



Emerging from COVID – a merging of the years

MY SHRIEVAL year began with my Declaration on Zoom and sadly the first three months' engagements were few and far between because of lockdown. However, I spent the time organising the fundraising concert I was planning that would raise funds for the Back Stage of the Buxton Opera House. This Matcham theatre is a vital cultural and architectural asset to the county.

My first engagement was an interview on BBC Radio Derby about the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh and attending the live streaming of the Commemorative Service for His Royal Highness held in Derby Cathedral.

My first actual event was to attend the reopening of Poole's Cavern in Buxton, a wonderful tourist attraction with crystal stalactites and stalagmites renowned as the finest underground scenery in the UK.

Much of the first three months was spent in conversations and Zoom meetings with Tony Walker, last year's High Sheriff, as COVID brought about a merging of the years.

Tony says: 'I am very grateful to Louise for allowing the presentation of Derbyshire Beacon of Hope Awards in her year. Awards have been made to 150 individuals and organisations that had gone over and beyond what anyone

could have expected, serving their local communities during the pandemic. Recipients were identified online by public nomination through the Derbyshire County Council and Derby City websites and received certificates signed by the Lord-Lieutenant, both Louise and me, and the County Council Leader and Chair, or the City Council Leader and Chief Executive, plus a nice badge with our specially designed logo. It took some time to agree and organise this scheme and so while it was launched in my year all the presentations took place in Louise's. Recipients varied from schools to local shops, to health and community



High Sheriff Louise Potter outside Buxton Opera House



Peak pilgrimage with Ven Bob Jackson, George Gillespie OBE, Ken Sharples, Tony Walker (High Sheriff 2020-21), Bishop of Derby Rt Revd Libby Lane, Richard Cole, High Sheriff of Rutland 2020-21



Derbyshire boundary cycle ride: Lord Burlington (High Sheriff 2019-20) and Lee Timmis, world record-holder for the fastest cycle across Europe (3rd and 4th from right)

organisations, to individuals who just helped their neighbours. I am also very grateful to the Lord-Lieutenant, a team of Deputy Lieutenants and senior county councillors for making the presentations. All recipients were delighted to be recognised and we had some very heart-warming and touching ceremonies.

'Like other High Sheriffs in 2020-21 much of my year was virtual, but one event we could do was the High Sheriff's Peak Pilgrimage, walking 39 miles from Ilam to the plague village of Eyam. We walked in September, during the relaxation of lockdown restrictions at that time, and in socially distanced groups of six, over four days. Walking to Eyam in the COVID year was so poignant as we remembered the villagers' self-sacrifice during the plague of 1665-6. We saw beautiful scenery, had wonderful moments of reflection and an excellent service at Eyam when we finished.'

Also in September, Lord Burlington, High Sheriff in 2019-20, completed his 208-mile county boundary cycle ride – another merging of the High Sheriffs' years.

My visit to police headquarters at Riply left a great impression on me. Listening to the 999 calls I was struck with the amount of social issues the police have to deal with on a daily basis. My thoughts and support go to our judges and magistrates, the prison and probation services, the police and emergency services. I am looking forward to the Legal Service to be able to meet them in person.

◆ Louise Potter DL
High Sheriff of Derbyshire 2021-22