



Standing with Ukraine

SINCE MY low-key Declaration I have been delighted to find that the pace has picked up considerably and I have had the good fortune to visit people and places far and wide across the county. My intention has always been to meet and recognise those who quietly get on with things without seeking any acknowledgement.

It has been a real delight to continue my connections with the Ukrainian community, marking the 30th anniversary of independence in August when Bolton Town Hall was illuminated blue and yellow and an outdoor service held in Victoria Square. At Christmas (according to the Gregorian calendar), we were treated to a fabulous concert when Ukrainians of all ages danced and sang in glorious costume. The following week we enjoyed a traditional Christmas meal – all 12 courses. This was against the backdrop of growing concern in Ukraine and, more recently, we have joined a peace vigil and a superb concert in aid of Ukraine. It is heartbreaking to see what is happening and to know that people we have met are so intimately connected.

A highlight has been the Young Citizen of the Year Awards, recognising the efforts of young people in the county. Each one shortlisted has sought to improve lives and solve problems in their communities in their own unique way. We held a gala evening courtesy of the University of Bolton when the shortlisted nominees and their families came together for supper, met the judges and former High Sheriffs, and received a trophy, certificate and cheque.



BBC North West's Roger Norman, High Sheriff Diane Hawkins and Owain Wyn Evans



Proudly supporting Ukraine at the Christmas concert



Above: All the finalists at the High Sheriff's Young Citizen of the Year Awards with the High Sheriff and Under Sheriff David Cam

Above right: Diane Hawkins with winner Amber Shaw, former High Sheriff Mark Adlestone, chairman of Beaverbrooks and sponsor of the event, and Greg Cole, High Sheriff's Explorer Scout Cadet



My personal highlight was probably my appearance on BBC North West just before Christmas. This was to present Owain Wyn Evans with a Special Recognition Award for his amazing drumathon which raised nearly £4m for Children in Need. He was taken completely by surprise on air and was speechless (probably for the first time ever). The programme was quite possibly a first, too, in that Nigel Lanceley, High Sheriff of Merseyside, also appeared on the same broadcast: two televised High Sheriffs in one evening.

Special Recognition Awards have been a wonderful way to recognise the contribution to society made by so many people in Greater Manchester. From the five-year-old who has picked up litter every Saturday for nearly two years now, to the volunteers who prepare labour bags and filled Moses baskets for new mums and babies who otherwise have nothing at all, it has been humbling to meet so many people who continue to work quietly in the background showing that they care.

This year has been a real privilege and an honour to serve the people of Greater Manchester. It has been rich with experiences and events, and, above all, I have been able to thank people for what they do willingly without expectation of any acknowledgement.

◆ Diane Hawkins JP DL
High Sheriff of Greater Manchester 2021-22