



An incredible privilege

Mandy Thorne MBE DL

High Sheriff of Shropshire 2023-24

Being High Sheriff brings so many opportunities to meet interesting people, visit so many community and voluntary groups, and undertake activities which are rather outside one's comfort zone!

Having the privilege of sitting in the Family Court alongside a learned and wise Crown Court judge and being able to watch the work of the barristers, lawyers, court staff, social workers as well as the judge himself was fascinating. The opportunity to observe the end of a long criminal trial at one of our courts was enlightening, not least in watching the detailed summing-up from the judge and, while in his chambers, learning more about the legal process and application. As a High Sheriff with no legal background, I have found the interaction between my role and the judiciary to be a real eye-opener; the welcome that I received from whichever court I attended and the patience of all the magistrates and judges I met and their willingness to share their insights – it has all been an incredible privilege.

One of the highlights of my year was organising – together with the High Sheriffs of Herefordshire and Worcestershire – a seminar showcasing the work of the Family

Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDACs) to the local authorities, the NHS and charities across the West Mercia region. We were brilliantly supported by two former High Sheriffs and were privileged to have the Rt Hon Sir Andrew McFarlane (President of the Family Division), Lord Justice Peter Jackson (Court of Appeal) and Her Honour Judge Venables (Member of the Family Justice Council) as our keynote speakers. We aspire to see FDACs set up in our region so watch this space.

Traditionally in Shropshire we celebrate our outstanding young citizens with an awards ceremony in March where young people from across the county are nominated by their school or community group for doing amazing things. This year saw over 55 nominations which celebrated the best of our young citizens – the awards evening will be an event I will remember for ever.

Shropshire is blessed with so many amazing people and organisations and presenting High Sheriff's Awards has been a real privilege. We asked communities to nominate individuals or groups for an award as well as identifying worthy recipients ourselves and the last few months of my shrieval year have been interspersed with fascinating visits to meet incredible people. From the Ellesmere

With Cllr Paul Davis (Mayor of Wellington) for Pancake Day celebrations in Wellington

Phantom Yarn Bombers who decorate post boxes and lamp posts in the lovely town of Ellesmere to junior rowing coaches in Ironbridge; from youth club leaders of over 30 years' experience in St Martins to the Wellington-based veteran who has created a wonderful organisation to support other veterans with mental health needs; from the inspirational member of the Telford Youth Parliament to the two Bridgnorth-based young farmers who organise charity tractor runs... I have had the good fortune to meet so many fabulous individuals who do so much for our communities.



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