



Farewell to Partner Richard Fairbairn

Lester Aldridge would like to extend a fond farewell to Richard Fairbairn, who is retiring after a phenomenal legal career that has straddled six decades, arguably all in the same firm!

Richard is a Scot by blood and was born and raised in London. Having graduated from the University of Nottingham in 1974, Richard then started his career at Westerns Ralph Bond and Rutherford, where he completed two years of Articles. In 1975 the firm merged with Thompson Quarrell. Here, Richard first met David Parkhouse (retired partner of LA), an assistant solicitor at that time (the two would once again become work colleagues with the merger of Park Nelson with LA in 2004). He was articled to Peter Fawcett, then the French Government's solicitor in London; this was the start of his interest in French law. He completed his Part 2 exams after his Articles. Richard qualified as a solicitor on 1st July 1978. He was briefly an assistant solicitor with a firm in Grays Inn before returning to Thompson Quarrell in October 1978, becoming a partner on 1st January 1979.

The Thompson Quarrell office was a lovely house in Essex Street, opposite the law courts. In 1993, Thompson Quarrell merged with Park Nelson, and Richard moved into the old Bank Of England building in Chancery Lane. Finally, in 2004, Park Nelson merged with Lester Aldridge, where Richard has remained since, working as a partner for 44 years.

Richard's passion lies in language education to cut across barriers. His late wife was a professional linguist, speaking six languages and studying for another degree when she passed away. Richard became the first English Trustee in 1992 for the French Embassy Trust. This involved an estate of properties owned by the trust to protect the eastern end of the Lycee. He had first become involved in this in the mid-1970s when he was articled. He was invited by the French Ambassador in London to start setting up the charity (French Education Charitable Trust in 2015) that bought the French school (The College Francais Bilingue de Londres) in Camden Town & the former Brent Town Hall establishing the Lycee Internationale de Londres Winston Churchill – a fully bilingual international school in Wembley which opened its doors in September 2015. The school was named to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Winston Churchill's death and also to recognise the role Churchill played in France's past in relation to World War II and the 1944 Liberation of France. Richard remains one of the charity's trustees and the only English trustee.

Since 2004, Richard has been an invited Trustee for the Association of Language Learning (ALL) for the UK. ALL is run by teachers for teachers and has thousands of active members. Richard is the only non-teacher on the Board and was a long-serving Chair of the Board of Trustees (ALL Management Board) and serves on other language and education-based boards. Since 2016, Richard has been ALL's Treasurer on its Board of Trustees. Richard also became involved with Groupe Monassier, helping French people with issues in the UK.

Since 1987 Richard has been a trustee of the Alliance Francais de Londres, an educational charity dedicated to teaching the French language, at a French language school in North London.

Since 2006, Richard has also been a Director and Charity Trustee of Fluxus Arts Projects (originally called Paris Calling Ltd).

Richard holds two medals for his decades of service to France, trying to find new language schools. He is an Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Academiques, one of only two French medals instituted by Emperor Napoleon. It is signed by the French Prime Minister and granted to foreigners and French people residing abroad, contributing actively to the expansion of French culture worldwide. In June 2004, Richard received the Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Merite (the medal was created by Charles de Gaulle when he decided there was a proliferation of French medals, which he amalgamated into one). This requires a minimum of 15 years' service and is awarded by the President of the French Republic.

As a private client partner, Richard has worked on an array of interesting cases. One notable case is Allfrey vs Allfrey [2015] which is a landmark case following changes in perpetuity law. The trust funds involved were substantial; LA is noted on the court report.

The most significant change that Richard has seen in his years within the legal profession is that handwritten notes have become usurped by computers, search engines, and people who believe that they can do the legal work themselves without the correct knowledge or experience.

This aside, Richard is rightly proud of his achievements and having worked with a huge range of people over the years; he has always got on well with his colleagues. Richard will miss his colleagues the most. Over the years, he believes himself privileged to know many very nice people and competent lawyers.

Richard plans to keep himself occupied in his retirement by continuing to spend time with his five grandchildren, all of which live within a few miles of his home, and indulge his passion for art and music with his memberships to the V&A, The National Gallery and the Louvre in both Paris and Lens in addition to his continued involvement with his multitude of charitable organisations.