



Invisible walls in Wales

Below: Sir Martin Narey, my husband Andrew Singer, Liz Singer, Lana McLaggan and the outgoing High Sheriff, Rory McLaggan, before my Declaration

FOR NEARLY 40 years I have been a volunteer fundraiser for Barnardo's, initially as a founder member of a newly formed group in my home town of Porthcawl. As my interest grew so did my involvement, and I now chair Barnardo's Appeals Advisory Board, supporting all volunteer fundraisers in the UK.

When asked if I would accept nomination as High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan I thought this would be my chance to raise awareness of the wonderful work that Barnardo's are doing in my county. The charity now works closely within Parc Prison in Bridgend in a unique project called Invisible Walls Wales (IWW), working with the families of prisoners with the aim of keeping the families together and preventing reoffending.

My Declaration was a very special occasion attended by all my family and very close friends.

His Honour Judge Twomlow presided in my parish church in the village of Newton where we live. My guest speaker was Sir Martin Narey, one-time Director General of the Prison Service and later Chief Executive of Barnardo's. In his speech, Sir Martin made reference to the outstanding work being carried out in the IWW project. My three eldest grandchildren, who had travelled from Singapore for the occasion, were my sword bearers. The weather was perfect and we were all able to walk to the prep school behind the church for the reception.

I had already set about planning my charity event which was to be The High Sheriff's Celebrity Tug-of-War Competition and a Celebration Lunch in aid of Barnardo's in the grounds of a college in Bridgend. Nine teams from all walks in life took part, each with celebrities from sport or the media acting as

Photo by Keith Morgan



First World War Exhibition in Porthcawl - army volunteer, Paul Joseph of Porthcawl Museum, Andrew and Liz Singer



Photo by Keith Morgan

cheerleaders. After a champagne reception, 260 guests sat down to a three-course lunch in a marquee in a field! Thanks to huge support from local businesses, charitable trusts and friends, we were able to present Barnardo's with a cheque for £30,000 for their work in Mid Glamorgan.

Rather appropriately, the team of warders from Parc Prison won the event and were presented with their trophy by the Lord-Lieutenant, Mrs Kate Thomas. Everyone had been made aware of the work being carried out, with short talks from the Director of Barnardo's Cymru, Yvonne Rodgers, and the Senior Manager of IWW, Corin Morgan-Armstrong, and all felt moved by what they had to say.

Mid Glamorgan is a large county in area, but there is no city and High Court Judges rarely visit, so I am not quite as busy as my fellow High Sheriffs either side in South and West Glamorgan, but it gives me the opportunity to concentrate on giving support to organisations in the local community. One special event was to open an exhibition in my home town commemorating 100 years since the commencement of the First World War. At that time Porthcawl had a population of 5,000 and 400 young men volunteered to go to war; 102 didn't return. We remembered them and were thankful.

Now I am halfway through my year, with many more appointments in the diary and much more to look forward to.

❖ Elizabeth Singer DL

High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan 2014-15