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THE CHANGE WE SEEK



“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

Barack Obama



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Linda Lingle

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JC and Chef Robert – two hugely renowned and respected figures in the hospitality sector are levelling up fine dining by making it both approachable and affordable. We visited their Crouch End bistro which is serving 3 Michelin star quality food.

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Taking a look at how the Government’s plan for levelling up will influence the UK car industry and national demand for electric vehicles.



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Did you know?



LEGALLY SPEAKING

City Solicitor’s brand new podcast.

We are very excited to have published the first episode of our podcast. You will find it where you normally listen to your podcasts – or on Spotify <https://open.spotify.com/show/3ltl9rGAN1b5Ah6H9iHmgX> or use this link <https://anchor.fm/maroulla-paul>



editor's letter



WELCOME TO THE SPRING ISSUE OF CITY SOLICITOR. IF THE BUZZ WORDS FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF YEARS HAVE BEEN LOCKDOWN AND ISOLATION, IN 2022 EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT LEVELLING UP.

But is it just the latest box to be ticked by businesses and government – or is it a genuine desire to make the world more equal and fair? We have devoted our entire issue to this subject and have talked to a myriad of people who are making some very significant changes.

We hear about the incredible transformative work Justine Greening and Seema Kennedy are doing to bring opportunities that could hugely benefit lives and economies.

Mark Stephens talks to us about the true story behind the fascinating Parthenon Marbles saga; and explains why it is time to do the fair thing.

We look at what our own industry is doing to level up the law.

And we even find out how we can eat the food of a three star Michelin chef in a local bistro.

We are also delighted to launch our challenge; to get 1,000 lawyers to donate £10 monthly and transform a homeless person's life. You can read all about it in our article on Beam.org where we hear the CEO, Alex Stephany, explain his social enterprise which is the epitome of levelling up.

And as Spring is all about new beginnings, we are delighted to announce our own first. In conjunction with this issue, we

have published the first City Solicitor podcast – Legally Speaking. This first episode is linked to the levelling up theme in that it looks at charitable works carried out by lawyers. You can listen on any of your preferred podcast providers like Spotify <https://open.spotify.com/show/3ltl9rGAN1b5Ah6H9iHmgX> or use this link <https://anchor.fm/maroulla-paul>

It's a podcast that is available to everyone, not just our CLLS members. We have really enjoyed producing it – and we would love to get your feedback.

We hope both the magazine and podcast inspire you to join us in levelling up our society.

Philip Henson

Editor
mail@citysolicitors.org.uk

“In conjunction with this issue, we have published the first City Solicitor podcast – Legally Speaking.”

“

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.

BARACK OBAMA

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CHANGE IN HOW BUSINESSES AND ORGANISATIONS WORK

We expect change to initiate from the Government; for our elected representatives to be the ones to set the way for us to effect the differences we all want. And, indeed, most politicians are politicians precisely because they genuinely want to see a levelling up, a fairer society. But we are living in a world where politics and politicians have become tainted, trust is diminishing and those passionate about changing things for the better are having to find a different means for this to happen.

Justine Greening was Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities from 2016 to 2018. She was the elected Conservative MP for Putney, Roehampton and Southfields. In 2018, Justine Greening left the Cabinet and decided to focus her commitment, energy and time into social mobility – something she has always been passionate about.

Seema Kennedy OBE was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home

Office and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health and Primary Care. She was also the first woman to be the Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Conservative Prime Minister. Seema was also co-chair of a cross-party Loneliness Commission along with Jo Cox MP. Following Jo's murder in 2016, Seema took forward this work with Rachel Reeves MP to form the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness. In 2019 she left the political arena and has since relentlessly worked towards a genuine levelling up.

Rather than wait for it to happen, both these extraordinary women are working to be the change they were seeking.

Seema told us that “despite what is going on in the newspapers at the moment, being in elected office is a noble calling and most of my colleagues in Parliament were in it for the right reasons. They wanted to do good in the world and wanted to be able to get to the end of their lives and look back proud that they have changed things. Justine and I still have that passion. We want to be public servants. We want to make the world better.”

Social mobility has characterised both of their lives.

Justine's journey began from a very working class background in Rotherham and went on to sitting around the Cabinet table.

“I had never expected or planned to go into politics. When I was growing up in Rotherham, we were surrounded by politics in a way. There was the miners strike, a lot

“I've always challenged myself to shift if I think it's a better thing to do.”

Justine Greening



1 Strong foundations in Early Years



2 Successful school years



3 Positive destinations Post 16+





“This was a stark visual reminder of the inequalities in our society.”

Seema Kennedy OBE

of unemployment... In a funny way I grew up understanding how decisions affect lives but not making that connection I could somehow be a part of that political system and with making those decisions. I became an accountant but in my spare time I was trying to make a difference locally by campaigning to get more zebra crossings etc and eventually I became a councillor in the late 90s. I loved that work and wanted to do more, which is where the political journey began. I wanted to be a piece of a choice that the electorate has – feeling they could choose me because they trusted and believed I would work to make a genuine difference to their lives. Democracy is about choice. About driving change. I’ve always challenged myself to shift if I think it’s a better thing to do. I didn’t suddenly get an altruism chip implanted the day I became an MP. I had always cared about these things.

“Employers know it matters because it matters to their customers and to their staff.”

My own personal journey underlines how when you get an opportunity, it can be transformational. But it’s too much about a lucky break, about who you know and whether you have the right connections to get the right advice at the right time and not enough about talent finding its way no matter what. I have always believed that if you free up that talent, it is not just better for those individuals who see how they can contribute to the world in a way they may not have been able to do before, but I think it is also better for our society and our economy. Values are changing. For the younger generation, levelling up is high on their agendas. Employers know it matters because it matters to their customers and to their staff.”

Seema grew up in Lancashire where she saw “many areas with really high deprivation, where all the indicators on health, on longevity, on educational achievement and social mobility are going all the wrong way whilst they are sitting next to highly prosperous areas. I definitely experienced this in my own home town of Blackburn which has appalling health indicators yet a few miles down the road people had good health indicators and lived longer. You have to ask yourself ‘why is this?’ and ‘what can we do to stop it?’. I saw so much untapped potential. When I did school visits, I saw a lot of





“The Goals have meant businesses can work much more strategically and effectively on their levelling up plans.”

children suffering from obesity – and this was holding them back in so many ways. They couldn't exercise. They had health issues which would undoubtedly cause them problems later in life. They suffered from a lack of confidence. This was a stark visual reminder of the inequalities in our society. As PPS to Theresa May, it was interesting to see the different attitudes and experiences towards inequality; there were unsurprisingly differences between the North and South but even within very prosperous areas in the South East, there are still massively deprived areas. Not only is this a social justice and moral issue but it is an economic issue. If we are not using our greatest talent and asset – our people – to their full potential that is a problem for us all.”

Now Justine and Seema are working with This Is Purpose (thisispurpose.com) which is helping businesses and organisations “put people and planet at the core of their purpose”.

A coalition of businesses, NHS Trusts, Councils and universities together with civil society and cross party MPs have established the Social Mobility Pledge which has at its core 14 Levelling Up Goals which are becoming the bible for the organisations who are serious about levelling up and do not just see it as the latest catch phrase or a box to be ticked. These Goals have allowed businesses to understand which ones are most relevant to their work and, therefore, which ones they should focus on. Some focus on education, some are around access to opportunity and progression and others concentrate on factors that get us further – or hold us back; whether that's the digital divide, health and wellbeing, connectivity and infrastructure. The Goals have meant businesses can work much more strategically and effectively on their

levelling up plans in a consistent way and by speaking the same language.

Justine believes that businesses can play a key role in driving levelling up through thinking more carefully and strategically about the opportunities they have and how they affect lives.

“Businesses have already been thinking quite carefully about what the planet and sustainability means to them, but now is the time for them to be thinking about people. Just as businesses are playing a big part of the solution to climate change, so they can play a big role in levelling up.”

When all this began in 2018, Justine was asking employers to do three specific things; to get into schools and talk about careers, open their doors to work experience also, crucially, to look at how they recruited people.

The Social Mobility Pledge is the biggest of its kind in the country. Hundreds of businesses and organisations in both the public and private sectors are actively involved. 100 universities have also committed.

What does levelling up really mean? Do people understand the true sentiment and challenge behind the probably now overused words?

Justine believes that people almost have a “distinctive understanding that levelling up is how they and their families have more opportunities in the future. It is a phrase we used to use from when I was in the Department of Education, where I think it was very well identified as how you achieve equality of opportunity as in you extend opportunities to people who don't have them – which does not mean taking opportunities away from those that





do have them. It's about more opportunities for more people. It's not a zero sum game; in other words, if we can create more that is how we raise everyone's prospects".

Seema sees levelling up as a strong target that all political parties applaud and champion (something very rare in this day and age).

"How it is carried out – there are a hundred different ways – in our Purpose Coalition, we have focussed on 14 areas which we believe, if achieved, would lead to a levelled up Britain. If we want to be a competitive nation in the 21st Century, this is what we all have to be working towards."

In evidence of this being a thoroughly supported cross party campaign, Emily Thornberry MP and the Shadow Attorney General had this to say;

"As someone who's been working in the Law and in Politics for almost four decades, I take quite a long-term view of the challenges we've faced and the changes we've seen when it comes to opening up opportunities for people from all backgrounds.

We've had a long fight over the years to prevent outright discrimination and equalise treatment when it comes to hiring, firing, pay and promotion, and we're still not there for example when it comes to the gender pay gap, the representation of women and minority ethnic groups at board level, or the choice of which young people get early chances through work experience or internships. We've had an even longer fight to try and remove the less overt barriers to career progression that people find in their way, whether it's individuals with caring responsibilities at home or people who've grown up in poverty, and we've still got a very long way to go in those areas.

"They should be opening up equality of opportunity and promoting social mobility in their workplaces."

"They will actively benefit from having a workforce that reflects the nation as a whole"

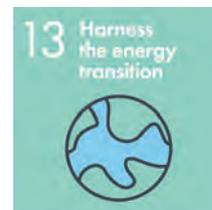
Emily Thornberry MP



But I think the longest, hardest fight of all is persuading companies in the City and elsewhere that they should be opening up equality of opportunity and promoting social mobility in their workplaces not just because in some areas the law requires them to do so, or because they risk being embarrassed in some league tables of ethnic or educational diversity, but because they will actively benefit from having a workforce that reflects the nation as a whole, and then drawing on the full range of different talents, life experiences, and ways of thinking about the world that they get from having that workforce.

That's why I welcome the construction of this broad and growing coalition of businesses, universities and others supporting the pledges behind the campaign, committed not just to talk in theory about but demonstrate in practice the tremendous benefits that come from embracing equality of opportunity, and driving social mobility. It is a fantastic initiative, and I am very pleased it is already winning such widespread support."

Businesses, organisations and, indeed, the Government could learn a lot from the work Justine, Seema and their colleagues are doing to level up Britain.



CHANGE IN OUR PROFESSION

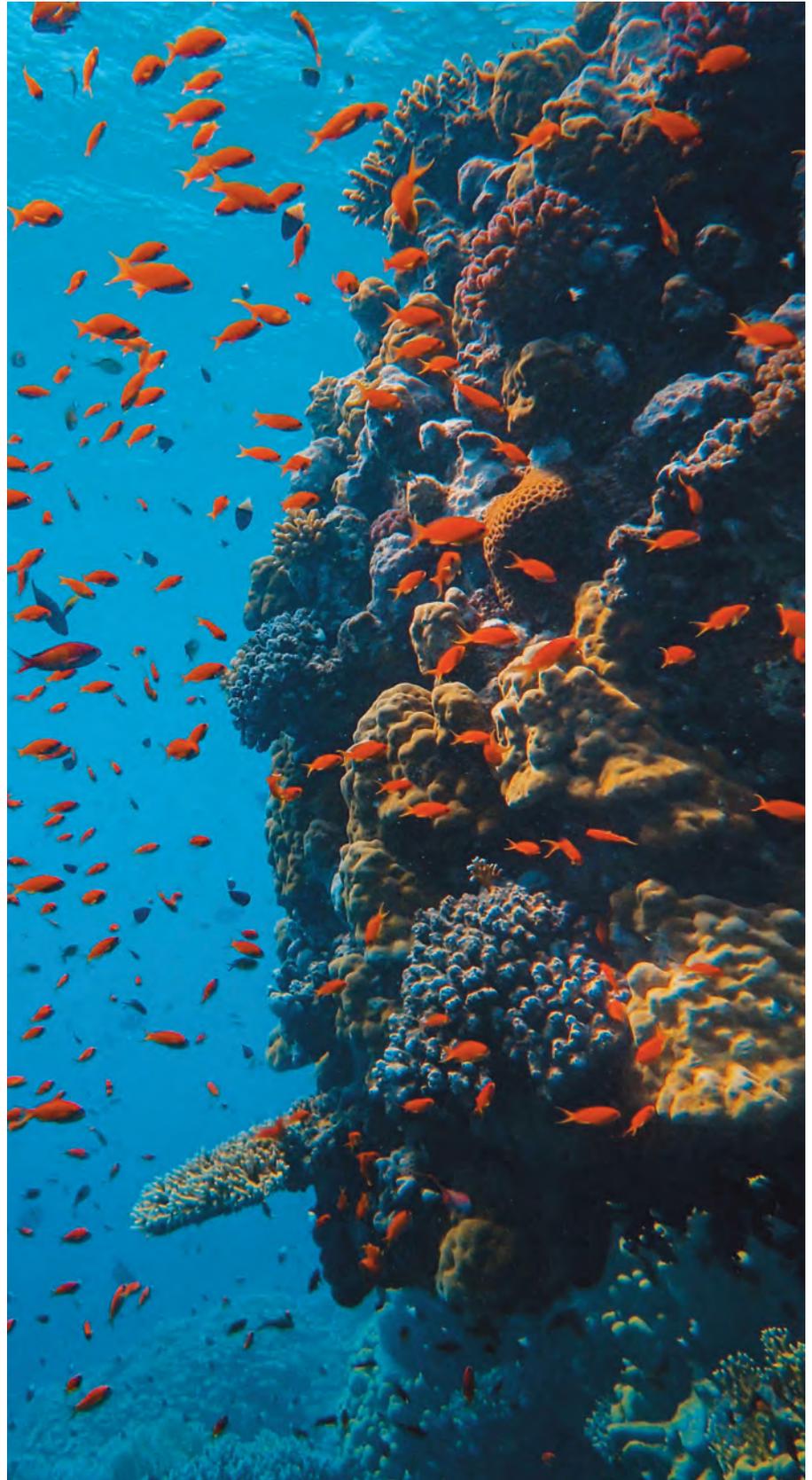
From the word 'go' there was strong engagement with the Social Mobility Pledge from law firms, particularly those based in the City of London

Justine says;

"For the legal sector, the issue of how they drive greater diversity and what it is going to take to shift the dial on a profession that historically has been more closed than open, was a real challenge but one they were keen to undertake. From the start, individual law firms were getting very deeply involved and connected with the Social Mobility Pledge. What we soon realised was it was not just about how to get a more diverse pool to have access to the profession but also how to help them get on once they were in. Whilst we are definitely seeing the profession bringing very many different people to be solicitors, there is still an issue about that diversity not flowing through or upwards."

Levelling Up Law is an initiative that was born to address those issues; not just getting in but getting on. Understanding that most law firms are facing precisely the same challenges, it made complete sense to get them to talk and work together rather than individually. This is what the City of London Law Society (CLLS) has been able to do really effectively, it is the hub around which the law firms can have those conversations. Universities were then added to this mix, to talk about the work that could be done upstream to make sure people were joining these law firms already understanding the environment they were going into in order to minimise any sort of culture gap they might otherwise encounter and to stop them feeling like a fish out of water.

Seema was herself a lawyer before entering politics. She didn't go the traditional Law degree route but rather did a conversion. Her training contract was at Slaughter and May and she qualified into the Commercial Property and Construction Team. Interestingly, she left when she became a mother and wanted to work part time but in those days part time meant 4 full days and with no remote working then, this was more than Seema was wanting to commit to. Fortunately law firms have come a long way since then and have levelled up to give more opportunities to mothers who want to





continue their careers. In her time as a lawyer, Seema also volunteered at a Law Centre. Having worked in a major firm herself, she is aware of the challenges and pressures.

“One of the problems is that the legal profession is such a massively popular one, the firms are literally inundated with applications so the reflex is to go back to the traditional universities – the Russell Group – but there are amazing students who have the aptitude and skills and life experience to be excellent City lawyers who were in the post ‘92 universities. We have worked to put these newer universities in conversation with law firms to try and broaden the pool they fish from – for everyone’s benefit.”

Whilst there is a long way to go, Levelling Up Law has made some really great steps. There are some real commitments that have been made, not least of which expanding the pool of universities that firms recruit from way beyond the traditional ones who used to dominate almost exclusively. Law firms also now have the tools to track their levelling up in a consistent fashion. There are lots of fresh ideas coming through that will enable law firms to find incredible talent from places they would never have previously thought to look. Businesses are levelling up; their customers are demanding it, their staff are demanding it. So when they are choosing a law firm to work with, they are looking for one who is on the same page. Levelling up is not just something that brings benefits to individuals, but to business, to society and to the world.

Justine recalls working with one law firm who had a US client complain that whilst the firm had sent four solicitors to a meeting, they were, essentially, the same person. The client explained that they were looking for different views and ideas. The law firm understood and agreed but then it dawned on them, their entire firm was really that one person. They realised how valuable levelling their firm up would be, far beyond just from a fair minded perspective.

“Levelling up is expected now. It’s wanted. It’s needed. It makes for better business. Law firms are better when they have lots of different ideas. It’s a win-win.”

Sarah Clover has been on the main Committee of CLLS for four years. At her very first meeting, there was an item on the agenda on social mobility and the speaker was Colin Passmore, the former Senior Partner of Simmons and Simmons

“Getting good talent provides a better base on which firms can operate.”

LLP and a passionate advocate of trying to get people into the profession from more diverse and less traditional backgrounds. This all resonated 100% with Sarah.

“Quite simply, it is the right thing to do. But aside from that, in order for firms to get the very best talent, they really need to fish in as wide a pool as possible. Getting good talent provides a better base on which firms can operate. They come to problems with different perspectives and with fresh ways of problem solving”.

Colin Passmore had done a survey of CLLS members which showed that many City firms were putting a lot of resources into broadening their pools. Most City firms were using RARE, a contextual recruitment system that claims to have ‘built the best social mobility measuring tool for graduate recruitment’. There are a number of other schemes like City Solicitors Horizons which mentors and supports students on their journey into City law firms. But they did not want to stop there; law firms were keen to be doing more.

Justine approached Colin regarding her Social Mobility Pledge and they came up with the idea of linking up City Law firms with non Russell Group universities. So, Levelling Up Law was born and Sarah, Colin and other CLLS committee members have since worked alongside Justine and Seema on the project.

Sarah says the premise of the project is quite simple.

“It is to identify and overcome the barriers that non Russell Group university graduates face in trying to enter, and progress in, City law firms.”

The project was launched in February 2021 with 15 City Law firms taking on the initial phase alongside a similar number of universities.

This first phase involved discussions between the parties facilitated by Seema to identify the problems and solutions at different stages of recruitment. At the reaching out stage, the recruitment

process itself and the problems facing people with more diverse backgrounds embedding themselves and progressing.

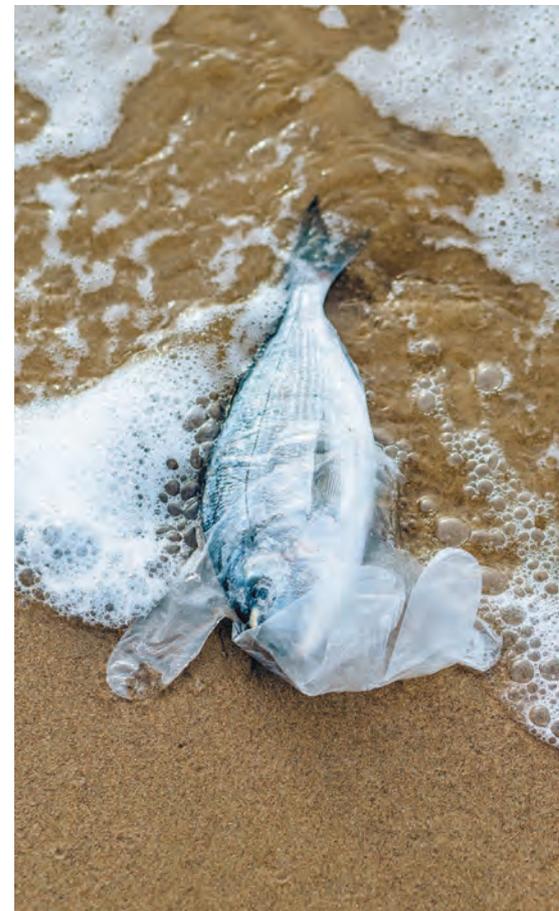
Sarah tells us;

“We are now in a phase where individual firms are forming links with individual universities and carrying on the discussions in a more granular way between themselves”.

For those out there in the big bad world that think of law firms as elitist, stuck in their ways and all about connections, their enthusiasm and commitment to projects like Levelling Up Law should make them rethink.

Similarly, when we start doubting our politicians and public figures, we only need to look at people like Justine and Seema to restore our faith. (Maybe they should come back!)

Perhaps, due to the work that is selflessly being carried out today with such great passion and commitment, we will get to live in a levelled up country in our lifetimes. In the meantime, we can all be a part of that change we seek.



CHANGE IN THE OFFICE

Whilst Levelling Up Law is a wonderful collaborative project that is providing access to the legal profession, we must not forget the work that is being done by individual law firms on the other side of the coin which provides access to legal services to those who cannot afford them.

Julia Wookey is a senior associate solicitor at Howard Kennedy LLP and heads up their pro bono programme alongside her colleague, Luke Barden de Lacroix. They actually set up the programme when they were trainees at the firm when they recognised that while the firm did pockets of incredible pro bono work, it didn't have

the opportunity for everyone from a PA to a Partner to get involved.

Both Julia and Luke came to Howard Kennedy from backgrounds where pro bono was an integral part of their practice. Julia had been volunteering in San Francisco for the California Appellate Project, working on appeals for prisoners on death row – quite the polar opposite from what she would be doing in a City law firm. Luke had been volunteering in law clinics.

They both were determined to continue pro bono work alongside private practice and so spoke to the Management

“They both were determined to continue pro bono work alongside private practice.”





Committee at Howard Kennedy. The pair acknowledged the amazing ad hoc pro bono work that was being done but wanted a more structured and inclusive offering. They were asked to put together a business case for their proposal so they spoke to various advice clinics and charities they hoped to partner with and came back with the case. They knew whatever they set up had to be flexible and scalable to enable anyone from any level of expertise to get involved if they wanted to.

Howard Kennedy gave the project the green light and it launched in 2016 and is still going strong.

“We have been fortunate to be recognised in the Law Society’s Annual Pro Bono Awards every year since we set up our pro bono programme, either winning or being shortlisted or highly commended, together with our pro bono partners”.

We send lawyers to the free legal advice centre at Toynbee Hall, whose driving principle is to eradicate poverty. They match us up with individuals who need our help. This covers a broad range of issues from small criminal matters to human rights to housing disrepair to debt and family matters. Our trainees really enjoy this as they go in pairs and get great supervision and develop exceptional transferable skills such as dealing with clients face to face; it compliments their private practice.

We have also partnered up with a fantastic outfit called LawWorks who essentially act as a broker between participating high calibre law firms like us and Charities and Not For Profits who need Legal advice. For that, we put together teams to deal with matters such as Charity Trustee disputes, problems with landlords – no two matters are the same.

Through this work we have also entered into some long term arrangements with some of the Charities. We have been appointed as Honorary Counsel for Action

“It is fair to say that our profession is really contributing to providing access to the law – and towards levelling up.”

on Postpartum Psychosis. It has brought together members from all over the firm; they have a go to person that assists on contracts, a go to person for disputes – and so forth. We all work together to make sure our advice is aligned.

We also take on ad hoc cases which can come from anyone in the firm and we have a pro bono Committee which evaluates prospective pro bono matters using our internal merits and means test. We have done some incredible, interesting and worthy work for some very interesting and deserving individual clients and organisations, for example the Human Dignity Trust whose goal is to decriminalise homosexuality throughout the world so they take pieces of strategic litigation globally with a view to changing the law.”

The firm has just hired a Responsible Business Manager with a view to expanding the work they are already doing. Everyone enjoys and feels rewarded by doing this work so not only do the recipients benefit but the lawyers do too.

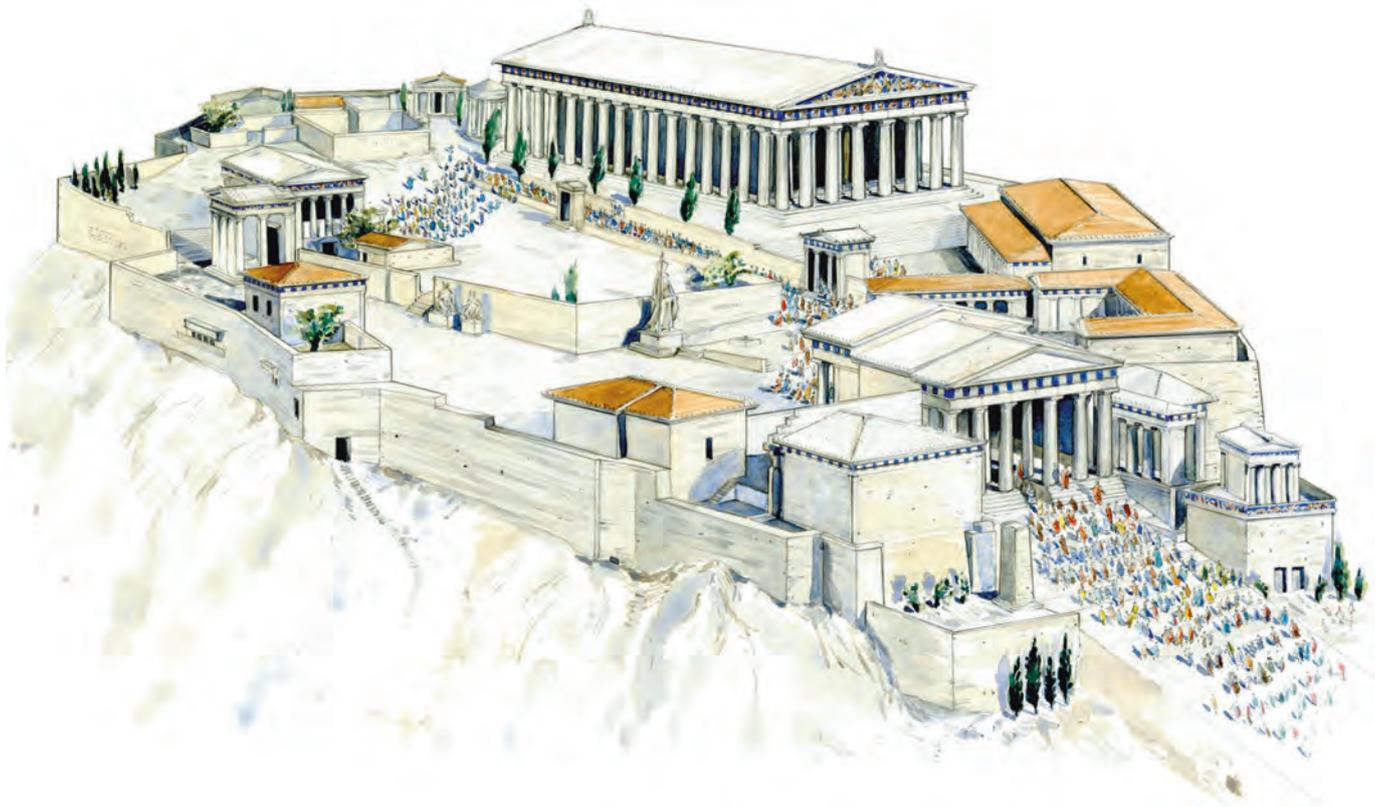
There is one overarching rule Howard Kennedy has in taking pro bono work; that they will not take it on unless they can do it with the same high standard as their fee-paying work.

Howard Kennedy is doing amazing pro bono work. They are not alone or unique among City law firms. It is fair to say that our profession is really contributing to providing access to the law – and towards levelling up.

“Everyone enjoys and feels rewarded by doing this work.”

ARE WE LOSING OUR MARBLES?

To be accurate, they are not ours to lose. So, rather than losing them, we will be doing the correct and honourable thing in returning them to their rightful owners.



We are talking about the Elgin Marbles to be specific, but with living proof that misinformation is not something that is just part of our lives today but has been around for centuries, the Elgin Marbles are not the Elgin Marbles at all.

Let's start at the very beginning and try to unravel the intricate web of lies and deceits and wrongdoings that have led to an acceptance of a story that is simply not true.

Mark Stephens CBE, a partner at Howard Kennedy LLP, is not just an expert in cultural property (not to mention a zillion other legal areas), but is also a fanatic art collector, so it's hardly surprising that he should be involved in this drama.

Mark's interest in all things Ancient Greek began in around 1964 when his parents went to Athens for a romantic break; a highly unusual occurrence in those days of propeller planes. They visited the Parthenon, of course, and came back with a piece of rock about the size of a man's hand. Mark hastens to stress that this was not an original piece; repairs were underway and this was a chip of the new stone that was being used and which had been discarded. This rock ignited something within Mark and he began to devour Greek history and Greek fables and became fascinated with Alexander the Great. When he first heard the story of the Marbles, he felt disturbed by it.

When Nana Mouskouri began her campaign to get the Parthenon Marbles (as those pro having them returned prefer to call them) returned home, it stuck with Mark, but was not in the forefront of his thoughts.

Mark went on to become well known and respected in the arena of looted artworks, particularly Second World War looted Nazi pieces which were being sold in the Sixties when provenance was not really an issue. One such piece was a Renoir which Richard Burton had bought as a gift for Liz Taylor from her father who was an art dealer. Mark was then asked by the Tasmanian aboriginals if he could recover their ancestors from the Natural History Museum – not a request that comes along every day. Needless to say, the Museum was reluctant to give them back for a myriad of reasons, not least of which being they did not understand the aboriginal belief that they cannot go into dreaming (their concept of heaven) unless their elders are interred in the ancestral lands. When the case was being heard, it was only when a grown aboriginal man broke down in tears and explained he believed his soul to be in jeopardy and the very eminent Supreme Court Judge, Lord Woolf and Sir Lawrence Street, an Australian Judge who were presiding together were both visibly moved by this, that an understanding and empathy of the

“Misinformation is not something that is just part of our lives today but has been around for centuries.”

“It was the first time I had really looked into the history. People assume they know the history of the Parthenon Marbles, but actually they don’t.”

situation began and the remains were ordered to be returned.

All this brought Mark right back to square one and to the Marbles; an Australian group campaigning for their return approached him wanting an opinion and Mark worked with Geoffrey Robertson on that.

“It was the first time I had really looked into the history. People assume they know the history of the Parthenon Marbles, but actually they don’t. The British Establishment had this cri de coeur of “No Elgin, no marbles: as in had it not been for Elgin, the Marbles would have been destroyed. Whilst many believe this to be true, even today, it is actually a reprehensible lie.”

Mark examined the facts, rather than buy into the fiction. He analysed these facts by reference to the laws of this country, the laws of the Ottomans and also International Law that applied at the time and concluded pretty firmly that Elgin plundered them and if they were stolen, the British Museum therefore had no title to them. A fairly basic point.

But how did all this come about? If you go back to that place in time, everyone was doing the Grand Tour; the wealthy and entitled were visiting all of the classical antiquities which fit in with having studied Greek and Latin at school. The Grand Tour began in around 1646 when a book was published on the Tour and by 1700 it had become very very popular, not just in this country, but all over Europe. This is how Cook’s Tours were invented. Anyone who was anyone went on the Tour – but Elgin wanted to go one step further and yearned to dismantle the Parthenon and re-assemble it as part of his country mansion in Scotland, Broomhall. And to some extent, he succeeded, which is witness to the entitlement of the time.

In the Sixties, Country Life magazine published pictures of some of the Parthenon friezes inside Broomhall. Needless to say, the current heirs no longer permit photography of the interiors.



Interior of Broomhall showing friezes from the Parthenon



Thomas Bruce...
The Not So Honourable Earl of Elgin



Broomhall – the home of Lord Elgin and the place appointed to receive the Parthenon Marbles



Modern day Broomhall



Mark talks of the law that applied at the time this “theft” happened.

“The Ottomans were an illegal occupation which happened until Greece got its independence in 1832. It is important to understand the laws of war which require, in this case, the Ottomans to respect temples, places of worship, palaces and places of cultural significance. To a certain extent the Turks, Ottomans and Phoenicians honoured all of this. As they came to Athens to invade, everyone respected the Parthenon – which was identified as a cultural gem, hence being a part of the Grand Tour. When the Phoenicians attacked in 1687, the officers gave orders (which are on record) that the cannons should be aimed to cause as little time to the Parthenon as possible.”

In 1780, the French Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire had asked permission to take the sculptures from the Parthenon and he was refused because of international law. They knew this was a place of cultural and historical significance. Of course, for both the Ottomans and the Athenians there was another reason. The Grand Tour was incredibly lucrative. It attracted wealthy families who spent generously.

In 1800, Elgin sent artists to draw and paint pictures of the Parthenon which he intended to use to get copies done in order to decorate the interior of Broomhall. However, the Ottomans would not allow artists in – they sat there for six months and then worked out a solution that was agreeable to all parties. For the massive sum of £5 a day, they were allowed to enter and sketch. £5. Think what a massive amount of money that would have been both locally and at that time. It was made clear, in writing, the “bribe” did not allow them to touch or dig or erect scaffolding.

It was around this time, whilst the drawings were underway, that Elgin, who had until this point never been on the Grand Tour himself, was appointed British Ambassador to Constantinople and here the story takes a suspicious turn especially, as Mark tells us, “if you are a lawyer who has done criminal cases, you start to think these bits don’t fit.”

It is at this point Elgin says he received a firman, a permission from the Sultan in Constantinople. Most scholars today have examined this, along with a lot of lawyers, including Mark, and tend to agree it is a barefaced lie.

“I wasn’t very familiar with firman at the beginning and so I bottomed it out. All firmans are consecutively numbered and they are all still in the national archive in Turkey and available to review. There is no number missing. And there is no Elgin firman. Which explains why he was never able to produce it. All of the firmans have a formal, ornate style that they are decorated with. The more important the order, the more ornate they are. But they all come with very formal diplomatic greetings that are easily identifiable. So when Elgin’s vicar produced to Parliament what he said was an Italian translation of the firman. I was

“There was no explanation as to why the original firman had been lost.”

even more suspicious. There was no explanation as to why the original firman had been lost. There was no explanation as to why an Italian translation was needed or what purpose it was produced for or when. And there was no explanation as to why this so-called Italian translation did not match the indicia of the formal diplomatic language and words that are in all the other firmans.”

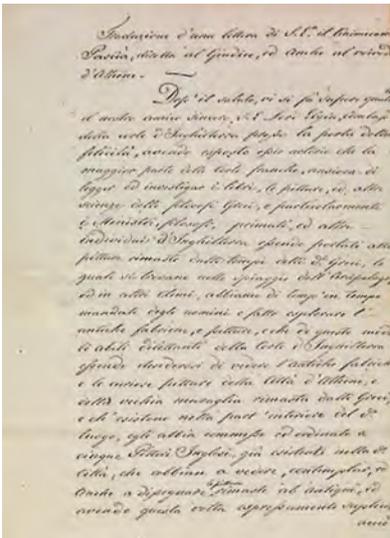
Proof beyond any reasonable doubt that this was a made up document?

In order to get the Marbles, Elgin spent around £30,000 on bribes, or as he described them; “extravagant gifts”. A lot was straight cash but he gave the Senior Military Commander a pair of silver pearl encrusted duelling pistols which would have been worth a fortune. Mark questions “why would you spend £30,000 in bribes if you actually have the written permission of a totalitarian ruler?”.

Mark realised this story had always been looked at in parts but never as a whole or



Examples of a couple real Firmans of the period



Left: The Fake Firman

Terms of what Elgin said was his permission (Firman)

“Artists in the service of the British Ambassador, Lord Elgin, are entitled to enter freely within the walls of the Citadel and to draw, model with plaster the ancient temples therein. To erect scaffolding and to dig where they may wish to discover ancient foundations and liberty to take away any sculptures or inscriptions which do not interfere with the works or walls of the Citadel.”

properly. He also discovered that it had also been a massive scandal in the UK at the time. After all, Elgin had vandalised one of the key attractions on the Grand Tour, depriving his fellow aristocrats of having the opportunity to see the Parthenon in Athens in its full splendour and as it should have been. In 1806 when Elgin returned to London, he found himself in the middle of a furore. People had travelled all the way to Athens only to find that he had left the Parthenon in a state. He was stripped of his Scottish title (which was not as prestigious as an English peerage) and he and his wife, Mary, were ostracised from society. She could not bear the shame so divorced him and remarried a man who was not excluded from society. Elgin was summoned before Parliament to investigate his behaviours and his actions and in 1816 a Parliamentary Select Committee Report roundly condemned him. This created a problem for Parliament. They clearly knew that Elgin was a crook and a despoiler of ancient



Mary, Countess of Elgin

monuments, but it was not practical to return his plunder to Athens. In an attempt to resolve the problem, Elgin offered to sell "his" Marbles to the British Government for £70,000 plus an English peerage, i.e. a higher honour than

“Under a false name, he wrote a pamphlet that Elgin (i.e. himself) had saved the Marbles.”

he had previously held. The Government countered with £30,000 and no peerage. They offered the £30,000 because that was what he had spent on the bribes and transport. They finally settled on £35,000 – and even this was controversial, with many believing he should suffer bankruptcy. He was in debt at the time so the additional £5,000 prevented this happening.

Excluded from society, he left London and became an exile in Paris where tried to rehabilitate his reputation. Under a false name, he wrote a pamphlet that Elgin (i.e. himself) had saved the Marbles which would have been destroyed by the Ottomans, by tourists or even by the Greeks themselves. He sang his own praises anonymously as the saviour of the Marbles. The fact that they had survived perfectly well for over 2000 years was obviously not mentioned. Nor was it mentioned that the Marbles had been respected and protected by many different rulers. But the important thing about this false narrative was that it got the British Museum out of a hole. They quickly adopted this narrative saying they were looking after the Marbles in London because the Greeks were not capable of doing so. Also untrue. But it gave a legitimacy and an explanation – and it is the one everyone knows because it has been repeated so many times from the 1800s till today. Another English crook and Lord, Lord Duveen, said he would pay to build a gallery at the British Museum (of course named after himself) to display the Marbles but on condition that they were scoured a brilliant white to expose the underlying marble. The British Museum agreed to this deal and employed a team of cleaners armed with wire pads and heavy duty solvents to scour off the colour. A couple of bits survived. Ironical that they were damaged in London where they were supposedly safe, and not in Athens where they had been safe for a couple of thousand years. And it gets worse. During the recent pandemic, the Duveen Galleries which still house the Marbles, sprung leaks from the roof. Everyday it





British Museum was made to a design inspired by the Parthenon



Attempted sale of Elgin's plunder

rains, the rain drips down on to the Marbles! So much for safekeeping.

As for Elgin, he lived in Paris for the rest of his days. He died a syphilitic, his nose had rotted off and he had a tin nose.

Mark's thorough research and investigations led him to the following;

"I concluded that Elgin did not have legal permission to remove the friezes or take them to London. He had no firman. He resorted to criminality; the paying of bribes. It was basic Law in Athens, in Ottoman Sharia, in International Law and in English Law that if you acquire something that is stolen, you do not become the owner of it, you just possess it. And the owner may have been deprived of it, but in Law, remains the legal owner – and there is a legal obligation by all of the Laws referenced above to return the property to its legal owner. So without mincing words, the British Museum is in possession of stolen goods and should return them. They were stolen by Elgin. They never were the Elgin Marbles. They were the Greek Marbles or the Parthenon Marbles. I take the view that this is an appalling travesty, it is clouded in lies and myths and self-serving nonsense. Essentially, legally they have got to go back."

"The British Museum is in possession of stolen goods and should return them."

UNESCO recently passed a resolution that the Marbles need to be returned to Athens. Mark believes there is a sea change coming. Older curators are stuck in the ways of the past but the younger ones have a very different attitude.

Does Mark believe the Marbles will be returned?

"Absolutely. Younger curators agree. Younger academics agree, It is all part of

respecting people and their history and the colonial perspective of the previous generations and of museum and gallery directors is something of the past. I'm very hopeful. We need someone who is in touch with morality to make that change. And one day it will happen."

Perhaps it's time we levelled up to the truth, to our mistakes and to the fact that the Parthenon Marbles are simply not ours to keep.



“We have come dangerously close to accepting the homeless situation as a problem that we just can't solve.”

Linda Single

Fortunately for the homeless and for society, Alex Stephany, CEO of Beam.org decided he was simply not going to accept this situation and has set out to try and be a part of the solution.



“The people we see on the streets are only the tip of the iceberg. More than 300,000 people are living in hostels and women’s refuges. About as many people that live in the entire city of Brighton are homeless in the UK today.”

Startling facts. It’s probably fair to say most of us are deeply troubled by the homeless situation but what is it that prompted Alex to do something more than the rest of us who perhaps buy food, or hot drinks or give some money?

Alex is an ex-lawyer himself, who worked for Clifford Chance before running JustPark whose claim to fame amongst other things is that it raised the maximum possible funding without a prospectus, £3.7million.

Alex has lived most of his life in London and it has always worried and concerned him that we live in one of the wealthiest economies in the world and homelessness is such a huge problem. It was while he was working at Clifford Chance that Alex first got exposure to the social inequality that exists in our city. He was on secondment working for a charity giving pro bono legal advice and it was an eye opening and shocking experience for him. He witnessed first hand the most disadvantaged in our society, those with no legal residency rights, minimal legal rights, some were trying to not be deported, some feared for their physical safety. Alex says he couldn’t really spend more than 15 or so minutes with each one and so felt powerless to help them in a meaningful way.

After 4 years at JustPark, Alex felt he had an “itch to scratch”. He wanted to solve problems, to make a significant difference. And whilst we all know parking is definitely a problem, Alex felt there were bigger and far more important issues to be tackling. He was looking for a meaningful social problem he could address, using technology.

“We live in one of the wealthiest economies in the world and homelessness is such a huge problem.”



“We have over 1,000 homeless charities, billions are being spent on the problem and still people are literally dying outside of tube stations.”

The answer came to him, almost by chance.

“About four years ago, I became friends with a homeless man who would sit outside my tube station, Archway. He told me he chose that particular spot because there were CCTV cameras there and it made it less likely that he would be beaten up. He had been out of work for more time than he could remember.”

Alex got to know this man. He bought him cups of coffee and pairs of socks when the weather was cold – and then he just disappeared. It was about six weeks later when Alex saw him again; he looked completely different. His big beard had been shaved off and he looked much, much older and terrible. Alex learned from him that he had had a heart attack. He was still sitting on the same concrete step outside Archway tube station.

“At that moment, it hit me really hard that not only had I failed to help this person but he was actually in a way worse position than when I first met him. As I was walking home I was thinking this is just such an upsetting state of affairs; I tried to help this guy, we have over 1,000 homeless charities, billions are being spent on the problem and still people are literally dying outside of tube stations.”

Alex began to ask himself what did this man really need. The answer was obviously not another cup of coffee. What he really needed was skills, support, confidence and money in his pocket in a sustainable way.

“I thought this is going to cost more than a cup of coffee – but what if we all chip in? Use that small amount of money it would cost to buy a couple of cups of coffee in a way that would make an actual difference?”

Alex’s unprecedented success with crowdfunding rounds at JustPark prompted him to think that maybe he could crowdfund all of the things that homeless people really need and support them into long term financial independence.

That was the initial idea and then Alex began to research and learn a lot about the issue. He was introduced to a man named Tony in a homeless hostel who had been out of work for 21 years,



who had been a drug addict, an alcoholic and had been in prison. He was estranged from most of his family and was a very sad man who had literally been beaten up by life.

Alex told him he was going to start a new website and crowdfunded training for homeless people.

“I told Tony I had heard he wanted to be an electrician and I said we would try and help him achieve that. He had only one question for me. He asked ‘why would anyone want to help me?’. I was stung by the question and I told him I genuinely believed there are a lot of people out there who would want to help him. We just have to make it easy for them. And that’s my job. I told him – his job, if we were to be able to give him that opportunity was to seize it with both hands and turn his life around. Tony trusted me – and so Beam began. It became a huge news story. Tony needed £3,000 – which we got. He then got his City and Guilds qualification, got a job, did so well that he got promoted and could afford to have his own flat. He has even reunited with his family.”



Doubtless, after reading that there is not a dry eye in the house.

More and more people were being referred to the service and every week Beam was successful in getting people into jobs in a wide array of areas from construction to teaching assistant roles to driving jobs.

“It became clear that we had struck upon something really powerful here. This crowdfunding model was removing all of the financial barriers that people have been facing for a long time. It also massively boosts their confidence.”

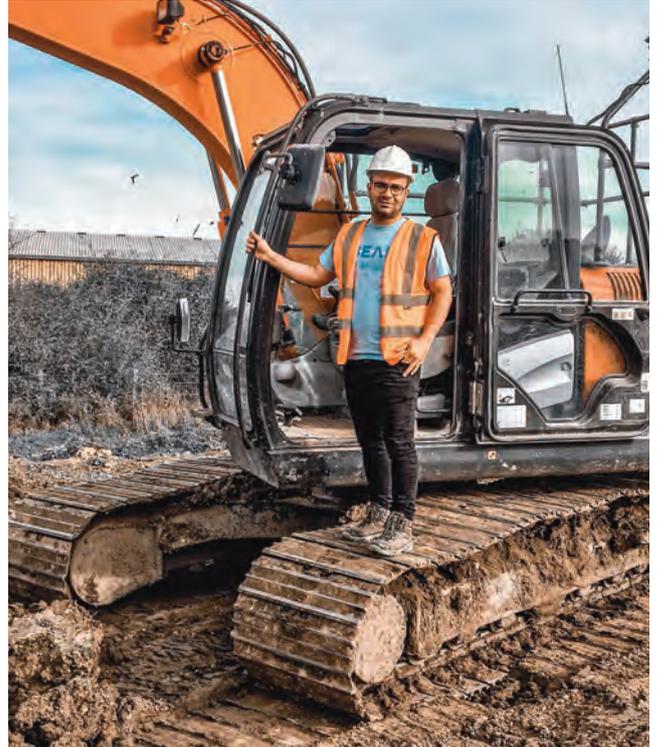
Everyone looking for support has their own page. You see a picture of them, know their name, read their story, hear their ambitions. You see how much money is needed – and how much has been received so far. Importantly, you can leave them messages of support to encourage them when they are starting work. On average most of these individuals have been out of work for about five and a half years. They need self belief. These messages help them.

“Alex is not satisfied with just helping the homeless either. He is determined to go further.”

Alex is not satisfied with just helping the homeless either. He is determined to go further.

“Working with these individuals, one thing we have learned is that a whole load of problems interrelate; homelessness, the refugee crisis, disabilities, racism; the vision here is that we not only can make a massive contribution to ending homelessness by financially empowering people but we can do the same for so many other groups too.”

It is not just Joe Public who can help Beam by contributing but also companies who are partnering



“With us, every penny you donate goes to the people who need it most.”

with them and hiring from their talent pool. For them it’s about hiring people who can add value to their businesses, it is about employee engagement because more and more people want to be working for businesses that are trying to do some good in the world. It really means a lot when employees see their companies hiring women from a refuge and so who now have an opportunity.

“This is incredibly different from any homelessness organisation you may have encountered before. It’s about building connections between the donor and the individual. After you have donated you get sent updates on their progress. It is incredibly transparent. You see a budget – and this is broken

down into precisely how much we have spent and on what. So you know exactly where your money has been used. Something else that is very unusual about us is we operate a 100% giving model. Typically when you donate to a charity, very little of the money reaches individuals. With us, every penny you donate goes to the people who need it most.”

It would take a heart of stone not to be moved by this story. And, of course, Alex needs your help. Already many law firms are working with Beam; their advisers are Herbert Smith Freehills LLP, on Intellectual Property they are advised by Allen & Overy LLP and they are working on a homelessness project specific to Islington with Slaughter and May.

But, as individuals, you can help too. For what it costs you to buy a cup of coffee for a homeless person, you can make them financially independent, get them into full time work – and give them a sense of self worth.

Beam.org



CITY OF LONDON LAW SOCIETY NEWS

Meet the new CEO of CLLS; Matthew Rous



In December last year, CLLS said a grateful farewell to its first ever CEO, the hugely talented David Hobart. On 1st January it welcomed his successor, Matthew Rous.

If you expected Matthew's CV to be a long list of Magic Circle firms, you could not be further from the truth. His first degree was in languages (French, Russian and historical linguistics) and the lion's share of his career to date has been with the Diplomatic Service. Over more than a quarter of a century of globetrotting, his professional life has shown a marked emphasis on East Asia, with two postings each in Japan and China and another in Indonesia.

That said, Matthew has dealt with issues pertaining to the law in all of his Foreign Office roles, always being careful to remain in lockstep with the in-house Legal Advisers. For example he was part of the team which worked on Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule in the 1990s. It was an intense period where he had to be very closely aligned with the Hong Kong Government's legal experts including the Attorney General. More recently, Matthew spent four years as Chief Executive of the China-Britain Business Council, a challenge which he thoroughly enjoyed.

When the chance came up to join CLLS, Matthew saw this as the perfect next step and as a chance to deploy all that experience in a new field. "It's the most incredible opportunity," he says. "The City of London is the beating heart of the UK economy, and it's the City's lawyers who keep the heart healthy and the blood pumping around the system."

Matthew is fulsome in his praise for the job which the CLLS has done over the years. He cites in particular the contribution of the Specialist Committees. "They really are the crown jewels of this organisation. It will be a huge honour to work alongside lawyers who represent la crème de la crème of English law." He is also looking forward to being part of what he calls "the great and truly dedicated team" at 4 College Hill.

What will he bring to the CLLS? Matthew says it would be "utterly deluded and highly presumptuous" for him to seek to add value to the technical analysis done by the Specialist Committees, at least in the short term. He points however to his knowledge of the UK Government system and his track record in co-operating with partners in Whitehall, Westminster and beyond to improve policy outcomes. "I know at least some

of the right levers to pull in order to make stuff happen," he comments wryly.

Matthew also sees communication as an important part of his new role. "Much of what the CLLS does is necessarily complex and confidential, and obviously should continue to be so," he notes. "However there are other aspects of our work which we do want people to know about. Where this is the case, I want to reach out to ensure that the enormous contribution City lawyers make is recognised."

The legal profession tends to be seen "as a privileged elite," Matthew observes, "and, yes, there is some truth in that. City law firms employ highly intelligent high achievers, and that is something to be proud of. What is not so well known is that the City firms have a huge sense of duty to the country and to the community around them, and they want to the law to

"Working as a network we can achieve some really great outcomes."

be a force for good." Matthew highlights the recently launched Social Welfare Solicitors Qualification Fund as a hugely positive example of the CLLS rising to this challenge.

Asked what he would most like to achieve as CEO, Matthew responds, "My focus will be on our Members. They give incredibly generously of their expertise and of their time, which is something I don't take for granted. I want to make sure that everyone who is part of CLLS feels that we provide a well-curated space for them to come together, thereby enabling City law to be more than the sum of its parts. Working as a network we can achieve some really great outcomes."

Outside the day job, Matthew has recently started a Masters in creative writing and has just finished his first novel, a mystery. (Perhaps his interest in the law extends to criminal law too.) He and wife also made the most of the opportunity to explore areas close to home through the COVID lockdowns. In 2021 they completed both the 45 mile St Peter's Way and the 81 mile Essex Way on foot.

Matthew signs off saying that there is a huge learning curve looming in front of him like Jacob's Ladder and that he needs to get on with climbing it. If his enthusiasm is anything to go by, he will have reached the top in no time.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Monday 9th May 2022 – Annual Service at 6.30pm HM Tower of London, followed by Reception & Supper at Trinity House. Liverymen, Freemen & Guests.

Tuesday 17th May – CLLS/Gray's Inn Lecture.

Friday 17th to Saturday 18th June – Beckett Pageant (www.beckettpageantforlondon.com)

Wednesday 22nd June – CLSC & CLLS Annual General Meetings & Champagne Reception at 5.30pm Liverymen & Freemen.

Friday 24th June – Election of Sheriffs, Guildhall. Noon. Followed by lunch. Liverymen only.

Tuesday 14th June 2022 – Sustainability Dinner at the Old Bailey – more details to follow.

Sunday 25th September – Sheep Drive.

Tuesday 27th September – Court Dinner.

Thursday 29th September – Election of Lord Mayor, Guildhall. Followed by lunch. Liverymen only.

Saturday 12th November – Lord Mayor's Show.

November/December – Livery Dinner – more details to follow. Liverymen only.

Wednesday 14th December – Carol Service and Supper.

THE TALLEST OAK WAS ONCE JUST A NUT THAT HELD ITS GROUND

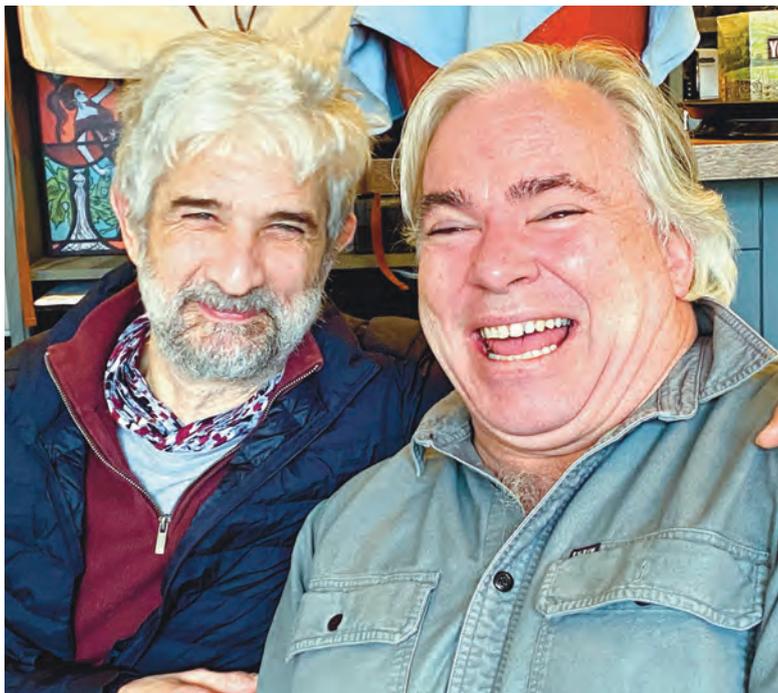
Friday night. I was going out for dinner and cocktails with Milia and Christian. All three of us are foodies but we were keeping it local – Crouch End to be precise – so expectations were not high. North London has good food – but it’s not known for the Michelin stars or fine dining that Central London offers in vast array. We arrived at a modest looking place, Les 2 Garçons, with some cafe-like tables and chairs on the pavement. As we pushed open the door, we somehow found ourselves in a travel and time machine that transported us to Paris half a century ago. We were in a small, dimly candlelit room, filled with wooden tables and leather chairs that were very shabby chic and crammed full with very convivial guests – and the smell of cooking immediately made our stomachs rumble. Just as in Parisian bistros of old, the specials were chalked up on blackboards and we knew straight away that the worst part of the evening would be having to choose between the delights on offer.

Whilst pondering this highly difficult decision, we had a Kir Royale. Now, there is something from dim and distant days! It was just as delicious as it used to be and I wondered why this gorgeous aperitif had fallen out of fashion. Our food choices were also blasts from the past; chicken chasseur, pigs trotters, boeuf bourguignon and many more famous and loved French classics. I have to be honest, whilst all the dishes sounded divine, I did question if the cooking would live up to the expectation.

Our orders were taken by a larger than life French waiter. Who turned out to also be the sommelier. And the Maitre D’. Oh and the co-owner too. In fact, he was the only person who was not in the kitchen. He introduced himself as JC and was such a caricature of a Frenchman, I almost expected him to fall out of character at some point and speak with a Cockney accent.

Then the real show began. Milia and Christian had both chosen the Sea-Scallops, braised endives, champagne & orange butter as their entrées and I had the Seared Duck Liver with Apple and Onion Tart. JC, a true wine expert, paired our dishes with the most divine French white wine, a Macon-Charnay 2019 domaine Gueugnon Remond, which he described as having ‘nice fresh peach flavours’ and which was well rounded and truly yum!

From my very first taste of the food, I knew this was not local cooking – either in Crouch End or even Paris. It was extraordinary.

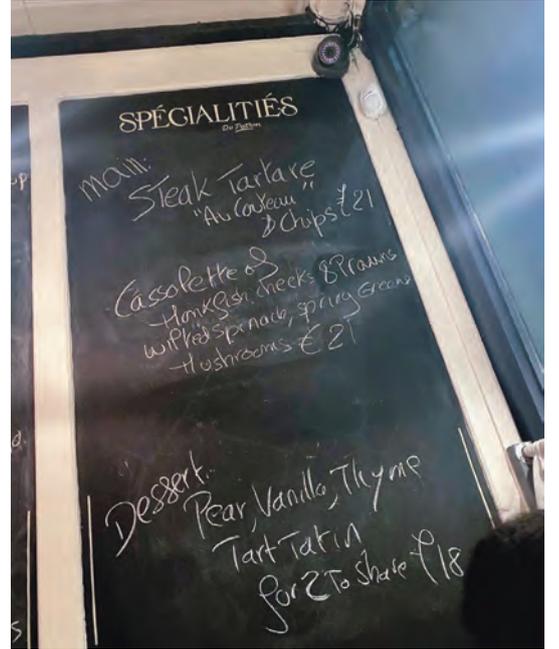


Our mains were brought out to us by the chef – and other co-owner – himself. As Chef Robert placed my Steak Tartare “au Couteau” in front of me and introduced himself, I started getting a feeling of *deja vu*.

Looking at his face and at the flatware my food was served on, suddenly I was back in the late 90s. Not in Paris. Rather the Oak Room in Piccadilly. I wonder if any of you readers are lucky enough to also remember it? It was Marco Pierre White’s jewel, a three Michelin star restaurant where the Head Chef was Chef Robert Reid, the self same man who was now presenting me with a fabulous looking Steak Tartare. We began chatting and discovered that not only was Chef Robert ex Oak Room but that was how he met JC, who had been the Maitre D’ there. (Obviously, that Frenchness was not a facade!).

How on earth did they get to be running a tiny bistro in the suburbs? As the restaurant was packed, we could not really chat properly but the three of us agreed to meet up for a coffee so I could hear their story. That will come later, but for now back to the food.

If I said to you that the Steak Tartare was the best I have ever tasted, I would be 100% honest and accurate. Steak Tartare is so easy to get wrong. It can be too bland. Too overwhelmed with spice.



Too eggy. Too raw meaty. Too many things. But this one was perfection. It literally melted in my mouth and I just wanted to somehow capture that taste and keep it in my mouth forever. And as for the chips it was served with....who ever knew the humble potato could ever taste so sublime?

Milia chose the Suprême de Poulet Label Rouge "Poule au pot" sauce gribiche and all I can say is we did not hear a peep out of her while she devoured the entire plate. For Christian, it was Fillet d'aiglefin fumé, pomme de terre nouvelle, moutarde beurre blanc which was also served with an egg and Christian could not stop singing its praises. They had made their decisions on their mains having seen them being served to the two ladies sitting at the next table to us and listening to their squeals of delight as they ate. The tables are close together but unlike a lot of places where that can feel intrusive, somehow this was like one big dinner party where everyone talked to each other and just had a great time.

Our mains were partnered with a Bourgogne Pinot Noir, 2018 domaine Jean-Marc Pillot, a beautifully smooth medium body red, packed with fruits – again chosen by JC. (He told us burgundies are his passion.)

We then were in a predicament. To dessert or not dessert? Milia – as ever – said no. Christian had

announced he was having dessert as soon as he tasted his starter. I was torn. But my heart – as ever – won over my head.

We chose one of the specials; the Pear, Vanilla and Thyme Tart Tatin for two to share and decided to share between the three of us so as not to be too piggy.

Chef Robert proudly brought the tart out for us to see before serving it. It was ENORMOUS and looked too good to be true. So much so that everyone else in the restaurant started 'ooo'-ing and 'aaa'-ing and a few even clapped. When JC announced there were only two left, there was almost an uprising in the room as guests clamoured to get one of the prizes.

It tasted every bit as good as it looked. Better actually to the point that not one crumb was left on our plates.

Our bill was very much akin to local prices and nothing like we would have expected to pay for such extraordinary food, wine and service. We were sad to leave – in the same way one is sad to leave friends after a fabulous dinner party and we couldn't wait to return.

I did return a few days later, sadly not to eat this time, but to have coffee with Les 2 Garçons and listen to their story.

LEVELLING UP FINE DINING



Walking into the restaurant in broad daylight and seeing it empty was very different from my previous experience. I was even more aware of how much it looked like someone's home. The pair welcomed me warmly and we shared coffee, sparkling water, walnuts, dried apricots and biscuits whilst chatting. JC was still larger than life, making us laugh with his stories. Chef Robert was as complex and enchanting as his food.

I knew I was in the company of the very epitome of those in the food and wine industry, but also with two warm, funny, charming, loveable individuals.

Chef Robert was born in South Africa – although there is no trace of an accent – and after winning Junior Chef of the Year, decided to take a trip to France for more culinary inspiration. Through a friend of a friend he met the renowned Roger Verge, who has been described as one of the greatest chefs of his time, and did a week's internship at his Verge's world famous restaurant, Moulin de Mougins, which was also the starting ground for Alain Ducasse, David Bouley and Daniel Boulud. After the week, they offered him a job so Chef Robert went back to South Africa, handed in his notice, packed his bags and two months later he was a junior chef at one of the world's most famous establishments.

"I wasn't intending to stay for long. I couldn't speak a word of French and couldn't even pronounce the names of the dishes I was cooking. But I drank their coffee, smoked the Gauloises, put the beret on, indulged in their culture – in short, I started to live the French life. Only then could I really expect to be able to cook their food. By the time I left six years later,

I spoke French fluently and hardly ever spoke any English. I said it like I heard it rather than learn through schools."

Chef Robert progressed his way through two and three Michelin Star restaurants. He parted company with Verge and went to Strasbourg to work at Au Crocodile and from there to Paris where he worked for Joel Robuchon (who was named "Chef of the Century" by the Guide Gault Millau in 1989) at Le Jamin, a three Michelin star restaurant, then L'Avenue where Robuchon was a consultant and from there he came to London. Chef Robert knew Gordon Ramsey who introduced him to Marco Pierre White and within a year he was Marco's head chef at Marco Pierre White, The Restaurant and then at the Oak Room. And this was where he met JC.

JC is 100% French – with all that entails; a passion for food, wine and life. He began his journey at one of the finest catering schools in France; one that was considered so good everyone left with a job. JC was given first choice of all the jobs the school had open to them and, not ready for big city life just then, he chose La Pyramide, a three Michelin star restaurant in Vienne. (Talk about starting at the top!) He quickly realised that to progress in the industry, he needed to speak English – he jokes that he is still learning today. He saw a job advertised to work in Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in the days when an application meant writing a letter, posting it and biting your nails until you received a reply weeks or even months later. JC got the job and moved to England. His job was as a commis sommelier of which there were two – but bizarrely no chef sommelier.



“First getting into a 3 Michelin star establishment is the hard bit. But it’s a circuit, a club. Once you are in all the doors open. The club is full of characters. At Le Manoir one of the French waiters was someone I had never met but I knew of him because he had always preceded me in jobs. He was the first of us to work with Marco – and introduced me. Marco asked me what I was earning; I replied £70 a week. There and then he offered me £170. No prizes for guessing what I did!”

JC began working with Marco in Harveys where he started off life as sommelier and was very quickly offered the job of manager.

In true JC style he says;

“I couldn’t speak English so I thought ‘why not?’ and took the job!”

JC was there for four years and describes the time there as “intense” (I will leave it to you to determine why!) and eventually he decided he wanted to return home to France where he opened his own restaurant in the middle of nowhere in Burgundy. Needless to say he got bored so in 1998 he returned to both London and to Marco.

After the Oak Room, Chef Robert felt he couldn’t go back to work. Like so many chefs who live polarised lives working the times others are socialising, he felt burnt out. He says he didn’t have the time to enjoy life. He decided to take two years out but even whilst supposedly resting, he helped with the opening of a restaurant in Cape Town which he describes as more fun than work. It was in Camps Bay – the Mayfair of Cape Town and Chef Robert tells us cooking steak and kidney pie in April for Cape Town’s most rich and famous did not feel like work but was just enjoyable and a million miles from London life as a chef. Like JC he eventually missed London and came back, working at first in a private club as he still couldn’t face getting back into the rat race. He says it has taken him to now to get rid of what he describes as “post traumatic stress” of “living in other people’s fantasies. You are exposed, you are naked, vulnerable. You are dragged into their lives – which whilst wonderful – leaves no time to live your own.”

For JC, life after the Oak Room continued with Marco. He opened the Belvedere in Holland Park, the Parisian Chop House; he also did a lot of trouble shooting for Marco. JC describes himself as a firefighter who is far better at responding than he is organising.

It was only a matter of time before JC would want to run his own business again and when that time was right he set up L’Absinthe in Primrose Hill which he ran very successfully for 11 years. It was a 65 seat restaurant and with two sittings a day it all got too big and too much – especially for a self described control freak like JC.

Which brings us to today. After such illustrious journeys, both men coincidentally found themselves

living in Crouch End, both of them separately plotting their next move.

For Chef Robert, having a tiny interactive front and back restaurant with a community feel had always been his dream. So he decided to go for it. He rang JC one Friday night and told him he was setting up a small restaurant and asked for his help with the wine list. They met on Monday and by the end of the meeting, JC was a co-owner. It wasn’t planned – as is the way with most of the best things in life.

You can see that both the men are passionate about the restaurant. To fund it, they set up a crowdfunder. They raised the target in 4 days and doubled it in a month. With the rest coming from their own savings, the project had the green light.

“It’s not often we get to eat 3 Michelin Star quality food in such a relaxed and convivial environment and at very affordable prices.”

It’s not just the food in the restaurant that is home made with their own fair hands. They bought table legs and reconditioned them. They bought a big solid plank of wood, sanded it, cut it and made table tops. They found the original Oak Room flatware on eBay and supplemented it with specially made plates featuring different illustrations of their logo. Chef Robert even drew the logo himself. They even clad the walls and built the kitchen themselves.

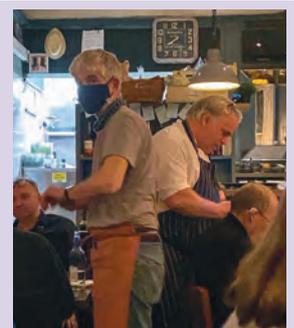
It is nothing short of a labour of love. Needless to say, this restaurant is always packed out. But I urge you to do what you can to get a table. It’s not often we get to eat 3 Michelin Star quality food in such a relaxed and convivial environment and at very affordable prices.

Rene Redzepi, the famous Danish Chef from Noma once said “Fine dining is an occasional treat for most people”. Les 2 Garçons have made it something that can be far, far more regular. From the Oak Room to Crouch End, we can all be very grateful that these two loveable and genius “nuts” stood their ground.

**Les 2 Garçons,
143b Crouch Hill, London N8 9QH
020 8347 9834 www.les2garconsbistro.com**

Opening hours

Wednesday	5:30–9:30pm
Thursday	5:30–9:30pm
Friday	5:30–9:30pm
Saturday	12:30–3pm, 5:30–9:30pm
Sunday	Closed
Monday	Closed
Tuesday	5:30–9:30pm



'LEVELLING UP' – GET SET FOR CHANGE

By Joel Leigh

Taking a look at how the Government's plan for levelling up will influence the UK car industry and national demand for electric vehicles.

Following the recent announcement by 'Levelling Up' Secretary Michael Gove, the long-awaited details of the Conservative's new scheme to 'shift both money and power into the hands of working people' is being heralded as the 'biggest shift of power from Whitehall to local leaders in modern times'. A key part of the 2019 Party manifesto, Gove announced the Government's bold and wide-reaching commitment to achieve the entire twelve-point plan, which seeks to transform the UK by spreading prosperity and opportunity to all four corners of the home nations, by 2030.

But how is it likely to influence the UK car industry, and how big a role will the sector play in the intended national transformation?

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) estimate that the automotive industry as a whole contributes £15 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy and is also the largest exporter of goods at £42 billion. Further, that 180,000 people are directly employed in car manufacturing and another 680,000 in the wider sector, with demonstrated industry strengths including innovation, engineering excellence, product diversity and a highly skilled workforce. But globally the picture is fiercely competitive, and major UK players recognise the need to stay ahead of the game to ensure long-term success.

To that end, SMMT had already called on the Government to make good on a series of financial commitments around their pledge to

"The Government has recently committed to investing £100 million in the UK Gigafactory start-up Britishvolt."

'Build Back Better,' the economic growth plan supporting massive investment in science and technology nationwide.

SMMT's 2021 report 'Full Throttle: Driving UK Automotive Competitiveness' suggested the creation of a 'Build Back Better Fund' to support advanced car manufacturing and to revolutionise production lines, lower energy consumption, explore hydrogen technology and extend tax incentives for plug in and ultra-low emission vehicles. Also addressed was the necessity of installing at least 2.3 million charging points nationwide – particularly on-street charge points – to ensure less affluent drivers and less prosperous areas aren't left behind.

Realistically, the UK will need upwards of 60 gigawatt hours (GWh) of Gigafactory capacity annually to produce enough Electric Vehicle (EV) batteries and components to support a car industry of a similar size to the one we have today.

With current annual capacity of less than 2GWh, there is clearly a long way to go, but the Government has recently committed to investing £100 million in the UK





Gigafactory start-up Britishvolt, through its Automotive Transformation Fund. This multi-billion-pound project will create up to 8,000 jobs at the site of an ex-coal yard in Blyth, Northumberland and the new company expects to boost capacity by 30GWh per year. Boris Johnson commented that the location of the new factory was 'a strong testament to the skilled workers of the North East and the UK's place at the helm of the global green industrial revolution'.

Britishvolt is one of two major UK battery manufacturing projects to have secured funding in recent months, the other involving the expansion of an existing but smaller scale plant in Sunderland that currently supplies batteries for Nissan Leaf production. Currently, local authorities in the West Midlands and Somerset are actively pitching for two more Gigafactories.

It will be hoped that such initiatives will make progress at levelling up the North-South divide in terms of EV ownership; whilst 1 in 40 drivers in London have switched to electric or hybrid vehicles, the figure is only 1 in 150 in the North East, with consumer reluctance largely explicable by the absence of suitable and affordable public charging points. Recent data indicates the ratio of EVs to public chargers stands at just 1 in 52 in the North of England, compared to 1 in 30 in the South, in part because many local authorities outside of London lack the expertise/financial resources to plan/install the necessary charging infrastructure.

More recently SMMT have urged the Government to create a new Office of Charging ('Ofcharge') to

"Ultimately people in less prosperous areas will not embrace EV ownership until such cars are more affordable."

function primarily as an industry watchdog, but with additional responsibility for enforcing legal mandates to ensure the installation of nationwide charging points and administering ring-fenced funding to help local authorities to pay for new charging infrastructure.

Such initiatives make an obvious and coherent contribution to the levelling up plan, which seeks to 'unlock the potential of people and places across the UK', but ultimately people in less prosperous areas will not embrace EV ownership until such cars are more affordable to buy and maintain, and regular use is supported by an effective national charging network, neither of which is currently the case.

Overall, policymakers have dreamed up an impressive and forward-thinking plan for tackling pertinent issues in British politics today, in particular the huge social inequalities thrown into the spotlight because of COVID-19, but for this 'moral, social and economic catalyst for delivering change' not to be self-limiting, 'Levelling Up' must become more than just the latest Boris buzzword.

Joel Leigh is the motoring correspondent of City Solicitor and a Partner at Howard Kennedy LLP

THE LAST WORD

DID YOU KNOW?

The Audacious Victorian Railway Revolution

Plans to 'level up' the UK in the 21st century are underpinned by multi-billion pound investments in railways. From HS2, Northern Powerhouse Rail and the East-West Link are the big beasts. But there are also a host of smaller-scale but locally impactful railway infrastructure projects across the country. But as big as these investments are, they pale in comparison to the railway mania that engulfed Victorian Britain.

The creation of the UK railway network in the nineteenth century saw the equivalent of billions, if not trillions, of pounds invested in infrastructure. In five years alone, 5,000 miles of track were laid as the nation succumbed to an obsession with rail. As with any such boom, there were winners who would walk away with immense fortunes and, in some cases, bring about big changes to society.

Robert Stephenson was one of the pioneers of the railway. Along with his father, George Stephenson, he was the engineer responsible for designing the Rocket, the locomotive that famously won the trials to decide the best engine for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway.

Already instrumental in Britain's first timetabled passenger railway, he would become a powerful force behind the UK's most important line – the London and Birmingham Railway. His annual salary as chief engineer would eventually reach £2,000 – an economic status equivalent to several million pounds in today's money – placing him firmly in the league of today's best-remunerated bankers and executives.

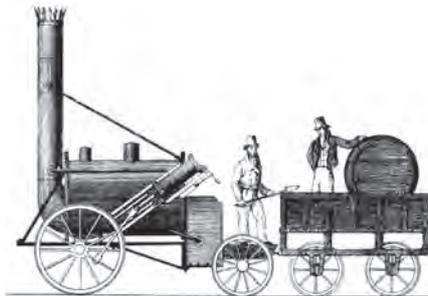
After a lifetime helping to design, build and ultimately finance the nation's railways, Stephenson had amassed a personal fortune of £400,000 – giving him an economic power equivalent to over £700 million in today's money.

You didn't have to be the chief engineer or owner of the railway to make a fortune. Thomas Brassey would go on to become one of the greatest, most efficient and richest of the railway subcontractors. Brassey's work dated back to some of the earliest railways, when he completed the Penkridge viaduct in Staffordshire for the Grand Junction Railway.

His expertise saw his company expand – both around the world and to projects outside of railway building. By the time of his death in 1870 his estate was valued at over £5 million (some £3.6 billion in today's money), making him, in the words of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB), 'one of the wealthiest of the self-made Victorians'.

Not everyone walked away from the railway game with their riches intact. In a chaotic age of speculation, boom and bust, whole fortunes could be lost dizzyingly quickly. George Hudson was one of the towering figures of the railway age, the so-called Railway King, whose entry at the ODNB describes him as a railway promoter and fraudster. The latter of these descriptors gives a clue as to his fate.

As one of the first investors in the early railways, Hudson extended his empire from his base in York. His influence in this area helps explain York's future



as one of the key railway towns in the UK. By the mid-1840s, Hudson's companies' controlled over a quarter of the railways then built in England'.

The extent of his ambitions was revealed in 1846, when his agents submitted plans for thirty-two parliamentary bills for railway projects costing a total of £10,000,000. This represents an economic cost in today's terms of over £25 billion (significantly more than Crossrail).

The whole railway empire began to unravel at the end of the 1840s and, by 1859, Hudson was forced to flee for France to escape creditors. He came back in 1865 to fight for a parliamentary seat in the general election but was arrested on account of his debts and was imprisoned in York for three months. He never quite plumbed the depths of penury, but he had fallen from the heights of influence, power and wealth to the cell of a debtors' prison.

Another towering figure of the railway age who made and lost a fortune was Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Brunel's engineering genius was understood and admired in his lifetime, and remains a potent symbol of the Victorian age. But his finances never recovered from his commitment to the SS Great Eastern.

Still, Brunel's legacy was never tarnished and he had become a hero to the British. He is commemorated in statues, in educational establishments (Brunel University) and in a starring role in the opening



ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games. But most of all, he is remembered in the continued use and appreciation of his iconic constructions. In 2002, he was voted the second greatest Briton in the BBC poll that saw Churchill take the top spot.

Not all the railway fortunes came from laying track and running trains. William Henry Smith opened his first newspaper stand in 1848 at Euston Station. By 1850, the firm had expanded greatly with its eponymous stalls being serviced by depots in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. Just 15 years after opening their first stand, Smith had 500 newsagents and stalls across the country.

W H Smith would continue to grow with the railways, eventually branching out and taking on the high street. The business would branch out from merely selling newspapers and started selling books and other essentials to cater to the travelling public.

Realising that the demand for books was limited by the high price of hardbacks, Smith started selling cheaper editions nicknamed 'yellowbacks'. These were cheap reprints of books that were no longer subject to copyright. They were joined by 'traveller's library' editions published by Longmans.

Another businessman who took advantage of the railway network was Thomas Cook. Thomas Cook was, in many ways, an unlikely pioneer or corporate titan. He was a Baptist minister and devoted temperance campaigner. His brush with business came from realising that the spare capacity of the railways could be exploited for cheap excursions.

The first publicly advertised Thomas Cook excursion took 540 temperance campaigners from Leicester to Loughborough to attend a temperance rally. At a shilling a head, it was not yet the heady stuff of business success, but it was a start. Cook's real break came from the Great Exhibition in 1848, when Cook's arranged for up to 165,000 people to visit London.

By the 1880s, Thomas Cook had become a ubiquitous presence facilitating travel throughout the world. Its logistical capabilities were so renowned that the company was asked to supply the Gordon Relief Expedition to rescue General Gordon from Khartoum.

This article was provided courtesy of Ian Chapman-Curry, Principal Associate at Gowling WLG and host of the Almost History podcast.

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