



Photo: Ray Farley

## Important to continue a tradition

**AT THE time of writing, the effects of the coronavirus nationally are intensifying and there are many uncertainties as to the future. It is clear that the impact upon the year of the incoming High Sheriffs will be considerable. It is against that background that my reflections regarding the past twelve months and my contribution to this publication are somewhat tempered per chance that any hint of jubilation may appear insensitive. Accordingly I shall confine myself to a short factual account of one particular aspect of my year.**

On 23 September 2019 the Chairman of the High Sheriffs' Association wrote to all High Sheriffs enquiring as to the ways in which the Judges' Services are conducted in the various counties and pointing out that in some counties they are now poorly attended.

In Merseyside, prior to 2018, the attendances at the Judges' Service had declined considerably. I am pleased to be able to say, however, that this trend has now been reversed and the service here has been completely reinvigorated. The means by which this has been achieved may be of interest to others who wish to achieve a similar outcome.

In 2018 a working group was set up in Merseyside in order to address the question of falling attendances. The group is chaired by the current High Sheriff and other members – totalling thirteen in all – include former High Sheriffs, the High Sheriff in nomination, the Under Sheriff, the Chancellor of the Diocese, the Honorary Recorder of Liverpool, the Clerk to the Merseyside Lieutenancy and two Deputy Lieutenants.

Each member of the group is charged with the responsibility of sending out invitations in the name of the current High Sheriff to specific individuals and/or groups. These include the Lord-Lieutenant of Merseyside, the High Sheriffs of neighbouring counties, past High Sheriffs, Deputy Lieutenants, those (both current and retired) who sit in judgement of all ranks from Magistrates and Tribunal Judges to Court of Appeal Judges, the Queen's Remembrancer, the Leader of the Northern Circuit of the Bar, the President of the Liverpool Law Society, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool and other civic dignitaries, the Chief Constable of Merseyside, the Merseyside Police and Crime Commissioner and the Vice Chancellors of the three local universities.

Others receiving invitations include representatives of all religious groups,

**Above:** (L-R) Mark Adlestone OBE DL High Sheriff of Greater Manchester, David Steer QC DL High Sheriff of Merseyside, the Hon Ralph Assheton TD DL High Sheriff of Lancashire, Mark Mitchell DL High Sheriff of Cheshire and David Cam DL, Under Sheriff of the County Palatine of Lancaster

the emergency services, the armed forces, the probation service, the consulates, the court staff, voluntary organisations and the uniformed youth organisations. General invitations are circulated throughout the legal profession and, of course, the general public.

At the Judges' Service held last October at Liverpool Cathedral the net result was a procession of some ninety individuals and a congregation approaching a thousand.

I respectfully agree with the observation made by the Chairman of the High Sheriffs' Association in his aforementioned letter that 'It is important that the Shrievalty continue this tradition'.

We, here in Merseyside, believe that we have created a template to ensure the success of our annual Judges' Service for many years to come.

**David Steer QC DL**  
*High Sheriff of Merseyside 2019-20*