

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE STUDENT LAW SOCIETY 2007-2008

Peter Knibbs

In Spring 2007 I put myself forward for the nomination for the Presidency of the Student Law Society. During the presidential election period, my campaign focused on a mission to professionalise the Law Society, and to raise its profile within the University of Plymouth, and the city of Plymouth itself. I was thrilled to be elected as President, and so I and my team set to work!

The governing body of the Law Society is the Committee, consisting of the President, and Officers who are given specific briefs with the responsibility to implement the activities of the Law Society. During my time as President, the Committee consisted of the following people:

President:	Peter Knibbs
Treasurer:	David Coughtrie
Secretary:	Andrew Clark
Mooting Officer:	Jennifer Marshallsay
Assistant Mooting Officer:	Luke Garrett
Careers Officer:	Lauretta Nwadiogwu
Careers Secretaries:	Charlotte Buckley & Jenna Harvey
Special Events Officer:	Fiona Bee
Social Officer:	Ryan Keogh
Negotiation Officer:	Jim Smyth

From the very beginning, we acted together efficiently and with determination to improve the Law Society in such a way, that the Law School, the University and most of all law students, would take pride in a Law Society which assisted law students on their path to a legal career, and which would be a great ambassador for the University of Plymouth.

One of the Committee's tasks was to embellish and professionalise the Law Society's well-established events; most prominent of all was the annual Cheese and Wine Evening. These evenings, which had always proved to be enjoyable events, traditionally consist of arranging legal professionals to mingle with law students, in order for advice to be given as to the approach to take in progressing students' legal careers. Of course an added bonus is the provision of cheese and wine. We immediately set out to find an auspicious venue for such a prominent event, and selected the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club on Plymouth Hoe. We also secured over 30 legal professionals to attend, including both solicitors and barristers, and Recorder Judge Taylor, the Law Society's Honorary Chairman. The evening was a marvellous success, with over 100 students in attendance. For many, the evening was the first time they had had the chance to meet legal professionals.

Under the stewardship of Jennifer Marshallsay, the Law Society enjoyed the most successful mooted competition in its history. After widely advertising the importance for students to engage in mooted, we were pleasantly surprised to find interest in

participation to be four times that expected from previous years. As well as holding the internal mooted competition, with the final held in Plymouth Crown Court, the Committee organised an external mooted competition at the University of Exeter, held in a mooted court.

In addition to mooted, the Committee also organised, under the stewardship of Jim Smyth, a negotiation competition. As a vital skill for all present-day barristers and solicitors, we felt it appropriate to open the competition to all law students who wished to compete. We experienced a groundswell of support, and established negotiation competitions as an eagerly anticipated event in the Society's calendar.

Furthermore, the Committee lodged its interest to dine at Lincolns Inn for its special University Dining in Hall. Eight students were randomly selected from a hat to attend, along with myself and Fiona Bee, Special Events Officer. Those students who attended dined with the Bench and the Bar!

However, we as a Committee did more than merely embellish extant Society events - we also established new and innovative ones; for example, the 'Student Forum.' The format of the evening was for legal professionals to sit as a panel and respond to students who quizzed them over any matter they desired concerning the legal profession. These questions were followed by wine and nibbles in the venue's foyer, where the students could meet the professionals individually. Both solicitors and barristers were in attendance.

Nearing the end of our tenure as the Society's Committee, we decided to give one last blast in our innovative thinking: we devised a 'Great Debate' open to all University Students. The topic of debate was "this House believes that international human rights must take precedence over national sovereignty", and we secured former minister in the Major Government, Piers Merchant, to sit as a panellist. Over 60 students attended the debate which was certainly heated and energised! The event was followed by wine and nibbles where added debate took place. Debating is highly entertaining, insightful and is excellent experience for those seeking a career in law.

The Society prides itself on its extensive and formidable links with the legal profession. First and foremost is the Society's Honorary Chairman, Recorder Judge Taylor, who is a great friend to the Society and a real asset to the law student body. Judge Taylor is an active member of the Society, who often attends and speaks at Society events, including judging the final of the internal mooted competition. Secondly, the Society had forged strong bonds with local solicitor firms, who are always keen to send representatives to Society events. Thirdly, the Society is blessed by firm links with Plymouth chambers, King's Bench Chambers. Mr. Ali Rafati, barrister at the chambers, and a former student at the University of Plymouth, is a fervent supporter of Society events. Indeed, King's Bench Chambers kindly provided the Society with sponsorship during my time as President. The Society also enjoys excellent links with Devon Chambers, another local Chambers, with especial thanks to Piers Norsworthy who helped judge the internal mooted competition. Rougemont Chambers, Exeter, has also been extremely supportive towards Society events, and we were delighted to have representatives from Rougemont Chambers at our Cheese and Wine Evening.

We also recognised that there must be some respite from legal studies, so we made a point of organising social events at Vodka Revolutions throughout the year, and who kindly chose to sponsor the Law Society. The Committee wanted to thank our members for their avid support of the Society, so we organised a free-bar at

Revolutions for an evening, along with free food. I can attest that their food is sumptuous! The Committee, with Ryan Keogh as steward also organised various pool nights and pub crawls throughout the academic year.

I wish to conclude by saying what a pleasure it was to be President of a Society which excelled itself in furthering the opportunities of our student members, and as chairing a Committee so adamant on re-shaping the Society. The Society is now an organisation to take great pride in, and testament to what can be achieved by grit, tenacity and belief in the student law body.

I wish the new Student Law Society President, Fiona Bee, every success this year in taking the Society forward to an even brighter future!