

A county of opportunity for all

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High Sheriff of Lancashire 2024-2025

I was surprised to find myself in the role of High Sheriff. I grew up in Lancaster in a working-class family and as a child I looked out of my bedroom window each day at Lancaster Castle towering on the hill, never imagining that I would one day hang my shield there.

I have set out to inspire people across the county to aim high; I am living proof that Lancashire is a place of opportunity for everyone. I live by my motto's coat of arms, Carpe Diem. From humble beginnings, to senior manager in the NHS, the private and charity sectors, and... the High Sheriff of Lancashire!

Three years before my appointment, I was asked by the Lord-Lieutenant if he could nominate me for the role. I did not hesitate! I then discovered that I couldn't tell anyone until the monarch pricked my name on the Lites, just two weeks before I would be installed in the role.

Most High Sheriffs are nominated by a High Sheriff and there is a ceremony in the Royal Courts of Justice when three names for each county are put forward; in March, the monarch pricks the first name on each list.

This ancient procedure does not apply to the appointment of High Sheriffs of the County Palatine of Lancaster; in 1714 under George I, they were excluded from the general list and have since been appointed by the monarch in their right as Duke of the Lancaster. Each year the Lord-Lieutenant recommends a name to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and in March the Chancellor places the Lites (parchment bearing the names of nine selected persons, three for each of the counties in the Duchy) before His Majesty. His Majesty then pricks the names of the three High Sheriffs at the top of each list with a bodkin.

At a ceremony each year, the Constable of the Castle receives the Lancashire High Sheriff's shield, which is hung in the Shire Hall. Mine reflects my life, half of which I devote to community and voluntary work in Lancashire and the other half to extremely poor people living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in northwest Pakistan.

It has been a year full of opportunities, including involvement with law and order: setting up a Lancashire and South Cumbria regional pro bono legal committee attached



to the Attorney General's; sitting in court observing cases with High Court judges and the coroner; teaching police students and cadets; and spending time in prisons.

Additionally, I was pleased to act as returning officer at the general election and be present at royal visits from Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, the Duke of Gloucester and the Duke of Kent; to have attended the Legal Service and to have had the opportunity to speak on International Women's Day and in numerous schools; to bring together mayors from across the county for afternoon tea at Lancaster Castle (the description for a gathering of mayors is 'chain gang'!).

The highlight of my year has been shining a light on many of the unsung heroes working in voluntary and community groups across the county and individuals who are doing amazing things for many people. So I was delighted in my final week to invite 17 people and organisations to receive a High Sheriff's Award in the Shire Hall to recognise the significant positive impact they are having on people in the county. I have had the pleasure to get to know these people and to witness first-hand the wonderful work they are doing, often without reward or recognition. This made my year exceptional.

I am looking forward to joining the club of former High Sheriffs. A tradition in



My High Sheriff's Awards ceremony was held in the Shire Hall



With the 'chain gang' at Lancaster Castle

Lancashire is for the High Sheriff to convene a gathering of former High Sheriffs. We gathered in the Shire Hall to enjoy our shields followed by dinner in A Wing of the old prison.

Some believe that the role of High Sheriff has no power, but in my experience, you can have a great deal of influence that can galvanise people to act for good and I will continue the following three projects that I have started in my year:

1. Developing 'The Vision for Morecambe' – needed because, first, the people of Morecambe deserve a better place to live and a healthier, happier future and, second, developing Morecambe is likely to greatly increase the chances of success of the proposed Eden Project.

2. The regional pro bono committee to facilitate the provision of free legal advice and support for people who have little or no money.

3. Chair the charity Escape2Make which works creatively with young people who have become disconnected from society and are at risk of being enticed into crime in Lancaster and Morecambe.

Having these three projects in my life is an unexpected bonus of being High Sheriff.

Finally, I wish my successor Jim Carter all the very best for a wonderful year as High Sheriff.

