



Cheshire 2012-13

Little did I know what was in store for me when I accepted the invitation of a drink at Nick Bromley-Davenport's home then the High Sheriff of Cheshire in 2007. "Will you be High Sheriff of Cheshire in 2012?" he said. How could I say no? I was only 42 and no-one from our family had ever held the office.

Five years flew by, we went to Burghley, commissioned a coat of arms (it turned out ours was a Victorian fake), went to the Royal Courts of Justice for the nomination ceremony and started to plan our year.

As soon as my nomination was public we asked everyone whom we could for advice. Past High Sheriffs were generous with their time and my diary was cleared. My predecessor John Lea was a star and kept a diary of his engagements. Also, like me, John had a full-time day-job which gave me some comfort that I would be able to cope.

It has been a whirlwind of a year, starting with the HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's splendid visit to Chester Zoo at the start of the Diamond Jubilee tour; I parked in the wrong place, as did the Chief Constable.



With my predecessor John Lea.



Beth Tweddle MBE receiving a High Sheriff's certificate for her achievement at the Olympic Games.

Sir Roderick Evans was our first High Court Judge, sitting on the case of the murder of Shafiea Ahmed by her parents in Warrington. I sat with the Judge during the cross-questioning of her sister. With cases like this in the day, judges need some respite at night and so some lively evenings were enjoyed by all and, being a brewer, I delegated the catering to a different JW Lees pub on each occasion and colleagues loved joining in and helping me with the office.

We hosted a drinks party for the great and the good of the county and the legal service in Chester Cathedral, but the big event of the year was the Cheshire Diamond Jubilee Ball which we co-hosted with the Lord Lieutenant of Cheshire and former High Sheriff, David Briggs. We chose Cheshire Crimebeat, Cheshire DebtCred, the Cheshire Community Foundation and Onside NorthWest as our charities, and raised over £100,000 thanks to the generosity of our guests. It was a great evening, M People providing the entertainment, as well as a welcome from the Ellesmere Port Sea Cadets.

We involved our children aged eight to 16 whenever possible and I inevitably took at least one of them to each engagement unless it was completely inappropriate.

We were relieved to receive a letter from the Privy Council allowing us to leave the country from time to time and we even managed to go to the Olympic Games in disguise. Chris Evans brought Carfest to Cheshire to raise money for Children in Need and our younger son enjoyed the Child Catcher and the *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* car. In fact, we found that the High Sheriff was welcomed everywhere in the county. Cheshire Police are hugely committed to Crimebeat and, thanks to Crimebeat Co-ordinator Frank Harding, we were able to get into parts of the county that we would not otherwise have ever reached. On the day of the James Bond film premiere we visited police HQ and toured the vehicle and firearms units.

Even the Recorder of Chester, His Honour Judge Elgan Edwards, showed his lighter side when exposed to the



News from and about Members

charms of our middle daughter who wanted to try on his wig.

We have been proud to give something back to our county, raising funds as well as recognising individuals. The High Sheriff commands attendance from all, even Olympians, with Beth Tweddle receiving a High Sheriff's certificate for her achievement at the Olympics.

We found that Remembrance Day plays an increasingly special part in the hearts of the British public and there must have been over 3,000 people outside Chester Cathedral to hear the Last Post.

I would like to think that we have made the most of the year. It has certainly never felt like a dress rehearsal and there are only 112 days to go as I write this. □

William Lees-Jones

High Sheriff of Cheshire 2012-13



Presenting a cheque for £10,000 to Cheshire Crimebeat.