

'Any Road'

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High Sheriff of Cheshire 2023-24

*If you don't know where
you're going
Any road will lead you there*
'Any Road', George Harrison

This line from the Beatle and philosopher seemed to me to encapsulate my intended journey as High Sheriff. Like most, I received lots of good advice from former travellers, including one whose advice was, 'don't take any notice of all the advice' – including his! Those that know me well knew that I would be predisposed to this sentiment. I value spontaneity and want the year to largely chart its own course, not engage the sat-nav. Of course milestones would need to be included but I'm focused on the journey – the destination will arrive soon enough.

The journey began with my Declaration ceremony which was held at the University of Chester, the very first time in over one hundred and sixty years of its history that the High Sheriff of Cheshire had been installed within its highest seat of learning. Given my own professional lifetime in academe and being the holder of an honorary award from the university, I was delighted to have the opportunity to make a small piece of history for us both. At the time of writing, three months have passed in a blur with a blizzard of invitations to meetings, openings, events and speaking engagements.

Sitting at the Crown Court with His Honour Judge Steven Everett, Honorary Recorder of Chester, brought back memories of my own service as a magistrate sitting with judges on appeals. In a remarkable moment, I was shown the corridor where the names of all former High Sheriffs of the county are splendidly embossed on to wall plaques and I think it was at that moment that I realised that I had also taken a place in the history of this great county. It was a very humbling moment and I privately reflected on the expectations of my distinguished predecessors to make good the commitment during my Declaration to use my year productively in the service of others.

An early detour has of course been the wonderful Coronation of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla. We celebrated in grand style in Chester's



With Clive Knowles, Chairman of the British Ironwork Centre and creator of the *Knife Angel*, receiving (another!) High Sheriff's Award

great cathedral and in a thousand and one different ways in towns and villages the length and breadth of the county. A feeling of joy was exemplified in Holmes Chapel which had life-size hand-knitted figures of the royal couple in the village centre, receiving national attention. Other pit stops so far have been largely joyous and provided opportunity to recognise the work of marvellous people and organisations contributing so very much to the lives of others.

Cheshire Police and Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service are prominent in my

detours, attending graduations and passing out parades; and I am resurrecting the practice of a High Sheriff's Police Cadet which has lapsed in recent years. We welcomed the *Knife Angel* sculpture in Crewe and reflected on the twenty-five years of endeavour by Crimebeat to keep our young people safer.

So, my consort and I are at cruise speed and well on our way to... we are not sure where. I see a service station ahead so perhaps it's time to top up the petrol tank/batteries. Expect further report on progress later.