

ABOUT ASHURST ALUMNI

## Alumni news

Catch up on the latest news about Ashurst and Blake Dawson alumni.



If you are an alum of the firm who has started a new position, won an award or perhaps moved into a different career path then please let us know, we'd love to hear from you. Please email us at [alumni@ashurst.com](mailto:alumni@ashurst.com).

## Achievements and appointments

Congratulations to our alumni on their recent achievements and new appointments.

### FRANKFURT - DIANE MANZ BECOMES LECTURER OF SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY



**Diane Manz** (Senior HR Resources Manager, Frankfurt, until 2017) has recently started a new role at Hamburger Fern-Hochschule as a lecturer in social psychology. While the lecturing role is new, educating others is something Diane has been focused on since starting her own consulting business in 2017.

#### What have you been doing since leaving Ashurst?

It's been nearly four years now since I left Ashurst to start a more or less completely new life. From one day to the next I was a mother of a nearly five-year-old boy, the cutest boy ever by the way, and I spent my days in playgrounds and my nights in a coma...

11 months later, in 2017, having settled as a family, I started my own consulting business – branding I coaching & consulting. Having dealt with so many different people and challenges in the workplace, my 15 years at Ashurst were the perfect preparation for it. I can focus on what I love and what I am best at – dealing with people and helping them to find the right track for their professional life, and supporting them to overcome obstacles and develop. No wonder that a lot of my clients are lawyers and I am really happy to keep this bond to the branch. My main focus in business coaching is on career development, leadership, communication, inclusion and work-life fit. Another important topic of my work often linked to this is stress management and burnout prevention, especially for working parents. Besides coaching I also offer workshops and lectures.

Since this summer I am also proud to be part of the team of Hamburger Fern-Hochschule as a lecturer for social psychology.

#### What is your favourite Ashurst memory?

There is not one special Ashurst memory, there are so many. Starting with the legendary HR Skiing trips to Garmisch in the early years, countless staff outings and parties with so many wonderful people, working with a fantastic HR team all over the world, being part of exciting international HR projects and last but not least all the personal and professional challenges that made me thrive. A special laugh goes to the whole support

team in Frankfurt for all the fun we had and for all the stuff we rocked together. I often miss my legal and non-legal colleagues and it was so good to see many of them at the last Alumni event in Frankfurt.

#### GLASGOW – NICKY BEACH JOINS PRIVATE SPACE COMPANY SKYRORA



Congratulations to **Nicky Beach** (Legal Analyst, Glasgow, until 2018) who has joined private space company Skyrora as Legal Associate.

Skyrora designs, manufactures and deploys rockets to clear the way for small satellite manufacturers looking to access Space. Headquartered in Edinburgh, and with facilities across Europe, Skyrora is developing launch vehicle technology to ensure that the life-changing benefits of space are realised here on earth.

#### LONDON – DR RONNIE YEARWOOD ADMITTED TO THE BARBADOS BAR



In June 2020 **Ronnie Yearwood** (Solicitor, London, until 2015) was presented to the Bar of Barbados by Sir Trevor Carmichael QC to the Chief Justice of Barbados at the Supreme Court of Barbados.

2020 has been a big year for Ronnie who was also appointed a Director of Invest Barbados in February.

**Congratulations on being admitted to the Barbados Bar. Tell us more about this and what it means to you.**

Thank you. To practice law in Barbados and other parts of the Caribbean requires completing a 6-month conversion course for lawyers trained in the UK and the Commonwealth to acquire the Legal Education Certificate (LEC). The course can be done at 3 law schools across the Caribbean. The closest school to Barbados is Hugh Wooding Law School in Trinidad. Therefore, each week I travelled to Trinidad very early on Monday morning by plane for classes and back to Barbados late on a Tuesday night. I would then spend the rest of the week doing in-service training, lecturing at university and chairing a local school Board amongst other commitments such as researching and writing.

This made it a mammoth effort to complete the LEC which allowed me to be called to the Bar in Barbados. I could not have done it without the support of my wife, Lucy.

#### **What does your role as a Director of Invest Barbados involve?**

Being a Director on the Board of Invest Barbados (IB) is an important role which involves providing support, guidance and direction to the day-to-day management team of the key investment promotion agency of Barbados. IB works to promote and attract investments of all sorts, from the traditional in manufacturing and property to the modern in ITC.

What is particularly exciting at the moment for Barbados is the Barbados Welcome Stamp which allows people to work remotely from Barbados for 12 months. Given the changing nature of tourism due to COVID-19, this move by the government of Barbados shows a proactive response to change rather than being caught on the backfoot. The IB team at management and Board level was part of the Welcome Stamp initiative along with other key government agencies and all involved deserve a big well done! So, when can I expect to see you in Barbados?!

**Alumni team: Sometime soon we hope!**

#### **You are also a lecturer at the University of West Indies, what do you like about teaching?**

I enjoy teaching, at its core every job involves an element of teaching, some more formal than others. In practice, as lawyers, we also teach even if we do not call it that and use terms such as "knowledge transfer". To explain a deal to a client is a teaching moment.

I think what I enjoy most about teaching is seeing when students understand the ideas and can then apply them to various situations.

I especially enjoy teaching back in Barbados and at the same institution I graduated from, which I believe is a vital part of the region's identity and instrumental for the future of the region. There is no Caribbean without the University of the West Indies (UWI), as every people crafting a new identity needs institutions that can tell and record their story. It is an exciting time to be at UWI given its recent rankings in Times Higher Education as number 1 in the Caribbean, number 18 in all of Latin America and the Caribbean, and also listed

in the 100 universities of the Times Higher Education Golden Age universities, ie universities formed between the 1940s and 1960s.

**What do you enjoy most about life in Barbados?**

There is so much to enjoy about living in Barbados. It is good to return to be able to spend time with my mother and reconnect with family and friends. Like living and working anywhere it comes with its stresses and strains, but to be so close to the beach is a privilege with the sound of the waves crashing as you amble along on a cool evening can be magical, timing it so you can catch the sunset even more so. I enjoy hiking usually with an organised group, and for such a geographically small island there are plenty of routes off the beaten track that will keep you occupied. I especially appreciate long walks on the East Coast of the island and my favourite park, Farley Hill, that overlooks the East Coast.

**What is your favourite Ashurst memory?**

On reflection working at Ashurst nurtured many useful traits which I can transfer into my different commitments in the workplace. At the time when working long hours into the early morning these teachable moments may not have been appreciated to their fullest but on consideration I am grateful to have enhanced my skills of multi-tasking, endurance, critical thinking and interactions in a professional capacity.

I especially enjoyed the opportunity to work with Goldman Sachs. The GS team was sharp and engaging and because such a relationship was developed, I extended my secondment there.

The opportunity to work abroad was enjoyable. I was unsuccessful in applying to Singapore, but what I feel was a blessing in disguise was the chance to work in Brussels and explore this city's history and culture.

Friends who I can call upon in a professional and personal capacity is probably the most important takeaway from my time at Ashurst.

**LONDON – CHARLIE GEFFEN BECOMES NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF KENTECH GROUP** ^



London alum **Charlie Geffen** (Senior Partner, London, until 2013) added a board position with Kentech Group to his already extensive CV. Along with his new role as Non-Executive director of the Kentch Group, Charlie is also a trustee of the Institute of Cancer Research, a member of Council at Surrey University and Chair of The International Stock Exchange Authority Limited.

**Please tell us more about The International Stock Exchange and your role as Chair of the regulatory arm.**

The International Stock Exchange (TISE) in Guernsey has around 3,000 listed securities and has grown significantly over the last few years. Because it sits outside both the EU and UK regulatory frameworks it is able to offer a pragmatic and cost-effective exchange which benefits from a well-developed professional services culture in the Channel Islands. Recently it has grown its share of High Yield Bonds and REITs as well as funds, securitisations and other technical debt listings. Another opportunity is to create a private market for private companies accessible only to sophisticated investors. There is considerable demand for more liquidity for private companies but this is constrained by the regulatory environment in the UK and EU which is appropriate for large public companies but often creates an unnecessary burden and cost for smaller private businesses. I currently chair the regulatory arm and will take on the Group Chair role in January.

**You currently hold a number of board positions in a variety of very different organisations. What do you enjoy most about this?**

The variety. During my time at the Firm we set up a programme called "Life Outside Ashurst" to encourage partners at all levels to take on a non-executive role. These roles provide an opportunity to act as a principal rather than an adviser, widen your network and generally broaden your experience. This benefited the Firm, made you a better lawyer and created a more interesting track record if you wanted to do things after retiring from the law which I did. After I left Ashurst I spent 6 years helping Gibson Dunn grow its London office which gave me access to a whole range of different people, particularly in the US, and took on a non-executive board role at a fund manager based in London. As well as TISE, I am a non-executive director at Kentech, which services the global energy sector, where I represent a significant minority shareholder in a private equity controlled company. I have also taken on the Deputy Chair role at The Institute of Cancer Research and am a member of Council at Surrey University. Although they are all very different organisations it is fun to be challenged and interesting to try and apply my experience in different settings. Even better it allows me more time to ride horses than being a lawyer ever did!

**What is your favourite Ashurst memory?**

There are many and I had a great time. During my first week at the firm I was asked to drive the Senior Partner's new car to serve a court summons on his neighbour who had been disrupting his pheasant shooting. Driving the new car and keeping it overnight in the run down part of London where I was living was as scary as serving the summons. Later experiences included being whisked across town for a meeting with Virgin on one of their new limo-bikes and nearly losing a bankers cheque for £75m. More useful was helping develop the private equity practice, grow the firm's European network and a famous lunch with Mary Paddy at a renowned winery on the Mornington Peninsular.

#### LONDON - CHRISTOPHER HENLEY COLLECTS CII DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD



Congratulations to **Christopher Henley** (Solicitor, London, until 2004) who was awarded the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII) Distinguished Service Award.

This award is for those who have "demonstrated outstanding qualities and achievements within the profession". Christopher received this award in recognition of his contributions to the insurance industry generally, through his books "All Risks Property Insurance" (which won the British Insurance Law Association book prize), "The Law of Insurance Broking" (now in its third edition) and "Drafting Insurance Contracts", as well as lectures, articles and contributions to several other publications, and chairing the Research Studies

Committee of the Insurance Institute of London since 2004.

Christopher is an FCII and a Chartered Insurer, as well as being a vice president and member of Council of the IIL. In a previous life as a solicitor he handled several cases that set precedents in insurance, as well as specialising in defending claims against insurance brokers.

He was also a Long Distance Learning Tutor for ACII students in the days when course tests involved ink and real paper rather than anything more digital, and as a result readily admits to a conscious (and almost pathological) bias against illegible handwriting. He is however pleased to receive the award in the shape of a heavy glass paperweight, because the Wordings department is probably the last bastion of the pre-paperless society and he is sure that it will come in very useful on his desk.

#### What is your favourite Ashurst memory?

Perhaps the fact that my interview with Jeremy Hill in 1998 ended with a couple of glasses of wine at 7pm in the meeting room to celebrate the fact that I had apparently got the job!

Actually I was first offered a job by Ed Sparrow in 1986 as [Big Bang](#) was happening and having had the interview at 8am, he offered me the job at 1pm with an invitation to attend the firm's weekly cocktail party that evening. I did. He introduced me to the very eminent Senior Partner as "This is Mr Henley. He is thinking of joining us", to which the senior partner looked me straight in the eye and replied "Not with that beard he's not". And I didn't, until 1998...and the theme then recurred as my first written appraisal from Jeremy ended with the phrase "I do wish he would get rid of that wretched beard". Ironically about 3 years later I did, at which point the sight was so shocking that he asked me to grow it again. It has since never left my face.

#### MILAN - ANDREA SEMMOLA COMMENCES IN HOUSE COUNSEL ROLE WITH SNAM



Congratulations to **Andrea Semmola** (Lawyer, Milan, until 2017) who has joined Italian energy infrastructure company, Snam, as Senior Counsel Non-regulated Business Asset Legal Affairs.

#### Please tell us about your new role with Snam.

In July of this year (yes, during the lockdown and pandemic emergency!), I moved from the law firm I was collaborating with to take up the role of Senior Counsel Non-regulated Business Legal Affairs at Snam, providing legal assistance and negotiation for extraordinary deals all over the world in connection with non-regulated business assets.

#### What have you been doing since leaving Ashurst?

I moved to a boutique law firm where I have continued to practice in the energy and renewable energy field (both on the M&A and Banking side).

#### What is your favourite Ashurst memory?

There are many memories to recall. On the work side, I had the opportunity to be involved in exciting and high profile transactions with primary standing counterparties. On the personal side, I made a lot of connections and friends that I continue to meet with today.



Congratulations to Professor **Michael Adams** (Consultant, Sydney office until 2007) for winning the Academic of the Year award at the Lawyers Weekly 2020 Australian Law Awards.

Professor Adams is Head of the University of New England Law School in Armidale, New South Wales. We recently spoke to him about this award, his time at Blake Dawson, career highlights and his passion for inspiring the next generation of lawyers. We look forward to sharing his full interview early next year as part of the 2021 *Firm friends* annual yearbook.

In the meantime, enjoy a short extract from the interview.

#### What does being named Academic Lawyer of the Year at the Lawyers Weekly 20th Australian Law Awards mean to you?

I think it is a reflection on how seriously I take my mentoring and reflects my investment in the next generation of lawyers. I have been investing in this for 30 years and I have won a number of awards for mentoring.

My daughter challenged me recently and asked me if I'm actually a mentor or a champion, because I do tend to champion young lawyers. Having a daughter go through the field means I have a particular soft spot for female lawyers because I sometimes think they get a rough trot, so I spur them on to get the results they want to achieve.

One of the things I have actually been doing recently is free LinkedIn sessions where I make myself available for career advice for lawyers which I find really rewarding.

Two of my nominee referees for the prize were actually students, the current president of the Law Students Society and the past president. I invested in their leadership skills, getting them to national conferences and supporting them when they had internal political problems. They always knew they could phone me to get advice, help and suggestions, and bounce ideas around. One who graduated last year has become my research assistant this year and it has been lovely to work with her at a different level as well as a graduate.

On a more personal level, my daughter's team was nominated for an award at the Lawyers Weekly awards for the Employment and Industrial relations team of the year. She was watching the awards with her team at the partner's house and all of a sudden she saw my wife, Melissa, and our lounge room, and said "That's dad!". She knew I was being nominated but neither of us thought I would win because I am not from the [Group of Eight](#) universities and if you look at the history of the award, mostly it tends to go to these. I was genuinely surprised, and for Lucy to comment that it was such a funny thing to be sitting around with all of these other lawyers and see her dad win an award - that was very cute.

#### SYDNEY – JOHN WOOD PROMOTED TO GENERAL MANAGER, COMPLIANCE AUSTRALIA & NZ AT EQUIFAX



Congratulations to alum **John Wood** (Partner, Sydney, until 1996) on his recent promotion to General Manager of Compliance, Australian and NZ at Equifax.

His promotion has also resulted in him working with good friend and fellow alum David East (Partner, Sydney, until 1997) who will be filling his previous role.

**Congratulations on your promotion to General Manager, Compliance Australia & NZ at Equifax. Please tell us more about both the role and the organisation.**

Equifax is a listed American multinational data, analytics and technology group, largely based around consumer credit reporting agency businesses in various countries. In ANZ, it has built from the old Veda business, acquired by it in 2016. My time with it started some 2½ years back, as a short contract role to deliver an M&A integration, and evolved from there to a 4 day/wk permanent employee. Immediately prior to this role, I was Senior Legal Counsel for Marketing Services, B2C and licensed businesses – a position that one of our other alumni, David East, is now filling (to paraphrase the Blues Brothers, we're getting the band back together...)!

My GM, Compliance role is responsible for internal regulatory and operational risk compliance, plus external dealings with regulators, across ANZ – with reporting to our ANZ GC as well as to Heads of Compliance and Privacy in the US. In a rapidly evolving "big data" world, in the midst of major platform transformations within the group, it is anything but boring!

#### Since leaving Ashurst you have had an extensive career. What are some of your career highlights?

My B&F/Projects training and partnership with Ashurst was a great platform to build from, no doubt about it. It has allowed me a varied career along some, perhaps, less-travelled paths. My years as a GC/executive with listed hard rock and O&G mining companies were dynamic, challenging and a lot of fun – setting up some US operations around 9/11 remains particularly memorable. Morphing from a Principal Counsel to Director of Structured Finance & Alternative Investment Products within National Australia Bank was a source of many great experiences. Board positions have been rewarding. And contracting roles post-2011 have given me great variety, from "big pharma" (Baxter) and "big tobacco" (BAT) to the Project Counsel for NSW Treasury Corp's custodial restructuring of Government FUM. My current "big data" role provides great colleagues, challenges and is definitely up there with them!

#### What is your favourite Ashurst memory?

There were many times we worked hard and partied hard (possibly, harder...). But my favourite memory probably remains a secondment the firm arranged for me with Pillsbury in San Francisco for a year or two. I made Senior Associate whilst I was away and the West Coast was a great place to be. Towards the end of that time, two senior partners from Sydney passed through SFO en route to London, and asked as to my return plans post-secondment. I suggested "after my money runs out?" – the response was, "Yes, a couple of weeks should be fine...". 7 months later, after a rock-climbing roadtrip through 46 US States in a Camaro Z-28, the firm accepted me back in Sydney without blinking an eyelid. Not sure I'd recommend that for career progression now...

## Forums and events

We are delighted to welcome our alumni to participate in Ashurst forums and events.

#### CV REVIEW SERVICE

Our recruitment team are delighted to offer a CV review service to all Ashurst alumni, both legal and business services professionals.

Whether you are just starting out or have a well-established career our recruitment experts can help.

Simply email your CV (in English) to [alumni@ashurst.com](mailto:alumni@ashurst.com) and one of the team will be in contact to set-up a 30 min call to provide you with some personalised advice and tips.

#### Meet the experts



**James Oliver, Resourcing Manager**

James is a Resourcing Manager in the Sydney office of Ashurst and is primarily responsible for recruiting lawyers from associate to counsel level. Prior to joining Ashurst James worked for a global legal recruitment agency assisting private practice and in-house lawyers in their recruitment processes. He has over 10 years' experience reviewing legal CVs.



**Rebecca Owen, Resourcing Manager**

Rebecca is a Resourcing Manager in the London office of Ashurst. Rebecca deals with the recruitment of lawyers, from newly qualified to counsel in our London, Glasgow and Luxembourg offices. Prior to joining Ashurst, Rebecca worked for specialist legal recruitment agencies in the UK and Australia, assisting lawyers with their career moves within the private practice sector.





**Zahra Nowrouz-Tafreshi, Resourcing Consultant**

Zahra is a Consultant in the Resourcing team at Ashurst where she recruits both business services and legal roles. Prior to joining Ashurst Zahra worked for a number of recruitment agencies where her focus was solely on legal recruitment. Having originally studied law, Zahra has also worked as a lawyer both in Australia and overseas.



**Fraser Duff, Resourcing Advisor**

Fraser is an Advisor in the Resourcing team at Ashurst where he recruits across both the legal and business services sectors. Prior to joining Ashurst Fraser has worked within established recruitment agencies dealing with executive headhunting and freelance recruitment, before moving to an internal recruiter role.

## 200 STORIES FOR 200 YEARS



### Do you have a story to tell?

To celebrate Ashurst's bicentenary in 2022 the team behind the firm's successful First Women project are embarking on a new storytelling project, "200 Stories for 200 years".

This project will produce 200 multimedia stories that celebrate the firm's people and achievements over the past 200 years. The stories will be about Ashurst's people, both as individuals and groups, but could also be about events or places that are connected with the firm.

To kick start the project we are calling for a selection of photos and memories from our alumni. If you have recently been tidying out some cupboards and have come across any old photos from your time at Ashurst, we would love to hear from you! Please also get in touch if you would be interested in contributing a story via another medium such as a written piece, podcast, artwork or video.

Contact the [alumni team](#).

## In memoriam

We are sad to share the news that Martin Bell, senior partner of Ashurst between 1986 and 1992, recently passed away. His successor as senior partner, Andrew Soundy, shares his memories of Martin in a [moving tribute](#).

## Firm Friends yearbook

Our yearbook contains a selection of articles and interviews with alumni from across our global network. If you would like to feature in our next edition please get in touch with [alumni@ashurst.com](mailto:alumni@ashurst.com).

[READ FIRM FRIENDS 2021](#)

## Alumni contacts

If you have any questions or you need to update your contact details, please email [alumni@ashurst.com](mailto:alumni@ashurst.com) or get in touch with our alumni team.



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