

Do your little bit of good



With Consort George Grignon at the launch of the Windrush Exhibition at Chatsworth House

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High Sheriff of Derbyshire 2023-2024

Choosing your best bits is rather like choosing your best music for *Desert Island Discs*. Like music, your choices can leave an emotional imprint for a variety of reasons and depending on your mood your 'best' can change as regularly as the weather.

During my year of office, I attended just over 370 engagements. I have been exposed to the most wonderful people across the county where I've shared stimulating conversations, laughed heartily, been moved to tears, heard heartbreaking stories of loss, survival and resilience, and in practical terms got stuck in to better understand the lived experience of others. Without doubt, Derbyshire is a county bursting with the best in humanity.

My theme for the year was 'Unity is Community'. With this in mind, the High Sheriff's Legal Service at Derby Cathedral was a highlight. I strongly believe we achieve more if we recognise and value our differences and use them as our strengths to work collaboratively for the greater good.

Celebrating difference was the order of the day: from the deeply moving music courtesy of Derby Cathedral Choir, superbly led by Alexander Binns, the organist and voice of soloist Jamie

Joseph, to the delivery of prayer from Royal School for the Deaf Derby and Reigate Primary School students, who displayed such composure and dignity.

It was an opportunity to bring people together, representing all that is great about Derbyshire, where our physical and social differences were accepted and embraced. Where conversations

began, friendships flourished and alliances were strengthened.

Celebrating and honouring the Windrush generation as part of the 75th year anniversary gave me a deeper appreciation of the sacrifices they made and being able to showcase the Windrush Exhibition, the creation of my consort George Grignon, at Chatsworth House



Having presented daughter Natalie with her police long service award – with son-in-law Chief Inspector Chris Thornhill, grandchildren Orson and Emeline, and Ruchita Shah DL



With Derby College Windrush group for the launch

was a moving and unforgettable moment. The untold stories of those who worked so hard to contribute to the UK, often in a hostile environment, were inspiring and highlighted the resilience of that generation and all they achieved.

It was sobering remembering those who paid the ultimate sacrifice through centuries of war and conflict when I attended various Remembrance services and Holocaust Memorial Day – without doubt many moments to pause and for reflection. To truly honour those who gave their lives, we all have a personal responsibility to treat everyone with compassion, dignity and respect.

By contrast, I spent a day with Derbyshire YMCA Padley serving breakfasts to those without a roof over their heads; a week volunteering with Derby Kids Camp; visited Jericho House, a home for males working hard to overcome drug and alcohol dependency; hospitals; youth groups; charities and more. Yet despite 370 engagements, I only really scratched the surface, realising very quickly there are hundreds of buried hidden gems rarely discovered across the county.

Climbing Snowdon raised some money

and my passion for dance enabled me to host the first Derbyshire UNstrictly Dancing fundraiser and the Embark Schools Dance Festival supported by the Embark Academy Trust, Amanda and Peter Ellse of Cosy Foundation, and Jonathan Leach of Indigo Communications. I'm pleased to

say that, due to the success of the dance fundraiser, this will now be an annual feature in the Derbyshire calendar. Six dancers already confirmed for June 2025!

We rely heavily on the goodwill of our volunteers, and the professionalism and hard work of our emergency services, judiciary, military, army personnel, charities, third sector organisations and community groups. I am immensely grateful for the support from His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant and the Lieutenancy, past High Sheriffs, those High Sheriffs in nomination, and the previous Under Sheriff Andrew Cochrane. It has been a joy to nurture these friendships and I particularly send very best wishes and congratulations to the current High Sheriff, Ian Morgan OBE.

The support from my partner George and additional consorts Anne and David Grattidge without doubt enabled me to get to grips with the task ahead and I am immensely grateful for the support they gave.

I have been privileged to be among a countywide demographic where leadership, commitment, resilience and a passion for improving the lives of others was in abundance. Everyone I came across played a part in contributing to building stronger, safer and happier communities.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, 'Do your little bit of good where you are; it is those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.'

Thank you to each and every one of you for all you are doing to make a difference and to all who have supported and walked beside me as part of the journey.



Celebrating International Women's Day Derby