

Tees Valley Law Society

Annual Review 2014



TVLS

President's report to the AGM 15 July 2014

On agreeing to take over from Tony Whinfield as Constituency Member for Hartlepool, little did I realise that I would end up as President of Tees Valley Law Society in July 2013. That said, I have enjoyed my year as President and hope that my successor has as much pleasure as I have had as the Society's President.



Events

Over the course of the last twelve months I have represented the Society at a number of events.

14 July 2013

Matins for the Courts, Durham Cathedral

I took part in the legal procession which opened the service. This is a spectacular event.

4 October 2013

Insurance Institute of Middlesbrough Annual Dinner

14 November 2013

Newcastle upon Tyne Law Society Annual Dinner

22 November 2013

Teesside Society of Chartered Accountants Annual Dinner

I was asked to speak which was a pleasure as was listening to Dame Tammy Gray-Thompson who gave the key note speech at that event.

7 March 2014

I was delighted to host, as President, our Annual Dinner at the Thistle Hotel in Middlesbrough. I am grateful to Nicola Nelson who, as always, made sure that the dinner ran like clockwork.



I was delighted that the His Honour Judge Peter Armstrong was able to accept my invitation to speak. He was his usual very amusing self, ably supported by Emma Harbron our Senior Vice President - who can forget her rendition of The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round!

I thank the local Solicitors, Barristers and other professionals who continue to support the dinner, which helps to make it the occasion that it is and has been for a number of years. Hopefully that support will continue.

My chosen charity was Hartlepool Hospice who do invaluable work in the community and being able to raise over £2,000 to help them continue to provide this help gave me great pleasure.



The President, HH Judge Matthews QC and some of the guests

Representing Tees Valley Law Society

As President of Tees Valley Law Society, I have had the pleasure to welcome two new District Judges to Teesside, namely District Judge Temple on 09 April 2014 and District Judge Reed on 13 May 2014.

I have also represented the Society at the valediction for both District Judge Cuthbertson on 27 March 2014 and District Judge Mainwaring Taylor as recently as 27 June 2014. Ordinarily the President of Tees Valley Law Society would be asked to speak to one event such as these, however being asked to speak at four is indicative of the changing legal world that we live in. It was my absolute pleasure to speak at these events although tinged with a little sadness when we say Goodbye to two very experienced and highly respected District Judges.

The difficulties and challenges the profession face are well documented, however I am confident that as a profession we can, as we always do, rise to the challenge. I thank all of those who work on behalf of the Society in particular the Education and Training Committee who are now going to have to get to grips with the proposed changes to continued professional education.

I hope and trust that my successor, as President, enjoys representing our Society as much as I have during my year in office.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to, and thank on behalf of Council, Committee Members and the general membership of Tees Valley Law Society, Helen Crute for the many years of sterling service she has given to the Society and wish her and her family the very best for the future.

Phillip Mitchell
President
July 2014



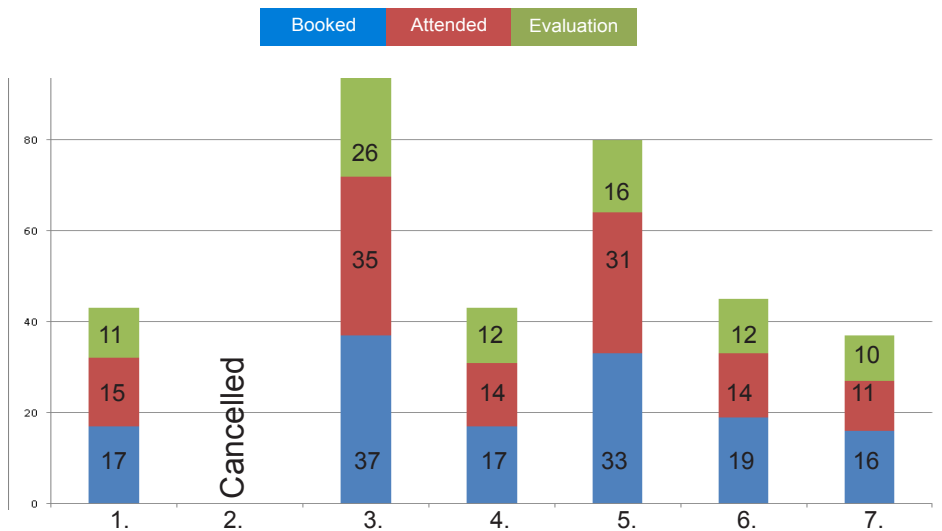
Education and Training Committee

Chairman: Geoff Cruickshank

Co-ordinator: Geoffrey Crute

CPD Seminars

During 2013, 7 seminars have been organised, as follows:



1. Current Issues affecting Law Firms

Ross Hume
Wesleyan for Lawyers

2. Insolvency in Commercial Litigation

Hugo Grove
Enterprise Chambers

3. Commercial Landlord & Tenant Update

Stephanie Jarron
Enterprise Chambers

4. Managing Litigants in Person

Brian Mather
Trinity Chambers

5. Law Costs - post-Jackson Landscape

Lee Coulthard, John M Hayes

6. Maximising the Benefits of OFR

Northumbria University for
Legal Management &
Regulation

7. Employment Law
Where we are & where we are going

Jamie Anderson
Trinity Chambers



Charges

The cost of laying on this programme averages between £3,500 and £4,000 per annum (depending on fees paid to external speakers) which means that our continuing charge of £30 for members allows us to just about break even, with 120 attendances over the calendar year under review.

Evaluation

Evaluations are generally very positive, with many attendees offering additional critical comment. As to attendance, the evaluation results and the comments tend to indicate that interest is generated by the topic (see for example May and September) rather than pre-knowledge or reputation of the speaker. The Committee has noted that topical updates on core subjects tend to be more popular than one-off talks on - perhaps more specialist – topics; and therefore the programme will be more focussed on core subjects of wide commercial interest, with an attempt being made to be more responsive to recent legislation or case-law.

Better Communication

To achieve this objective, it is essential that members communicate with the committee as to what topics are attractive to them. It is also essential that the committee is representative of a broad interest / skills base, as well as (so far as possible) geographically representative. Steps have been and continue to be taken to refresh and reconstitute the committee; but we would particularly welcome volunteers from some of the more rural areas or outlying towns – their contribution is particularly vital to be able to advise the committee how practitioners in such areas are able to plan and execute their continuing professional development, and how the Society may be able to support them in that.



The future of Continuing Professional Development

Over the last three years, committee members have been involved in the consultations, LETR report papers, and ongoing discussions, and have also followed the course of the SRA deliberations on CPD in implementing the LETR recommendations. The Chair and the Co-ordinator in particular have devoted significant time to the debate concerning these changes.

Members will be aware that compulsory CPD hours are to be phased out, but the obligation regarding continuing professional development remains. The Committee has now “mapped out” a way ahead for TVLS to support CPD amongst the membership locally, and a short presentation will be given on this at the 2014 AGM. This presentation will subsequently be published on the Society’s web-site, and we will be seeking members’ feed-back on the proposals.

Geoffrey Crute
Co-ordinator
July 2014



And finally ...

Its over 10 years since I took over the role of Administrator for TVLS, and I have decided it's time I moved on to pastures new - although I don't think retirement is quite the word for what I have in mind - more like lapsing into my second childhood!

I am trying to leave TVLS in a position to take advantage of all the latest in technology to operate efficiently communicate with everyone in the profession in Tees Valley easily.

The website has been re-vamped, and we now have the members area working ... in most cases! There have been some glitches with the password distribution so if you haven't got yours - email me (or my successor) The email address will remain the same, whoever takes over.

The record keeping has been improved from a database which only I could use (& only because I wrote it!) to one which will be much easier to use. There are still some final tweaks to do, and then the real test will come when the data is imported and everything checked over. I have details of over 850 people and 152 firms on the database so there is a significant risk it will go awry - but fingers crossed it wont be too bad.

One of my regrets is that the number of members I am passing on is significantly lower than I "inherited". In 2004 there were over 300 members, falling to fewer than 170 in 2011. So far this year we are up to 184 (which is more than the whole of last year) so things are improving, albeit slowly. But considering I have a database of over 850 individuals, it's a bit depressing.

But before I go, I would like to thank everyone I have worked with over the last 10 years for putting up with me, and to wish to Society - and indeed, the profession - all the best for the future.



*Helen Crute
Administrator - just!
July 2014*