



Memorable and precious moments

I FELT very fortunate to start my year, unlike my two predecessors, with minimal Covid restrictions, HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the first Parliamentary by-election in the South West, never mind Devon, for thirty years. On taking office every High Sheriff was handed details of London Bridge in preparation for the possible death of the monarch and fervently prayed, as I did, that it would not be required. Sadly, this proved not to be the case.

The Jubilee celebrations were like a microcosm of a shrieval year with a surreal seated tea with the Lord-Lieutenant and Lord Mayor at a trestle table in Exeter High Street (much to the bemusement of shoppers), lighting the beacon (not, contrary to appearances in the image, the trumpeter) in our parish, taking the ceremonial Sunset Salute on HMS *Portland* (a Type 23 frigate) in Torbay, attending Exeter Cathedral's splendid Service of Thanksgiving and finally, and by no means least, a heart-warming tea with the occupants of Exonia Park, a residential park home estate.

I was asked by the acting returning officer for the Tiverton and Honiton constituency to declare the result of



At Exeter's Jubilee Party in the High Street

June's by-election; mindful both of the poll's somewhat colourful genesis in the Dominator Tractor/porn website scandal, which led to some 60 media organisations registering to attend, and the anticipated 4.00 am declaration time raising the spectre of a drink-fuelled and rowdy crowd, I must confess to feelings of some trepidation. In practice the event proceeded remarkably smoothly and no one seemed to notice when the one police car in attendance was called away to another incident. The by-election was also noteworthy for recording highest government majority overturned.

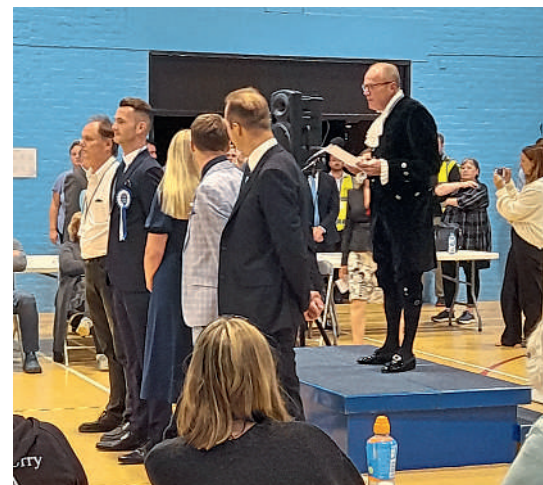
Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II died on Thursday 8 September and on Sunday 11 September, in common with High Sheriffs throughout the land, I read the Proclamation of the Accession of King Charles III to the throne outside County Hall in Exeter. This period was bitter-sweet, with the deep feeling of loss caused by the passing of our longest-reigning monarch with an unparalleled 70 years of dedicated service matched by the people's gratitude for her life, and enthusiasm for a King determined to follow in her footsteps.

The other most memorable and precious moments of my year have involved meeting the amazing men and women, often volunteers, who work at the coal face of the areas a High Sheriff seeks to support and encourage. I am particularly reminded of giving High Sheriff's Awards to the wonderful Linda Sillifant, kitchen manager at one of my chosen charities, St Petrock's, for 20 years' service to people experiencing homelessness in Exeter, and to Geoff Edwards, a community first responder in Barnstaple, who racked up an extraordinary 10,000 volunteer hours of being on call, saving the lives of many patients and reassuring others – especially important with the advent of longer periods of time before an ambulance arrives.

I must also mention LandWorks, my other chosen charity, which



Richard Youngman definitely lighting the beacon



Performing returning officer duties at the Tiverton and Honiton by-election

provides a supported route back in to employment and the community for ex-prisoners through developing skills in woodworking, market gardening, landscaping and cooking, achieving significantly below average reoffending rates in the process.

Richard Youngman
High Sheriff of Devon 2022-23