

GRAY'S INN BARRISTERS COMMITTEE

STEPHEN INNES, CHAIRMAN

When I canvassed Gray's Inn members of chambers to act as my proposers for election to the Gray's Inn Barristers' Committee, I was invariably asked 'what does the Committee do?' Since being elected as Chairman I still routinely encounter the same question, so I thought I should have a go at answering it.

In a nutshell, the Committee is here to represent the interests of the members of Hall within the Inn, and through the Inter-Inn Committee we compare notes with our counterparts: the Bar Representation Committee in Lincoln's Inn, Middle Temple's Hall Committee and Inner's Bar Liaison Committee.

The Committee's constitution reflects the aim that the Committee should be representative of the membership of Hall, and so it comprises 10 self-employed barristers, three employed barristers and representatives of the circuits. Additionally, the Committee may co-opt members to ensure an appropriate balance with regard to the varying interests of members of Hall. This year we have been pleased to be able to co-opt the President of the Students' Association, AGIS.

In order to promote the links between Hall and the Bench, two members of the Committee attend the meetings of the Inn's Management Committee. Earlier this month, the Chairman of the Management Committee, Master Irwin, attended a meeting of our Committee to talk about the Inn's Strategy Review and to canvass our views on what members want from Gray's Inn. I can genuinely say that I have found all the senior members of the Inn to be most supportive of the aims and aspirations of the Committee.

This is undoubtedly a time of potential change and uncertainty, but also great opportunity, for the Bar generally and therefore for Gray's Inn. A good example is the future of Bar training, given the recent announcement by the Bar Standards Board that different models for the BPTC will be permitted, including the Bar Council/COIC two stage model. It is more important than ever that the interests of the members of Hall are properly represented.

While politicians like to claim that they appeal to a particular group, such as 'the squeezed middle', the group with which Gray's would like to be able better to connect could perhaps be termed 'the missing middle' – the members who drift away from the Inn after qualifying before potentially getting involved again later on through activities such as advocacy training.



The Committee is currently working with the Inn on a number of initiatives which it is hoped will all assist in connecting with the members of Hall:

- planning a series of Young Bar events for members and their guests
- expanding the Inn's mentoring scheme so that as well as students it covers pupils and, potentially, new tenants
- re-developing the Inn's website
- refining the Inn's database of members
- devising a survey of members.

For me, personally, serving on the Committee has provided a very welcome insight into how Gray's is managed and run, and has enabled me to get to know many more people, at all levels, within the Inn. I would encourage anyone to stand for election to the Committee or at least, if they have any comments or suggestions, to pass them on to a member of the Committee (gibc@graysinn.org.uk). I hope that, well before the end of our three year term, there will no longer be the same need for people to ask what the Committee is for!

Members of the Committee

Self-employed

Stephen Innes (Chair)
John Critchley (VC)
Katrina Hanstock (Secretary)
Jamie Clarke
Mark Eldridge
Gwynfor Evans
Samantha Jones
Emma Price
Harpreet Sandhu

Employed

Michael Jennings
Lucinda Orr
Karen Squibb-Williams

Circuit representatives

Harpreet Sandhu (Midland)
Andrew Taylor (Wales & Chester)
Zoe Saunders (Western)
Chloe Fairley (Northern)

AGIS representative

Gethin Thomas