



An incredible and inspiring Island county

AS SUMMER gave way to autumn our 'holiday island' settled to a less frantic pace, but a High Sheriff's year is never a quiet one and there was still plenty to do.

With an October Legal Service, we welcomed the High Sheriffs of Hampshire and Wiltshire to a fantastic service in Newport Minster. A busy week for High Sheriffs in counties of the Western Circuit with three Rule of Law services on three consecutive days!

One thing leads to another. I attended a visit from Prince Michael of Kent to Sandown in August which led to an invitation to visit the Sandown & Shanklin Independent Lifeboat. Almost a community within a community, this



With fellow High Sheriffs Sir Charles Hobhouse (Wiltshire) and Phillip Sykes (Hampshire), and the Archdeacon of the Isle of Wight, the Ven Peter Leonard, at the October Legal Service

life-saving charity is enthusiastically supported by family members and friends of the crew, the town council and many more – a real network of people looking after each other and those at sea. Having spoken to their chaplain, fundraisers and volunteer crew it was a perfect illustration of how small charities have the widest of reaches well beyond their core purpose.

In December the Island holds a Gilten Market – an ancient event whose origins have been lost in the mists of time – where the winning beast from a fat stock show has its horns adorned with gold paint by the High Sheriff – a steady hand needed!

Mental health has been my theme for the year. Clinical admissions for mental health disorders are more than double the national average on the Isle of Wight. It's worse for young people – a survey of over 2,250 young people on the Island by the Isle of Wight Youth Trust has just reported that in the last 12 months nine per cent of 11- to 25-year-olds have made attempts on their life and 35 per cent have self-harmed; hospital admissions for self-harm are up by 33 per cent. This is the new pandemic.

I have visited and worked with a wide range of mental health charities and providers with the aim of bringing mental health into the open: the Isle

Above left: Richard Jackson holds the winning beast to be gilded by the High Sheriff Photo credit: Isle of Wight Observer

Above: Mary Birch receives a High Sheriff's Award for 25 years of fundraising for Sandown & Shanklin Independent Lifeboat

of Wight Youth Trust, Isorropia and the Wave Project to name a few. To raise awareness the Isle of Wight High Sheriff's Trust commissioned a series of high-quality films aimed at steering young people in need, in particular, to get help – these have been rolled out across our small county to 55 schools, 70 or more community and youth groups, numerous sports clubs and the NHS. They are great films – to see them check out the Isle of Wight High Sheriff's Twitter account.

To end on a positive note, I must highlight the Shademakers of Ryde – I had visited this internationally recognised carnival charity during my first six months in office and was thrilled to hear that they had been selected to bring their world-class spectacle (having performed in carnivals in many major European cities) to head The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant in London. Two hundred and fifty Islanders leading the way! If you miss it, don't worry – it's coming to Newport Carnival in July.

Thank you to the Isle of Wight for allowing me to be High Sheriff for this last year to serve what is an incredible and inspiring Island community.

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