

# Sore wrists and sallow fretfulness

**AUTUMN IS MY** favourite season of the year. The rich colours, the soft days filled with the faint scent of smoke, the crackle of leaves under foot, the whispering of wood pigeons and the long smoky shadows all lend enchantment; not to mention the fact that at last the grass no longer has to be cut, you do not have to keep out of the sun for fear of melanoma and your exposure to carcinogens has been reduced by putting away the barbecue for another year.

Keats was right to speak of "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" and to paint a picture of moss'd cottage trees, barred clouds blooming the soft dying day and all those other heady descriptions.

But he wrote his 'Ode to Autumn' before the modern day requirements of CPD points. Had he been writing now (and especially if he had been a solicitor) his euphoria would have become dulled. Because there is a monster lurking behind every cottage tree at this time of the year: it is in reality the season of sore wrists and sallow fretfulness. Because our CPD year is nearly at an end and the consequences of failing to gain those magic points are too awful to contemplate.

Course providers, savaged by the recession, nonetheless report record bookings for their courses in the dying weeks of the CPD year as desperate solicitors rush to go on a course – any course – to make up their points.

I had the pleasure of watching the eyes of a conveyancing solicitor glaze over as he sat through a seminar on damages that offered four valuable CPD points. He was asked at the end if he had any questions and his response was: "No I am only here for the CPD."

## Creative point scoring

By the time you read this it will be too late to save you. However, now is the time to plan for the coming year. And here I have some good news. So long as you get a quarter of your points from accredited courses, you can be creative about the rest. You can acquire CPD points from participating in other courses which are of relevance and benefit to your area of work. Try these for starters:

■ Golf. According to the PGA website, participants at their teaching and training conference could have gathered a whopping

100 CPD points which would have lasted any golf-playing solicitors for years. But this story has three sad endings: golfing CPD points are probably less valuable than legal ones; you cannot carry your points forward; and the course was cancelled at the last minute "because of the economic climate". Shame about that. More solicitors should apply next year.

■ I also rather fancy gathering a few CPD points from the Institute of Brewing and Distilling. A four-day tour of Scottish distilleries would have gained 48 points.

■ If your work involves anything to do with animals you could have obtained CPD points at 'Glee Petindex Seminars'. The course included talks on the pet chicken, identifying human disease by odour, and starting out in reptiles (no lawyer jokes please).

Or you could stick to law. The Nuclear New Build Law Conference is still to take place. For three days you could be treated to talks from leaders in the nuclear industry and even learn about decommissioning your own nuclear installation. The only slight drawback to this course is that it could set you back more than £3,500 which might be an expensive way of acquiring your points – unless of course you are planning to be the first kid on the block to build a nuclear power station: that could be exactly the thing we need in the brave new world of alternative business structures.

But none of these ideas are a patch on what I have planned. Barr Seminars will be putting on the ultimate CPD course next October. It is to be entitled 'The Law of Autumn' and will carry precisely 16 CPD points. The timetable will include:

- Personal injury nose litigation (injuries caused by stepping on garden rakes).
- The role of the conker in criminal injuries (bring your own string and skewers. Soaking in vinegar will disqualify you).
- Neighbour disputes over leylandi hedges, with an opportunity to resolve several live disputes (training in chainsaw use to be given).
- Clock back litigation: to deal with claims by the millions of people who say



they suffered post traumatic stress disorder following the discovery that they had inadvertently turned up an hour early for work.

■ Counselling for Halloween trick or treat victims with role play (pumpkins and scary costumes to be provided). Please complete your inside leg length and waist circumference on the registration form.

■ Legislation concerning blocked and leaking drains. It is hoped that the Lord Privy Seal might be able to make a guest appearance.

■ Demonstrations of the EU directives on the purity of beer (I am sure that there must be some), to be outsourced to the Poachers Pocket (first three pints included in course fee). Siesta to follow prior to:

■ Key note lecture by a local locksmith: how to pick the locks of your rivals' cars, offices and office safes.

■ How to make bonfire night profitable for lawyers with lessons on the manufacture of wooden barrels and how much saltpetre is needed to make the ideal mix of gunpowder.

And if all that sounds exhausting, the University of Glasgow is offering CPD points if you study a course in behavioural sleep medicine. Presumably points will be awarded if you do not stay awake during lectures.

**SJ online**



**Still missing some CPD points?**

Read Richard Barr's more serious suggestions at [solicitorsjournal.com/tales](http://solicitorsjournal.com/tales)

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## A few serious points

- If you do find yourself in real difficulties over your CPD points, don't fall on your sword. The SRA recognises that some solicitors may find compliance difficult. If you have problems, contact the professional competence team on 0870 606 2555 to discuss the matter.
- Do not ignore the problem because failure to comply can result in delays in issuing a practising certificate or disciplinary procedures.
- You must keep your training record for at least six years.
- The SRA has a handy template for recording your training which can be accessed on [www.sra.org.uk/documents/solicitors/cpd/guidance-for-solicitors/cpd-training-record](http://www.sra.org.uk/documents/solicitors/cpd/guidance-for-solicitors/cpd-training-record).
- Writing articles for legal periodicals counts towards CPD points. Try it!
- And *Solicitors Journal's* CPD scheme is good value at £142.50. [Click here to sign up](#).