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*London*

*Official newsletter of The Association of Women  
Solicitors London*

## **PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES, EQUALITY AND INCLUSION FOR WOMEN IN LAW**

### **CHAIR'S ADDRESS**

A very warm welcome to your latest AWSL newsletter.

It seems nothing short of a blink of an eye ago that your committee elected me as your Chair in March 2023, and what a year it's been! However, before I launch in, I would first like to extend my gratitude to my predecessors, especially Christl Hughes and Virginia Cannon, but all of whom laid the foundations to allow my tenure to be such an exciting one.

I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to the family and friends of our dear Elizabeth Cruikshank. Elizabeth was an inspiration to us all and will be truly missed.

### **What's Been Happening?**

Following the 2023 AGM, it was an absolute privilege to have the incredible [Tatyana Eatwell](#) of Doughty Street Chambers speak about her role in the successful releases of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Nizar Zakka. You may recall that both were arbitrarily detained in Iran in what was coined as "state kidnapping". The legal battle was extraordinary, and Tatyana's talk was very moving indeed. Thank you to all of those who attended in person. I hope you enjoyed the evening as much as I did.

We then had Anna Manning conduct a virtual session titled "Grow Your Confidence". The session was interactive, and the feedback received was very positive indeed.

Our committee member, Samantha Lewis then held our first hybrid event of the year on housing related asthma claims. The turnout was impressive, which was good to see on such an important and topical subject.

Courtesy of our Vicki Sales, AWSL was represented at the biggest fundraising event in the legal calendar, the London Legal Walk. Congratulations, Vicki for completing the walk and thank you for coordinating the team to ensure we were able to participate. The London Legal Walk 2024 takes place on 18.06.2024. I appreciate a lot of our members will be walking with their respective firms. However, if there are any members who would like to walk with AWSL then please let us know by emailing [awslondon1@gmail.com](mailto:awslondon1@gmail.com). A circular will also be sent closer to the time.

AWSL was invited to and attended the key conferences hosted by the SRA and the LSB's second ever annual conference. Christl Hughes and I manned the stand, and we took it in turns to attend the sessions of relevance to our members.

As a result of the conferences, we have been able to network, raise our profile, and widen our pool of potential sponsors. We have also further strengthened our links with the SRA, who asked us to feature on their 'Your health, your career' page as a recommended source of help.

Our Bessie Eigbefoh then attended the Sole Practitioners Group annual conference, where AWSL's attendance was acknowledged and welcomed. Bessie was able to liaise with senior staff from the SRA and Legal Ombudsman.

I was then very pleased to note in December 2023, five out of the 11 deputy High Court judges appointed by the Lady Chief Justice in her first round of appointments were female, two of whom solicitors.

I attended the LSB Consultation on 17.01.2024 to understand their proposed business plan for 2024/2025. If you would like to review the content, please visit the link [here](#).

We then had our traditional discounted ballet event, which this year was Edward Scissorhands. Sadly, I was unable to attend but understand the performance did not disappoint.

## Administration

We have spent the rest of the year finalising a number of compliance matters following changes in the rules and regulations, which applied to the Association. This included amongst other things, updating policies, taking out insurance, changing over bank signatories and updating our website. We have also invested in an administrative assistant, a registered office and a secure remote platform upon which to host our remote events.

As volunteers, we did our best to complete this as soon as possible but, unfortunately, it resulted in the sacrifice of organising more events. We had to prioritise these matters to ensure long-term sustainability of the Association. However, I am pleased to report that we have now completed this process and – even better news, despite the necessary increase in the Association's overheads, we will not be increasing membership fees this year.

We are also on the look out for more committee members. If you, or you know of anyone who would like to join our vibrant committee, please register interest by emailing us at [awslondon1@gmail.com](mailto:awslondon1@gmail.com).

## What's Next?

We are in talks with 5 Pump Court Chambers to host another insightful training session on The Civil Procedure Rules, Part 36. We are aiming for this session to be held remotely in February, and further details will follow shortly.

There will be a lot going on in March, but I hope by now you will have all received your 'Save the Date' for the AGM on 21.03.2024. Details will be circulated via email, but in the meantime, I am very excited to announce that I will be hosting at Leigh Day's offices in the Panagram, Barbican. Following the AGM, we will have an opportunity to network. Please secure your place by [booking here](#).

We will continue to organise this year's events calendar but, if you have any ideas on events or training, please let us know [here](#); otherwise, watch this space!

Finally, in a world where “working 9 to 5” is an aspiration, let’s take something else from Dolly Parton, who once said, “if your actions create a legacy that inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, then you are an excellent leader” ... As some of us approach year end, please remember to be kind to yourself, lead positively – even if it’s against adversity, and know that in creating a positive legacy, you will always be an “excellent leader”.

Here’s to another exciting 12 months.

With very best wishes,  
Your Chair, Renée Wright

*Please note, additional platforms for assistance:*

Mental Health:            [LawCare](#)  
Financial difficulties:    The [Solicitors’ Charity](#).

# ELIZABETH CRUIKSHANK 1942- 2023

AWSL was saddened to learn of the death of our former Chair and Honorary member Elizabeth on 5th September 2023 following a fall at home. She was 79.

Many tributes have been published in the legal media including the Law Society Gazette, First 100 Years and Legal Women.

As a highly regarded, author, teacher, scholar and historian as well as a solicitor and advocate for women in the law Elizabeth was a respected, long-standing member of our Association.

As a wife, mother and grandmother she also served as an excellent role model and friend.



I first met Elizabeth in 2008 when I joined the Committee of the then national Association of Women Solicitors. She was at that time just finishing as Editor of our quarterly magazine LINK. Looking back through my copies of those the artwork, narrative and presentation are just excellent. Whenever my copy arrived I could not wait to read it!

When in 2013 the National Association of Women Solicitors had to close down (due to withdrawal of funding) feelings ran high but in the final issue of the LINK magazine Elizabeth recited very positively the good that the national Association had done and the progress that had been made. Her gentle and tactful approach inspired total confidence in her integrity over some very difficult times and AWSL now continues that work.

We extend our sympathy to Sir Donald Cruickshank, their children and grandchildren.

*By Christl Hughes MBE*

# EDMONDSON JONES LLP – FLEX APPEAL

Edmondson Jones LLP a fully virtual, flexible-working, Private Client law firm which was founded in 2021 by Elizabeth Jones and Nicola Edmondson.

Elizabeth and Nicola worked together for several years in the City, juggling the demands of being working parents with growing their careers, commuting and everything that comes with being a lawyer in a busy practice. During the pandemic, they saw a shift change in terms of how clients wished to interact and



work with them. Therefore they decided to take the opportunity to set up their own, virtual law firm, allowing them to work entirely flexibly, in a way that suits the responsibilities of being working parents, whilst meeting the needs of clients.

“Something that had prevented us from doing this previously was the need for central London office space, but the pandemic and everything that has come after showed us that this wasn’t the case anymore. We do see clients in person if they wish, but we find that most prefer the convenience of virtuality – they are busy people with busy lives.”

The firm is a boutique practice specialising in the full range of Private Client work, from Wills and Probate to complex tax and trust planning for high net worth and non-domiciled individuals. “We are a fully flexible-working firm, with happy clients, and we do not think the two are mutually exclusive. The fact we have been growing since day one is testament to this. We do not have set working hours or billing targets, we don’t require people to be sat in an office, and so our way of working really suits people who have caring or other responsibilities, who otherwise may have left the profession, or not returned, after say, maternity leave. Statistically, this tends to be women, but we think anything that helps the profession retain good lawyers is a positive thing. We think this kind of working is the way forward for everyone’.

*By Christl Hughes MBE*