

Report of the Chairman of the Worcestershire Medico-Legal Society for 2015-6

I think that I can report on a successful year in 2015-6. Our objective is to cover not just medicine as such, although this is obviously a main feature of our programme, but to look at health care in the light of social care and education too. This reflects the current emphasis on, so far as possible, looking at these three services as an integrated whole.

The talks were generally reasonably well attended with an average of about 15-20 except for one by the Tom Wheatley, the Governor of Long Lartin Prison, where we were absolutely snowed under by the large attendance and, regrettably, some were turned away. The counsel of perfection here is to plan well in advance for what may be very popular talks – but who knows which these will be? We should aim for 20-25 attendees as this gives a good atmosphere and leads to an interesting spread of questions. We planned five talks but the speaker for one – which was to have bene on whistleblowing in the NHS – could not come and we could not find a replacement.

The talks that did happen were:

Domestic Violence – Ruth Jones

Legal Humour and Legal Howlers – James Somerville

Life and Challenges in a High Security Prison – Tom Wheatley

Conscientious Decisions in Health Care – Tony Cole and John Duddington

At the start of the year we experimented with holding meetings at the University of Worcester in what was the chapel of the old hospital. Although this was a lovely venue the attendance at this venue was very disappointing and so we have reverted to holding all our talks at the Charles Hastings Centre at Worcestershire Royal Hospital. However we have continued to build up links with the University and I have held very productive meetings with them. I also spoke to the first year students on their LLB about the Society and I hope that some of them will come to our meetings.

We held the second conference at the University, jointly sponsored with them, this time on End of Life Care, which was a tremendous success, and we look forward to the next one, in November 2017 on Deprivation of Liberty. Unfortunately the LLM/MSc Law and Ethics for Health and Social Care at the University did not take off this year but I very much hope that it will do so in future. Many thanks to Dr. Helen Taylor, one of our members and a member of staff at the University of Worcester whose tremendous enthusiasm is behind this collaboration.

On the question of publicising our activities I wrote an article for ‘The Three Pears’ an journal for law societies in the West Midlands, and we are delighted that Worcestershire Law Society have taken out corporate membership of our society. I do hope that other organisations will do so too: corporate membership is £200 a year and if you are a professional organisation it really is a very inexpensive way of bring continuing education to your members, all of whom can of course attend our meetings.

On the subject of membership I must stress that amongst all of these developments our individual membership is in fact slowly declining – this is a worrying trend and so I do urge any of you here tonight who are not members to consider doing so. The consequence of this

decline is that the society is in fact being financially sustained by fewer and fewer people. This cannot go on.

May I thank all of our committee members for their constant support and for being such a fertile source of ideas for speakers. The committee members are: Dr. Tony Cole, Dr. Kelvin Laidlaw, Dr. Jonathan Leach, Dr. Helen Taylor, Susan Jarvis, Gill Porter, James Somerville and Erica Wassell.

The President of Yorkshire County Cricket Club used, by tradition, to go on for ever. I shall not do that but I would like to continue to see the project with the University of Worcester carried through to fruition. Lesley Smallman is happy too to stand again as your Secretary and Treasurer but we shall be looking at some date to hand over!

May I end by thanking you all for your support, our excellent speakers for without exception being so interesting and, on the personal level, so friendly and above all Lesley who is a real gem as a secretary/treasurer and does all the hard work!!

John Duddington

October 2016.