



## Do not be late again

THE FOCUS of my year was attempting to enhance the profile and relevance of the Ancient Office. We started a dedicated website and Facebook page. After being late for my first event in the cathedral due to traffic and over-ambitious double-booking I was politely told by Lady Morrison, our Vice Lord-Lieutenant, that no one noticed, but 'do not be late again'. Wise words!

I nominated the Worcestershire Community Foundation as my charity and specifically the High Sheriff's Fund. I thank Michael Timmis for running a Simulated Clay Day and to Lucy Wells for coordinating various fundraising events.

I thank Patrick Holcroft, our Lord-Lieutenant, Annie his wife and Isabel Welch, Lord-Lieutenant's PA, for their endless support and calming advice.

### God

I thank Canon Brian McGinley for stepping into the role of my chaplain. His wisdom and calm dealing with everyone from prisoners to the royal family was a masterclass. The Rt Revd the Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, Dean Peter Atkinson and Canon Michael Brierley: your love, prayers and openness are both infectious and at the heart and at the spirit of the county. Your IPP (Imprisonment for Public Protection) conference at HMP Hewell Grange was the most extraordinary event; everyone agreed – the whole criminal justice system from judges to those judged.

### Government

Councillor Brandon Clayton, Chairman of the County Council, and Jabba Riaz, Mayor of Worcester, are examples of how cross-party and cross-faith action work well in this county. I thank our local MPs for answering my requests, referring them on to the Home Secretary and the Lord Chancellor, all to the benefit of our local citizens.

### Law

The High Court has returned to Worcester giving me the opportunity to sit, look and learn and to provide and accept the hospitality from many High Court Judges



**Above:** Cassian Roberts (R) at the High Sheriff of Staffordshire's Legal Service with (L-R) Revd Preb Richard Grigson (Rector of Stafford), Nat Hone (Herefordshire), Diana Thompson (Leicestershire), Pippa Gee (Staffordshire), Lucy Palmer (Derbyshire) and Rhoddy Swire (Shropshire)

and helping me raise monies for the High Sheriff's Fund. At the county court, Judge Jukes QC, other judges and the court officials were so welcoming and helpful. The magistracy invited me to sit in court and to attend the mock trials which filled the Magistrates' Courts with happy, enthusiastic and competitive schoolchildren who were then highly commended in the Shire Hall.

### The Services

The prison service – the passion and care demonstrated during my visits, the desire to improve by linking with our university to provide courses for prisoners and staff are commendable, as is the project to get local businesses into the prisons to train, support and give hope to prisoners. The West Mercia Police led by the Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion and Chief Constable Anthony Bangham, the Fire Service, the Ambulance Service, the Civil Service and our military – volunteers, cadets and associates – all bind together and underpin the county. I am impressed by their professionalism and compassion.

### Charities

In all their different forms these are the beating heart of the county. The little I have been able to do in supporting them has been the real bonus of this office. I am proud to have been able to disburse funds to – among others – Nora Parsons Day Centre, The Good Soil Project, and Longlands Farm providing alternative education for 11- to 18-year-olds.

### Our Neighbours

The Office does not need to be in isolation. I enjoyed great support from neighbouring Sheriffs providing different perspectives and opinions. Nat Hone (Herefordshire) and Rhoddy Swire (Shropshire) have been invaluable and fun! Christopher Loughran (West Midlands) in Birmingham showed how small we are compared to the metropolitan super state of Birmingham. Pippa Gee (Staffordshire) showed us the National Arboretum and Clare Sawdon in Warwickshire entertained us royally.

### ♣ Cassian Roberts

*High Sheriff of Worcestershire 2018-19*