



PETER KEENAN- OBITUARY

It was with sadness that we have learnt of the very recent death of Peter Keenan, a Founder Member and Former Joint Head of Cobden House Chambers. He dies just short of his eighty fourth birthday.

Peter Bernard Keenan was born in Salford on 23rd January 1935. He went to school at De La Salle College, Salford, and studied for a law degree at the University of Manchester, alongside Nigel Howarth. He followed this with a post-graduate degree at Magdalen College, Oxford. He lectured at the London School of Economics from 1959 to 1962.

He was called to the Bar in 1962 and commenced practice at the Chancery Bar in Duchy Chambers which became Bridge Street Chambers, eventually becoming Head of Chambers. For some time, he combined practice with teaching tax law at the University of Sheffield. In 1997 he became Joint Head of Chambers with Howard Baisden upon the formation of Cobden House Chambers. It was a mark of Peter that even as he approached the final stages of his career at the bar, he was prepared to undertake the responsibilities of leadership in order to cement the futures of other members of the newly formed chambers, (which consisted of the merger of Bridge Street and Hollins Chambers). Peter and Howard were well matched in that both were married to hospital consultants and both had in former times written books on Air Law (although neither was to practise in this field). They were (and Howard is still is!) responsible, hard working and enormously respected supporters of the young bar. They provided the platform from which the current members of chambers were able to benefit.

His practice within the Chancery field was varied. He appeared in the House of Lords twice, in *Shiloh Spinners Ltd v Harding* and in *Brackenkbank Lodge Ltd v Peart*. One of the highpoints of his career was his work for the Union of Democratic Miners in the litigation surrounding the NUM strike in the 1980s. He also acted as junior Counsel in the successful judicial review of the Government's decision to close coal mines. He was elected a Member of the Institute of Conveyancers reflecting the esteem by which he was held by London practitioners. Outside the Chancery sphere, he acted as George Carman QC's junior in the successful defence of Ken Dodd on tax evasion charges, focusing on the financial side of the case and the Revenue's published statements on Isle of Man investments.

Peter made an important contribution to the profession as part of the delegation with Derek Mallard, John Fryer-Spedding and Nicholas Riddle which led to a Judge of the Chancery Division sitting in the North of England for half of the judicial year. (Ben Hytner QC also offered valuable support.) This

enormously strengthened Chancery practice in the North of England and has served as a model for Chancery jurisdiction in other parts of the country and for the Administrative Court in the Provinces.

Peter retired from practice in about 2005 and retired to live in the Chilterns. He was happily married to Janet and had two children, Caroline who is a Senior Lecturer in Law in the University of Exeter and Philip who works in films.

Janet and Peter collected paintings and were well renowned for their prowess in picking up the work of young promising artists and in their astute dealings in the auction houses. Peter had a classic Rolls Royce, which he offered to family and friends as a wedding car and which would make appearances at Chambers dinners over the years.

His death came as a great surprise to Chambers as well as a great sadness. He will be remembered by his former colleagues for his enormous goodwill, his cheerful disposition and ready smile and his hard work and considerable input into the bar and particularly into his chambers.

Richard Oughton

Richard Hartley QC