

Lawyer of the Week

Sean Larkin, QC



Sean Larkin, QC, of QEB Hollis Whiteman Chambers, acted for the prosecution in the first Supreme Court case to consider the width of the definition of “terrorism”. In the case of *R v Gul*, the court ruled that it was wide enough to cover action against any government and included uploading to the internet of videos of attacks by insurgents on coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

What were the main challenges? The biggest challenge was the research into the history of terrorism and counter-terrorism legislation in the UK, coupled with the analysis researching terrorism in public international law as well as a comparison with terrorist legislation in other countries. Fortunately, Malcolm Shaw, QC, and Duncan Atkinson met most of that challenge. The commitment and experience of CPS Counter Terrorism made the task even easier, proof, if proof be needed, that litigation is a team effort.

What was your worst day as a lawyer? Being sent to Aldershot Magistrates’ Court instead of Alton Magistrates’ in the days before mobile telephones. While I was waiting for my train at Aldershot Station to go to Alton, my client persuaded the stationmaster to make a Tannoy announcement complaining of my lateness and telling me to hurry up, to the amazement of my fellow travellers and my embarrassment.

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What was your most memorable experience? Either the time I received a case late but won a legal argument to secure an acquittal and my client's wife, reacting to the speed of it all, said: "We don't even know your name", leading me to feel I'd made a difference — or a jury cheering my junior, Edward Henry, when he stood to address them.

Who has been most influential in your life? Personally: my wife, Ann, parents and family. Professionally: all my colleagues. I have been making daily withdrawals from a vast knowledge and wisdom bank and spending it freely. In particular, Warwick McKinnon and David Evans, QC — I still apply their lessons.

Why did you become a lawyer? I don't really know, but I've never regretted it. I still enjoy every case, big or small.

What would your advice be to anyone wanting a career in law? Work hard. Be persistent. Think creatively. Be lucky. Believe in yourself. Don't always believe your clerks when they say that you're due at Aldershot Magistrates' Court.

If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have chosen? I suspect I would have been more active in politics. To effect change.

Where do you see yourself in ten years? Writing and performing music.

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