



Childhood ambition thwarted... for now

AS MY year in office closes, reflecting on my achievements leaves a rather melancholy feeling. Despite the challenges, I have striven onwards fulfilling as many of my great intentions as possible, although the volume of video calls has at times been overwhelming.

My overriding message has been one of support, and I put together a gift box with commemorative mug, Yorkshire (naturally!) Tea, and KitKats – all wonderful North Yorkshire products. Plus, the addition of a personal note to boost morale and motivate those whose efforts have proved legendary during the pandemic.

One of my most humbling events has been my visit to Clean Slate Solutions in Eaglescliffe, an organisation which helps ex-inmates rehabilitate by finding employment. My help in providing contacts with county-wide employers to extend their network has been very rewarding, with some extremely positive results. I am now honoured to be patron of the charity.

With the aid of our internet platforms, I have presented numerous High Sheriff's Awards across the county, and while

not being able to shake hands with the recipients, it has been gratifying to see the many smiling faces on screen and to see the flurry of well-wishes across our social media. A recent Court Award was made to a vigilant CCTV operator whose work helped apprehend several perpetrators who were convicted of murder.

The main event of the year, the Letters Patent Ceremony, was held at York Assizes. Fortunately, this fell between lockdowns and so, although shortened and with numbers restricted, I was able to attend in person!

In between lockdowns, I have made the most of the time available. A very engaging walk-around was had in Richmond accompanying the mayor, visiting shops and businesses to discuss the effects of the pandemic and finding out about their enterprising ways of continuing to trade, and how they were planning to recover. Despite their difficulties, their positivity was very encouraging.

Below, left to right: High Sheriff of North Yorkshire flag lowering; High Sheriff of North Yorkshire gift box; South Kilvington competition entry

As times have been limited, I have been proud to don my High Sheriff's uniform on a handful of occasions around Christmas, and was most enthusiastically received at a wonderful primary school assembly at South Kilvington School. They wanted to recognise the efforts made by everyone involved, including the children, in keeping education going. I set them a competition – one of the marvellous results can be seen here.

There were numerous awards to present 'virtually', including the winners of the Richmond Business Excellence Awards 2020, the North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service and North Yorkshire Police. Readings made at our beautiful Ripon Cathedral's various services were always a splendid privilege.

Despite the highlights, there were some disappointments – my two cadets, one from British Transport Police and the other from Fire & Rescue Services, have been unable to accompany me to events as had been intended – two very promising youngsters whose futures are bright. I hope the addition of their award will enhance their CVs nonetheless. Another disappointment was being unable to fulfil a childhood ambition of a high-speed ride in a police car – I am hoping that my NYP contacts will stand fast on their offer once restrictions are relaxed again!

◆ David A Kerfoot MBE DL
High Sheriff for North Yorkshire 2020-21

