

The 2016 Times 2TG Moot upholds 'the very best advocacy standards'



BEN GURRY

As this year's moot winners claim their prizes, entry opens for next year, says Edward Fennell

The inaugural Times 2G Moot concluded last month with a glittering final in Middle Temple Hall — and immediately set an inspiring standard for the 2017 competition.

Described as “a wonderful evening” by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas, and with an enviable list of moot judges in Lord (Anthony) Clarke, Lord Justice (Christopher) Clarke and Sir Richard Aikens, the final tested the finalists’ nerves, preparation and sharp skill in presenting legal arguments persuasively and concisely.

To the entertainment of the packed hall the teams found that they had to contend with the judges as much as battling their opponents. “The judges were outstanding and really got into the spirit of the evening,” says Paul Downes, QC, the moot coordinator and head of pupillage at 2TG, the competition’s sponsor and partner with *The Times*. “There was a light touch, but at the same time they exposed the mooters to the sort of scrutiny that senior advocates receive in the appellate courts.”

That, of course, is why mooting is an important formative experience for young advocates. “The most demanding aspect of the competition was engaging with the judges in a manner which not only per-

From left: finalists Cara Goldthorpe and John Williams; Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas, and winners Maurice Holmes and Michael Harper

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Why does advocacy matter?

The Times 2TG Moot has been established as a beacon for the importance of advocacy. “We are passionate about advocacy,” says Paul Downes, QC, of 2TG. “We believe that the future of chambers and of the Bar in general depends on our being able to attract, nurture and inspire tomorrow’s great advocates and this competition provides an excellent opportunity to further that objective.”

to present an argument and deal with interventions from judges. At 2TG we think that a proper grounding in advocacy remains central to success in a career as a barrister. Even in these days of skeleton arguments, there’s no substitute for oral argument for getting to the nub of an issue.”

For those who want to take on the challenge of *The Times* 2TG Moot 2017, preliminary registration by pairs of students for this year’s competition opens from today at 2TG.co.uk and will close — with receipt of entries — on May 31.

The initial problem for entry by skeleton argument and YouTube presentation will be published on March 31 and selected participants (to be notified by the end of June) will then commence the first of three knock-out rounds in the autumn. The final will be held in Middle Temple Hall on January 19 next year when the winning pair will receive a cheque for £4,000 and the competition trophy. The runners-up receive a cheque for £2,000.

Effective advocacy, said the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas, requires, first, a mastery of the subject on which you are going to argue. Second, it demands the observance of the highest standard of conduct. And third, there is the vital and creative art of persuasion.

“There is no better way of analysis and getting to grips with a problem than by oral argument,” he says.

Michael Harper (awaiting the star pupillage) entered with his mooting partner Maurice Holmes. Harper said: “It looked like a stand-out mooting competition, obviously set up with the very best advocacy standards in mind. It was an opportunity to test our mettle against the best and I think that is always worth doing.” Maurice Holmes (a pupil at Crown Office Chambers and former professional cricketer) the evening was — quite remarkable — all about enjoying his time at the crease. “For me these competitions are primarily about having fun. If you don’t enjoy challenges posed by mooting then a career at the Bar probably isn’t for you.”

Their opposition in the final were Cara Goldthorpe and John Williams, both assistant barristers at different institutions when they entered. “It was great to be able to enter the competition directly, rather than through an institution, as we were at the same university,” says Williams, who has just accepted pupillage. “We both enjoy going toe-to-toe with skilled mooters. And given the effort *The Times* a-