



PLYMOUTH LAW SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021

PLS Committee Officers 2021

President – James Walsh, GA Solicitors

Vice-President - Craig Moore, Womble Bond Dickerson

Honorary Secretary - Rhodri Davey, Kitsons

Honorary Treasurer – James Walsh, GA Solicitors

Council Member – Steven Hudson, Gard & Co

PJLD President – Abigail Payne, CWC

Year as President

As President during the challenging Covid year of 2020 I was expecting to hang up my boots in January 2021, but the PLS members voted me to undertake a second successive year as PLS President. This was to maintain some continuity and hopefully make up for the loss of the fun events I was supposed to attend such as the cancelled Mayflower 400 celebrations and the Dinners hosted by our neighbouring law societies.

I was however proud to be the first consecutive President role since 1933 when Mr P S Snell held the position for an unprecedented 2 year period.

Little did we know, but 2021 was to continue as a further year of challenge for the nation and for every member of our profession as the COVID-19 pandemic would simply not leave us alone.

Unfortunately, there was further disappointment during my tenancy as we had to postpone for the second time the Mayflower 400 lecture, but my hope is Lady Brenda Hale will be able to join us in November.

The good news is there were two Dinners which were not cancelled and I thank Bristol Law Society for their kind hospitality. I also thank our Members for attending our brilliant Dinner in October. To be frank it was touch and go if we would be given the green light, but we were saved due to the fantastic vaccination programme at our host venue at Plymouth Argyle and a decline in positive cases. Thank you in particular to our Honorary Secretary Rhodri for taking over from Neil as Master of Ceremonies and superintendent officer of the 267 who attended who had not seen each other for the previous 18 months. From the feedback it is clear we all had a fantastic evening and it shall live in my memory as will our donation to charity.

As a consequence of the success of the Dinner and the numbers attending which were up by around 100 from 2019 we were able to make a profit coupled with generous amounts deposited in the charity buckets on the night. This resulted in a donation from PLS in December of £3,000 to St Luke's Hospice.

As I mentioned in my Report of 2020 my role as President has predominantly been one of a communicator and middleman as the worrying pandemic took us into 3 lockdowns. This has continued through 2021. We had regular Newsletters to our members which I hope have been useful as a conduit of information between the Courts; Government; and the local profession.

Our legal landscape has changed drastically during the last two years. Offices closed; working from home; staff and trainees furloughed. It has been tough, but I am so glad to hear how our Plymouth firms have rapidly adapted and the majority of our firms have not just survived, but have been able to operate successfully and profitably during this period.

The Plymouth Law Society Committee have continued to meet on the 3rd Monday of each month with the meetings throughout the year taking place via Zoom. We

anticipate continuing to meet in this manner, but shall take a view later in the year if we can return to have a few meetings in person. I would like to thank all our Committee Members who dedicate a significant amount of their own free time to supporting the Society.

Special thanks also to Steven Hudson our Council Member who again devotes considerable time and resource working with the Law Society Council. He has helped immensely this year with issues in relation to the nature of representation on the Council and the problems with the Solicitors Indemnity Fund which effect all practitioners.

Of most enjoyment to me over the last 2 years was our interaction with the next generation of Plymouth Lawyers and our work with the University of Plymouth. Covid has not stopped events taking place and we have had some memorable virtual evenings talking about careers; training contracts; and what life is like as a lawyer. One of my missions for my presidency was to try and put across to the students that Plymouth has a very skilled industry of lawyers and they do not need to leave the City to have a successful career in law. This culminated in more or less my last event as President where gave a speech to the students at their Annual Cheese and Wine Networking event in December at the Box. The feedback given to me and our colleagues filled me with excitement that we have a great prospect of a new generation of very talented lawyers ready to continue our legacy with the Plymouth Law Society.

Past events

Despite the Covid restrictions on events I can report on some success stories for the Plymouth Law Society over the last year.

- January 2021 – liaising with Law Society Criminal Law Committee – safety in the Magistrates courts
- 16 February 2021 – virtual networking evening – students and practitioners on the subject of recruitment in the time of COVID – positive feedback and encouragement for students looking for training contracts and work experience in 2021.

- 11 March 2021 - University Virtual Networking Evening replacing the traditional wine and cheese evening – speech to the students
- 25 March 2021 – PLS Virtual Comedy Night
- 27 May 2021 – Group virtual meeting with local law societies hosted by Stephanie Boyce, President of TLS
- 14 July 2021 – Presidents’ and Secretaries’ virtual conference
- 25 September 2021 – Presentation of PLS prize at University of Plymouth Law Graduation Ceremony
- 7 October 2021 – PLS Annual Dinner at Plymouth Argyle
- 14 October 2021 – Bristol Law Society Dinner
- 2 December 2021 – University of Plymouth – Annual Cheese and Wine Networking Evening at the Box – speech to the students
- 16 December 2021 – Lawyers carol service at St Andrews
- PLS Website – fully redeveloped and rebranded – both public and member only pages
- Throughout 2021 we have worked closely with the University – we have co-opted Luke Fisher and Rosie Brennan to the PLS Committee and helped promote the legal advice clinics run by the students along with networking events on careers
- Since October we have hosted last Friday in the month social and networking drinks at the Treasury – this shall continue into 2022

2022 President

May I wish Craig Moore the best of luck for 2022. He shall have my support and of all the Committee. I am sure the Plymouth Law Society shall go from strength to strength.



James Walsh
President of Plymouth Law Society
6 January 2022