



A year of the unexpected

THE COMMENCEMENT of my term of office did not go exactly to plan. Just six weeks before the Declaration I fractured my ankle and needed surgery. Let's just say that walking in to my Declaration on two crutches was not the scene I had envisaged! However, it was a very moving ceremony at Trinity St David for family, dignitaries and fellow Welsh Sheriffs, followed by a wonderful champagne tea. When fully recovered and back on my feet, I held a further reception for representatives of the three local authorities, emergency services and various charities.

It was a year to remember. I had the pleasure of travelling to all corners of Dyfed, which consists of the beautiful rural and coastal counties of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire. It was rewarding to experience such diverse occasions, from the Scouts' weekend camp (without a mobile phone in sight) to a workshop for adults with learning difficulties.

I was pleased to attend the Order of St John Priory for Wales Visitation and Investiture at Saint David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire, having spent an evening previously with the Carmarthen St John Ambulance cadets. The value of this association has become so apparent in these challenging times.

A further privilege was to be invited to read a lesson at the Divine Service at Llandaff Cathedral to mark the beginning of the Legal Year. It was a truly spectacular occasion in all its splendour. As the county of Dyfed does not have a Crown Court, the opportunity to be present at legal dinners in Cardiff was always appreciated. The Supreme Court visited the city in July, so it was a wonderful occasion for us as High Sheriffs of Wales to host a magnificent dinner at the Mansion House. Thanks are due to Dr Isabel Graham, High Sheriff of South Glamorgan, for coordinating the evening. There is certainly a close friendship among all the Shrievalty.

During the year, the county was honoured by royal visits from TRH The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall. HRH The Princess Royal also visited Dyfed on two separate occasions.

My two designated charities have been Pancreatic Cancer Research and a local county charity Tir Dewi, helping the farmers of west Wales in difficult times. I am greatly indebted to businesses and friends who were generous with their contributions to an agricultural auction in October and the 'Christmas Ideas' afternoon in December was also a success, with tickets being a complete sell-out.

Indeed, December was a busy month – carol concerts, citizenship ceremonies

Above left: Richard Morris, Under Sheriff of Ceredigion, the High Sheriff and Roland Lewis, Under Sheriff of Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire

Above: Dr Simon Hancock JP, Chair of Pembrokeshire County Council, the High Sheriff and Prof David Howell, at the launch of Vol 5 of *An Historical Atlas of Pembrokeshire*

and many other engagements and who can forget, the general election? It was certainly a satisfying experience to fulfil the role of returning officer for two Carmarthenshire constituencies. Fortunately a recount was not needed!

The High Sheriff's presentations during the year included the Dyfed Young Persons Trust Awards. This trust, established by Colonel Dai Davies during his year of office, gives financial support to young people who, within their organisations, have displayed outstanding achievements and wish for further advancement.

The culmination of the year's activities would have been the Dyfed Shrievalty annual dinner in March. This is a special evening for previous High Sheriffs, family and friends to reminisce. Unfortunately, due to the prevailing pandemic restrictions, the event had to be cancelled.

Nevertheless it has been a tremendous honour and privilege to serve as High Sheriff and I wish to thank HM Lord-Lieutenant Sara Edwards, the Under Sheriff Roland Lewis and my family for their support.

◆ Helena Lewis

High Sheriff of Dyfed 2019-2020