

lawyer of the week **Guy Hollebon**



GUY HOLLEBON, a partner and head of employment at the law firm Bevens, is acting for Richard Gizbert, the US journalist who successfully challenged his dismissal from ABC, the US network, in a landmark employment case. He had refused assignments to a warzone in Iraq on health and safety grounds. ABC has said that it will appeal against the decision.

What are the possible implications of this case, and what have the main challenges been? The case establishes protection for journalists or camera crews who refuse to cover assignments in warzones and who are dismissed because of their refusal. One of the main challenges in the case was to convince the employment tribunal that Richard Gizbert's refusal to cover warzones fell within the health and safety legislation as this is the first time that this has been argued as far as I am aware. The outcome of the

case clearly shows that employment tribunals are prepared to apply existing employment laws to fit current world issues such as the war in Iraq.

What was your worst day as a lawyer? My first appearance as an advocate in the employment tribunal and asking the chairman first thing in the morning if he wished to hear live witness evidence from a medical expert to be told that this is always preferable to dead witness evidence. That set the tone for the day.

What was your most memorable experience as a lawyer? As a wet-behind-the-ears trainee solicitor, being sent to a site inspection in a neighbour dispute case. While climbing a precariously balanced ladder and looking over a fence into the neighbour's garden, the neighbour appeared and subjected me to a tirade of abuse. When I came down from the ladder our client said: "You see, he always does that when someone peers over the fence at him."

Who has been the most influential person in your life and why? My mother and father who both practised as solicitors and who, in spending 18 years trying to persuade me to become an accountant, simply

spurred me on to study law and qualify as a solicitor.

Why did you become a lawyer? Like a Miss World contestant I dreamt of helping to create a more just and fair society and saw the law as a way of achieving this and only had half an eye on the comfortable lifestyle that went with that.

What would your advice be to anyone wanting a career in law? Go for it. The law covers such a wide area that there is something there to stimulate, impassion and reward everyone, even conveyancers.

If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have chosen? If I had not gone to university to study law then my parents would not have sold my drum kit that I foolishly left at home during the first term and maybe I could have graced the pages of *NME*. Otherwise probably an accountant.

Where do you see yourself in ten years' time? Still enjoying the law and being able to indulge my passions of art, food and music with my wife Rebecca.

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