

## Tribute from Robert Hams at the Valedictory of Glyn Edwards, Bristol County Court, 1 February 2019

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Less than 4 years ago many of us in this Court room gathered to celebrate Glyn and Jo's marriage which was a very joyous occasion in both their lives.

What a contrast with the present.

Whilst I am deeply honoured to be asked to pay this tribute to Glyn I cannot tell you how much it saddens me to be here today and how much I wish this was not happening.

My only comfort is that I am sure that everyone gathered here today is thinking exactly the same.

With your permission I'd like to tell you a little about my relationship with Glyn.

I first met Glyn in the mid/late 1990's, over 20 years ago and we remained professional colleagues and friends until his untimely passing last Saturday. In the mid/late 1990's St John's Chambers introduced Glyn to me as a successor to Paul Darlow who was then about to become a full time judge.

At that time the civil courts were wrestling with the automatic directions under old County Court Rule Order 17 Rule 11, particularly the automatic strike out provisions, and there was much satellite litigation surrounding their interpretation.

Glyn and I had a lot of fun acting for Defendants in such applications and achieved considerable success in striking out unwary, non-compliant Plaintiffs – as they were then.

That all came crashing to an end in 1999.

But by then I was already instructing Glyn in substantive trials and did so for the rest of his professional career. Other Counsel came and went but Glyn was always constant.

We worked together on all sorts of cases, albeit mainly Personal Injury claims, and at every level, from taking evidence on commission from a mesothelioma sufferer in a hall in Shirehampton to the dizzy heights of the Court of Appeal where L J Jackson presided.

There were many factors which made Glyn stand out for me and why I kept going back to him.

He was highly intellectual, but never pompous. He was able to explain complex legal issues with enormous clarity;

He was able to see the other side – and often used it to his advantage

He prepared meticulously whether for conference or trial;

His manner was very friendly and engaging. As a solicitor he was a delight to work with. He was also always courteous not only to opposing Counsel and witness alike but also to Court staff at all levels from ushers to clerks through to judges.

He had an ability to make clients and witnesses feel at ease in difficult situations and to meet them at their level, wherever that was.

Everyone who instructed him will agree that he was a superb advocate. In reality he was silk class and I never had any hesitation in briefing him against Leading Counsel as I did in the Court of Appeal. But he was also grounded; even when addressing the Court of Appeal he did not indulge in show-boating or grandstanding. He just advanced succinct arguments which were constructed and delivered logically and clearly but did so with immensely persuasive impact.....and he prevailed.

He was a dogged cross examiner. His particular speciality was experts who he often persuaded to his contrary view. His questions were often delivered with a dash of self-deprecating humour which was his trademark. I cannot count the number of times I heard him say to witnesses who had evaded his questions "Do you know, I'm sure I asked you a totally different question than the one you've answered?"

He also had an uncanny intuition. One example sticks in my mind which I'd like to share. Glyn was cross-examining a Claimant who was suing a local authority client for allegedly providing a negligent reference as a result of which he had been unsuccessful in his application for a lucrative position and had lost many thousands of pounds in consequence.

The Claim was document heavy with hundreds of e-mails. As we were on about the second or third day of cross-examination of the Claimant with Glyn pouring over the minutiae of these e-mails, Glyn suddenly pointed to something in one of them and said "That's a lie isn't it Mr so- and- so?" Naturally, Mr so-and -so was taken aback by this accusation against his good character, particularly given the nature of his claim!

Everyone else was equally bemused. I stirred from my torpidity; the Claimants Counsel looked quizzical; the judge raised his eyebrows.

The reason why everyone was puzzled was because there appeared to be nothing in the hundreds of e-mails we were scrutinising to suggest that the Claimant HAD LIED, but Glyn must have sensed something.

Glyn kept stabbing at the email repeating his accusation. The Claimant adamantly refused to admit that what he had written was a lie. So Glyn tried a different approach. He suggested to the Claimant that what he had written was an "untruth". And the Claimant agreed! Job done!

The case probably turned on that point and needless to say the claim was dismissed, but it was just a brilliant moment.

That "spat" (if I can put it that way) not only exemplifies Glyn's intuitive touch but also his meticulous preparation and attention to detail, (because he must have thought something was amiss). It also illustrates his persistence, and his agility of mind to switch tack to achieve the outcome he was seeking.

While I speak as a Defence solicitor I'm sure that many of these attributes ring true to the many Claimant solicitors who instructed Glyn.

But Glyn was more than just an exceptional advocate and Counsel. He was somebody who was always happy to give general advice at the drop of a hat. He became my "go to" Counsel, and I'm sure that he was the same to many solicitors in this Court today.

Nothing was too much trouble for Glyn. On many occasions he gave up his free time (as did others in his chambers) to participate in Mock Trials I organised for local authority clients all over the West Country. In the last Mock Trial in which he participated he played the role of judge. But instead of rattling off an extempore judgment at the end of closing speeches, and enjoying lunch with those present, Glyn took himself to a quiet corner and wrote out a reasoned judgment which he later read out; further testament to his meticulousness.

But Glyn was more than the most highly valued professional colleague I have had the privilege to work with throughout my career; he was also my social buddy for he and I regularly enjoyed going to concerts together and spent many happy summer days watching cricket usually at Lords with friends. Quite ironically it was during the one day international at Bristol in September 2017 between England and the West Indies (the match before the infamous Ben Stokes incident that night) that Glyn mentioned that he wasn't feeling right and was undergoing tests.

Like everyone else, I'm sure, I was devastated when I learned of his diagnosis. But I was delighted when last summer there was some cause for optimism so much so that I was able to take him to Lords for the first day of the England v India test. Unfortunately it rained all day and no play was possible. At the time that was something of a disappointment but looking back now, I'm not unhappy that the covers remained on all day for it enabled me to spend uninterrupted time with Glyn. In his company 6 or 7 hours just flashed by, so easy was it to be around him.

I remember we spent part of the day amusing ourselves with a somewhat puerile game Glyn had learned from QC friend. It sounds daft but it was simply "Which rock star deserves a slap?" Between the two of us we came up with quite a list, assisted by a significant contribution from a friend of Glyn's, a Judge (who will remain nameless), who called Glyn while we deliberated.

In summary how would I describe Glyn? I'd like to use one of his own phrases to do so. He was simply a "Top Man", and one who has been taken too soon and will be sorely missed.

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1 February 2019