



Small things can make a huge difference

I ANTICIPATED many things for my year as High Sheriff, some of which have come to pass and some of which have been very unexpected. I had always imagined that Her Majesty The Queen would outlive me by years, and so when the news broke that she was not well and the Royal Family were travelling to Balmoral, I was astonished.

What an incredible time to have been High Sheriff though. Thankfully Herefordshire's plans for London Bridge were well discussed and practised, meaning the actual events – from the books of condolences, Requiem Mass, County Service of Remembrance and the Proclamation – went (at least to the audience) seamlessly, and with dignity and meaning. I cannot praise all those involved highly enough. My main preoccupation was to read slowly and not cry and apparently I managed to achieve that.

I had always hoped that I would be able to leave a legacy of some good after my year in office but what I have discovered, or perhaps had revealed, is that it is the small things that we

do that make a huge difference, rather than the large gestures. I have two small examples which spring to mind, the first of which is when I awarded some High Sheriff's Certificates in July this year.

Superintendent Edd Williams had forwarded me a letter he had received from a doctor in Worcester, describing an incident on a bridge in Hereford where a father and sons aged 12 and 16 prevented a woman committing suicide. Thanks to the Mayor of Hereford, Councillor Mark Dykes, the Harley family (Phil, Dawn and the boys, Ewin and Mikey) were invited to the Mayor's Parlour in the town hall for a ceremony with myself, the mayor and deputy mayor, Superintendent Williams and Councillor Sebastian Bowen, Chairman of Herefordshire Council, where they were presented with certificates. They are an amazing family. Phil had already received the George Cross from his time dealing with landmines in Afghanistan and Ewin was head boy of Aylestone School. We publicised their incredible efforts and community spirit and had a huge response from people I would not normally have heard from. I feel

Below: At the Mayor's Parlour with Superintendent Edd Williams, Cllr Jacqui Carwardine (Deputy Mayor), Cllr Mark Dykes (Mayor) and Cllr Sebastian Bowen (Chairman) to present High Sheriff's Certificates to the Harley family



Sarah de Rohan with some of the many thank you cards from pupils

the knock-on effect from all of this has been much larger than anticipated.

My focus this year is on youth and preventing young people falling into the criminal justice system. To that end I am visiting all the secondary and tertiary educational establishments in the county, as well as fitting in as many primary schools as possible. The most life-enhancing visit happened at St Mary's Primary School in Credenhill. It is a school slightly different from many as it has a high proportion of children from SAS families. I spoke at a whole school assembly and have never come across such marvellous children – totally engaged, full of questions and an absolute delight to be with. I absolutely loved my time there and subsequently heard via social media from some of the parents. I also received about 40 most beautifully decorated thank you cards and envelopes from the pupils which I will treasure forever.

Sometimes, with all the invitations coming in and a full diary, it can be easy to forget the smaller, lower-profile, less significant (so say) events we are asked to attend, but I believe it is in those that the strength and power of the Shrievalty can often make the most difference.

◆ Sarah de Rohan JP
High Sheriff of Herefordshire 2022-23