



No substitute for talking to one another

THE SECOND half of my year as High Sheriff started with the North Eastern Legal Service at York Minster – a vibrant ceremony marking the start of the legal year. A veritable flock of High Sheriffs gathered with the highest echelons of the legal profession in the Assembly Rooms in York and after a delicious brunch we all processed to the Minster accompanied by the York Guard in their red uniforms.

Throughout the autumn, I was lucky enough to be able to criss-cross North Yorkshire visiting special schools and small rural charities, attending the passing-out parade for the fire cadets, going on patrol in a police car, and meeting Malton's Mini Police Unit. Set up by PC Jane Jones, this initiative invites primary school children to come and learn more about what the police actually do. It was inspirational to see a rapport being built between the police and very young people.

On a visit to Henshaws Specialist College in Harrogate I met a very talented young lady, originally from Liverpool, called Marnie Jade Lane. Marnie is blind but has taught herself how to play piano, and she plays marvellously. By a stroke of luck, I was able to introduce her to the Aintree Racecourse team who invited her to accompany soprano and Aintree ambassador, Laura Wright, at the annual Grand National Weights Lunch. Marnie and Laura came



Above: With Laura Wright, Marnie Jade Lane, Rachael Blackmore and Mrs Lane at the Grand National Weights Lunch

together for a marvellous performance in front of Liverpool dignitaries as well as many racing luminaries, including last year's Grand National winning jockey – and national hero – Rachael Blackmore.

Towards the end of 2021, I began to recognise a common theme being raised by the organisations I was talking to. They had all been working so hard to keep their service users on track that they did not have the time to communicate with other organisations that could help them raise money and awareness. To this end I organised a Connectivity Lunch, inviting

Below left: Co-founder of Rubies, Liz Edwards, and project assistant, Dawn Palmer, were pleased to welcome Venetia Wrigley as part of her year raising the profile of small charities – especially as she came bearing chocolates!



Below: With the Scarborough Sea Cadets

Below: With the York Guard on the day of the North Eastern Legal Service at York Minster



every organisation that I had met to come together for the sole purpose of talking to each other. A strategic table plan was devised in order to maximise conversation between organisations and individuals with shared interests, and I think it worked – the noise in the room was phenomenal and the feedback very positive.

Omicron cancelled many events around Christmas but life regathered momentum in January and I spent the last few months going to the passing-out parade of the Scarborough Police Cadets, visiting the Scarborough Sea Cadets and seeing Scarborough's life boat being launched. I was thrilled to celebrate International Women's Day at York Mansion House, hosted by the Lord Mayor's Consort, Joy Cullwick, and York Sheriff's Lady, Danielle Mason. My final week was spent mostly in Middlesbrough and Redcar, meeting some incredible charities including the amazing women of Rubies. Their mission is to help pre-teen girls to respect themselves, build their confidence and teach them to be resilient in the face of social media.

Being High Sheriff has been a very humbling experience – I am so grateful to have been chosen. I have learnt so much and loved spending time with everyone I have been lucky enough to meet.

◆ Venetia Wrigley DL
High Sheriff of North Yorkshire 2021-22