



## Law and order – no stone left unturned

**THE FIRST few months of my term of office as the High Sheriff of Kent have proved to be as busy – perhaps hectic is a more appropriate description – and as enjoyable as I could have anticipated. However, it probably does not come as a surprise to hear that, due to the pandemic, my year did not begin exactly as I had planned.**

Arrangements for my Declaration ceremony were affected by COVID restrictions and the agreed date was changed out of respect for HRH The Duke of Edinburgh as it coincided with his funeral. The ceremony was held with a limited attendance in my local church, St Margaret's Rainham, and was live-streamed. His Honour Judge Griffith-Jones QC oversaw events, with Lord Reed (President of the Supreme Court) reading the Royal Warrant from the Privy Council. The Declaration was witnessed by Mandy Samrai JP, who is now the Chair of the North Kent Magistrates' Bench – a position I previously held (see <https://vimeo.com/540640641/1402f530fe>).

My main focus has been supporting the police and emergency services, especially considering the challenges and pressures they have faced over the past 18 months and my engagements

in that regard have been many and various. I have made a number of visits to departments of Kent Police, including the Serious Collision Investigation Unit, the Special Constabulary, the Rural Crime Task Force, the armed response team and the force control room, as well as several individual police stations across the county. An invitation to inspect the work of the Border Force in Dover and witness its anti-smuggling operations proved to be particularly illuminating.

As well as visiting all of Kent's seven prisons, I have arranged for a group of well-connected businesspeople, known as the Kent Ambassadors, to visit HMP Stanford Hill – an open prison for low category offenders on the Isle of Sheppey. This will take place in November, with a view to offering employment opportunities to offenders on release. The victims of crime have not been forgotten, and a visit to a women's refuge in Thanet gave an insight into the effects of domestic abuse.

As a former Chairman of the Bench, it is hardly surprising that I have made it a priority to visit several magistrates' courts, especially North Kent Magistrates where I was presented with a copy of a photograph taken when I was appointed in 1993.



At Tunbridge Wells Police Station with Insp Ian Foster, PC Henry Jewitt, PC Jake Cooper and Chief Insp Omid Changizi

I have been delighted to be involved in many awards ceremonies such as the Rainham Eco-Hub, a group endeavouring to improve the local environment, the Kent Fire and Rescue volunteers as well as attending the celebration of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service to the Kent Bloodrunners, who perform a vital service transporting blood between hospitals.

Naturally I have been delighted to accept invitations to be the guest speaker at meetings of several Rotary Clubs, as well as other community groups across the county. It is a complete honour to serve as High Sheriff in this historic county and I look forward to continuing that role for the remainder of my year of office.

**John Weir JP**  
*High Sheriff of Kent 2021-22*



Presentation to John Weir by Mackenzie Cameron JP, Mandy Samrai JP (Bench Chair) and Mandy Ellis JP



John Weir with paramedics from South East Coast Ambulance Service and Neil Davis (CEO Medway Council) on 999 Day