



Doing it differently

THE BBC described Friday 13 March 2020 as 'The weekend the world changed'; for me it was the day I gave up work to focus on the year ahead. I had been advised that it is not about 'being High Sheriff' but 'doing High Sheriff'; 2020-21 was about doing it differently.

We quickly rearranged my Declaration from Oakham Castle to its car park with just the handful of essential people attending and witnessed by a confused dog walker. The following week the *Rutland Times* headline stated 'I will be a virtual High Sheriff'. I had no idea what that meant but soon went to places I had never been before – Twitter and Instagram.

As lockdown took hold, letter-writing, emails and Zoom replaced planned visits as I realised that flexibility is everything. The East Midlands High Sheriff team met regularly over Skype which was invaluable for sharing ideas and maintaining morale! As High Sheriff during the COVID-19 crisis it was vital to be a 'glass half full person' and make the most of what you could do.

A key part of the role is to work closely with the Lord-Lieutenant; Dr Sarah Furness and I wrote to every town and parish council seeking nominees to receive letters of thanks for the help they had given others to cope with the challenges of COVID. We knew that we had only scratched the surface so produced a YouTube video to thank many more.

As holidays were cancelled a friend and I reinvented our Spanish walking plans to walk the county boundary instead. As



Stocken Prison Hidden Heroes Day with Lord-Lieutenant, Prison Governor Neil Thomas and High Sheriff's Cadet Bradie Smith



Presenting a 'How the Police keep me safe' poster competition winner's certificate to Alfie with PC Joe Lloyd



Completing the Rutland Round walk with Nick Clarke on market day in Uppingham greeted by Deputy Mayor Liz Clarke

probably the only High Sheriff whose county is small enough to walk round in five days it was a unique opportunity to raise funds for the Community Foundation. Rutland Radio featured us every day on their breakfast show; my thanks to them for providing such a great way to raise the profile of the Office.

Rutland is proud of its prison at Stocken and it was a privilege to visit with the Lord-Lieutenant and my police cadet, Bradie Smith, on their Hidden Heroes Day to meet and thank members of staff for their work to keep residents safe. I am grateful to Leicester Crown and Magistrates' Courts for the opportunity to visit and see just how hard everyone was working to deliver justice for all involved.

School visits may not have been possible but I organised a 'How the police

keep me safe' poster competition for the county's primary schools and we received great entries with some really positive messages. The winners' posters will be displayed at Warning Zone, a charity in Leicester, which educates Year 6 students in understanding risk and good life choices.

It has been a privilege to serve as Rutland's High Sheriff this year and I believe using social media and online videos have enabled me to reach out to many more people across the county than I might otherwise have done, and in a more informal and accessible way. Rarely can the county motto have been more appropriate, 'Multum in Parvo' or 'much in little'.

R A Cole TD
High Sheriff of Rutland 2020-21



Opening Uppingham Community fridge project, providing surplus supermarket food to local families, with Root & Branch Out Director Claire Crowley and volunteer Sue Ball