



Cometh the hour, cometh the man

SOME PEOPLE have commiserated on what a terrible year to be High Sheriff... But as the old saying goes: ‘Cometh the hour, cometh the man’.

I have loved almost every minute of it. And YES, this year has been different, but I have been energised by the absolutely amazing efforts of remarkable people from all walks of life. From high-profile celebrities to low-profile hospital workers; from council workers to members of the police; from fire fighters to church wardens and charity workers – people from all walks of life have really stepped up and I am so proud to tell everyone I come from this great county.

The pandemic has been devastating for many people. We have lost thousands of loved ones, a huge number of businesses have gone bust, people have lost their jobs and the country is in huge debt... but there are still many positive things to be thankful for.

I think most people will have had time to reflect on their lives, their dreams and aspirations, their core values and their objectives. I believe we will emerge as a kinder community, a fairer country and a significantly more tolerant one.

I have learnt much during my year:

I have learnt that the impact of Covid on our lives and on the country has been greater than we could have ever imagined. We find ourselves in a situation where the economic gap in society – the difference between the haves and the have-nots – has widened. Wealthy people appear to



Helping to deliver 2,200 slow cookers to be distributed to vulnerable families in Cheshire

have fared much better than poorer both medically and economically.

Having spent 10 days with our Cheshire Crown Court judges I have learnt what a lonely job that can be – and that the judges like home-made cake! Lesley and I have started a new tradition for future High Sheriffs to provide judges with home-made cake on their court visits.

I have learnt that listening to the incredibly thoughtful speeches H M The Queen has made this year and playing them back to people has been very powerful.

‘The pride in who we are is not a part of our past, it defines our present and our future.’

‘I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge.’

‘And those who come after us will say the Britons of this generation were as strong as any.’

I have learnt that engaging with and encouraging others can achieve much more than I can on my own. The office of High Sheriff can open doors, but if you want to bring about change then you need to motivate and inspire the right people... and get them working towards a common goal.

I have learnt that the Cheshire Community Foundation is a brilliant way to get money to worthwhile causes; they have been thoroughly vetted and have to report back on their outputs from the donations.

I have learnt that Cheshire is a great county full of wonderful people, so thank

you to all who have helped me. In particular very special thanks to my wife for her great understanding about all the wonderful promised events that sadly I had to cancel... including The Queen’s garden party.

This pandemic could be seen as creating a much bigger divide in our towns and communities, but actually I believe that many people here in Cheshire have come up with ideas and actions to help reduce its impact and significantly assist in the most vulnerable areas.

For many people overt displays of wealth have lost much of their shine and some have become vulgar. The real modern-day heroes are people who have mobilised themselves to help those in need and the disadvantaged rather than those who drive the flashiest and most expensive cars.

Raising money and awareness for school dinners, the homeless, mental health, the NHS and a whole range of other charities and good causes is seen much more as a civic and moral duty than ever before and is starting to be celebrated – it has become cool.

The one commodity that has become more valuable than ever before is kindness: ‘No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.’ (Aesop)

It’s not just about talking about doing great things, it’s about acting, it’s putting the graft in and it’s about getting others involved too.

Nick Hopkinson MBE DL
High Sheriff of Cheshire 2020-21



Presenting a High Sheriff’s Award to Warrington Youth Club for delivering essential childcare for children with special needs during lockdown