



## Much more than cider and beef

HEREFORDSHIRE IS a county with a widely dispersed population of some 190,000, one of the very smallest counties by population though large in area. The neighbouring High Sheriffs (with whom I have shared a number of events) have more crime, more courts, more law and order work and judicial entertainment. A High Court Judge has not sat in Hereford for two years, being met at the county border, escorted safely to the lodgings and provided with entertainment as in days of yore.

However, we keep the Crown Court, the magistrates and the coroner busy. We fight to keep justice locally administered against the forces of central bureaucracy. I invited the Chief Magistrate, Senior District Judge Arbuthnot, who is in charge of District Judges (Magistrates' Courts), to address the magistrates' bench AGM.

We continued the tradition of a High Sheriff's lecture. Sir David Latham, previously chair of the parole board, addressed an audience in the beautiful old court in the Shirehall in Hereford. His subject was highly topical: 'Are parole boards becoming too risk adverse in the face of public opinion?'

My focus was social care and we organised a symposium that brought together distinguished judges, the heads of Herefordshire Council Social Services and commentators on the subject, as speakers and a discussion panel. Some

180 people from across the county attended, from both state organisations and our wonderful charities with their hosts of volunteers.

A theme has emerged from the symposium and from the many visits that we made to charities and state organisations involved in care. Taken off the leash of bureaucracy, these organisations will work together to develop sensible solutions to particular problems. Inevitably, this can give rise to a 'postcode lottery'; however, striving for uniformity does not make the best use of resources, kills initiative and damages morale.

Herefordshire is a county that punches well above its population weight. We have the finest music and culture. The Three Choirs Festival that cycles between Worcester, Gloucester and Hereford was this year in Hereford – lucky me. Our cathedral with its choral tradition is a feast for the soul daily. We also have some fine educational establishments to whose ranks we are about to add NMITE (New Model Institute for Technology & Engineering), which will be the first new university in the country for 40 years. It will focus on collaboration with industry and will welcome the first students this September. This will encourage further development of high value-added commerce. Already, we are seeing the growth of hubs of high technology

activity. We are striving for a net inflow of young people who will then live and work in the county.

All High Sheriffs in 2018 will have been involved in the commemorations for the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. In Hereford Cathedral a particularly poignant moment was the silence during the Service of Reflection on 11 November, during which 3,213 petals fell from the transept tower for each of the fallen, whose names had been read over the previous week – it was an honour to be asked to help read. We are a military county, proud of our contribution.

In Rotherwas, near Hereford, stands a derelict enormous munitions store, soon to be restored to new more peaceful use. We have paid tribute to the Canary Girls who worked there, so called because the chemicals often gave the workers symptoms similar to jaundice. A small cohort are still with us and one of the four royal visits was to thank them.

It has been a privilege to hold the office of High Sheriff for a year in this wonderful go-ahead County of Herefordshire. We are much more than cider and beef – though they are top quality. Come and visit the county, for work, pleasure and fulfilment.

◆ Nat Hone DL

*High Sheriff of Herefordshire 2018-19*



Above: Hereford's new university inauguration service – the academic parade



Above: Hereford Council's Citizens Awards winners