



A fitting tribute

HOW QUICKLY the last five months have passed since my Declaration at Knowsley Hall on 21 April. Looking back, I had completely underestimated the amount of admin that comes with the role, and the large file with monthly dividers purchased soon started to fill. The use of social media, photographs and hash tags has been invaluable in helping to profile events and engagements attended, while at the same time outlining the important work undertaken by the third sector, which is beyond measure. Having nearly 30 years' service as a magistrate under my belt, attendance at swearing-in ceremonies of newly appointed magistrates has been rewarding.

As expected, we started off embracing the glorious occasion of the Platinum Jubilee, lighting beacons, celebratory teas, and planting trees for The Queen's Green Canopy. This joy has now been replaced by the immense sadness on the passing of our nation's beloved Queen Elizabeth II. Thursday 8 September 2022 ended a historic reign of 70 years. Her Majesty was a beacon of stability and dignity in what has often been a turbulent world. Her commitment to her duty as sovereign, and a lifelong love of selfless service is beyond comparison.

On receiving the email titled 'London Bridge', there was a sudden realisation that I would now face one of the most important tasks asked of any High Sheriff and would take part in a ritual that was more than 300 years old. At noon on Sunday 11 September, 350 people including the Lord-Lieutenant, Deputy Lieutenants, Bishop of Warrington, Dean of Liverpool, Rector of Liverpool, the Lord Mayor of Liverpool, borough mayors, political and executive leads, Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Services, civic organisations, the judiciary, third sector representatives, faith leaders, Armed Forces, veterans, Merseyside Scouts, and Liverpool Commonwealth Association arrived at the Liverpool Parish Church to hear the official Proclamation of the Accession of the new sovereign, King Charles III. It was a pivotal moment when the congregation declared in unison 'God Save The King'. The service reflected our historic past, but also captured the moment of change when the new adjusted words of National Anthem were sung.

Following the sad passing of Her Majesty tributes have flooded into my office. Over the past few days, I have been interviewed for radio and television, and attended many unique

engagements including the Requiem Mass at the Metropolitan Cathedral, a Service of Celebration at Liverpool Cathedral, a civic service at the Hindu Temple, and at the Allerton Synagogue. In recognition of the importance of the River Mersey in Liverpool's history, a fitting tribute was arranged by the maritime sector, when all working vessels gathered in front of the Three Graces (Liver Building, Cunard Building and the Port of Liverpool Building). The formation included pilot launch boats, RNLI lifeboats, river tugs, Mersey Ferries, and the *Disney Magic* cruise liner. River tugs performed Fleur De Lis – spraying water from their fire cannons.

Mirroring the work of my fellow High Sheriffs in England and Wales, I have fulfilled a host of terrific engagements and events. To date I have undertaken 125 engagements. Through each encounter I have learned so much more about my county, including the wonderful diversity that exists within communities. I always return home feeling inspired.

Over the years, High Sheriffs have witnessed many historic and unique events. As we reflect and look forward to serving our new sovereign, King Charles III, our role, function and independence are likely to be just as important now as they were over 1,000 years ago.

◆ Lesley Martin-Wright JP DL
High Sheriff of Merseyside 2022-23



Image: Arthur Gold

At the award-winning Evergreen Chinese Wellbeing Centre whose aim is to provide high-quality, culturally appropriate, community-based services to support older people from Chinese and other communities



On board the *Royal Iris* for the Maritime Commemoration Service for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II with the mayors and of Wirral and Knowsley with their consorts