



For those who go the extra mile

‘DEAR DIARY, what a day it’s been...’ (The Moody Blues, 1969)

I made the Proclamation on 11 September 2022 at the Guildhall, Worcester. These lyrics were in my mind when I stood in front of a large crowd, many gathered hours before. Live streaming and a camera crew all added to the occasion. We made the lead on BBC *Midlands Today* that evening.

Philip Larkin wrote (Silver Jubilee in 1977):

*In time when nothing stood
But worsened, or grew strange
There was one constant good:
She did not change*

Henry James said on the death of Queen Victoria: *‘We all feel a bit motherless today.’*

I had these mixed emotions as I prepared for my day. We had lost our queen and gained a new prime minister and a new king, all in the



At my Declaration with the Rt Hon Sir Andrew McFarlane, President of the Family Division, and my predecessor, Richard Amphlett



The team at Batchley Support Group (BSG), Redditch with their High Sheriff’s Award

space of a few days. And, as I practised the cadences of the Proclamation beforehand in front of the dog, I felt I was playing a small part in history.

I went out to the steps of the Guildhall. Quiet. All eyes on me. Statues of Charles I and Charles II looked down from this historic building – dating from 1721 and once the seat of justice in the city. The Lord-Lieutenant, the Lord Bishop of Worcester and assembled dignitaries stood to my right and left.

I was about 90 per cent of the way through the Proclamation when someone collapsed at the front of the crowd: a lady who, to get a prime position, had arrived two hours before. She had been standing all that time. I paused, explained what had happened and asked for paramedics to help. It soon emerged that the lady had fainted, thankfully nothing worse, although she was shaken by the experience.

I resumed. Deciding to repeat a few lines from the Proclamation before finishing it, I added a rousing ‘God Save The King!’ and ‘three cheers for His Majesty Charles III’. A fitting reflection that from past sadness arise hope, optimism and expectation for the future.

My final duty was to hand over Proclamation scrolls to representatives of the seven districts in the county so they could spread the word to their communities.

I dived into the crowd and spoke to the lady, now sitting on a Guildhall chair and feeling much better. I also met so many people, all enthused by being part of Worcestershire’s history that day. A big thank you to all involved. You know who you are.

A privilege to play my part, to add to the many events, wonderful charities, public servants and lay people I have met in my shrieval year. In their own way, the warp and weft of the county, they have been as important to me as the Proclamation day.

Just one typical example from one day in the diary, yesterday, as I write this:

I gave a High Sheriff’s Award to retired PC Paul Downes of West Mercia



With PC Paul Downes (retired) and Insp Richard Field (both of West Mercia Police) at Redditch police station to present a High Sheriff’s Award

Police for long and outstanding service, and then another award to the long-running Batchley Support Group in Redditch for their community work, counselling, mental health and homeless support, and the famous Community Pantry where food is distributed and no one is ever turned away. Paul and BSG are making a real difference. It was also my pleasure to distribute to the BSG team my Extra Mile lapel pins.

The Thursday Club in Worcester is where I finished my day: it is for people young and old with learning difficulties and is celebrating 40 years of existence. Meeting weekly – typically more than 100 people – it fulfils a need which statutory authorities do not: getting together for social events, activities, and just making friends in what could otherwise be a lonely life. I gave them an award and Extra Mile lapel pins. They are a delight to be with and their enthusiasm almost tangible – a joy to experience. Days like this make this role so important for our county.

◆ Andrew Manning-Cox
High Sheriff of Worcestershire 2022-23