

North American Committee – Report for AGM, July 2021

As Members will be aware, this year's report is again on a North American Meeting that did not go ahead. Last year I said that it made it a rather unusual report, but sadly it is probably now an entirely anticipated, and usual, report. In summary:

- The meeting was due to take place in Florence on 2 – 4 June 2021, at the Hotel Westin Excelsior (for accommodation) and Hotel St Regis (for meetings) either side of the Piazza Ognissanti. The Thursday night drinks event was organised at the Palazzo Gondi, just off the Piazza della Signoria, and the Friday night gala dinner at the Villa Bardini. The highlight of the usual programme of talks was intended to be a special panel session on advocacy in the Commercial Court – and in commercial litigation at all levels of the judicial system more generally. This was to be held (still, if belatedly) in honour of the Commercial Court's 125th anniversary, with a panel comprised of Lord Hamblen (former Commercial Court judge and current Justice of the Supreme Court), Lord Justice Phillips (former Commercial Court judge and current Lord Justice of Appeal) and Mrs Justice Cockerill (the current Judge in Charge of the Commercial Court), who were then to be joined by some of our distinguished Honorary Overseas Members to reflect upon similarities and differences in practice, and in what constitutes effective advocacy in commercial litigation, from a North American perspective.
- The event has again been postponed to next year. Happily, we have succeeded in rolling over all the group and individual bookings in Florence without any cost to COMBAR or to individuals who have booked.
- As such, we have lots to look forward to! The meeting will be taking place in Florence, at the same venues (save that the dinner venue has changed – the dinner will now be at Villa Il Garofalo), from Wednesday, 1 June to Friday, 3 June 2022. Members should be sure to note those dates in the diary now – and messages about the registration process will be sent out in the autumn in the usual way
- For both the initial organisation of the meeting, and the organisation of the postponement, enormous thanks are due to Emily Wood, Veronica Kendall and Alison Tighe, all of whom have, with consistent good humour, put in a prodigious amount of time and effort, to excellent effect. I am very grateful to them all.

Fionn Pilbrow QC

Chair, North American Committee