



By Dr Eamonn G. Hall

In Praise of a Solicitor

If you read this piece, and you are a solicitor, and you have completed drafting a deed and you feel harassed by the system and feel (sometimes) perplexed by the multiplicity of our statutes and case law, and rage silently at the regulation of the solicitors' profession, and you feel perplexed by some provisions of the *Solicitors (Amendment) Act, 1994*, and you feel angry (sometimes) at the institutional Law Society, take heart, the deed you have drafted, or are about to draft, will last (subject to any misfortune of being lost or destroyed) for as long as the printed word survives.

If you feel proud of the words you have composed, if, for example, you feel proud of having grasped – in an intellectual sense – the essence of the prior title of a convoluted transaction, the words of *John Keats* (1795 – 1821) (who died at the tender age of 25 years unlike 98.9% of solicitors) are apt to serve as a source of consolation:

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
Its loveliness increases, it will never
Pass into nothingness.”

If you are worried by some of the current trends in legal life, you should take further heart from the final words of *John Keats*'s poem:

“Yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away
the pall,
From our dark spirits.”

If you are a sole practitioner, or the principal of a prestigious firm, the deed you have drafted will bear your

name. If you are not in that category, your initials will be on the deed. The words of *Walt Whitman* (1819 – 1892) offer further comfort:

“What am I after all. . . pleas'd with
the sound of
My own name? repeating it over and
over;
I stand apart to hear – it never tires
me.”

Our 150th Anniversary

It is appropriate here to mention that Sunday January 26, 1995 marked the 150th anniversary of the granting of the first Royal Charter to the Law Society of England and Wales. The Law Society of Ireland traces its origin back to the foundation of the Law Club in 1791 which later became the Law Society in 1830. In 1852 the Law Society of Ireland received its first Charter. It is appropriate to send fraternal greetings and congratulations to the Law Society of England and Wales. In a few years time we will also celebrate our sesquicentenary.

It is the commonsense of solicitors that saves organisations from falling foul of the law. It is the wisdom of solicitors that seems to be appreciated by so many.

Mr Richard Barr in the *Solicitors' Journal* of 17 March 1995, celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Law Society's charter, referred to the countless committees, societies, voluntary bodies and charities across the land which either have a solicitor serving on them or one in the background providing free help. He noted that it was often the common sense that solicitors brought to those

organisations that saved them from falling foul of the law, from lapsing into chaos or even ferocious feuding. He observed that it was the wisdom (derived from seeing the human condition in all its reality) which solicitors bring into the turmoil of daily life which seems to be appreciated by so many.

We are not always seen as such, *Mr Barr* stated, but we are frequently the Davids fighting Goliaths, the runners of the extra mile or simply the best hope that clients have of making sense of a wicked world. The writer concluded that the real worth of the solicitors' profession lies, of course, in the fearless representation of the client's interests. When we do this, we inevitably make ourselves unloved by those who challenge those interests. Almost by definition, 50 per cent of solicitors will be hated – those on the other side of the case.

The *Solicitors' Journal* is running a “My Favourite Solicitor” competition which will be open to any individual or organisation who can nominate any solicitor, whether in private practice, public service or voluntary organisations. The criteria for the award will be:

- the benefit received by an individual or an organisation from the solicitor's work
- tangible benefit received by the client
- good client relations
- equitable use of the law
- efficient management of the case
- work above and beyond the call of duty
- high professional standards.

Readers who have reached the end of this piece may consider that they would be eligible for an award entitled, “My Favourite Solicitor”.



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