

Months leading up to tenancy

The last three months have been the busiest of my pupillage! Throughout my second six, I averaged around three to four hearings a week. I hit a personal record in the last week of January, appearing in court every single day!

Not only was I in court every day, but I also travelled far and wide for hearings. FYI, I'm based in Manchester.

On Monday, I was at the County Court at Leeds for a return of a contested bankruptcy hearing, representing the petitioner. The dispute centred on whether the debtor owed sums to the petitioner under a personal guarantee and indemnity he had signed for a company of which he was a director. While the debt itself wasn't contested, he challenged service. Most of the hearing was spent debating whether the petitioner had taken all reasonable steps to serve the statutory demand (the document preceding a bankruptcy petition). Despite the debtor having expressly acknowledged receipt – and being present at the hearing – the court, in its wisdom, decided the issue warranted robust examination...

On Tuesday, I was back at it, this time at the County Court at Carlisle for another contested bankruptcy hearing. As with the Leeds case, the debtor had signed a personal guarantee and indemnity. The issue was whether the petitioner had unreasonably refused an offer to use his property as security for the petition debt. There were various historical charges on the property recorded on the land registry title document, however, it wasn't entirely clear what they related to or what the value of those charges were. As a result, it was unclear what equity was available or whether the debtor could remortgage the property to settle the petition debt.

The judge adjourned the petition hearing so the debtor could find out what those charges relate to and ultimately determine whether the debtor's offer was unreasonably refused.

But the judge was clear in his ruling that if the debtor sat on his hands that a bankruptcy order would likely be made at the next hearing.

On Wednesday, I was back in Leeds for a small claims hearing for a standard credit hire case. I was for the defendant insurer. These cases arise from RTAs, where rather than suing the driver who is said to have caused the accident, the claimant sues the insurer under the European Communities (Rights against Insurers) Regulations 2002. The claimant sought to recover the cost of hiring a replacement vehicle while theirs was being repaired.

Thursday took me to Leeds once again, this time for a section 8 possession hearing. These hearings usually last about a minute when they are uncontested – which this was. However, my hearing was only called on an hour after it was due to commence...

While waiting, one of my clerks emailed me about an interesting matter scheduled for London the following day. So, after wrapping up in court, I went to chambers to discuss the case.

It was a complex unfair prejudice petition under section 994 of the Companies Act 2006, being handled by a barrister from my chambers who was called to the Bar nine years after I was born! The hearing in London was an interlocutory application in the High Court to extend time for exchanging witness statements, in circumstances where the trial date has already been fixed. On paper, it was a straightforward application, but it was my first appearance before an ICC Judge and my first time in the Rolls Building. The whole experience was fascinating: meeting and advising the clients (solicitor and lay client) outside of the courtroom, making submissions before an ICC Judge, facing an opponent who was called to the Bar two years BEFORE I was born – and, of course, winning the application!

Afterwards, I headed to the Middle Temple library to finalise the draft minute of order. There was some back and forth with my opponent (not unusual), before the final draft order was sent to the ICC Judge's Clerk.

What a week that was.

The following Tuesday, I had eight winding up petitions (about half of what I usually do in the Manchester list), and that evening, I shared my crazy week with student members of the Middle Temple in a talk (I appeared remotely).

Tenancy – goal accomplished!

February remained a busy period, filled with hearings and paperwork. My final tenancy review also took place that month – and it went very well.

Stephen Connolly, who supervised the majority of my second six, recommended me for tenancy. He and Bryn (who supervised my first six) drafted a report, which was sent to the board recommending tenancy. The board approved it, and the report was circulated to all members of chambers for a vote.

I genuinely believe self-confidence is essential in this job, so, perhaps surprisingly, I wasn't nervous about the decision – despite spending the last 11 years working HARD towards this goal.

As I write this final diary entry in HAMPTON & VOÚIS, Manchester, listening to my favourite Afro Beats songs, I feel reflective – and more than a little nostalgic about my journey. I moved to this country at the age of 10, having lived in Germany before, knowing only the words “yes” and “no”. Determined to master the English language, I studied spelling and grammar daily. I was originally placed in the bottom sets at school. By the time I sat my GCSEs, I was in the top sets.

EXCHANGE
CHAMBERS

I went on to study Law (with German Law) at the University of Sheffield and earned a First Class Degree.

I secured a scholarship from the Middle Temple to study the Bar Course while working as a paralegal. I got a Very Competent.

I obtained pupillage after the second time of applying at one of the most prestigious sets in the country and THE BEST set in the north of England.

And now, I am a fully qualified Barrister.

Thanks be to God.

I have said this in a recent LinkedIn post – but it bears repeating – I couldn't have done this without the unwavering support of my supervisors, mentors, colleagues, friends, family, and instructing solicitors.

On to the next goal and challenge!

Julius Klutse

Exchange Chambers

klutse@exchangechambers.co.uk

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