

Gray's Inn new practitioners workshop

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From 21 to 23 May 1999 Gray's Inn held a workshop on Appellate Advocacy and Ethics for new practitioners. A few lucky South Africans participated at their invitation. Guy Hoffman SC, Sharise Weiner SC, Peter Olsen SC, Margie Victor and I participated as trainers and Karen Schneid as a new practitioner.

We were hosted at a welcome dinner by the "usual suspects" Edmund Lawson QC, David Hunt QC and Edwin Glasgow QC at the Charterhouse Restaurant. This splendid dinner set the tone for the weekend. We were wined and dined for the next few days (except, of course, for Saturday night when we had to buy the drinks to celebrate the Protea's crushing defeat of England at the Oval). The Appellate Advocacy workshop is held to hone the skills of new practitioners under three years' standing and the exercises are supervised by trainers (from Gray's Inn and South Africa) and judges who make themselves available for the weekend.

On Friday afternoon the entire group was transported to Highgate House, a lodge and conference centre in the countryside outside Northampton near Althorp (where the Princess of Wales is buried). We were introduced to the participants at a banquet and this was followed by an address on appellate technique by Sir Murray Stuart-Smith, a Lord Justice of Appeal. The workshop sessions were held over the next two days. The sessions were conducted by the trainers with the judge sitting as the "bench" for each exercise. The review method was used for each exercise with us South Africans participating as trainers. Heads of argument ("skeleton arguments") were filed in advance of the weekend and these were also subjected to review. Between each appeal session a quick-fire session on ethics was held in a question-answer-discussion format.



Instructors at the workshop. From left to right: Mukul Chawal, AJ Dickson SC, Anesta Weeks QC, PJ Olsen SC, Anuja Dhir and Lincoln Crawford.



Saturday's night banquet. From left to right: Sarah Foggit, Guy Hoffman SC, Sharise Weiner SC and AJ Dickson SC.

As a recent innovation each group had a solicitor observer who was prompted into making observations and comments at the appropriate time.

We South Africans thought we held our own and contributed meaningfully to the workshop. We were assured that we would be invited back.

It should be noted that the Appellate Advocacy programme has not been in operation long but the organisers are constantly reviewing and modifying the exercises. I found the English models intricate and detailed compared to the models we use at the Natal Bar. The English models are intended to test the skill of practitioners whilst our

comparatively simple models are intended for pupils. Irrespective of the differences there is a great deal we can still learn from Gray's Inn in setting up and conducting workshops.

On the social side we were able to renew our acquaintance with some old friends. Apart from those mentioned above were John Hendy QC, Nick Price QC, Anesta Weekes QC, James Hunt QC and Lincoln Crawford and some new friends in Colin McCaul, Mukul Chawla and Anuja Dhir (who has the most charming Edinburgh accent but who hails originally from Durban!). And then there was, as there always is, Sarah Foggit, who made us all feel at home and solved all our problems. 