



Annual Review 2018



President's Report to the AGM

21 June 2018

It has been a privilege and pleasure to serve Tees Valley Law Society as honorary president for the past year. And how quickly the year has passed! Along the way, I have been most fortunate to have worked with, and made the acquaintance of, some wonderfully talented, professional and dedicated lawyers, and indeed members of other professions who practice throughout this region.



Their commitment to the prosperity and advancement of this wonderful part of England has been truly inspiring.

TVLS

Tees Valley Law Society has a long and proud history. Founded in 1874, it was originally called the South Durham and North Yorkshire Law Society. Its stated objectives then were...:

- the protection of the rights and privileges and the advancement of the character, status and interests of attorneys and solicitors practising in South Durham and North Yorkshire;
- the promotion of honourable practice;
- the settlement of disputed points in practice; and
- the decision of questions of professional usage and courtesy.



Originally named the South Tees and North Yorkshire Law Society, TVLS has a large and diverse constituency

Getting back to the present day, Tees Valley Law Society is independent of the Law Society of England and Wales, but works closely with the national Society in representing the values and interests of the solicitor's profession generally.

Within Tees Valley, we believe there are around 1,000 solicitors on the Roll, the majority of whom are engaged in private practice; we estimate that around 10% of that number work in-house throughout the region.

As a society, our priority is to help represent our members in the region, and the firms both small and large who provide legal services to the community at large. We endeavour to achieve this through being a voice for our members, and by representing their interests to the national Law Society.

The Business and Property Court

I was delighted during the year, at the invitation of HH Judge Philip Kramer, to participate on the launch committee of the Business and Property Court (BPC) in Newcastle Upon Tyne.





His Honour Judge Kramer

The BPC at Newcastle, which is headed by HH Judge Kramer, is made up of the Chancery Division of the High Court, the Circuit Commercial Court, and the Technology and Construction Court. It will facilitate disputes across a range of highly technical legal specialisms including insolvency, intellectual property, trust and probate, and competition and finance.

The arrival of the BPC in the North East is undoubtedly a positive step, and one which recognises the value of this region's output to the UK economy. This means that business and property disputes, at the highest level of complexity and across a very wide range of business endeavour, can be resolved within our region and without the need to resort to travel afar or to seek expertise from those who may not be entirely familiar with the unique needs of our region.

Given the UK's status as having one of the most revered legal systems in the world, the commitment to adjudicating upon the most complex business and property disputes directly within our region will indisputably bring considerable relief to litigants in terms of cost. There will also be substantial savings in terms of time, where the need to travel outside of the region is obviated and where the services of local practitioners can be utilised.

The reassurance of having access to the country's top judges, and the ability to resolve commercial disputes at the highest level on our doorstep will greatly benefit the business community and will assist the North East in its standing as a credible and desirable place to do business.

The establishment of the BPC is without doubt an exciting and positive development for the North East and one which earnestly deserves the unwavering support of the business and legal community.

Judicial Appointments

One of the most enjoyable tasks of the sitting President of Tees Valley Law Society is to attend and speak at the swearing-in ceremonies of new full-time appointees to the District Court. This year, I was fortunate to be invited to three such ceremonies, all of which had a connection to the Tees Valley.

In January, I attended at the Bradford Combined Court for the swearing-in of DJ (MC) Timothy Capstick. DJ Capstick, a criminal law specialist, was called to the bar in 1986 and practised at 6 Park Square Chambers in Leeds. He was appointed a Deputy DJ in 2003. DJ Capstick has now been appointed to the Teesside Combined Court.

In March I attended the Teesside Combined Court for the swearing-in of DJ Nathan Adams. DJ Adams was formerly a tenant of Broadchare Chambers in Newcastle Upon Tyne, where he practised civil, crime and matrimonial finance. He was appointed a Deputy DJ in 2015. DJ Adams has now been appointed to the Teesside Combined Court.

In May, I again attended at Teesside Combined Court for the swearing-in of District Judge Paula Sharon Bailey. A career solicitor, DJ Bailey formerly practised family law in the Tees Valley. She was appointed a Deputy DJ in 2010. DJ Bailey has been appointed to the Stoke-on-Trent Combined Court.

Annual Dinner



Our annual dinner is the social highlight of the TVLS year, and this year we decided to return to Jurys Inn Hotel in Middlesbrough for the event.

The logo for Tees Valley Law Society (TVLS). It features the letters 'T', 'V', and 'L' in a stylized, overlapping font. The 'T' is black, the 'V' is blue, and the 'L' is black. The 'S' is written in a cursive, black font to the right of the 'L'. There is a green checkmark-like shape integrated into the 'V'.

Despite unprecedented weather conditions, affectionately referred to as the “Beast from the East”, there was excellent support for the function from all over the region. While attendance was somewhat hampered due to difficulties with travel occasioned by the adverse weather, a thoroughly enjoyable evening was had by all. Almost £1,200 was collected for our selected charity, which this year was the South Tees Hospital’s Retinal Development Fund.

Enquiries have already been received for next year’s annual dinner, for which planning will soon commence.

Education & Training



One of the most popular attractions of membership of the Society is the ability to avail of low cost, relevant, professional, ongoing education and training seminars which the society organises on a regular basis. Chris Noon has put tremendous effort into running several training events this year, all of which were very well attended. Feedback from attendees has been very favourable and we hope to run a further 8 / 10 courses over the course of the coming year.

Membership

There has been a slow but steady diminution in membership of the society over the past number of years. In order to address this, we have worked solidly at increasing the profile

of the Society throughout the region over the past twelve months.

It is pleasing to note that a three-fold increase in applications for membership has been recorded over the past year, when compared with the previous year. We believe that a stronger society has more to offer its members, and we will continue to focus on membership issues and increasing the appeal of the society, over the coming year.

I mentioned earlier that as a local law society, we strive to represent the interests of our members on a broader, and national level, by acting as a voice. However, to make the most of our efforts, it is vital that we hear that voice. I therefore encourage all our members to engage with us, and join us as we continue our work for the ultimate good of our profession, and our region.

Thanks



Dermot Winters, Nicola Neilson and Chris Noon

In closing, I would like to place on record my gratitude to our admin team at NE Law, our IT specialist Adam Crute, and the support and cooperation of TVLS members and the TVLS Council.

Most particularly, I would like to thank Nicola Neilson and Chris Noon of Council for their tireless work and patience throughout the year. Chris Noon is due to take over as President of TVLS for 2018/19, and I wish him all the very best for the year, and assure him of my ongoing support throughout his term of office.

Thank you all!

*Dermot Winters
President
June 2018*



Education & Training Report

Having been asked to take over as E&T Co-ordinator in July 2017 my priority was to provide a diverse range of topics to our members at affordable prices. It was agreed that we would attempt to put on approximately 6 seminars in the next 12 months.



Planning

I started this process by contacting all of the Barristers Chambers in the North East and in Leeds.

There was a mixed response from the chambers but the majority of them wished to support the society. The most enthusiastic response came from Trinity Chambers based in Newcastle. They agreed to provide four seminars which would take place in October, November and December and they would provide further seminars in the New Year.

It was agreed that the seminars would be on contentious probate, employment law, an update to public child law and a seminar on the benefits of family arbitration. It was hoped that other areas of law would be covered later in the year.

Once the speakers and the topics were agreed it was then simply a matter of booking a venue... which unfortunately wasn't! However, after much to-ing and fro-ing it was agreed that Timothy Spain and Brian Mather (a double act!), barristers from the Family team and both Chartered Family Arbitrators covering a fast growing area in Chambers, would deliver their seminar on "Family and Children Arbitrations, talking through practical steps, benefits and case studies" on the 30th November 2017.

Much to my annoyance and those who had taken up the offer of attending this seminar the weather decided that it wished to play its part in preventing me from putting on seminars. This seminar had to be cancelled due to snow, albeit nothing like what would come at the end of February 2018 but bad enough to cause disruption. This seminar has still not taken place, again due to the problems with co-ordinating the speakers diaries with the venues availability. It is hoped that this will now take place in September 2018.

Venues

Due to the problems with arranging a venue it was decided that we would approach Teesside University and ask them to assist us. We had a very productive meeting with their then head of the law faculty who agreed to allow us to use their facilities. Unfortunately, he then left but the agreement was still in place and I began the process of working with the university to arrange seminars to take place at their buildings.



Employment Law, 19 March 2018

On the 19th March 2018, Helen Hogben, an Employment and Regulatory barrister, delivered a seminar covering recent developments in Employment Law, particularly the implications of the new fee regime. 13 people attended this seminar and the feed back was extremely positive, with one commenting being “the content of the seminar was excellent, and the handouts were useful” and another was “excellent supporting material”. The only criticism which we received was that the parking was difficult.



Contentious Probate, 22 March 2018

On the 22nd March 2018, James Kemp, a Chancery barrister delivered a seminar covering many aspects of Contentious Probate. 18 places were booked for this seminar and again the feedback was very positive with most comments stating, “good handout” and “helpful handout”. Again, the only criticism was due to the parking and locating the seminar room.

Child Care Proceedings, 1 May 2018

Finally, on the 1st May 2018, Patrick Goodings and Kate Fenwick (another double act!), again from the Family team delivered a seminar covering Child Care proceedings following Re N, Section 20 agreements and Human Rights. 27 people booked places to attend this seminar and again the feedback was extremely positive with comments such as “very helpful and simplified talk on a difficult and hard area of law”, “very interesting”, “informative, good presentation, enjoyed both speakers”, “interesting and informative” and finally “well presented!”. Again, the only criticism was with regards to finding the venue.

Program for 2018-19

With regard to the venue, whilst it is appreciated that parking is difficult at Teesside University they are providing good quality lecture theatres and facilities for the benefit of the society and I am hopeful that if we continue to put on seminars at the university members will become accustomed to it. I therefore do not intend to look for alternative venues at this time. One request that I have had from the speakers is that perhaps a starting time of 5:30pm or even 6:00pm would be better because this would allow not only the speakers more time to get to the venue but would also enable more members to attend. I therefore intend that the future seminars will start later. Of course, the drawback for this is that they will finish later. If members have any views regarding the venue, length of seminars and start and finish times then please contact me.

Over the coming year it is my intention to organise more seminars, covering a wider range of topics. We already have the seminar on family arbitration planned and a seminar on actions against public bodies. Finally, we are also planning a seminar in October to be chaired by HH Judge Kramer on asset recovery in insolvent estates and this would tie in with the Business and Property Court. The seminar will be multi-disciplinary and will be opened up to accountants, surveyors, the bar and solicitors. It is our intention to continue to grow this side of the society which will hopefully assist with the retention and increase in membership.

Chris Noon

Senior Vice President and E&T Co-ordinator

June 2018

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