

The Creation of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law

1. In September 2008, Lord Bingham retired as Senior Law Lord of the House of Lords. He remained President and Chairman of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL), and so a number of the Institute Trustees discussed how BIICL should honour this extraordinary lawyer and committed leader of BIICL.
2. BIICL was also celebrating its 50th year in 2008, with a series of lectures on the rule of law. The rule of law in international and comparative legal contexts had been an implied (and sometimes express) theme underlying many of BIICL's activities during its 50 years. These lectures by eminent thinkers in international and comparative law, including BIICL's own Senior Research Fellows and Director, were published in an edited collection: *The Rule of Law in International and Comparative Context*.
3. At the same time, Tom Bingham had published his ground-breaking article on the rule of law, and then delivered BIICL's Grotius Lecture in November 2008 on 'The Rule of Law in the International Legal Order'. He went on to expand on these ideas in his superb book: *The Rule of Law*.
4. The combination of BIICL's underlying theme and Tom Bingham's clear interest led to the idea of the creation of a Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law within BIICL. When this idea was put by Robert McCorquodale, the Institute Director, to BIICL's Board of Trustees chaired by Alex Layton, it was enthusiastically endorsed. Tom Bingham humbly agreed to this.
5. The strategy for how to create the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law was devised by Robert McCorquodale and Diane Denny, the then Development Director. The strategy was essentially to begin by approaching different sections of the legal profession across a range of occupations. While the rule of law is a universal concept applicable to all people and institutions, it was felt appropriate to begin by seeking support within the legal profession initially, before going wider. There was a close and direct engagement with law firms, barristers, judges, government officials, corporations, trusts, journalists, and others both in the UK and overseas.
6. The fund-raising for the Bingham Centre was launched in November 2008. This was at the time of global financial collapse. Thus persuading many to donate for the first time to establish a Centre founded on a legal principle was a daunting task. In addition, BIICL only had a very small fund-raising team of a part-time Development Director, with some administrative support, and the Institute Director. This meant that careful thought had to be given as to how to maximise its fund-raising power through networking, and how to clarify the Centre's purposes. This was crucially assisted by the active engagement of Sir Christopher Bellamy, as the Chair of the Bingham Appeal Board, and Paul Lomas, the Vice-Chair, as well as the Appeal Board members, who set aside organizational allegiances to maximize the Appeal's potential in order to establish the Centre.
7. Diane and Robert, with Christopher, and Tom on occasion, spent a great deal of time over the next two years in meeting legal practitioners and the Appeal Board, and devising individually crafted materials. Initially, one law firm decided to commit a six figure sum over a period of five years and that firm

then encouraged other firms and corporations to follow, which happened gradually. Similarly, barristers and judges donated and then appealed to colleagues to match funding.

8. This process was made more difficult with the untimely death of Tom Bingham during 2010. As the enormous respect that he had as a person was a key part of the fund-raising strategy for the Centre, his death required a coherent and sensitive revising and retuning of the strategy. Thankfully, our donors continued to donate and we were delighted that Tom's family were very supportive of the continuation of the funding for the Bingham Centre.
9. Despite all these difficulties, during the course of 2009-2010, the Bingham Centre moved from an idea to a reality, with almost £1.5m of its £2.2m target raised in that period. As the Institute's turnover is usually about £2m, to be able to raise an additional £1.5m in this context was extraordinary. Indeed, the fund-raising strategy was recognised with the short-listing of the team for an award.
10. Finally, in December 2010, after two years of hard work, the Bingham Centre was launched by the UK Secretary of State for Justice and senior judges from Britain and France, senior lawyers and Lady Bingham, in front of over 200 people, confirming the breadth and depth of support for this new initiative. The other key person was the newly appointed Centre Director, Jeffrey Jowell, who brought considerable experience and respect to the role, which has helped to enable the Bingham Centre to grow from its foundation.
11. The creation of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law was a triumph of an idea into reality, using scant resources and maximizing the use of volunteers as fundraisers in a professional environment. It is hoped that the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law continues to be supported to become a permanent monument to a wonderful, intelligent, humane and humble man, who helped to create and then transform the idea of the rule of law into a national and international standard.

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