

GUIDANCE FOR THE SENIOR-IN-HALL

(revised February 2012)

In general

- 1 Seniors-in Hall shall be responsible to the Bench for:
 - good order in Hall on dining nights, term-keeping Sunday luncheons, and such other occasions as the Bench shall identify,
 - dealing discretely with any complaints that may be made privately by note or orally but a member attempting to complain publicly must be asked to desist,
 - encouraging, but not insisting on, members participating in Hall life,
 - representing Hall as appropriate, and
 - constituting the Panel of Seniors-in-Hall responsible to the Bench for discussion of matters concerned with activities in Hall and elsewhere as the Bench shall identify.

The Panel shall also keep under review the 'Customs of Hall' and shall liaise, as appropriate, with the Barristers' Committee.

- 2 The Seniors shall be appointed by the Bench according to an agreed procedure.
- 3 The Duty Senior should always address Hall through Mr/Madam Junior and should warn the Junior in advance, through the Head Porter, when a response is expected.
- 4 The Duty Senior, the Head Porter, and the Head Waiter/Waitress should maintain liaison in Hall and Chapel over all matters including members' behaviour, the appropriateness of their dress and ensuring that gowns are worn.
- 5 The Duty Senior should be familiar with the current Customs of Hall to ensure, as far as possible, that they are observed. Seniors have been chosen as those who can exercise authority with good humour and discretion to ensure that dining remains a pleasant experience while also ensuring the formalities, traditions and courtesies are maintained.

In particular

Before dinner

- 6 The Duty Senior should attend Hall at least twenty minutes before the start of dinner (save for Sundays and mixed-mess dining nights when there is a Benchers' reception beforehand) and shall sit in that place designated for the Senior. The Duty Senior shall remain in Hall to ensure that all members leave by (normally) 22.00 hours or such other time as he may arrange with the Under Treasurer or Duty Porter. This is an important responsibility of the Duty Senior and, if he has to leave earlier for such reason as travelling, he must ensure that his Deputy (or another Senior present) fulfils it. In extremis, the Under Treasurer must be notified.

- 7 Normally, before the Bench enters Hall, the Head Porter (or his Deputy) reminds members of the restrictions on leaving Hall and he shall then invite the Duty Senior to address Hall. Duty Seniors may take this opportunity to welcome Barristers, students and guests and to remind them of the tradition of hospitality of this Inn and of the importance of the custom of toasting to ensure that members of each mess know each other and the members of the adjacent messes.
- 8 The Duty Senior and the Duty Deputy will both dine free of charge on the occasions for which they have been planned – a Deputy is always planned in part to ensure that there is always a senior Barrister on duty without a last minute series of emergency telephone calls by the Treasury, and in part to provide support for the Duty Senior. Normally, both are expected to attend but, should that prove difficult on any occasion, they are expected to arrange cover between them.

During dinner

- 9 The Duty Seniors should:
 - be aware of any disturbance or other matter which deserves their discrete attention, and of any concern of the presiding Bencher
 - grant any request *in extremis* to leave Hall temporarily (which is not normally allowed between Grace before dinner and Domus). The member wishing to leave should make a written application through a staff member to the Duty Senior who should grant the request (and no issue should be taken) although only one person should be allowed to be absent at any one time
 - ensure that toasting is honoured in the Senior mess and, at least, in those other messes within sight

After dinner

- 10 After the Bench has withdrawn, the Head Porter shall present the gavel to the Duty Senior who shall respond to the Junior's request to propose the toast of 'Domus':
 - Before making that response, the Duty Senior shall make such announcements as are necessary about activities taking place in Hall that evening.
 - On those occasions when the Bench does not retire, the Junior shall invite the Treasurer or other Presiding Bencher to propose 'Domus'.(Note that when the Bench is not present, this toast is drunk with all members of Hall standing)

11 **Monday nights are normally Moot nights.** The Duty Senior has no extra duties on **Moot**. On some of these occasions dining is replaced by wine and canapés or a buffet (in Hall or the Bingham Room) but there shall still be two Duty Seniors present and gowned although their duties will only be the maintenance of good order and the mixing with students.

12 **Tuesday night** is (customarily) mixed mess dining and often includes a short address to which the Presiding Bencher proposes a short vote of

thanks. The Duty Senior may be invited to second this vote on behalf of Hall at the discretion of the Presiding Bencher.

- 13.1 **Thursday night/formal guest night** is the night on which Hall entertains itself and, after 'Domus', the Duty Senior shall fulfil the role of Master of Revels (or appoint another Barrister to fulfil that role) encouraging **voluntary** contributions from members accordingly. Arrangements may be made to provide to the Senior a list of those **volunteering** to participate but the practice of one member rising to challenge another, the defendant responding, and the Senior adjudicating, has been abolished by Pension and must not be allowed to take place on any occasion. Lecture or debates may be arranged for the period before dinner.
- 13.2 **Thursdays (Grand Night)** Benchers hosting guests join with Seniors, Bar and Students for pre-dinner drinks in the Bingham Room. Other Benchers not hosting to gather on the LPR Landing as normal for pre-dinner drinks. At 18.50, the Head Porter will gavel to lead Seniors, Bar, and students in procession through the Bridge Bar and down the internal staircase into Hall. Benchers to be called from LPR Landing – all to stand. Hosting Benchers and Guests will proceed down from BR and processed to High Table to be introduced as customarily. The Presiding Senior must be aware of the extra after dinner duties that he has on Grand Nights see Custome of Hall.
- 14 **Friday night** is (occasionally) concert night. The Bench retire for a short period and return for the concert after which a designated Bencher proposes a vote of thanks to the performers.
- 14 There may be occasional term-keeping dinners that are less formal than otherwise - in keeping with the nature of the occasion: a concert night is an example. Normally, on such occasions, Hall will be invited to pre-prandial drinks with the Benchers in the Large Pension Room, tables may be round rather than refectory-type, and the custom of messes toasting themselves and each other will be set aside. However, Grace before and after the meal will be said as would be expected at any semi-formal dinner, the sober dress requirements will be maintained to mark the residual formality, gowns will be worn because they are the indication of a term-keeping occasion, and there will be a duty Senior-in-Hall, as always, to be the Treasurer's agent for any purpose.
- 15 Normally Hall should close by 22.00 hours (16.00 on a Sunday) at the latest and it is the Duty Senior's responsibility to ensure that members leave by this time (so that staff will be able to clear the tables) but the Duty Senior shall have discretion to vary the time of closure if it appears right to do so. When announcing that Hall is closing, the Duty Senior should encourage those who wish to adjourn to the Bridge Bar (via the internal staircase – although gowns should firstly be returned to the Robing Room) and to allow them to take with them any remaining wine or port on their tables.

16 In respect of Sunday Chapel services, Duty Seniors are expected to attend Chapel, gowned, and assist the Chapel Keeper should he need assistance. In particular, they are asked to supervise members leaving after the service encouraging students to go by the main door to avoid congestion in the Chapel corridor although Barristers and their guests may normally leave by the Benchers' door.