

# New Practitioners' Programme

## Advocacy Training

by Lowri Mai Griffiths

On Saturday 20 March 2009 a number of bleary eyed new practitioners arrived at Middle Temple Hall for the NPP advocacy training. Amongst those desperately seeking coffee were the first ever individuals to attend the Middle Temple NPP Advocacy Course for the employed Bar.

A select group of six, three of us working in the private sector and three working in the public sector, we had first met two weeks previously at the case preparation session. As one of the six, I was nervous about the course, but I was grateful that I would not be assessed attempting more traditional court advocacy alongside fellow new practitioners who are regularly on their feet.

A great deal of time and effort had been put into devising a course that would give us the opportunity to practise some of the key written and oral advocacy skills utilised by employed barristers in public and private practice. Both the private and public sector exercises that were set provided an opportunity for us to practice our written advocacy skills, and also our oral advocacy skills in a manner relevant to all those at the employed Bar. The course focussed on the key advocacy skills required of the employed barrister, persuading senior colleagues and those leading an organisation to follow our legal advice on a given topic.

The private practice advocacy exercise took place in the morning. This required us to prepare a minute advising the Board of an investment management firm on a legal problem, attend a meeting with the General Counsel of the firm to discuss the

minute, and present the minute to the Board. I will admit that the finer points of the financial world are alien to me. Luckily for me, Christiane Valansot of the Investment Management Association and Julian Burling, General Counsel of Lloyds, who had devised the private practice course, did not probe my knowledge of the financial sector too deeply. Instead, along with Master Colin Edelman, they provided helpful feedback and advice to improve our presentation.

All in all, by the end of the morning session, I was feeling more comfortable and ready to tackle the public sector exercise. My newfound comfort level took a knock, however, when I returned to the training room. The Treasury Solicitor himself, Master Paul Jenkins, had joined Master Jonathan Jones, Director General of the Attorney General's Office, who had devised the public sector course, to assess our performance. As a very junior lawyer at the Treasury Solicitor's Department, I was a little terrified at the possibility of making a hash of things in front of

my top boss.

The exercise required us to prepare a submission to a Minister setting out our advice on a legal issue. In the advocacy session we first presented our advice to our legal manager before going to present it to the Minister. As with the private sector exercise, this exercise focussed on core advocacy skills relevant to all employed barristers. At the end of the afternoon, there was a general discussion as to how both the trainers and the trainees felt that the day had gone. There was some discussion as to possible restructuring of the exercises, but the general consensus was that it had been an extremely useful day. Personally, the fact that the exercises were tailored to the employed Bar meant that the exercises and the feedback were more meaningful than they would have been had I participated in the equivalent session for the self-employed Bar. It also brought home to me the fact that the Inn is interested in and concerned about those of us who choose to practice at the employed Bar.

*Master Jonathan Jones, Director General*



*Master Paul Jenkins, Treasury Solicitor*

