



NORTHUMBERLAND

News from and about members

So much more to do!

Below: Joanna Riddell presenting a water bottle to Val Hinchley, Tynedale Hospice at Home volunteer

MY SHRIEVAL year began in our garden with a select group of six, all socially distanced. It was quite a surreal experience due to the ongoing COVID restrictions, but the hard work began immediately with arranging Zoom meetings to enable me to reach out to all those agencies with which I wished to engage.

I was determined to deliver my plans for fundraising and awareness, and luckily for me a break in the restrictions allowed me to host a clay pigeon shoot with lobster lunch and a live auction to raise funds for the High Sheriff of Northumberland's Awards. It was a wonderful occasion, with generous bidders enjoying their first taste of freedom after the lockdowns, and clearly all in a mood to help me raise a record-breaking sum.

My next big venture was to host the High Sheriff's summer garden party – across two days – to raise money for and awareness of the High Sheriff of Northumberland's Awards, and to engage with our enforcement agencies. I was supported by the Chief Constable, Northumbria Army Cadets, Northumbria Police and Police Cadets, 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery (my neighbours at Albemarle Barracks), Northumbrian Crafts, and a programme of live music including the Cassino Band from the

Below: With Jean Davidson (Chair) and Tony Gates (CEO) of Northumberland National Park Authority at The Sill, Hadrian's Wall



Right: Northumberland Buffalo Community Centre staff



Northumbrian Army Cadet Force, Northumbrian pipers and youth groups including the Sunshine Panners from Haydon Bridge High School, the Inspired group from Berwick upon Tweed, and Bad Apples from Ashington. Over a thousand visitors attended, and because it was the first time for two years that any one of the groups involved had engaged in a public event, to see confidence returning was quite emotional for everyone.

I have been seeking out wonderful individuals who have made magnificent contributions to their communities through their voluntary work to be

recipients of a High Sheriff's Award, and have invited all those to my home to chat across the kitchen table. They have all received a water bottle I designed with the High Sheriff's badge and definition of a hero, and will return for a special ceremony next February where citations will be read and they will be feted. I have also presented Court Awards to two people who have put themselves in great danger to apprehend dangerous criminals.

My visits so far have taken me to food banks, youth projects, schools, rural crime volunteer sessions, hospice charities, RNLI stations, ambulance headquarters, prisons, Northumberland National Park and award ceremonies. Looking ahead, the diary is busy with legal services looming, and many more visits to youth projects across the county. I can't believe that we are all halfway through the year – so much more to do!

My main thought from my experience thus far is just how much of the United Kingdom is run by volunteers through charities, and how fortunate we all are to live in this country. It is truly humbling to meet so many generous people who give so much of their time and energy for the greater good. I feel very honoured to serve Northumberland.

Joanna Riddell
High Sheriff of Northumberland 2021-22

