



## Using my role to connect

**I WAS declared High Sheriff of West Sussex on 14 April at Lewes Crown Court by the Rt Hon Lord Justice Haddon-Cave, Senior Presiding Judge for England and Wales, 25 years after my father was declared for East Sussex in the same court. I proudly wore his slightly altered court dress with a maternal family sword.**

East and West Sussex have a strong bond as the counties are one bailiwick with one police force and both High Sheriffs undertake several engagements together, which I value.

I am six months in and have a good picture of how the county operates. I have been involved with the police, visited prisons, courts, many charities and worshiped many times in our wonderful cathedral in Chichester with my diary offering so much more to look forward to.

This year is all about my county and I am using my role to connect people where there could be positive synergies. So much of the third sector is underpinned by volunteers who quietly perform their duties day in, day out, for which we owe them a deep sense of gratitude. However, we need more as they have dwindled to below the levels we enjoyed before the pandemic so wherever I go I spread the message.

The legal system is one of concern as it is creaking with an unprecedented

backlog of cases, shortage of staff and, in many areas, difficult buildings, so I try and offer support wherever I can as the judges, magistrates, support staff and all the others involved are doing a great job under very trying times.

My most humbling event has been an award ceremony for The Order of St John for Organ Donation where the

*“This year is all about my county and I am using my role to connect people where there could be positive synergies.”*

High Sheriff of East Sussex, Jane King, and I gave awards to people who had lost family members and donated their organs to unknown people in need. The decision for this to happen has to be taken very soon after their family member (whether partner, sibling or child) has died and therefore it was

**Below left:** with Chief Constable Jo Shiner, recently retired Deputy CC Julia Chapman and PCC Katy Bourne at the Chief Constable’s Award Ceremony

**Below right:** With Jane King (East Sussex) at the South of England Agricultural Society remembering Queen Elizabeth II; Her Majesty was patron of SEAS

a very personal and heart-warming day where we met so many forward-thinking, brave, wonderful people.

Clearly the most important and proud role of my year will have been to read an introduction and then the Proclamation of Accession of King Charles III on County Hall’s steps in Chichester on 11 September. Following Queen Elizabeth’s death all the events in my diary, except one, were postponed or cancelled but quickly replaced with new events to honour our late monarch. All were memorable and moving but a service at Chichester Cathedral stood out. The Dean put together a fitting programme and the Bishop of Chichester gave a wonderful address highlighting the exceptional person she was together with her achievements both personal and public.

I must also mention the police; an easy target for the press but gosh they do a good job, and often when on the beat or being called to an emergency do not know the outcome. I have attended four award ceremonies so far whether they be Long Serving, Bravery, Chief Constable Special or Attestation Awards. Each is as important as the others and greatly valued by the officers and their families. The connection between the police and Shrievalty in Sussex is strong.

**James Whitmore**  
*High Sheriff of West Sussex 2022-23*



Photo: William King