

Norman Ernest Palmer CBE QC (1948-2016).

Celebrated English academic and barrister Norman Palmer QC died of motor neurone disease, aged 68, on 3 October 2016 in Wales in the UK.

Norman Ernest Palmer was a tall man, neatly dressed, erect of carriage with elegant diction. Whether in his native Chancery Lane or in a remote village in the Indus Valley inspecting artefacts, he presented like a version of Phineas Fog - the insouciant, yet observant traveller, fascinated by his fellow humanity.

He was the eponymous author of Palmer on *Bailment*, the esteemed legal text on every aspect of bailment. This book allowed Palmer to carve a life as the quintessential expert in all aspects of art law. It was his domain. He knew every aspect of the rights of sale, possession, transfer/ownership and loan of important chattels and museum policy. The text has been continuously cited since 1978 by high appellate courts of the common law world..

Bailment was conceived in Australia. It was written and edited in Palmer's first years as a fledgling academic in the 1970s at the University of Tasmania. He used to joke that Hobart in the late 1970s was the perfect setting, an escape into the *Never Never* to write and edit unhindered by the dictates of big city life.

Palmer maintained a lifelong connection to Australia and to the Sydney Bar. Palmer began visiting Australia as a child. His most enduring memories included visiting his grandmother in an old double-entranced house at Mosman in Sydney.

He was Sir Anthony Mason's cousin. He knew Gordon Samuels and Dennis Mahoney among others. Many Australian students collaborated with him in the countless essays, books and cases whilst studying in England. He was generous and lively with time and knowledge. He cared as much as he captivated. Palmer could often be seen dining with friends

in his favourite Greek restaurant near to the British Museum. Palmer regaled his guests with sparkling anecdotes, learned commentaries and humorous asides.

Outside of the law, his knowledge of literature, fable, spirituality was vast. A little known detail of Palmer - he was an avid collector of prestige vintage cars and owned a great number of them. Ever the eccentric, Palmer never knew how to drive and had no licence. He always toured with a chauffeur.

Palmer was born in Grays in Essex to Muriel and Norman senior. Palmer showed great promise from the outset at the Palmer Endowed School. He went to Magdalen College Oxford with a scholarship to study law. There he shone as a scholar with emphasis on common law subjects: tort and contract.

Palmer was called to the Bar of England and Wales at Lincoln's Inn in 1973. He later held chairs at Reading, Essex, Birmingham and Southampton Universities then, in 1991, occupied a chair in commercial law at University College London.

By that time, Palmer was already travelling the world and advising on art and antiquities from the earliest traces of civilisation to the Holocaust. In 1991 he took silk *honoris causa* for his contribution to the law outside court work. And in 2006 he was awarded the CBE for his services to art and the law. He kept chambers in 3 Stone Buildings in Lincoln's Inn. Palmer was awarded a doctorate by the University of Geneva.

Latterly, Palmer QC with Geoffrey Robertson QC and Amal Clooney were retained in 2015 to opine and advise the Greek government on the position of the Elgin Marbles at international law and under English law. Apart from that, his membership in committees and boards was fervent and continuous, addressing claims of chattels and inheritances, and

spoliations arising from the Holocaust era.

Throughout his career he facilitated many a restitution of priceless property. His noteworthy cases include *Government of Islamic Republic of Iran v Barakat Galleries Ltd* [2009] QB 22; [2007] EWCA Civ. 1374 where a Mayfair gallery was found in possession of valuable carved vessels about 4,500 old. Palmer with Sir Sydney Kentridge QC achieved repatriation of the objects. They also include *Marcq v Christie Manson & Woods Ltd* [2004] QB 286 in the English Court of Appeal and *Photo Productions Ltd v Securicor* [1980] AC 827. He also acted for the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre who successfully claimed back bones of their dead taken by early explorers and displayed in the Natural History Museum in London.

His most recent success was his collaboration with his spouse Ruth Redmond Cooper in establishing the Institute of Art and Law (IAL). It is the hub that brings together all aspects of practice, management and academic matters related to art, antiquities and the law. The institution's spirit reflects much of Palmer's life work.

He is survived by his second spouse Ruth Redmond Cooper, whom he married in 1994, and their daughter Lillian. His eldest daughter from his first marriage to Judith Weeks survives him as do his three grandchildren.

By Kevin Tang