

CitySolicitor

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CITY OF LONDON SOLICITORS' COMPANY AND THE CITY OF LONDON LAW SOCIETY

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PETER ACKROYD

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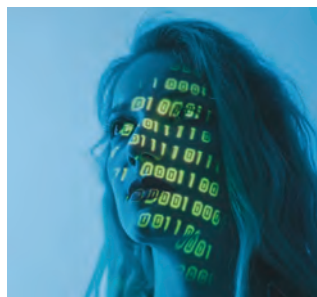
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GLOBAL HUB

6 LONDON. SIMPLY THE BEST

World leader in so many ways. What makes this amazing city so superlative?



8 THE SECRET WEAPON IN OUR ARMOURY

Technology, far from being a threat, is helping London maintain its position as the legal hub of the world. But it is actually doing even more for our city – it is helping us become the global number one for Lawtech too.



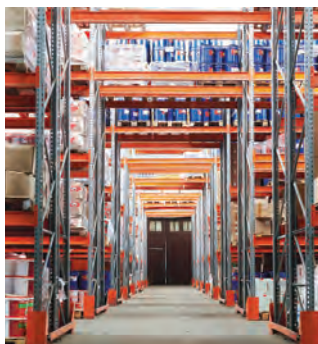
12 THE MUST HAVE FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRMS

Lawyers from all over the world choose to work in London. Law firms wanting to be truly international see a London office as an essential. We look at the advantages and; pitfalls of being a foreign lawyer in London and of being an English lawyer working in a foreign law firm.



16 CAN THE YOUNG PRETENDERS STEAL OUR CROWN?

London has for a very long time been considered the place for arbitration. But Singapore and Paris – amongst others – are now hot on our heels for that position. What can be done to ward them off and maintain our crown?



20 HOW BUSINESS IS GETTING ITS HOUSE IN ORDER

As well as having some of the greatest talent in the world in London law firms, businesses both British and global are benefiting from having the highest calibre of legal brains working in-house. We spoke to four such lawyers who have turned their back on private practice and never looked back.

24 OVERCOMING GLOBAL CHALLENGES — AND TURNING THEM INTO OPPORTUNITIES

Beyond our own profession, London is one of the leading business centres of the world, boosting our economy and our reputation and providing jobs for many. COVID, Brexit, the Ukraine war and rising inflation have negatively impacted these businesses, particularly SMEs. How can London address these challenges and make changes that lead to an even more positive future?



26 IMMERSE YOURSELF IN JAPAN (WITHOUT LEAVING LONDON)

We visit the Aubrey at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Knightsbridge and immerse ourselves in the 19th Century world of Aubrey Beardsley while having a very private, intimate and totally unforgettable Omakase Experience with Pietro Rizzi.



29 CAR COLUMN

Gigafactories and the challenges of change



30 LIVERY NEWS



32 SIP

Our regular wine columnist explores urban wineries and visits three extraordinary wine producers all in the heart of London. Plus we take a leaf out of Academie du Vin Library and dip into some of the finest wine books in the world.

34 THE LAST WORD

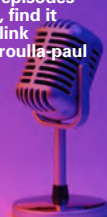
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editor's letter



I AM ABSOLUTELY DELIGHTED AND PRIVILEGED TO WELCOME YOU TO THE NEXT EDITION OF CITY SOLICITOR IN MY NEW ROLE AS EDITOR.

This is a role I have taken on after Philip Henson, your last Editor, stepped up to become Chair of the Editorial Board. Phil's shoes are big ones to fill but hopefully with his guidance and help, we can continue to produce stimulating, informative and challenging material for you to enjoy and digest.

The theme for this Autumn issue is GLOBAL HUB and we dedicate the entire magazine to the glory of London.

We are so fortunate to live and work in this incredible city which is globally recognised as sitting at the pinnacle of the world.

We explore what has made London become the pre-eminent choice for business and, in particular, for our own profession. We look at why individuals and firms choose to work here. But we also examine the challenges it will face in the future and the weapons it will need to deploy to maintain this highly prestigious position. Who are the upstarts threatening to take our crown?

Our capital is also renowned for its extraordinary hospitality sector – which in essence allows us to travel the tastes and flavours of the world without leaving the city. We visit the Japanese influenced

and inspired Aubrey situated in the Four Seasons Hotel in Knightsbridge, and we taste some urban wines – did you know some of the finest winemakers are producing incredible vintages right here in our city?

And I examine Westminster's increasing politicisation of the green agenda, fuelled by the expansion of ULEZ, UK domestic finances and a series of looming net zero targets.

I truly hope you enjoy my first issue, and I would welcome your feedback and your comments

Joel Leigh

Editor

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“We are so fortunate to live and work in this incredible city which is globally recognised as sitting at the pinnacle of the world.”



LONDON SIMPLY THE BEST



London has been named "Best City in the World for 2023" (for the 7th year running so this is no fluke win) in a recent ranking by Resonance – beating other major world cities such as Paris, Tokyo, Dubai, Bangkok, and New York.





It is the number one city for the Arts; theatre, photography, dance, opera, film, music, design, architecture – you will find them all in abundance and in their finest in our capital.

With 71 Michelin starred restaurants, it is definitely a foodie paradise. But as well as the fine dining, there is cuisine from every place on the globe, there is street food, good old pub grub like fish and chips (with over 7,000 pubs you are never more than 7 metres from one) not to forget our famous pie and mash shops.

8.4 million trees and 300,000 gardens means that London matches the UN definition of a National Park. Pretty amazing for an urban city with almost 9 million inhabitants.

It is not just for the Brits. It is truly open. Home to 270 nationalities with over 300 languages spoken here.

There is little you can't do in London – professionally and socially. Like Aubrey Beardsley, you can “taste” Japan without the jetlag, like the finest French chateaux, you can produce some of the world's finest wines and like Samuel Johnson, you can never tire of life.

London is amongst the best as a financial hub, as a business hub, as a tech hub and, most importantly for us, it is the pre-eminent legal hub of the world.

We look at what makes London so great in terms of the legal profession – both in private practice and in-house, what draws practitioners and clients from all over the world to work or choose to settle disputes here.

We look at what we need to do to maintain this position and who is snapping at our heels to take over. We also examine how businesses generally can combat the unfavourable cards they have latterly been dealt to carry on winning.

(And – obviously – we follow in Aubrey's footsteps and also do a bit of winetasting.)

“We look at what we need to do to maintain this position and who is snapping at our heels to take over.”

THE SECRET WEAPON IN OUR ARMOURY

When you reach the top, that is where the work really begins. Others will not only copy but innovate in order to compete; you need to always be one – or two – steps ahead. To maintain your position, you need to find new strategies, new behaviours and, ideally, a secret weapon.

Our profession has a love/hate relationship with technology. Initially some feared or rejected it – but embracing it is our way of maintaining London's position as the global hub for law. Lawtech is the weapon that allows us to work more efficiently, more accurately, more cost effectively. We can be smarter, quicker, better. Interestingly, despite our profession being known as one not always the first to adopt change, the legal profession in London is ahead of its competitors in the rest of the world in seeing the potential lawtech offers and fully grasping it.

Increasingly, law firms – alongside their traditional and expected practices – have a lawtech and innovation department as part of their armoury. Christopher Tart-Roberts is Head of Lawtech and Chief Knowledge and Innovation Officer at Macfarlanes LLP.

Chris began his career as a solicitor in the late 90s and, initially, trod a very traditional path. He did his training contract at Linklaters LLP and was a banking lawyer there for nine years. He then went on to be a banking partner at Pinsent Masons LLP. Through all of that time lurked an ever growing interest in technology. When he qualified in 2001, that coincided with when Linklaters were first starting to use some of the automation technologies which are now widely used today. These fascinated Chris and he could see the potential for them.

"Ten years ago I decided to be brave. There was enough going on in the world of legal technology to be able to say this

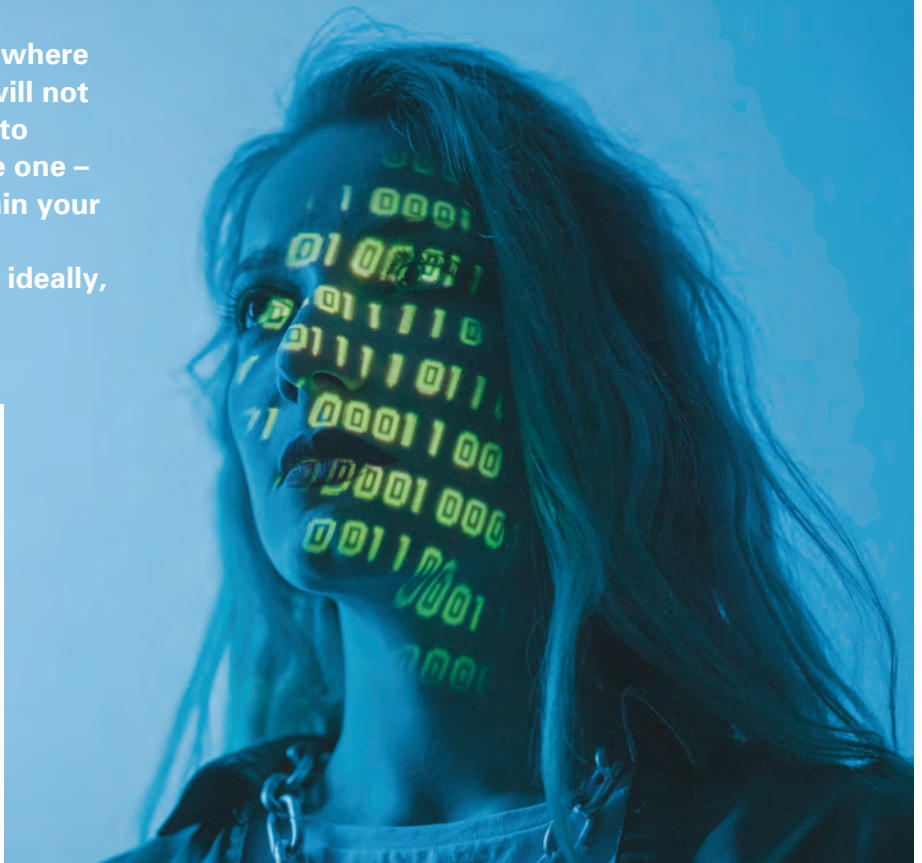
is a career path in itself. I stopped writing loan agreements and delved deep into the world of AI."

Chris set up a nascent legal technology team at Macfarlanes – initially just him and a paralegal which today is 20 plus. This is a combined team of lawyers, technologists, data and information science specialists, change management specialists, people with backgrounds in product – and much more.

"We sit as a practice area which is somewhat different from how other law firms operate. Our remit is to look at how we can use technology for the benefit of our clients; both how to enhance the quality of the services we provide to clients across the board and also how we can use technology to develop new products and services to offer to our clients."

Chris describes his role as one that bridges different worlds. It is about knowing and understanding the technology despite not being an IT person, knowing what you can get out of legal technologies and also understanding the legal context which, for Chris, comes out of a long period of actual legal practice. Others in the team come from a tech background and so are building their knowledge of the legal side but everything they collectively do encompasses both law and technology and involves being able to talk in both of those languages and to bring them together."

"Where a disconnect can occur is where you get good technologists are quite a long way removed from the lawyers, who are distant from the coal face and who speak a different language. And vice versa. I sit in both camps and bring them





together. I'm not saying what we do is a translation role because it is way more than that – but absolutely translating and bridging is a fundamental startpoint. How we can have knowledge on both sides of the equation that brings it all together without a gap in the middle is what my work entails."

Most of the big City law firms now have such resources to a greater or lesser degree and in different shapes and sizes. There is no consistency in what the different firms are doing. Chris contrasts it to when he was a banking lawyer and one firm's banking practice looked much like another. But what firms are doing in the name of legal technology differs quite significantly.

"Some firms are looking at incubating technology. Some are looking at developing the technologies themselves. Some are positioning this capability as a business support. Some as part of their client offering. Some firms do one or some of these, some do all. There are no hard and fast rules."

If, generally speaking, the legal profession is conservative and slow to change and technology is at the polar extreme of that spectrum, has Chris encountered any resistance to what he is trying to do?

"Resistance, no. But there is absolutely work to do to help people understand the benefits technology can bring in their specific context and help them understand in a way that makes complete sense. In the context of a lawyer's day to day work they need to see what the technologies can bring to a specific task and to clients."

How does Chris view the recent acceleration in the growth of Artificial Intelligence? Is the profession observing it with fear or enthusiasm?

"AI is very much an enabler. I cannot emphasise that too much. It is a fascinating area and over the past five years there has been so much progress – and this has escalated in the last six months. This is hugely exciting. But a lot of what you read is not based on real knowledge. Once you get your hands on them and try them out you see the reality of where we actually are; which is that at the moment the technologies are helpful but nowhere close to doing the job of a person. They will help a person do their job, they will enable that person to do that job more quickly, more accurately and to improve robustness and consistency but

"When you consider the outputs you deliver to your clients, technology allows you to enhance those in a really significant way."

any talk of AI taking our jobs right now is pie in the sky."

Chris believes that, in London, law firms have been taking the potential of lawtech more seriously than anywhere else in the world.

"When I look at who is doing what across the world, London firms are at the forefront. It is our firms who have been the most active for the longest time, who put lawtech front and centre in the context of their client offering."

Why is this?

"The way that legal technology has grown within London law firms has, to a certain extent, come out of other functions we have had in play for a long time. Areas like professional support and knowledge management. The technologies we are now using to develop new services for our clients come out of automation

technologies that knowledge management teams have been using for 20 years to automate precedents that lawyers use – we are now leveraging that technology to go on to do amazing new things with it. Firms in other parts of the world do not necessarily have those originating functions. If you go over to the US, the concept of professional support lawyers is really thin so there is not the same base point to build out from. A lot of it is about momentum. London firms had the originating functions – and the investment – so once the ball got rolling it snowballed."

Does Chris believe that this ace card London seems to have in terms of leading lawtech will help us maintain our position as the global legal hub?

"Yes. It is about excellence in what you do. In the services you provide and the way you provide them. It is about excellence in what you deliver to your clients. Technology offers astonishing potential to help you achieve excellence in these areas. To really drive forward the way you do your work. Similarly, when you consider the outputs you deliver to your clients, technology allows you to enhance those in a really significant way. Being able to deliver your advice to your clients in an online interactive format that clients can use in a more sophisticated way and plug into their own systems is so superior to having things stuck in a word document. Technology unlocks so much. The fact that we are significantly investing, as a group of firms in the City, in technologies, in teams to fully leverage





“Firms who are implementing legal technology are allowing themselves to spread out and for people to operate remotely.”

these technologies and in the culture within our firms so that we fully understand and are able grasp the potential, can all lead to us not just maintaining our position as the pre-eminent city for law but for lawtech too.”

Amy Conroy is a Data Scientist at Mishcon de Reya LLP and a founder of Law School 2.0 whose mission is to bring change in the legal industry from the ground up through education reform, mindset change, and practical opportunities.

Amy is originally from Canada. She studied Law at Bristol University and, originally, had every intention of returning home to practise as a criminal solicitor but having studied criminal law in her first year discovered that she hated it! In her third year she did an IT module at the same time as writing a dissertation on AI and the right to be forgotten – and the bug bit. She came across a Masters in Computer Science that Bristol offered, it was a conversion programme which took a year. She tied together her law degree and her computer science degree by writing her thesis on creating an automatic case summarisation system where you put in a judgement and it gave you a summary generated using machine learning. She then worked as a legal engineer at a document automation startup and it was during this period she met Annabel Pemberton and Nathan Corr. Annabel is a trainee lawyer at a startup firm in Prague, a small firm whose primary focus is tech clients. Nathan was, at that time, studying at Aberdeen and had set up one of the first lawtech societies for students. Minds met as the three of them realised there was no clear route from university to

using or working in legal tech – and so Law School 2.0 was born.

“We wanted to create an organisation where we could bring people together to teach them about lawtech and what it actually means. Most students and even lawyers who you speak to think it is about AI taking over jobs, about robots replacing lawyers – we wanted to teach people how to be innovative, how to start from basics when they don’t have access to big, expensive technologies (which is obviously the case in the smaller law firms). A lot of technologies come with a requirement for a minimum number of users per licence – and that can be something like 300k to implement a document automation solution for example – so this immediately rules out so many firms from using certain legal tech tools.”

Amy’s day job at Mishcon is in their tech team, building solutions internally and deploying them within the firm.

“Mishcon is an interesting firm in that it is most definitely open to new technologies. This is evident through the companies in the Mishcon de Reya group. One of which is MDRx, an in-house tech consultancy focusing on emerging technologies. There is also MDR Lab who bring in tech startups into our firm to work with our lawyers. Generally at Mishcon there is huge excitement about technology. With new technologies like ChatGPT, people are so excited to get their hands on it and start working with it themselves. It’s probably one of the first times that our data science team, and I’m sure it is the same for data science teams at other

firms, are the ones trying to slow things down until we can test and verify the accuracy of the models for different use cases in the legal industry.”

Whilst Amy believes that the legal profession’s adoption of lawtech can help us maintain our pre-eminence, it also offers us the opportunity to decentralise.

“When COVID hit, it kicked a lot of law firms into gear to set up different technologies. For the first time, you couldn’t just put a contract on someone’s desk and ask them to approve it. We had to figure out a way of passing it remotely. Firms who are implementing legal technology are allowing themselves to spread out and for people to operate remotely. Because we have new processes, created using technology, in place, that make this possible. Allowing lawyers this flexibility gives them more time to concentrate on working rather than commuting or travelling to meetings. This in turn makes them more efficient and seals our position as the best.

There is another upside. Because, through necessity, London firms grasped technology with such fervour, there are now so many lawtech firms based in London that, as a result, we are now being acknowledged around the world not just as a legal hub but as a lawtech hub. The Government of Canada recently recognised this with an initiative that sent out a number of lawtech startups to Canada to try and spread what we have developed and implemented here.”

Amy believes London is more advanced than the rest of the world in terms of what we are outputting with our lawtech startups – mostly around contracts. In terms of case law, Amy sees the US as being more advanced and puts this down to access to judgement data.

“The sheer number of lawtech startups in London is staggering. They are competing with each other which drives them to be excellent. When you combine this with in-house teams like our own, we are definitely earning our reputation as a lawtech hub.”

What does Amy believe is the greatest contribution that lawtech can give to our legal system?

“Access to justice. Lawtech allows us to offer services to society. We can take repetitive tasks that firms do and probably charge quite a lot for and turn them into services that can just be output for your



everyday individual, who likely can't afford traditional legal services. Take the automation of contracts – this would mean for lawyers, we only have to draft it once and for consumers it would make it so much more accessible cost wise, as all they need to do is fill out a questionnaire and have their contract generated. Obviously, we would have to take great time and care to make sure the contracts are automated in a safe way and are fully accurate – but, with these provisos, this can really open up the reach of the law.”

Jessica Jia Shin Leau is Head of Partnerships at PocketLaw. PocketLaw ‘offers a suite of easy-to-use tools to streamline your legal processes and drive efficiency, reduce costs, and achieve better results faster. Everything from contract drafting and automation, and collaborating with colleagues, to eSigning, secure tracking and storage, and task management. By unifying contract management and automating key legal tasks, PocketLaw helps companies optimise their legal processes so teams have more time to focus on strategic initiatives while maintaining control and quality.’

Jess is a UK qualified lawyer and practised with London firms as a corporate lawyer specialising in M&A for many years before moving to PocketLaw – and also to Sweden where she now lives. PocketLaw has offices in London and Berlin which Jess visits as frequently as possible. At the end of 2019, Jess moved to Stockholm with her Swedish husband (courtesy of Brexit) and has participated in PocketLaw’s journey since April 2020 when they launched in Sweden. Seeing very quickly that the UK and London is actually a better market for the product, PocketLaw launched in London within a year of launching in Sweden. Now they are co-headquartered between the two cities. Both the founders are Swedish but the UK has a much faster adoption rate; the opportunities in London are huge.

“It is a double edged sword. There are more competitors in London; fiercer competitors, the appetite for business is stronger – they are more aggressive, everyone wants to get ahead and they are prepared to take risks to find that one thing that gives them the edge. That said, Sweden is hugely digital though, very big in tech generally and very innovative. At PocketLaw, we benefit from the best of both worlds. Sweden, being a smaller market, has its perks. With a smaller market, Sweden is a valuable location to test new ideas and products before rolling them out to larger markets. Word of

mouth is a lot quicker and there are fewer competitors but the market size in the UK is far bigger than Sweden will ever be.”

PocketLaw is an end to end solution, meaning it helps companies discover precisely what they need through a series of questions. It covers all day-to-day aspects of business law, from corporate to employment to GDPR to share incentive schemes. If you already know what you are looking for, you can go straight into the template bank where you will find 400 plus jurisdiction specific contracts. As well as a template bank, PocketLaw is also a contract management system. Again, after a simple format of short questions you can create your contract and send it out for e-signing directly from the platform.

“We are not replacing lawyers. We know the value lawyers can bring. Half of our team are lawyers themselves. But we are replacing Google, asking your friends for an old contract etc..

We work with partner law firms for further help and advice. Our platform also supports legal teams and businesses in optimising their legal processes to support their overall business goals.”

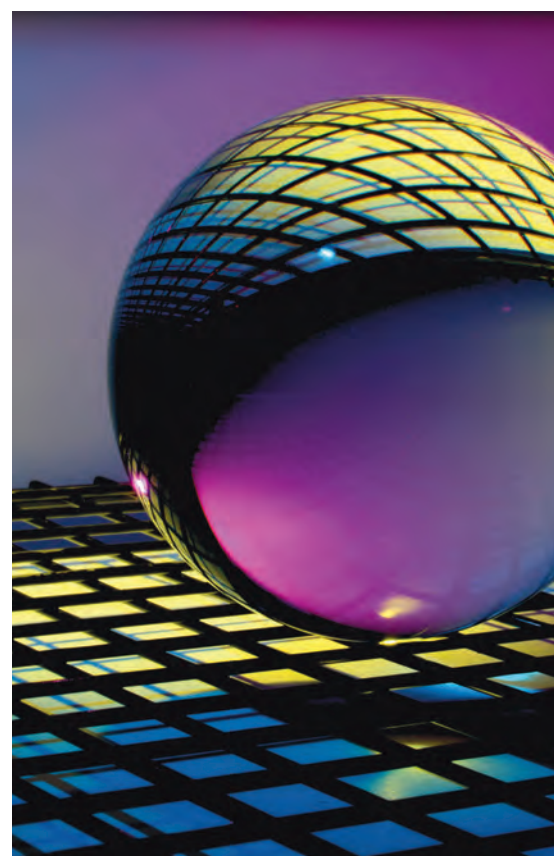
Even as a corporate lawyer, Jess always had a huge interest in tech. In one firm she worked in she started an initiative called Techlaw Hub. The firm, DKLM LLP, was based in Old Street and there were 3,000 startups in the postcode so there was always a buzz about technology.

How does Jess think London compares with the rest of the world in lawtech?

“I would say London is definitely ahead. We have found that Germany is a little bit behind in digitalisation generally, not just lawtech. They are slower, compared to London, in adopting digital tools for their companies. If you look at Eastern European countries, they are more en par. But everyone wants to tackle the UK. There are so many opportunities – everyone wants to be there. People there adopt quicker and faster.”

Jess feels being involved in law in Stockholm is a very big shift from what she was used to in London.

“There is a big difference in the consumption of legal services in Sweden compared to the UK. It is not uncommon for a lot of matters to be absorbed internally, or pushed to an accountant in Sweden. Whereas in London businesses are more



“London is establishing itself as another global hub, in lawtech itself.”

prepared and open to approaching lawyers even at quite an early stage.”

Jess believes London is quicker to adopt lawtech partially because businesses in London are better enlightened on the merits and benefits of better access to legal services. There is an apparent increased demand for streamlined, cost-effective legal services to accelerate agility and quick adaptation in the increasingly complex legal landscape. More people understand the need for it, even if they do not necessarily have the budget for it.

It seems that there is little doubt that London’s keenness and enthusiasm in adopting lawtech is not simply helping it maintain its place as a global legal hub but is pushing it even further away from the competition who generally are taking on these technologies much more slowly. And, in addition, London is establishing itself as another global hub, in lawtech itself. Definitely a win-win situation.

THE MUST HAVE FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL LAW FIRMS

Wherever the main base of a truly international law firm is, it is becoming increasingly inevitable that a London office is part of the practice. As the global hub, a presence here is not just a luxury but almost a mandatory to be playing in the top leagues. We spoke to three different lawyers; one from China and one from Denmark who decided to open up offices here as well as to an English lawyer who works for an American law firm in London.

Squire Patton Boggs is a full service global law firm. The Squire part was originally Squire Sanders & Dempsey which was formed in Ohio in the 1880s. The Patton Boggs is from a very distinguished lobbying and legal firm based in Washington DC. They merged in 2014. The transatlantic merger which led to a prominent London office dates back to 2011 – which made them an international firm. They have 16 offices in the US and 4 in the UK; as well as London, they are based in Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. This is unusual for an American law firm. The merger was complementary in that the UK firm had offices primarily in Western Europe and the US firm had offices in Eastern Europe so it created a global presence. In Europe, they opened their 16th location recently in Dublin. They also have offices in Australia, China, Singapore and Tokyo as well as the Middle East.

What is interesting is that the London office is the largest of them all. It has very few American lawyers based here but borrowing from the multicultural nature of this city and the internationalism of the firm, there are lawyers from all over the globe accommodating tens of languages and it feels international in the truest sense.

One of Squire Patton Boggs' lawyers is Carlton Daniel who advises on intellectual property rights, commercial contracts and consumer regulatory law. He handles both contentious and non-contentious matters. To quote from the firm's website;

'Carlton is a recognised star in the advertising and marketing field and frequently speaks at client events and industry conferences. His practical and commercial approach is bolstered by

having spent time on secondment at BT plc, BP plc and Birds Eye.'

We spoke to Carlton about what it is like to work in an American law firm in London and why he thinks it is important for any international firm to have an office here.

Carlton's own career began with a realisation of the importance of London. Originally from Birmingham, he was only interested in Midlands firms. But, whilst at law school, he very quickly understood that if he wanted his career to flourish, London was the way to ensure that. He was working as a trainee solicitor with Wragge & Co (who rebranded as Gowlings) who offered for him to complete the second half of his training contract in London rather than Birmingham and he jumped at the chance. Carlton left Wragge & Co in 2008 to join a firm that then shortly



after merged with Squire Patton Boggs and so Carlton overnight was a part of an American global firm without ever having changed jobs.

Carlton smiles wryly at Squire Patton Boggs being described as an American firm saying it depends who you are talking to.

“If you look at it narrowly by numbers, we have more offices and lawyers in the US than anywhere else; so, to that extent, you could say we are an American firm. But looking at our global presence, the nationalities of our lawyers, the huge range of international clients and our global board that draws upon management talent across the firm, we are a very multinational business.”

Carlton believes law firms follow global financial centres and so much business is done in London, an office here is a must for any truly international law firm. Also, the language plays a big part. It remains a fact that a significant portion of the world still speaks or uses English.

“If you are expanding a business, irrespective of where you start, it tends to be easier to do so in an English speaking country. If you are an American and you want to come to Europe, London is an easy and obvious choice. Likewise, if you are expanding West from Asia it makes sense to start in London. The fact that we have four international airports – two of which are extremely large – is an added bonus. If you are physically travelling, being able to do so easily through London really helps.”

We asked Carlton if he thinks London’s reputation as being the best in the world including as a legal global hub is justified.

“I have travelled a lot and I genuinely would not want to live anywhere else. I think it is the most fantastic city and I love it – for all of its flaws and it has many. It’s expensive. It’s dirty. People can be rude. But it is just the most exciting city to be in. In terms of what is on offer here – arts and culture – it is sensational. And going back to the legal profession, the quality of the lawyers in London is the best in the world.”

Why have we got the best lawyers in the world?

“It’s a combination of history, tradition and training. The UK has had a legal profession for a very, very long time. We developed the parliamentary system, we are a hub of international business and we have

responded to the growth in the legal market. We reformed in the 90s and we continue to do so. We encouraged the profession to thrive. We exported our system of common law to many countries around the world including the United States. Our judicial system is justifiably very well respected. As an example, we have a specific Patents Court where judges are all ex barristers or senior solicitors who specialised in IP so you get excellent decisions from people who practised almost exclusively in this field sometimes for 30 or 40 years. When you are trying a case, they totally get it. Not only are they brilliant minds, but they are also very accessible and forward thinking. All of this goes towards why our profession has thrived.”

Carlton talks about how the London office of Squires Patton Boggs simultaneously reflects both the international flavour of London itself but also the international culture of the firm.

“The culture of an office draws from the people who are around it. As you walk around, you see a variety of faces and hear a variety of accents and that is partially because London is such an international place. Our law firm rightly reflects that. On any one day there will be people here from Paris, from New York, from the Middle East – anywhere and everywhere.”

Yuhua Yang is a partner of LLinks Law Offices in London and Beijing. Triple qualified in China, New York State and England & Wales, Yuhua is a Chinese

lawyer with over 20 years of experience in the corporate/M&A and commercial fields. She specialises in advising international clients on the China strategy from the PRC legal and regulatory perspectives, as well as advising Chinese clients on cross-border matters. She is currently running the London office of LLinks Law. We caught up with her to find out what brought her so very far from home.

Yuhua was born and brought up in Beijing. She considers herself very fortunate to have had certain important milestones that have ultimately shaped her life, although at the time this was not obvious.

In 1989, when the Tiananmen Square massacre happened, Yuhua was 12 years old. Although she obviously was aware something was wrong, she did not really comprehend exactly what was happening. It was only when she was at Peking University years later and experienced liberal democratic thinking for the first time that she began to understand the grievances that existed which were not really in the public domain. That piece of hidden history remains very sensitive in China.

Yuhua graduated in 1999 and became a lawyer. In those days, it was relatively new to become a lawyer in China. As a profession it had only existed for around 30 years. Today China has more than 650,000 practising lawyers and around 40,000 law firms. In terms of percentages relating to the population, this is nothing – especially when you compare it to the US or the UK.



“London has the status and capacity to attract the finest global talent.”

In her early career, Yuhua experienced the beginning of China’s capital markets development and Chinese companies starting to float overseas in places like Hong Kong and Singapore, US and UK. She benefited from an education that had taught her to speak English as the older generation – her bosses – generally lacked that language capability, as such she played a valuable role in the early stage of her career. The downside was there was no professional training available on English legal drafting and more broadly how to practise internationally, neither in her firm nor most of the Chinese firms, at that time – so she relied heavily on what she could glean from the overseas lawyers that she was working with.

In 2003, SARS hit Beijing and Hong Kong and there was a lockdown. This enforced break gave Yuhua time to reflect. For four years after she graduated, she had been working non-stop and going from one project to another. She realised it was time to pursue a more international education. She stumbled upon the UK Lord Chancellor’s Scheme for young Chinese lawyers which was attractive to her for several reasons; she could speak English and it was funded. She was one of 15 lawyers chosen for the 2004–05 programme – and the youngest. This was where her London journey would begin and she started to experience Western liberty.

Life in London – with the unfavourable exchange rate and the fact that as a young lawyer in China Yuhua had not yet amassed much in the way of savings – proved to be prohibitively expensive. Also because Chinese lawyers were so new and relatively unsophisticated in the profession, Yuhua did not have the credibility to get work in the UK as a lawyer when her course ended so she then went to the US to do an LLM programme. This then qualified her to the New York Bar – which gave her the status she needed. She then worked in New York for a year and then returned to China. She considered herself Chinese, a Chinese lawyer and having got all the qualifications she needed from overseas she wanted to return to her home and her family and do some international work. She very quickly became a partner and her task was to develop international business for the firm which she achieved pretty well.

By this time Yuhua was married to an Englishman she had met whilst in London and who had moved to Beijing to be with her.

In 2014 Yuhua’s practice had grown to a stage where she needed a better platform that had international recognition and she joined LLinks Law in 2015, one of the leading law firms in China, listed in Chambers APAC – but it was still not an international firm.

Events collided in 2015. Due to her international marriage, several factors from Yuhua’s English part of the family made a serious call on her relocation to London. A “golden era” in UK-China relations was heralded in 2015 by David Cameron and George Osborne. Although ironically the “era” lasted only around five years, at that time UK-China trade and investment were promising rapid growth. Yuhua saw it as an unprecedented opportunity for a truly international practice of a Chinese law firm.

In 1998, LLinks was founded in Shanghai as a banking finance firm, then grew into a high quality full service commercial law firm in China. With London being the global hub for financial services, and with so much Chinese investment happening internationally in the second decade of the 21st century, Yuhua saw an opening. Very few Chinese law firms had set foot in London and no one had earned a really good reputation and professional respect in the London market. There was a gap – and an opportunity. She was determined to prove that Chinese lawyers could be as good as any others on the international level and to be recognised as such.

After nearly two years of market research and preparation, she eventually got the green light from LLinks. The firm was clear that London was the right place though what could be achieved and how to achieve it remained unspoken given that most Chinese law firms were on a steep learning curve and no one had managed such a step successfully. Eventually, LLinks’ London office was quietly born in January 2017. In 2018, LLinks London was shortlisted for the Law Society Excellence Awards 2018 in the International Legal Services category which was a highlight for Yuhua.

“Operating in London meant accepting we are very niche – and having to deal with all the challenges that came with that. In China, if we advertised for a position, we were inundated with applications. In London, I was lucky to get a handful. As a matter of fact, a Chinese law firm brand is not attractive to the best talent at all. I tried to grow organically – but it was hard work for me personally because I had to wear many hats”

As an individual partner, Yuhua matches the UK firms’ performance and standards in terms of fee earning, and profit margins but she is struggling to find the means to both grow personally and to grow the office. Obviously, she needs truly bi-lingual and dual-qualified lawyers which are not that easy to find in the London market; although there are a lot of Chinese on the market but only a very few are capable of truly mastering not only the languages but also the legal knowledge and practice of the two very different systems.

Events have not helped matters. Yuhua could not have foreseen the geo-political tensions that were to come, nor the pandemic.

Despite all of the obstacles, Yuhua remains committed to developing the office here, still firmly believing London is the right place to be – not just for her, professionally and personally, but for the future success of LLinks.

Yuhua says London life is rich. She can’t compare it to China because she can’t erase her connection with her family there. But if she has to be away from them and her home, there is nowhere better than London.

“London has the status and capacity to attract the finest global talent – which then just further adds to its position as the global hub for so many professions. Before 2017/18, although in a general sense, Chinese investments were not as sophisticated as American or European ones, nonetheless they were welcome. The more investment, the more trade, the more globalisation, everyone benefits. Then quickly the “golden era” was over, and general sentiment towards Chinese investment changed a lot. I need to find people with a truly international outlook – and there are few better places in the world than London to do that. A lot of London people here do have an international mindset and look at things globally. People are beginning to talk about re-assessing the China strategy when China eventually re-opened earlier



this year after the pandemic. As the second largest economy in the world, China remains relevant. The more complexities generated by the economic downturn pressure, geopolitical challenges, supply chain issues etc., the more demand for truly sophisticated and value-added practical professional services. In the Chinese language, the word “crisis” is composed of two characters, one representing danger and the other, opportunity. If you are looking for a sophisticated destination to operate, there are not many choices – and London remains one of the very few on the planet up to date. That may not be the case in 20 years, especially in the post-Brexit era. There are many trying to knock it off its top position; London cannot afford to be complacent.”

Steen Rosenfalck is the founding partner of ebl miller rosenfalck and heads the commercial team and the Scandinavian desk.

Steen grew up in Denmark and qualified as a Danish advokat having done his Masters and a post grad in Oslo in maritime law and contracts for the offshore sector based on English and American style documents. He moved to the UK in 1994 because he wanted to practise internationally as opposed to just sitting in Copenhagen. He requalified as a solicitor whilst working at a small law firm which was the first multinational practice that was allowed by the Law Society. Then he joined Osborne Clarke and was there until he decided to set up on his own in 2002.

“London is an international hub for everything; art, music, finance – and, yes, the Law. When I left Osborne Clarke, I wanted to set up my own firm to work with cross border clients. Most law firms in London typically export English know-how. They don’t necessarily tap into the local markets. Our lawyers, if not all dual qualified, have extensive knowledge of working abroad. My partner (who was also from Osborne Clark) had worked in the Frankfurt office for five years. We understood what it meant to be a foreign lawyer and what that brings to the table.”

This was the DNA and the USP of ebl miller rosenfalck. This gave them a competitive advantage.

“I couldn’t have done the opposite in Copenhagen because the London market is truly international in its outlook and, historically, the Law Society has been really welcoming to overseas lawyers coming to the UK. This was embraced



as they recognised it would strengthen the market if it incorporated all of the international capabilities. I don’t think that other European countries like France or Germany would or could have taken the same approach. It is obviously an advantage that English is the international business language. 60% of our clients are overseas owned; they instructed us because we had that international edge.”

Steen believes that London’s position as a centre of legal excellence is being threatened now, not because lawyers have become worse in their technical ability but because there is also the opportunity to do, say, arbitration in Paris and all the other centres that are trying to compete.

“As a profession in the UK we need to stay on our toes; to be relevant, to be strong.”

How does Steen think we can do this?

“Improve language skills generally; it does help if you can speak your client’s language. This goes back to the education system. We need to ensure that young people can work internationally. We need to look at how we project ourselves also. There has been some arrogance about London setting the standard of justice and that is not necessarily the case as we have seen with human rights of late. It’s great to have competition but, wearing my English hat, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels.”

Steen says that in the two decades he has been in London, it is apparent to him how the French have worked to improve their language skills; likewise the Italians and Germans – we cannot lag behind.

Does Steen see a difference between how we practise law in London and how they do on the continent?

“In many jurisdictions in mainland Europe you need to do a Master of Laws – so that’s five years. Training is typically three years so you qualify after eight or nine years. Here people qualify quicker and therefore younger. They also qualify to become specialists younger whereas on the continent we are more generalists. Had I remained in Denmark, I would have done more diverse work. In addition, the UK is unusual in having the split between solicitors and barristers – not a simple concept to explain to foreign clients who cannot grasp why they should pay twice. The profession in the UK has basically been a decade ahead of the competition on the continent in allowing law firms to market themselves, in terms of de-regulation, with professional development – but now they are catching up. Where I hope they don’t catch up for their own sakes is on the compliance side which is a massive burden to firms here. In London, we are business focussed as well as being lawyers.”

Three very different lawyers with three very different backgrounds and stories. What they share is a complete understanding that to be a part of a truly international law firm, a foot in London is not just useful but fundamental. They all recognise the many unique qualities London offers – but also warn that we simply cannot afford to take our pre-eminence as a given. There is a queue waiting to succeed us. We need, therefore, to constantly examine and change to maintain our position at the top.

CAN THE YOUNG PRETENDERS STEAL OUR CROWN?

Increasingly parties are choosing and being encouraged to arbitrate rather than litigate. London has long been heralded as the global hub for arbitration and, even despite Brexit, continues to maintain that position. Other jurisdictions, like Singapore and Paris, are jousting to knock us off the top spot. Is our eminence justified? How can we ward off the competitors?

We spoke to four eminent arbitration lawyers to hear their views.

Duncan Bagshaw is a partner at Howard Kennedy LLP. Duncan sees himself first and foremost as an advocate. He qualified as a barrister and started off by doing a very wide range of commercial disputes including some financial cases. After a few years of practice, he realised that the international ones were, for him, by far the most interesting – because of the clash of cultures, the differences of legal cultures, the differences of approaches between parties and lawyers from different places. He decided to expand his international knowledge and practice, and finished up in Mauritius. Duncan had a particular interest in Africa-related matters, having worked on a few such cases, and had fallen in love with the continent.

“At the time, the London Court of International Arbitration (LCIA) were looking for someone to help and set up the new arbitration centre in Mauritius and I went for that job as I saw it as a fascinating challenge, real departure from my usual job and therefore valuable experience. It was great. I spent a lot of time travelling to different African countries, I met a lot of African lawyers and businessmen, I also met a lot of Government representatives and heard about their attitude to international dispute resolution and how they thought it was serving or failing to serve them. I was also offering Mauritius as an alternative place where disputes could be resolved. It had the potential to be an African Switzerland, a reliable and safe jurisdiction.”

This set Duncan up for his future work in London which is focussed on international disputes mainly in arbitration, many of which involve an African party.

After three years, Duncan returned to London and joined Stephenson Harwood LLP, because they had a strong international arbitration and African practice which they were looking to grow. He joined Howard Kennedy in 2019 to expand their international arbitration practice.

Does Duncan see London as the main choice for arbitration?

“I think it is one of the main choices. It has never been the main choice for civil law jurisdictions. That has been shared by Paris and a few other major centres like Switzerland and Stockholm. But London has always been the first choice for common law jurisdiction related disputes, particularly in English. It's about getting a tribunal who are most likely to approach the matter in a way you are familiar with. In recent years, the distinction between common law and civil law is getting more blurred, the parties to disputes involving civil law countries are becoming more sophisticated and are aware of the different approaches that may be taken, and are comfortable with them. Also arbitrators are getting more comfortable to tailor their approach, and to make it more nuanced, not just for common law or civil law clientele. In addition, disputes are more frequently occurring between parties where one side may be from a civil law jurisdiction and the other from a common law country.”

Duncan thinks London risks suffering from this blurring because there could be less perceived value in London's status as the place of choice for common law arbitrations. Nonetheless Duncan believes we are a long way off from saying London has had its day.



“The quality of the arbitrators who are here, the quality of the court system and the arbitral institutions, and the popularity of English law which is still the most obvious choice will inevitably lead people here more than anywhere else. London still holds the status as the venue of choice despite it being slightly threatened by this globalisation and harmonisation of arbitration between different traditions.”

What can London do to lessen that threat?

“We have to make sure that the institutions here are considered both open and accessible to parties from around the world. The LCIA is doing this but it needs to continue its efforts to make it a success. It needs to continue to ensure that it has good representation of lawyers from a very wide range of jurisdictions on its users councils and on the Court. If you have an LCIA arbitration and it relates to South America or East Asia or Australasia, it is really important the users feel the institution is really well plugged in these regions so it knows who the good arbitrators are. The ICC does it in a slightly different way by having committees in a large number of locations around the world so they have local knowledge which feeds into a good selection of arbitrators. Something that has also happened – which the LCIA could have done nothing about – is that the ICC is no longer seen as a French institution but a global one and they have ensured that within the institution there are teams who speak English as a first language. This has allowed the ICC to transcend its geographical location. In London, arbitrators, lawyers, the court, institutions – there is a slight sense they do not need to transcend their location because they are in the right place anyway. We all need to work to maintain the attractiveness of London, to make sure we don’t act at all complacently. We need to remain relevant in a world that is globalising and is seeing major shifts in economic influence and power. The pool of arbitrators in London is the best in the world. We need to leverage this to maintain our leading role whilst also supporting the development of emerging jurisdictions.”

Arish Bharucha is also a partner at Howard Kennedy LLP specialising in arbitration. Arish finds arbitration a hugely interesting and stimulating practice which, because it is so international in nature, brings its own complexities. He likes the process of arbitration which has a flexibility to it, not burying lawyers in procedure, but allowing them to focus on the substantive dispute. He believes the calibre of people working in arbitration is strong and he is constantly inspired by, and learning from, them. He says arbitration has excellent professionals practising as counsel and tribunal members – so you get exposure to retired members of the senior judiciary, eminent lawyers from other jurisdictions, academics and others.

Why does Arish believe London is considered to be a global hub for arbitration?

“English law is very important. It is the preferred governing law for international commercial contracts because of how well established it is, how much jurisprudence there is, and it is the common law

system from which many other jurisdictions have derived their procedures and their legal principles. Whilst that does not necessarily mean that the seat has to be London, people often think the best place to have an English law matter decided is London.

The quality of arbitrators here is extraordinary. Some are retired judges who have been held in the highest esteem. The standard of the counsel and solicitors is also very high. And, beyond that, the experts you can get here, the hearing facilities, there’s a whole ecosystem that has built up around dispute resolution in London that is hard to compete with. Time zone and geography is also important; London is a good central point in the world and relatively easy to get to from most places.”

Despite all these pluses London has going for it, Arish still believes it has its challenges and its competitors.

“For sure, for the foreseeable future, London will remain a key centre for arbitration. The centre that has caught up the most and which has the potential of challenging London for the number one spot is Singapore, which has certain advantages. It has massive government support. It is a city state with a strong focus on the service sector which brings in excellent talent from overseas to settle there, to work there and (amongst other things) to arbitrate there. The SIAC has a lot of support and a lot of resources at their disposal. They equally have certain geographical advantages. It is an obvious place for China related matters to be resolved, there is also a massive Indian diaspora in Singapore, and it is slightly closer to India

“For the foreseeable future, London will remain a key centre for arbitration.”





than London. Traditionally it has been seen as being cheaper yet more efficient than London. That perception is, perhaps, changing now. But that, combined with strong marketing, helped attract a lot of work from India in particular who are one of their largest users of arbitration services. It is also a very flexible system when it comes to arbitration. It is relatively easy to set yourself up there and to establish yourself and practice. It has a lot going for it and is mounting a strong challenge to London.”

What can London do to ward off not just Singapore but to maintain its attractiveness?

“I believe it’s about the legal community (including through the Law Society and the Bar Council) and institutions (such as the LCIA) reaching out to lawyers and to corporates all over the world and marketing the benefits of London as a jurisdiction and debunking some of the myths that are out there. We are just as efficient as everyone else, maybe more so, we are not more expensive than competitor jurisdictions – perhaps that was the case historically but not now. Having more events like London International Disputes Week and raising awareness of what we can offer would also be helpful.

I think we need to show an element of humility too. There was a perception of London and London lawyers as being a bit imperious and expecting the work to flow in without necessarily making an effort. Whilst this may or may not be the reality, the perception still needs to be addressed.

Constantly reviewing and updating the law is also fundamental. The Law Commission is looking at the Arbitration Act and making some positive amends.

A combination of all of these factors should keep London relevant. Government support in flying the flag for legal services in general would also be very helpful.”

Hendrik Pushmann is Head of Farrer & Co’s Arbitration Group. An English lawyer and German lawyer, he

came into the law after an academic career. He fell into arbitration, he says, because he was “looking for an outlet for excess energy” during his legal practice course. There is a big international arbitration moot court that happens in Vienna every year and he put together a team (Naomi, who features next in this article was his mooting partner) and got funding from what was then the College of Law. He found it way more interesting, he says, than the Takeover Code he was made to study and even though he confesses to having done “abysmally badly” in the moot, he realised arbitration was stimulatingly varied and a huge amount of fun to practise.

“You are dealing with a variety of rules as well as a variety of governing laws. And there is a huge variety of subject matters too – anything from oil paintings to oil pipelines. It is a vibrant area to be involved in.”

Why did Hendrik choose to practise in London rather than his home, Germany?

“I was here anyway on a research fellowship, dealing with some very niche points of Polish history and politics. I was deliberating what to do with this and then thought I would try the law to see if it appealed and it did. I stayed here and the rest is history.”

Why does Hendrik believe London to be a centre of excellence for arbitration? Like Duncan and Arish he points to the fact that English law is still a very commonly used choice of substantive governing law because parties anywhere in the world have some exposure to it.

“There are many reasons why London is a global arbitration hub. Professionals all over the world practice English law. It is known. It is very much tried and tested. Contract law is very well developed and fine tuned.

It is a system that parties that do not necessarily have any economic nexus to the UK will still be comfortable agreeing on.

There is also the fact that London has such a historical reputation. And it has critical mass. It is not just that many leading practitioners are based here, it is also the facilities, the backbone. London has several fully developed arbitration hearing centres; many of the leading transcribers and other service providers are here. But in times where remote facilitation becomes more prevalent will this continue to be seen as a crucial factor?

England’s got a very well developed arbitration law – again tried and tested albeit somewhat idiosyncratic in relation to the Uncitral Model Law which is the global standard, but not in a bad way.

However, we must not be complacent. Yes, we are a leading (maybe the leading) global hub now. But it is not a foregone conclusion that this will continue forever.”

Hendrik believes the revision to the Arbitration Act that is currently underway is timely.



"There are some areas such as the arbitrability of trust disputes where there has been development that makes other jurisdictions, like Singapore, more attractive. Reflecting global best practices and making the necessary revisions to be in line with them is a positive move for England to be taking."

Hendrik sees the competition as being, in our region, first and foremost Paris. But he says there are also arbitration-friendly jurisdictions with credible, efficient institutions in many other places like Vienna, Geneva, Stockholm (in Europe) or, globally, Singapore, Hong Kong and New York, to name only a few. In Europe, Dublin is also making a big push to position itself as a competitor.

"As the saying goes, the competition never sleeps. There are credible alternatives and we who practise here need to be mindful of that."

Having said that, Hendrik believes London is definitely a centre of great legal talent and that all the support facilities that are needed to be in place are excellent here. He contrasts this with a situation he found himself whilst sitting as an arbitrator in another arbitration jurisdiction where he requested an electronic hearing transcript and was dismayed to be told that he would have to wait 6–8 weeks for it.

"London is a very attractive proposition and in a league of its own at the moment. But, as London based practitioners, we are going to have to hustle to maintain this."

Our final interviewee, arbitration lawyer Naomi Briercliffe, is a partner in the International Disputes Resolution practice at Squire PB (the American law firm we featured in the previous article). She joined the firm from Allen & Overy and specialises in both international commercial arbitration and public international law, including investment treaty arbitration. Her practice is roughly split 50/50 between these. She has handled disputes in various legal seats and in most of the major institutions. She has particular expertise in the energy sector.

We asked Naomi how she finds working in an American firm contrasts with her experience in more English practices?

"I love it. Our global spread is enormous. And we have specialists and real expertise on everything – you name it, we've got it."

The global culture benefits when it comes to arbitration too.

"Squire PB has a very strong public policy team as well as deep expertise across traditional areas of law. In the US they do lobbying, which we can't do in the UK. But even within our UK team, we have international policy specialists who can help our clients – be they corporates or states – manage complicated political situations. This means we can come up with holistic solutions that try to resolve problems."

"London remains one of, if not the, leading arbitral centres of the world."

What attracted Naomi to arbitration?

"The opportunity to work with people and parties from across the world and being able to work on projects relating to different jurisdictions. I have always been very international in my mindset. Also, as an arbitrator, you tend to take your disputes from the client's initial problem to the hearing. I am an advocate as well as a solicitor and that is a very attractive part of the practice."

Naomi absolutely sees London as a centre for excellence in arbitration;

"London remains one of, if not the, leading arbitral centres of the world and the reason for that is we have a modern and well-drafted arbitration law – which may be about to be updated to make it even more relevant. Clients from across the globe also recognise that we have a very strong rule of law in England generally and so we can rely on the London courts for clear and concise decisions in terms of arbitration. It's an arbitration friendly jurisdiction; our courts understand the need to support arbitration as a practice and we also have a very large pool of experienced counsel based here. Lastly, English law in general is a very attractive law under which to conclude international commercial transactions, largely because of the recognition of the freedom to contract so the four corners of your contract really are the limits of the parties' relationship. You do not have to have English law as the governing law of a contract in order for the seat of arbitration to be in London, but the two often go hand-in-hand."

With regards to our competition, Naomi references the annual Queen Mary survey which puts London and Singapore as being neck and neck followed by Hong Kong and Paris. This is the first time they have been ranked equally.

"There is a potential risk that London is displaced by Singapore in future. Singapore sees arbitration as big business so has been promoting it recently. It is also a natural seat to consider for parties operating in expanding Asian markets. Work is, however, ongoing to keep London relevant, including – for example – the ongoing review of the Arbitration Act 1996 by the Law Commission."

Much consensus within our four. Yes London is at the top currently and with a lot of justification. But Singapore is equalling us and Paris – and a few others – are not far behind. We must not be complacent. We must stay relevant. Amendments to the Arbitration Act hopefully will help us. The calibre of our people here and of our facilities are both definitely huge assets. With humility, determination and innovation, we could keep that very valuable crown.



HOW BUSINESS IS GETTING ITS HOUSE IN ORDER

London does not get its reputation of being the global legal hub solely for our private practices and judiciary but also for the superlatively high quality of General Counsel and in-house lawyers working in and around the capital, most of whom started their professional lives in City firms. We spoke to four such lawyers who all had similar beginnings but are now working in vastly indifferent industries about what prompted their move and how they find life on the other side.

If you are a big rugby fan reading this then this is a spoiler alert; James Stebbing's story may make you green with envy.

James is the General Counsel (GC) and Company Secretary of Six Nations Rugby Limited.

James also has an MBA, tailored to executives working in the Sport, and was included in The Lawyer magazine's 100 most impactful lawyers list for 2021 (The Lawyer Hot 100).

How did a City solicitor land such a dream job?

We caught up with James to hear about his journey, about his transition from private practice to the exciting world of big business sport.

James was originally geared for an army career and, in his gap year, he did Camp America.

Personal events caused him to calibrate his future career and he changed paths and decided to study law. This was a huge thing for his family as both his parents didn't enter higher education or pursue professional careers.

His next decision was to choose which area of law he wanted to practise. A self-professed sport nut, James thought it made sense to combine his passion with his day job. In those days jobs that combined sport and the law were few and far between but James was fortunate enough to secure a training contract at Harbottle Lewis LLP who James felt "had a pretty stellar client

roster and a proficient sports law practice". Having undertaken a secondment at Virgin Atlantic, one of Harbottle Lewis's clients, James realised straight away that the "being embedded in the cut and thrust of industry got my juices flowing as opposed to the private practice world. It was always a case of when not if I made the transition to the in-house world".

An opportunity arose with another client – Vodafone. Maybe not sport but a big sponsor of sport. He grabbed the opportunity and never looked back. From Vodafone, he moved to Barclays, but nonetheless still harboured a desire to end up at a sports rights-holder. Then, about a decade ago, he stumbled across a role at England Rugby. Working in financial



“James believes sport is in a particularly interesting period right now.”



services did not necessarily hold him in the best stead to get a job in sports but after several conversations, England Rugby recognised James's passion and ability and offered him a role there. He very quickly worked his way up to be Head of Legal and they started having talks about private equity options for rugby and his current role stemmed from that.

“Rarely does a day go past that I do not remind myself how lucky I am. When we run recruitment programmes for junior staff, we get inundated with hundreds of applications and that reinforces my sense of gratitude.”

James believes sport is in a particularly interesting period right now.

“It is subject to huge amounts of disruption whether that be from technology, the ways fans interact, engage with and consume sport, third party investment – our own business was the subject of a big private equity investment a couple of years ago which I managed. There is never a dull day. It's amazing to see the pace of change and transformation that is happening in the sports industry.”

James summarises the difference between working in private practice and in-house as “embedded” versus “being at arm's length”.

“You get variety working both in private practice and in-house; it's just a different type of variety. In private practice it's about different clients, different sectors, different industries. Once you are in-house you are laser focussed on the one particular business but you do get the breadth. These days I don't practise much law as such – it's more corporate governance,

stakeholder management, strategic planning – it's an ever evolving landscape.

I have a great relationship with the private practices that we work with and consider them to be very much an extension of my team. But nonetheless they are parachuted into various projects which they get really embedded in but once their work is done, that's it. They can very quickly lose context. But in-house you are living and breathing it. And, as you get more senior it becomes more about running the business rather than dealing with individual matters in a silo. From my perspective, I will always need help from private practice for capability or capacity reasons or both.”

James says London has been considered the global hub for our profession for as long as he can remember and it shows little sign of abating. He says that when, on occasions, circumstances have meant he had to use lawyers from other jurisdictions he does not always feel he is getting the same level of expertise, nor the same value for money – the overarching quality is not necessarily there in the same way.

Does he believe the calibre of in-house lawyers matches that of those in private practice?

“There has been a change in the direction of travel for quite some time. When I first went in-house, it felt like there was a two-tier system. Although there have always been some fantastic lawyers in-house, the bulk of the talent was retained by private practice. For a number of reasons, that has changed – not least because of the number of incredible opportunities now available in-house. I mentioned how the sports industry has changed – some sports rights-holders are now multi-million, even billion pound companies so, for example, where a Premier League football club may not have had an in-house lawyer a decade ago they now have teams of them. The quality of work has brought the quality of lawyers with it. A good in-house role allows you to have your cake and eat it.”

Julia Smithers Excell is Managing Director and UK Head of Financial Markets Legal at ING Bank N.V. London branch.

She trained and qualified as a solicitor at Clifford Chance LLP. A year later, personal circumstances took her to Switzerland and she got a job in-house at a Swiss bank based in Zurich so the shift came by default, more by circumstance than choice.

She loved it, particularly the collegiate nature of the legal team who worked very closely with the traders on the trading floor. Again, life played its cards and Julia then

had to move to Singapore – and went back into private practice again with Clifford Chance. Eventually Julia moved back to London, where she is now based and settled, and at that point she decided if she had a choice between in-house and private practice she would like to be in-house and so took a job at UBS. During her career after that, she has ended up working in three of the City's Magic Circle Law firms; Clifford Chance LLP, Linklaters LLP and Slaughter And May – effectively working in-house at these as a professional support lawyer, so, in effect working as a lawyer for the lawyers rather than directly with external clients. This offered Julia flexibility time-wise which enabled her to juggle her career with being a hands-on mother. She has also worked in the London offices of various US, EU and Swiss banks and as a secondee in the Bank of England's Legal Department during the pandemic. Julia has also done the Financial Times Non Executive Director Diploma – part of the reason for doing this was to gain a better understanding of how business works including board governance, board strategy and business strategy.

Having experienced both private practice and working in-house to such great extents, we asked Julia how she would differentiate them.

“I think the main difference is that in-house you are a cost centre, a support function. In private practice, you are a profit centre, you are front office – like a trader on the trading floor. The things that make a difference in your day to day existence are small ones – like if you are front office you have nicer coffee machines, you have immediate help if you have IT issues, if the photocopier breaks down again you have immediate help, you have bigger budgets. The main thing most people flag when talking about the difference is the hours but, in my experience, they are not particularly different. Take Brexit, when I was on secondment to the Bank of England, my Bank of England colleagues and also those across all the Government legal departments like the Treasury, the FCA etc worked on a massive project to onshore and domesticate EU law necessitating extraordinarily long hours.”

Julia has been working with ING for about a year now. It is a global bank with Dutch origins which has had a London branch since the mid 90s when it bought Barings, a British bank.

“London is one of the world's greatest financial centres. For example, when we moved to a new office in 2016, our then CEO said it was important to be in London to support UK-based clients but, just as

importantly, to be in this great, international hub so that ING can serve wholesale banking clients all over the globe.”

As Managing Director and UK Head of Financial Markets Legal, Julia works on ING’s Moorgate trading floor in financial markets where they trade derivatives and structured products of all kinds. She covers both financial markets on the transactional side and gives regulatory advice for the London branch so she supports both the businesses and the branch as a whole across all its functions. She works very closely with her Amsterdam, Paris, New York and Singapore legal colleagues. They are a wholly collegiate international financial markets legal team.

Julia says there are probably not many financial centres across the world where lawyers have their own guild or livery company like we have the City of London Solicitors’ Company which works really closely with local law – the Company actually shares offices with the City of London Law Society. The City of London’s Solicitors’ Company now has in-house solicitor representation on its board as Julia has recently been appointed to its Court as a Liveryman of the Company.

Why does she believe London is such a great legal hub?

“English Law governed contracts are very widely used in international financial markets. You’ve got the financial markets trade associations who have London offices – like ISDA, the International Swaps and Derivatives Association, the LMA for the loan market, ICMA for the bond market and so forth. All of them have produced market standard template documentation governed by English Law which is widely used internationally and not just domestically. These contracts also defer to the jurisdiction of the English courts which are well versed in adjudicating on financial markets and services disputes. Our courts and judiciary ensure that commercial law keeps pace with changes and transactions and new areas of financial services activity to protect the interests and the expectations of transacting parties around the world. For example, they quickly recognised some years ago the need to develop expertise in dealing with disputes involving innovative products like crypto and NFTs. As well as a strong case law pipeline already developing in this area, we have had launches in the City at Guildhall by the UK Jurisdiction Task Force (the UKJT) of its various legal statements on crypto assets and smart contracts, we have had the Law Commission for England and Wales developing a really strong body of consultations and proposals to reform



English Law to better recognise and protect digital assets, and we are also very lucky to have in the City the Financial Markets Law Committee which focuses on flagging up to Government and to regulators areas of legal uncertainty in financial markets. For all these reasons London is such a strong legal centre and I cannot see that changing. London will always be one of the primary hubs for international trade. Our courts and common law will always attract international use because of their flexibility and legal certainty, as will the quality of English Law professional expertise based in London. The international trust and confidence in our judiciary is not going to change anytime soon. Our position is further bolstered by the great financial services regulators we have, including the Financial Conduct Authority, the Bank of England and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Their rule-making and technical expertise have really enhanced the trust and confidence of international investors in the stability of the London markets.”

Julia references a speech made by the Governor of the Bank of England when he was the CEO of the FCA looking at Brexit in 2019 where he talked about the UK’s legal approach being rooted in common law and developed through case law, and being based on the experience of cases, and evolving rapidly in response to changing conditions and conceptions of the public interest, which he described as “inductive”. He also felt that post-Brexit the UK regulatory system would evolve to take on board practical experience more rapidly, and would be based more on principles that emerge from experience in public policy. He said “If you look around the world, you find that wholesale financial markets are more commonly found in countries with common law systems. I don’t think this is an accident

or random act. Wholesale markets work better in systems that base their rules and principles more on experience.”

Amy Harker is an in-house lawyer and a mother of two small daughters. Moving in-house is precisely what allowed her the option to be both a working career woman as well as a successful family one. As her eldest daughter is now approaching school age, Vinci, the company that Amy works for, have approved her flexible working to fit around her childcare.

Amy trained at Ashurst LLP and did the traditional contract whereby she had four different seats, including six months in dispute resolution team and six months in the construction team. As a part of that she went on secondment to Westfield Shopping Centre and ultimately qualified within the dispute resolution team. She was mainly focussed on disputes within the construction sector; adjudications and some arbitration and litigation. Amy found the team were very much focussed on much bigger international arbitration and financial regulatory disputes, mainly because of the nature of who both Ashurst and their clients are. She was more interested in domestic construction disputes; adjudications to do with delay and time; disputes about the construction of the buildings that we actually see day to day as we walk around London – things that were more tangible and relatable.

Amy very quickly had her eyes open for an in-house move where she could focus on that work she enjoyed, whilst being able to work much more closely with and within a business. The work-life balance it offered was also important to her.

“When I was two years qualified, back in 2015, I was approached by a recruiter for a role at Vinci. I knew it had international reach, that the UK business did a lot of domestic work, and because they are a contractor they do a lot of adjudication and dispute work. Had they been a developer not a contractor the same opportunities would not have been available to me as a litigation lawyer. Contractors have large teams of sometimes 20, 30, 40 sub-contractors so, unfortunately, there is a lot more potential for things to go wrong. The role was specifically to focus on contentious work which was attractive to me because this was quite unique. Often as a dispute resolution lawyer you get fewer opportunities to move in-house because companies don’t traditionally want contentious lawyers in the way that they want lawyers to do their routine contract reviews and such like.”



Vinci in the UK has a turnover of roughly two billion with around 6,400 employees. It is part of the French international group which is a world leader in concessions, energy and infrastructure, active in more than 120 countries.

What does Amy perceive the biggest difference to be in the work she did in private practice and what she does now in-house.

"The breadth of what you cover. You are less of a specialist and more of a generalist in-house. Although I am still a litigation lawyer working in construction, at Ashurst I would be focussed on doing one small part of a massive litigation – say witness statements for six months or so. Because it would be a multi-million sometimes billion pound matter, it would be exciting, but you are such a small cog in a massive machine. When you move to a smaller team in-house – there are only three lawyers in our team – you are able to be a much bigger part of the smaller disputes, but still be involved in a supervisory capacity on the larger disputes (which we typically outsource to private practice firms). You are more involved and more hands on with the business, which I love."

At the moment, as we are all fully aware, there are a lot of issues going on in the construction industry regarding cladding so Amy is dealing with a lot of work with owners of buildings Vinci has designed and/or constructed and, where appropriate, involving the supply chain in discussions and/or claims.

Amy is also dealing with matters with a number of disputes on PFI hospitals which they maintain.

She also deals with a variety of subcontractor disputes and does non-contentious work like contract drafting and contract reviews. She also organises training and know-how for Vinci. If there has been recent case law that might be of interest, she will develop training to ensure mistakes are not made. A very varied portfolio of work.

"A very big area I am working on right now is PFI schemes in hospitals. We maintain a lot of hospitals and the contracts are long-term relational ones – sometimes for 25–35 years. Many of these are expiring and so there may be hand-back issues. There are also issues arising from the involvement by the NHS of consultants to help them recover money through the interpretation and sometimes exploitation of payment mechanisms in PFI contracts. This can and has resulted in very large-scale

difficult disputes involving many parties which we are working our way through."

Shane Mitchell works for the Sadel Group. Shane originally did his training contract at Herbert Smith (now Herbert Smith Freehills LLP) and qualified as a corporate real estate lawyer – so in essence a hybrid. He moved to a couple of other firms, and in 2020 followed one of the partners he worked with to Macfarlanes. Whilst there he was sent on secondment to the London office of Sadel which is a Luxembourg based family office which focuses on pan-European investments around property, logistics, green energy and the food supply chain. So impressed were they with him that they asked him to join full time as their General Counsel. It was not an easy decision for Shane to make as he also had partnership private practice offers.

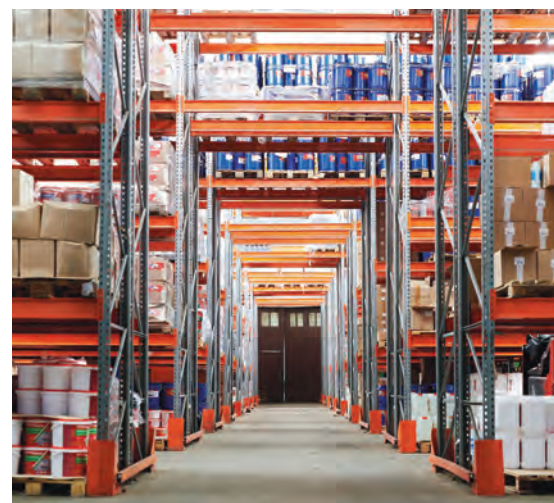
"Sadel seemed like the best fit for me. Firstly, in terms of the people I would be working for. Andrew and Stephen Lawrence are both great businessmen. The appeal of working in the environment with the development plans they had for the business was very exciting and the prospect of being at the coal face in terms of helping them achieve their goals made the offer one I could not turn down."

How different does he find working in-house to private practice?

"The daily challenges are very different. Sadel is a family office which focuses on investments in real estate and food related operational businesses – our biggest business is cold storage. The types of queries and challenges that come up on a daily basis are hugely different from what I was dealing with in private practice. Challenges here are granular but very interesting as you acquire an appreciation for how they impact the daily operations of the business; whether they be employment, corporate or real estate related. In private practice the issues are much broader as my work was more focussed on periodic larger transactions such as acquisitions or financings."

The operational business (Magnavale) has over 400 employees. This is a stand alone business and the Sadel team led by Andrew Lawrence act as asset and development managers. Sadel work to a very flat structure – something else which initially appealed to Shane – with only five in the team permanently based in the London office. Shane is the only lawyer.

"I have to look at the big picture of the legal work that is needed at any time. Some pieces I do myself but we also have standing relationships with a couple of private law firms. Macfarlanes is obviously



one and they handle our bigger more complex corporate and financing transactions. We also have a law firm in Luxembourg (where the parent company is headquartered), and a smaller firm in Manchester who deal with our day to day corporate and real estate matters."

What made a global firm, headquartered in Luxembourg choose a London lawyer and a London office for him to work from?

"In my years in private practice, I – like so many London lawyers – was used to working in cross jurisdictional transactions – primarily hotel or logistics deals, in Spain, Italy, Germany and across Europe generally. This experience of managing teams both across disciplines but also across jurisdictions gave me an edge and was good preparation for working in-house. Good project management skills appeals to clients and it is something a lot of City lawyers have."

Whilst Shane believes London's reputation as a legal global hub is justified, he is still very conscious that other regions in the UK have excellent skill sets. But because of its reputation complex transactions tend to be run from London – there is such experience and knowledge of cross jurisdictional work.

"The demands on time, the deadline pressures, the complexity of the legal issues – there is an expectation that all the technical, legal and management knowledge that is there in London firms can deal with all of the challenges – and deal with them excellently."

Four incredibly talented lawyers doing vastly different but equally fascinating work further evidencing the high calibre of our lawyers in London. In-house lawyers are without doubt another card we have in maintaining our position as a global hub for our profession.

OVERCOMING GLOBAL CHALLENGES – and turning them into opportunities

London's greatness is partially attributed to the achievements and economic prosperity of the businesses that choose to centre themselves in the city. Events of the past few years have challenged such businesses – and, therefore, the capital itself. We examine how these challenges cannot simply be addressed but used as a driver for positive change and increased success.

Rehana Ameer is testimony of how London is open to merit, talent and hard work and is closed to prejudice against race, colour, religion and gender.

Her biography is intimidatingly full of successes; she is a true Londoner.

'Rehana Ameer is the first Indian born woman to be elected as an Independent Common Councillor in the City of London Corporation's 950 years of history in March 2017 for Vintry Ward. She is a serial entrepreneur with ventures in Consulting (IT, Engineering and Management) Education and Healthcare. She possesses over 25 years of experience in IT and Management Consulting where she has led, managed and successfully delivered large multi million-pounds IT and business transformation programmes for multinational companies worldwide.

Rehana is a Trustee of SOAS, University of London, a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and is an honorary member of CEO Clubs Network UAE. She is also a Trustee of the Trust for London. As a Governor of the East London NHS Foundation Trust, she serves on the Significant Business Committee of the Trust where she provides strategic advice and guidance on the Trust's investments and other commercial activities. As an International Advisor of the United Economic Forum

and a few other chambers of commerce in the UK and abroad she mentors and provides strategic advice to entrepreneurs and professionals.'

City Solicitor had the pleasure of speaking with Rehana about how she sees London now, post-pandemic, post-Brexit. Have recent events damaged our great City? How justified is its place as the global hub for so much?

Rehana is a woman of huge energy and passion – as her CV evidences – and she puts this down to a desire not just to achieve for herself but to be able to put her skill sets, international experience and knowledge into helping her community – this is what drives her. She says women are blessed, not just mythically but actually, with an ability to multi-task – and she is definitely living proof of that.

"For any city to thrive, the economic and social welfare of the people is very high on the agenda."

"London's future is a very important topic in light of what has been happening in the past few years both here specifically and also around the world. There have, in recent years, been a number of impacts on the social and economic level and also the well-being of people. For any city to thrive, the economic and social welfare of the people is very high on the agenda. Unemployment levels here in London are 5.3% higher than in the rest of the country – but on the other hand, there are a number of unfilled vacancies – which is an almost contradictory phenomenon. Whilst we are understandably worried about the economic outlook, data relating to businesses shows there are employment opportunities – some of which have actually been created as a result of the pandemic. There is, however, a skills mismatch which policymakers and businesses need to address. They need to upskill existing resources and also provide learning opportunities for graduates and the over 50s. This would bring relief to people in terms of unemployment, dealing with the rising costs of living, inflation – it is a ripple effect. This will bring confidence to the city."

Rehana is very aware of the challenges that not just COVID and Brexit but also the Ukraine war and high inflation have brought to our city – and in particular to the huge number of SMEs that are based here.



"Consumer behaviour has dramatically changed as a result of recent events – and this, in turn, will drive how operations happen, how strategies are formed, and how to go to market. This is where the big players of the world, organisations like Microsoft and Accenture, can pitch in to see how they can work with local communities and SMEs to bring in digitalisation support and literacy both to consumers and for businesses. Businesses are struggling to find the budgets to bring in the heavy infrastructure and training that is required. Consumers too need help – not everyone knows how to do a bank transaction or how to shop online, for example. Reasonably small help like this can effect huge changes for the better."

Another challenge for London (and indeed the rest of the world) is that with the increase in online business there is the massive increase in cybercrime.

"At the City of London Corporation, we have a programme called the Cyber Griffin Programme whereby the City of London Police provide advice, training and a number of resources helping businesses to protect themselves from fraud and to safeguard their confidential information and that of their customers. For businesses struggling with so many challenges at the moment, help like this is invaluable."

The Committees Rehana is involved with are also trying to push the agenda of how they can diversify local government procurement so that a number of City SMEs can reap the benefit. Whilst this is also being looked at the Central Government level, Rehana believes there is no need to wait for something to happen at a bigger level.

"I am tabling the idea of having a City of London Corporation open day where we can invite SMEs and give them an overview of what it is like to become a supplier to a local authority; what sort of facilities are available, what the process entails, what they need to be eligible for from a compliance perspective and is there a way they can collaborate with other organisations in order to meet those criteria? If every local authority within London could organise such events, this would open a lot of opportunities."

Post Brexit, we have been looking at global supply chains. But Rehana wants us to look at whether these can be achieved locally so we are not dependent on the rest of the world for supplies. She says that whilst London is obviously a service-based city, with the pressures the country

"The City has shown its resilience throughout history in its ability to always not just bounce back but excel."



is facing, there needs to be a shift in thinking to examine opportunities of how we can also incorporate manufacturing – or even assembling of goods.

COVID obviously altered London's footfall with less people coming into offices here to work. A new programme called Destination City is committed to funding £2.5 million a year to make London a place for leisure and socialising as much as it is a business and professional hub.

"Fewer people coming into London to work in offices has negatively impacted on the retail and hospitality and leisure sectors – on the businesses themselves and on their employees as a consequence. Can we change from being considered a place to work but into a place to visit? It has been disheartening to see shops closing, people losing their jobs – this impacts on taxes and the economy. Programmes like this can boost vitality and increase footfall. We have heavily

focussed on international tourism – now we need to focus on the domestic."

Technology is another area which Rehana believes will keep London at a pinnacle.

"Finance For Growth is another City of London Corporation initiative. The focus is how can London be the number one choice of destination for tech and innovation. Different business leaders and experts have come together to support the startup economy – which is the growth economy and the future of London. A lot of London startups are looking elsewhere for financing, for scaling up and listing and if we can finance these ourselves that can make London the top destination in the world and set us ahead of the US."

Rehana absolutely believes London will continue to be one of the great cities in the world.

"The City has shown its resilience throughout history in its ability to always not just bounce back but excel. London has its charm; everyone loves it. It is a diverse, multi-cultural economy and that is what keeps it vibrant. People love to connect with its history – which sets it apart from competitors like New York or Shanghai.

The people are what make London what it is – forward-looking and thinking. The London spirit is already there in its people and I think it will evolve as a different, bigger and better city with more to offer more people – in line with its own diversity.

We can revive and reboot London's offering. It's not about quick fixes but about long term strategies so that London always remains as the top destination of choice. We have the legal system, the infrastructure, the right talent. It is the global city for any business, for leisure, for innovation, for studies. London has in it everything, It has everything for everyone. It has the resilience of the people and the support of both central and local government. The challenges it faces have been accepted in a positive way. The disruptions have made us come out of our comfort zone and to think bigger and to progress faster."

Immerse yourself in Japan *(without leaving London)*

Aubrey Beardsley was an English illustrator and author – although you might be forgiven for assuming he was Japanese when you look at his black ink woodcut drawings. These, often depicting the grotesque, were heavily inspired and influenced by Japan; a culture Beardsley was obsessed with – although he sadly never got to visit Japan in his very short lifetime which lasted a mere quarter of a century.

When you step into Aubrey, London (named after the aforementioned artist) which is situated in the Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park, it is like entering Beardsley's Japanese mind and world and being transformed to a different time and place, a very glamorous one. Not only do you feel you have left the hustle of Knightsbridge way behind, but also the 21st century. This is a world where beautiful people, elegantly dressed, eat food and sip cocktails that look like art. It feels secretive and decadent – utterly glorious!

The Aubrey is an award winning Japanese restaurant with a very elegant bar, late night Izakaya and an extraordinary omakase beverage experience – but more of that later. The walls are adorned with Aubrey Beardsley prints and the cocktails menus pay homage to the Yellow Book and they actually have one of the original Yellow Books on display.



The Yellow Book was a British quarterly literary and art magazine/book which was published for three years from 1894 to 1897. It is named after the French novels of the time that dealt with sexual content, an illicit subject at the time. The novels were wrapped in yellow paper so that readers were aware of what they were about to see and read. Beardsley was its first editor and also responsible for the yellow cover.

The Yellow Book was a huge departure from most art and literature of its time which followed the strict Victorian values. It was very much a part of a new movement that was springing up that chose to stand up against such a restrictive society and show its absurdities.

We visited The Aubrey late one Friday afternoon to chat with its delightfully charming and charismatic Pietro Rizzo, the Bar Manager.

Pietro shared a drink with us in the main bar; a glass of sparkling sake that was every bit as delicious (albeit markedly different) as a renowned Champagne. Then Pietro showed us around the different spaces. Firstly, the Salon which is a lively place for drinks, the Library which is more subdued and very elegant, the Private Dining Room – a very intimate space with its own access to the bar. Finally he ushered us into a very secret and discreet six seater bar – the Omakase Bar. This is where The Aubrey's Omakase Cocktail Experience takes place every Monday to Saturday at 6pm and 9pm and on Sundays at 2pm.

What is omakase? It literally means – 'I leave it up to you' – and that is precisely what happens in this extraordinarily private, beautiful and lush room. The six guests sit on luxuriously comfortable bar stools while Pietro (or one of his team) prepare a



“This is a world where beautiful people, elegantly dressed, eat food and sip cocktails that look like art.”



“tasting menu” of the most divine cocktails – all of which pay homage in some way to Beardsley or other artists from that avant garde movement and from Japan. The specific choices of cocktail vary depending on the seasonality, the ingredients available, the conversations Pietro is having with his guests, the overall ambience – so it is a very different, unique and bespoke experience on every occasion. The cocktails tasted here are not on the Aubrey’s main cocktail menu but are one-offs created specifically. As well as the cocktails, there are some delicious Japanese snacks which are not served as pairings but designed to elevate the experience and to ensure that you can cope with six cocktails in two hours – quite a challenge but not a bad one! Whilst the omakase is fast becoming quite a fashionable and sought after experience in London when it comes to food, The Aubrey are the first to offer a beverage equivalent.

My guest and I had the privilege of experiencing this intimate experience in an even more enhanced way as there were only two of us, not the usual six. We took our places and participated in the Japanese ritual of oshibori, whereby we were presented with a hot towel to wipe our hands. Then the show began. Watching Pietro mix the cocktails in front of our eyes was like observing a perfumier, an artist and a magician all rolled into one.

Firstly, he aromatises the room so our senses are immediately mesmerised. Pietro is obviously neither English or Japanese and spent two years immersing himself in the world of Japanese culture and beverages to prepare himself for his role.

“We don’t aim to copy and paste nor to provide a truly authentic Japanese experience. Instead we look at this beautiful, wonderful culture of drinks

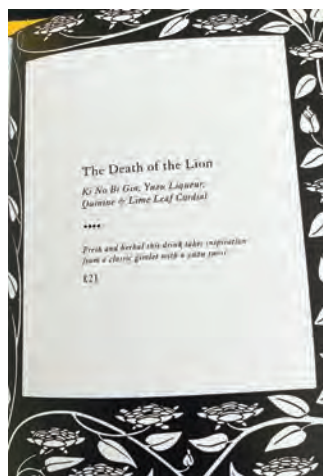
“We look at this beautiful, wonderful culture of drinks and hospitality – 360 degrees – and we take it, interpret it and make it our own.”

and hospitality – 360 degrees – and we take it, interpret it and make it our own.”

The omakase cocktail experience follows the pattern of any good menu; you don’t start with dessert. You begin with a starter, gradually building up the strengths and the flavours and ending with something sweet.

Our first drink was, therefore, something that was very light in fragrance (smells are hugely important in this whole adventure). It features The Aubrey’s house champagne, which is very special as it is made specifically for them. To this something very Japanese is added – Sakura Cherry Blossom Vermouth which was created for the opening of the Mandarin Oriental in Tokyo. This exquisite drink is limited edition, with only 2,000 bottles being released each year. The addition of the essence of Kyoto cherry blossom is not just very expensive but extremely rare so having the opportunity to try it is a real treat. Finally, Pietro sprays a secret ingredient, a “perfume” in the drink. While all this sounds relatively simple, it literally took Pietro about 15 minutes to put this drink together, to mix it in the right way, to chill it correctly. The wait was more than worth it. This drink, one of Pietro’s favourite, signature serves, was light, bright, refreshing, exotic and delicious – a glorious mix of European and Japanese tastes and smells. Pietro says that as well as experiencing these wonderful





drinks in the moment, he wants his guests to be able to take their favourite recipe home to try there – so each guest is presented with a beautiful handwritten (in fountain pen, in black ink – resonant of Beardsley's drawings) list of ingredients on a highly tactile piece of torn edged card, dated and finished off with a sumptuous wax seal – Pietro says he wants us to remember we have been transported to the 1800s. Because the cocktails are so rarely made, this is a wonderful way of capturing them and encapsulating them into history.

As an interlude between our cocktails we try shochu and soda. Pietro explains that shochu is the real news for the next few years. Most of us have tasted or heard of sake; shochu is Japan's biggest drink – a distilled spirit which can be made of any of 55 ingredients varying from rice – as you would expect – to sweet potato, barley, molasses and many more – imagine how different it can taste! If you want a whole lesson on shochu or sake as it is being served the bartender will be happy to oblige – it comes down to his experience to judge whether this is what you want or whether you want to be left in peace to chat amongst yourselves.

Our next cocktail features the classic umami taste which is so classically Japanese but rarely used in England. Pietro says he drew the inspiration for this drink from the infamous Dirty Martini and our taste buds are now moved from light and refreshing to a more structured beverage which again tries to showcase Japanese tradition and culture. This cocktail includes a tomato liqueur which Pietro encourages us to taste neat on its own first to see

how incredible it is. He is not wrong. Like a lot of Japanese drinks, it does not have the harshness normally associated with alcohol but is much more refined and delicate.

Our cocktail is made from Japanese gin – it is very salty and savoury because it is distilled with ocean water. Just three ingredients; the gin, the tomato liqueur and a perfume which smells of black pepper but is made from nasturtium. Pietro uses a lot of sprays in his cocktails; they add a wonderfully intoxicating aroma as well as a distinct yet subtle flavour.

He has them specially made in Italy.

Dry ice, smoking guns – all of these add theatre to the evening but these are just not for the spectacle – they contribute to the cocktails themselves. Pietro explains that using the smoking gun to burn herbs and spices can create a wonderfully intense and aromatic sensation – like a natural incense.

Our cocktails continued to flow, each one equally delicious, all of them showcasing some element of Japan. The food we ate was delicious – also Japanese obviously. The Japanese culture of showing huge respect to your guests was carried out with perfection. Despite this place being 100% high end, there is no snootiness. Everyone is super friendly and keen to share not just their creations but their knowledge.

The music, the lighting, the furnishings have all been considered to the ultimate detail to deliver

a very intimate, cosseted and utterly luxurious sensation where small touches delight – matching the omakase experience itself. The word unique is frequently used, possibly overused – but that is precisely what this is. What you taste, who you share your drinks with is a one time only combination never to be repeated. Sadly!

The experience costs £198 plus service for the two hours (which always runs over because everyone is having too much fun and the passion of the bartenders keeps them producing more and more!) for the official six drinks plus five snacks – however, as well as the cocktails, Pietro and his team want you to taste lots of the ingredients separately – as well as other beverages so it really is a free flowing night and, considering the utterly private and intimate nature of the event, coupled with the knowledge the bartenders impart, it really is great value for money and something you simply cannot experience anywhere else.

Beardsley once famously said if he was not grotesque, he would be nothing. The Aubrey is the polar opposite of grotesque – but, far from being nothing, it is everything you could wish for in a bar, a restaurant and an experience.

THE AUBREY, LONDON
Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park
66 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7LA
Menu: theaubreycollection.com
Phone: 020 7235 2000
Reservation: sevenrooms.com, opentable.co.uk

GIGAFACTORIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE

By Joel Leigh

The author weighs up the political appetite for powering the electric vehicle revolution

Hand in glove with the paradigm shift towards electrification and decarbonisation in the automotive industry comes the need for vast gigafactories churning out the battery packs, drivetrains, and other clean tech products necessary to meet the demand for increased electric vehicle (EV) ownership.

The Faraday Institution, a leading clean mobility research group, have estimated that the UK will require a minimum of five such gigafactories by 2030 to avoid outsourcing, each producing 20GWh worth of batteries per annum to keep pace with industry needs. By 2040 the requirement will have doubled.

Yet the government appears to be dragging its heels on the issue, with the Nissan plant in Sunderland the only viable gigafactory in the pipeline by the end of last year. The plant's intended capacity of 12 gigawatt hours (GWh) will power 10,000 cars per annum by 2025, but this is only a fraction of what is needed.

By way of contrast France has four operational facilities, Germany nine and the US forty-three. China, however, boasts a staggering 283. Until recently and by 2030, the UK was set to achieve capacity of just 26 GWh, compared to 325 GWh in Germany and 1,176 GWh in the US.

Current UK environmental legislation provides for a complete ban on the sale of all new diesel and petrol cars by 2030 with hybrid vehicles to follow five years later and the entire economy carbon neutral by 2050. However, in this increasingly politicised area of public policy, things haven't quite gone to plan.

Under Theresa May and Boris Johnson, the government pursued a blueprint to transform the nation into a clean transport hub, via the so called 'Green Industrial Revolution' policy. However, the agenda suffered a significant setback earlier this year following the collapse of the EV battery manufacturing start-up Britishvolt as a direct result of the government withholding £100 million of financial support. Before going into administration, the project had been set to deliver thirty times the GWh output of the Nissan plant at a £3.8 billion site built symbolically on the former coal-fired Blyth Power Station.

The Treasury alleged that key financial targets had been missed, but co-founder Orral Nadjari laid the blame firmly at the door of Rishi Sunak's government, citing a lack of impetus following the



end of Johnson era and the challenging economic conditions created by the cost-of-living crisis.

Not long after, the Business and Trade Select Committee heard evidence from a panel of experts that, without a swift acceleration in capacity and investment much of our automotive industry would migrate to central Europe.

Sunak must have thanked his lucky stars, then, when the Tata Group announced in July that the world's 400th gigafactory, its first outside India and the largest in Europe, will be sited in Somerset. The factory is scheduled to start production in 2026, creating an impressive 40 GWh capacity as well as up to 4,000 new jobs.

Still other challenges remain. Stellantis, the world's fourth largest automaker by sales, has warned the Government that a £100 million commitment to build EV's in the UK at Ellesmere Port is at risk, absent re-negotiation of the political hot potato that are the post-Brexit trade rules, which stipulate that at least 40% of EV's and 30% of batteries must originate from the UK or EU to avoid tariffs being imposed. Unless the existing regulations are extended to 2027 the project could become untenable due to the surge in raw material and energy prices.

Tesla is also yet to be persuaded to build its second European gigafactory in the UK rather than expanding its existing site in Germany or turning to France, where President Macron has embarked on a major charm offensive targeting Elon Musk.

A further question is how best to curb climate change whilst staying aligned with public opinion, and this has sparked fierce cross-party exchanges. In London, the debate has been fuelled by the expansion of the ULEZ zone vs the resultant economic hardship, proving a critical wedge issue in the Uxbridge by-election when Johnson's recently vacated seat was unexpectedly retained by the Conservatives. The lesson being that there is a political price to be paid for forging ahead with emission reducing targets which impose an arguably unfair burden on local businesses and domestic taxpayers.

Following the by-election result Sunak approved a plan to issue hundreds of new North Sea oil and gas licenses, declaring himself 'on the side' of motorists, and Labour scaled back a planned £28 billion annual investment in green jobs and industries and withdrew much of its support for the ULEZ expansion.

Supporting the exploitation of existing carbon assets to ease domestic finances, whilst maintaining a firm intention to meet challenging and seemingly contradictory net-zero targets, including the push towards EV's, leaves politicians on a precarious tightrope approaching the next general election. Who will best maintain their balance in the court of public opinion, when faced with so many intersecting key decisions, remains to be seen.

Joel Leigh is the motoring correspondent of City Solicitor and a Partner at Howard Kennedy LLP

LIVERY NEWS

A look at what has been happening.

THE CITY OF LONDON SOLICITORS' COMPANY PRIZE 2023

We are delighted to announce that the Company Prize for 2023 has been awarded to Amie-Louise Corry, a Trainee with Taylor Wessing LLP. This award is made each year to an aspiring solicitor at a City firm who has gained a distinction on the Legal Practice Course and who, based on an essay competition and an interview with the Master and the Chair of the CLLS Training Committee, shows the most promise as a future City solicitor. Amie-Louise's essay (reprinted below) explores 'What diversity in law firms should look like by 2040'.



By 2040, City law firms should have diverse staff operating at all levels of its business, with individuals receiving opportunities based purely on their ability to succeed within a given role and not based on who they are, where they come from, or who they may know.

We must, inspire, educate, and change the way we look at diversity. If we fail to take these steps, diversity will look as it does now, a small step in the right direction with a great deal more to do.

Inspire

To tackle lack of diversity, we must start at the very beginning. There is a significantly low number of individuals, from underrepresented demographic backgrounds, applying to the legal profession. City law firms need to do more to present the opportunity of a legal career as a realistic option for individuals from minority backgrounds. The way they achieve this is twofold: firstly, community outreach through investment into initiatives such as Future First, Aspiring Solicitors and others, designed to forge connections with students from underrepresented backgrounds and present an avenue into the profession.

Secondly, it is a trickle-down effect. If firms are more conscious of their degree of diversity across all positions, specifically senior positions, this will foster an inclusive and encouraging culture from the top down, which will attract more minority individuals to enter the profession in the first place. However, given that only 16% of partners are from a BAME background, how can we persuade young people from that background that a successful career in law is a realistic prospect for them?

Educate

Moreover, it is evident that individuals from minority and low-socioeconomic backgrounds do not receive the same access to high quality education from an early age, compared to their white, middleclass counterparts.

City law firms must be careful not to draw from a small pool of elite graduates from similar backgrounds. Rather, firms should take a holistic view when considering applicants, moderating academic achievements by taking into consideration the applicant's background, nature of education to which

they have had access, and their opportunities generally. Firms which recruit from a wider talent pool create teams which more closely reflect the clients and communities to which they serve, leading to long-term professional relationships.

Furthermore, investment into and expansion of legal apprenticeships, scholarships and other financial resources is crucial in providing equal access to opportunities and assisting individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to realise their true potential.

Change the way we look at diversity

Finally, we need to stop looking at diversity as an "initiative" and instead it must be ingrained in the DNA of all City law firms. Whilst focus on numbers and percentages helps to provide accountability and assists with driving efforts forward, increasing numbers should not be the sole objective. Alternatively, policies should be put in place which are thoroughly embraced by people at all levels to which they become culture. Once diversity is part of a firm's culture, we are on our way to long-term, permanent change.

THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES FACING IN-HOUSE LAWYERS, AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM –

the beginnings of a new conversation with our in-house solicitor members

Just days after the SRA published its report on the findings of its thematic review of the challenges facing in-house solicitors, The City of London Solicitors' Company (the "Company") hosted a discussion on ethics and regulation for the in-house lawyer at the offices of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. On 20 April 2023, Jonathan Kembery (Freshfields' GC) brought together a formidable panel of experts – Marianne Butler of Fountain Court Chambers, Karen Nokes of UCL and Jenifer Swallow, a consultant and strategic adviser with considerable in-house experience – to consider whether and how best in-house lawyers (who are solicitors in England and Wales) can be the "conscience of their corporation".

This note is no substitute for having been at the event itself and hearing everything our experts had to say on the night, but we thought that sharing some of the key points made would be an interesting read for anyone wishing to learn more on the topic and unable to attend.

It was acknowledged that dealing with dominant clients with pressing commercial agendas was not unique to the in-house sector. Solicitors working in private practice also face this pressure, and, like



in-house lawyers, do not wish to be thought of as saying "no" without offering a workable solution to help to achieve the client's objective. The risk of a private practitioner losing an important client for their law firm can create personal pressures which are similar to those faced by in-house lawyers. Each may feel that it could be their job which is ultimately at risk.



“The SRA’s Principles have the potential to be used, if needed, as a “paper sword” by in-house lawyers to defend their advice and stance.”

Whilst dealing with ethically tricky situations is not an everyday experience for most in-house lawyers, the stakes can be high when these situations do arise. The skill, in such situations, is to avoid an outcome which involves the in-house lawyer’s advice being ignored, with the risks that this can pose for the corporate employer and its wider stakeholders as well as for the in-house lawyer themselves.

As to how to go about achieving a culture, in a non-SRA regulated corporate, which favours compliance with SRA rules by its in-house legal team, our panel noted:

- An in-house lawyer cannot (even if they might wish to) ignore their ethical obligations, as set out in the SRA’s Principles and Code of Conduct, as these have statutory authority; they are delegated legislation. Further, if any of the SRA’s Principles conflict in any given situation, the SRA takes the view that it is the outward-facing Principles which would take precedence over and above acting in the bests interest of the client. In the Introduction to its Principles, the SRA says this: “Should the Principles come into conflict, those which safeguard the wider public interest (such as the rule of law, and public confidence in a trustworthy solicitors’ profession and a safe and effective market for regulated legal services) take precedence over an individual client’s interests”. In this sense, the SRA’s Principles, just seven in number, have the potential to be used, if needed, as a “paper sword” by in-house lawyers to defend their advice and stance. It was, however, acknowledged that, in the absence of further supporting internal policies/procedures and/or governance controls within their employer organisation, the practical reality of using the Principles in this way may be hard for an in-house lawyer.
- That said, those seven Principles do not set out ethical ideals which are unique to the in-house lawyer. They are similar to the standards expected of a corporate’s directors and so there should be no real scope for tension between a corporate’s in-house advisers and its board. Having direct access to the board might therefore be something which in-house lawyers should expressly reserve in the terms of their employment, as often they will take their instructions, on a day-to-day basis, from commercial colleagues who are not also directors of their employer.
- Indeed, determining who the client is, whenever asked to advise, was key to compliance. In the panel’s experience, if this question is asked and answered correctly at the outset, good compliance tends to flow more naturally. An in-house lawyer can act not just for their actual employer but related parties too, such as other group companies. Identifying with certainty who the client is, and whether there is more than one, when asked to advise, helps the in-house lawyer to identify and appropriately deal with any conflict, confidentiality and disclosure-related issues and obligations.

- Issues can also arise if in-house lawyers treat their business colleagues as clients rather than working with the clarity that ordinarily it is the corporate entity, represented by their board, who is the client. This can lead to inadvertent breach of regulatory duties.
- In private practice, the discipline of opening client/matter records and sending of engagement letters tends to keep the client identification issue front of mind. Might this be replicated in some way in larger in-house teams especially? Having “onboarding” policies and procedures in-house would also prompt clarity as to which individuals are authorised to give the in-house lawyer their instructions, as well as giving the in-house lawyer the opportunity to remind/inform both the client and the individual giving them their instructions what the in-house lawyer’s regulatory obligations are.
- A particular bear trap for the unwary here is the risk of taking “incremental instructions” on a matter – that is, instructions from a number of people as opposed to a single contact. In-house lawyers, like all solicitors, have disclosure obligations which require them to share all relevant confidential information pertinent to a matter with their client; there is a risk of breaching this duty where there are multiple colleagues purporting to give the in-house lawyer instructions on a matter, as the lawyer will likely share some information with each of them but is unlikely to share all information with all or even one of them.
- This danger is, of course, very closely connected with the “identification of client” point. In some circumstances, sharing material information about a matter with a business colleague lead, who is not also a director of the client, and failing to share that information with the corporate client’s board too can put in-house lawyers at risk of breaching their disclosure duties.
- Along with a “professional identity”, lawyers can also have an “organisational identity”. Being cognisant of one’s “organisational identity” in any particular context can help. If an in-house lawyer is not sure whether they are involved in a matter as adviser, observer or technician, this can lead to what is sometimes called “cognitive conflict” with one’s professional identity. An in-house lawyer must know what hat they are wearing in order that they are live to which values and obligations should dominate.

“Good people occasionally do bad things and it is rarely because they intend to.”

- Good people occasionally do bad things and it is rarely because they intend to – it is likely that failure to identify a decision is being an ethical one plays a big part here.
- Identifying a decision as an ethical one means that an in-house lawyer is more likely to seek a second opinion from another member of the in-house legal team. Normalising discussions around scenarios and sense-checking decision-making should be encouraged.
- Adopting a position whereby all in-house lawyers in an organisation’s legal team are expected to call out anything “slightly off” at the outset could also have benefits by helping to set the tone and potentially heading off bigger problems. Otherwise a “boiling frogs” scenario can present itself – whereby the lawyer fails to take into account or realise the cumulative effect of the small things.
- More broadly, minor infractions are easier to ingest and can result in self-justifying a “yes”. Overtime, this can become routinised, side-stepping reflective practice. It is OK to say “I need to think” and “I’ll have to come back to you”. Reflection and reversion can prevent the risk of falling into an “ethical sinkhole”.
- Dedicated ethics training was vital and for some in-house legal teams this might mean increasing their existing offering or making it more focussed. The value of this (and additional budget needed to deliver ethical training programmes) should not be lost on the client/employer given that barristers are seeing an increase in the number of in-house lawyers taking personal advice on their regulatory duties – a reaction in part to the increased reporting duties they now have. Further, corporate responsibility is increasingly on the board agenda (e.g. through the lens of ESG), and the role of in-house lawyers (in the context of allegations of corporate misconduct) increasingly under the spotlight.
- In private practice, the rigour which being the law firm COLP involves (not just the reporting obligations the role carries, but the obligations to make sure your organisation has good policies and procedures to ensure compliance backed by appropriate training) can inform the way a law firm GC approaches their job. Could this idea be carried over into the in-house context by the regulator? And might this be something which the in-house community would welcome, rather than viewing as an additional regulatory burden?

The COLP question is where our formal conversation had to end (although further discussion followed over drinks) on this occasion. The evening felt very much like the beginning of an important conversation, which many feel needs to continue as matter of some urgency, involving both corporate employers of in-house lawyers and regulators too.

If you’d like to attend our “Food for Thought” events going forward, please do let our Clerk, Linzi James know. We should mention that, although these events are open to non-members, members of the Company do get priority. If you are interested in learning more about what membership involves and the other benefits it can bring you, please do get in touch. We’d be delighted to hear from you.

Finally, a huge thanks to our fabulous panel of experts for making this event such an enjoyable and stimulating one, and to Jonathan and Freshfields for their kind hospitality.

Sarah de Gay, Master



Welcome to SIP, our new regular column devoted to every delicious thing we can sip; wines, cocktails and non alcoholic delights.

Written by our journalist, Maroulla Paul who is a self confessed nerd when it comes to wines and spirits. Maroulla has WSET Wines and Spirits Level 3, WSET Sake Level 1 and Capstone Level 1 (so far!).

In this issue, our wine expert Maroulla Paul visits some London wineries (and, yes, you did read that correctly) and samples some of the unexpected delights these urban winemakers are making.

We also delve into some of the beautiful wine books published by Academie du Vin Library which allow you to explore Bordeaux without even leaving our City.

URBAN VINTAGE

When we think of English wine, it is delicious bubbles that float to mind. Bubbles made from grapes growing on lush green gently rolling slopes.

Well, now it's time to completely rethink. London not only does not have sheep – but more importantly, nor is it one – so when it decides to do something, it is going to do it differently, brilliantly – like the creative megaforce it is.

Urban wineries are pretty commonplace in the US but in the UK they had never been heard of until a little more than a decade ago.

In 2010, Cliff Roberson, a highly respected and established wine importer, felt inspired by the success of urban wineries around the world and, looking at how craft breweries and gin distillers were springing up all over London, he decided it was time for the City's first urban winery and London Cru was born.

The idea was not just to create great wines but also to give urbanites the opportunity to understand and see the whole winemaking process first hand – without ever having to set foot outside of the concrete jungle.

In 2018, Australian winemaker, Alex Hurley joined London Cru and it moved to a different level. Hurley believes a winemaker is like a chef; he needs to pick the finest ingredients but the magic lies in what he does with them. The best chefs come up with innovative, delectable expressions – and Hurley wants to do the same. Where most English wineries are working with the classic three Champagne grapes, Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier and Chardonnay and making sparkling wines – Hurley

decided to explore lesser known cool climate grapes such as Bacchus and produce deliciously different and unexpected stills.

The 2021 Bacchus uses grapes from a single vineyard from Tillington in West Sussex. (All of London Cru's grapes are sourced from within the UK now). The aroma is so like a Sauvignon Blanc; it smells like freshly mowed grass – reminiscent of the English countryside. Take a sip and you get a big grapefruit burst; wondrously and refreshingly acidic but also creamy because of being aged on lees for 7 months and the use of malolactic fermentation. There is also lime and gooseberry – it is a citrus delight.

This Bacchus was one of the highest rated in the WineGB Awards 2022 – receiving a Silver medal. Jancis Robinson raves about it. Taste it and you will totally understand why.



Renegade was London's second urban winery and was launched by Warwick Smith, an asset manager in his previous life. Smith had always been passionate about wine having grown up in the South of France and, like Roberson, was impressed by what urban wineries were doing in the US, so decided London needed more than one. Unlike London Cru, Renegade sources grapes from all over Europe as well as from the UK which allows the winemaker, Andrea Bontempo, huge choice and flexibility. The mission is not to create the ordinary but to be extraordinary both in delivering English versions of classics and also in producing the unexpected, the experimental.

One such experiment is Bethnal Bubbles. This is a very hazy sparkling white wine made 100% with Pinot Noir grapes grown in Herefordshire. What is different about it? After its first fermentation, hops are added to the base wine, as in beer





making. The result? The aromas are first definitely hoppy but then you get fruits in abundance – both citrus and tropical. On the palate it is unlike anything you’ve ever tasted. There is a kind of beer taste but it’s most definitely not beer, yet it doesn’t taste like any other wine either. What it is is delicious.

Romain Auderie, one of London’s most influential wine consultants said;

“I am beyond impressed with Bethnal Bubbles; it is highly creative and totally fascinating. Uniquely hoppy and a gastronomic joy. My clients are both surprised and delighted by it.”

Our third London winery is Blackbook which, unlike both London Cru and Renegade, is actually owned by the winemaker himself, Sergio Verrillo together with his wife, Lynsey. Verrillo worked in many countries (France, NZ, South Africa, America...) and with many wineries (Greyfriars, De Montille, Ata Rangi, Mulderbosch, Calera, Flowers...) before deciding to go it alone, also launching in 2017. Verrillo is passionate about Pinot Noir and Chardonnay so his mission is to create the finest expressions of these whilst also experimenting with some other grapes. Verrillo believes in sprinkling innovation into tradition in order to create something which is both familiar yet new at the same time.

Sea of Love is a perfect example of this. It is a Pinot Blanc varietal which is aged in burgundy oak barrels for seven months with frequent lees stirring; giving it texture, something Verrillo strives for.

On the nose, this wine is like lemon, lime and grapefruit being freshly zested and on the palate mingles peaches and floral delights with the citrus.

Bert Blaize, award winning wine consultant and writer, adores Sea of Love;

“It’s so expressive, lean and full of electricity, with oysters, it’s a dream.”

All three of these wineries are producing wines of exceptional quality but – as you would expect from London – they are not ordinary wines; they are unique, unusual, experimental, exciting. Even their names and labels are out there creatively. Renegade names its wines after its clients (Amy, Janet, Alf...) and has pictures of them on the bottles. Blackbook takes inspiration from art and music; GMF is their yummy sparkling Seyval and stands

for the title of one of Verrillo’s favourite songs – something unprintable! London Cru puts maps on London into an outline of the leaf of the specific grape.

Blaize summarises beautifully;

“To focus on making still wine in the UK takes a lot of creativity, confidence and skill, which these guys have bags of. They are pushing boundaries and aren’t following the herd in growing champagne varieties and making overpriced soulless wines”.

London wineries are cool and creative. Most importantly, they make amazing wines every oenophile should try.

LONDON CRU

21–27 Seagrave Road,
London SW6 1RP
www.londoncru.co.uk

BLACKBOOK

Arch 41, London Stone Business
Estate, Broughton Street,
London SW8 3QR
www.blackbookwinery.com

RENEGADE

Unit 7, Lockwood Way,
E17 5RB
www.renegadelondonwine.com

SIP. AND LEARN. AND READ. AND ENJOY

Steven Spurrier, the man who famously organised the Paris Wine Tasting of 1976 and Hugh Johnson, the world’s best selling wine writer, co-founded Academie du Vin Library to publish the best wine writing in the world. Their list is small – because (as with wine) they value quality over quantity but each gem is a joy, a wealth of knowledge and utterly readable. Their books tell stories – just as every great wine does! Their website is the ultimate go-to place for any excellent wine book – not just ones published by themselves.

As well as books, Academie du Vin Library have just launched high end wine courses based on Steven Spurrier’s original ethos of learning by tasting in a convivial atmosphere. Very (very) good quality wines are poured to teach the principles of wine making, etc.

And there is also a weekly online column, Vinosity, to cover a wider range of wine topics and regions and to publish the work of younger wine writers.

We read two Bordeaux books; From Bordeaux to the Stars – a story of the transformation of the Cazes family’s renowned estate, Chateau Lynch-Bages, one of the Left Bank’s most valuable Crus but, more importantly for France



and the world, the transformation of the entire Bordeaux region. The story covers the Second World war, the economic disasters of the 60s and 70s and the beginnings of En Primeur.

The Bordeaux Club is another glorious read. It is a story of 12 very disparate friends who have one thing in common; a passion for wine, especially Bordeaux. They meet to taste the finest wines – over time, over 1,000 were tried. 1,000 of the finest wines ever. Their opinions differ – which makes for great reading.

Academie du Vin Library has very kindly offered a discount for City Solicitor readers. If you would like to buy the Bordeaux books or any of their other publications, use code CITY5 for a £5 discount on any book. They are also happy to organise bespoke wine courses if any firm is interested.

For full details of all the books, the courses and the online column, please visit www.academieduvinlibrary.com

THE LAST WORD

DID YOU KNOW?

The metropolis that might have been

Hiding in sketchbooks and feverish imaginations is a city left unbuilt. This invisible cityscape is made up of plans, dreams, and visions that were never realised. They are sometimes intriguing, frequently audacious and, at times, terrifying. From a towering pyramid of the dead to futuristic bullet trains whisking visitors to an urban fantasyland. Join me on a short sojourn into unbuilt London, where history and imagination intertwine in a realm of audacious architectural dreams.

A more fitting palace for an Empire

In 1910, Sir Aston Webb, an English architect, was commissioned by Edward VII to draw up plans for a truly imperial home for the King-Emperor. They envisioned an ambitious reconstruction of Buckingham Palace, with plans to replace the existing frontage with a spectacular façade in white Portland stone.



Webb's proposed redesign was undoubtedly grandiose. It was to feature a series of symmetrical colonnades, ornate carvings, and a monumental dome. This would even have dwarfed the dome of St Paul's Cathedral. Yet, with the untimely death of King Edward VII in 1910, this vision for an imperial Buckingham Palace was left on the drawing board, allowing the palace to retain its more subdued charm.

The Battersea Bullet – A Train to Thatcher's Fantasyland

The 1980s brought forth a plan as futuristic as it was fantastical. Known as the Battersea Bullet, this project aimed to link central London to a proposed theme park, London Paramount. Its proponents envisaged the Bullet as an innovative high-speed train that would shuttle excited visitors from Victoria Station to the heart of a magical fantasyland, all within 15 minutes.



It was a project soaked in optimism and ambition, mirroring the energy and spirit of the 1980s. But amidst escalating costs, planning conflicts and financial woes, the Battersea Bullet ultimately derailed, never realising its mission to transform London's travel and leisure landscape.

John Martin's Triumphal Arch – A Monument to Victory

Rewind two centuries, to the dawn of the 1820s, where artist and architect John Martin, buoyed by Britain's victory in the Battle of Waterloo, proposed a staggering architectural masterpiece – a monumental triumphal arch in central London.

Martin's design was colossal in its scale, slated to stand taller than Nelson's Column. His masterpiece was meant to function as more than just an arch: it was a multi-purpose building, incorporating galleries and viewing platforms, offering unparalleled vistas of London. This celebration of Britain's military prowess, however, remained in Martin's sketches, ultimately falling by the wayside due to its exorbitant costs and growing public scepticism.



The Crystal Arcade – shopping amidst shimmering shards

Regent Street, one of London's most famous shopping districts, could have been a destination beyond our wildest dreams. In the mid-19th century, plans were drawn up to transform it into a 'crystal arcade'. It would be a stunning edifice of glass and steel, inspired by the success of the 1851 Great Exhibition's Crystal Palace.

The project was imagined as an architectural marvel, promising to turn Regent Street into a luminous, sun-filled corridor. Yet, the crystal dream shattered amidst opposition from existing shop owners, unwilling to move out for the ambitious revamp, and concerns about the logistical challenges of such a mammoth undertaking.



The Metropolitan Sepulchre – the Pyramid of Death on Primrose Hill

No exploration of unbuilt London is complete without discussing the Metropolitan Sepulchre, more ominously referred to as the Pyramid of Death. In the 19th century, architect Thomas Willson proposed this 94-story pyramid on Primrose Hill as a solution to London's overflowing cemeteries.

Willson's pyramid was to be a city of the dead, capable of housing five million souls within its stark, austere walls. Yet, despite the practicality of the proposal, it was met with profound discomfort. Londoners were not ready for this imposing mausoleum in their skyline, and the Pyramid of Death faded into oblivion.



This article was provided courtesy of Ian Chapman-Curry, Principal Associate at Gowling WLG and host of the Almost History podcast.

www.almosthistorypodcast.com

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