

**THE TEES VALLEY
LAW SOCIETY**

**Annual Review
2011**

T VLS

Circular concerning Meeting of Solicitors

Guiseborough
25 April 1874.

Dear Sir,

The feeling of very many influential members of the legal profession, in North Yorkshire and South Durham having been ascertained to be favourable towards the formation of a Law Society for that District, it is proposed that a general meeting of the profession for the purpose of considering the propriety of establishing such a Society, and if resolved, in the affirmative, of discussing the preliminary steps towards its formation shall, by the kind permission of the Mayor, be held in the Town Hall, Stockton-on-Tees, on Wednesday, the 29th instant, at 8 o'clock. Your attendance is earnestly requested.

Yours truly
Arthur Duchamaw.



President's Report to the AGM 3 July 2011

It was an honour to be elected President of Tees Valley Law Society in July 2010. At that time I really wasn't sure what my Presidential year would involve, but I am delighted to say that it has been both interesting and rewarding.



The last year has been a difficult one for the profession both locally and nationally and that will continue into the next year. I am pleased to say that Tees Valley Law Society has played its part in influencing decisions made at a national level that affect solicitors in this area and beyond.

Nicola Neilson receiving her Presidential Chain of Office from the outgoing president, Elizabeth Foreman

Whenever I have been given the opportunity and platform to do so I have put forward the thoughts of the profession locally and given my full support to the solicitors in this area who do a wonderful job despite the pressures exerted on them.

As only the third female President of this Society, it is with great pleasure that I hand over the baton to the fourth, my successor, Joanne Lavery. I am sure that I am leaving you all in very capable hands.

Events

Over the course of the last 12 months I have chaired the Society's Council meetings which take place bi-monthly. I would like to thank all those members of the Society who have sat on Council or any of our committees over the last year. Their support and contribution have been invaluable to the continued success of our Society.





I would particularly like to thank those involved in the Education & Training Committee as the programme of seminars continues to go from strength to strength. As part of my role, I have attended most of their Committee meetings.

I have also attended meetings of the North East Joint Committee of Local Law Societies. These meetings were held in Newcastle and Sunderland and give an opportunity for the four regional Law Societies to share views and concerns.

Thanks also to our administrator, Helen Crute, for all her efforts over the last twelve months. The task of keeping the Society's affairs in order is never simple and with the increased use of our website her role is constantly changing.

My thanks also go to the Law Society's regional manager, Judith Mason, for her continuing support and her enthusiasm in promoting Tees Valley Law Society and its members. Also to our national Council members, Nigel Dodds and Louise Brough, who have travelled great distances to attend our Council meetings whenever possible and continue to represent our members at a national level.

Early in my term of office, I was asked by the local branch of Resolution to attend one of the meetings which had been hurriedly arranged to address the issue of the family legal aid contracts. I attended that meeting and supported the work that they did in preparing for a judicial review. The local recognition branch were very active in this campaign and I was pleased that they could approach Tees Valley Law Society for the support that they needed.

Wherever possible I have attended seminars organised as part of the full programme and that provided for the trainees and recently qualified solicitors.

As well as all of the work that is seen, a great deal of change has been taking place behind the scenes. There have been the changes to the membership structure to implement and I am pleased to confirm that we now have non-solicitor members for the first time in the Society's history representing both Legal Executive and Licensed Conveyancers.

Work has also been undertaken to introduce a package of benefits to members of the Society. and this package will be published soon.

In addition, there has been work required to ensure that the trainee awards, which will be presented later this evening, can continue in some recognisable form. This requires input not only from this Society, but Sunderland Law Society and the national Law Society too and hence these discussions take some time.

I have also been honoured to represent the Society on a number of occasions and I set out below details of some of the things that I have done.

11 July 2010

Matins for the Courts, Durham Cathedral

I took part in the legal procession which opened the service. After the beautiful service I was fortunate enough to be invited to the luncheon in the Great Hall at Durham Castle which was hosted by the High Sheriff of Durham.

1 October 2010

Insurance Institute of Middlesbrough Annual Dinner

I was delighted to attend this Dinner as the representation of the legal profession and was pleased to see a number of our members who were also in attendance.



14 October 2010

Dinner with Des Hudson, Chief Executive of the Law Society

I was invited to a dinner in Newcastle attended by local law society Presidents, Law Society Council members and other solicitors from across the North East. This was an opportunity to express the views of solicitors in our area in a small, focused, yet informal environment.

15 October 2010

Teesside Society of Chartered Accountants Annual Dinner

It was a pleasure to toast the members of their Society, especially as I knew that I would be asking their Chairman to reciprocate at our Dinner in March. Again, it was fantastic to see a number of our members in attendance.

21 October 2010

Autumn Social

At this informal event which was attended by a cross-section of the profession, from a young man who had completed the LPC and was hoping to secure a training contract to some more established members of the profession, I launched the inaugural Tees Valley Law Society Awards.



The Launch of The Tees Valley Law Society Awards

Solicitors are not always given the praise that they deserve (although I am pleased to say that in Tees Valley they often appear to be) and this is an opportunity for the hard work and dedication of those within the profession to be recognised.

The deadline for submission of applications for the awards is 31 July, so there is still time to get in a nomination (or two!) for someone that you think is deserving of the awards.



I hope that the awards will prove to be a success and that the Society will be making these awards in many years to come.

Don't forget, whilst you don't have to be a member to make a nomination, the person being nominated must be a member. Best of luck to everyone who is nominated. To be nominated is in itself an achievement.

11 November 2010

Newcastle Law Society Annual Dinner

I attended the Annual Dinner at the Civic Centre, Newcastle, a remarkable venue. Part of the evening was dedicated to their Society's annual awards and it was amazing to see the competition between the various nominees and the delight that winning brought to those who were successful. Their awards are obviously regarded highly and I hope that in future years our awards will be as successful and highly sought after.

11 March 2011

Tees Valley Law Society Annual Dinner



The President and some of the guests

I was humbled at the turnout for our Annual Dinner. All firms have had to tighten their belts over the last few years so to see so many of you out in force at the Dinner was incredible. Over 300 guests enjoyed the dinner which was, once again, supported by Northumbrian Water

Property Solutions, who not only sponsored the event but also donated some excellent raffle prizes. More than £2,100 was raised on the night (with more to follow as a result of the Gift Aid declarations made by some guests) and was donated to St Teresa's Hospice.



21 March 2011

Cheque presentation, St Teresa's Hospice, Darlington

It was a pleasure to visit St Teresa's Hospice with Jenny Graham of Northumbrian Water Property Solutions to hand over a cheque for £2,160 to Jane Bradshaw, the Hospice Director. It was wonderful to be able to see first hand some of the ways in which the money that was raised at the Dinner will be spent.



L-R: Joyce Wynn-Williams (Complementary Therapist St Theresa's) Nicola Neilson, (President TVLS) Jenny Graham (Northumbrian Water) Jane Bradshaw (Director, St Theresa's)

29 March 2011

Inauguration of DJ Heels

Those of you who know me are well aware of my discomfort at having to speak in public. For this reason, I am not a litigator and have not attended a court since my days as a trainee solicitor. However, I overcame all of that to make a welcome speech at that the swearing in ceremony for DJ Heels on her appointment to the District bench.

13 and 14 May 2011

Presidents and Secretaries Conference, 113 Chancery Lane

The Presidents and Secretaries Conference was a very interesting affair. Friday afternoon and Saturday morning were filled with numerous sessions about a variety of topical issues and it was intriguing to hear the views of those at varying stages of their careers, from different practise areas and different geographical areas on the issues that affect us all.

On the Friday evening, my husband and I attended the dinner at the Waldorf Hilton. The speech by Nazir Afzal OBE, the National Director of CPS in London, was far more entertaining and witty than that of Clive Anderson, the broadcaster and former barrister – I'd heard more



than one of Clive's jokes done before! That said, a thoroughly enjoyable night was had by all and I am pleased to report that whilst a certain number of the North East contingent were asked to leave the hotel bar because the staff wanted to go home, I was not one of them!

20 May 2011

Lunch with John Wooton, Vice President of the Law Society

I attended this small lunch with the other local Law Society Presidents and our regional manager, Judith. This was another opportunity to discuss topical issues from a local perspective. I was also able to inform John of the good work that Tees Valley Law Society does, and has done for a number of years now, with trainees and recently qualified solicitors in the area.

1 July 2011

Sunderland Law Society Ball Durham County Cricket Club

A more informal affair than the Dinners held by the other regional Law Societies, but an enjoyable evening all the same.



Nicola Neilson
PRESIDENT



Education And Training Committee

Chairman: Geoff Cruickshank

Co-ordinator: Geoffrey Crute

Education & Training Report for 2010

The Committee, under the Chairmanship of Geoff Cruickshank, has continued to provide a programme of CPD courses, aimed particularly at the smaller firms and sole practitioners. It incorporates refreshers, introduction to changes in law and practice, and/or “awareness-raising” relating to more specialist topics. The Committee also seeks to support trainees in various ways.

The Committee meets three times per year. The CPD programme is, wherever possible, planned in detail 6 months ahead and in outline 12 months ahead. This enables us to maintain good information on the TVLS website, as well as being responsive to topical legal issues. In choosing topics we are dependent on members making requests or suggestions, so that we have some idea of what may be of interest. Regrettably, in the year under review, we had to cancel one presentation – a “Mock mediation” – because of lack of response. This event had been planned because a mock mediation held some two years earlier has been extremely well-attended. The committee judged that mediation was now a more commonly-used process and therefore there would be a good take-up. An additional seminar was therefore arranged for the end of the year to maintain our “offer” of 12 CPD points per year.

The remaining seminars dealt with Commercial Property, Human Rights, Judicial Review, “Legal Firms in the 21st Century”, Pitfalls of the recession, and Land Registration update. A total of 144 people attended these seminars, and evaluation showed that subject to one exception they retained an extremely high approval rating.

The logo for TVLS, featuring the letters T, V, L, and S in a stylized, handwritten font. The letter 'V' is highlighted with a blue and green gradient.

Members of the Society receive a £15 discount on the cost of each Seminar, which (over a 6-lecture season) more than makes up for the annual TVLS membership fee for those who are good supporters of the programme. Even attendance at 2/3rds of the seminars covers the membership fee! The CPD programme also continues to contribute a modest profit to the general finances of the Society, in the year under review amounting to £1,041.

In trying to pursue its objective of supporting trainees, the trainee representative and the committee are always severely hampered by the difficulty in “tracking down” where trainees are. Information from the SRA tends not to be available before the February following the main “uptake” of trainee places, and is often inaccurate. We therefore make a regular request of known training principals for information; but this also suffers from non-notified changes in training principal in some firms, or general lack of response. We are therefore reliant on the process of osmosis. Another difficulty is that in terms of trainee involvement in leading the trainee programme, people are just beginning to find their feet when they qualify and move on! The Committee are therefore looking at ways in which they can offer greater support to a trainee programme, particularly in the early to mid-Autumn of each year, but will remain heavily dependent on firms giving timely information to the Society Administrator as to the “whereabouts” of new trainees.

Despite these difficulties, in the year under review trainees held a successful programme of 6 workshops for themselves and the newly qualified (broadly up to 3 years' ppe) as well as a couple of social events. In the last couple of years, there has been a significant reduction in the number of trainees in the Society's area, and this makes it all the more important that trainees should have the opportunity of meeting together periodically to share experience.

The logo for TVLS features the letters 'T', 'V', 'L', and 'S' in a stylized, handwritten font. The 'V' is the central element, colored with a gradient from blue on the left to green on the right. The other letters are black.

Since the year end, the Society has lost the availability of its regular venue at Castlegate Water Sports Centre, because of the sale of that Centre by Stockton Borough Council. The staff at Castlegate has been enormously helpful in the provision of those facilities, and we record our thanks to them. CPD seminars during the autumn of 2011 will be held at the offices of Archers Law at Lakeside House, Kingfisher Way, Stockton on Tees. Any further future change of venue will be notified both on the seminar flyers and on the TVLS web-site. The detailed programme for 3rd October 2011 to 13 February 2012 can also be found, in the members area on www.teesvalleylaw.org.uk

Geoffrey Crute
Education & Training Co-ordinator

The logo for TVLS features the letters 'T', 'V', 'L', and 'S' in a stylized, cursive font. The 'V' is the central element, colored in a gradient from blue to green, and is positioned between the 'T' and 'L'. The 'S' is to the right of the 'L'. The letters are black with a slight shadow effect.

Public Relations Officer's Report 2010

As the Press Release Officer for Tees Valley Law Society, my primary role is to raise the profile of the society and its members on a local and national level. A further key role is to inform members of issues in the press which may be relevant to local lawyers across Tees Valley. An issue which has been a concern for many practitioners in the area has been the Legal Aid reform, which has featured heavily in our news bulletins to ensure members have been well informed of the developments. I must also ensure that the business community in Tees Valley are aware of the aims of the society which in turn will strive to promote solicitors in the locality.

This role enables me to act as a touchstone between the local legal profession and the media. The aim is to be both informative to members and to promote local professionals on a national level.

A further development for the society has been the introduction of our website. The website has a news section and bulletin which is regularly updated providing access to information and publications from the Law Society and local news. We also hope to be in a position to promote the society further by introducing excellence awards which will commend local solicitors with special achievements acknowledging the vast array of legal talent in our region.

I would invite local solicitors to contact me with any relevant news stories which may be capable of promotion in the local press and further for coverage on our website.

Rachel Donald
PRO

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Prize Giving

The Society awards two prizes each year to trainee solicitors -

The William Hutton Prize, which is limited to trainees who have entered into a training contract with a practice in either Sunderland or Middlesbrough, between 1 October and 30 September, and who gained a distinction in his or her Legal Practice Course. In the case of trainees who gained their LPC as part of the Exempting Degree process, their marks have to equate to degree standard. This is one of the most valuable prizes in the Country.

The R T Richardson Prize which is open to any Law Student who is contracted to a member of The Tees Valley Law Society, and, in the opinion of the Council of the Society, has demonstrated the best level of achievement in completing the Legal Practice Course during the previous year.

As in the previous year, the prizes were presented at the Society's AGM, held on 29 June 2010.

The William Hutton Prize for the year 2008-2009 was presented to Kathryn Watson of Armstrong Foulkes, Middlesbrough

The R T Richardson Prize for 2009 was presented to Danielle Distefano of Archers Law LLP with Anna Porter of Cygnet Family Law as runner-up.

The winners of the 2009-10 William Hutton Prize and the 2010 R T Richardson prize will be presented at the AGM on 5 July 2011.




Winners of the 2008-2009 prizes



L-R: John Freer, who was awarded a certificate to recognise over 40 years in practice, Anna Porter, Kathryn Watson, Daniell Distefano, Gordon Hetherington, a retired member of The Tees Valley Law Society

TVLS The Tees Valley Law Society



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Become a member

As agreed at the AGM, there are changes to the classes of membership:-

Full Membership, which includes voting rights, is open to all qualified Solicitors

Associate Membership, which does not include voting rights, is limited to those with a professional legal qualification, and is open to

- ILEX Fellows and Members
- Barristers
- Licensed Conveyancers

Trainee Membership, which does not include voting rights, is open to Trainee Solicitors, Pupil Barristers and trainee ILEX who are working in a legal practice

Benefits of Membership
As well as reduced fees for training, other benefits are being developed, and could include discounts for restaurants and shops, TVLS social events, and members' discount evenings, in addition to eligibility to the newly launched TVLS Legal Awards and the R T Richardson Prize (which is only open to trainees who are contracted to a TVLS member)

More details on the benefits will be published as they are confirmed.

Fees
The annual membership fee remains at £50 for full members. Associate members will pay £40 and Trainee members will pay £20. The various discounts on membership fees is being discontinued.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the Tees Valley Law Society click [here](#) to download the application form.

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