



Looking Towards a Future in Law

Monday 20 March 2023

Opportunity for young people across
the Reading community

We are delighted to welcome you to the launch of ARCH.

ARCH is a hub bringing together individuals and organisations across Reading to offer opportunities and learning experiences for young people and young women in particular.

The ARCH programme will offer a range of activities that develop aspiration and self-discovery, built on innovative community connections.

At the heart of ARCH is a multi-school and Reading-wide partnership. This partnership connects to a network of individuals and organisations with whom we collaborate.

What unites us is the desire to improve the life chances of young people to help them explore and fulfil their potential and live with confidence, purpose and joy.

Our sincere thanks to Lady Justice Geraldine Andrews DBE for sponsoring the '100 Years of Women at the Bar' Exhibition at The Abbey and to the Judicial Office for their facilitation.

We are grateful to students and staff of The Holt, John Madejski Academy and The Abbey for coming together for tonight's performances. Our thanks also to all our school and community partners, collaborators and associates who are joining us on this journey.



The Abbey



QUANTUM-h



4:30pm

Private View of the '100 Years of Women at the Bar' exhibition

- 5:00pm **Welcome**
Will le Fleming, Head of The Abbey
Richards Hall
- 5:10pm **Innovate UK Purple Plaque Award**
- 5:15pm **Keynote speakers:**
Samantha Woodham, Family Law Barrister
Co-founder of the Divorce Surgery
- Lady Justice Geraldine Andrews DBE
Court of Appeal Judge, England & Wales
- 5:35pm **Performances inspired by ‘100 Years of Women at the Bar’**
Developed with the creative support of RABBLE Theatre
- The Briefcase**
Performed by students of John Madejski Academy, written by The Abbey
- Hijabi**
Written and performed by students of The Abbey
- A Lonely Seven Years**
Written and performed by students of The Holt
- 6:05pm **Keynote speaker:**
Dana Denis-Smith, Founder of First Hundred Years - Next Hundred Years
- 6:15pm **Breakout Rooms**
We welcome students Y7 and upwards to discuss the themes of the evening with our guests from the justice and legal profession
Classrooms
- Parents and guests are invited for refreshments in the Hardcastle Hall
- 7:00pm **Networking Reception**
All students and guests
Hardcastle Hall

Keynote speakers

	Samantha Woodham (alumna of The Abbey) is a family law barrister at 4PB and co-founder of
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The Divorce Surgery.

Samantha champions women in industry, was shortlisted for Entrepreneur of the Year at the Women in Law Awards 2020, won Champion of the Year in the Citywealth Powerwomen of the Year Awards 2021 and was one of 40 women awarded the Government's Women in Innovation Award. She was shortlisted for Barrister of the Year at the Citywealth Magic Circle Awards 2022, the only non-silk nominee.



Dame Geraldine Andrews DBE (alumna of The Holt) is the first woman graduate of King's College London to be appointed a High Court Judge, becoming part of a proportionately small but growing group of women who have joined the ranks of the Senior Judiciary. As Lady Justice of Appeal of England and Wales she sits in both criminal and civil appeals and in the Divisional Court.



Dana Denis-Smith, founder and CEO, Obelisk Support and Founder of First Hundred Years - Next Hundred Years. Dana studied at LSE, embarked on a career as a journalist before switching focus and training as a lawyer with Linklaters. She set up her own business, Obelisk Support, to provide flexible legal services to top companies and law firms, using lawyers who no longer wanted a traditional legal career. Dana is passionate about access to justice and equality of opportunity.

Our warmest thanks to all our keynote speakers and breakout room guests for generously sharing their experiences with students for ARCH

- **Dheeba Ali**, Paralegal, LLB Law graduate and training to qualify as a solicitor
- **Annabel Allen**, trainee solicitor having studied History at Durham followed by a law conversion course (Abbey Alumna)
- **Emily Campbell**, Barrister & Senior Counsel (Abbey Alumna)
- **Vanessa Cheyne**, Senior Lawyer with the Commercial Law Group of the Government Legal Department
- **Bella Cordwell**, LLB Law Graduate, Southampton (Abbey Alumna)
- **Georgie Dibbo**, currently studying for the bar course, qualifying as a barrister in 2023 (Abbey Alumna)
- **Simon Dimmick**, planning lawyer with expertise in environmental matters, charities and strategic planning
- **Chief Superintendent Sarah Grahame**, Berkshire Local Police Areas
- **Helen Habershon**, solicitor specialising in family law
- **Alka Kharbanda**, High Sheriff of Berkshire 2022-23, partner at a law firm and specialises in dispute resolution
- **Frances Kyle**, Senior Associate Solicitor in the dispute resolution team
- **Jenny Marsh**, partner at a London law firm, focusing on competition law (Abbey Alumna)
- **Ben May**, Senior Crown Prosecutor, CPS
- **Francesca Neil**, solicitor, experienced in civil and commercial matters
- **HHJ Heather Norton**, Resident Judge, Reading Crown Court
- **Nikki Phillips**, Deputy General Counsel & Director of Legal Operations (Abbey Alumna)
- **Lila Raczkevych**, second year Law & French Student at University of Bristol
- **Immi Ramskill**, Chemistry at Oxford followed by a Law conversion course. Studying for Solicitor Qualifying Examinations before starting a training contract (Abbey Alumna)
- **Elisabeth West**, lawyer and lecturer, volunteer advisor at Citizens Advice
- **Alexander Wright**, Solicitor, converting to law from the pensions industry (Abbey Alumna)

Celebrating a Centenary of Women in Law

Dana Denis-Smith

Extract from a guest blog for TBD about the setting up the First Hundred Years Project

In November 2013, there was a story in the alumni magazine published by Herbert Smith Freehills – I can't remember many details of the story, other than that it was about a male alumnus, but what caught my attention was a group photograph in the corner of the page, taken in 1982 and featuring a big group of lawyers dressed in black tie. There was only one woman in that shot. And I suddenly had a lightbulb moment: in my lifetime, there had been so few women in leading positions within law firms to push for a different narrative. And I wanted to know how this was possible.



The Royal Courts of Justice, London

During my research, I came across the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, which paved the way for women to become lawyers for the first time. I immediately saw that the centenary of this landmark piece of legislation could provide a powerful focal point for giving female lawyers the much-needed context for their professional endeavours and a necessary sense of their own collective history.

One of the things that was therefore very important to me was to create a public story-telling space where it was safe to share the full story of what it's like to be a female lawyer with children, and not just the redacted or sanitised version focusing exclusively on the work side of the equation. And then to connect these unvarnished narratives with what it is like to be a woman, with the legacy and history of women in law and creating something that female lawyers can truly be proud of – because they are standing on the shoulders of giants. It was about establishing a dialogue with a history that had hitherto been missing.

www.First100years.org.uk



**Innovate
UK**

Congratulations to Samantha Woodham, Alumna of The Abbey, for being awarded the prestigious Innovate UK award for innovation in family law practice.

Innovate UK says “There are thousands of blue plaques across the UK, 900 in London alone, celebrating the achievements of influential and pioneering figures. Yet, women feature on fewer than one in seven of them.

This highlights a national issue of the under-representation of women in the media and in leadership roles, whether in the workplace or in the education system. This results in a lack of relatable role models for children and young people.

Innovate UK hopes the purple plaques will inspire more girls to get into innovation and follow in the award winners’ footprints.”



With special thanks to Co-Artistic Director Dani Davies (Abbey Alumna), Community Outreach Lead Gemma Colclough and the team at RABBLE for working alongside our student writers and performers.

RABBLE is an inclusive, independent women-led theatre company & CIO, based in Reading - producing relevant, original theatre that responds to our lives.

“We help people feel proud of who they are and where we come from”



We are thrilled to partner with ARCH in their efforts to create opportunities, improve the life chances of young people and enable them to thrive with confidence and purpose.

As a technology company, we believe that technology is an enhancement for communication but not a replacement for human interaction.

By partnering with ARCH, we are sharing a core purpose of engagement and learning, assisting in community building and developing leadership and confidence skills among young women.



Tell us your ideas for future events

Let us know how you can help

Find out more about ARCH

arch@theabbey.co.uk