

# THE BRIDGE

Issue 6

Winter 2004/2005

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## CHAIR'S ADDRESS—SUE MAYNARD CAMPBELL MBE IS ELECTED



Sue Maynard Campbell, Chair of GSD 2004-2005

I am Sue Maynard Campbell and I was elected Chair of the GSD at the AGM in June 2004. I am a solicitor who has been on the Roll for 25 years. I have been disabled throughout my career, being a permanent wheelchair and PA user.

I went to Nottingham University and read BA Law, and then on to Guildford Law College. Having made the obligatory 80 or 90 applications for articles, I qualified in 1979. I went straight into partnership and then into sole practice after three years.

I currently focus on my role as Managing Director of Equal Ability Limited, one of the country's

leading disability equality consultancies. We are a business-to-business consultancy working across the sectors in training, access consultancy, employment and service planning and development, and research.

For the last few years I have felt detached from the GSD, not exactly sure what was going on. I then got the plea to come to the EGM on the new constitution. It seemed obvious that the Group was at a crossroads and that my skills might assist it.

**Continued on page 2**

## WHAT A CHANGE! BY SUE MAYNARD CAMPBELL MBE

I first went to 113 for my admission ceremony 25 years ago. I can't remember exactly what access was like but my father hauled me up the steps in a manual wheelchair. I went at some point in the 80s and recall having to use a lift that was designed for wheelchair users and short people only. The Carey Street entrance was a distinct improvement, but a long winded way of getting in culminating in a horrendous portable ramp. But now ...

I really do feel included. The new entrance is so discreet that I missed it twice the first time I came. It is under cover so no more waiting for admission in the rain. You go up alongside the steps and come out where everyone else does, by the entrance doors. And the new loo – well I'm a connoisseur of loos and I would give this one 9.5 out of 10. Pretty good by any standards, and not just useful for disabled peo-

ple. The first dinner I came to I waited for it to be vacated, only to find the MC had used it as a dressing room!

Well done 113 for an excellent job!



The disabled loo at 113



Bringing to the fore the abilities and aspirations of solicitors with disabilities



The Group for Solicitors with Disabilities is a Recognised Group of the Law Society

## CHAIR'S ADDRESS BY SUE MAYNARD CAMPBELL MBE

*"I see the issues for the Group revolving around communication and profile."*

I have to say I am re-engaging with the Group at, to put it mildly, an interesting stage. I hope, by the time you read this, we will have signed, or be in a position to sign, the Recognised Groups Agreement. We will then be in a position to re-establish ourselves where we should be: at the heart of disability discussions in the profession.

The GSD should be central to the interface between the Law Society, the legal profession in general, disabled solicitors, the education sector, disabled people wishing to become solicitors, and those wishing to use our services. We are at a time when there are major opportunities for opening up the agenda on disability, such as Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 came into force in October 2004 and the Law Society's own

agenda on equality and diversity.

Those who have been actively involved over the past few years have done a sterling job trying to make progress under difficult circumstances. Rob Wilks, my immediate predecessor, has for instance, begun to move us into the 21st century with his email discussion group. However, the Group does undoubtedly face challenges.

I see the issues for the Group revolving around communication and profile. Communication with members of the Group, and with those we need to reach. These include disabled solicitors having difficulties in the workplace needing peer support from those who have already "been there"; trainees having trouble moving on and those having trouble getting training contracts; the Law Society

in developing its internal and external approach to disability as an equality issue; and the profession generally as it wakes up to the fact we have a Disability Discrimination Act and that it affects *their* practice.

It is a huge agenda, and one we need to tackle in a realistic way. From my experience I suspect there are a number of members who would be able to offer some support, but for whom meeting in London are not the easiest way of contributing. I will be looking at new ways of working, but if you feel that you could contribute, even an ear to a colleague needing support on a very occasional ad hoc basis, please do contact me.

**Sue Maynard Campbell**  
Email: sue\_gsd@hotmail.com  
Tel No: 01924 276498

*"I get a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from my committee work"*

## COUNCIL MEMBER'S MUSINGS BY DAVID MERKEL

It seems like only yesterday that I took my seat at my first Council meeting. In fact it was 3 years ago.

The Law Society lives on

a diet of meetings, committees, lengthy reports and council agendas.

Three years ago, the Council was enlarged to include a number of non-constituency seats. The GSD was accorded a seat and I was elected. Since then, Equality and Diversity has become a Chancery Lane standard. It is up to the GSD to ensure that it is kept as a high standard and that disability issues

and concerns are always to the fore. On a lighter note, I get a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction from my committee work, especially in the area of education and training. Equality and diversity has a direct bearing on this. Linked to this is my buddying / mentoring activities at various law colleges. With the benefit of my Law Society network, it has been possible to help some disabled law students by easing some doors open. After all, students are the future.



**In the arms of the law!**  
[From left] Geoffrey Pointon (Chair of PYV Group), David Merkel and Ed Nally (President of Law Society)

## THE GSD'S NEW EXECUTIVE BY ROB WILKS

While much of the Committee remains the same, the GSD has three new Executive members for the year 2004-2005.

Sue Maynard Campbell has become the new Chair, while David Merkel, an ex-Chair and the GSD's Council Member, has been elected Vice-Chair, and Ian McMichael, a long-

standing Committee member, has been elected Honorary Secretary.

The office of Treasurer remains vacant, on account of the fact that the GSD's finances are currently being managed by the Law Society until the GSD is in a position to sign the Recognised Groups Agreement.

We are always in need of new blood, so if you are interested in being an Executive Member for 2005-2004, please let us know.

## THE FUTURE OF THE GSD BY ROB WILKS AND SUE MAYNARD CAMPBELL MBE

Before Rob Wilks' Chairmanship of the GSD during 2003-2004, the GSD seemed overwhelmed by fighting and inactivity. A loss of direction resulted and it existed in limbo and not in accord with the Law Society's new rules on Recognised Groups, because it had not signed the Recognised Groups Agreement. In consequence the GSD had not secured funding for the year 2003-2004.



Rob Wilks

When Sue Maynard Campbell took over the Chairmanship, the in-fighting and internal politics at that point seemed to have ceased.

The GSD is refocusing

itself on the issues that concern the membership; access to the legal profession for disabled solicitors, trainees and law students and access to the law for disabled people generally. At its final meeting under Rob's Chairmanship it ratified a new constitution and is now in a position to sign the Recognised Groups Agreement.

The main threat to the existence of the GSD at present is the lack of involvement among our membership, a Committee that struggles for new blood and few candidates for Executive positions. This means that the GSD is finding it very difficult to find volunteers to carry out the work required for the Group to be seen as a viable Recognised Group and to represent our constituents effectively.

We need YOU the members. At last count, there were 933 of you, thanks to the Law Society *Groups Recognised by the Law Society* leaflet that was sent out to practising solicitors currently listed on the Roll of Solicitors earlier this



Sue Maynard Campbell

year.

Please respond to a letter from Sue that will be coming to you shortly asking about your wish to become involved and so on.

Without you we cannot continue, but with you we have a huge job that we can, and will, tackle effectively and with enthusiasm.

*"The main threat to the existence of the GSD at present is the lack of involvement among our membership"*

## DEVELOPING LINKS BY LIZ MARSHALL



Liz Marshall

**Liz Marshall talks about how she hopes to develop links as the GSD representative on the Association of Women Solicitors (AWS).**

I agreed to become a co-opted member of the Association of Women Solicitors (AWS) in May 2003 to help build closer links between the AWS and Group for Solicitors With Disabilities (GSD). The AWS and GSD have a shared interest in promoting the development of a more diverse legal profession that is responsive to the needs of its members and clients and more accurately represents the community that it serves.

We have a lot in common so it makes sense for the two Groups to work together to raise the public profile of equality and diversity issues and pursue other issues of mutual interest.

However, there are some notable differences between the AWS

and the GSD. For example, the AWS is positively sedate by comparison with the hot blooded atmosphere of the GSD meeting. There is no need to shout above the noise of the crowd in order to make yourself heard! But the calmer approach of AWS members debating issues is matched by a strong commitment to representing the interests of women in the legal profession.

Another difference between the GSD and AWS is that the AWS has permanently established Working Parties focusing on specific issues, such as publicity, "The LINK" Magazine and policy issues, that meet prior to each main meeting. This helps to move forward key issues on the Agenda and is a good means of allocating responsibility to Group members according to their particular areas of interest and/or expertise. The Policy Working Party responds to relevant consultation papers on behalf of the AWS, such as the recent Department of Constitutional Affairs Consultation on the reform of the Judicial Appointments System and the consultation on proposed changes to the law regulating cohabiting couples.

This year, the AWS and Young Solicitors Group (YSG) undertook a joint research project into the reasons for women leaving the legal profession

and failing to be promoted into partnership at an equivalent rate to their male colleagues, which revealed that many women still face discrimination when they seek to combine professional and family responsibilities. I hope that there may be scope for the AWS to collaborate with the GSD on appropriate joint initiatives in the future, as they have done with the YSG. In the meantime, I will continue to keep the AWS and GSD informed of issues of common interest.

*"The AWS and GSD have a shared interest in promoting the development of a of a more diverse legal profession"*

The Group for Solicitors with Disabilities invites you to a

Christmas Reception

on

Wednesday 15  
December 2004

at

5.00pm

Please RSVP to  
Judith McDermott  
Committee  
Secretary



## DEAF PEOPLE AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION



**Alison has lost her chance to complete the LPC**

Under disability discrimination legislation, the Law Society's Code of Practice, one would have thought disabled people would have no problem accessing the profession.

As a Deaf person, I completed my LL.B. back in 1997, mainly out of textbooks because DSA at that time was not enough to cover interpreting support. I wanted to move onto postgraduate study, but statutory funding was not in place, to cover a rather large interpreting

### ALISON BRYAN £8,000.

bill. All solicitors will be aware, participation and attendance for your LPC is compulsory.

Given this, I opted to work in the voluntary sector so I could at least campaign for change, and change came with a rather tokenistic extension of postgraduate DSA to £5k, and the Royal Assent of the Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001 to cover disability discrimination in education.

Whilst both these measures are a significant step forward, the 'reasonable adjustment' stance, still leaves Deaf trainees out in the cold. Is the £70,000 interpreting and notetaking bill reasonable, bearing in mind an institution has stated that it is only willing to financially cover adjustments up to the course fees, around

Since then, I've started my LPC twice, and I've had to subsequently withdraw due to funding issues. The interpreting bill for my foundation course alone amounted to £7000. My LL.B is now outdated and I am unable to complete the LPC. This is due to lack of financial support for Deaf Law students at postgraduate level.

For institutions to comply with SENDA, the government pumped £56 million into the sector, and most adjustments will have been spent on physical changes e.g. wheelchair ramps and lifts. Access for Deaf people usually comes in the form of higher ongoing costs, which institutions are financially unable or unwilling to match.

Equal access is unfortunately still a dream.

*"My LL.B is now outdated and I am unable to complete the LPC. This is due to lack of financial support for Deaf Law students at post-graduate level."*



**John wants to complete the BVC but the costs of BSL/English Interpreters are too high**

As a BSL user, I have yet to achieve my dream to become a barrister. It has been something I've always wanted to do,

### JOHN SAVVA

and yet obstacles have always been placed in my path: I was even told that I couldn't do a law degree.

Determined nevertheless, I obtained a place at the University of Wolverhampton and completed my LL.B in 2000. I was fortunate to be able to share with other students the costs of BSL/English Interpreters by way of the Disabled Students' Allowance.

I carried out a search for interpreting costs to determine just how much I need to pay for two qualified BSL/English Interpreters for the BVC. The Sign Language Bureau quoted £60,000 to £80,000 for a one year full time course.

The DfES only provides £5,500 per year. The Law School has refused to pay more than the cost of the course. When am I going to get the support I need?

*"The Sign Language Bureau quoted £60,000 to £80,000 for two BSL/English Interpreters for the BVC."*

## SIGHTS SET ON JUDICIAL SUCCESS

**Sir John Wall, CBE was the first blind person in modern times to be appointed Deputy High Court Master in 1990 until his retirement at the end of 2002. Sir John's blindness meant that he encountered many obstacles during his distinguished career. It is a tribute to his determination to succeed that he was able to become a solicitor and then proceed to the Bench.**

The first obstacle that Sir John had to overcome was finding a firm that would actually give him a job. He applied to some 400 firms and had 53 interviews before finally being offered a post

It would be comforting to believe that employers nowadays are less suspicious of the disabled, but it would seem that this isn't always the case. "Things haven't got a great deal better," says Sir John. "A recent Royal National Institute for the Deaf survey revealed that 73% of employers would decline to take on a blind person and 70% a deaf person. In contrast, just 50% of them would refuse someone with a criminal record..."

Sir John successfully qualified as a solicitor in 1954, and he worked from 1956 to 1974 in the legal department of the National and Local Government Officers Association.

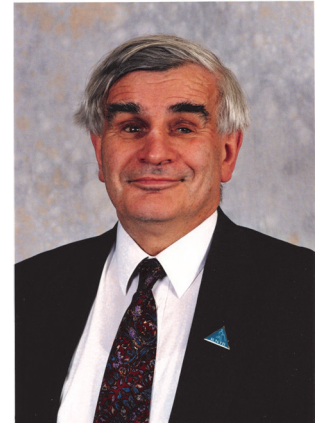
At NALGO he made his

first attempt to join the judiciary. "I got turned down," he says. "The reasons given were that, as a blind person, I wouldn't be able to observe the demeanour of witnesses, couldn't read documents and generally wouldn't inspire the public with confidence."

In 1974, Sir John left NALGO to join the law firm of Middleton Lewis, which subsequently merged with Lawrence Graham – a firm that now has some 80 partners. In 1990, he applied again to the Lord Chancellor's Department to become a judge. He was listened to this time and allowed to become a Deputy Chancery Master working beside a Chief Master for one week. This was followed by another week sitting by himself as a temporary Deputy.

The rest is history. He was formally appointed in February 1991, an event that was reported in a number of newspapers, including The Times and The Daily Telegraph. And he served with great distinction until the day he retired in late 2002.

But was his blindness a considerable hindrance where his judicial duties were concerned? Or did he feel that he fulfilled his duties as competently as a sighted person? "If you were an adult and lost your eyesight over night, then you would be utterly disorientated," he replies. "But if you lost your sight a long time ago, like I did



Sir John Wall CBE

at the age of eight, then you have developed all sorts of ways of compensating.

"Maybe I couldn't observe the demeanour of witnesses, for instance, but I could judge them by their tone of voice. In fact, it can sometimes be very helpful not to be prejudiced by appearances,"

Thinking back on his career, did Sir John find it fulfilling? "Very much so. I enjoyed being a solicitor and was very well paid for my pains. But being a Master was even more interesting. All the relevant facts are given to you by the two counsels and you rarely find yourself spending weeks on the same case – so there's plenty of variety."

In June 1994, Sir John was awarded a CBE by HM the Queen in recognition of services to visually impaired people and was made Knight Bachelor in June 2000.

**By Sir John Wall CBE**

*"... a blind person ... wouldn't be able to observe the demeanour of witnesses, couldn't read documents and generally wouldn't inspire the public with confidence."*

## UNIQUE NEW WEBSITE LAUNCHED BY DEAF LAWYERS UK

Last June, a group of Deaf lawyers came together to create a website to document the existence of Deaf lawyers, provide an online resource and to address topical issues.

The site contains Deaf Blawg, which is an online journal, to be updated regularly. Written by Deaf people, it provides regular comments by Deaf people on Deaf legal access in the mainstream.

The website has gathered support from Deaf lawyers internationally. Henry Vlugg, a Deaf Law-

yer from Canada, said, "I am truly impressed. The website has already pointed me to the UK Equal Treatment book, which I have downloaded and passed onto the British Columbia Law Society Equality Committee, to see if they could do something similar."

Additional support has come from the British Deaf Association. Its Chair, Doug Alker commented, "The BDA welcomes this initiative, and sees it as a significant step forward towards Deaf lawyers having involvement and influence

in Deaf legal issues."

[www.deaflawyers.org.uk](http://www.deaflawyers.org.uk) highlights the potential, professionalism and depth of Deaf talent in the UK that is still not recognised at the beginning of the 21st century.

**By Alison Bryan**



Deaf Lawyers UK was launched in June 2004

*"Last June, a group of Deaf lawyers came together to create a website to document the existence of Deaf lawyers"*

## TRAINING CONTRACT WORKING PARTY

So many of our members are having problems obtaining training contracts and work placements, and with this obstacle in mind, the GSD has set up a Training Contract Working Party to bring awareness to the legal profession and develop special relationships with law firms. This way we can gain an insight into which law firms are truly disability friendly. Evidence currently shows that many firms are not taking disability issues seriously enough and as a result some students are being discriminated against.

**What we are in the process of doing:**

*Open Day* - we are currently in the process of setting up an open day aimed at students with

disabilities with a major international law firm in the City. The open day will take place in December this year.

We are also talking to Law Firms about the following:

*Work Placements* – designated places for students with disabilities.

*Mentoring / Firm awareness.*

*Student open days / shadowing / office assessment day*

*Student recognition*

*Feedback to students who are unsuccessful at training contract / work placement* – sometimes firms refuse to give feedback. To a student

who has disclosed their disability it starts to raise questions in their mind and can open the firm up to litigation.

*Creating a model law firm* – showing the legal profession and the General Public that "a model law firm" is at the forefront of employing disabled solicitors and staff and providing the best possible service for clients with disabilities.

If you would like to join our working party or could help with any of the above we would very much like to hear from you.

**By Ruth Fenton**

*" [We aim to] bring awareness to the legal profession and develop special relationships with law firms."*

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Issue 6. Published by Q3 Print Project Management, Quorn House, Queens Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 1HH © The Group for Solicitors with Disabilities.

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## NEXT ISSUE (SPRING 2005)

If you would like to contribute an article for the next issue of *The Bridge*, please contact us.

Perhaps you want to raise an issue with the GSD membership relating to the obstacles you face in accessing the legal profession, either as a client or legal professional?



Maybe you just want a rant about not being able to secure a training contract?

Do you want to discuss a particular area of law, or problems with applying certain law e.g. the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, to various scenarios?

If you have any articles that you would like to submit, please contact Rob Wilks, Editor, via email: editor@gsdnet.org.uk.

## FUTURE MEETING DATES

The National Committee will meet on the following dates:

Wednesday 15 December 2004  
3.30pm

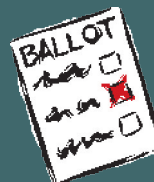
Thursday 17 February 2005

Thursday 14 April 2005

All meetings will be held at the Law Society.

## CHRISTMAS RECEPTION

Wednesday 15 December  
2004  
5.00pm



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 19 May 2005

## GSD OFFICERS 2004—2005

### EXECUTIVE

#### Chair

Sue Maynard Campbell

#### Vice-Chair and Council Member

David Merkel

#### Honorary Secretary

Ian McMichael

#### Treasurer

James ? (tbc)

#### Immediate Past Chair

Rob Wilks

### COMMITTEE

#### Elected

Jonathan Bindloss-Gibb

Alison Bryan

Ruth Fenton

Jeremy Hooper

Liz Marshall

Julia O'Brien

#### Co-Opted

Brian Perham

John Savva

Marcus Turley

Sir John Wall

Are you not happy with the way the GSD is run? Do you want an opportunity to put your views across?

Why not become a GSD Officer or a Committee Member in 2005-2005?

If you're interested, please contact Judith McDermott.