



Beyond the shiny badge

I HAD been warned that Greater London is a special case in all things shrieval. Over eight million souls squeezed into a bailiwick covering only 600 square miles. Here, the most likely response to 'Hello, I am the High Sheriff' is 'Who?' The good news is that you can get anywhere on the Underground.

With eleven Crown Courts, including the Old Bailey, supporting the judiciary is a priority. Visiting each court to see the remarkable work of the judges, barristers, and court staff in challenging circumstances was fascinating. Returning that hospitality at our Judges' Dinner was an enjoyable privilege. In Greater London it is through the High Sheriff's Awards where we add most value. Championed and arranged by our indefatigable Under Sheriff, Lynn Johansen, ceremonies were held at the Supreme Court and Blackfriars Crown Court. Hearing the citations for Londoners who bravely intervened in often horrifying crimes is moving and humbling. Such civic recognition is vital and the support from the judges, our hosts, the Lord-Lieutenant, and the Commissioner enhance and dignify the ceremonies.

My highlight of the year was the special investiture we hosted for the Royal Humane Society for those involved in the



Photo: Johnny Fenn

Above: The High Sheriff addressing the Special Investiture recipients and guests at Fishmongers' Hall, November 2018

London and Westminster Bridges terrorist attacks in 2017. Held in November 2018, appropriately at Fishmongers' Hall on London Bridge, we awarded thirteen bronze medals to mark the bravery of citizens who had aided those injured in the attacks. They were joined by their families and representatives from the communities caught up in these dreadful events, including the police, ambulance service, hospitals and civic authorities.

Beyond civic recognition, my themes have been mental health, and education in prisons. The Thames bridges are magnets to the suicidal, so prevention is a priority for the Metropolitan and City of London Police. The Marine Police Unit, England's oldest police force, plays a vital role in attending around 1,000 incidents and typically recovering 60 bodies from the river each year. With half those detained by the police throughout London experiencing mental health challenges, a better appreciation of and support for this aspect of our criminal justice system is overdue.

London's prisons share the challenges faced across the country. The Third

Sector champions education to prevent reoffending. So, we were proud to support fundraising for excellent charities including The Clink, Bounce Back, Leap, Beyond Food and PACT.

Beyond the shiny badge, the Office in Greater London offers many opportunities but few entrenched privileges. Having Westminster Abbey as our parish church is, however, an honour. We commemorated the death of Stephen Hawking; Nelson Mandela at one hundred; 60 years since Windrush; the opening of the legal year; the NHS and the Commonwealth, each at 70; 80 years since Kristallnacht; and 100 since the end of the Great War. Led by the Dean, the music, doctrine, and ceremonial were pitch perfect, so the Abbey showed Britain to the rest of the world at its most welcoming. As a Royal Peculiar, a church responsible directly to the sovereign, protocol is observed rigorously. Almost certainly the only time I will be ranked ahead of the Leader of the Opposition.

♣ Charles Spicer
High Sheriff of Greater London 2018-19



Photo: Hamish McLean

Above: The High Sheriff with Senior Master Fontaine, Queen's Remembrancer (right), and Lynn Johansen, Under Sheriff of Greater London (left) at the Royal Courts of Justice after his swearing-in, April 2018