

# Moments of serendipity



At the Judges Service with Alan McViety (Cumbria), Lorraine Worsley-Carter (Greater Manchester), Martin Ainscough (Lancashire) and Jeannie France-Hayhurst (Cheshire)

## Lesley Martin-Wright JP DL

High Sheriff of Merseyside 2022-23

Shakespeare wrote 'Better three hours too soon than a minute too late'. Never have I been so obsessed by time. Of course, a High Sheriff should not arrive three hours early but arriving late is not the 'done thing'. Therefore, we have become masters at diary management and travel planning.

The variety and diversity of engagements have been extraordinary and wonderful: sitting with family and civil court judges, observing the senior coroner, presenting certificates to magistrates for their long service, attending a joint exercise between Merseyside Police and British Transport Police, Diwali celebrations, citizenship ceremonies, Chinese New Year, Freedom of the Borough for NHS Trusts, Holocaust Memorial Day, Remembrance Sunday, reading one of the nine lessons at the Duchy Carol Service at The King's Chapel of the Savoy, Commonwealth Day, and the High Sheriff's Awards evening (to name just a few). Along the way I have been on national television, radio interviews, appeared in magazines, and now feature in two books.

An important marker in the Merseyside calendar is the start of the legal year. Held in October 2022 at the magnificent Liverpool Cathedral, the Judges Service brought together the Judiciary, Merseyside Police and Fire & Rescue Service, academia, civic society, and various faith representatives. A highlight was the attendance of many youth groups and, of course, the opportunity for the High Sheriffs from

Merseyside, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, and Cumbria to attend.

My aims for the shrieval year included reaching out to those organisations which help young people achieve their best outcomes; helping organisations that work with victims of domestic abuse; and supporting those who provide health and wellbeing services. There have been countless conversations about the negative impact of Covid-19 on education and young lives. I have met people who need a safe place, somewhere that is welcoming. When tragedy struck it brought into focus the magnificent work that is undertaken by Merseyside Police and grassroot organisations. As High Sheriff I have attended many community cohesion and resilience meetings, and thanked



Bearing Christmas gifts

those who work under the radar. On occasion I have been incredibly moved by the stories, and amazed by the bravery and fortitude that people demonstrate.

Liverpool is a historic city and therefore attending the Freedom of the City ceremonies has been a real highlight. The title is granted to individuals to recognise their exceptional service. Being present for the presentation to Jurgen Klopp, the manager of Liverpool FC, was an interesting evening. He became the second 'non-Scouser' – after Nelson Mandela – to be granted the honour.

For a High Sheriff the value of social media comes into its own. It is an excellent vehicle to help promote the wonderful work of the groups, businesses, and charities you visit. A popular social media post was the visit to the Liverpool Seafarers Centre where Christmas gifts were handed out to the crew of a merchant vessel docked in the Port of Liverpool. Climbing up the 100-foot ladder on a cold and wet day was no mean feat, but the warm welcome received on board made up for it.

There have been many times during the year when moments of serendipity occur, when the connections you have forged during the year are of benefit to others – for example, a group of volunteer knitters from Halewood is now supplying hand-knitted hats to merchant seafarers (men and women) who sail into the River Mersey.

As High Sheriff you have a unique opportunity to see at first hand the vital and valuable work undertaken in your county. It has been an honour and great privilege to serve.



With Jurgen Klopp at the Freedom of the City ceremony