Subject: The Yorkshire Law Society 1786-2015 - A Personal Tribute

Dear Secretaries,

This is a request for your help. On 21 March 2017 I shall have been a member of the Yorkshire Law Society for exactly 50 years and the Society itself will have been in existence for exactly 231 years since its inaugural meeting on 21 March 1786. We were not the earliest of the provincial law societies. That honour belongs to Bristol (founded in 1770) to whom I am writing separately. Both societies, incidentally, predate the national Law Society which did not appear on the legal scene until 1825. Both the law and its practice have seen momentous changes since that time and I have equally seen momentous changes during the period of my membership of the Yorkshire Law Society. To take but one example, when I joined in 1967, there were no women members and it was still the age of scale fees, positively no advertising and no ‘ambulance chasing’. On the other hand legal aid and advice was fairly freely available to the indigent and Euro-Law was something that only johnnie-foreigners and a handful of specialist practitioners in the City of London had to worry about. In short much has changed since those not so far off days.

This is not an orthodox academic history but it does attempt to provide an admittedly personal perspective on an important period of legal development which formed the world in which we live today, including its full legal, political and social context. If the future of the legal world is very difficult to predict, some understanding of how we got from where we were to where we are will at least give us some notion of where we might be heading, or even encourage us to change direction. It is for this reason that although the title might suggest a geographically specific perspective, it does provide a more general one – at least that is my hope!

Attached is a pdf version of the book’s dust jacket which gives some indication of its scope. Further information can be obtained from a selection of chapters can be browsed via links on the Society’s website www.yorkshirelawsociety.org.uk/member-news together with a photograph of a presentation of one of the first copies off the press to the President of the Law Society (and formerly President of the Bristol Law Society) Robert Bourns.

I can only ask for your indulgence in bringing these details to the attention of your members in whatever way you may feel appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Lawton