

EXCHANGE

CHAMBERS

Following the first two weeks of pupillage at Exchange Chambers, I certainly hadn't been put off and was ready to dive back in after the bank holiday break. The historic sex offences trial that I had been observing with Exchange barrister Alaric Bassano was entering its second week, and the examination-in-chief and cross-examination of the defendant was fast approaching.

Whilst I had seen this in the trial I had observed on my first week, this subsequent trial proved to be a different beast altogether. The defendant was extremely hard of hearing, so it was imperative that Counsel factored this into their approach when questioning him, ensuring a fair balance between making sure their questions were properly put to the defendant and making sure the information they thought the jury would need to arrive at a verdict was properly elicited.

Whilst the slowing down of questioning meant that the trial ran slightly longer than it normally would, it was highly instructive to see how experienced Counsel dealt with "bumps in the road" such as this, and a note was duly made in my *Pupillage Diary*.

Following the conclusion of the trial, and whilst the jury were sent out to consider their verdicts, I had the opportunity to see more day-to-day type hearings that will likely be my bread and butter when starting on my feet, such as sentencing hearings, mentions, and bail applications. And before I knew it, the jury were back in.

In the first trial I had observed, the jury had ultimately decided that on the majority of counts, they could not arrive at unanimous (or even majority) decision, so they were discharged. This, I was advised, was somewhat unusual, so I had yet to see a defendant being either fully convicted or acquitted.

The jury were called back in by the judge, and now for their verdict...ANOTHER hung jury! In an unlikely twist of fate, I had encountered my second hung jury in as many trials. It was insightful seeing how relentlessly Counsel move through all the work on their respective plates; whilst the prospect of a retrial was novel to me, Counsel moved straight onto the next case they had to work on, quickly shifting their focus onto what new work needed to be completed.

This demonstrated to me the type of mentality you might need to thrive at the Bar; one whereby you can consistently maintain the highest levels of motivation to work through case after case, ensuring you can sustain your focus for prolonged periods of time with little downtime. But for any aspiring barrister who may be reading this, this is by no means a bad thing. Even from the position of just observing, the excitement of every day being different and having its own challenges and successes is unlike anything else.

Following the relative rollercoaster of Week 3, I wondered what Week 4 might have in store for me. Monday rolled around and involved a journey down the M62 to Liverpool Crown Court to meet up with my Supervisor for a new case involving an alleged rape.

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A new environment, full of infinite possibilities...Well, not quite. The case had to be adjourned because we couldn't find a court room. So the day was over before it really got started, and we went our separate ways with a view to starting again on the Tuesday.

Tuesday arrived, and...another change of plans! I had been asked to sit as a (mock) Judge in a (mock) trial for Chambers, so instead of building up my experience as a Pupil, I leapfrogged many years in practice and went straight to the (mock) Bench. Finally on the Wednesday I managed to get into the (real) trial I had expected to start on Monday, and we jumped right in. Prosecution opening; defence examination-in-chief; prosecution cross-examination. The trial process was starting to become more familiar to me, and I drew comfort from the fact that I was starting to understand how everything fits together (and it wasn't just a case that Chambers had offered pupillage to the wrong person and had yet to figure it out).

The rest of the week flew by, including an event at Chambers meeting the future Pupils of Exchange at the second-round interviews, and more day-to-day hearings and bail applications. And just like that, my first month was over! As with the first two weeks, it has been fantastic. It's safe to say that I'm starting to feel right at home at Exchange.