

SPRING 2021  
#111 THE OPPORTUNITY ISSUE

# CitySolicitor

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CITY OF LONDON SOLICITORS' COMPANY AND THE CITY OF LONDON LAW SOCIETY



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MILTON BERLE

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## looking at the world of business



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non-sequitur

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Did you know?.....



## editor's letter



WELCOME TO OUR FIRST EDITION OF 2021.  
AS SPRING BECKONS AND THE CLOCKS  
GET READY TO SPRING FORWARD,  
HOPEFULLY WE CAN ALL BEGIN TO  
ANTICIPATE LIGHTER AND BRIGHTER  
DAYS IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

The past 12 months have been challenging beyond anything we could have ever imagined, but, as with most situations we find ourselves in, there are always positives as well as negatives.

So, in this issue we look at how businesses reinvented themselves to deal with the pandemic – and prospered as a result.

We also talk to some lawyers who have also reinvented themselves and are now in completely different businesses and careers.

We humans have phenomenal resilience and we find opportunities in even the darkest of places. With its theme of OPPORTUNITY, this issue pays tribute to that.

We hope you will find inspiration from the stories our interviewees shared – and we look forward to receiving your feedback.

And, may I personally take this opportunity to wish us all a much happier, safer and more “normal” rest of the year with the hope that the long winter is finally behind us.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "P. Henson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Philip Henson**

Editor


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*“We humans have phenomenal  
resilience and we find opportunities  
in even the darkest of places.”*

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# REDUNDANCIES IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION –

*a message of hope  
and opportunity*



*Our Editor, Philip Henson,  
Head of Employment at  
ebl miller rosenfalck, offers  
practical tips, and a  
message of hope, for those  
members of the legal  
profession whose roles may  
be at risk of redundancy in  
these uncertain times.*

During the recession of 2008, specific practice areas of the legal profession felt the brunt of the downturn – notably property lawyers and some corporate lawyers. Back then, law firms and in-house teams of all sizes reviewed their capabilities to see where they could save costs and they reorganised their teams accordingly. Those reorganisations impacted solicitors and support staff, but they also impacted the talented graduates who are the next generation of solicitors – many of whom were incentivised to start their training contracts at a later date.

The legal profession is seeing similar trends amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, apart from property lawyers who are currently in high demand due to the reduction in the rates of Stamp Duty Land Tax (SDLT) which have applied for residential properties purchased from 8 July 2020. Those reduced rates are in force until 31 March

*“Remember that if your role is  
made redundant then it is not a  
reflection on you as a solicitor.”*

2021 – although there will no doubt be pressure to extend the current scheme, especially as some lenders have been inundated with mortgage applications.

If your role is placed at risk of redundancy then I hope that the pointers in this note are of practical help, and also offer you some comfort.

**This is not your fault.** Remember that if your role is made redundant then it is not a reflection on you as a solicitor. Sometimes work dries up in certain areas as clients seek to reduce legal spend. Remember that property lawyers were in very high demand after the UK came out of 2008 recession. I consider it likely that after the impact of COVID and the uncertainty of Brexit have been absorbed then there will be a surge in demand for legal services, in particular for corporate/commercial lawyers.

**Seek professional support.** It will be a stressful time, and there are kind and trained professionals who can help you. The excellent charity, LawCare, is a charity which is set up to help lawyers. LawCare operates a helpline (0800 279 6888), which is open Monday – Friday 9am–5.30pm, and they have a live chat Monday & Wednesday 1.15–5.30pm, Thursday 9am–1.15pm.



*“Consider asking peers for recommendations on your LinkedIn profile and giving recommendations to others.”*

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**Review if any financial support might be available.**

LawCare have put together a helpful resource which lists sources of potential help.

**Update your CV and your LinkedIn profile.** Ensure that your CV and your LinkedIn profile reflects your practical experience.

**Ask for recommendations.** Consider asking peers for recommendations on your LinkedIn profile and giving recommendations to others.

**Network with your peers.** This can be difficult in the current climate, but there are online events happening all the time. Sign up and engage.

**Reach out to contacts.** Don't be shy in reaching out to contacts to explore if there are any active opportunities that might be relevant to your experience and consider your USP's and where you can add value.

**Ask colleagues and mentors for help.** Often asking “who do you know who needs...” can be powerful. Seeking another role by yourself can be challenging, if you have support from others who are keeping a look out, or ear to the ground, then it can be very helpful.

**Consider changing disciplines.** You will have spent years developing your skills in your chosen area of practice, and I don't want to put you off pursuing that, and it is not my intention to patronise readers by saying that this is something that you should definitely do. However, I recall that after 2008 there was an increase in personal injury lawyers retraining (or some simply rebranding themselves) as employment lawyers. Some of those have gone on to have stellar careers, especially those who applied their established litigation knowledge and experience to

High Court litigation in the employment context (such as breach of restrictive covenants); or where they have pivoted to Health and Safety law. Changing discipline at any time is daunting and challenging, but for some it might be worth looking into. Consider researching which are the growth areas of practice and whether it is possible to segue to that discipline.

**Consider learning non-legal skills.** There are lots of course providers out there. Coursera offers a variety of free courses from leading institutions.

**Consider setting up your own legal business.**

The SRA has published a helpful guidance note on preparing to become a sole practitioner or SRA regulated freelance solicitor. You could also make the transition to setting up your own firm with current or former colleagues (please check your contracts, and seek advice before doing so), as happened after 2008, when some solicitors whose roles were made redundant made the seamless transition to business owners.

## Practical Tips

**Check your contract** to see what your entitlements are in respect of notice pay, accrued holiday, bonuses, what happens to your benefits etc.

**Calculate your statutory redundancy pay.** If you have worked for your firm, or in-house employer, for 2 years or more then you will be entitled to a statutory redundancy payment. The government has developed a redundancy calculator, which is easy to use to help work out your statutory entitlement.

**Negotiate the terms.** You can do this yourself, or you can engage an employment lawyer to negotiate the terms for you.

The amount of legal costs will be a concern, and whilst it's usual for an employer to offer a contribution towards an employee's legal costs if they are asked to enter into a settlement agreement, that is often not enough to cover all the costs.

**Explore all of your options.** Maybe a better opportunity will present itself from what initially could seem like a blow.





# A DIFFERENT CAREER PATH – *pipe dream or a real opportunity?*



**However much we love what we do, which one of us can honestly say we have not sometimes day dreamed about a completely different way of life?**

For most of us it remains a dream but for some it becomes reality. Maybe circumstance steps in. Maybe courage takes over. Whatever the push, some grab the opportunity to change their lives.

And far from feeling our time in law was wasted, we realise just how useful such a foundation is in other aspects of our lives and our work.

For many the shift from studying law or being in the profession to something different has led to great heights – Kamala Harris is one current shining example.

We talk to a handful of lawyers who have been bold and expanded their horizons into a very eclectic and fascinating mix of industries. Their joy and satisfaction in their new found roles is an inspiration to all of us who are contemplating walking a different road.

# GUARANTEED TO MAKE YOU HUNGRY



Who doesn't love great food? The prospect of a culinary treat was certainly one of the pleasures that helped us get through the trials of the various lockdowns. Whilst staying at home, day in day out, meant endless cooking, getting a delivery from one of our favourite restaurants provided a well earned reprieve. But we are also seeing a new opportunity spring up and flourish. Getting deliveries of boxes of ingredients and prepped food with instructions on how to cook it – so allowing us to have restaurant quality food that we have actually made ourselves.

**Makes Miso Hungry** is one such business. They deliver authentic Japanese food – but with a modern twist. The boxes contain delicious and unusual ingredients – some partially prepared – with instructions as to how to cook them to perfection. Their unagi box got a mention in TimeOut Magazine's Best Dishes of 2020 as selected by chefs in December.

**Yoko Nakada** set up **Makes Miso Hungry** after spending a decade as a lawyer specialising in advising Japanese businesses on a large variety of issues such as inbound M&A, employment, immigration and commercial property. This made her somewhat of an unconventional lawyer



as she did not have to knuckle down to a particular niche but dealt with a broad portfolio of subjects. Yoko comes from quite an academic background, her father was also a lawyer and she believes her education and nurture led her to her initial career path. Spending time at Clifford Chance on the "take your daughter to the office" days left her impressed with the Canary Wharf offices, the bedroom pods, the canteen – she says she was "starstruck" and defined success as what she was seeing – but admits to not really seeing the reality behind the sparkle. She recalls that even from an early age she was taught at home how to construct her argument – whether it was about getting her ears pierced or being taken to her favourite restaurant – so becoming a lawyer was something of an inevitability.

But after ten years she was ready to do something else. Yoko has always loved cooking and sees herself as a great foodie. When her family first came to London from Japan, there were no Japanese restaurants around (hard to imagine as they are so fashionable now) and it was even hard to get the necessary ingredients to make the food at home so Yoko recalls taking extra suitcases when they visited Japan for holidays to stock up. Yoko always nagged her mum, who was a fantastic cook, to open a restaurant but she was more a traditional mum rather than an entrepreneur. Yoko, on the other hand, began trading rice balls at school for things she wanted and then, while at university, she began making and selling rice balls in packs of three.

"Today we are living in a world where people see just how sexy and delicious Japanese food is. From chains like Wasabi to high end restaurants like Roka and Zuma, it is a cuisine that people now really understand and appreciate.

I feel guilty when I look at the traumas and challenges the pandemic has caused people but I can genuinely say it proved to be my hero. In my legal profession, I worked round the clock, weekends, evenings and when we went into lockdown things did quieten down and being at home gave me time to speak to myself in a way I had not had the time to before. I realised I wasn't enjoying my work quite as much as I used to and it wasn't allowing me to be the fun, bubbly person I really am – I didn't feel I was being authentic.

Simultaneously to these thoughts running through my head, friends were asking me where they could get things like gyoza wrappers in lockdown, or they would text from Asian stores asking me to FaceTime them to help them pick the right ingredients to make sushi. I was asked to do a Zoom class for my team on Japanese cooking. I looked at why – even though people love Japanese food, they hardly ever make it at home and concluded they don't know where to get the ingredients from or they know where the shop is but have no idea what the labels are saying or they buy hundreds of pounds worth of stuff to make one thing and then don't know what to do with the remainder of the stuff after so it just sits on shelves.



The idea of “**Makes Miso Hungry**” came to me naturally from all of this that was going on around me. I thought instead of just emailing recipes to friends why don’t I just pack it up, allow people the experience but I will take care of all the logistics. And it all came together over a very short period of time. I started sending out boxes in April to friends – got their feedback, analysed it, improved my product and then did all the compliance stuff. As the numbers picked up, I handed in my notice.

I haven’t looked back. Week on week the business has grown and I am fortunate enough to have loyal customers who

order from me frequently. I didn’t go into this naively, but I believe you have to be a certain type of character to set up your own business – I’m working even harder and longer hours than I even did as a lawyer. My last menu attracted so many orders I had to do two all-nighters a week. The product is not just supplying the ingredients for people to cook themselves – I make the dipping sauce, I pre-marinate the fish, the chive is pre-chopped – I want the experience to be as relaxing and enjoyable for my customers and because the ingredients may be somewhat intimidating to beginner Japanese cooks, I do as much as I can myself whilst still leaving enough so that my customers feel proud to have cooked the meal themselves.”

Yoko has already had to take on a packer and an assistant chef as well as drivers to deliver her boxes around London and she also used DPD for nationwide delivery.

The name **Makes Miso Hungry** stems from Yoko’s old Instagram account where, for years, she recommended restaurants. The logo was designed by Yoko’s sister, who is an architect.

Her customers come through Instagram and newsletters but primarily through word

of mouth and some great collaborations. Masterchef Professionals 2019 winner, Sven Hanson-Britt, reached out to Yoko wanting the eel box set. After eating it, he said it was one of the best Japanese meals he had ever tasted and asked if they could work on something together. He made some beautiful Japanese sakura leaf biscuits which perfectly aligned to her brand.

Yoko never compromises on quality. She personally drives in her Zipcar at midnight to New Covent Garden for vegetables, she is at Billingsgate by 4am to choose the fish and finishes off at Smithfield to source her meat. Foodies love being a part of that journey but without having to get up themselves to do it – this has certainly attracted customers to her.

**Makes Miso Hungry** really does tick all the boxes; superb quality ingredients prepared and delivered (in exquisite packaging) with just enough left for you to do to feel you are a superb Asian chef – and then you get to delight in the fruits of your (not too great) labour. Menus change monthly so it can become a regular rather than one-off treat. This definitely is a recipe for success.

**makesmisoHungry.com**  
**Instagram #makesmisoHungry**

## MADE ME SO HAPPY!

### Our journalist attempts Japanese cooking at home

I love cooking. I have tried and succeeded in some pretty complex stuff where it has taken me days on end to source the various ingredients, prep them and then I have been known to spend the entire weekend cooking for a dinner party. But I have always steered clear of Japanese because, even though I love it, it seems to be a step too far. I live in a part of London where many Japanese choose to reside so there are lots of Japanese grocers in my vicinity. I have occasionally ventured in and looked at all the packages and their very foreign typography with both desire and fear. Ditto the various fresh produce. They look amazing but I have no idea what they are, let alone what to do with them.

I was, therefore, both excited and nervous when my **Makes Miso Hungry** box arrived. Yoko said it would be simple to make – but a Japanese person’s idea of simple might not equate with a Greek’s!

As you would expect from anything Japanese, the delivery was efficient and the packaging was elegantly simple with clean, uncluttered design. I received an email in the morning telling me precisely the time my box would arrive – 6pm – and there it was, precisely on the dot, perfect to cook for dinner. (I had taken chicken out of the freezer in case I messed it up).



My box was the Salmon Aburi-Don with Yuzu Ponzu dressing. Tentatively, I opened the box not sure how many hours of cooking lay ahead of me. Inside, were two GORGEOUS fillets of salmon. And I do mean gorgeous! I am super fussy about the quality of food and always go to a great fishmonger to purchase my fish but this looked in a different league. They were described as “sashimi grade” – chosen near to the belly of the fish to ensure the best marbling. The fish was accompanied by lots of little pots – all perfectly labelled so I knew precisely what they were. The contents of these pots included crispy onion, chives, nori (seaweed) – all of which were prepped and ready to simply top onto my food. There was rice that was measured out for two people, miso soup with wakame and – the star of the show for me – some ikura – salmon roe sourced from Hokkaido just before the breeding season which gives it a “perfectly taut outer skin” and is divinely soft inside.

I know all this stuff because inside my box was a leaflet filled with info about the ingredients and

which also explained to me – with both words and pictures – exactly what I had to do.

The rice had to simmer for 18 minutes but the rest took less than five. Nothing could have been more simple or straightforward to cook and put together.

But the results looked – and tasted – as though I had slaved away for hours. It was just delicious – and looked amazing with all the various toppings. My only criticism – it disappeared as quickly as it took to make – in no time at all! I think I am going to be even more adventurous next time and try the eel.



This really is an incredible service – the very best ingredients, all perfectly prepped and with great instructions. I’m delighted I can now add Japanese food to my repertoire. This whole experience definitely made me so happy – and I’m hungry for the next one!





# Finding an ALTERNATIVE WAY

**Olivia Ferdi** began her career as a lawyer with Allen Overy LLP. As a trainee, she was sent on secondment to GlaxoSmithKline and this was where she initially discovered how much she enjoyed the client facing exposure. At the time, 2015, there were a lot of exciting tech companies in the UK – and with tech being something Olivia was very interested in in her personal life, this led to her deciding she wanted to explore a role where she could combine being client facing with that passion for tech and also connect the business with the legal advice she could give. She approached one such company that she really wanted to work for – Farfetch – an online tech marketplace which brings together thousand of boutiques – so a tiny boutique in Mallorca, say, can put their goods on this platform and connect with a consumer in Philadelphia or Greece or, indeed, anywhere in the world. Farfetch fitted all of Olivia's requirements – including satisfying her interest in fashion. Her role at Allen Overy LLP was as a corporate M&A associate but she joined Farfetch in their Intellectual Property function and so started learning about a whole new discipline of law.

"Farfetch really gave me a taste for business. You have to be extremely commercial to work at a hyper growth company – and Farfetch was considered a unicorn, on track to be a billion dollar company very quickly, hoping to reach an IPO within 10 years of its existence. It was all very exciting but it meant you were battling the business's high demands for growth."

Olivia worked with Farfetch for several years and started to work very closely with the commercial side of the business, particularly when they launched a corporate accelerator. They would invite startups to pitch an idea that may support the wider ecosystem of a tech platform. Farfetch would take a minority investment in these businesses and they would come onboard for a 12 week mentorship programme. Olivia found she loved that side of her work and thought she might do something in the Venture Capital space working with such startups as she loved giving advice at the coalface.

Olivia was considering how to make that move when, in 2018, her (now) husband was in an accident while playing football and had a knee injury. This was a mere seven weeks before their planned wedding and he was told he would not be able to walk without crutches on the day – or to dance. The couple were keen to try anything that might help and his brother who lived in New York recommended CBD oil. Olivia and her husband had never even heard of it but tried it and it gave him an amazing recovery experience – and he danced non-stop at the wedding. Olivia says they were so amazed at this wonder product they started to thoroughly research it.

"At the time, 2018, there were no CBD products in the UK really that were premium or accessible. What was available had really scary branding and messaging, tasted awful and definitely was not in a format you could have, say, in your law firm or with your friends without getting some very odd looks! We realised there was a real opportunity here. One of the key benefits of CBD is that it can help with daily anxiety. We discovered that as well as its benefits with helping injury recoveries, chronic pain, inflammation and even cancer, it is also great dealing with everyday stresses, relaxation, helping you unwind and sleep. It is completely game changing. The World Health Organisation has said there are no addictive qualities and no overdose risks involved so you can just dose up. Whilst we loved the product, there was nothing available that fitted into our lifestyle so from the beginning of 2019 we decided to launch our own range.

I did this initially while still continuing at Farfetch but our company TRIP got so much traction so quickly, that I gave up my job to run it full time. It was never something I had planned – although from those early days at GlaxoSmithKline, I did discover I had a real interest in bio-sciences as well as in healthy living and wellbeing – but I never thought I would be working with my husband, never mind running a business that is cannabis related."

TRIP sells a very upmarket and stylish range of drinks and oils that are CBD infused – and which work wonders. Both she and her husband work full time in the business now. Olivia's husband – an ex Goldmans man – runs the financial side. Olivia then convinced her brother in law to quit his marketing job at L'Oréal to run that function within TRIP and her sister in law runs Sales.

TRIP launched in August 2019 and was immediately stocked by Selfridges, Planet Organic, Fenwicks, Harvey Nichols and Liberty. They are now stocked in the Soho House Group as well and are expanding internationally. They are already present in five European markets and have a USA launch this year. TRIP also sells directly online which has obviously helped them through the retail closures of the various lockdowns.

Whilst Olivia is no longer formally practising law, the global cannabis space is an extremely complex and interesting legal and regulatory environment to be operating in, which she finds very exciting.

Consumers who have tried the products have loved the experience and appreciated the benefits so through word of mouth sales have snowballed and the business is now a firmly established success – proving (in more ways than one) that an alternative way can be a better way.

[www.drink-trip.com](http://www.drink-trip.com)



## TAKING THE PRODUCTS ON A ROAD TRIP Our journalist samples some of TRIP's products.

I have to be honest. I was not 100% looking forward to sampling a TRIP drink. Having had severe back issues in the past, I had tried various CPD oils – and found the taste just too awful to bear – so the prospect of an entire drink was none too appetising for me.

This was somehow made less daunting by the stunning packaging which, being a fervent lover of great graphic design, really fitted in with my sense of good aesthetics. The tins were really chic – beautiful pastels, great typography and clearly told me the entire drink would only add 15 calories to my daily total – and contained zero sugar. It also explained (with very cute icons) how, as well as containing 15mgs of premium CBD, my drink would also provide my body with the natural botanicals ginseng, l-theanine, turmeric and chamomile.

I could put the tasting off no longer – so to sweeten the experience, I poured the lightly sparkling Peach Ginger variety I chose into a beautiful wine glass.

One sip and I was hooked. This really is a delicious drink. For me, the punchy kick of the ginger coupled with, more subtle but equally gorgeous, summery peach undertones really tickled my tastebuds. Fortunately, there was no hint of the dreaded CBD taste or smell I had experienced with other products.

I thoroughly enjoyed the drink – it felt sophisticated and a great alternative to a glass of wine.

The icing on the cake? I slept a solid nine hours the night I sampled it. Unheard of for me.

I'm definitely looking forward to trying the Elderflower Mint one tonight. And the Lemon Basil tomorrow!



# The ART of CHANCE



**Marian Ang** studied Art History at the Courtauld Institute so perhaps the writing was always on the wall that she would eventually end up with an art related job. But circumstances made the road there a somewhat convoluted one. At the end of her first year of study, in 2008, the financial crash happened and a more stable career path suddenly became more appealing.

Having flirted with the possibility of a career in law before, Marian now considered it more seriously and after doing various vacation schemes with different law firms, was offered – and accepted – a training contract with Olswang LLP.

In 2012, Olswang offered trainees the opportunity to take a year off and Marian grabbed the opportunity and went to UNESCO to work on their Cultural Heritage Protection Programme in Beijing.

When she returned she completed her training contract and towards the end of the two years, Olswang were gearing up for a merger so there were not many job opportunities open. They recommended Marian to Nabarro LLP and she went there to work in the IP and Commercial Department for around 18 months.

“My boss at the time (a wonderful man by the name of Guy Heath) encouraged my connection to the art world – I worked as a consultant for UNESCO, was a writer for an art law blog, and also lectured at the Institute of Art & Law during my time there.”

Then circumstances came into play again. Marian got engaged to someone working in Hong Kong. The Brexit vote happened at the same time and with more than half of Marian’s work being based on EU law, she thought “the stars were aligned” for her to make a break and move to Hong Kong too.

Marian moved with no job to go to and job hunting was not so easy as, at that time, there were simply not the legal jobs in Hong Kong to match her experience. There was a limited cultural heritage scene there, and art law was not really an established practice.

By chance, she was at a talk and met the Managing Director of Phillips Auctioneers. They chatted over coffee and two weeks later someone in the 20th Century Contemporary Art team resigned and Marian was asked if she would like to come on board.

She has been there ever since.

Marian is a cataloguer – she researches and writes about the artworks as well as talking to clients. She covers around 300 pieces a year now; no mean feat.

When she joined Philips, she started off in administration, which was more legal based – so, for example, she would work on the consignment contracts etc but as opportunities opened up she increasingly worked with the specialist side of the business.

Marian deals with Western and Asian Contemporary art – a lot of young artists – new names – and also big names like Jean Michel Basquiat and Kaws and famous Asian artists like Yayoi Kusama and Yoshitomo Nara; she deals with a whole spectrum of works.

Marian believes her legal training “definitely helped get my foot in the door”.

“Phillips only started in Hong Kong four or five years ago, so they don’t have legal counsel. It was useful to have someone who had that legal background. They weren’t looking for a lawyer per se – but the skills definitely played to my advantage.

But my passion is art not law, so when I moved to my current position, I felt really content. I felt I had come full circle – from where I studied Art History to a role that is solely about art and nothing to do with law at all.

The art scene in Hong Kong is still in its relative infancy – so it’s exciting to be a part of it as it grows and develops. Of course, it’s not London in terms of its access to the arts, but there are so many incredible things happening. M+ is opening this year – which is our equivalent of the Tate Modern – and which is going to be the biggest Asian museum for visual culture. Art is becoming increasingly important here.”

*“Without her legal background, she may not have landed her dream job in the art world.”*

Unsurprisingly, Marian is an art collector herself. What is she personally drawn to?

“I like – and collect – quite a random mix. I have pieces by Gerard Richter and Zao Wou-Ki. But I also collect the conceptual stuff the young artists are making.

My current favourite piece I own is Lee Bae’s Issu du Feu. Bae is a Korean artist who works with charcoal. Arriving in Paris as a young, immigrant artist, he was so poor that he couldn’t afford paints, only a bag of charcoal which went on to become his signature material and a way of connecting to his Korean heritage. I love that blend of Asian and Western influences – and the stories behind the works are fascinating to me.”

Whilst the legal profession was not for Marian, it certainly seems that, without her legal background, she may not have landed her dream job in the art world. Maybe chance really is a fine thing.



Lee Bae’s Issu du Feu

*“The art scene in Hong Kong is still in its relative infancy – so it’s exciting to be a part of it as it grows and develops.”*



# PAYING IT FORWARD

Whilst nobody would question the high calibre of our legal profession, it is also fair to say that its services are not always available to everyone who needs them. It is also true that our rich traditions and heritage – while adding so much, so often – sometimes need to be overhauled to make them more fit for the times we live in. As with most problems, in order to see and deal with them clearly, we often need to step outside to do so.

**Julia Salasky** did her training contract and qualified into the Litigation team at Linklaters LLP. She really enjoyed her time there, “working, with some really smart people, on a lot of banking and derivative type cases”. Whilst on her training contract, she was sent on secondment to the Mary Ward Legal Centre, an organisation which helps vulnerable people get legal assistance. This was the polar opposite end of the spectrum from her work within the firm and exposed her to the realities of the struggle so many face trying to access legal services.

Julia had done her Masters in International Relations and one of the reasons she chose to join Linklaters LLP was to get exposure to international work. After she had been qualified a couple of years she took exams to join the UN and worked, firstly, in the Hague at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and then, in Vienna, at the UN Commission on International Trade Law. She worked a lot on a project called Online Dispute Resolution which “did not work too well because there were 150 government lawyers all trying to negotiate a standard in the technology space that would improve the legal experience for clients.”

But this planted a seed that Julia could help do things differently.

“I thought I could make more of an impact on the ground, trying to resolve one of the core difficulties which people face, which is funding. Five years ago I founded a company called CrowdJustice – a crowdfunding platform for legal matters. Over half a million people have donated to thousands of legal matters and millions and millions of pounds have gone towards paying for legal services.



We started to look closely at the business model of law firms. It became clear that there was a great deal of opportunity to streamline the way firms interact with their clients, so that they can deliver their services faster, cheaper and better. My next company, Legl, a legal technology company, was borne out of that realisation coupled with the learnings that came from my time at CrowdJustice. Legl’s objective is that, by using better technology, law firms can have more efficient business models that deliver a better experience for their clients. This is achieved by creating better digital operating models.

Initially, the two businesses may seem very far apart because CrowdJustice is a very socially impactful business, focussed on making a difference in consumers’ lives. But, actually the thing I set out to do at CrowdJustice is to examine the structural barriers in the legal system and that’s precisely what we are doing at Legl.

Traditionally, the way law firms’ business and operating models work and the way they interact with clients is very manual and, therefore, very time consuming – but this time cannot be charged for. This creates cash flow problems, risk and gives clients a bad experience.

From a 21st century perspective, it is obvious that this framework can – and ought – to be digitised. This does not detract from the substantive work that lawyers are doing, in fact it gives them more ability to do just that. This results in a far better experience for clients, it improves cash flow, and it drives revenue by enabling firms to take on more clients. It’s all about attacking the structural problems the business faces from a different perspective and angle.”

Whilst Julia is still involved with CrowdJustice, Legl is now her primary focus and the business she is running day to day. Legl is growing rapidly. It has a staff of around 30 people and is working with about 150 law firms, including many in the top 200. Their no-code tools enable firms to digitise processes such as onboarding, compliance and payments – all the back office processes which are normally done manually and are email, paper or face to face based.

“COVID has seen a sea change in the legal profession in terms of adopting technology. What might have been seen as a ‘nice to have’ pre pandemic, is now considered essential. COVID has been a transformative time for lawyers, things as pedestrian as working from home are normalised now. Obviously, cloud based solutions make this easier – and it is precisely such solutions that we offer. For us as a business, COVID has accelerated our growth because there is a renewed focus on tools that make life simpler.”

With Julia’s background being so firmly in the law not technology, how does she manage to be the head of a software company?

“There’s so much that, in retrospect, I didn’t know about technology and product when I set out. It was a steep learning curve – and I’m still learning.

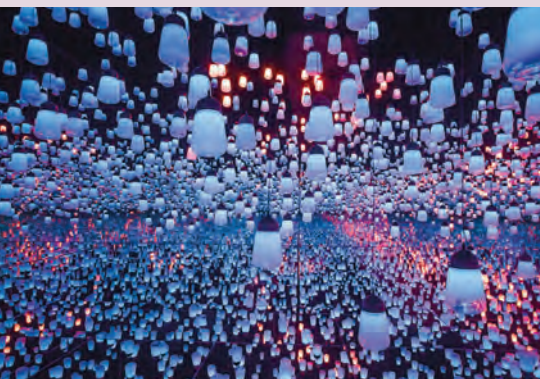
I see technology as something that fundamentally can solve problems – which is what lawyers themselves do. It is logic based, process based and also quite creative.

One of my biggest learnings has been to focus on the problem itself. Our initial response as people – as lawyers particularly – is to say ‘this is the answer’ or ‘we should do it like this’ – but it’s almost always the case that there are five or six – or a million! – ways to solve a problem with technology. So I’ve learned not to jump to the answer but instead to really bottom out the problem, and let people smarter than me figure out what is the best way to design and build to create a solution.

A lot of lawyers – including myself at the beginning – are scared of technology – but increasingly businesses like ours make it hyper-accessible, almost ‘consumerise’ it – so that, for a firm, it should be as simple as using any other online product one uses in normal life.”

Julia says she got a lot out of her time as a lawyer. Now she is paying it forward with the work she is doing at CrowdJustice and Legl, both of which are enriching and transforming the profession for the better.

[www.legl.com](http://www.legl.com)  
[www.crowdjustice.com](http://www.crowdjustice.com)







# FEEDING *the* SOUL

**Michal Seal** completed her training contract at Linklaters LLP but decided very early on in her career that the law was not really for her.

"There were three reasons I decided not to continue being a solicitor. Firstly, I have always wanted to create value. Lawyers generally spend their time mitigating risk. Secondly, at the time, working in a magic circle law firm was a challenging environment for a working mother (although things have now moved on). Thirdly, I simply didn't find the work stimulating, it wasn't well suited to my skill set."

Michal wrote a restaurant recommendation blog with two friends during her time at Linklaters and she very quickly realised that this was her real passion and the food industry was where she wanted her career to move towards – although at that point she had no idea in what capacity. She began networking and stumbled across SSP Group plc, a leading dedicated operator of food and beverage brands in travel locations.

She quickly worked her way up the ladder and after only five years she was made the UK and Ireland Commercial Director, a role she held for two and a half years. Michal enjoys leading a big and dynamic team which is not something she believes she could

have done as a practising lawyer where the work is relatively solitary.

Given the hospitality and travel sectors in which SSP operate have been badly hit as a result of the pandemic, the last 12 months have brought many challenges but Michal persisted in creating value for customers and for shareholders where possible.

In the middle of the pandemic, Michal, keen to take on the next challenge and not being one to shy away from an opportunity, decided to change jobs. She moved to Elior as Marketing and Corporate Communications Director, a contract catering company which is listed on French Stock Exchange. A B2B organisation, Michal seems to have come full circle as a great many of Elior's clients are law firms.

"As a lawyer, one of the most important skills I learned was communication. Linklaters taught me to communicate at a very high level, in a polished and professional way. When I made the transition from law, I very quickly realised that these skills are rarely taught in most industries and it certainly played to my advantage and stood me in good stead to further my career. The other transferable skill is that lawyers are taught how to organise themselves effectively and this has been particularly useful".

Michal believes that even though the food and drink market has been so affected by COVID, it has also presented a massive opportunity.

"There are some very interesting and exciting entrepreneurial individuals who are making the most of the change of dynamic in our industry – and technology is certainly playing a big factor in helping them achieve their plans. Look at the delivery market. It has exploded in the past year and there is enormous potential for it to grow more. We have an untapped opportunity to transform how consumers eat. It is an exciting industry to be in and I am delighted I am a part of it."



*"As a lawyer, one of the most important skills I learned was communication."*



# GLOBAL PANDEMIC — all doom and gloom?

*Or, an opportunity to do things better?*

Whilst we can never underestimate the pain and heartaches that COVID-19 brought with it in so very many aspects of our personal and professional lives, it also presented the opportunity for us to show just how creative, strong, adaptable, determined and smart the human race is.

As individuals, we found ways not just to survive but to communicate, connect and actually have fun – and as workers, we found the inner resources to adapt our businesses to make them relevant and feasible despite all the restrictions – and to give people what they wanted and needed in these dire times.

We talked to 5 very different businesses who not only survived the pandemic but prospered through it.



# Finding benefits IN A PANDEMIC



*“To have come so far so quickly and in such an unstable world is quite an achievement.”*

now to speak to say 20 people a day is completely different from what it was twelve months ago – and that has accelerated my ability to generate income. In my first 3 weeks of trading, I had over a hundred conversations with people which definitely helped to get the ball rolling – and that is something which I could never have achieved if I had started the business in a more normal world. I think people are far more receptive to having a conversation without the ceremony – so the process has been rather delightful. It has meant I can focus on the things I need and want to do rather than wasting time having to jump on a train or a plane.”

Whilst currently Tourle is operating alone, he already is looking at recruiting and says he believes he has made his business “as shock proof as possible”. It is not a highly leveraged business and his risk is minimised. Tourle set up without help from investors. He believes that whilst investors are hungry to find businesses to put money into at the moment, they are not prepared to take gambles without taking a huge slice – and Tourle was not prepared to give that at this moment. Although Tourle, like the rest of us, has been working from home, he has access to offices in the City to move into as and when restrictions allow.

Tourle’s plans for 2021 are to be profitable in Chime’s first year of trading, to grow the business in people terms by bringing in partners and to scale up by getting some significant global clients on the books – which is already happening. He says he sees this year as still being the startup year for Chime and intends by 2022, when clients are secure and happy, to be more concerned with product development in order to bring some exciting and innovative new solutions to the marketplace.

There seems little doubt Tourle will not just meet but surpass his aims – to have come so far so quickly and in such an unstable world is quite an achievement and is an inspiration to see the opportunities that even global disasters can present.

[www.chimeglobalbenefits.com](http://www.chimeglobalbenefits.com)

Leaving a secure and fulfilling full time job to start a new business always takes courage and a leap of faith. But to do it in the middle of a global pandemic could be seen as madness. That is precisely what **David Tourle** has done – and he did it without reservation but with determination and enthusiasm – and has never looked back.

Tourle is a global benefits consultant – which, in layman’s terms, means his business helps other businesses with their employee benefits across multiple countries and jurisdictions. Tourle started with one of the biggest employee benefits organisations, Aon and spent a decade working with multinationals before joining Boston Consulting Group for three years as the Global Benefits Director – then to use Tourle’s own words “in the midst of all this madness I decided to take a leap”.

Tourle believes that rather than this being bad timing it was, on the contrary, the perfect time. He had harboured the desire to set up his own business for around ten years; he watched the market come and go, observed companies being bought and sold and thought on a number of occasions maybe it was right but, personally, was not in a position to do so. Certainly, until the pandemic, Tourle did not consider 2020 as being the year he would go ahead.

What changed his mind?

“It was a calculated risk. With all the chaos and uncertainty that COVID has brought with it, we are witnessing a huge upswing in companies paying more attention than before to employee wellbeing and employee risk. Add to that the shake up that

Brexit has brought – firms thinking about what their international footprint is, new markets opening up, international mobility. These things led me to believe if ever there was a right time to grab the opportunity to set up my own business, then this was it. For me the opportunity collided with personal financial stability and so everything was aligned. Things are so shaky in the economy right now and I am lucky to be operating in an industry and talking about subjects that people want and need help with.”

This went from an idea to a revenue generating business in a matter of months – no mean feat.

Chime Global Benefits was built in a space of 5 weeks and launched in the middle of October 2020 and Tourle describes it as a “fascinating journey.”

Tourle says he always believed that starting up a business would be a huge investment – not just financially but timewise also and when he had considered it in the past assumed he would lose four to six months of income while establishing a network, a framework etc but he has been “bowled over by how easy it has been to do”.

“Setting up the business, finding third parties that can help, building a website – a lot of this has been super easy – but other things have been a nightmare. Getting professional indemnity insurance in these crazy times has been so difficult at one point I thought I would not be able to start trading. The insurance industry has been so shaken by COVID that it is practically impossible now for startups in some sectors to get the insurances they need. But the ability





# How internet shopping **REALLY WORKS**



No sooner does it cross your mind that you really do need a new pair of running shoes and a minute later you are choosing between hundreds that fit the brief, you've ordered and the next morning there they are in your hands leaving you with no excuse not to put them on your feet and start to get fit.

Nothing could be more simple could it? But to make that click such an excellent transactional experience, not just for you but for the seller and the manufacturer, a lot has to happen seamlessly behind the scenes. Obviously, that includes monies being efficiently transferred between all the relevant parties.

Whilst you may never have heard of Banking Circle, the chances are they are at least partly involved in some of those stress-free purchases you have made.

Banking Circle is a FinTech company with a banking licence from the Luxembourg Financial Regulator. Trading for five years, it was set up by two Danes who had the idea of addressing the time and cost barriers of international transactions. And they were particularly concerned about the impact this has on the success of smaller businesses.

The business was originally part owned and incubated by the Danish bank, Saxo Bank. In 2018, the majority shareholding was acquired by one of the world's largest private equity funds, EQT.

The proposition is simply to provide a financial infrastructure that improves the speed, reconciliation and cost of payments processing for cross border transactions. The customer base is financial institutions; banks, payments businesses and FinTechs. Working with Banking Circle, these organisations can offer a faster and more cost effective service to their customers – often SMEs – which still meets all the necessary compliance. Banking Circle can do this because it has created its own financial network to handle the whole process, rather than

relying on the traditional correspondent banking model which adds higher costs and time delays.

The focus is to enable financial inclusion for even the smallest businesses who are, say, trading on Amazon and other marketplaces and to give them the ability to trade more cost effectively and quickly without money getting stuck for days on end. This, in turn, keeps their cash flowing. The business currently has 275+ employees, with its headquarters in Luxembourg, as well as offices in London, Amsterdam and Munich, where primarily the sales function is, and in Copenhagen where the product development mainly takes place.

Soren Skov Mogensen is the Chief Growth Officer of Banking Circle and is responsible for "driving an ambitious but thoughtful growth."

"Banking Circle has grown to become a big commercial success with 155 billion euros flowing through our systems every year. Our clients include Stripe, Alibaba, Paysafe, Natwest and Shopify. But we are not a name that the consumer or the merchant will know. We operate behind the scenes.

When a consumer buys a pair of shoes online, the online transaction is delivered by a payments business who collects the credit card information from the consumer and passes it to the card schemes (typically Visa, Mastercard or AMEX). The card schemes collect the funds from the consumer's account and send the payment to the Payments business bank account held with Banking Circle. The Payments business instructs Banking Circle to settle the funds to their merchants. The consumer never sees us, we simply are the infrastructure operating behind the scenes.

On top of this, we offer other services such as Foreign Exchange, and we are constantly developing new products.

We are driven by the notion that a cross border transaction should not take five days or cost 50 euros. We believe it should take five minutes and cost 50 cents – or even less.

To achieve this goal we wish to create our own direct clearing and settlement access to the largest currencies in the world. We need local licenses so that we can integrate directly to a central bank. This is an audacious mission to be on and completely unparalleled.

Of course, Banking Circle was impacted by COVID – just as any other business has been. People were used to sitting next to each other, travelling all the time to be together. Suddenly everyone was working from home. We are a small family with a strong DNA which is characterised by five words; determination, velocity, ambition, impact and engagement. Then we found we were all away from each other. We had to adapt our ways of working.

Fortunately, we had systems already in place. But our working rhythms changed. We tried to make things as easy as we could for our employees in these difficult circumstances. We introduced a #TimeOut into the day, encouraging people to take a break from work and to go out and get some fresh air/exercise. And we asked our colleagues to take a picture during their break and post it so that the rest of the team could be inspired. We also organised virtual lunches for people to informally chat and eat together. And on Fridays we ran a virtual bar.

Another challenge is that because we are expanding, we have been taking on new employees through COVID. It is important to make them feel integrated and a part of the culture so we welcome them virtually once a month.

But that said, we operate in a market where many of our transactions are based on online purchases and COVID has prompted more and more people to shop online. This has meant we have had record high flows of payments.

For example, when people start buying face masks in huge quantities on online platforms, particularly when they are being shipped from places like Asia, this leads to a high level of activity for us.

Merchants and end consumers may not know us but, with our unique DNA, we believe we will continue to thrive even in these very difficult times."

Next time you press "PAY" on an online purchase, remember how much work has gone into making it happen so easily!

**bankingcircle.com**

# Why 2020 was *a vintage year*

Certain things became rituals in our lockdown lives; helping us get through the challenges, isolation and anxiety. Being kind to ourselves and allowing ourselves treats and luxuries no longer seemed like extravagance but necessity. A glass of delicious white, red or rose certainly was something to relish and savour after a day of working at home and homeschooling with no prospect of a meal at our favourite restaurant or a trip to the theatre to look forward to.

When City Solicitor caught up (on Zoom of course) with corporate lawyer, **Kyle Harmon**, in NW Connecticut, it was minus 9 degrees centigrade there, and he was in the midst of chopping wood and building fires. Unusually, we were not interviewing Harmon about his (highly successful) legal career, but on that very subject of wine – and its lockdown appeal.

Harmon wears more than one hat (and not just to keep warm). As well as his legal career, he is also a partner in Ancestral; wine importers based in Bermondsey who specialise in 100% organic, low intervention, zero additive, biodynamic, sulphite free and totally DELICIOUS natural wines. Two of the three partners of Ancestral are lawyers and were the original founding members of the business in 2016.

Food and wine have been at the heart of Harmon's life story since he was a boy. He grew up in the "hippy food boom of the late 70s and early 80s" with a mother who was involved with the restaurant world and grew her own vegetables. They lived in Southern California; not the fashionable area, more inland, the "breadbasket" and their friends were mainly chefs and their neighbours were primarily farmers – including grape farmers and wine makers.



Harmon feels this hippy style upbringing contributed to him having a DNA that led him to want to be involved with and work with organic and ethical producers. Initially, he began to help the local, smaller natural winemakers to do smarter things with their business. Harmon sees winemakers as artists and feels that the more artistic they are the less likely they are to have the toolkit to think about their business as a business. Whilst he believes some of them to be "extremely savvy", nonetheless he felt that he could provide some structure around what they were doing and by taking a longer outlook, provide some stability in what is otherwise a chaotic industry. It is this ethos that Harmon has carried forward into Ancestral which he describes as being "highly producer-centric" in its approach.

Harmon first saw the market opportunity for natural wines in 2010 whilst living in New York.

"Both in New York City and in San Francisco this budding trend for natural wines was fast growing – but it lacked cohesion. I moved back to London in 2012 and had the same impression of the market, albeit it was much further along at that point. This validation of an earlier trend spot made me realise the opportunity.

From an aesthetic standpoint, people were focussing on the producers which is smart as I have always believed there is an inherent connection between people and the land; with the old way of life – a simpler way. People want to feel in touch with their primal, archetypal self, so to speak.

We knew there were a lot of amazing artisans out there and we saw an opportunity to help them distribute and sell their wines in the UK. Our plan was to give more certainty and stability to the producers so they could make the wines with the confidence that there was a market for them.

We take a hands on approach with our producers so we have our own branded products which we have been involved in since before it was even a grape. We don't just slap labels on bottles – we are there from day one. People think risk is how likely is it you are going to lose something – I take a different view, I think risk is the identification of uncertainty and if you can put some hard parameters around that and quantify it that's great but the uncertainty also affords opportunity if you can embrace it.

That is the view we took at the start of the pandemic; we knew it was going to go on and snowball so we chose to take the long view. One opportunity was that a lot of people were not buying wine from our producers as they normally would have so any time they had extra inventory we took it; we were not scared, we embraced it. It was important for our producers to have certainty – and we wanted to give them that. It took a lot of backbone – this business is not for the faint of heart even in good times and certainly not in a pandemic. Overnight most of our customers got shut down – and were worried about how to pay their bills. We worked with them as partners, communicating and giving them time rather than ultimatums.







*“The pandemic seemed to encourage people not to drink more but to drink better.”*

Like everyone else, we had our trials and tribulations through the various lockdowns – the coherence and dedication of our team ensured we got through it. But it also saw acceleration in our business which may not have happened as quickly otherwise – particularly with our web shop and our off trade retail offering. We work with great producers who have developed a loyal and dedicated following so when selling directly to the public we were not starting from scratch. Even though restaurants obviously shut down, some reacted quickly to reinvent their offering to match the circumstances – Vins in Canonbury, North London is one such business; overnight they started delivering incredible wines and cheeses to people’s homes – and we are proud that they chose our wines. Another great example of an existing customer that pivoted overnight from mostly-trade/restaurant facing busy to direct-to-retail home delivery, was Natoora. In the earliest days of Lockdown 1.0, they shifted to home grocery delivery and they sold/delivered a lot of our wines for that period. We’ve had wines in their shops for some time, and we still have wines there, but the shift in their business model overnight was drastic and very impressive. And allowed them to not just survive, but grow in the process. Much like us.

We have been hiring staff throughout the pandemic. We adopted a bullish attitude – which was needed as we did not just have the pandemic to contend with but Brexit and the highly negative issues that it brings to our business. We could have taken the turtle approach but we felt we should at least take the cockroach one and embrace the uncertainty and make sure we come out the other end. We are not making decisions for the next three hours or three days but ones we can live with three years down the line.

The pandemic seemed to encourage people not to drink more but to drink better. In the darkest days, having that ceremony of opening a wonderful bottle of wine helped get me through and, fortunately for our business, that was true for so many others too.”

We asked Harmon if there is a must have amongst the Ancestral offering; he replied;

“Absolutely. All of them. We sell wine; everyone else sells beverages.”

You know where to go in the next lockdown.

And, where to go after too!

#### **Ancestral**

**Arch 9 Voyager Business Park,  
Spa Rd, London SE16 4RP  
07725 127558**

**Ancestral.com**

**Instagram; @ancestralwines**



## **A TASTE OF HISTORY**

### **Our journalist samples one of the Ancestral offerings**

Guillaume Aubert, one of Ancestral’s partners, very kindly sent me a bottle of red wine – a Domaine Vinci Rafalot to be precise – to review. He attached a note telling me it was “a pre phylloxera Carignan planted back in 1880 (unheard of) from French Catalunya”.

I had zero idea what that meant so, while the wine was breathing, I asked Google to decipher these words for me. Let’s be honest here; I didn’t even know what a Carignan was – and I had – hitherto – always prided myself on being quite knowledgeable regarding wine varietals.

I discovered Carignan originated in the north east of Spain. In southern France, it is found in the Languedoc-Roussillon, Southern Rhone and Provence and can be written as Carignan, Carignan Noir or Carignane.

“Carignan was widely planted in southern France following phylloxera due to its high yields but has since been replaced by Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre. Carignan is a vigorous, high-yielding, late-budding and late-ripening grape. It requires a lot of heat, and needs a dry climate as it is prone to mildew thanks to its tight clusters. Carignan produces a medium-bodied wine with aromas of dark and black fruit, pepper, licorice and baking spices.”

OK so that sorted, the next task before the actual tasting (some delayed gratification going on here) was to figure out what this “pre phylloxera” is all about.

It turns out that phylloxera is a kind of bug that wiped out the vineyards of France – and, indeed most of Europe, in the 19th century. Miraculously, some survived – and are still in use today – and

my wine came from one such treasured vineyard. Wow! Could my palate do this justice?

I am fortunate enough to have tasted – OK scoffed – a lot of great wines in my life and I can honestly say this one was right up there. It was just YUM. Not so full bodied that it knocks you out but just jammed full of a very rich blend of fruit and spice. It was so delicious, I have to shamefully confess that I worked my way through almost the entire bottle in one evening – but woke up without a trace of a hangover; credit to the production of the wine.

It also has a very cool label – something which always pleases me – as, indeed do many of the natural wines Ancestral curate.

In short, a bottle of wine that looks amazing – and tastes even better. If this is a taste of what Ancestral have to offer, I will most certainly be making them my top wine supplier.





# HOME *Sweet* HOME

**An Englishman's home has always been his castle, but in the past year, it has also become his (and her) office, restaurant, cinema, school, gym, shopping centre – and much more besides.**



From 23rd March 2020, we went from spending just a few hours a day at home to being there full time. Space had to be adapted beyond somewhere to relax, eat and sleep to unexpectedly and suddenly accommodate work areas, places where children could be schooled and somewhere to escape from everyone else. This increased time at home made us more observant of our surroundings – replacing that old sofa or getting a new dining table took on new importance. And with some people being in the fortunate situation of saving the money they would normally be spending on travel or restaurants or commuting, the money was there to buy these things. James Birtwhistle is the co-founder and Marketing Director of The Cotswold Company, a UK based retail business who operate in the furniture and soft furnishings space. In the 13 years Birtwhistle has

been with the company, he has seen them go through recession, growth, acquisitions but he says that the world going through the massive, huge change that COVID presented and how Cotswold had to flex to cope with the needs of consumers has been “a thrilling journey, if not more than a little stressful”.

“It has been interesting to see that the things we personally invested in developing throughout the life of the business, have now come to the fore to make the business not just survive but thrive; I am thinking particularly of our company culture – it is the hard work, conviction and application of the 250 people who work with us that have enabled us to weather this storm against a backdrop where so many retail businesses have been negatively affected and impacted through no fault of their own. It may sound trite to say but we have always

*“The team has been phenomenal in pulling themselves and each other and us through this huge trauma.”*

worked hard to build a supportive, familial and nurturing environment and you don't realise the benefits of that until times are tough. Even in our most imaginative and thorough disaster planning, a pandemic had not featured and suddenly the physical hub of our HQ was dissipated. Everything had to go into the cloud. Finance, Operations, Call Centres and Marketing had to work from home. This lockdown impacted more than the closing of our shops. But the team has been phenomenal in pulling themselves and each other and us through this huge trauma. I am really proud of how they have dealt with this.

Whilst we do have stores – five – they are more showrooms and they are not based in retail parks which seem to have taken the biggest hit. We worked hard to continue our service online while adhering to government guidelines on social distancing etc. In the beginning we had to furlough a few of our staff but that was short lived. We are pretty self-sufficient; we have our own delivery fleet and we closely partner with couriers so we could easily adapt and adjust when the lockdown meant we were delivering to broader geographies and could not go into people's homes. We have thousands and thousands of customers and delivering furniture and





## *“We are helping people create an emotional haven in their homes.”*

leaving it on a doorstep is not ideal – especially when our products are not flat pack. But it is testament to their quality and to the packaging that everything was robust enough to be transported safely like this and our customers were delighted with their purchases and were prepared to cope with the sometimes logistical challenges leaving stuff on their doorstep meant for them.

The UK market has seen a huge increase in the demand for home office furniture – obviously – but I feel our success goes deeper than that. Because people are now working and living at home they value their environment more. The need to feel comfy and homey – to nest, to feel secure is highly prevalent in these uncertain times. More and more people are talking about the importance and the sanctuary of home away from the chaos – and our furniture sits comfortably with those values. We have a strong heritage and use organic materials; a lot of wood. Our furniture is high quality, sturdy, secure. It is about personal comfort. Our designs are timeless which is reassuring in these times of massive instability. Our customers seek cosy and comfy – which is the niche we’ve always tried to serve. We are helping people create an emotional haven in their homes – not just supplying them with new furniture. Our ethos has always been about building on the rhythm of nature, about bringing

tranquillity and that has never been more important or appreciated than it is today. Buying furniture is not a flippant purchase but an emotionally connecting investment – they are big ticket items.

We pride ourselves in searching out the finest quality producers and partnering with them; we follow where the quality is from around the world – from identifying the finest basket weavers in the middle of Vietnam to launching a new mattress range where the stuffing comes from sheep in a tiny cottage industry in Dartmoor. These are not one-off examples but at the heart of how we operate. All of this has led us to have massive growth in the past year – and we have recruited and recruited and recruited to keep up with the demand. COVID has meant the geographic boundaries that existed before simply have disappeared and we now are able to employ passionate and talented people from a broad pool who we did not have access to before.

Personally I’m still optimistic about the future – but it’s been an exhausting year. It’s been quite a journey but whilst the pandemic has really accelerated our growth it’s been sobering to see its impact on the wider economy. The responsibility to our organisation, our customers and our community has never been greater.”

[www.cotswoldco.com](http://www.cotswoldco.com)







# ACTION. AND.....

# CUT

## That seems to sum up the past 12 months doesn't it? We come out of lockdown, start getting our lives back then 'CUT', it all stops again.

One of the things that has helped us get through those endless days – and, more relevantly, nights, stuck at home is watching some of the incredible films and series on Netflix, Amazon, Apple, iPlayer and all the other streaming channels that have kept us entertained.

Obviously the film production companies were just as impacted by the pandemic as the rest of us – but, in between lockdowns, they worked to the extremely strict social distancing measures and to other COVID safe restrictions in order to keep our banks of incredible stuff to watch well stocked.

Tom Avison is MD of Time+Space Studios Co which operates Twickenham Studios which is one of the businesses that seems to have bucked the trend and prospered through the pandemic; no mean feat for a film production company as making movies is not the easiest task to perform whilst keeping two metres apart – although according to Avison that statement “underestimates the resourcefulness of the production industry”.

Time+Space literally bought out Twickenham at the start of the pandemic and Avison joined in May of 2020 with the job of “rebooting” the studios. Resourceful or not, that could not have been without major challenges at a time when the entire country was shut down.

“During the first lockdown we entered into conversations with a company who wanted us to do the final sound mix of their latest feature film (which just happens to be one of the biggest productions in the world right now). They were keen to go at the

end of April but in order to comply with all the restrictions properly we couldn't make it work till the end of May. They were prepared to wait as our sound studio is renowned for being the very best in the country with the most respected editors. Because our sound studio is around 2000 square feet there is more than enough room to accommodate eight people in a perfectly COVID safe environment. The film makers are used to working with the very top, highly prestigious Hollywood studios so it was a high bar but we fulfilled and surpassed their expectations which then opened the floodgates for us.”

Twickenham Film Studios Managing Partners, Jeremy Rainbird and Piers Read, had worked relentlessly to ensure the entire site not just complied with government regulations but also set the standard for the rest of the industry in the UK. Set in a leafy location in Richmond, away from the bustle and crowds of the city, this was the perfect environment to be as COVID safe as possible – which is why it attracted Hollywood productions as well as independent films, music videos and many other types of productions.

Avison says;

“The measures we had put in place were self evidently working successfully so after bringing back just the sound department initially, we then brought the picture department back and in July when the British Film Commission published their guidelines for the industry, there was the most almighty surge of work which had been pent up for months suddenly released. Before the first lockdown,

the UK film production market was the biggest it had ever been with £3.6 billion of investment. Then everyone sat at home and watched everything there was to watch until there was literally almost nothing left – so you can imagine what happened when those flood gates reopened. As soon as the industry said it was safe, and the government ratified it, we were bombarded – even more than usual because, obviously, people could not film on location or abroad, so studio work became busier than ever anticipated. This extended beyond film and television to commercials who again were impacted by the restrictions as to where they could shoot and our stages, which are highly adaptable, proved very suitable for their requirements.

We have partnered with a cleaning company who generally work with hospitals in operating theatres and, since the pandemic, they have worked on every production with us so the level of cleanliness is the highest – add to that the constant testing and other measures we have put in place, and the result is that the people working here feel as secure as they possibly can. Where staff could work from home, they did – editors for example and the admin people. But, generally, our work involves physically being in the studios so it was important we did what we could – above and beyond what was required of us – to make the space as safe as possible.

All this was a huge and unbudgeted expense but the demand is there to be met and our stages are booked till the end of 2021 – and beyond.”

We all hope we are coming to the end of a very long tunnel – but whatever lies ahead, places like Twickenham Studios are there to make sure we never run short of great productions to watch.





# LIVERY NEWS

A look at what has been happening – and what is coming up.

## Master's Word

**When I penned the Master's Word article for the Autumn 2020 edition of City Solicitor I rather optimistically predicted the end of the lockdown and was looking forward to welcoming you all to our Livery Dinner on 1st December to be held at Goldsmiths' Hall.**

I spoke too soon!

Lockdowns have now been with us in one fashion or another for nearly a year. But I now write to you with sense of renewed and genuine optimism that with the efficient roll out of the COVID vaccine we will see the final end of lockdown restrictions and a resumption of the Company's normal social programme. Based on recent Government pronouncements this is not likely to take place until June 2021 at the earliest. However we are planning a large social event to allow us to all get together in person and celebrate our "new found freedom" as soon as the situation permits.

Despite the ban on in person events the Company has been very active. Our Committees and the Court continue to meet and transact the business of the Company online and we have organised a number of online themed events to allow members to get together. In fact we have probably hosted more events over lockdown than is normal in the Company's calendar.

We have continued to host our online drinks parties which have proved popular particularly with new members. On 21st January 2021 the Wine Committee organised a highly successful evening entitled "A Virtual Tour of the Southern Rhone and its Wines" hosted by Oliver Hickman of Wine Uncovered. Oliver gave us an entertaining and engaging tour of the region and introduced to us its different wines including emphasising the importance of the "terroir" which gives the region's wines their distinctive taste. Combined with a tasting of the local wine, the event was pronounced a great success by all those who attended. Thanks go to Martin Roberts, Chair of the Wine Committee, and Clerk, Linzi James for all their work on organising this successful evening.

At the end of February we were given a tour (yes virtual of course) of a different kind entitled "Shakespeare and the Lawyers". The tour highlighted Shakespeare's

relationship with the legal profession and provided the answer to the question why Shakespeare penned the words "Kill all the Lawyers". Conducted by TripAdvisor five star-rated Official London Tour guide and Freeman of the Company, Ian Fagelson, we were treated to a pacey, funny and intriguing history of Shakespeare's life in the Square Mile vividly recreating the world of Elizabethan London. This was our most popular online event to date. We are extremely grateful to Ian for donating his time free of charge. All proceeds raised from this event went to the Company's Charitable Fund. Ian's tour was very well received and we hope that Clerk, Linzi James, who ably organised the event will be able to persuade Ian to return with another of his entertaining London tours.

We are still continuing to admit new Liverymen and Freeman and have developed an online Admission Ceremony before the Court so we can still manage the admission process in lockdown. I am pleased to say interest in membership of the Company among the profession remains high. The Company is committed to opening its doors to as wide and diverse a membership as possible as we strive to keep pace with the changing face of the legal profession. To this end we have published our Values Statement on the website setting out the values we subscribe to as a truly diverse and inclusive Company. Allied to our Values Statement we have also published a Members' Conduct Protocol designed to assist members and their guests especially when attending Company functions. Do please take time to review our Values Statement and Conduct Protocol on the Company's website.

We will also be conducting an Engagement Survey in the near future which we would ask your assistance in completing. As we weather these strange "lockdown days" and look forward to re-engagement in person at future events, there has never been a more crucial time to get members' views about what type of events you would



Robert Bell

like to see. The results of this survey will help us increase the quality and range of our events to meet members' expectations.

A number of membership events have taken place recently. On 8th March 2021 we held a very well attended recruiting event specifically tailored to lawyers working in house at companies, regulators or those in Government service. In addition along with Tony King, Senior Warden, and Sarah de Gay, Junior Warden, I hosted two "Tea with 3" events in mid-March giving new Members of the Company the opportunity to ask questions of the Master & Wardens and to help us in turn to introduce them more fully to the work of the Company.

Finally I would like to update you about the Company's offices at College Hill. The Company's offices remain closed due to the current lockdown restrictions. Nevertheless the Company's staff continue to do a tremendous job at supporting our online events, Company Committees and Court Meetings working from home. I would like to say a special thank you to Clerk, Linzi James, Administrator, Liz Thomas, and Secretary, Denise Llewellyn for their tireless and great work in keeping the Company's affairs running smoothly and efficiently. As the Company and the CLLS staff are currently working from home now is an ideal time to review the state of the fabric of the building and the way we use and occupy College Hill. So with the agreement of the Court, I have formed a Working Group under the chairmanship of Past Master Rupert Jones, which will be looking at how best to prepare the offices for the future. I will report more fully to you when the Working Group publishes its recommendations. I would like to thank Rupert for taking on the job as Chair of the Working Group.

May I conclude by thanking the Wardens, Tony King and Sarah de Gay and Stewards Ginny Cannon and Ed Parker for their continuing support and assistance as we navigate the Company through these unprecedented and strange times. However I am confident that better times are on the way and I am excited about catching up with you all in person at our events later on in the year.

# HOW COVID-19 ACCELERATED THE ELECTRIC DREAM

By Joel Leigh

## Opportunity knocks for the electric vehicle industry as the vaccine roll-out offers a route back to normality

Facing yet another weekend in lockdown and having thoroughly exhausted my Netflix list, I wondered what the internet might suggest by way of respite from the seemingly endless loop that has more than once found me channelling Phil Connors in *Groundhog Day*. The best Google had to offer was a virtual karaoke, or a spot of online amigurumi – the Japanese art of crocheting small creatures or animals; erm, thanks but no thanks. After whiling away another hour configuring increasingly extreme specifications for the Rolls-Royce I will never own, I decided to go for a walk around Hampstead heath, to fire up my brain cells and find some inspiration of my own.

Of course, my decision to get back to nature has been shared by many during the previous year, following plenty of advice suggesting that a good walk can improve both your mood and your physical health, as well as offering the opportunity to discover something new on your doorstep. Perhaps not surprisingly, a recent Transport for London report found that 31% of Londoners chose to walk over any other form of transport last year, whilst 57% of people reported taking more walks for exercise and for longer, than before the pandemic.

For some, that extended stroll might offer the chance to indulge in a spot of bird watching, or to appreciate the flora and fauna in a local beauty spot. I, however, was struck by the murmur of electric vehicles (EVs) amassing in nearby streets. Further exploration (or being nosey according to my wife) revealed an explosion of previously unnoticed charging points adorning the driveways of my neighbours.

The proliferation is undoubtedly connected to increased public awareness around the environmental benefits of EVs, following measurable improvements in air quality during lockdown due to the reduction in road traffic, but equally, Londoners are mindful of the expansion

of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) in October 2021 and the daily £12.50 charge that will be levied on vehicles failing to meet emission standards, including most diesel cars manufactured pre-September 2015. Nationally, the government plans a 2030 ban on all new Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicle sales, and both Ford and Jaguar Land Rover have already committed to becoming all-electric brands in advance of the deadline.

2020 was a tough year for car manufacturers, and yet Tesla's Model 3 became the UK's best-selling car in December 2020 with sales just short of 6,000 units, a lead of more than 1,000 over its nearest rival, the perennial VW Golf. Whilst the statistic was partly to do with the timing of Tesla's UK delivery schedule, the fact remains that demand for EVs grew by almost 186% during the pandemic.

Increasing the uptake of EVs depends on more than just green sentiment, however. The government has recognised it must prioritise a rapid expansion of the UK's underwhelming charging infrastructure, without which ownership is completely impractical. The think-tank Policy Exchange reports that there are just 35,000 public chargers in the UK today, with urban and more affluent areas typically enjoying better coverage, but that 400,000 will be needed to meet demand. With only 7,000 charging points currently being added to the network each year, the rate of installation needs to increase at least five-fold.

Some of the expansion will be government backed via a £1.3 billion funding package, a figure likely to rise thanks to installation challenges outside major cities and towns, where access to the electricity grid is complex and disproportionately expensive to arrange, but the lion's share of the required funding – as much as £8.7 billion – will fall to the private sector, creating the perfect conditions for an EV infrastructure gold rush.



Facing pressure to cut its global emissions, and hot on the heels of the government's commitment, Shell recently agreed a 100% acquisition of Ubitricity, the UK's largest public EV charging network, instantly quadrupling its existing offering of 1,000 public charging points. The long game is to significantly expand the range of on-street options, including lamp post and bollard charging, as these are key for the 40% of people living and working in cities and those who have limited access to off-street parking.

Shell's acquisition represents one of a series of noteworthy deals; others include French energy giant EDF purchasing Pod Point, the UK's third largest network and said to be gearing up for a stock market launch, and McDonalds indicating that almost 1,000 of its drive-thru restaurants will be offering customers access to rapid charging points courtesy of a link up with the public charging network InstaVolt. Renewable energy company Gridserve has recently opened its first all-electric forecourt, partnering with retailers such as WH Smith Travel and Costa Coffee to keep customers entertained whilst their cars are charging.

The government's target is ambitious but appropriate, given the impact of petrol and diesel vehicle use on greenhouse gas emissions, and it is a rare upside of the pandemic that it has spurred an acceleration in the trend towards cleaner and greener methods of transportation.

Ultimately though, drivers will only adopt EVs en masse if they have confidence in the national charging network, so if Boris wants to facilitate a post-pandemic rock down to electric avenue, the infrastructure must pass muster.

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



# ONE LAST WORD DID YOU KNOW? Operation Unthinkable



**According to Field Marshal Montgomery, rule number one on the first page of the book of war is 'do not march on Moscow'.**

In April 1945, Winston Churchill ordered the British Chiefs of Staff to consider ripping up the rule book with plans for an opportunistic attack on their wartime ally, Russia.

In October 1944, Winston Churchill and Josef Stalin met for the Fourth Moscow Conference. During a long evening of vodka-fuelled negotiations, the two leaders agreed to divide various European countries into spheres of influence.

Churchill wrote out a list of countries and percentages to represent the interests of the USSR and the UK. Stalin indicated his approval of the plan by marking a large blue tick in the top corner.

This possibly represented the high point in Churchill's faith in his Russian wartime ally.

Just five months later, serious doubts had surfaced in Churchill's mind over whether the Soviet Union could be trusted. At stake was the future of Poland, the post-war division of Europe and even the survival of western democracy.

In 1939, Britain had gone to war with Nazi Germany in fulfilment of the terms of the Anglo-Polish Agreement of Mutual Assistance. Now, with the end of the war in sight, Churchill had a keen interest in the fate of her pre-war ally.

Josef Stalin also had a keen interest in the fate of Poland.

And Stalin exerted far more control over what that its future would be.

By the time the Allied leaders met at Yalta in February 1945, the Red Army was in control of most of Poland. It had occupied Warsaw, Lodz and Krakow, or, at least, what remained of these cities. It was also posed to take Berlin, Vienna and Prague, tightening the Soviet grip on Central Europe.

Stalin had also installed the Polish Committee of National Liberation in power in Warsaw. The Committee, also known as the Lublin Government, was dressed in the costume of national independence but was fully controlled from Moscow.

Any doubt about Stalin's intentions was relieved when 16 Polish representatives of the London-based government-in-exile were arrested despite having been issued safe-conduct passes.

Churchill's doubts solidified as Soviet intransigence increased. He expressed his fears to Roosevelt that: 'at present all entry into Poland is barred to our representatives. An impenetrable veil has been drawn across the scene'.

So had Britain gone to war with one totalitarian state only to see another take control of Poland?

On 4 May 1945, Churchill wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden: 'Terrible things have happened. A tide of Russian domination is sweeping forward... After it is over, the territories under Russian control will include the Baltic provinces, all of eastern Germany, all Czechoslovakia, a large part of Austria, the whole of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.'

'This constitutes one of the most melancholy events in the history of Europe and one to which there has been no parallel. It is to an early and speedy showdown and settlement with Russia that we must now turn our hopes.'

What kind of 'early and speedy showdown' could Britain hope for in 1945?

By the end of the war, Britain was broken in victory. The Red Army controlled eastern Europe and had over seven million men under arms. And it was only going to get worse. Churchill pondered the future: 'What will be the position in a year or two, when the British and American Armies have melted and the French has not yet been formed on any major scale, when we may have a handful of divisions, mostly French, and when Russia may choose to keep two or three hundred on active service?'

And then what?

Could Britain once again face an enemy just across the narrow divide? Churchill went on to muse that: 'it would be open to the Russians in a very short space of time to advance, if they chose, to the waters of the North Sea and the Atlantic'.

Just under a month before Germany's final surrender, Winston Churchill ordered the British Armed Forces' Joint Planning Staff to think the unthinkable and plan for an attack on Russia.

Lt Gen Sir Hastings Ismay submitted his final report to Churchill on 22 May 1945. In it, the primary goal of Operation Unthinkable was stated as being: 'to impose upon Russia the will of the United States and the British Empire. Even though 'the will' of these two countries may be defined as no more than a square deal for Poland, that does not necessarily limit the military commitment.

There was even a target date for the offensive. British and American tanks would roll eastwards once again on 1 July 1945.

The plan was based on some key assumptions.



The attack would enjoy the full backing of the public in the UK and USA and continued high morale amongst British and American troops.

The western allies would have full assistance from Polish troops and recourse to German manpower and the remnants of German industrial capacity and they could rely on logistic support from other western countries.

Finally, the planner assumed that, on being attacked, Russia would ally herself with Japan.

One of the more incendiary aspects of the plan was that the western allies were to be joined by up to 100,000 rearmend German soldiers. The planners were told to: 'count on the use of German manpower and what remains of German industrial capacity'.

The plan called for a swift punch through Poland by 47 British and American divisions. The Royal Air Force would strike from bases in Denmark and Northern Germany and the Royal Navy would move along the Baltic coast.

Victory would be impossible without: 'a large proportion of the vast resources of the United States'. The remote odds would: 'become fanciful if the Americans grew weary and indifferent and began to be drawn away by the magnet of the Pacific war'.

Field Marshal Brooke was less diplomatic, writing that: 'the idea is, of course, fantastic and the chances of success quite impossible. There is no doubt that from now onwards Russia is all powerful in Europe.'

The Cabinet Office planners also pointed to the failure of Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union to highlight the futility of such a military engagement.

Unsurprisingly, the report suggested that the Soviet Union was likely to respond aggressively to such an attack. Whilst the allies concentrated on Poland, the Red Army could overrun Norway, Turkey, Greece and potentially take the oil fields of Persia and Iraq.

In the end, the preparations came to nothing, and were, if anything counterproductive, serving only to fuel increasing suspicion between the wartime allies. The discussions were conducted with the greatest levels of secrecy. But this didn't prevent Stalin soon finding out about them. Soviet agents and communist sympathisers had penetrated all levels of the Whitehall bureaucracy.

The details of the planning were stored away at the Public Records Office in a file headed 'Russia: Threat to Western Civilisation'.

This article was provided courtesy of Ian Chapman-Curry, Principal Associate at Gowling WLG and host of the Almost History podcast.  
[www.almosthistorypodcast.com](http://www.almosthistorypodcast.com)





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