

Newsletter



Issue 2 December 2008



LAW CLINIC CELEBRATES FIFTH ANNIVERSARY!

On Wednesday 15th November 2008 the Law Clinic celebrated its fifth anniversary surrounded by established guests, former members and present committee members. Everyone present acknowledged the amazing achievements that the Clinic has made and will continue to make in future years, all of which could not have been accomplished without the support of external supporters, Law School staff and more importantly the students.

From the Director's Desk



As this Newsletter attests, the Law Clinic continues to go from strength to strength. We continue to take on (and generally win) increasingly complex and important cases, and have also started to expand beyond our core advice and representation activities to engage in law reform (see page 9) and to take our first tentative steps in what is often called 'Street law', namely providing the community with information about the law and their legal rights. We continued to maintain very high levels of membership this year. The latest recruitment drive led to a record number of applicants. Although 136 applied we can only manage to train around 60 places, so there were many disappointed students.

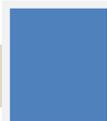
Apart from the extra training required by expanded numbers, my activities have been focussed on Clinic development and ensuring that we have the money to fund this development. As regards the latter, I helped Annabell Fowles with successful applications to the University's Alumni Association and Knowledge Exchange Fund, which together brought in £26,500. Over the Summer, McGrigors also agreed to renew their very generous contribution to the Clinic and I have just heard that DLA will also continue to help fund the Clinic.

To these two firms must now be added Thompsons and Irwin Mitchell, who will also make contributions to Clinic funding. Given that the Law School has now agreed to pay for the salaries of Annabell and Kate Laverty, our two supervisors, we are in a very good financial position. On the other hand, demand for our services means that we are never allowed to stand still and thus the money is already needed for a number of possible new developments, which I hope to describe in the next Newsletter.

We have also been lucky in offers of help with training. As David Martyn's piece shows, we have been very lucky to continue to be offered invaluable sessions on various aspects of Clinic work. Indeed, such was the amount of co-ordination required for training that David was an obvious candidate for Law Clinic student of the year. Given that he also carried a large and difficult case load, and was involved in our biggest settlement ever, he was a worthy winner of this award, even though he had to fight off strong competition from other nominees. The case of the year award was also fiercely contested to the extent that the judges could not separate Carol Doherty and Erika Syme's case discussed at page 8, involving the dismissed waitress, and that of Stuart Kelly and Julie Hodson, involving a faulty laptop, discussed at page 5. Competition for Donald's Ducks was less fierce, though there were a number of incidents - not unrelated to intoxicating drink - which qualified, such as my missing

my last train home after a Central Glasgow CAB party and Siobhan Connor falling off her chair at the Summer barbecue, though if an award has to be made, I think Linda McCann mistaking being burnt by the fire with a bee sting probably justifies the award.

As the above and Siobhan's report shows, the Clinic continues to foster a social environment. More formally, once again, we had a very successful anniversary party in November, which was attended as usual the Principal and Sheriff Principal amongst many others. Here we sadly said goodbye to Jenifer Ross, whose advice on employment law cases has been invaluable and also formally thanked Linda Ion, who will shortly leave the Clinic after three fantastic years of service. Sadness aside, I was very proud to celebrate the first five years of the Law Clinic. In that time I have seen it grow from a small number of students and myself with a small budget to a budget last year of over £60,000, three employed staff, and most importantly over 160 enthusiastic, hardworking and highly capable student advisors. I have no doubt that the next five years will be just as successful.



Farewell Dear Clinic, For the Time Being!



Year 2007-2008 was another successful year for the Clinic with the development of Outreach Clinics, visits from various international academics and the plethora of training opportunities made available to Clinic members and facilitated by student of the year David Martyn. From a personal perspective it was exciting to be part of such a formative year in which there were many things to rave about and much publicity in the form of an extensive article in the Herald,

Following in the footsteps of Lindsay Bruce as Student Director was always going to be difficult considering the time and effort that she invested in the Clinic. The fantastic foundations that were implemented in years gone by were those which I would strive to build upon. For example, since our move from the Stenhouse to the Lord Hope it was becoming apparently obvious that we required further space and IT facilities, which the Law School acknowledged and subsequently granted further space, and

Annabell Fowles joined the team and added further expertise to our extremely knowledgeable team, Effie Shaw received a Doctorate from the University for her service to the community assisted by her work with the Clinic and our very own Clinic students displayed academic prowess displaying the fact that, in my opinion, the Clinic produces some of the finest graduates at the University. It was a sad day when the end of the academic year came round, however, I departed from the Directorship knowing that the Clinic was in very good



Helen's Hellos...

In the time since I took over as Student Director things have been relatively busy in the Clinic! Over the summer, as well as a lot of client work, we have seen a lot of changes to procedures in the Clinic, not least in the form of the introduction to our new Case Management System which has been designed by our IT whiz, Alasdair Stewart together with work on developing from some of our core activities.

On Saturday 1st November myself, Donald, and two other students attended the LawWorks Student Pro Bono Conference at Nottingham Law School.

The Conference was aimed at academics and law students who are involved in Student Pro Bono activities and I have to say it was a real eye opener for me. Hearing the ways in which other law schools run their pro bono activities made me exceptionally proud to be involved with our project at Strathclyde.

We have recently had our fifth anniversary party on bonfire night and the following day we had a pro bono round table meeting within the University to discuss some possibilities of expanding the provision of free legal service in Glasgow and a potential new project which the Clinic can be involved.

Last year saw the development and piloting of our first Outreach Project. This year it would be great to see the continued development of project along with additional new developments in the Clinic.

However it is important to remember that the possibility of developing the Clinic from our core activities would not be remotely possible without all of the hard work which is put in by all the student advisors so I would like to take this opportunity to say thanks for all your hard work, keep it up and here's to another great year!

Home Sweet Home

By Michael Anderson

The client had moved a Canadian Pine log cabin (with two wheels) in 1993 upon land which she had temporary planning permission to occupy because she intended to build a house on separate land (which she owned) directly adjacent to the log cabin.

- Subsequently due to (among others) financial reasons she was forced to abandon plans for the development and remain in her log cabin. There followed around a decade of convoluted “back and forth” with the council wherein they would tell her to apply for planning permission, then she would hear nothing for a number of years. In the intervening years she was connected to various amenities i.e. heating, sewage, electricity and she extended the caravan, all the while paying council tax on the property.

- On 27 July 2007 she received a letter from the Council informing her to apply for retrospective planning permission and she subsequently did so.

- On 31 August 2007 a complaint about the log cabin was made to the planning officer by a neighbour and on 19 November 2007 she received a letter from the Council noting that they were unable to proceed with the application for planning permission because it failed to accurately reflect the development on the ground.

- On 8 December 2007 she received a letter from the Council enclosing an enforcement notice to the effect that she would have to destroy any “additions to the property” and remove her caravan.

- This letter asked for her to submit a written request to withdraw the planning application. This notice told her that if she wished to appeal she must do so, to the Scottish Ministers, by 25 February 2008.

What Happened

The client came into the Clinic on the 21st of February (i.e. we had 3 days to submit the appeal)

thus meaning that myself and my partner, Craig Allan, were forced to move *very* quickly in familiarising ourselves first of all with the material facts of the case and then with the relevant planning provisions (neither of us having done planning law).

This was made difficult by the fact that the client had brought in what appeared to be every document she had ever owned and we were forced to sift through the mass and attempt to find useful and relevant information. Nevertheless, after doing

this, we set about learning what we needed to do and, as a result of our combined effort, we submitted the appeal on time thus buying us time to find the client a lawyer (which we managed) and to draft supporting facts for the appeal to aid the lawyer.

We would definitely have been unable to research the various planning law provisions and documentation if it hadn't been for both Kate and Annabell's extensive guidance, Donald's “cajoling” (telling us to stop mucking about with trying to file the documents- that could be done after we'd saved her home), and the advice of Prof. Mark Poustie.

What I thought of the case

I found the case intensely interesting. Not least because this was the kind of person that I joined the Clinic to help- the client in question was a pensioner with no-one else who could help at such short notice- but also because, although the case was intense, the feeling that I had really contributed towards making a material difference to someone's life was extremely rewarding. As a result of having to learn and practically apply part of planning law, it's now an area in which I have a real interest and would consider pursuing.



Laptops and Article 6

By Stuart Kelly

The Law Clinic was instructed by Mr A, a part-time opera singer who had recently branched out into the world of cabaret. Knowing he needed technical equipment (such as IT for song-lists and speakers and so forth) for future gigs, a recording studio boss Mr A had previously worked with suggested that he would sell him a “brand new hi-tech laptop” that he had in stock for such purposes. Mr A was impressed by the sales pitch and, keen to take advantage of the offer, bought the laptop which was new in its box.

The laptop worked well for a few months, but then suddenly started playing up and crashed on numerous occasions. Mr A did not have access to the internet so there was nothing to suspect other than a technical fault. He returned the laptop to its seller – the recording studio boss – who suggested it wasn’t his responsibility: “I don’t do guarantees, not my problem”.

After weeks of thwarted negotiation, the seller eventually agreed to send the laptop back to its maker (Hewlett Packard) to see what was wrong. The laptop was thereafter returned to the seller, supposedly having had a “small hard drive fault” repaired. Mr A was informed of this but was not convinced – what was this small fault, and why was he unable to find out what it was?

The seller answered neither question, presumably because he did not know. Unconvinced that the problem was fully rectified, and without any confidence in both the product and seller, Mr A refused to accept the returned laptop and instead requested his money back. The seller refused. Running out of options, Mr A went to his local CAB – they advised him to raise a Small Claims action himself, and recommended the Law Clinic for negotiation and advocacy.

The seller proved similarly unequivocal with the Law Clinic – “the laptop has been repaired, what more

can you want?” Initially we thought he had a point – was Mr A being too demanding a purchaser under the Sale of Goods Act? The seller had, after all, sought to repair the laptop. However, a recent House of Lords judgment - *Ritchie Ltd -v- Lloyd Ltd, 2007*- seemed to prove that a purchaser was in fact still able to reject a good if there were reasonable grounds for suspecting the product was not fully repaired, or that the purchaser had not been furnished with enough information by the seller as to the original fault to make an informed decision.



With this case on our side we were quietly confident of Small Claims victory, but we hadn’t bargained for a problematic Sheriff. At the evidential hearing, the Sheriff continually refused us the opportunity to proceed – “this case HAS to be settled” he repeatedly emphasised, brandishing his glasses and tapping his pen. The drama of it all! The problem was, neither Mr A nor the seller wanted to negotiate –

both were adamant of all, or nothing. Eventually, after four hours of frustrated debate, Article 6 prevailed and we were then able to proceed with the evidential hearing and legal argument. Interestingly, the Sheriff had not heard of the *Ritchie* judgment – what’s more, we were told that we were the first representatives to have had the audacity to submit a House of Lords judgment to him in the Small Claims Court.

First time for everything though: *Ritchie* was submitted, our Sheriff let us advance our arguments in full, and he even ruled in Mr A’s favour after a long period of *avizandum*. Mr A wanted to sing he was so pleased – we settled on his treating us to a victory Chinese as a ‘more pleasing’ alternative.



Annabell Fowles

I thought you might be interested in hearing some reflections from your newest member of staff on life as a supervisor in the Law Clinic. I officially started work on the 1st November 2007 following a series of discussions, and at least one lovely lunch, with our esteemed leader Donald. To say his he is enthusiastic about the Clinic is something of an understatement, equal perhaps to describing Maggie Thatcher as an enthusiast of trade union reform. Enthusiasm is always pretty catching and I am happy to report that I am now thoroughly infected with the “justice” bug. Perhaps I led a very sheltered professional life in the public sector as, until coming in to work in the Clinic, I had really no idea of the scale of unmet legal need in this great city, nor the huge variety of legal problems facing some of our poorest and most marginalised communities. They say variety is the spice of life and there is certainly no shortage of spicy factual backgrounds in some of our recent Clinic cases. From Employment Tribunal’s about lap dancing clubs to recovering fees from bogus business colleges, life is never dull. We also have to react pretty quickly in some situations such as in a recent planning law matter where a formal appeal against an order to remove from and demolish an elderly lady’s home had to be turned around in a very short timescale. In that matter, as in so many others, the quality of service to the client was greatly enhanced by the involvement of our academic “legal eagles” and we are extremely fortunate to have their expertise and support. I have also been pretty busy trying to attract additional funding to further develop and expand the Clinic. Our application to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs was unsuccessful but we have received a more positive response from the University’s Knowledge Exchange Enhancement Fund and continue to try and attract support from individual donors, Alumni and the profession. Time sure flies when you are enjoying yourself. I cannot believe that I have been here at the Law Clinic for nearly one year already! How come I still get everyone’s name wrong? I will have to put that down to being a person of a certain age and hope that the stimulating environment of the Law Clinic surrounded by all you enthusiastic bright young things will sharpen me up.



Ilona McGowan: New Advisory Committee Member

Introduction... I’m a second year student doing the graduate entrant LLB and although this probably makes me a mature student, I fail to accept this, and do my best to pretend I’m not!

Background... I was born in Scotland, but spent most of my childhood growing up in Stratford, Canada; a complete rip off of Stratford upon Avon, but nonetheless a lovely place to live. I have travelled extensively and finally settled back in time for secondary school in Glasgow. After completing my first degree I was offered a job as a fashion buyer and stylist (not that you would know it to look at me - do as I say not as I do) and couldn’t resist it. The realisation that fashion wasn’t going anywhere prompted my return to law school as well as a keen interest in the subject as a whole.

Why Glasgow, Why Law? ...Why Glasgow? is easy. After travelling so much as a child I was happy to settle down in Glasgow. I love the humour, and the banter of Glaswegians and it feels like home. The weather is appalling, but I adore our obsession and endless conversations about it. I chose law because I was compelled by how it filters into everybody’s lives, mostly without knowing it. I think it is responsible in driving change and challenging social norms on many contentious issues. I joined the Law Clinic because although I plan to go down the commercial route, I am a great believer of karma and it’s important to give back. In most respects, the Law Clinic is a win-win situation, you experience amazing things but at the same time you’re helping others who need it most. I hope my role on the advisory board will give me a better depth of understanding into how the Clinic works and allow me to contribute in a meaningful way.

Interests: ...My most recent interest is my pug dog, Sid! I aim to push to allow all pets into the Law Clinic, not just Donald’s dogs! Apart from that, I am very social; I love to spend time with friends and family and I go to the gym if I can be persuaded and of course I love fashion. I am learning to sail at the moment and hope to get my qualification next summer.



CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM



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[Log Out] Welcome Danielle McLaughlin!

Welcome to the Law Clinic Case Management System!
While slightly delayed, we've now started to roll out the Case Management System!
All of the Case Managers have now signed off and we're releasing the system in stages - the main Case features are all now available. Please remember to keep both a paper diary and an electronic one, any updates/changes on this will be communicated via email!
Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to train as many advisors as expected at the AGM. As a result, case managers will be providing training at firm meetings to those who have not yet been trained, and following this we will begin to turn on further functionality, for example, our electronic room booking system for the interview room. This staged introduction will also help to alleviate any problems and allow everyone (Advisors, case managers, supervisors/administrators) to become more familiar with the system.
If anyone has any questions, please initially send these to your case/firm manager.



By Alasdair Stewart

All of the advisors in the Clinic should hopefully be aware of our new case management system – which if I can say so myself, is probably the biggest change for the Clinic this year!

Going right back to the beginning, it was only 10 months ago that I took up the position of Information Officer on the executive, and suddenly became intimately familiar with the day to day running of the Clinic. One of the things which quickly became apparent is that while the Clinic's existing systems for recording information "worked", they were far from ideal – I later found out they had originally been designed only as a temporary solution, over two years ago!

Prior to summer, I promised Donald a better way of doing things. As luck would have it, I was successful in applying for a summer post – this seemed an ideal chance to finally turn my promise into reality. Unfortunately, as happens every year, case work took over and it was only thanks to many late evenings and weekends that I was able to present and demonstrate the initial parts of the case management system to the first committee meeting at the start of the new semester.

Since then, the system has grown at an astonishing rate and – judging by Donald's list – is likely to continue to! One of its first achievements was handling all of the application forms for our recruitment this semester, before advisors had even had a chance to see it themselves. From all the training sessions, I've been overwhelmed by the positive feedback. Everyone has commented on the time it should save them and how it will make everyone's tasks just that little bit easier and simpler.

The system has been built in-house and designed specifically for our Clinic's setup. All advisors in the Clinic are already familiar with web-based portals through the University, and the Clinics case management system mirrors this by being web based and accessible to advisors from any web browser. Our focus has been on keeping things simple - the system is based around a diary which advisors can update and enter important deadlines along with any work they've done on their cases.

Rather than holding an electronic copy of the file, the system simply records letters and phone calls in and out, leaving our paper file and electronic document systems intact. The system also provides access to the latest news in the Clinic and easy access to contact information for advisors. Through this, we're able to finally generate on-demand statistics on case loads, information on advisor availability and much more. Case Managers and Supervisors are also able to keep a closer eye on cases, which ultimately ensures that we are able to provide a better and more professional service to our clients!

While case managers have had access to the system for some time, advisors were only recently given access and it was great to see people in the Clinic hub using it within just a couple of days of it going live for them! The benefits will only be realised through everyone using the system, and it seems we're well on our way – keep it up!



CASE: Carol Doherty and Erika Syme By Erika Syme

Some say that the best way to learn is to be thrown straight in at the deep end - that is exactly my experience of my inaugural case. In September of last year I was handed my first case that had been referred to the clinic by Dr Effie Shaw of CAB, Glasgow. Our client was a young employee of a club who had been summarily dismissed due to disagreements with the management. She had been immediately cut off, having never received a contract, with no notice pay and no payment for untaken holidays.

Considering my lack of experience in all things legal, meeting her for the first time was rather intimidating. Here was someone who knew what she wanted irrespective of the challenges ahead. She believed that she had been wrongly treated and wanted to do something about it, in circumstances where the rest of us may just have accepted our lot.

Despite the client's determination and our enthusiasm the case was not without its problems. Upon conducting our research we discovered our client was a mere six days short of the applicable qualifying period, and subsequently could not found an unfair dismissal claim. Additionally, in the spirit of self-help, and before the Clinic took on the case, the client had attempted to contact her employers directly to conclude the matter amicably. Whilst commendable, this had delayed her subsequent application to the Employment Tribunal, possibly jeopardizing her entire claim.

On this basis we were called to a pre-hearing review at the Employment Tribunal. Not only was this the first time that I had appeared in a formal legal setting, but this was also our first encounter with the employer's lawyer. To say that the man was focused and uncompromising was something of an understatement! The hearing ended happily for us as the case held firm despite the time bar issue. However, it was this initial meeting which sparked a sequence of quite astonishing correspondence. While we remained surprised, if a little amused, with the tone of his letters, the respondent's irritation appeared to increase with each well-structured and biting reply.

This cumulated in a threat to seek costs against us for apparently wasting their time by withdrawing our claim for unfair dismissal, despite the clear merit of the other heads of claim.

This was a dramatic and unexpected element of the case. We found ourselves in a position where not only could we lose the case but also cost the client money in the process. We conducted our research but ultimately the decision to proceed was not our call. It was the client's determination, despite the risks, that took the case forward. This was certainly a lesson for me as I discovered that in addition to managing a client's expectations a lawyer's role is to advise not to dictate.

It was with some trepidation that we prepared for the full hearing, scheduled for the middle of February. We attended on the morning of the hearing to be faced with the respondents and an offer – something that until that point had been totally elusive in spite of our best efforts. It was a fair settlement with which the client was delighted. She was now able to move on having proved her point and profited financially in the process.

As for me, it was a steep learning curve from which I feel I have benefited immensely. The case also fulfilled the two roles that I feel the Clinic has – we empowered someone to fight for their cause and I certainly learnt a thing or two in the process.





One of the most attractive elements of Law Clinic membership for students is the opportunity to engage with a wide variety of practical lawyering skills at a very early stage in their degree. From our comprehensive four week induction training programme to the ongoing series of in house and external development courses, the Law Clinic aims to support student advisers in developing the skills they will require to service the needs of our growing list of clients.

In January this year we were delighted to welcome thirty five new student advisers to our induction training programme, where the key skills of client interviewing, clinic procedure, letter writing and file management were addressed by a selection of trainers. This year we were happy to welcome along experienced Clinic adviser Erika Syme, fresh from a highly successful Tribunal appearance, who was able to give the new students the benefits of her recent experiences first hand. This is the kind of peer to peer learning we are very keen to encourage at a more informal level throughout the Clinic.

Another innovation saw Alasdair Stewart record the entire training course, creating a very useful reference resource for students who need a refresher on the basic

principles. Training opportunities for experienced advisers continued apace with last semester's highlights including another employment session with our sponsors McGrigors, a session on client interviewing with experienced mediator Charlie Irvine, a question and answer session with part-time Tribunal Chairman Ian McPherson and an important student-run session on the changes to Small Claims procedure. This last session was based on a course at the Legal Services Agency which several students attended on behalf of the Clinic. These students then passed on the most relevant parts of that session to the wider student body.

In the end, the Law Clinic recognises that in the short time we have with students as an 'extra-curricular' element of their degrees we cannot even begin to fully prepare them with all the skills they will require when attempting to solve our client's problems. However, we hope that by providing a grounding in at least some elements of the skills we all need to develop as lawyers, Law Clinic students will at least feel more confident about the challenges they face in handling a range of unfamiliar cases.



Update on Our Relationship with Thompsons by Caroline Gray

Thompsons solicitors approached the Clinic late last semester in order to create a working relationship with us. Our ex-student director Lindsay Bruce is one of their trainees, so they were already well-informed as to the function the Clinic fulfils. The original idea was that Thompsons would assist us in cases, primarily Employment Law, and that we would provide them with research assistants by way of students. We are currently negotiating a deal along these lines and in fact have started fulfilling our part. Thompsons plan to act on the information gained by the projects so some of our students may very well have played a part in helping to change the law!

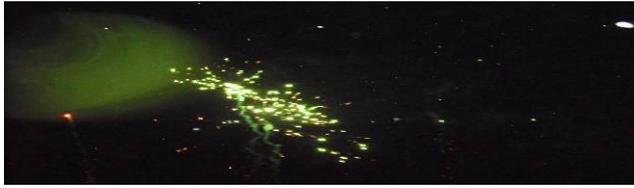
Many of you will have seen our adverts requesting students to work as voluntary research assistants of a couple of projects and so far this year we have sent students on two of these projects, which although very hard work, have been an extremely rewarding experience for those involved.

Virginia Toyi, Kirsty Williams and Joy Bell, all law clinic advisors, started our first project with Thompsons Solicitors back in January. Their 29 page paper which has now been submitted researched a comparative study on time limits for unfair dismissal claims. They examined national time limits (in 10 jurisdictions across Europe) for unfair dismissal and looked at time limits in respect of sex discrimination cases.

Emma Boffey, Jennifer Thomson and Siobhan Connor are currently working on a research project as part of the ongoing Lord Gill Review into the Scottish Civil Courts. One of the factors affecting access to civil justice is the way in which the legal process is funded and they are specifically looking at how the court system and its staffing are funded. Currently, the majority of this funding comes from the public purse. However, there are proposals to make part of this funding attributable to the pursuer litigant. Concerns are rife that such a development would unjustifiably impede access to civil justice - thus the aim of their research paper is to examine how other countries in Europe deal with this issue. The paper examines all 27 countries in the European Union and gathers findings on the court funding process of each, critically examining the success and merits of each method.

Undoubtedly our students have done a superb job and have been excellent ambassadors for both the Clinic and the University!

Don't Stop Believin :Law Clinic Holds Successful Pub Quiz, BBQ and Bonfire Bonanza



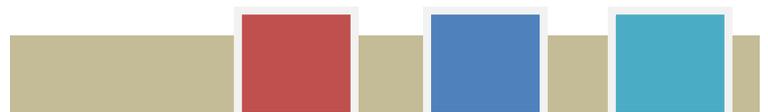
By Siobhan Connor



Who sang, 'twenty five years and my life is still trying to get up that great big hill of hope'? If you know the answer to this question then you either know a lot about 90s pop music or you attended the Strathclyde University Law Clinic Pub Quiz! Since then we have also held a summer barbeque and a bonfire, both at chez Nicolson! A big thanks to everyone who came along to all these events, they have been fantastic with great banter, amazing karaoke debuts, prizes, fireworks and lovely marshmallow soup!



As social convener for the Clinic I believe it is important for us to get together and enjoy a good night out as this will help to cement the relationships we have already built while working with each other on cases. It was also great to see our new members at the quiz and bonfire as well as old ones. Congratulations to the alumni/diploma team who won the top prize limo ride at the pub quiz and also to Donald's team who came in second place and shared their prize of beer with everyone in great socialist spirit. Some people who deserve a special mention for their donations to the raffle and help on the night are Sarah Walker, Barry Berlow-Jackson, David Martyn, Alison Hughes, Hughes Opticians, McClure Collins Solicitors and above all Joni from TJ's entertainment. I would also like to give a huge thank you to Helen Bain and Katy McSkimming for all their help at the recent bonfire – it was wet, but Katy certainly sent sparks flying with her wonderful firework display! Due to the success of the quiz, barbeque and bonfire, there will hopefully be other ones coming up. Watch this space for further events – don't stop believing!



Where are they now...?

Lindsey Reynolds

I studied the LLB graduate entry degree from 2001 – 2003 and completed the Diploma in Legal Practice in 2004/2005. Towards the end of my first year of study, discussions began regarding the Law Clinic and I was really interested in becoming involved. I think the Legal Process course at Strathclyde had raised awareness of access to justice issues and had motivated a lot of the students to participate. It was great to work alongside other energetic, and similarly idealistic students in setting up the project. I was fortunate to be appointed as a team leader, which gave me an overview of the sorts of cases that were coming to use the service and a window into the real world of advice work, which is something that cannot be learned from textbooks.

I completed my traineeship with Legal Services Agency, a law centre in Glasgow, in the Refugee Legal Project, spending six months in the General Court Department, where I learned about residential evictions and dampness and disrepair cases. After qualifying I was pleased to be kept on at LSA, moving to the Mental Health Project, where I am today. The workload is extremely varied and much of the week is spent out and about doing home and hospital visits, and appearing in Court and Tribunals. My current caseload includes mental health detention, judicial review, community care, family law, immigration and asylum, children's hearings, adults with incapacity and medical negligence. I am particularly interested in cases where I am appointed as a Curator ad Litem/ Safeguarder where an adult does not have the capacity to instruct their own Solicitor.

Once I started to feel reasonably settled at work, I decided to return to Strathclyde University to study on the part time LLM in Human Rights. It is a fascinating area of law, and the course provides a useful theoretical background to my day to day caseload.

The Law Clinic did provide solid practical experience prior to the challenges of my traineeship and contributed to my ongoing interest in social welfare law and I would certainly recommend it to any student, no matter what their interests and ambitions for the future.

Aimee Asante



6 years ago I enrolled as a student on the LLB, waving the blue flag of the Tories determined to use my LLB to promote Britain from the drudgeries of socialism, which would obviously include "rolling back the State". Clearly I modelled myself after Margaret Thatcher. So why did I join the Clinic? For the percentile of society determined to work rather than take up the roll of the leech on society's belly; yes, I am referring to those not poor enough to qualify for legal aid, yet not rich enough to afford a lawyer(I know, this would be a good place for Harold MacMillan's 1960's "Wind of Change" speech).

So where am I now? Following 3 years of Law Clinic indoctrination mainly regarding social conscience, I finally caught the bug, burned my blue flag (or at least a small corner of it) and decided I too would join the ranks of those in the struggle for social justice. In pursuit of this, I am currently doing a Ph.D with a focus on land rights and environmental justice, in the Law School, at Strathclyde University. The main focus of my research is Africa. The issues being researched are those questioning whether or not, since the fall of apartheid and other equally oppressive regimes causing people to be unceremoniously relieved of their land, there is a need to change the prevailing international legal approach for determining environmental justice as regards land ownership? Following this, I plan to do something practical with my knowledge...like getting our land back (sorry, getting the people their land back...it's all about the people!).

Back in our day much time was spent in the Clinic planning a "new world:" the end of the LLB, however, saw us all go in different directions. The skills I acquired, however, are now devoted to planning lectures and co-ordinating the BA course, Introduction to Law and Legal Obligations. The best part of the job is setting exams, unequivocally the worst part is marking and the hardest part is encouraging students to look beyond the examination and desire education for the purposes of soul-food, self-improvement and the advancement of mankind as a species, and society as a body.

Have I given up aspirations of world domination? Clearly not; knowledge is power and education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. This time however, I am learning a lesson from Argentina's Eva Duarte de Perón and working to bring up the least in society. Why? In the words of Marian Anderson, "No matter how big a nation is, it is no stronger than its weakest people, and as long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you might otherwise."