

LSLA

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The incoming LSLA president pays tribute to his legal heroes & reveals a passion for sports

DAC Beachcroft partner John Bramhall is the newly-elected president of the London Solicitors Litigation Association (LSLA).



What was your route into the profession?

I went to school at [Reigate Grammar](#), and after a diet of sport, detentions, and arguing, both in competitions and playgrounds (a perfect training for life as a future litigator) I went on to [St Anne's College, Oxford](#). University was as much about sport, as jurisprudence, so called, but while skipping some London rugby team for [Bill Richards](#) (now LG), he persuaded me to do a vacation placement (what on earth...?) at [Slaughter and May](#). After those few weeks, I changed track, and decided to become a solicitor, not a barrister, and spent the next decade in their litigation department, with some excellent people.

What has been your biggest career challenge so far?

In career and life... Trying to be patient and to listen properly (I can hear my secretary laughing now!), and retaining a sense of perspective, however challenging a situation may appear. I try to help myself in making at least a nodding attempt to achieve those aims by working with people who first, I like; but second, who I think are cleverer than me (not hard, I can hear you say); but people who will challenge me, and tell me why I am wrong, even as trainees/NQs/baby juniors. More widely, and as incoming LSLA President, I see real challenges for the litigation legal community in coping with the aftermath of the Jackson reforms, and the train crash that was *Mitchell*. To my mind, the legal profession has done nothing to deserve being treated like naughty schoolchildren, and we should not be looking over our shoulders, thinking there but for the grace of God go I... and fearing a negligence action for missing a deadline that has caused no prejudice. Still. Welcome to the Brave New World.

Which person within the legal profession inspires you most?

In university days, [Lord Denning](#), for his style of writing and desire to achieve a fair outcome. But within the workplace, I suppose that in my early years, those around me—I was technically articled to [Francis Neate](#), whose way with people and drafting abilities were special. One of his clients was English cricket's governing body, which was a joy, as dealing with disciplinary hearings for Gattling, Lamb, then ball tampering and South Africa wasn't really work at all! [Deborah Finkler](#) was my "Aunty" on qualification and looked after me in the early years, and I always liked the cartoon picture in her office—"Settle? Where's the fun in that?". In later years, I learned a lot from [Clive Zietman](#) about how to develop a practice, and his comment in an article like this one, that litigation was his "hobby" made me smile.

If you weren't a lawyer, what would you choose as an alternate career?

International diplomacy.

Who is your favourite fictional lawyer?

[Patty Hewes](#) from *Damages*, but [Ally McBeal](#) would be much better company for a night out.

What change would you make to the profession?

A compulsory training week for all new judges in a solicitors' office, doing late night bundling and preparing costs budgets.

How do you relax?

I have on occasions been accused by those closest to me of being a sports obsessive. Quite unfair of course, and in any event, it is simply my way of relaxing. I have played both rugby and cricket with enthusiasm (albeit limited ability) for many years, and although increasingly a spectator these days, I did manage to play my first game of rugby (age 52) with my [Quins Academy](#) 18 year-old-lad v *Stade Francais Voltigeurs* last month—and he went off injured before me, which is something I will not let him forget in a hurry!

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