



Lifting the lid on the Isle of Wight

COPING WITH last-minute changes are part of life and High Sheriffs are not exempted! April 14 saw a much simpler Declaration than envisaged with a handful of attendees and the High Sheriff's chaplain attending by Zoom. The online theme has featured heavily this year and I am sure it will remain a key communication tool in running a successful year.

An invitation from the New Carnival Company to join the launch of National Children's Carnival Week was an exciting first introduction into attending a 'live' event. After lockdown gloom it was inspiring to see young people creating a positive message using dance, music and creativity to present 'mini-carnivals' in multiple locations. Maintaining the dignity of the office while being asked to practise some disco moves with the amazing performers was an early test!

A constructive contact with the Chair of the Bench prompted a focus on the work of magistrates and a reception was hosted by the High Sheriff at Shanklin Chine to thank them and the court staff for their hard work especially over the last 18 months. To underline the commitment magistrates provide, a long-service award was presented to Steve Howe – retiring after 39 years as a magistrate.

The links between our armed services and the local community have been a strong theme since April. In May I was honoured to be present at a memorial service for 40 Commando attended by serving and veteran Royal Marines from all over the UK. The pandemic has delayed so many important events – Arreton Church hosted a moving 76th VJ Day Anniversary service attended by several veterans – one of 100 years of age. I was thrilled to hear their stories. Cowes Week was lucky to have HMS *Ledbury* as guard ship – the Royal Navy went to great lengths to help strengthen bonds with the Island community.

One standout element this year has been the privilege to engage with the invaluable charitable sector. I was delighted to present medals to some of



The New Carnival Company – National Children's Carnival Week Launch at Barding Roman Villa with High Sheriff (right)



Presenting Steve Howe, retiring magistrate, with his long-service award

those who 'Walked the Wight' to raise funds for the Mountbatten Hospice – numbers were down but this great event was back. My focus for the year is mental health – especially relating to young people; I have visited many charities in this sector facing rapidly rising referrals



Above right: With Sarah Dunsterville and Abbie James at the Wave Project, Sandown Beach



With Alec Penstone at Arreton Church VJ Day Anniversary service

and stretched resources. The Isle of Wight High Sheriff's Trust has been making awards for mental health training for organisations such as Duke of Edinburgh's Awards and the Isle of Wight Youth Trust.

Using the natural environment to improve mental health has been a particular interest and it was fascinating to meet with the Wave Project using the Island's wonderful coast to build confidence and resilience in young people through surfing; on land, Wight Horse CIC was delivering similar advantages through working with horses.

It's only September so a busy six months ahead!

James Attrill DL
High Sheriff of the Isle of Wight 2021-22