



Ripping up the script

MY YEAR started with a Zoom Declaration – no doubt standard operating procedure for all High Sheriffs now. As someone who was entirely unfamiliar with video-conferencing before, it was a good introduction to how my shrieval year would be conducted.

The year has not exactly gone to plan but I have tried to find the positives in ripping up the script and adapting the role to work within the constraints of COVID-19. Thanks to the internet, I have been able to meet a wide range of people in all corners of Lancashire – far more individuals than if I had conducted a traditional programme of visits. In particular, I have learnt a lot about the voluntary sector at work in the county and how they have been coping with and supporting others through this pandemic.

In June I sent out a call to request nominations for a special High Sheriff's Award to recognise individuals who have been helping out in the community at this challenging time. After a slow start, over 200 nominations have come in from a wide geographical area of the county as well as from a wide range of different people. I still, optimistically, hope to meet as many nominees as possible in the coming months.

After nearly five months it was lovely to be able to make my first visit in person.

My husband and I were treated to a most interesting morning at Lancashire Police headquarters at the end of August. A generous hour with the Assistant Chief Constable got us up to date with how the police have been managing over the last few months. They have had to balance business as usual with additional duties, trying to police the COVID-19 Regulations. Significant restrictions have been imposed to manage the rate of infection in a number of Lancashire towns throughout the summer, which has added to the challenge.

It was fascinating to have the opportunity to learn about modern policing. One of the excellent resources the Lancashire Police have is their mounted division. It is the second largest mounted force in the country after the Metropolitan Police and an excellent tool for coping with people gathering in larger numbers than they should. An officer on top of a 17-hand horse is an imposing prospect and socially distanced too.

During my visit I was treated to a demonstration of the use of drones in modern policing – another tool for

Below left: The High Sheriff of Lancashire with Andrew Penny and Colin Lewis of Oscar Kilo, the National Police Wellbeing Service
Below right: Andrew Penny with members of the drone team, part of the tactical operations department



Sergeant James Cooper, Mounted Branch, with his horse Guild

combating crime from a distance. I also met an officer in the wellbeing unit, which has been formed recently. This is a necessary resource in these stressful times. Finally, it was a privilege to spend time with some of the key members of the Lancashire Resilience Forum which is based at the police headquarters. An advantage of having a nuclear power station in the county is that the Forum was already in place and was able to respond to the onset of COVID -19 swiftly.

Catherine Penny
High Sheriff of Lancashire 2020-21



Photo credit: Sergeant 3961 Peter Norris, Oscar Kilo