

SOMERSET

News from and about members



A wonderful year of saying thank you



Photo: PA Images, Ben Birchall

FOUR DAYS after my Declaration, I was honoured to be presented to Her Majesty The Queen at Castle Cary Station as we enjoyed a brilliantly organised Royal visit. You could ask, how do you beat that!

My main themes have been to:

- build on my predecessor's initiative to support our Unlocking Potential Somerset project for disadvantaged young people
- meet and thank as many charities and volunteers as possible with the help and guidance of both Quartet and Somerset Community Foundations
- work closely with our Somerset Police young cadets

Unlocking Potential (UP) Somerset

The 'UP Somerset' initiative was successfully launched across six schools in Bridgwater and Weston Super Mare with local further education college support and South Bristol Youth who have successfully delivered programmes to young teenagers for seven years.



OPPOSITE PAGE

Top: At Somerset's Legal Service: Charles Wyld (Bristol), Mary Clare Rodwell incoming High Sheriff of Somerset, Johnnie Halliday, Sarah Le May (Hampshire), Philip Warr (Dorset), John Willis (Cornwall)

Bottom: The Lord-Lieutenant of Somerret Annie Maw presents the High Sheriff to Her Majesty at Castle Cary Station

THIS PAGE

Top right: High Sheriff's garden party raising a glass for Volunteer Awards and Unlocking Potential Somerset

Below: High Sheriff's Community Award recipients with the High Sheriff from L to R: Susie Wilkinson (Somerset Farming Community Network), Lt Theresa Torr (Salvation Army - Taunton), Katy Massy (Bath Youth/Mentoring Plus), Gill Brown (Children's Hospice SW) and Peter Renshaw (Rotary Taunton)

It aims to help those Year 9 pupils from challenged family and neighbourhood backgrounds to raise self-confidence and find pathways for pupils with an 'Insights to Apprenticeship' programme. The monies raised for this three-year programme is via Somerset Crimebeat Trust.

Looking forward, we are on our way to expanding the programme to several Taunton Deane schools. The interest I witnessed from many pupils both before and during my year convinced me that this was a strategically important programme to help improve young lives.

Meeting civic leaders

All doors were open and invitations flooded in from across our historic county. Meeting proud town mayors, attending many wonderful church services and handing out civic awards needed to be balanced with getting to know many of the volunteers going above and beyond to help those in need. Thank goodness for my wife Sian in organising me, and my satnav for finding my way across our largely rural county!

In July we held a party to thank them for their hospitality and to recognise some wonderful volunteers, unsung policemen and women as well as the 40-year-old Yeovil Freewheelers who serve East Somerset and Dorchester hospitals with their mission-critical volunteer blood bike service.

Highlight of the year – a celebration of Somerset volunteering (9 Feb 2020)

Well before the end of the year I decided that I wanted to shine a light on the hundreds of organisations and unsung heroes from all walks of life who give back to those in need. With guidance from the Dean and Chapter at Wells Cathedral we



organised a multi-faith celebration of volunteering.

Over 600 intrepid souls representing many organisations battled through Storm Ciara from across Somerset to come and be recognised. The cathedral's regular and volunteer choirs sang together; there were readings from Somerset and Quartet Community Foundations, and prayers from the High Sheriff's chaplain and police cadets. This was followed by reflections on the importance of volunteering from Muslim, Hindu and Jewish faith groups. Instead of the evensong sermon I recognised a diverse selection of volunteers with High Sheriff Community Awards and afterwards we celebrated with tea and bubbles.

Police cadets

Throughout the year I was very grateful to have the backing of Somerset Police cadet leaders and my High Sheriff cadets Josh Davies and Yas Newton-Mason in particular. We did treasure hunts, a High Sheriff's quiz, and they helped at carol services, garden parties and the volunteer and Legal Services. Like our Unlocking Potential Somerset project, I could see the increase in self-confidence among the cadets during my year.

Passing the baton

Unlike many counties, Somerset combines its Legal Service with the Declaration of the incoming High Sheriff. I was able to thank my fellow South-West High Sheriffs for inviting me and Sian to courts and judges dinners, prison visits and Legal Services across the region.

Somerset's Legal Service on Sunday 15 March was an ominously dull and rainy affair, perhaps foretelling the impending virus lockdown to come only a week later. Thank you Somerset volunteers and charities for stepping forward during the crisis of this pandemic. You are truly needed now more than ever before.

Johnnie Halliday
High Sheriff of Somerset 2019-2020



Photo: Paul Gillis