



Blazing a trail

LITTLE DID I think that almost six months into my term so much in our country would have changed since I made my Declaration when I enjoyed the most amazing day.

The Shrievalty had placed their trust in me as the first High Sheriff to have been born disabled. The year has not been without its challenges, but that is the normality of life when one has a physical impairment. I have been heartened by the trouble many – sadly not all – have taken to accommodate my additional requirements.

I was keen to reach out to all my fellow Welsh Sheriffs, and organised Zoom meetings and a WhatsApp group at least a year before we took on our roles. Together, we have been able to work through all manner of issues, which collectively has helped us in what we do in our respective counties.

I have been honoured to attend court to witness the installation of a new Recorder of Cardiff and a swearing in ceremony for new magistrates. I have joined with faith leaders, the military, and charitable groups (among others) to lend support to many good causes in the county. Often the highlight has been to give High Sheriff's Award certificates to very deserving individuals or organisations.

I have been in the company of royalty, school children, volunteers and asylum seekers, and they have each taught me vastly differing but valuable lessons.

During the course of the Jubilee celebrations I was presented to Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, together with Prince George and Princess Charlotte. Shortly after the

Jubilee holiday, it was also a delight to welcome His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall to Cardiff. I was uniquely privileged, at the suggestion of the Prince's private secretary, to show His Royal Highness a photograph of an oil portrait of him I had recently completed. This was painted as part of a project to support the work of NSPCC Cymru, my chosen charity for the year. Fortunately it was viewed favourably, and a trip to the Tower was avoided!

The lighter side to being High Sheriff over the glorious Jubilee weekend was to be asked to open our local street party, during which I presented a High Sheriff's Award to a dedicated lady who, during lockdowns, spent a great deal of time making sure her older neighbours were safe and secure.

I have been humbled by the commitment of blue light and emergency services to their communities and have been able to witness first-hand the rigorous training police, fire and ambulance officers undertake. I had the pleasure of presenting High Sheriff's Awards to members of the Welsh Ambulance Service for their actions in saving a member of the public from certain death, having fallen into the path of a moving train.

The saddest part of my year has been Queen Elizabeth's passing. Despite the arrangements laid out in Operation London Bridge, I genuinely hoped that the consequences of the monarch's death would not fall during my year.

Below left: Enjoying my local Platinum Jubilee street party

Below: Presenting High Sheriff's Awards to the Welsh Ambulance Service



Meeting Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, together with Prince George and Princess Charlotte over the Platinum Jubilee weekend

As a High Sheriff whose county includes the capital city of Wales, the reading of the Proclamation was a little different. Nevertheless, arrangements had to be made to allow me to access the dais to take part in the ceremonial aspects of the occasion. I have only the highest praise for the designer, and was honoured that my appearance on the dais at the start of the new Carolean era meant an obviously disabled person had taken part in a significant moment in history.

I could only marvel at the stoicism shown by His Majesty The King and The Queen Consort during their tour of the UK. To be presented to the now King prior to the service at Llandaff Cathedral – only weeks after his last visit to Wales as Prince of Wales – was a very surreal moment.

So what of the rest of my year? It goes without saying that I shall continue to blaze a trail in my own inimitable way, showing that no matter the level of impairment, a disabled person can make a meaningful and lasting contribution to institutions whether ancient or modern. Hopefully my time as High Sheriff will help further promote an inclusive and encompassing Shrievalty.

Rosaleen Moriarty-Simmonds OBE

High Sheriff of South Glamorgan 2022-23

