



# One community

**THE THEME for my year – chosen before COVID – was One Community. This took account of my association with Wiltshire Community Foundation; the ‘rebasing’ of army troops and families from Germany to Salisbury Plain; the growing contribution made by ethnic minority groups in our larger towns; and Wiltshire’s community policing policy which has produced one of the lowest crime rates in the UK despite having one of the smallest county police forces.**

As subsequent events proved, One Community was a fortuitous choice. In my dual role as High Sheriff of Wiltshire and chair of its Community Foundation, I was ideally placed to ride the tidal wave of community spirit that the COVID pandemic engendered; to encourage community support groups; provide them with advice and financial grants (over £2 million raised and distributed in the year); and recognise the work of unsung heroes with High Sheriff’s Awards.

While recognising the misery that COVID has brought, I saw how crisis also breeds innovation. Despite successive

lockdowns, the reach and impact of community support services have been extended by imaginative use of information technology – and the pandemic has served as a catalyst to accelerate positive changes to working practices. These trends are here to stay, and future High Sheriffs will need to adapt accordingly. An interactive website and active social media presence are now a *sine qua non* for High Sheriffs seeking to reach out to their county and demonstrate the continuing relevance of the Shrievalty.

That said, the biggest decision High Sheriffs faced in this COVID year was whether leadership was best demonstrated by setting a ‘Stay at Home’ example – or by getting out on the front line. As an ex-soldier, a figurehead volunteer in the county, and leader of the Community Foundation, I felt strongly that the High Sheriff’s place had to be alongside the communities under threat and the emergency services supporting them – seeing and being seen. This was perfectly achievable within COVID guidelines by registering as a key worker and volunteering with community support groups (e.g. by

joining crisis management panels; visiting and advising community groups; delivering food, medicines and laptops; operating with the emergency services; and volunteering at vaccination centres, etc.). In the intervals between lockdowns normal service was resumed of course – allowing two royal visits, a string of ‘Rule of Six’ lunches, court sittings, prison visits and so on.

Not one of the public events that I had planned for my shrieval year – including several exciting joint projects with the military and ethnic minority communities – came off. But looking back, I realise I have perforce reached out to, and helped, more people than would have been possible in a ‘normal’ shrieval year – and in more practical ways. To illustrate this, and so capture the positive legacy of COVID, I worked with the Lord Chancellor, Lord-Lieutenant, Chief Constable, my Chaplain and the Community Foundation to put together an online Rule of Law Celebration to mark an extraordinary shrieval year and the Declaration of my successor. It can be viewed at [youtu.be/DUzezKWPiY](https://youtu.be/DUzezKWPiY).

◆ Major General Ashley Truluck CB CBE  
*High Sheriff of Wiltshire 2020-21*



### A YEAR IN PICTURES

**Clockwise from top left:** Post Declaration; Salisbury Fire Station; presenting High Sheriff’s Award to Hindu Samaj – one of many Indian groups who rendered extraordinary support to all communities in Swindon; opening a new community facility near Salisbury; Remembrance Day at Salisbury Guildhall; volunteering at the COVID mass vaccination centre at the Museum of Steam, Swindon