



Embracing opportunities

LIKE SO many High Sheriffs in nomination, I am sure, I was tentative about assuming the role, wondering whether I had the confidence to embrace the opportunities that would present themselves to me, whether I would be able to put people at ease in unfamiliar situations and – my biggest dread – having to speak in public! However, events soon overrode those initial anxieties and of course, by the miracle of social interaction and most people's natural generosity of spirit, I found that I was soon made to feel comfortable by their willingness to talk about their area of expertise.

What I was keen to derive from my year was the chance to experience aspects of life in our society which in the normal course of events I would never come across. I was curious to understand better how the judiciary worked and thanks to the time and welcome I received from judges, particularly in the Crown Courts of York and Teesside, and the county's magistracy, I glimpsed the broad respect that people have for the rule of law which underpins our democracy and grants us all a fair degree of freedom. On the other hand, being in court was also a demonstration of societal troubles which elicited in me feelings of consternation at one end of the spectrum and huge sympathy at the other. During the year, I also witnessed and admired the difficult role the police, prison and social services play in keeping our society glued together.

There were lots of happy and uplifting events I attended, from commemorative church services in York Minster, Ripon Cathedral and Selby Abbey, for example,



WearBlueDay: High Sheriff with children at Terrington Hall School to talk about her anti-bullying and online safety campaign



Yorkshire Air Ambulance Day: Paramedic Lisa Dempster, James Fenwick, Daryl Stephenson, Sue Stephenson, High Sheriff of East Riding of Yorkshire, Linda Fenwick, High Sheriff of North Yorkshire, Dr Chris Srinivasan



to visits to RAF Menwith Hill and GCHQ Scarborough where all sorts of global communications and activities are closely monitored. I saw the valuable work provided by the emergency services in the guise of the North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service, the Yorkshire Air Ambulance, and Scarborough and Ryedale Mountain Rescue, and was given a guided tour of Stockton-on-Tees by the civic party who understandably took great pride in showing how they are taking a lead in regenerating what was once a deprived area.

Like most other High Sheriffs, I chose to support one special charity: this was Bullying UK (www.bullying.co.uk) which concentrates on helping those who suffer bullying, particularly in the home as well as in school, from which so many social problems emanate and persist.



Above left: Letters Patent Ceremony, 29 October 2019: His Honour Judge Ashurst, the Hon Mr Justice Martin Spencer, Linda Fenwick, High Sheriff of North Yorkshire
Above: High Sheriff with PCs Oliver Lewis and Ben Stevens, York City and East Neighbourhood Policing Team

It was an honour to be chosen as High Sheriff, something I will always value, especially as a born and bred Texan gal! More seriously, it made me realise how considered my suggested nomination of a future High Sheriff should be.

Incidentally, I largely overcame my fear of public speaking, which I would heartily recommend, by having lessons with a most brilliant voice coach!

◆ Linda Fenwick
High Sheriff of North Yorkshire 2019-20