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Contents

President's Column 4
Sheffield & District Law Society President Steven Dawson looks forward to the New Year.

Legal News 5
Some of the local success stories from the latest Legal 500.

Legal News 6
Member firms MKB Solicitors LLP and Unity Law win at this year's Yorkshire Legal Awards.

Legal News 7
Bell & Buxton celebrate their merger with Morton Price, and family solicitors from Howells and Graysons WE receive recognition.

Conveyancing Focus 8
Banner Jones’ Executive Director and Head of Residential Property Chris Sellars looks at the effect of foreign buyers on the local market.

Conveyancing Focus 10
James Burgess of MKB Solicitors LLP asks his clients and contacts for their views of the Barnsley property markets.

Conveyancing Focus 11
Richard Memmott of Norrie Waite & Slater takes a look at the housing market from the firm’s Rotherham office.

Movers & Shakers 12-14
Robert Addy of CRA Legal comments on the current state of the job market, plus a round-up of the latest local moves and appointments.

Counsel’s Case Note Corner 16
Bank House Chambers barrister Angela Wrottesley examines the Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act in her regular column.

Conveyancing Focus 17
An estate agent’s view of the current housing market from Steve Hinshelwood of Blundells.

Society News 19
The latest news from the Society with an update on the Yorkshire Law Banquet, including a discount available for the 2015 annual dinner.

Legal News 20-21
Barnsley-based DigitalLawUK is the first firm of its kind, Howells and Bell & Buxton do their bit for charity, and news from the University of Sheffield’s Law School.

Lifestyle 22-23
St Johns Buildings have moved to new premises after 28 years in their previous home and we review restaurant Cubana after hlw Keeble Hawson helped them to relocate.

New editors for The Legal
Following the success of the previous issue of The Legal magazine which was produced by the Society’s office staff Liz and Faye for the first time, we will now also be editing the magazine ourselves with Faye taking over the editorial role from David Todd as of this issue.

The Society would like to thank David for his contribution to The Legal and to wish him well in his future endeavours.

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Hello, and welcome to the Winter edition of The Legal.

As I type this, I am looking at one of the many pictures on my office wall. I have had this particular one on my various office walls since I was a Trainee Solicitor - Salvador Dalí’s ‘Apparition of Face and Fruit Dish on a Beach.’ Even after years of looking at it I still find new things (“Is that a fish?” and “Oh – I can see another dog!”). It has also been known to break the ice with new clients on occasion. Now, I've always been a fan of Dali - there’s just something about the craziness I seem to enjoy and at times relate to - yet it’s only as I sit pondering the picture (anything rather than work on that next IHT400!) that it’s dawned on me why I like it for my office wall. It’s like the law: it’s dependent upon the person studying it as to what they see. Which is how the law so often is - open to interpretation.

The relevance of this to the current issue of The Legal? Well, as you will have seen we have a Conveyancing focus and reading the articles submitted on the current state of the property market it seems to me that an awful lot depends upon the point of view of the person observing. Some say it's improving – 'the shoots of recovery' – whilst others may see it as a 'false dawn.' In issue 16 I wrote “The market in Barnsley does seem to be improving, but there is a long way to go yet.” These days I do less property work than I did back then, so I leave you all in the capable hands of my friend and colleague at MKB, James Burgess, for a review of the Barnsley market, and the experienced hands of Chris Sellars at Banner Jones offering a view on Chesterfield and Sheffield and Richard Memmott of Norrie Waite & Slater with a review of how things are in my current home town of Rotherham. Never let it be said that we do not cover all areas of the ‘District’ here at Sheffield & District Law Society!

In other news from Law Society Hall, the Hall itself is looking an awful lot better as the decorating works continue with the sympathy and attention to detail the old building deserves. As well as these physical improvements we are also now working on a new website for the SDLS, the primary aim of which is to make our site the ‘go to’ point for local members of the public seeking a lawyer and to feature our members more prominently, making it easier for potential clients to find you and your firm. Along with other plans this is all part of wide ranging reviews which we are carrying out to further strengthen links between the SDLS and member firms, increasing the benefits that we offer.

Plans are also well underway for the social event of the local legal calendar – the SDLS Yorkshire Law Banquet on 6th February at Cutlers Hall. Tickets are already selling fast and I would encourage you to book soon to obtain the benefit of the discounted “booked before Christmas” rate and secure a table for you and your firm at what should be an amazing evening (see page 19).

I would also like to take these last few inches of my President’s Column to offer congratulations to SDLS member firm Unity Law (including past President Chris Fry) for their recent recognition as ‘Niche Law Firm of the Year’ at the Yorkshire Legal Awards and my Managing Partner David Wright from MKB who won the main award of the evening – the Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year (see page 6). David is one of the two people responsible for bringing me back to South Yorkshire from my self imposed exile on the East Coast many years ago (but please don’t hold that against him), and it has been (and continues to be) an honour to work with him at MKB.

Just to take us back full circle, and in case you were thinking my choice of art for the office is a bit pretentious, the two most recent pictures I have just hung in my attempts to hide the multiple times painted woodchip in my office are of Marvel’s ‘The Silver Surfer’, going about his ‘Sentinel of the Spaceways’ activities! So we shall see what clients make of those in the weeks to come. They may take some explaining! And, for those of you concerned, that IHT400 is still sat looking at me…

So, no matter whether your Christmas plans include taking some much needed time away from the office and eating and drinking too much, or if, like me, Christmas is a time when eating and drinking too much is something other people get to do as I spend most of my time on the M1 between ‘Home Home’ in Rotherham, ‘Mrs President’s family home’ in North Notts, and my ‘Original Home’ in the North East – may I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and an exciting and prosperous New Year!

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4
Local law firms receive recognition in 2014 Legal 500 rankings

Several Sheffield law firms have received a mention in the latest Legal 500.

The prestigious publication named Banner Jones as a ‘Leading Firm’. Marketing Manager Ann-Marie Lowe comments “Following our Family Law team’s success last year in the Legal 500 rankings, we are delighted to have received a ranking for our Personal Injury team this year as well.”

Head of Personal Injury Simon Wright received recognition for leading “a very well-organised team, which handles claims of any size and type” and was awarded the accolade of ‘Recommended Lawyer’, along with Robert Banner, also in the Personal Injury team, and Toby Netting from the Family Law team. The Legal 500 quoted Toby as being “exceptional” and Head of the team Ron Whitlam exudes calm and experience.”

Simon comments: “We are very proud of the business for achieving this ranking as it highlights our specialism and expertise in these areas. It is a wonderful thing to have been given this recommendation from such a highly regarded publication.”

Howells Solicitors maintained their high rankings for several areas in the professional guide.

Their Immigration team was ranked in the top tier across Yorkshire and the Humber for specialising in asylum, human rights and family immigration, as well as handling “a number of cases that proceeded to the Upper Tribunal.”

The Family team were recognised for their work in matrimonial and children law with Head of Department Alyson Siddall recommended.

The Crime team remain highly ranked in both the general crime and fraud categories, with four individuals recommended: Chris Wong and Chris Davey for their “extensive experience working on complex frauds”,” John Gibson for “leading a sizable team” and Chris Peace for being “well regarded for youth court work.”

The Civil Liberties and Human Rights, Medical Negligence, Personal Injury and Housing teams were also praised. The Employment team were recognised for “branching out into respondent work” as well as continuing claimant work.

Managing Partner Peter Mahy said: “We are delighted to have maintained our rankings and to once again be recognised as one of the leading law firms in South Yorkshire across all our areas of Family and Civil Law and Criminal Defence. Howells has an excellent reputation for the quality of advice and representation we offer and we are extremely pleased that our performance has been consistently recognised.”

hlw Keeble Hawson celebrates success with 21 lawyers recommended across 17 commercial and private client practice areas.

The firm is ranked among the best for employment law in South Yorkshire with practice head Barry Warne’s team remaining in the top tier.

Roger Dyson heads the “very capable” commercial team. The firm’s commercial property department is recommended, and the Sheffield commercial litigation team provides a “genuinely faultless service.” Head of the team Ron Whitlam and partner Michael Peacock are singled out for praise.

The firm’s Simon Brian and Ben McFeely were once again listed as recommended lawyers.

Head of Employment Simon comments “Our recommendation in the Legal 500 is a reflection of the consistently high quality service our Employment Team provides to businesses and individuals throughout our region in dealing with Employment and HR issues. We are very proud of the hard work undertaken which has led to the positive client feedback necessary to retain our place in this prestigious publication.”
Managing Partner at MKB Solicitors LLP helps to keep Barnsley on the map

MKB Solicitors’ Managing Partner, David Wright, has won the top award at the Yorkshire Legal Awards.

At a glamorous evening hosted by Steph McGovern of BBC Breakfast, David was named Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year.

MKB are incredibly proud of David for this once in a lifetime achievement, especially because these awards are rarely bestowed on firms outside of Leeds and Sheffield.

David had been nominated in the Managing Partner of the Year category and whilst he was thrilled with simply being nominated, he and his colleagues were left somewhat deflated when this prize was awarded to a firm in Leeds.

Agony soon turned to ecstasy however when the final award of the night was announced.

‘Yorkshire Lawyer of the Year’ is a Judge’s choice award for outstanding achievement by an individual and as the winner was described at length by Alistair MacDonald QC it soon became clear where the award was heading.

Those present from MKB were absolutely delighted when David’s name was read out to ovations from the 500-strong crowd.

David has worked at MKB Solicitors LLP of Huddersfield Road, Barnsley (formerly Mills, Kemp and Brown Solicitors) since 1971 and qualified as a solicitor in 1977. He is regarded as one of the best property lawyers in the region, with more than 40 years’ experience of serving Barnsley and the surrounding areas with distinction, and has been Managing Partner at MKB since 1998.

David’s wealth of experience on all things business and property related, his strong links to Barnsley business, dry sense of humour and no-nonsense approach make him the first point of call for many in the area on property and commercial issues. His colourful personality has made him a well-known character in business and social circles in the region.

David states: “I am delighted to have received this Award. We have a fantastic team here at MKB who are enthusiastic for the work they do and for growing the business as a whole. I have worked at MKB for over 40 years and I am looking forward to what the future holds for the firm.”

Unity Law named best ‘Niche Law Firm’ for second time

Multiple award-winning law firm Unity Law has secured further investment in order to assist with the firm’s growth strategy.

Established in 2010 by Sheffield & District Law Society Past President Chris Fry, the Sheffield firm has successfully established itself as a leader in the field of Occupational Disease and Disability Discrimination litigation.

In order to facilitate their ambitious growth plans, the firm underwent a rigorous independent audit by Zebra Legal Consulting. As a result, the due diligence experts awarded the firm an ‘A’ rating, making them one of only a very small number of firms to achieve such a high ranking. Zoe Holland, Managing Director of Zebra LC said of the firm: “The audit findings revealed a firm that provides excellent quality of service, with a good standard of technical and operational competency.”

Unity Law also scooped the award for ‘Niche Law Firm’ of 2014 at the prestigious Yorkshire Legal Awards dinner held at the Royal Armouries in Leeds. It is the second time that the firm has won the award, having been previous winners in 2012.

Chris Fry said: “We’re proud of how far we have come in such a short space of time. We’ve exceeded our original business expectations in respect of turnover and market position; but the recent recognition in the Legal 500, another award win and further investment, will enable us to make a further push towards achieving our next growth objectives.”

Unity Law is also keen to ensure that it maintains the sound ethical principles on which the firm was founded. It recently announced a new pro-bono partnership with the Sheffield Wednesday Football Community Programme which works with the disabled community in Sheffield to make sport accessible to all.
On 1st October Sheffield-based solicitors Bell & Buxton announced their successful merger with Morton Price. Both companies provide a client centred, cost effective, and personal service tailored to the needs of each individual client.

The Morton Price team join Bell & Buxton at their prominent Telegraph House base to enhance the services available to all their clients. This deal consolidates the many years of experience and good reputations of both firms by adding value, skills and knowledge to their collective offering.

This new arrangement sees overall personnel numbers rise to 44 across the partnership. Alex Ross, Partner at Bell & Buxton, said:

“Joining up with Morton Price just seemed like such a good idea on so many levels: not only are Steve, Richard and Lis all experts in their fields, but also they will strengthen our existing teams of corporate and business work and commercial and residential property, which can only benefit our clients.”

Stephen Price said: “We will now be able to offer our clients a wider range of legal services. Without the administrative burdens of running a practice and with the support of the other lawyers within Bell & Buxton, we can concentrate more on the needs of our clients.”

Family law partners Michelle Cooper and Sandra Russell of Graysons WE have been listed in the UK’s top 50 rated solicitors, as voted for by clients on the review site www.vouchedfor.co.uk and recently listed in The Times.

The site allows clients, vetted by VouchedFor to guarantee that they are genuine, to post reviews of solicitors they have used for the whole range of legal services. Only the top 50 solicitors in the country are listed.

Partner Michelle Cooper is head of the firm’s family law department. With over 25 years’ family law experience, she has a formidable reputation in the region. Michelle specialises in complex, high value, high profile and often contentious divorce and finance cases, including those involving complex business dealings, partnerships, pension sharing, assets abroad, trust funds and shareholding with assets, as well as the dissolution of civil partnerships and prenuptial agreements. She is particularly well known, locally and nationally, for her expertise and success in resolving issues through round-table meetings.

Michelle sits on the district Resolution committee and is a former chair of its South Yorkshire and district division.

Partner Sandra Russell qualified in 1994 and has specialised solely in family matters ever since. Her vast experience helps her to guide clients to find the most appropriate individual solution. Sandra is a collaboratively trained lawyer and firmly believes that all family cases are capable of resolution outside the court arena, provided that couples listen to each other and stay respectful, using creative solutions that might not be available in the courtroom setting.

Of course Sandra recognises that collaboration isn’t for everyone, and is equally skilled and happy in the courtroom if litigation is necessary. Sandra is well known for her meticulous preparation, dedication to her work and strong ethical approach.

Both family partners have been accredited specialists in complex financial and property matters and domestic abuse with Resolution for several years.

Family lawyer at Howells Solicitors John Clegg has recently gained Resolution accredited specialist status.

John has been qualified for five years and specialises in domestic abuse and financial remedy cases.

Originally set up in 1999, the Resolution scheme helps people who are facing a family breakdown to make an informed choice when choosing a lawyer. To become a Resolution accredited specialist, lawyers have to agree to uphold the Resolution Code of Practice and to pass a written test demonstrating a breadth of knowledge of family law issues and specialist knowledge in at least two areas of family law.

Howells matrimonial team are all Resolution members, and now have seven solicitors who are Accredited Specialists. John comments “Part of being a Resolution member is being committed to encouraging a non-confrontational approach to resolving family disputes.

By acting in this way, both the emotional and financial costs of divorce or family breakdown are minimised and it is less stressful for all parties.”

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Foreign buyers profit from UK property market

Banner Jones’ Executive Director and Head of Residential Property Chris Sellars looks at the effect of foreign buyers on the local market.

Over the last 12 months the property market has moved on in proportions not seen since before the recession. Locally we have sustained price increases of 6% whilst London has seen rises of 20%. Banner Jones has offices across South Yorkshire, North Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire and in all of these areas market activity has continued at such a pace we’ve had to expand our conveyancing teams in both Sheffield and Chesterfield to cope with the upturn.

Recent developments however, suggest that the market is starting to cool. The number of homebuyer mortgages approved by high street banks fell to a 14-month low in September and The British Bankers’ Association said a total of 39,271 loans had been approved for house purchases over the month. This is 10% down on September 2013’s figure, and below the previous six-month’s average. Despite a flurry of mortgage rate cuts during the month and expectations that the Bank of England may increase the base rate, the number of customers remortgaging to a new lender was also down.

Much of this is attributable to the Mortgage Market Review (MMR) which came into force in April this year. This now requires lenders to delve far deeper into the ‘affordability’ of a mortgage, asking for such details as the amount the applicant spends on beer and haircuts. As a result applications are taking longer and an increased number are failing altogether. Despite this, experts are still predicting price rises over the coming months at a more restrained rate. Prices are still predicted to rise by around another 5% in 2015.

One of the other factors affecting the market is supply. Whilst Britain remains in the grip of an intense housing shortage, prices are likely to remain high. An estimated 240,000 new homes are needed each year in England, but only around half this figure is being built.

The market is also being fuelled in a large part by foreign buyers seeking a safe haven for their money. This is principal reason why Bank of England Governor, Mark Carney, has said the BoE cannot control the market; after all, a change in interest rates does not affect those spending their own cash.

For years foreign buyers, especially Chinese and Russian investors, have been buying up top end properties such as London’s One Hyde Park apartments. However, homes aimed at families and first-time buyers have now come into focus. Houses in Sheffield are among properties offered at foreign investment fairs and on estate agents’ websites in China and Russia.

Chinese buyers who can pay in cash are touring Northern towns to find investment opportunities, keen to make a profit from the booming UK property market. Experts fear this trend will force up prices for ordinary families. According to Chinese estate agents Juwai, an estimated 63 million Chinese people, almost the entire population of the UK, are wealthy enough to afford a property overseas.

The number of homes bought with cash rose by about a fifth over the past year suggesting a surge in these wealthy investors. Banner Jones have recently acted on a development where 156 of 160 apartments have been sold off plan to foreign buyers, before the developer has even bought the land!

Angliadom, a property firm in Russia, encourages buyers to consider towns outside London.

The firm’s website advises that Swindon is one of the top places in Britain to buy property with prices that are 20 or 30 per cent cheaper than similar towns.

Another firm with offices in Moscow and St Petersburg, ‘All European Estate’, advertises 2,368 UK properties, including family homes in Wales, the North West and the Home Counties.

Although price rises are expected to slow next year, the average home costs nearly ten times that of average earnings at £262,823 – the biggest disparity since the housing boom peak in 2007. The impact of this is that the average age of a first time buyer in the UK is now 37 and that is even after allowing for the huge contribution to the market from the ‘Bank of Mum and Dad.’ Where this leaves us is with a market which is still strong but with ‘generation rent’ struggling to overcome many of the obstacles to home ownership. With the overall shortage of housing and the surge of foreign investment into the market we cannot see this situation changing in the near future.
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Green shoots or Autumn leaves?

James Burgess of MKB Solicitors LLP asks his clients and contacts for their views of the Barnsley property markets.

For those of you out there who do not know me, an introduction: I am a solicitor at MKB Solicitors LLP in Barnsley, specialising in commercial and domestic property and have been operating in the Barnsley area for the last three and half years or so. Previous to that, I practised in the North East of England, dealing with many and varied property-related transactions from the Scottish Borders to Yorkshire and beyond. At MKB, I continue to handle property transactions on a national basis and very often find myself on familiar ground.

When asked to contribute to this edition of ‘The Legal’ in particular with reference to my view of the current state of play in the commercial and domestic property markets in the Barnsley area, I took the perhaps unusual decision to firstly ask around some of our clients and contacts as to their views.

As a firm, we regularly act for investors and developers who very often ask us our opinion as to how we regard the markets and whether the green shoots of recovery are visible. On this occasion, I decided to turn the question back to those who really are on the ‘coal face’ of the property market and then add my own personal assessment based upon what we have experienced in the last six months or so.

Having canvassed opinion, it is clear that several themes have become apparent during this period.

Firstly, the domestic conveyancing market would appear to have taken a significant step forward, in that seemingly many more sales and purchase transactions are being undertaken than has previously been the case during the last four or five years. This notwithstanding that, as we all know, mortgages have over the last few months arguably become more difficult to obtain, the application process having been significantly enhanced, resulting in many would-be purchasers (in particular, first time buyers) finding it increasingly hard to secure an offer of mortgage. However, the view generally would appear to be that the enhanced application process has not had a significantly negative effect upon the numbers of successful offers to lend being processed. Of course, only time will tell, but heading in to the notoriously busy pre-Christmas period, the numbers of new instructions to buy and sell residential property are not showing any signs of slowing down – in fact, quite the opposite. This is, indeed, encouraging, not only for the legal profession, but for the wider professional and financial services industry generally.

Secondly, in terms of residential buy-to-let opportunities, the consensus seems to be that most investors (be they owners of a smaller, self-managed portfolio, or the larger commercial investment companies or syndicates with multiple-property portfolios) are of the opinion that the best deals have been and gone and that the signs of an ‘upward curve’ in the market have been apparent now for some time. It would seem that most investors, although still alive to opportunities, consider capital values to be on the rise and are now consolidating what they have managed to take on during the difficult times of the last four or five years.

Thirdly, turning now to the commercial property market. Increasingly over the last few years there has been a distinct propensity for companies and businesses to take on shorter term commercial lettings within either established or brand new developments, often on the basis of exceptional deals offering incentives such as significant ‘rent free’ periods, or rolling deals having been significantly enhanced, resulting in many would-be tenants being nervous about committing to commercial premises have been sold by mortgagees in possession acting under power of sale.

However, I don’t think it is at all controversial or unexpected to comment that lender-funded purchases have been rare and that they continue to be so. Although many of our lender contacts are keen to stress that their doors are always open to new opportunities, many commercial investors or operating businesses looking to take on new commercial premises are still nervous about committing to commercial lending obligations in a market which continues to be unpredictable and where such requirements as personal or cross guarantees have often been the norm.

Notwithstanding, there have recently been some encouraging signs of resurgence in the commercial property market in the region, evident mostly in the commercial lettings arena but also more recently in the commercial sales markets, albeit that in our experience this is focused primarily around commercial premises and development sites where
The domestic property market in the Rotherham area – including Swinton, Mexborough, Ravenfield, Denaby, Conisbrough and Rawmarsh – was hit quite badly by the banking crisis of 2007/2008 and recovery has been a slow, gradual process.

Much of inner-city Rotherham and parts of the outlying areas are composed of modestly priced properties. This encouraged a number of investors to come into the market in the late noughties, many of whom did extremely well by acquiring properties at the bottom of the market in terms of price which they were immediately able to let to willing tenants who were by this time desperate for somewhere to live and were unable to put together a deposit of any significance due to the strictures caused by the banking crisis.

Apart from the thriving buy-to-let market, the general market for second time buyers ground to something of a halt.

First time buyers are the essential seed for any property market and once they are out of the game everything else has to be effectively put on hold.

Fee earners have to balance profitability with being able to maintain a reasonable stream of incoming work, something which has not always been easy to achieve. Sadly this level of competition has resulted in some casualties.

A number of firms have gone under over the last few years and there have been an increasing number of amalgamations between practices.

As a matter of principle Norries do not pay referral fees to estate agents so we have had to exist on our client base, the quality of service offered and a reasonable level of fees.

Over the last few years there has been some new housing development in the areas near Wath upon Dearne, Wombwell and Darfield. Progress has been slow but there have been signs over the last couple of years of first time buyers returning to the market with government schemes such as the Help to Buy programme, some mortgage lenders offering 95% mortgages and other incentives helping them to make the choice between buying or renting. Rents generally have gone up so much in the last few years that buying is once more a viable prospect.

In conclusion, the last few years have been a long and difficult road for many, not least home owners and businesses who own (or aspire to own) their commercial premises. However, it is hoped that the glimmers of daylight which have undoubtedly been witnessed over recent months continue to shine through and that the green shoots of recovery flourish and grow into strong branches, supporting further growth for the future.
Movers & Shakers

Happy New Year – happy new job?

Robert Addy of CRA Legal expects a busy beginning to 2015 after positive prospects this year.

It has been another exciting year in the job market, with promising signs that the UK’s economic recovery is really beginning to run up a head of steam. Within the legal market, we have seen a surge in movement this year at firms of solicitors throughout South Yorkshire, with the creation of new jobs prevalent at all levels.

For me, this is evidence that companies have regained confidence in the strength of the market. Thus, there has been a spike in demand for skilled, experienced and talented candidates in our region. This is fantastic news, not only for existing job seekers, but for people who are currently in a role but have been considering making a move to further their career. I have sensed a feeling of general apprehension and hesitation in recent times, as confidence in the market from a job seeker’s perspective was not what it once was.

This meant that people may have been put off taking the leap into making that exciting new move. But things have changed for the better, as confidence in prospects has positively spiked.

As the recruitment calendar draws to a close for 2014, it would be wise to remember that the market buzzes back into life as soon as January hits, as companies race to snap up the hottest talent around. I am predicting a frenetic first few months of the New Year, so now really is a fantastic opportunity to make yourself known to the marketplace and get a head start on the competition.

Here at CRA Consulting, we specialise in recruiting for the legal sector and have our finger on the pulse of the market throughout Sheffield and South Yorkshire.

If you are considering a career move, you can speak to one of CRA’s specialist consultants on 0114 2418030 or email us at info@craconsultants.com. We can provide an insight into market conditions and discuss any options within our exceptionally vibrant client base.

Here’s to a fantastic 2014 – and to kicking off the New Year with an exciting new career opportunity!

New member at Bank House

After successfully completing her pupillage, Bank House Chambers are delighted to welcome Rosemary Kavanagh as its new member.

Jim Baird, Head of Chambers said “We are delighted Rosie has accepted our offer of Tenancy. She has demonstrated tremendous ability and will be an asset to Bank House. We now boast 37 barristers across all disciplines and she will add to the strength in depth we already have.”

New recruit for Cartwright King

Cartwright King Solicitors have appointed solicitor Emma Hubbard to their family law team in Sheffield. Emma has 10 years’ experience in the field. She qualified in 2007 and has spent the last 6 years working at Graysons WE in Sheffield. She specialises in all aspects of family law including divorce, financial disputes, injunctions and arrangements for children. Emma brings a wealth of experience to the well-established and expanding firm.

Fiona Lazenby, national head of the family law team says: “We are delighted that Emma has joined the firm. Her established presence in Sheffield will help to promote and drive forward our well-regarded national team.”

From April 14 this year, all separating couples will be required to attend a mediation information and assessment meeting before submitting legal proceedings. Despite cuts to the legal aid system, funding is still available for those willing to attend mediation, to encourage more families to resolve disputes without court intervention.
Banner Jones strengthens key teams

Sheffield and Chesterfield based law firm Banner Jones Solicitors has recently strengthened several of their key departments with the addition of 5 new team members.

Chris Sellars, Director of Human Resources said: “These appointments come at a time of sustained growth in our business and they will allow us to continue to develop our service offering to clients.”

Katie Ash (formerly Beal) joins Banner Jones from Bhayani Bracewell as Head of Employment Law. Katie has extensive experience and will be integral in the further development of the firm’s Employment Law department.

Liz Anderton joins from Norrie Waite & Slater as an Assistant Solicitor in the Criminal Defence department. Liz has over five years’ experience in this sector and she will be a valuable addition to this well established team.

The Business Legal Services Team has also been strengthened by the arrival of Ian Osborn, who joins from Square One Law in Newcastle as an Assistant Solicitor. Ian specialises in commercial property and his experience will add strength and depth to the already highly regarded team.

The firm’s Residential Conveyancing team has been further bolstered by the addition of Barbara Vickers based at the Dronfield office. Barbara joins one of the largest conveyancing teams in the region, with 20 legal staff now focusing solely on residential property transactions.

Debbie Barker, who has extensive knowledge of legal costs in the areas of Family, Care and Criminal cases, joins from Irwin Mitchell as a Law Costs Draftsperson. Debbie also has experience with Clinical Negligence and Public Law legally aided claims.

Chris says “We would formally like to welcome all of the new team members on board and wish them all the best in their new roles.”

Marie makes move to MKB

Marie Davis has joined the Conveyancing team at MKB Solicitors.

Marie has worked in Conveyancing for over 15 years and qualified as a FCILEx in 2002. She specialises in Residential Property with particular emphasis on sales and purchases, together with transfers of equity and re-mortgages.

Marie says: “MKB is a well-established family firm that is forward-thinking and yet retains its traditional values. I am looking forward to working with a fantastic team to help develop and grow the Property Law department.”

David Wright, head of the Property department and Managing Partner states: “We are delighted to welcome Marie Davis to our Property team. Marie has a vast experience in this area of the law and will be a valued member of the team with clients and colleagues.”

New Head of Department to boost Dispute Resolution presence in Barnsley

MKB Solicitors have also welcomed Glyn Staves as a new Head of the Dispute Resolution department.

Glyn is well known for dealing with professional negligence claims and has a wealth of experience acting on behalf of clients bringing Will disputes, property and contract litigation among others.

He handles complex and substantial litigation, in the County Court, High Court and Court of Appeal. Glyn has been previously been involved with many successful high profile cases including a professional negligence claim worth £2.4million and an assent rectification worth £600,000.

Glyn states: “I am thoroughly looking forward to the challenge of heading up the Dispute Resolution department. MKB Solicitors has an excellent reputation with local businesses for the services they offer. MKB is at an exciting stage in business development with lots of media presence and forward thinking initiatives and I am looking forward to being a part of it.”

David Wright comments: “Glyn has a fantastic reputation with clients and colleagues in Dispute Resolution and we are excited to have a new member of the firm with so much enthusiasm for his work and ability. Glyn’s wide skill set will improve and enhance the services we can provide to clients both in and around the area of Barnsley.”

hlw Keeble Hawson hires four lawyers after successful training contracts

hlw Keeble Hawson is further strengthening its Sheffield and Doncaster offices with the appointment of four newly qualified solicitors.

The four young lawyers are on board permanently after joining as trainees in 2012. James Burdekin joins the award-winning corporate department at Commercial House, Sheffield, where his colleague Fiona Ward is a member of the commercial property team. Kate Mawer starts her legal career with the private client practice at the firm’s Old Cathedral Vicarage offices in the city, while Elizabeth Davies boosts the clinical negligence team in Doncaster.

Ron Whitlam, senior partner at hlw Keeble Hawson, said: “Our rigorous selection process ensures that we recruit only the highest calibre of candidates in what are particularly competitive times for both recent legal graduates, and those completing their training contracts.”

This ensures that hlw Keeble Hawson can continue to offer the excellent service on which our reputation is built.”
Gordons appoints former Sheffield-based partner as Head of Regulatory

Yorkshire law firm Gordons has appointed a former Sheffield-based lawyer as its Head of Regulatory to service the growing demand the practice is experiencing for this specialist area of law.

Leading regulatory lawyer Dan Stowers joins the firm as partner from Irwin Mitchell where he worked for the past five years, including in Sheffield, and held a similar position. Prior to joining Irwin Mitchell, Dan spent two years at DLA Piper in Sheffield and a similar period at Cartwright King Solicitors.

Commended by The Legal 500 as “having maturity and perception in criminal and regulatory cases beyond his years,” Dan has over 16 years’ legal experience and specialises in defending companies and individuals in relation to regulatory and criminal investigations and prosecutions brought by the full range of regulators.

Dan also defends clients involved in serious and complex fraud matters including bribery and corruption, asset stripping, mortgage, advance fee, high yield and missing trader intra-community (MTIC).

Welcoming Dan to the firm, Gordons managing partner, Paul Ayre, said: “Dan is a highly regarded lawyer, well-known for his ability to provide commercially sound, practical advice.

“His skills ideally complement the firm’s wider corporate offer. Regulatory is an increasingly important area of the law and Dan’s appointment means we are ideally placed to provide our clients with enhanced expertise in this area.”

Commenting on his appointment, Dan said: “Gordons is a dynamic law firm with a reputation for providing excellent client service and pragmatic, effective advice. Having the opportunity to develop a regulatory and business crime service within such an ambitious and successful environment made it the ideal move for me. My objective is to make Gordons the leading regulatory and business crime law firm in the region.”

Taylor & Emmet trio boosts business services

Sheffield’s Taylor & Emmet LLP is strengthening the services it offers to local businesses, following a hat trick of new appointments. The firm is welcoming a new assistant solicitor and two trainees to its commercial and litigation teams, increasing capacity and enhancing client relationships.

Assistant solicitor, Brian Fowler, has joined the business legal services department to meet growing demand for the firm’s commercial property advice. He has ten years’ experience, most recently at Shakespeares Solicitors in Nottingham, where he focused on dispute resolution.

Brian has particular expertise in property litigation, having worked on matters involving rating issues and contractual disputes. Since relocating to Sheffield last year, he has been looking to enter the local legal sector and is now forging links with South Yorkshire’s commercial property professionals.

Trainee solicitor, Naz Shabir, is working with Taylor & Emmet’s commercial litigation team whilst studying for a Masters degree at the University of Sheffield. He is joined by Emma Daniels, who is on secondment from Coates Solicitors so she can complete the contentious seat of her training with the property litigation department.

Rob Moore, Taylor & Emmet’s head of business legal services, said: “We are always looking for bright, enthusiastic young lawyers to bring fresh ideas and a new perspective to the team. Naz and Emma are showing a great aptitude for litigation and there is no doubt the experience Brian has already gained will enhance our commercial property services, particularly complementing the block management and contentious work we already undertake.”

New Corporate Finance Partner for Sheffield-based accountants Hart Shaw

Sheffield & District Law Society sponsors Hart Shaw Chartered Accountants and Business Advisers has appointed Patrick Abel as Corporate Finance Partner at the Sheffield-based firm.

Patrick has 20 years’ Corporate Finance experience, 11 of those as a Partner with a national firm based in the city. Hart Shaw’s Corporate Finance department offers a complete range of strategic services to local businesses and recent months have seen an upturn in the number of transactions taking place, prompting the decision to expand the department.

Patrick comments: “This is a great opportunity for me to join such a highly thought of and proactive firm as Hart Shaw and lead their Corporate Finance offering. Our focus will be based around offering a complete range of support services to our clients in order to assist them to realise their strategic and corporate goals.

“Hart Shaw’s full service offering is equivalent to that of national firms, but unlike those firms is agile enough to respond to local market conditions and offer excellent value to its clients. This is an exciting time to be joining Hart Shaw with the genuine prospect of several years of anticipated economic growth ahead.”

Paul Dawson, Senior Partner at Hart Shaw comments: “Patrick is a well-known and respected individual and has a wealth of experience in this field which is vital to help realise the long term strategy we have at Hart Shaw. He will be able to hit the ground running with a number of clients we are currently working with in addition to increasing our profile and offering in the years to come.

“We wish Patrick every success in his career at Hart Shaw and are excited to start working with him.”
The Employment Appeal Tribunal has given an important Judgment that could affect many workers across the UK.

In one of the most eagerly awaited employment law cases of the year, it has been decided that workers are entitled to be paid overtime pay when they are on holiday.

The case of Bear Scotland v Fulton (and other conjoined cases) followed on from other holiday pay cases this year concerning issues such as commission payments.

It was suggested that those workers who are required to work overtime as part of their contracts of employment should receive holiday pay entitlement that reflects their normal rate of pay. Therefore, where a worker does work regular overtime, consideration needs to be given to exactly what their normal pay is – as it is likely to be more than their basic contractual pay.

This should be assessed over a period of time prior to the period of holiday they are taking to make sure the holiday pay reflects their normal average pay.

This is a major decision and one which could have a great impact on businesses. It now leaves it open to workers who are required to work overtime as part of their contracts of employment to bring claims against their employers for unlawful deductions from their wages, which could go back as far as 1998 and potentially be very costly indeed.

While the ruling is likely to be appealed and any final decision is likely to be some time away, in light of this decision it is still possible that claims could be made that would need to be dealt with until they are stayed by a Tribunal.

Will your business be affected by the changes to Holiday Pay entitlement?

The Legal_Sheffield and District Law Society_Winter 2014
Angela Wrottesley, Barrister at Bank House Chambers, Sheffield, provides comment on recent legal changes. Angela has been in Chambers since 1999 and maintains a mixed practice.

I am informed that the focus of this issue is Conveyancing – an area into which I rarely venture. I then remembered that there is an area where as Counsel I often come into contact with the conveyancing file - applications pursuant to TLATA.

The Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996 (TLATA) provides a basis for determining disputes surrounding trusts of land. Applications can be made regarding the exercise of Trustee’s functions. Such applications are often made with the intention of seeking an Order for Sale. Other applications which can be made pursuant to TLATA include those seeking a declaration as to the nature and extent of a person’s equitable interest in property subject to a trust of land. The legislation is often utilised by cohabitants after a relationship breakdown to establish their respective beneficial interests in the former cohabitational home.

It is however an acronym which can cause concern in the heart of a family solicitor and a similar missed beat in the private client department. Such applications require a good working knowledge of the CPR so that questions such as whether to issue Part 7 or Part 8; whether it is necessary to prepare Costs Budgets and how to make properly formatted Part 36 Offers can be properly determined. The applications also require an approach akin to Ancillary Relief and a patience to manage client’s expectations in the midst of relationship breakdown.

In order to manage such a case effectively any applicant must have in front of them the documents which formed part of the purchase of the property in the first place – accordingly Counsel’s request for sight of and the receipt into the offices of Instructing Solicitors of the conveyancing file.

The conveyancing solicitor at the time of the purchase has the opportunity to ensure that no such application is even required. You will meet the parties at a time when calm discussions can be conducted and proper instructions taken before post separation self interest has emerged.

Even though the Land Registry, after the case of Stack v Dowden, instituted new forms to try to urge purchasers to declare their beneficial interests in the home and the Law Society has given guidance as set out in the Law Society Practice Note on Joint Ownership, problems still seem to be emerging. Conveyancers are advised to take care and to offer in certain circumstances that co-owners take independent legal advice to ensure that their interests are properly protected. Clear file notes must be kept regarding meetings. In my opinion telephone conferences on these crucial issues should be avoided. Telephone notes are often unclear and in poor handwriting. I would also try to avoid pro forma letters setting out advice in this complex area of law which are merely signed by the lay client and added to the file.

Don’t forget if you do have clients commencing on TLATA proceedings and your firm conducted the conveyance, I would advise that there is likely to be a conflict and so it may well be better to reject the new instruction. Your conveyancing files are likely to be a key exhibit and your conveyancer a witness of fact.

Counsel see such cases where the relationship has ended, tempers are high and emotions at their peak. Lay clients are trying to remember conversations which occurred sometimes decades before as to their intentions as to their home. The outcomes in cases can be notoriously difficult to predict and costs can run high. To conclude I quote the words of Lord Bridge in the case of Goodman v Gallant - a warning to all conveyancers:

“1 despair how often this Court has to remind conveyancers that they would save their clients a great deal of later difficulty if only they would sit the purchasers down, explain the difference between a joint tenancy and a tenancy in common, ascertain what they want and then expressly declare in the conveyance or transfer how the beneficial interest is to be held because that will be conclusive and save all argument …. ALWAYS TRY TO AGREE ON AND THEN RECORD HOW THE BENEFICIAL INTEREST IS TO BE HELD. It is not very difficult.”
Making a move before 2015

With Autumn underway, now could be the time to make a change and move home in time for Christmas, according to Steve Hinshelwood of Blundells.

Autumn is well underway and it’s a prime time for selling property as, after the summer holidays, home buyers are more determined to find a property and complete on the sale before Christmas comes round.

This year is no different with continued improvements in the housing market, house prices and developments in mortgage lending encouraging more people to move home. Dedicated sellers can take advantage of this renewed interest and look to seal a deal quickly.

We are seeing a responsible and sustainable recovery in the housing market and the volume of housing transactions is continuing to grow at a measured pace, with more people moving home in the first half of 2014 compared to the same period in 2013. We expect this momentum to continue throughout the remainder of the year.

This year we have seen the introduction of the Mortgage Market Review (MMR), which means that brokers and lenders need to demonstrate that the mortgage recommendation they make is in the best interests of the customer and meets the customer’s individual needs.

Our mortgage consultants can talk you through the new process and help you gather the information required to meet the lender’s requirements.

In order to help people understand the changes in the local housing market conditions, the impact of MMR on the mortgage process and how a potential interest rate rise could impact you, the door is always open at any one of our branches across South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire.

We proactively encourage property sellers, buyers, landlords and those looking for mortgage advice, to come and talk to us about any property dilemmas and find out how they can move home before the end of the year.

We believe it is important for current and prospective property buyers and sellers as well as landlords to be aware of current market conditions and any changes that could impact the decisions they make.

We look forward to welcoming people to our branches, helping to make the right decision for them and assisting them in moving home this year.

For further information about Blundells call the team on 0114 218 0701 or visit www.blundells.com

Business booms for Taylor&Emmet property team

Sheffield’s Taylor&Emmet LLP is predicting a record year for its residential conveyancing team, following a 53% increase in volume of work since January.

The solicitors have surpassed their own expectations for growth, thanks to improvements in the property market and the firm’s expanding presence locally.

According to the latest Land Registry property transaction data, Taylor&Emmet is ranked 19th out of 4,291 conveyancing solicitors in England and Wales for purchases completed. This figure was bolstered by the busiest August the firm has seen in recent years.

John Outram, Taylor&Emmet’s head of residential conveyancing, said: “The number of cases we completed in September was double that handled in September 2011. Talk of an interest rate rise may cool the market down slightly, but similar scare stories surrounding the new mortgage rules had little impact and demand remains strong. Going forward, we expect new instructions to remain high for the rest of the year and aim to carry the momentum we have built up into 2015.”

The conveyancing team’s success has been reinforced by ambitious plans for growth across all areas of the firm. In January, a merger was agreed with Bakewell stalwarts, Cockertons, complementing Taylor&Emmet’s Dronfield office and extending its reach into Derbyshire.

John added: “We have a large, forward thinking team with a broad set of skills, enabling us to handle all aspects of conveyancing work. Regardless of how busy we become, our focus has and always will be on the client. Taylor&Emmet’s success in this respect is highlighted by our most recent satisfaction survey, which found 99% of respondents rate the quality of our service and the advice we provide as excellent or very good.”
2015 AUCTION DATES

SUCCESSFULLY SELLING PROPERTY
for restoration, modernisation and investment

27 JANUARY
Deadline 12 December

24 FEBRUARY
Deadline 16 January

24 MARCH
Deadline 13 February

28 APRIL
Deadline 20 March

2 JUNE
Deadline 24 April

21 JULY
Deadline 12 June

15 SEPTEMBER
Deadline 7 August

20 OCTOBER
Deadline 11 September

8 DECEMBER
Deadline 30 October

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On Thursday 2 October 2014, the Junior Lawyers Division (JLD) and representatives of the Law Society attended the Law School at the University of Sheffield for their annual talk to current LPC and GDL students. Stacey Hanson, President of the JLD, outlined the JLD’s role and how students can benefit from getting involved in the activities that it runs. Stacey also gave an insightful account of her route into the legal profession.

Following Stacey’s talk, Sheffield & District Law Society President Steven Dawson gave a very entertaining and interesting talk on his route into the legal profession, along with some tips for students wishing to become a solicitor. Steve also set out his role within the Law Society and its structure.

After these talks, a number of LPC Alumni came to informally chat with the current students about their various experiences of the LPC and their different and varied experiences of legal practice.

Louise Glover, Careers Advisor for the School of Law, said that “The Law School would like to thank all speakers and visitors at this event. It is invaluable for our students to get input from fee earning lawyers and we’re grateful to them for making the time to give this. We were particularly pleased to welcome back former students, now trainees at firms in the Sheffield and District area.”
A solicitor who had to sift through millions of online documents relating to miners’ diseases has set up the UK’s first digital law firm.

DigitalLawUK, which is based in Barnsley, was the idea of Peter Wright after he had to get to grips with the law surrounding data storage as part of the high-profile miners’ cases he was dealing with.

The firm, which he launched earlier this year with his wife Heather Anson, who is a US attorney, gives advice on digital issues from data protection and copyright to social media policies and Freedom of Information. DigitalLawUK, which is based in the Digital Media Centre in Barnsley, does not give advice on any other legal matters, making it the only such specialist company in the country.

Over the next few weeks Peter is speaking at conferences, mainly in London, on topics from cloud computing to the ‘right to be forgotten’ online.

Peter, who is chair of the Law Society’s Technology and Law Reference Group, said: “It is very different from many other areas of law. You can train someone in buying and selling houses and not much changes in 40 years, but we have to keep up with changes all the time.

“A lot of companies know they have to be careful with data, but don’t really understand all the complexities of the law. You can have the IT department saying one thing, HR another, marketing something else and the legal team caught in the middle, and the risks are not taken seriously.

“We can come in and look at it all as a whole and work out exactly what is going on and make sure everything is legally compliant. The alternative can be fines and damage to reputation.”
City solicitors on a mission to raise thousands for charity!

Hard working and generous Sheffield-based solicitors Bell & Buxton have this year again taken part in the annual Will Aid campaign, and are hoping to raise more than ever! Last year they generated a bumper total of more than £9,000 and finished 2nd in the Yorkshire region fundraising table.

Will Aid is the UK’s leading charity will-writing scheme. It offers everyone the opportunity to make or update their Will in return for a donation to help people in need in the UK and all over the world.

This was Bell & Buxton’s 10th year taking part in this worthwhile cause that draws together nine well-known UK charities: ActionAid, Age UK, British Red Cross, Christian Aid, NSPCC, Save the Children, Sightsavers, SCIAF (Scotland) and Trocaire (Northern Ireland).

So determined are the firm to raise as much as possible that they offered appointments with 3 of their top solicitors – Charles Neal, Martin Sissons, and Clare Davies, as well as support being provided from the whole Probate department.

Ruth Tormey from Christian Aid, one of the charities benefitting said: “Christian Aid really appreciates Bell & Buxton’s support for Will Aid because Will Aid is very important to us. Not only do we receive a significant amount in donations, but the campaign also provides an opportunity for people to leave Christian Aid a legacy. Legacy gifts are crucial in enabling our work to eradicate poverty and change the lives of vulnerable people and incredible projects all over the world.”

Charles Neal, Partner at Bell & Buxton, commented: “We always take part in Will Aid; we see it as part of our firm’s commitment to being socially responsible by fundraising for good causes both in our local community, and on a wider national and international scale. We are passionate about Will Aid and the causes it supports, not just through the making of a Will but also by people potentially leaving a Legacy donation to a charity in that Will. We work very hard to make the campaign a success and are delighted to have done so well by raising over £46,000 to support vulnerable people and incredible projects all over the world.”

The University of Sheffield Law School hosts legal update

On 7 October solicitors from the Sheffield area attended a session on the recently implemented Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013 and the Consumer Rights Bill (expected to be implemented in October 2015).

The event was introduced by Pauline Laidlaw (deputy director of the LPC) and presented by Gareth Bramley and Rachel Cooper both of whom are solicitors with experience in commercial practice and teach Commercial Law in the School on the LPC.

The event was attended by solicitors from DLA Piper, Nabarro, Irwin Mitchell, hlw Keeble Hawson and Squire Patton Boggs and included among their number Sheffield University LPC alumni. One of the attendees, Russell Kelsall, of Squire Patton Boggs said: “I attended this event run by the Department of Law at the University of Sheffield because I specialise in this area of work, and wanted to both engage with others in practice and those in the School of Law about the impact of the new legislation.

The session was really worthwhile, as it was attended by solicitors from various firms who act for clients affected by the new legislation. I was able to discuss the issues with others and gain a better insight into how they are interpreting and dealing with matters following the changes. The setting was relaxed and the session was run well by Gareth, Rachel and Pauline. I would definitely be interested in attending similar events in the future.”

The event was an encouraging start to a program being planned which hopes to see increased interaction between the Law School and local law firms. The next event is expected to take place in early 2015 and will be advertised through the Sheffield and District Law Society.

100 miles to help keep children safe

A team at Howells Solicitors has cycled their way to raising over £720 for the law firms’ charity of the year, SAFE@LAST.

Taking inspiration from the Tour de France this summer, the team arranged a sponsored ‘tour-de-howells’ - cycling a 120 mile route between all four offices from Hull to Sheffield.

The new client advisors started at the Howells Office in Hull, cycling to the Barnsley office, then Rotherham and ending in Sheffield, a full 12 hours after starting out.

They have so far raised over £720.00 for the charity SAFE@LAST, a registered charity that helps children at risk of running away from home.
In the summer of 2014, after 28 years in Paradise Square, St Johns Buildings Chambers, under the leadership of Sally Harrison QC, moved to spacious new premises in the heart of the City at 7 Leopold Street (formerly the Bank of Scotland), directly across from the Leopold Hotel.

The grade II listed building built in 1888, which was the former Medical School for Sheffield as evidenced by the door into the main barristers’ work room, has been renovated to a very high standard whilst still retaining much of its original character. The magnificent ornate ceiling on the ground floor, once occupied by the banking hall, is now the canopy to the hub of Chambers.

Once it was cashiers handing out money to members of the public, now it is where Barrister’s clerks hand out briefs for court and where fees are collected when cases are completed. All of the staff, including secretarial and support services, are housed in this one bright open space and are able thereby to work effectively as a team.

The primary aim of the refit was to provide extensive, accessible facilities for our clients whilst providing generous working space for members. The accommodation provides both private rooms and hot desking areas to accommodate varying barristers’ working practices depending on whether they spend most of their time in the court room or have a paper based civil practice requiring privacy and space to use the online facilities, library and conference rooms.

St. Johns Buildings has, with its vision and plan for growth, achieved its main aim for its clients by providing four large air conditioned conference rooms with wifi, large screen televisions, DVD players and Apple TV. One room hosts the video conferencing facilities, which are widely used not only by members but also by professional clients and the Court when such facilities are required.

On a day to day basis, the conference facilities are utilised by members of chambers and their clients. However, with a little “twist”, two conference rooms open up to become a 70 seater lecture facility. Once transformed, St. Johns Buildings has one of the most impressive facilities in the City, specifically created to allow Chambers to provide seminars, conferences and events for our professional clients.

The new building was officially opened on 12th September 2014 by the Presiding Judge of the North Eastern Circuit Mr Justice Coulson. Over 200 guests attended the event which enabled Chambers to show the full potential of the new premises.

There is no doubt in everyone’s mind that, whilst Paradise Square has been the home to Chambers for many years, the move to Leopold Street has been a tremendous success and cements St Johns Buildings’ vision for growth and expansion to be the top set of Chambers in the country.

In addition to the change in premises, there have also been other significant changes. In 2014, St. Johns Buildings Sheffield has seen an unprecedented number of barristers join Chambers. Alison Dorrell and Paul O’Shea joined the criminal team whilst Justine Cole and Olivia Weir joined the family team. All are experienced practitioners who have moved from Bank House Chambers. They were joined shortly afterwards by Louise Stanbury, Kate Morley and Helen Davey, also experienced and well respected family practitioners formerly of Bank House Chambers. This was a tremendous boost to Chambers which took place prior to its relocation and further strengthens the team.

2014 was also another highly successful year for judicial appointments within St Johns Buildings Sheffield. Sarah Wright and Jessica Pemberton were both appointed to the Circuit Bench and are sitting in Sheffield and Hull respectively. In November, Siobhan Kelly became a District Judge in Leeds.

By the time you read this, Christmas will only be a blink away, and we will all be looking forward to the New Year. We hope that 2015 will be another year in Paradise for all.
Leopold Square’s newest restaurant bar savours expansion success

Restaurant and Latin bar Cubana is toasting expansion success with a move into 5,800 sq ft premises in Leopold Square.

The tapas bar which serves up Spanish and South American cuisine, live music and dance classes, commissioned award winning lawyers hlw Keeble Hawson to acquire the lease of its new two floor premises, formerly occupied by Platillos.

Offering 120 covers, the commercial property triples the capacity of its former Trippet Lane premises which it had operated from since 2000 - hosting regular visits by legendary Cuban outfit, Buena Vista Social Club.

Owners Adrian Bagnoli and Brad Charlesworth and their team including head chef Fabian Cruz, have recreated the rustic style and authentic Cuban ambiance of their previous premises – and have exciting plans to bring in some of the UK’s top Latino bands for special one off events.

Said Adrian, a well-known Sheffield entrepreneur who co-founded Sheffield’s Viva Salsa night club in the mid-1990s: “The move to Leopold Square comes at a formative time in the business as we expand not just our square footage, but our offering - with the addition of a private function room, more DJ nights and dance classes.

“hlw Keeble Hawson did a great job in ensuring our lease progressed smoothly and on time and we enjoyed working with the firm on this momentous milestone.”

Craig Law, commercial property partner at hlw Keeble Hawson - one of the region’s biggest law firms with offices in Sheffield, Leeds and Doncaster, said: “Cubana’s presence in Leopold Square will further enhance the area’s buzz and dynamism. The expansion marks a dynamic success story for the business as it goes from strength to strength.”

Ranked in the top 10 in Experian’s table of the most active advisers in Yorkshire’s mergers and acquisitions market during 2013, hlw Keeble Hawson is also included in Experian’s top 5 most active legal advisers in Q1 of 2014.

Our final two selections of traditional tortilla española (Spanish omelette) and mozzarella y jamón, parcels of Buffalo mozzarella wrapped in parma ham, went well when mixed with the hot tapas we’d chosen but would also have made a satisfying cold snack.

But the delicious food created by head chef Fabian Cruz since the restaurant’s original premises opened 14 years ago isn’t the only thing that attracts Cubana’s customers – the venue offers entertainment every night of the week, including live music, DJs and dance classes. And as Adrian was pleased to note, although Cubana’s new home has more than triple the capacity of their old site on Trippet Lane they have managed to retain the cozy, rustic feel which makes them stand out from chain restaurants.

Even loyal old customers who were sceptical about the move have been converted and love the restaurant’s new home – over 400 people attended the opening night in July and after just a few months, customers both old and new are coming back for more. After visiting Cubana it’s easy to see why – the friendly service, appetizing food and unique atmosphere make for a great night out.

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