



Inspiring hope

THE MOST common thing said to me this year has been: ‘What a pity you have had such an awful year.’ How wrong is that! It has been different with no civic receptions, dinners or grand occasions but it has been a year when High Sheriffs have really been able to make an impact and a difference to their communities and bailiwicks. This was my challenge.

I transferred my legal service into a film *Without Fear or Favour*. Bournemouth University introduced me to Josh, a recent graduate film maker, and with his help I produced a 20-minute clip. There were presentations from Mrs Justice May, the senior western circuit judge, highlighting the importance of volunteers to the criminal justice system;



Above: George Streatfeild filming *Without Fear or Favour*. Below: Lord Neuberger filming *Without Fear or Favour*

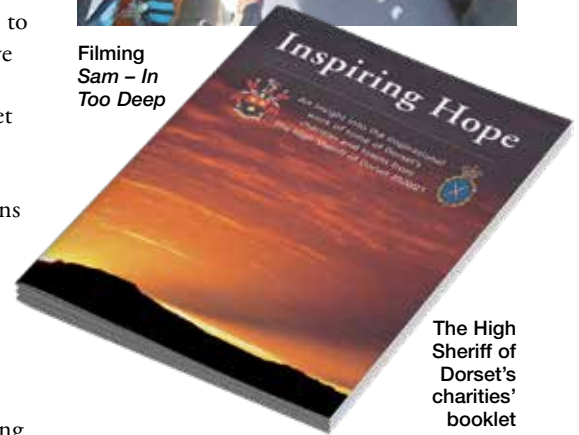
my chaplain the Revd Canon Janet Smith, raising mental welfare; Chief Constable James Vaughan discussing ‘policing by consent’ and Lord Neuberger, past President of the Supreme Court, explaining society’s freedoms within the framework of the law. I then emailed it to a much wider audience than would have been able to attend the service.

The summer event became a booklet to raise the profile of selected Dorset charities. In my Declaration speech I wanted to ‘inspire hope’ in those sections of society where there is none: that became the title for my booklet. If I could not get 200 people together to hear directly from the charities, I could at least get into their homes and offices with a production which highlighted a wider selection of organisations including the fantastic work done by groups during the pandemic lockdown. I circulated 1,000 copies, achieving a far greater profile than the event might have done.

Traditionally Dorset has a legal lecture in Bournemouth University, led by undergraduates on a topic promoted by the High Sheriff. Returning to Josh and fellow student Ollie for help I used the true story of a young boy groomed by a county lines gang into becoming a drug mule and who eventually was killed by them. *Sam – In Too Deep* is a



Filming *Sam – In Too Deep*



The High Sheriff of Dorset’s charities’ booklet

hard-hitting eight-minute YouTube clip which is being circulated throughout the county both to schools and young people as well as the wider community, many of whom are not aware of the depth of the problem. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4MXJTWNmfQ>)

In my view, the High Sheriff has three main things to achieve: to engage with, hear from and thank those doing amazing things; to publicise their work and achievements; and to bring groups together for mutual benefit. My solutions may not have been orthodox but they seem to have worked; after only two weeks the county lines film has been viewed over 3,700 times.

I do not believe any of it would have happened without the mutual support from the other eight High Sheriffs in my region: we routinely emailed, Zoomed and WhatsApped. It enabled us to compare our ideas and plans. Those sessions often became daunting; to hear the amazing things others were doing was inspiring and fired me up to achieve more, as well as giving us all the confidence to do things differently.

George Streatfeild
High Sheriff of Dorset 2020-21

