



## A place with a purpose

**I GOT to understand very quickly the purpose of being High Sheriff. While the baton was seamlessly transferred I must begin by recognising the work of my predecessor Mrs O'Neill, whose contribution to life across South Yorkshire was immense and delivered in extremely difficult circumstances.**

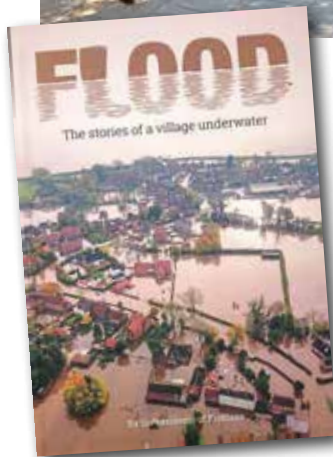
It is a time to be grateful, a time for renewal and hope, a time to be positive. It has been a privilege to experience at first hand the work of the NHS, South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, the judiciary, the prison, probation and rehabilitation services, and those working in the voluntary and charity sectors across the county. I thank them all for the work they do and for the help and support they have given me. It is special to have the opportunity to walk in the shoes of so many wonderful and inspiring people whose work is so valuable and done for the benefit of everyone in South Yorkshire.

That feeling of renewal and hope is embodied in the work that I have witnessed by South Yorkshire Community Foundation; by Roundabout, South Yorkshire's youth housing charity providing shelter, support and life skills to young people who are homeless; by Adira, a survivor-led mental health and wellbeing service that supports black people with mental health issues; and by Sheffield Futures, providing health and wellbeing support to young people for more than 25 years through its award-winning Door43 emotional wellbeing service. I must also mention the Sheffield Sea Cadets, the Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre and the Royal Air Force Association, just some of the wonderful organisations which welcomed me. They are special people doing special work.

As is often the case, there are some visits which have a really uplifting and positive impact. I was thrilled to visit the village of Fishlake near Doncaster, which gained national notoriety in November 2019 as the River Don, swollen by unprecedented rainfall, overtopped and flooded a huge swathe of land including



**Above:**  
With HRH  
The Princess  
Royal at  
Sheffield  
Combined  
Court Centre



**Left:**  
Fishlake  
village  
flooded in  
November  
2019

more than 170 homes and businesses. Two years on it was amazing to join the community at St Cuthbert's Church for the book launch when the villagers told the full story of the flood, a truly fascinating exploration of what is an increasingly common symptom of climate change. What a resilient community they are.

In July 2021 HRH The Princess Royal visited the Sheffield Combined Court Centre to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the building by the then Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Lord Taylor of Gosforth. Those who work there are rightly very proud of the court centre and it was important that this milestone should be marked. Milestones fulfil two purposes: to see how far we have come and how far there is still to go. The COVID crisis has compelled the court to innovate in a way that 25 years ago would have been unthinkable. It has done so due to the cooperation and collaboration of all component parts of the court centre in all jurisdictions: crime, civil, family work and tribunals. Indeed the court

**Below:** At the Inspiring Youth Awards (Back L-R) Chief Constable of South Yorkshire, Lauren Poultney; South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Dr Alan Billings; Chief Superintendent Shelley Hemsley, Sheffield District; (Middle) Mr Roland Freeman, Principal of Sheffield Park Academy; Mrs Juliet McKervey, Chair of Governors, Sheffield Park Academy; (Seated) Mr Andrew Coombe CVO, Lord-Lieutenant of South Yorkshire; Tamzin Begum, Sheffield Park Academy, Inspiring Youth Award Winner 2020/21, holding the South Yorkshire Police Shield; Martin McKervey, High Sheriff



has been on a voyage of discovery of new ways of working. I will just mention two: first, the Remote Dock for trials; second, the Fully Remote Court. What wonderful work our judges and all who work in the courts have done, led by His Honour Judge Jeremy Richardson QC, Honorary Recorder of Sheffield. Her Royal Highness was impressed.

What a privilege it was to attend the Inspiring Youth Awards Ceremony, operated and funded by South Yorkshire Police. The focus is on inspiring and motivating young people in schools and colleges in Sheffield and Rotherham to achieve their dreams and goals. We are proud of our splendid young people and their achievements.

There have been High Sheriffs for at least 1,000 years. Not everyone was that keen to be High Sheriff in the past; collecting taxes and rounding up criminals were perhaps not attractive. The role is nowadays largely ceremonial, but there is a purpose to it. I have thoroughly enjoyed the first six months and I am hugely excited about the coming months. It is simply amazing and hugely enjoyable, and it has a purpose.

**◆ Martin McKervey**  
*High Sheriff of South Yorkshire 2021-22*