

Dear Diary,

This is the final boarding call for the last charter trip aboard my Christmas pupillage sleigh. Surprisingly, I borrowed a unique herd of reindeers for this special journey. All passengers intending to travel, please board now as the sleigh is now ready for departure.

First calling point: Week 15

Monday was spent preparing for my first pupillage review which occurred on Tuesday. I updated my pupillage work diary. It is important to keep an up-to-date pupillage work diary as it can be used as a great tool for reflection and self-assessment. The diary also serves to pinpoint the practice areas shadowed and work prepared while identifying potential gaps. Those gaps may be other practice areas that you want to shadow and or the fact that you require more experience drafting (e.g. skeleton arguments, advice, defences etc).

On Tuesday the sleigh dropped me off at my first pupillage review. Ian Spencer and my pupillage supervisor conducted an informal discussion about the progress of my pupillage. I felt calm as I was entering the meeting. But as I nestled into my chair nerves caused my stomach to churn and frantic thoughts scampered around my mind. Those nerves quickly vanished when I saw Ian smiling. He asked me in a kind voice "Are you happy? Are you enjoying pupillage here? We want to make sure you are happy." Of course, I am happy and enjoying pupillage. The fact that he began this meeting by checking on my well-being and level of contentment confirmed for the millionth time that Exchange Chambers felt like home. The review went very well. I was given positive feedback. We discussed the direction of my practice and devised an action plan for the next 3 months and second six. I left that meeting feeling supported and content.

The rest of Tuesday's workday was spent reading papers for Wednesday and Thursday's shadowing opportunities. During the evening I attended the Northern Circuit's online session on top tips for the Ethics exam. This was a useful session discussing the syllabus for the exam, the core duties, how they interrelate and may conflict and the resolution of ethical dilemmas.

On Wednesday I shadowed Caitlin Edwards in a fast track trial. The claim for personal injury arose from a road traffic collision. Caitlin represented the Claimant. The Defendant raised causation as an issue in respect of the injuries and loss sustained due to the low velocity of the impact. Caitlin and I discussed my thoughts on the Claimant's prospects of success. I also gave her my opinion on whether I would have accepted the drop-hands offer made by the Defendant.

There were several lessons which could be deduced while observing the case, however, I will mention two. A good cross-examination on a Claimant's injuries is constructed by identifying the inconsistencies in different documents. Compare the witness statement's report on the injuries with the Claim Notification form, Particulars of Claim, medical reports, physiotherapy reports (the initial assessment and the discharge report) and the General Practitioner's notes.

Secondly, most low velocity impact cases turn on whether the force behind the impact of the collision was capable of causing injury. When delivering closing submissions particularly about causation it is helpful to structure the submissions by addressing the following questions:

- A) Was this a collision capable of causing injury?
- B) Has the Claimant demonstrated that he or she was injured in accordance with their personal injury claim?

The strong winds and rainy weather blew the drenched sleigh to Sheffield. There, I shadowed second six pupil Imogen Nichol in a small claims trial. Imogen represented the Defendant. This claim arose out of a road traffic collision in which the Defendant admitted the collision. Quantum was in dispute. This was a good opportunity to observe the type of work which I will be undertaking in approximately 3 months.

In this case the costs of the repairs of the vehicle were being challenged on the basis that the Defendant was not given a fair opportunity to assess if the costs accrued were reasonable and proportionate. It is essential to assess whether the Claimant mitigated their losses. When challenging the costs of repairs consider the following:

- Has the repair work stemmed from the damage?

- Were services undertaken that would not have been caused by the damage? For example, was a valet necessary?
- Is there an engineering report that provides the work units- the time spent on each task?
- Does the engineering report specify how much was spent on materials?
- Were there less expensive garages that could have undertaken the work?
- Were there nearby garages which would have eliminated the delivery cost of transporting the vehicle?

The jingling bells on the sleigh signalled the end of the week and the celebration of the festive holiday. The buzz of Christmas cheer and excitement led up to this climatic day- Exchange Chambers' Christmas party. Ian Spencer, Nicole Luna, Kate Heald and I boarded the sleigh from Leeds to Liverpool at 10:15am. The sleigh stopped in Stalybridge to allow Luke Heywood to board. The sleigh was transformed into a festive buffet with chocolates, crisps, sandwiches, Prosecco and much more. We ate, drank, and chatted in anticipation of the party.

When the sleigh came to a screeching halt in Liverpool we took a taxi to a nearby pub to meet other staff and members of Chambers. Smiling faces, the joy of holiday and a much-needed rest pervaded the atmosphere as we all happily conversed. A couple of hours later we braved the strong winds and walked to the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The festivities began with drinks and networking from 1pm-3pm. At 3pm we all sat and ate a delicious three-course meal. Merriment and cheer surrounded us all as we discussed the past few months and our holiday plans. The real fun began when the karaoke/ "carry-your-own-key" began. It was a delightful evening as we sang heartily and danced the night away.

Time does speed by when you are having fun. Luckily, I booked an overnight stay at the hotel. This gave me a wonderful opportunity to soak in the hot tub and eat a hearty full English breakfast the following day.

Second calling point: Week 16

Ahh... what was that sound? That was the sound of me exhaling on Christmas day. It was now time for a well-deserved break. I took the opportunity to be grateful for my blessings and cherish my family and friends. Of course, I couldn't forget to relish in good food, good company, and laughter. I hope you too had a wonderful and peaceful Christmas!

The rest of my week was spent revising for the rapidly upcoming BSB Professional Ethics assessment in January. Remember to keep your fingers and toes crossed for me and my co-pupils' success in our ethics assessment.

And just like that, the final trip on the Christmas pupillage sleigh has come to an end. I hope you enjoyed the journey. I wish you a prosperous and joyous new year. Now, I must return this unique herd of reindeer to the North Pole before I am placed on next year's naughty list. They have a lot to do in preparation for Christmas 2024!

See you later!

Yours truly,
Nia Marshall