



Crown Court

Annual Report 2003 - 2004

Lewes Crown Court

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Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

RESIDENT JUDGE & COURT MANAGER COMMENTS:

Lewes is an 8 Court centre but is unique in having 4 courts as a satellite, 12 miles away at Hove. We are a first tier centre, taking all class 1 cases from East and West Sussex and the occasional High Court Civil case. We have 6 other Circuit Judges, 3 of which are with us full time and 3 of which share their allocation between crime and civil in the county. 2 Judges have murder 'tickets', one has an attempt murder ticket and 6 have Rape tickets. One Judge is authorised to deal with High Court Civil cases as a 'Section 9' Judge. Lewes is equipped with a video link system in 2 of its courtrooms, but has only one witness suite for the vid link. This causes problems in that Lewes can only list one vid link case at a time and has resulted in inconvenience and delay with Judges/parties having to swap courts and juggle vid link trials. I understand a second witness room is being considered. This would be of enormous benefit and should be done as soon as possible. Hove does not have this problem, being properly equipped with 2 full systems.

Accommodation at Lewes/Hove is good. We have separate rooms for prosecution and defence witnesses on different floors. However, the public/witnesses use a shared canteen and the corridors would benefit from CCTV to avoid any intimidation. The same applies to Hove. Lewes and Hove now have the benefit of the LINK system. Despite a problematic installation this system is working well and is far superior to any previous system. If only CREST were updated! The courts look forward to Xhibit and Unification.

We have seen an increase in receipts this year of a modest 34 cases, but since 2000 we have seen an increase of just under 390 cases, a 39% increase over a 4 year period. The biggest increase has been in class 4 cases. Committals for sentence have seen an increase of nearly 40% in one year. Appeal receipts are also up by a modest 3.7% but appeals are now taking longer to complete, with more conviction/miscellaneous appeals. Magistrates are becoming more reluctant to sit for more than one day at a time making 1+ day appeals difficult to list. All this goes towards the number of outstanding trials being up on last year, with old cases taking only slightly longer to come to trial over the previous year. Added to this Lewes underwent CTMP for 2 months. Although we had the use of one Magistrates Court at Horsham for some time, in reality this did not solve the problem of the backlog during CTMP. Hove was also closed for 2 weeks when asbestos was discovered in the cells. Lewes would greatly benefit from a 9th and/or 10th Court, perhaps at the underused Lewes Magistrates Court building down the road. We could then look at taking back work from north of the county, which at present goes to either Croydon or Chichester. The timeliness target, although not met, has improved year on year since 2000.

Lewes has tackled the ineffective trials initiative this year with great success. With the co-operation of the other Agencies and the Judges, through meetings such as JPM and Court User meetings, we have already reached the national target for ineffective trials. The signs at the moment are that this will continue. However, it has to be said that this achievement appears to be at the expense of cracked trials, which have increased some 13.8% over last year. It would be interesting to see if this is mirrored by the rest of the country. Cracked trials, in turn, have had an adverse effect on sitting times and on jury effectiveness. This is down significantly on last years figure. We recognised a problem may occur and have since started to stagger the calling of jurors to reduce the amount who have to come to Court. This is beginning to take effect and should improve the figures next year. Despite our best efforts and the full support of the Judiciary, witness waiting times are still disappointing. We reiterate to the Police/CPS that witnesses should be staggered and that Judges will wait rather than have witnesses waiting unnecessarily. The message is taking a long time to get through.

We encourage visits to the Court from local schools and places of higher education. They now occur very frequently. Our visitors have been as young as 9 years old (although they cannot of course be in the building during the working day). Judges are always happy to speak with each group and the feedback from all these visits has been very positive. We operate an informal Judicial marshalling scheme, whereby law students can spend a week sitting with a Judge. It gives them a unique experience of being able to see the Court from the Judges perspective. 'A' level and above law students are always welcome to apply for such placements.

We are again planning our annual Open Day so as to be able to show off our wonderful listed building to members of the public. This event always attracts in excess of 1000 people and many letters of thanks are invariably received afterwards. Lewes/Hove is one of the friendliest and happiest Courts, with the staff and the Judges fully committed to the DCA and the PSA's set by the department. We all work together as a team. Many people, including Court Users and in particular the visiting High Court Judges, comment on the commitment to the work and the helpful and hardworking members of staff and Judges. I am very grateful to all for their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work. I am not in the least surprised to learn that this Court has more staff promotions than any other Court on the Kent and Sussex Group. Lewes and Hove are proud to have achieved Chartermark and Investors in People accreditation. We also work closely with the Witness Service to ensure that victim and witness care is a constant high priority. The Witness Service is now such an integral part of the Criminal Justice System at Lewes it is hard to think of running the Courts without their valuable assistance.

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RESIDENT JUDGE: Richard Brown

DATE: 28/5/04

COURT MANAGER: Dave Manning

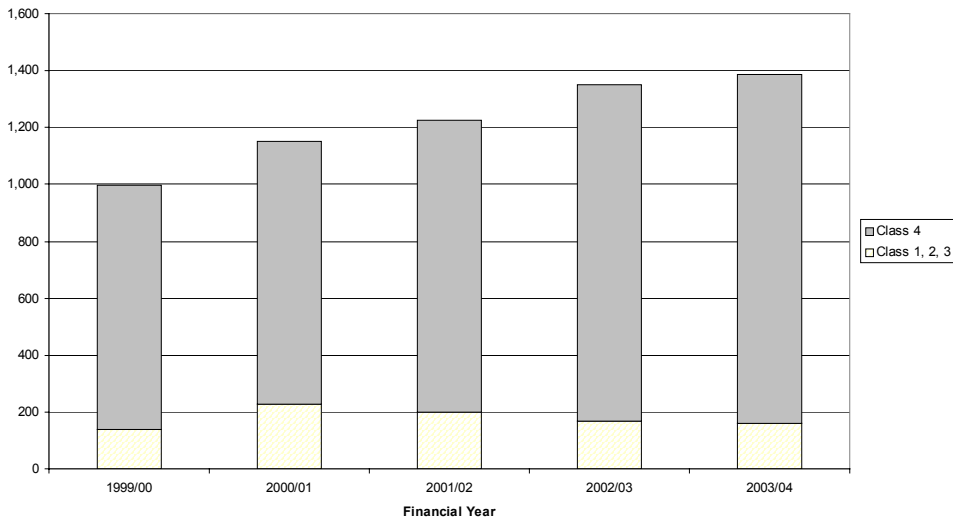
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Lewes Crown Court Annual Report by the Resident Judge and Court Manager

Workload

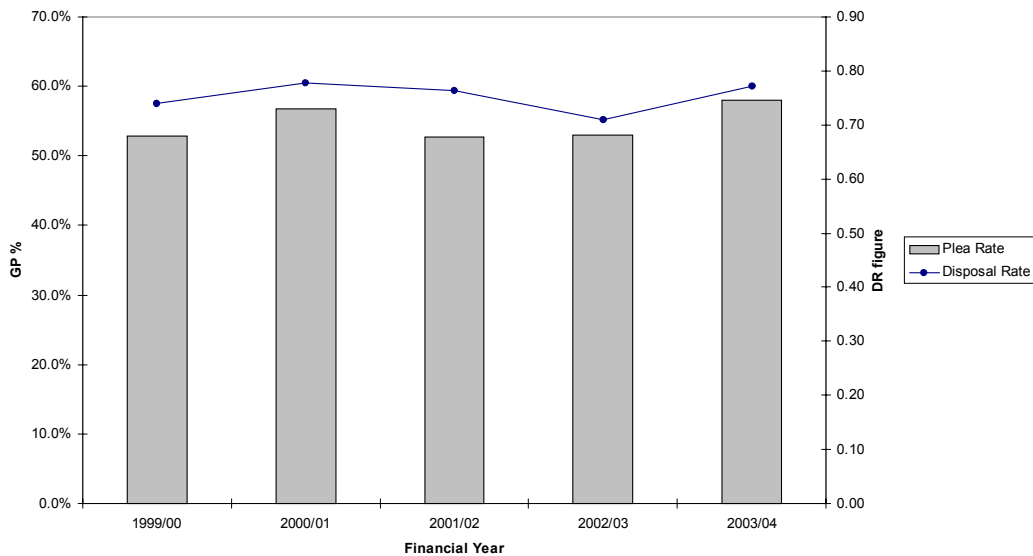
	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Trial Receipts	83,813	999	1,152	1,225	1,352	1,386	2.5%
Class 1, 2, 3	11,642	140	228	198	166	160	-3.6%
Class 4	72,171	859	924	1,027	1,186	1,226	3.4%

Trial Receipts by Class



	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Sentence Receipts	31,919	344	247	338	401	561	39.9%
Appeal Receipts	12,019	212	185	218	215	223	3.7%
Disposals	83,247	925	1,057	1,264	1,285	1,355	5.4%
Plea Rate	57.9%	52.9%	56.7%	52.7%	53.0%	58.1%	9.5%
Disposal Rate	0.82	0.74	0.78	0.76	0.71	0.77	8.6%

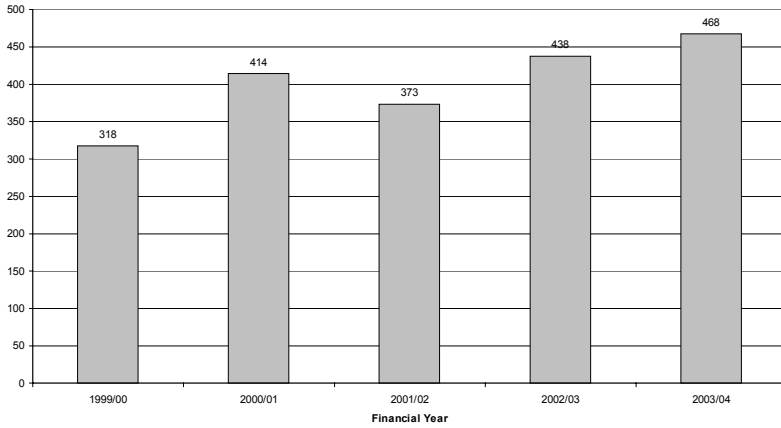
Guilty Plea Rate and Disposal Rate



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	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Outstanding Trials	29,752	318	414	373	438	468	6.8%

Outstanding Trials



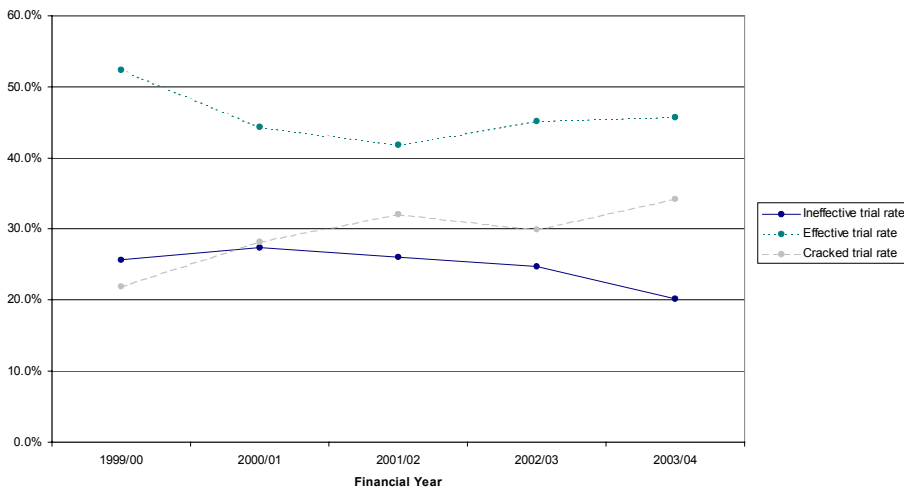
Stale Cases

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
% trials outstanding over 16 weeks	39.3%	36.5%	37.7%	31.1%	36.1%	36.3%	0.7%
% trials outstanding over 48 weeks	5.0%	2.8%	5.3%	3.5%	2.7%	2.6%	-6.4%

Cracked and Ineffective

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Trials listed (number)	51,232	642	766	903	940	893	-5.0%
Ineffective trial rate	20.6%	25.7%	27.4%	26.0%	24.8%	20.2%	-18.7%
Effective trial rate	41.0%	52.3%	44.4%	41.9%	45.2%	45.7%	1.1%
Cracked trial rate	38.3%	22.0%	28.2%	32.1%	30.0%	34.2%	13.8%

Ineffective, Effective and Cracked Trials

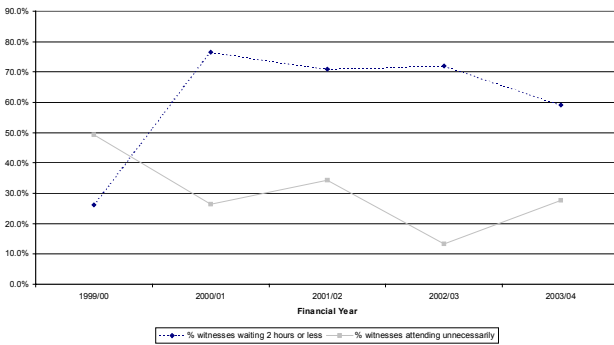


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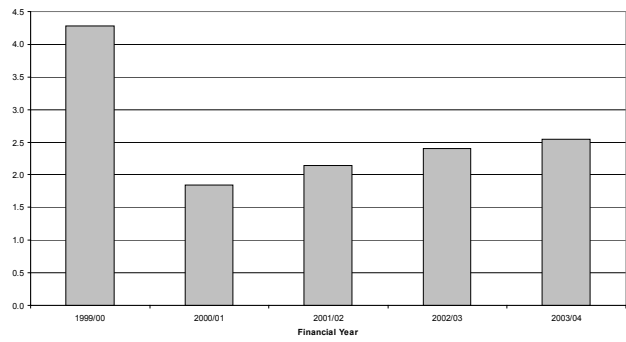
Witness and Juror service

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Days jurors sit as a % of attendance and non attendance	59.3%	58.8%	59.6%	55.9%	61.7%	54.6%	-11.5%
% witnesses waiting 2 hours or less	51.8%	26.2%	76.6%	70.8%	72.1%	59.1%	-18.0%
% witnesses attending unnecessarily	44.5%	49.2%	26.3%	34.4%	13.3%	27.6%	107.2%
Average waiting time for witnesses attending unnecessarily (hours)	2.7	4.3	1.8	2.1	2.4	2.5	5.5%

Percentage of Witnesses Waiting Within Target and Proportion Waiting Unnecessarily



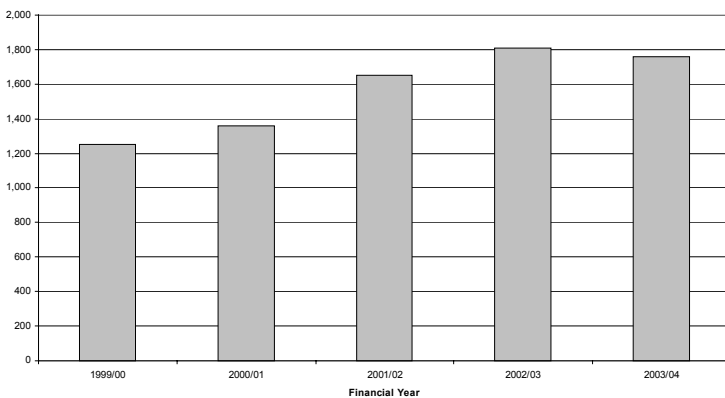
Average Waiting Time for Witnesses Attending Unnecessarily (hours)



Sitting Days

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Average Trial Hearing Time (hours)	9.6	10.7	10.1	10.2	10.5	10.7	2.3%
Average Guilty Plea Hearing Time (hours)	1.2	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.1	1.1	-3.7%
Average Sitting Day Length (hours)	4.33	4.34	4.36	4.15	4.27	4.10	-3.8%
Number of sitting days	101,320	1,250	1,360	1,653	1,810	1,758	-2.9%

Number of Sitting Days



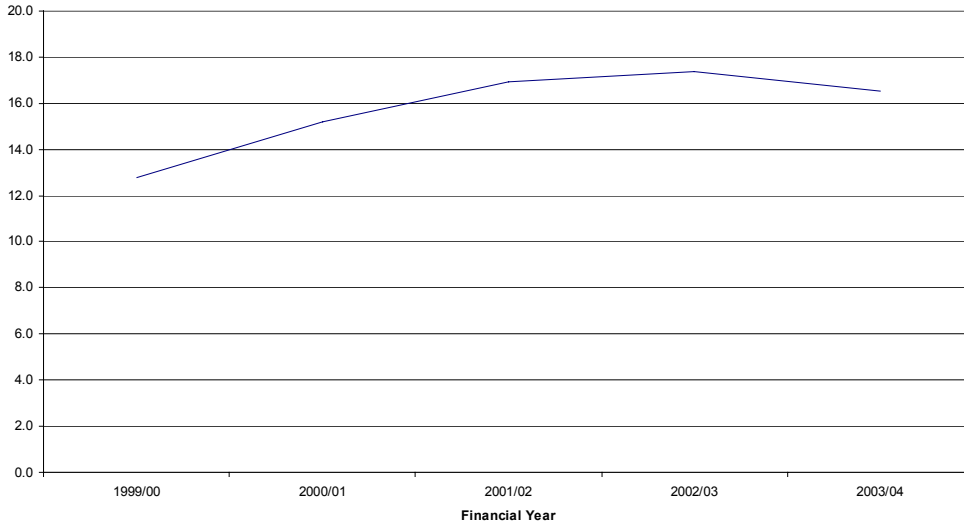
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PSAs

	EW 03/04	1999/00	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	% Diff
Average Waiting time (weeks)	15.1	12.8	15.2	16.9	17.4	16.5	-4.9%
% Defendants commencing in target	79.4%	82.9%	70.3%	68.0%	69.3%	71.5%	3.2%

Average Waiting Time



Percentage Cases Commencing Within Target
(Trials 16 weeks, Sent for Trial 26 weeks, Sentence 10 weeks, Appeal 14 weeks)

