



Worker bees of Manchester

I MADE my Declaration as High Sheriff of Greater Manchester at The Lowry in Salford Quays. At first glance it might seem an odd choice for a role carrying a 1,000-year history. During its 22 years, however, The Lowry welcomed Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and, during the pandemic, became a Nightingale Court. One of my principal guests was His Honour Judge John Potter, who presided over the Nightingale Court.

I began my year with a resolve to meet and thank as many citizens as possible for their selflessness, and for their show of humanity in the face of the hardships and the resulting inequality that Covid had brought over the last two years. The pandemic meant putting on hold many landmark occasions in the life of a charity or voluntary organisation, and everyone was keen to mark these milestones – as were the Royal Family. We had three royal visits within the space of six weeks, the third being to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Manchester Arena bombing.

Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee was nearly upon us, and I was soon in meetings with civic events' teams

regarding the forthcoming celebrations. Little did I know that I would be back in conversation with the same people only a few weeks later to discuss the protocols surrounding the Proclamation of Accession of our new King.

Greater Manchester has ten boroughs and two cities, and is rich in diversity and culture. I have been honoured to attend many interfaith events, not least being invited to light the lamp to open the United Kingdom Bengali Convention. Manchester Cathedral marked its 600th year as a collegiate church this year, and I continue to attend many multifaith events there – as well as visiting its roof! Manchester is synonymous with the bee, and I met senior apiarist Catherine Charnock and her assistant, together with the thousands

of bees nestled in their hives. They provide 'Heavenly Honey', the sale of which helps to fund 'Volition', Manchester Cathedral's volunteer programme – an innovation in volunteering and employability.

During one of my early court visits I met with His Honour Judge Nicholas Dean, Honorary Recorder of Manchester. From our conversation, it emerged that we both had a mutual desire for young people from areas of high deprivation to have the opportunity to pursue a career in the legal service. With the enormous help of the Kalisher Trust and the judiciary, including tremendous support from High Court Judges, we are working on a strategy for this to become a reality.

I visited the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police and the Chief Fire Officer of Greater Manchester Fire Service, as I wanted to find the best way to support their officers. Our plan, among other initiatives, is for me to visit police and fire stations within each of our ten boroughs. I have very quickly found that there is enormous disparity between the additional roles within the respective services due to their station location – city or rural – within our vast county. On visiting Manchester Central Fire Station, I learned that a turntable and crane are needed to reach the existing and the rapidly emerging high-rise apartment buildings, and so I joined a firefighter on the crane, going up over 40 metres. The crane enables firefighters to reach people attempting to die by suicide or fleeing from a burning building.

I am enormously proud of my two cadets – one is a Scout, and the second a member of St John Ambulance. I decided that I would concentrate on the ambulance service later in my year, as they had been working to capacity during the pandemic. I look forward to spending time in the call centres in the autumn.

Clockwise from top left: At the Bengali UK Convention in Manchester

With High Sheriff's Cadets Gracie Acton and Eoin Duffy Photo: Stuart Thomson

At Manchester Crown Court with the Hon Mr Justice MacDonald, the Hon Mrs Justice Yip and students of Abraham Moss School Photo: Stuart Thomson

With apiarist Catherine Charnock and assistant Nirmala Jennis on the roof of Manchester Cathedral



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