



An early start

I STARTED MY TERM of office a year earlier than I had expected due to one of my planned predecessors having to stand down through ill health. My initial sense of panic was soon replaced by relief that the waiting would soon be over and I could start the planning in earnest.

The previous High Sheriff of Cheshire, Susan Sellers, had given outstanding service to the county and I was somewhat nervous about following in her footsteps. However, the oft-repeated advice that High Sheriffs can tailor their year to suit their circumstances and ambitions did put my mind at rest – and it has proved to be true!

My year in office has focused on young people and I have had the pleasure of visiting a large number of youth organisations including Scouts, Guides, Prince's Trust graduations, local youth clubs, sporting facilities and national citizenship ceremonies; all of which have confirmed my strong belief that young people are by far the most inspiring members of our communities if given a chance.

My normal working life is as chairman and founder of a charity called OnSide

which builds and operates state-of-the-art youth clubs in city centres – each attended by two to three hundred young people every day. I have made it my aim as High Sheriff of Cheshire to initiate two of these centres in Cheshire during my year in office. As I write, we have two live projects in Chester and Warrington so, with six months to go, I am on track.

The County Court in Chester is seldom used these days, with major cases being directed to Liverpool and Manchester. For this reason we have not had much cause to look after visiting judges but both of the judges whom we have entertained at our home have opted for a less formal approach to the proceedings. The Lord-Lieutenant had suggested that I offered a choice of format and I pass this good advice on to other High Sheriffs.

As I enter the second half of my year I am resolved to be more proactive on the events and visits that I would like to arrange. It is too easy to be led by diary requests and I feel that I will make much more of a contribution by being more focused and directed.

It is a bit of a cliché that High Sheriffs are always mentioning how wonderful it is to meet all the people and organisations which make our country so great. All I can say is that this sentiment is at the absolute centre of my experience and I have enjoyed every single engagement so far.

◆ Bill Holroyd CBE DL

High Sheriff of Cheshire 2015-16

Above: Welcoming back the Warrington Wolves Foundation's young trustees on their return from the Gambia

Below: At the Cheshire Scouts and Guides send-off to the 23rd World Jamboree in Japan

