

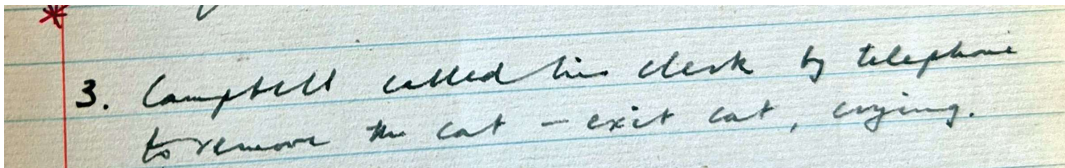
After dinner, people meandered over to the bar and remained there for a while, perhaps shy about going to the disco and showing off their dance moves to the senior members of the Bar and the members of the judiciary they will likely be appearing in front of at some point in future. Whoever did make their way down to the basement disco found a spacious, cool room equipped with a DJ playing (his interpretation of) the greatest hits, including all the Abba favourites, Bohemian Rhapsody and Mr Brightside.

The night finished for most by 1 or 2 o'clock in the morning, and people trickled off back to their rooms with tired feet, sore throats and cheesy tunes playing in their heads. I do not think I was the only one already picturing the strong cup of tea and full English breakfast that I knew would be bringing me back to life the next morning.



Above: Sign leading to the basement disco;

Below: An excerpt of FLBA minutes dated 11th June 1964



Sunday Morning

Joanne Boyle | 3 DJB Chambers



Having stayed up until the clock struck 12, I cannot in good conscience suggest to readers that Day 3 started with a full English following a lie-in. In fact, Day 3 started much earlier with midnight battlelines drawn between those keen to finish a nightcap in the Bar and those whose dancing shoes (including gold cowboy boots!) were itching to get onto the dancefloor. The 'dancefloor' being the 'basement', which had undergone its fabulous FLBA annual transition from empty, cobwebbed storage room to a laser light disco. Tunes from the DJ echoed down the hall, which left no doubt about the disco's otherwise inconspicuous location. Once there, DJs of a more familiar kind were spotted off-duty chatting, singing and dancing with both Judicial and Bar colleagues, young and old, underpinning, perhaps, the uniquely wonderful experience that Cumberland Lodge offers to all members who attend.

The next morning provided a much-needed buffer between a midnight boogie and the first talk of the day. From what I observed, breakfast was welcomed by all. No doubt because it reliably

caters to both health-conscious attendees grabbing fruit, yoghurt or cereal after a sunny morning walk and to the late rising weekend fry-up lovers, amongst us. I am sure all will agree that the wonderful, helpful and friendly staff are what makes Cumberland Lodge so inviting.

Next, the 'reflections' offered by the President on Day 2 were continued by our Chair, James Roberts KC, in a more informal manner, with a reading from archived FLBA minutes dating back to 11th June 1964: 'Campbell called his clerk by telephone to remove the cat. Exit cat, crying'. Clearly, retaining the confidence of FLBA discussions was of such importance that they could not be overheard by man nor animal - a principle which, I can confirm, was continued during our weekend under Chatham House Rules, as amended. Having said that, I did spot Sybil the Tortoise on the lawn close to the conference room... I can gladly report, however, that Sybil was not as mischievous as the cat of 1964 who repeatedly features in our archived minutes for interrupting otherwise orderly FLBA business. As James finished his concluding remarks,



we were reminded that his appointment as Chair is sadly also drawing to an end and that this was the last FLBA weekend he will attend in Office – a huge loss to FLBA, including those of us at the junior end who value being led by such approachable senior colleagues.

The last lecture in the drawing room was delivered by Julie Hine, who is responsible for assisting the Official Solicitor (who is a real person) and Public Trustee, Sarah Castle, to manage family litigation within a team of 4 other family lawyers. We are reliably informed by Julie that should we find ourselves seeking clarification at any stage in the OS appointment process, including needing instructions at court, then the first and most straightforward step is to telephone the OS' offices, whether raising a query as a Barrister or as a Judge. Other key takeaways were gratefully received.

After a coffee break, a panel discussion followed on the main lawn, hosted by the

Junior FLBA committee: Giorgia Sessi, Calum Smith and Poppy Sparrow. This chat was the most informal of the weekend and focused on important issues affecting all Juniors. In short, members expressed a keen interest in formal mentorship being arranged for those in the catchment of new tenant up to 5 years' Call which would provide an opportunity for mentees to seek guidance from a mentor from a different circuit. Professional Therapeutic Supervision, an unfamiliar concept to most, was explained and encouraged by those with experience of it who explored the possibility of connecting members to it through FLBA channels. We were reminded to take advantage of rewards offered by the Bar Council's business partners for the Bar scheme; and encouraged to promote positive change, whether by reporting inappropriate behaviour and bullying through Talk to Spot, proposing necessary changes within chambers, or completing the Barristers' Working Lives Survey 2025.

Day 3 ended with lunch served on the lawn in the baking sunshine. For me, this is always a wonderful opportunity to reflect back on the events of the entire weekend. Whilst I did that, iced diet coke in hand, I looked around and noticed how acquainted and comfortable members were with one another, having exchanged personal and professional anecdotes over the past three days and having learned and exchanged ideas together, as always irrespective of Call. Some may say in true FLBA fashion.

Until next year!



From top to bottom: James Roberts KC delivering concluding remarks; Sybil the tortoise; Julie Hine: *Introduction to the Office of the Official Solicitor and the Public Trustee*; Group photograph on the Lawn.