



## Inspired, entertained and in awe

WITH THE Covid lockdown ending there was huge opportunity to see what all our youth groups have been getting up to, and I had the very great honour to visit approximately 45 different projects, all of whom applied for the High Sheriff of Northumberland Awards through the Community Foundation.

The youth leaders are to be applauded for maintaining communication and links with their groups during the pandemic. My visits have always left me inspired, entertained and in awe of the passion and commitment so many have to achieve the very best for young people in their care. After my fundraising efforts, I was thrilled to be able to give awards of £1,000 to each group with five special recognition awards of a further £1,000 – held at an awards ceremony in Ashington. My guest speaker was Jeff Brown, our BBC Look North news and sports presenter. A great moment of excitement came when I announced the one lucky winner of Sam Fender concert tickets and personalised merchandise!

I have given High Sheriff's Awards to 30 individuals who have gone 'above and beyond' for their community, ranging from Covid heroes, Storm Arwen heroes, and others representing



Visiting 3 RHA



Remembrance Day parade in Morpeth with Vice Lord-Lieutenant Dr Caroline Pryer, and Commander Thom Hobbs RN, HMS Northumberland; and police cadets Alastair and Lily

magnificent contributions to the RNLI, Northumberland Mountain Rescue Team, Tynedale Hospice at Home, Litter Pickers, Rural Crime Volunteers, among others!

My visits have taken me to HMP Low Newton and HMP Northumberland, where I have seen the wonderful work of Nepacs (North East Prison After Care Society), the charity which organises prison visits and releases in the North East, and does a range of wonderful work with children who are impacted by the imprisonment of a parent.

I enjoyed the wonderful Legal Services at Newcastle Cathedral and York Minster – where seven High Sheriffs paraded through York – hosted three judges' dinners which were great fun, and attended the swearing-in of new magistrates at the law courts. I chose to be in the county town of Morpeth for the Remembrance Day parade, aided by my wonderful police cadets, Alastair and Lily, where we joined the march through the town led by Scottish pipers before laying a wreath at the cenotaph. Huge numbers of people turned out for a very moving day.

I had a memorable day out at sea on HMS Northumberland, kindly hosted by her captain, Commander Thom Hobbs, and another wonderful



Northumberland Mountain Rescue Team: World Extreme Medicine Cheviots exercise

day hosted by Lt Colonel Jonathan Hooper of 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery at Albemarle Barracks. Being invited to inspect the guard was certainly a rare privilege!

It has been a wonderful shrieval year – a year of personal 'firsts'. I have navigated my way across hundreds of miles to places I had never been before, met so many inspiring people, made speeches I never dreamed I was capable of, shared my new-found knowledge of the Curtana with many young people, and I step down from the Office of High Sheriff of Northumberland with superb memories.

◆ **Joanna Riddell**

*High Sheriff of Northumberland 2021-22*