



Farewell to Russell Kelly

We talk to [Russell Kelly](#), founding Partner at [LA Marine](#), and learn about his upcoming retirement and lengthy and successful marine law career.

Russell started his law career in 1984 as an Article Clerk at a London shipping firm, Thomas Cooper & Stibbard. After graduating with a Botany Degree from the University of Leeds, he decided to pursue a career in law, so he undertook a conversion course in Birmingham before completing his final solicitor's exams in Chester.

After qualifying, Russell spent 12 successful years at Thomas Cooper & Stibbard, swiftly ascending to partnership at the age of 30.

Having grown up near Portsmouth, Russell has had a lifelong love of the water. When an opportunity presented itself in Southampton to join Bond Pearce, he jumped at the chance to work in an office looking out over the water. It was here, over the next three years, that Russell established and nurtured the firm's shipping practice.

In 2000, Russell made his next move by joining Lester Aldridge as the firm opened its Southampton office. The management team had the foresight to open a marine practice, and Russell became a founding member of our LA Marine team. 24 years later, he proved it was very worthwhile.

Having spent his first 12 years working in commercial shipping, Russell diversified into other marine-related areas, such as personal injury and yacht law, which was beginning to develop as yachts became more prevalent and expensive! Russell has enjoyed the diversity and proven that you can practice law both from a contentious and non-contentious standpoint.

The most significant changes over the years have been in technology, compliance and regulation. Technology has developed at an astonishing rate. The days of telex, fax machines and even posted letters are either already a thing of the past or rapidly accelerating that way.

Russell foresees that there will be increasing regulation alongside increased boat ownership. He's excited by potential developments in the market, such as schemes where you can part-own a boat for a certain number of days a year. This will tie in well with his recent qualification as a Day Skipper.

One of the many highlights of his career was meeting David Bowie on the bridge of the QE2. He was on board investigating an incident, talking to one of the crew, when David approached him, introduced himself and asked if he could have his photo taken on the bridge. Regrettably, the encounter with Bowie was at a time before mobile phones had cameras, so he couldn't get a selfie!

Like Jurgen Klopp's words when he stepped down, Russell "loves the team, loves the clients, loves everything, he's just run out of energy".

Russell has undoubtedly had a fantastic career and created many wonderful memories along the way. He will miss it.

Russell is looking forward to his trip to Hawaii in May for a cousin's wedding and days chartering boats with family and friends.

Wishing Russell all the best in his well-deserved retirement and future adventures.