

London Calling: Philadelphia's Temple Inn Crosses the Pond



This February, ten members of the Temple American Inn of Court in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania visited the sites of Legal London. The group went to hear a case being argued in the House of Lords before the Law Lords. The Senior Law Lord, Lord Bingham, graciously invited the group to tea in his chambers after conclusion of the day's argument. Among other things, Lord Bingham discussed the creation of a new Supreme Court to replace the current House of Lords judicial responsibility and the controversial changes to the historic role of the Lord Chancellor. Lord Bingham told the group that he and the other Law Lords insist on writing their own opinions and do not have clerks helping them. Senior U.S. District Judge, Lowell A. Reed, Jr., founding President of the Temple Inn and a Master of the Bench, observed that the British judges usually do not have law clerks and, often, appellate judges give their decisions from the bench on the day of the argument. He remarked that he wondered how our courts would function in the British manner.

The group also watched a trial at the Central Criminal Court (the "Old Bailey") and visited the Royal Courts of Justice. Meredith Seigle, recruitment chair of the Temple Inn and a Barrister, found the process of using only cross-examination to elicit testimony in civil cases to be a unique difference from trial practice in the United States. She observed that the average person in the United Kingdom does not have access to the judicial system because of the costs of retaining a barrister and a solicitor. She also noted that class differences are very apparent in the courtroom. Barristers are wigged and robed in the traditional manner--and often come from wealth and nobility. In contrast, criminal defendants are literally placed in cages in a quadrant of the courtroom.

Inn members also enjoyed visiting the precursors and inspiration for the American Inn of Court movement, the Inns of Court, where they toured the historic buildings and learned about the differences between legal education--and the legal profession itself--in England and the United States. Lunch at Gray's Inn provided insight into the daily workings of the Inns, as did meetings with members of Gray's Inn and the Middle Temple Inn.

The group also toured and met with members of a set of Barristers' Chambers and with a firm of solicitors to discuss their different concerns, duties, and perspectives. Finally, the members participated in a lively discussion with members of the Bar Council, the representative body for the Bar. The Temple Inn hosted an evening reception at Gray's Inn to thank their hosts and presented replicas of the Liberty Bell to those members of the Bar who had done so much to facilitate their visit.

The three-day program was conceived and developed by the Temple Inn President, Anthony Haller, who happens also to be a member of Gray's Inn and a qualified Barrister. Anthony worked in conjunction with the Bar Council International Relations Committee, Charles Haddon-Cave QC of Quadrant Chambers, and Andrew Dobson of Lawrence Graham Solicitors to put together this innovative program permitting Inn members to view and to debate the intricacies of the English legal system as well as to gain insight into the special role of the Inns of Court in promoting ethical and professional standards. Haller said of the trip, "It gave me great pleasure to help arrange this trip and to allow our Inn members to experience first hand the traditions which have helped shape the Inns of Court movement in this country."