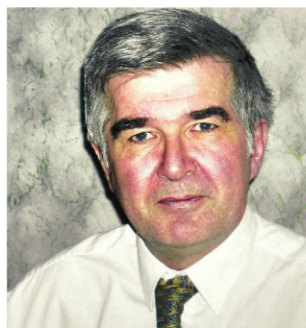


# Lost Law Society votes are not recovered so easily



Suffering a loss can be devastating, never mind how trivial. Imagine then, says **Richard Barr**, how The Law Society must be feeling



Richard Barr is a consultant at Scott-Moncrieff & Associates [www.scomo.com](http://www.scomo.com)

**T**he smell of noodles hit me as soon as I was on the train. I had been in London all day and my meetings had come to an end early. These days, most people can only afford rail travel if they buy tickets in advance, but the downside is that if you do not travel on your chosen train your ticket is invalid.

Two hours pacing round Liverpool Street station held no allure, but the prospect of getting home early, refreshed from a comfortable journey, persuaded me to take the earlier train.

Loss can affect us all in different ways. Kingdoms are lost for the sake of a nail. Poor old King John lost his jewels somewhere near my old tramping grounds of Wisbech and Kings Lynn. Literature is full

of it – *Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Lost Stradivarius* and *The Lost World*.

Love songs harmonise over losing that loving feeling/that girl/that gold ring.

And of course, the Law Society lost its vote of no confidence.

## Trivial loss

Against this huge backdrop of despair, my loss might seem pretty trivial, but it did not seem so at the time. The world, its neighbour, its dog and all of its cousins and uncles had all crowded on to my train, each one of them (except the dog) carrying a pot of noodles.

I moved to the front, where I shared unaccustomed intimacy with a group who were strangers to deodorant. Noodles and armpits are not a happy blend. There was not even space to unfurl a newspaper.

To pass the time, I pulled out my dictation machine and ran off a few letters. No problem about confidentiality as the din was deafening, as my secretary later mentioned as she struggled to make sense of train noises interspersed with a few discernible words.

Several stops and well over an hour into the journey, the crowd began to thin. I spotted, and sprinted to, one available seat halfway down the carriage. It was an uncomfortable seat but there I

remained for the rest of the journey to Norwich. I arrived full of regret that I had not spent an exciting two hours mooching round Liverpool Street station.

When I got home I realised that my dictation machine was missing. Yes, it was only a dictation machine, but it was



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a new, top-of-the-range digital model with go-faster stripes, and one that could virtually understand every word I spoke.

## Disappearing career

It did not end there: I had used it to record a confidential interview with a client. Suppose someone picked it up, listened to it and sold the story to the tabloids. What would the SRA, the Ombudsman and my client have to say? It did not bear thinking about. I saw my career disappearing before my eyes.

When you are in panic

mode, time passes slowly and people, except yourself, become stupid. The following day, I could make no sense of anyone when I tried to report my loss, and my frustration reached bursting point.

Then a little light glowed above my head. Years ago, I had obtained a direct contact number for Norwich station – long before they had invented push-button telephones. There was no harm giving it a try. To my surprise, it was quickly answered by a peremptory “Norwich”.

I explained the problem to the man at the other end. I imagined from his authoritative tone that he had an impressive hat on his head. “How did you get this number?” he demanded. He softened a little when I told him, but he made me promise not to tell anyone else.

“Yes,” he said, “we had one of those handed in last night.” I could have kissed him.

Later that day, man and machine were reunited. The machine was none the worse for wear, though it did smell a little of noodles, and, to my enormous relief, I found that I had already deleted the incriminating interview. Phew!

If only kingdoms, loving feelings and lost worlds could be found so easily – not to mention votes of no confidence. **SJ**