



High Sheriff in lockdown and lock-up

IN A situation that none of us could have predicted, we slipped seamlessly from High Sheriff in nomination to High Sheriff in lockdown. That has presented all of us with challenges unique in the history of the Shrievalty.

My reaction to the postponement of many physical events was to create the High Sheriff's Special Recognition Awards. They were launched through effective and targeted use of social media, support from the local press and broadcasters, and very quickly through word of mouth. I also wrote directly to the local authorities and mayors of all the Greater Manchester boroughs.

There was an enormous response to my requests for nominations for ordinary people doing extraordinary things to support their communities. While I was obviously unable to meet the recipients in person, they were delighted to receive a letter and certificate through the post, with the promise of a celebration gathering whenever that might be possible.

One of the first awards was made to a man with whose work I was familiar before it reached national attention. Marcus Rashford, the Manchester United footballer, had been working tirelessly but anonymously to highlight and ease the plight of child poverty, particularly those children going hungry. His tweet about his surprise and delight at being given the High Sheriff's Award showed his humility and before long there was a photo opportunity with the prime minister and government agencies were clambering to pledge support. I am thrilled that he has been given national recognition and extremely proud that the wider international audience was reached thanks to the initial recognition of the High Sheriff.

I am sure I am not alone in my quest to determine a blended approach to my work during this challenging time. Alongside the many virtual meetings, I have turned out to some wonderful events.

The GMP Special Constabulary, led by Chief Officer Mike Walmsley MBE, is a 300-strong body of women and men who volunteer to support our regular

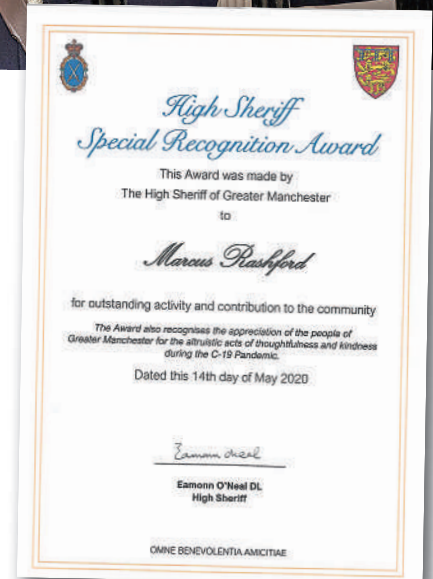


Above: Eamonn O'Neal High Sheriff of Greater Manchester in the cells at GMP Police Museum
Below: Eamonn O'Neal HS Greater Manchester with Chief Supt Stuart Ellison, Mike Walmsley MBE, Chief Officer of GMP Special Constabulary and Mr Stephen Paine JP
Right: The High Sheriff's Award Certificate awarded by Eamonn O'Neal, HS of Greater Manchester to footballer Marcus Rashford



police service. It was a great privilege to take part in the most recent recruits' attestation and offer some words of thanks on behalf of our communities.

I was invited by the Chairman of the Bench to unveil a plaque in the Manchester Magistrates' Court to mark the centenary of the first female magistrate in the country. Ada Summers sat in court at the beginning of 1920. She was well known for influencing great change in the magistracy. I reflected that as she was at the forefront of so much innovation, perhaps the story of Ada Summers MBE should be told more loudly and proudly.



The Greater Manchester Police Museum is a rich archive of law and order. While we have been unable to visit and benefit first-hand from the wonderful projects and exhibits, the museum has developed a way of engaging with schools and other groups through the digital world.

I was able to appear in person to be part of the museum's digital revolution and they wasted no time putting me in a lockdown of a very different kind – an hour in an Edwardian cell.

◆ Dr Eamonn O'Neal DL
High Sheriff of Greater Manchester
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All photos: credit Chris Oldham