

# Chance encounter

MY LEGAL LIFE



## Paul Shenton

Managing director, Just Costs Solicitors, Manchester

**Crown Court was like watching a door open on a whole new world – getting paid to argue for a living.** Was such a career really possible for a

state-educated boy with no lawyers in their family? 'Yes', said my dad. That support and belief made my dreams a realistic opportunity.

An LLB, LLM (Cantab), bar finals and six months of commercial litigation pupillage were scant preparation for my first day in court – a backsheet brief in Woolwich Magistrates' Court with a 'client' who was 'unfortunately' waylaid. No instructing solicitor, no instructions, no client and faced with what I thought would be the words to end, at the outset, my embryonic legal career – 'warrant not backed for bail' (which was later explained to me by my completely unqualified junior clerk).

**Like most things in life, chance rather than planning made me move to becoming a solicitor.** Eversheds offered me the opportunity to develop what became the country's largest claimant professional negligence team acting for more than 50 different financial institutions. You could not be a partner without being a solicitor. At 29, I managed that.

**Barristers are no different to solicitors.** I am fortunate to have worked with, over 20 years, at least three outstanding barristers who all are now, quite rightly, QCs – Nigel Jones, Paul Reed and PJ Kirby, all from Hardwicke Chambers in London. They are always my first port of call on the rare occasions that we use counsel.

**My father sadly passed away in 2005, after a long illness.** His saying 'never look back and say "if only"' resonated loudly. The desire to move home and start my own business was a challenge I knew I had to take.

**The cost of the provision of legal services has been an issue ever since the existence of lawyers.** The Jackson reforms have forced the issue to the forefront of the litigation process, not primarily as a retrospective exercise after the conclusion of cases. One will not entirely replace the other, but it has clearly changed the legal and commercial dynamics of the litigation model – a development which most clients clearly welcome.

**In the commercial world, litigation is just another business risk.** In my experience most financial directors will treasure the knowledge produced by the budgeting process. Most lawyers are reasonably accurate in valuing the 'bricks' of the litigation process. However, the complexities exist in the analysis of the 'mortar', which holds the case together and can often exceed 50% of the overall profit costs.

**Email has not replaced the need to meet with clients.** Clients are, and remain, why we are in business and it is a pleasure to meet them.

# Drugs trial collapses over evidence doubt

## Lawyer in the news

**Ben Rose**

Hickman & Rose

By Jonathan Rayner

**Who?** Ben Rose, 51, senior partner and criminal department head at London firm Hickman & Rose.

**Why is he in the news?** He acted for celebrity Tulisa Contostavlos who had been charged with brokering a cocaine deal. She was alleged to have put the *Sun on Sunday* undercover journalist Mazher Mahmood (the 'Fake Sheikh') in touch with rapper Mike GLC, who supplied him with the drug in May 2013. Contostavlos had denied the charges against her. Mike GLC

(real name Michael Coombs) previously pleaded guilty to supplying cocaine.

Judge Alistair McCreath told the jury at Southwark crown court on Monday 21 July that the case could not continue because there were 'strong grounds for believing that Mr Mahmood told me lies when he gave evidence to me [at a pre-trial hearing] on the 27th June.'

He explained that it was a 'fundamental principle'



that the court could not allow itself to be party to improper conduct and, if he allowed the trial to continue, then 'the court would be seen to be sanctioning or colluding in [improper] behaviour.'

He said: 'This case cannot go any further.'

**Thoughts on the case:** 'Investigative journalism has an important role in a liberal democracy, but do newspapers have the systems in place to protect the public interest? Fortunately, Tulisa's ordeal is now over because the

case will not be retried.'

**Why become a lawyer?** 'A burning passion to make a difference.'

**Career high:** '12 January 2007, the day the Court of Appeal quashed my client Andrew Adams' murder conviction. He had spent 14 years in jail for a crime he did not commit.'

**Career low:** 'It was the firm's first big case and I was so nervous my left hand was shaking and I had to hide it in my pocket. When I stood up to make the bail application, the Horseferry Road woman magistrate told me to 'kindly take your hand out of your pocket when addressing me'. I wanted to crawl into a hole and stay there.'