

Monckton Chambers

Sir Jeremy Lever  
KCMG KC

23 June 1933 - 24 August 2025



Gray's Inn Chapel

Monday 26 January 2026

A collection of written tributes to:

**Sir Jeremy Lever KCMG KC**

Fellow of All Souls College, 1957–2017

Honorary Fellow, 2017-2025

January 2026

## **Order of Tributes**

Lord Bellamy KC (p.4)

Sir David Edward KCMG KC FRSE (p.9)

Sir Christopher Vajda KC (p.13)

Jon Turner KC (p.16)

John Swift KC (p.25)

Peter Freeman (p.33)

Jonathan Stone (p.38)

Stephen Kon (p.40)

Robin Griffith (p.44)

Katherine Rundell (p.49)

Sir John Vickers (p.52)

Jennifer Skilbeck

## **TRIBUTE BY LORD BELLAMY KC**

This evening, we warmly salute the life of a brilliant man, called to the Bar by this Inn nearly 70 years ago. Most importantly, we salute a beloved brother, friend, mentor and, above all, inspiration to many of those here.

As I add my own tribute, I like to think that Jeremy is looking down on us, gently smiling as he corrects my grammar and punctuation.

It was Brian MacKenna, a dominant figure at the Bar after World War II, who persuaded Jeremy to join his Chambers, then at 4 Paper Buildings, in 1961. MacKenna then promptly went on the High Court bench just before Jeremy actually arrived.

There were then five Members of Chambers. Pupils were still required to pay the 100 guineas fee for the privilege of doing pupillage. Much work was still done in manuscript. There were of course in Chambers no photocopiers or fax machines, no electronic calculators, and of course no internet, email, PCs, laptops or mobile phones, Smart or otherwise.

This is however the heyday of the first restrictive practices legislation aimed at destroying the cartels which then suffused British industry. Jeremy was ideal for restrictive practices work, being probably the only barrister of his day with a knowledge of economics, having read PPE at Oxford before switching to Law, and then studying economics at Nuffield College, as well as being a Prize Fellow of All Souls.

But he suffered from a disability, his deafness. As Sir David relates,

Jeremy did his national service in the Royal Artillery – he served in Kenya and held the Africa General Service Medal – but was unfortunately exposed to artillery fire without ear protection. His deafness meant that the cerebral world of restrictive practices suited him better than the hurly burly of the traditional Bar.

And so, to Jeremy’s first great case: Books. Even for those of us around at the time, it is an effort to remember the days before Amazon, before Waterstones, the England of the 1960s. In those days the publishing trade relied heavily on independent bookshops. The Publishers Association had an agreement which prevented books being resold below the published price. The fear was that if the then new-fangled supermarkets, just arriving, cut the prices of the best sellers, the independent bookshops would go out of business, and the more niche books would no longer be published. This argument carried the day, and the Net Book Agreement, as it was known, lasted for more than 30 years thereafter, curated throughout by Jeremy.

Jeremy however, disclaimed all credit for the victory; he said that the case had been won, single handed, by Miss Babbage - the redoubtable owner of an independent bookshop in Hampshire who gave evidence. To the Restrictive Practices Court of the time, the thought of Miss Babbage and her like being driven out of business by supermarkets was too much. Those who would lose out, said the Court, included “the new author with something important to say, the scholar with new knowledge to communicate, the poet or the artist seeking to bring more beauty into the world...”

Whether any modern competition authority would address the need to bring more beauty into the world is perhaps open to question; or indeed whether any modern judgment would wax as lyrical; but that was then.

After the triumph of Books, Jeremy's Chambers moved to this Inn in 1965. Jeremy of course went on to act, over many years, for an astonishing range of industries, both here and in the EU, who were accused – always of course quite wrongly and/or outrageously– of some sort of monopolisation or abuse of dominance; and Jeremy in time became the acknowledged leader in this sphere, as ultimately recognised by his Knighthood in 2003.

Perhaps I could briefly highlight the following.

Just before Britain entered what was then universally referred to as “the common market” in 1973, Jeremy sponsored, encouraged and became the consulting editor of, a small book on European competition law, which now, more than 50 years later, and very much larger, is approaching its 9<sup>th</sup> edition. Every weekend for some time, he would take the first draft chapters with him to All Souls, and the following Monday they would come back, reordered, annotated and much improved in Jeremy's beautiful handwriting. I for one remain deeply grateful for Jeremy's inspiration, which enabled “the book” to see the light of day.

And then there is Jeremy's powerful impact on the EU. At the time, the European authorities had not seen anything like it: the depth and the sophistication that Jeremy brought to his cases was far beyond what even the leading Continental lawyers of the day could offer.

For a while Jeremy established his own Chambers in Brussels, which he would later describe as “one of the happiest periods of my life”, of which Sir Christopher Vajda will also speak. Building on ground-breaking anti-dumping cases, and a major case for IBM – at least as important as the big-tech cases of today - Jeremy became a leading

advocate in the Court in Luxembourg; not least because, with headphones on, and turning the volume of the simultaneous translation up to maximum, he could overcome his deafness and hear everything perfectly.

Of his many European cases, I would particularly mention AM & S, which established that the European Commission could not seize a document containing the advice a party had received from their lawyer. This is a rule of English common law, but an equivalent did not really exist in civil law systems. Jeremy was supported by Sir David, representing the Bars and Law Societies of Europe. This case remains, as far as I know, the only example, in our many years of membership, where the English common law actually succeeded in changing a rule of EU law, very largely due to Jeremy.

In Chambers work, Jeremy is legendary for absorbing a huge mass of information, much highly technical, to weave a convincing narrative to show beyond question that his clients were entirely innocent, indeed very often more sinned against than sinning. Jeremy's immediate weapons were a fountain pen, a pair of scissors, Sellotape, a stapler and Snopake; but his deeper armoury was his integrity, his hard work, brilliant mind, sense of humour, and the affection he inspired in clients, instructing solicitors and juniors alike.

And if I may say so, his achievement becomes all the more if we acknowledge a little of what he had to contend with.

There was of course his deafness.

Then once, many years ago, walking one day in the Chilterns, we were discussing father figures. "All mine let me down" he said, matter of

factly, without reproach. Indeed, Jeremy had grown up in effect fatherless. That must have had a massive impact.

And while today the gay community is naturally accepted as an integral part of society, it is extraordinary to remember that this was a criminal matter until Jeremy was well into his 30s. I am sure he would wish us today to remember his former partner Brian, while acknowledging that, for Jeremy, the course of true love did not always run smooth.

I never heard Jeremy complain about anything that befell him. But these aspects, I suggest, should only increase our respect for what Jeremy achieved, often against the odds. If the lawyers of today strive to follow Jeremy's example of integrity, of intellectual rigour, of sheer hard work, that indeed will be an abiding legacy of his amazing life.

Let me end by relating that, many years ago, I was bidden one weekend by Jeremy to a black-tie dinner at All Souls, I discovered to my horror when changing for dinner that I had no black socks. Jeremy fortunately came to the rescue.

None of us can claim that we stand in the shoes of Sir Jeremy Lever; but at least I can say that once, by chance, I stood in his socks.



**Sir Jeremy Lever KCMG QC**  
**Tribute By Sir David Edward KCMG KC FRSE**

Gray's Inn Chapel, 26 January 2026

I am sad that I can't be with you tonight, and I'm very grateful to Sir Christopher for agreeing to read this short tribute. Jeremy was my oldest friend and I treasure his memory.

We went up to University College, Oxford, on the same day in 1953. In those days, we ate all meals in Hall, and the Scholars sat at a separate table.

Jeremy and I sat opposite each other for two years until I went off to do National Service between the two parts of my degree.

We could not have been more different. I was a callow Scot, fresh from a bleak northern public school. Jeremy already had a life crowded with incident.

In 1940, as the Blitz began, his father sent him with his mother and his younger brother Timothy to stay with relations in New York.

Timothy remembers that one day as they were walking down a street, they heard a lady remark "Gee, did you hear those little boys with their strange accent?".

Jeremy, aged about 9: "Madam, excuse me. It is you who have the strange accent".

In 1942 at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, their mother decided

that it was time to come home and secured a passage on a former Amazon River steamboat sailing in convoy.

The voyage lasted 17 days going as far north as Iceland and as far south as the Azores. The ship was torpedoed twice but the charges failed.

Jeremy won a scholarship to Lancing but they suggested that - being Jewish - he would find it more comfortable elsewhere. He won a scholarship to Bradfield where he was very happy.

From there he went for National Service to the Royal Artillery, where his training included work with big guns.

In those days there were no ear protectors, and Jeremy suffered gun deafness with permanent hearing loss. So he was already seriously deaf as an undergraduate.

Soon after he was commissioned, a call was received for an officer to join an ack-ack battery in Kenya - ideally one who could ride a horse. Jeremy volunteered and it later transpired that the real reason was that they were short of officers to play polo.

History relates that Jeremy did indeed play polo, and moreover that he hitch-hiked from Kenya to Cape Town to see his grandmother.

You can well imagine that, with such a life behind him and restricted by his deafness, Jeremy didn't have much time for the frivolities of undergraduate life.

He was serious, ascetic, abstemious and not really one for a party.(He had not yet discovered the comforts of whisky.)

But he was kind, thoughtful, gently humorous and, for me, as for so many others, the very best of friends.

We all recognised that Jeremy was someone special. As well as other sparks of genius, he had the infinite capacity for taking pains, and he prepared meticulously for everything he did.

By the time I returned to Oxford in 1957, Jeremy had become President of the Union, with a First in Law and a half-Blue in Fencing.

He had read PPE for ‘Prelims’ and developed a particular interest in economics. But the Master of our College – Professor Arthur Goodhart – encouraged him to change to law, and to make it his career.

Jeremy’s deafness would have made it difficult to engage fully in the combative life of the Common Law Bar, and he wasn’t made to be a Chancery lawyer - that being the basic choice in those days.

Master Goodhart, an American, had a wider view of the possibilities for Jeremy’s career. He urged him to focus on a subject that lies at the boundary of law and economics – almost unknown here at that time but well known in America as anti-trust and already developed in Germany as cartel law.

Britain was then the home of the cosy deal, shared markets and fixed prices. The rather bureaucratic Restrictive Trade Practices Act had only just been passed. So here was a new subject – competition law - made for Jeremy, and he made it his own.

He moved briefly to Nuffield College to study it in greater detail but - soon after – was awarded a Prize Fellowship at All Souls College – the very pinnacle of academic achievement.

All Souls became his second home, to which he was devoted, and they to him. His Fellowship enabled him to give much of his life to study and teaching, which in turn enhanced his skills as an advocate and pleader.

Most of all, I hope we will remember him as a friend – kind, gentle, funny and affectionate.

## **Tribute by Sir Christopher Vajda KC**

Gray's Inn Chapel, 26 January 2026

I first met Jeremy some 24 years later than David - in 1977 in Brussels. By that time Jeremy had fulfilled all the expectations David mentioned and had become the pre-eminent competition law silk in England. As one of the first English lawyers to recognise the importance of EU competition law, he had just set up his own chambers in Brussels. He was the first barrister to do so.

The first case that I worked on with Jeremy was the challenge by Ford to the first interim measures decision taken by the European Commission in the summer of 1982. The decision ordered Ford Germany to start re-supplying RHD cars in Germany. Due to exchange rate fluctuations, those cars were available to UK consumers at a considerably lower price than the equivalent car in the UK. The solicitors to Ford (Philip Collins of Lovell White & King) turned to Jeremy to challenge that decision before the Court. Jeremy initially declined the instructions on the basis that he was committed to taking a group of Oxford undergraduates to the Chalet des Anglais in the French Alps. To his credit, Philip would not take no as an answer. Jeremy relented on two conditions: that all cons had to take place at the Chalet and that he be provided with a junior. I was that junior. Philip (wisely, as you will understand in a moment) persuaded the American clients not to come to the chalet. The only drafting that Jeremy did prior to our trip to the Alps bore all his hallmarks of precision, attention to detail and punctuation. It was the shopping list of the food that I should buy for the chalet party. The detail extended, I recall, to the exact quantity, in grammes, of minced beef per person. I was not to exceed that limit. As he explained to me, few people realised what nutritious meals one could cook on a limited budget.

When we arrived at the chalet, I could see why Philip had persuaded the Americans not to come. Jeremy was sitting in a deck chair on the lawn dressed in a pair of somewhat faded brown shorts and a string vest that had seen better days. But his brain and drafting skills were, as ever, razor sharp. We worked solidly until late afternoon when Jeremy ushered us to the chalet kitchen so that he could cook dinner for the chalet party – using, of course, every gramme of the food on his shopping list. Once inside the kitchen he started peeling the potatoes while continuing to rewrite my draft application.

All those efforts proved worthwhile as Jeremy was able to persuade the President of the Court to suspend in large part the Commission’s interim order.

Let me finish with a word about Jeremy’s Chambers in Brussels. In 1982, Jeremy invited two other members of the Bar to join him. They were Nicholas Forwood and myself. Chambers consisted of the first floor of a beautiful maison de maître in Brussels. The basement had a kitchen and housed a vast fax machine, probably the first fax machine in Brussels which had been supplied by IBM. That was where we would have our Chambers lunches. At one lunch Jeremy informed us that he had been contacted by Sir Gordon Slynn, then the UK Advocate General at the European Court asking him to take on a young barrister who had worked for him as a *référéndaire* there. The barrister had been turned down by a number of Chambers in London. Her name was Eleanor Sharpston. Eleanor thus became the fourth member of Chambers. When I was appointed the UK judge to the CJEU in 2012, I invited Jeremy to my swearing in at the Court. It gave him immense pride and pleasure that I was the third member of his Brussels Chambers to go to the European Court. Nicholas was already the UK judge at the General Court and Eleanor was the UK Advocate

General. As he said: “Not bad for a Chambers of four.” In truth none of us would have made it there without those wonderful hours sitting at the master’s elbow learning how to turn our sow's ear into something resembling a silk purse. As David said, we all recognised that he was someone special, indeed someone very special.

## Tribute by Jon Turner KC

26 January 2026

I first met Jeremy in January 1989 - 12 years after the young Christopher Vajda had run into him in Brussels.

I was in the first months of pupillage at Gray's Inn Chambers.

Jeremy was standing in the rain on High Holborn, hailing a cab in his black overcoat, and holding his umbrella high in the air.

He was on the way to a hearing in the House of Lords.

His baby junior was one Vivien Rose.

I was sent along to witness the advocacy skills of one of the finest talents at the English Bar.

“You are meeting Lever in his **sunset years**”, Jeremy said, introducing himself, after we had scrambled into the cab.

Jeremy was then 55 years old.

His sunset years at the Bar were to last another 2 decades, and more, and these are the main subject of my tribute.

What I want to do is touch briefly on a few aspects of Jeremy the man, and my close friend, that for me stand out.



These are:

- **First**, to give a glimpse of what it felt like to work with this astonishing man, who was the master of his field, on actual cases;
- **Second**, to give a sense of the purity of his intellect and his dedication to his work;
- **Third**, to speak about his instinct for fun, and for drama;
- and **finally**, to pay homage to his astonishing generosity of spirit.

### **What did it feel like to work with him?**

My first case with Jeremy was a vast Monopolies Inquiry into the supply of plasterboard.

Jeremy had hand-picked a team to represent the client, British Plasterboard, headquartered in Nottingham.

His pick as first junior was the young Nicholas Paines. There was an economics professor called Basil Yamey; a cerebral young PhD economist called Dr. Bill Bishop; and a brilliant accountant called Stephen Box.

All of us went to live together for several weeks in a English stately home, a short drive away from the headquarters of British Plasterboard.

We walked around the plasterboard factory itself, and then spent our days asking the businesspeople questions, and drafting responses to an endless questionnaire from the Commission.

Jeremy's tools of the trade were paper, sellotape, scissors, and tippex.

He sat in the middle of bits of cut paper all over the floor, chewing on the end of the tippex bottle until it was positively deformed with his teeth marks.

And he drafted with a knitted brow, like one of the Old Masters painting.

He would receive drafts on the economic issues from the Professor and the Doctor of economics, and - without missing a beat - make changes to them in his unmistakable flowing and elegant manuscript.

He was equally at home on points of law, or economics, or even accountancy.

From his pen, a narrative story about the company and its conduct coalesced.

The story was very simply and clearly told, without jargon and with an almost conversational rhythm to it.

In a way, one of the most memorable things that can be said about Jeremy is: **this was a man who could make even plasterboard fascinating.**

On a more prosaic level, Jeremy drummed into me as he has done to many other disciples his grammatical drafting conventions, which then stick with you for life. Such as:

1. you must place the word “only” in a sentence so that it sits directly adjacent to the words it is intended to govern. (For example, instead of “for breakfast, I only ate crumpets with marmalade” – grammar that caused Jeremy a sensation akin to physical pain, it had to be “I ate only crumpets and marmalade”).
2. If the clients allow (which clients never do), always spell the word “connection” with an “x”, **not** “ct”.
3. Finally, do all you can to get one Lewis Carroll quote into the case.

After Plasterboard, I worked with Jeremy on another long inquiry– this time into the supply of instant coffee.

The context was that there had been a big fall in world coffee bean prices, but this hadn’t dented the price of instant coffee in the UK, and the main supplier, Nestle, was posting **eye-wateringly high profits**.

Nestle retained Jeremy to defend them; I was his junior.

We were based in Croydon this time, and we began by walking around Nestle’s instant coffee factory in Hayes, built in 1913.

Jeremy stopped at one point, gazing at the equipment. “This is all very old”, he said to the business executive accompanying us. “Oh yes” replied the executive, “we haven’t needed to replace it”.

So”, Jeremy continued, “if an accountant was walking around this factory, they wouldn’t be able to see anything. It would be invisible. This will be part of the story behind these accounting profits.”

And so it turned out.

Jeremy’s feel for the world of industrial economics was so fine that he could detect the direction a case would take based on a factory site visit.

The Commission ultimately did give Nestle a clean bill of health, in one of Jeremy’s long list of stunning wins.

**And so, I turn to the purity of Jeremy’s intellect, and his dedication to intellectual endeavour.**

Jeremy would ponder a problem in-depth, sometimes for weeks, before deciding on the route to take.

On more than one occasion, he gave the analogy of a lump of stone that needed to be broken into small pieces.

Some people, he said, would tackle the problem by sending a team of lawyers to crawl over the lump of stone, chipping away at it with pick-axes.

His approach was to stand and gaze at the lump of stone, and just think. Then step forward and give it a decisive tap in one place.

It was in one of Jeremy’s later cases that I saw this philosophy in action most vividly.

It was a case for the Office of Fair Trading, then headed up by Sir John Vickers, in 2005.

The OFT had found MasterCard guilty of breaking competition law, because of something called its interchange fees.

MasterCard had appealed to the judicial Tribunal presided over by one Sir Christopher Bellamy.

Along with two baby juniors – Meredith Pickford and Josh Holmes – I was the OFT’s counsel, and Jeremy was the grand leader.

He arranged to speak with eminent economists who had considered the problem of interchange fees in other regions of the globe, including Australia and the USA. Together with Meredith, at Her Majesty’s expense, he flew to Chicago to meet one of these luminaries in person.

Then he shut himself away in his room for 10 days, thinking.

Finally, he emerged, clutching a manuscript.

“This case can be won”, he said. “And this is how. But the OFT decision cannot stand.

And so the OFT withdrew its Decision. But the case did **not** die. Jeremy’s case theory fed into the thinking of the European Commission, which adopted its own Europe-wide decision against MasterCard two years later, and withstood challenge on appeal.

There was a **non-legal echo** of this after Jeremy’s retirement. He had always said he wanted to write a biography of Herodotus, but never got round to that.

Instead, he spent a number of weeks in the All Souls College Library, bending his intellect to the problem of whether G-d exists.

When he emerged, he announced to me that he had concluded that G-d **does** exist.

I never got the chance to discuss his reasons with him.

**The third area I want to spotlight is Jeremy's sense of drama, and fun.**

Many here will know about the occasion in the monopolies inquiry into fine fragrances in the 1990s, when Jeremy turned up at a hearing wearing workman's overalls and gumboots, to drive home the point that appearances matter.

This penchant for showmanship was a feature of the man.

Ken Parker tells the story of an appeal against a decision of the Lloyds Disciplinary Tribunal, before Lord Wilberforce.

At the hearing of the Appeal Jeremy opened by saying that he begged leave to recount what he called "The Forensic Fable of The Duck Billed Platypus".

There was then a stunned silence in the hearing room, crowded with half the City of London, who were wondering what on earth was going on.

Lord Wilberforce lifted his eyebrow, put down his pen, and waved Jeremy to continue.

The Forensic Fable of the Duck Billed Platypus, an invention of Jeremy's, was the key to exposing the error of the Tribunal below, and winning the appeal.

Sometimes, though, Jeremy's sense of performance at a hearing could backfire.

One of the hazards of monopolies investigations was that your clients give evidence directly, and sometimes calamitously.

Jeremy always said jokingly it was wise to bring along an aerosol can of shaving foam to these hearings, in your suit pocket.

Then, he said, if your witness starts to screw up, you spray the shaving foam into your mouth and fall to the floor before the client goes too far.

In one case, Jeremy was representing a French company before the Monopolies Commission, and Jeremy appeared with a number of French businesspeople.

The Commission had interpreters at the hearing.

After his main witness had given a painfully bad first answer to a question from the Commission, Jeremy stepped in to ask if he might be allowed to put a few clarificatory questions to his client.

Jeremy was proud of his French, following his stay in Brussels, and asked the witness casually if he would prefer Jeremy to speak to him in English or French.

The witness thought for a moment before responding: "Mr Lever,

*when you speak to me in English I understand 80 per cent of what you say. When you speak in French I understand 20 per cent.”*

**Finally, I would like to end by paying tribute to Jeremy’s astonishing generosity of spirit.**

Jeremy was a man who always had time for the problems of others, no matter how pressed he was.

He was a man whose nature was to be consistently giving, and selfless, and he did not have a cruel bone in his body.

I was with Jeremy three days before he passed away. We sat watching the magpies in his garden in Folkestone.

He was constantly thanking those around him for their immense kindness and help. He complained of nothing.

His carers said to me then, and over the previous period, that they had never encountered such a perfect gentleman.

When his care manager came to see him in the last days, she asked what could be done to make him more comfortable.

“Whiskey”, he responded, and smiled.

Jeremy, I will miss you.



**“WHEN THE SCREEN WENT BACK “**  
**SIR JEREMY LEVER KCMG KC**  
**A PERSONAL TRIBUTE BY**  
**JOHN SWIFT KC**

At a recent Eldon Law Society dinner at University College , Oxford, Derek Wood KC, a Univ man, like Jeremy and myself, and a former Principal of St Hugh’s College , recalled an occasion on which he and several colleagues had been invited to All Souls for a formal dinner on a day when an Ashes Test match was hanging in the balance ( Those were the Days) and asked Jeremy whether they could watch the match on the All Souls TV. What seemed to them a reasonable request was brusquely although politely turned down by Jeremy, Senior Dean, on the ground that he would be watching Blind Date.

It seems incongruous that a person of such towering presence and intellect, by then the long established and unrivalled Number 1 in the UK and the EU in the field of Competition Law, would have such a weekly commitment: testing his judgment against one of Cilla Black’s suitors as to the likelihood of the “blind date” going further, indeed to marriage. Difficult, knowing Jeremy’s critical assessment of such matters, not to imagine that sage head shaking while muttering to himself “It’s not going to work, you know”, as the screen went back.

And then, as the bell called, strapping on black tie and joining the other gods at Valhalla for their Saturday night dinner and conversations on matters ethereal, or maybe the state of the plumbing. Sir John Vickers and Katherine Rundell have already spoken, at the All Souls Memorial Service, with humour , respect and affection about Jeremy’s long and distinguished tenure of Fellowships at All Souls, as has Sir David Edward KCMG of his and Jeremy’s early days at Univ,

where both were scholars, and of Jeremy's days as a refugee in the USA and his perilous voyage across the Atlantic in a convoy under attack by U-Boats. I cannot aspire to their eloquence but speak as I know about the man whose friendship and our professional work together formed a hugely important part of my life.

My association and friendship with Jeremy also goes back to Univ where I had switched from Greats to Law. Jeremy, then weekendening at All Souls, while already building a sizeable practice as a junior at the Bar, had been appointed by the Faculty to be my tutor in Roman law. Gaius and Justinian formed the subject of weekly essays, and I have to admit, long forgotten. Tony Guest and Lennie Hoffmann had very sensibly delegated that compulsory part of the Law Syllabus – Roman law II – to Jeremy. The walk across the High from Univ (The Pub on the High) to All Souls always carried with it that sense of unease, moving to a different cloistered and highly intellectual world, which I felt again when attending the memorial service last November. But it was more than that. Jeremy had then and had for the rest of his life a formidable presence, relaxed of course when relaxation was required, and always kindly, but nevertheless possessing some internal force, a profound depth, un homme serieux , knowing himself, in the Socratic sense, a man for whom duty was a paramount feature of his long life. And so to the beginning of our friendship.

In 1966, as a reject from a set of Chambers in London now known as Fountain Court, following a 12 month pupillage, with the conventional polite goodbye and hope that I would find somewhere else, without knowing where that might be, I turned up on the fifth floor of Grays Inn Chambers to meet, again, Jeremy. He suggested that I might want to read a book about a recent case in which he had been involved - for the Publishers Association – known as The Net Book Agreement- and

see if I was interested, in which case.... Was I interested? Oh was I interested! And so Yes, thank you very much, and I arrived and there stayed, without ever having been formally appointed to a tenancy, as was pointed out to me almost fifty years later on my retirement from Monckton Chambers - with Jeremy still in practice.

And so I was very lucky. Straight in to High Court litigation. Back in the mid to late 1960s, it was wig and gown stuff. I started off carrying the bags to court, checking the transcript for errors and so forth. It was readily apparent just how brilliant Jeremy was in written and oral advocacy. Still then a junior barrister, everyone knew he was star quality. Not just was he expert in the economic theories and principles underlying the restrictive practices legislation - he always had a profound respect and liking for his tutor Professor Philip Andrews at Nuffield College, Oxford - he also had throughout his professional life an ability to get to grips with every aspect of a case in which there were difficult technical issues and where expert witnesses would be called.

To take an early example. The manufacturers of chocolate and sugar confectionery were seeking an exemption from the application of the laws prohibiting resale price maintenance. Although not an issue going to the economics of the case, there was a separate issue as to whether and if so to what extent the products were responsible for dental caries. Experts had been briefed on each side. Jeremy had been given the responsibility for cross examining the expert witness for the Registrar of Restrictive Trading Agreements and had spent many hours in the British Library during which he had found and been impressed by the writings of a Professor Koch, and in particular what were known as Koch's Postulates. So the first question to the witness was "I assume you keep Koch's Postulates in your head." Unfortunately the shorthand

writer, whether or not suffering from toothache, transcribed this as “I assume you keep Koch’s Postulates in your mouth” an error which, when corrected the following day, caused the presiding judge, the fierce and fearsome Mr Justice Megaw, to reach for a nearby box of Meltis Newberry Fruits to conceal his mirth. The case was lost, yet somehow the ending of RPM does not seem more than 50 years on to have been a complete disaster as forecast.

Our main period of working together started with the enactment of the Monopolies and Mergers Act 1965 in which Parliament had decided that the key issue in every case referred to the MMC was whether a monopoly or merger is in or against the public interest: not dry stuff such as occupies us these days , issues such as whether there is a substantial lessening of competition. Not entirely at large was the public interest, but broad enough to give scope to many issues, economic, social, national. I think this was the occasion when Jeremy’s career really took off, clients such as Unilever, Xerox, Wellcome, Mars, British Ropes, many others whose Chairmen and their Financial Directors became close to Jeremy as their advocate in chief, and where the outcomes were usually critical to the future of the companies.

Work before the MMC was regular, testing in its variety and congenial. We got to know the members, and they us. Basil Yamey and Tibor Barna were on the MMC Panel for several years, both distinguished economists. Basil, a wonderful friend to Jeremy and me and indeed all of us at Monckton Chambers. Tibor, with his strong Hungarian accent, insisting that “the problem with most economists these days is that they don’t know the difference between right and wrong.” Prescient. But not all was entirely without a sense of mischief. In the proposed acquisition of Allied Breweries it was impossible for

us to find any public interest in Unilever's acquisition, so Jeremy proposed, in a printed Appendix, that the merger would enable Unilever's renowned catering department, headed by the Chairman's personal butler, to be merged with that of Allied, thus contributing to greater enjoyment over lunch and thus greater efficiencies. It was never submitted.

In Xerox, and its monopoly over plain paper copiers, we had our first visit together to New York, entertained in several excellent restaurants by our professional clients, Kaye Scholer, Fierman, Hays and Handler whose senior partner, Milton Handler, a New York legend, confided in us that only two kinds of people live in New York, the very poor and the very rich and he was one of the latter. We knew our place. Xerox, of course, once dominant was soon toppled through innovation and competition. IBM's fate came a bit later.

In Mars, a particularly aggressive US in house counsel had the temerity to challenge Jeremy's submissions to the MMC and told him, and me, that we needed to understand that competition in the petfood market was essentially product based, and why didn't we -clear impression of our being idiots - understand that. With exquisite politeness Jeremy then, with Biro and Tippex, simply added the following substitutable formula on every second page " As the Commission [choose appropriate example ] will already have appreciated / must know/ can infer from every analysis/would be right in concluding/have to agree/ competition in the pet food market is and always has been essentially product based. "Jeremy, you have nailed it." Easy. Lesson: keep the Client happy.

Just one more. Working with Jeremy for most of that period and then on to the IBM case (1975-1982) he had remarkable stamina but was a

serious hypochondriac, a walking pharmacopeia of ailments and their reliefs. So when in the great drought and hot summer of 1976 - we were by then in the Common Market - the European Commission was carrying out an investigation of the alleged dominance of the Wellcome Foundation in the supply of prescription drugs for the treatment of gout, he was in his element. As Jeremy, Christopher Bellamy and I sweated in the HQ of Wellcome in the Euston Road, he became the expert in explanations of the difference between uricosuric and uricostatic drugs and why there were substitutable in the definition of the relevant product market. Triumphantly we went to Brussels, confident that we had made our case, only for Jeremy to cry out over dinner, while opening a bottle of fizzy water: Look at the label “Contre la goutte. Rewrite the opening “.

As to the IBM case Sir John Vickers in his tribute at All Souls has already referred to how, as a former pupil of Derek Morris at Oriel, he met Jeremy early on in the case, having joined the team, and the importance of that to John’s spectacular, my words, future career. Just some further comments from me on how Jeremy handled that very difficult and complex case. For starters he made sure that he understood the technical aspect of computing. But his major contribution was the confidence that he inspired in two of the most impressive US lawyers it has ever been my privilege to know and work with : Nick Katzenbach, former US Attorney General to President Lyndon B Johnson, our professional client from the beginning ; and Lloyd Cutler , former White House Counsel to President Jimmy Carter , who joined the team in Paris after Carter lost the election. The mutual respect and affection was awesome, the UK/US relationship between the two teams being warm and cooperative, reflecting confidence in Jeremy’s leadership and, above all, his accessibility and support for all of us. Never any criticism,

nothing more than, in extreme cases of error, acknowledged, “I am sure that you have done nothing for which you could possibly reproach yourself.” Ouch. I can still hear it and feel it. At its most intensive stage, the UK team also included, as barristers, David Edward, Christopher Bellamy, the late Richard Fowler, Stephen Richards, Nicholas Forwood ; as solicitors Ashurst, led throughout the whole of that very long case by Andrew Soundy, whose personal support to Jeremy was unswerving and essential; our economists were Derek Morris, David Stout and Christian von Weiszacker From the US, Cravath, Swaine and Moore, including Tom Barr, one of the great US trial lawyers, and O’Melveny and Myers , Mark Steinberg , also a superb lawyer, as well as many IBM in-house lawyers. Quite some team, quite some case – and it settled.

Jeremy, having set up his own Chambers in Brussels in the late 1970s, returned to full time practice in the UK in the 1980s and remained as a member of Monckton Chambers until his retirement. In the course of that stage of his career, he was again in the forefront of cases ranging over EU law, competition law and judicial review, beyond the scope of this Tribute. As John Vickers has confirmed, his association with All Souls was such an important aspect of his life and the hinterland that he had, outside the professional practice, as to warrant separate tributes, which John and Katherine Rundell have provided. And I know that others will at his memorial service in January in Gray’s Inn pay their own tributes.

Even though we rarely worked together on cases during the rest of the 1980s or 1990s, occasionally on opposite sides, or when I returned to Monckton in 2000 after a spell regulating the railways, our friendship remained firm and Jeremy’s affection for our family was a delight. Indeed on the day of the announcement of the much deserved KCMG it was a private lunch for us and Jeremy at All Souls.

When the screen went back indeed – the memory remains keen of a man who combined exceptional talents, not only of high professional competence but of humanity and how to live a life well, to make friendships that endure and to make us all proud and privileged to have been part of his world.

John Swift KC

December 23, 2025



# Sir Jeremy Lever KC KCMG

## A Tribute

Peter Freeman

In my desk diary for 1988 there is a cryptic note for Tuesday 19th January:- “JFL to Stockport”. Jeremy Lever, Leading Counsel to the Brewers’ Society in the Monopolies and Mergers Commission’s inquiry into the Supply of Beer, was finally being allowed to visit a brewery, in this case Robinson’s I will come back to the relevance of this.

It is an enormous privilege to pay tribute to the late Sir Jeremy Lever, who influenced and inspired countless lesser mortals, including myself, to engage in and seek to understand the dark arts of economic law, competition law and the wider law of the European Union.

My contribution to Jeremy’s practice was. I am afraid, a long time ago and very modest. He has many far greater achievements to his name than anything to do with me.

Nevertheless, I owe him a very great deal. I want to mention two cases and a lesson.

Jeremy was of course famous in his field long before I started in it. But in 1982 the **Newspaper Publishers Association**, as was, held a meeting to discuss and agree terms with wholesalers to circumvent the rail strike then in effect. The OFT got to hear about this (not least because someone rang it from the meeting to ask if such an agreement was ok -it was not) and took the Publishers to court for agreeing arrangements “to the like effect” as a previously condemned agreement relating to dealings with wholesalers.

Contempt of court, for this was the charge, had very serious implications including possible committal for executives.

Jeremy appeared for the newspapers collectively. Somehow, and it is a tribute to his skill as a thinker and advocate, he managed to pull off a two pronged defence of first of all apologising profusely for any wrongdoing, and then denying there had been any wrongdoing, because the previously condemned agreement had been conceded without a substantive judgment, so there was no “effect” for the latest agreement to be “like”.

Never was there a more relieved group of executives. Counsel for the OFT left the court muttering “you will never get away with this” – but they did.

The second case was the **MMC inquiry into the Supply of Beer**, from 1986-9, focussed on the so called ‘tied house’ system then operated by most brewing companies.

Jeremy was retained (with Sir Stephen Richards as junior) to represent the Brewers’ Society, which spoke for the entire industry with a few notable exceptions (such as Guinness which had no tied houses at all.)

It is fair to say that although they had been subject to previous inquiries, the brewing companies were somewhat bemused by this latest attack on the tied house system and rather dismissive of the MMC’s demands for a very large amount of information. The Society assembled a large team of expert advisers, including the current Warden of All Souls, and much work was done.

Jeremy’s contribution was enormous, and essentially threefold. First to

set the intellectual framework for the Brewers's case. Second to write and sign off the main written submissions and thirdly to appear at the Hearings and speak on the Brewers' behalf.

He and Stephen worked immensely hard, often in a windowless room in a basement of Portman Square and for the most part succeeded in turning the occasionally baffling notions of the industry ("we must defend the status quo as it's changing all the time") into a coherent argument. So coherent indeed that the MMC Report included a rather double-edged acknowledgement (almost in the form of a complaint) that the Brewers Society's case had been superbly well presented:-

*"1.15 Throughout our inquiry we were struck by the vigour and thoroughness of the Brewers' Society's response to the many questions we asked and the points we put back to it. There is no doubt in our minds that the Society is formidably effective in championing its members' interests.*

*1.16 Eloquently though the industry's case has been put, we are not persuaded that all is well...."*

**(Cm 651 March 1989)**

But Jeremy was not always happy. He complained that the Society had given him food poisoning, that they were tardy in allowing him a junior counsel, and that they would not allow him to see and talk to the businesses on the ground ("*We have described and defended a brewing industry that could be on Mars for all we know*").

Hence the trip to Stockport, with which I began this tribute.

The Brewers' case did not prevail with the MMC, although that was certainly no fault of Jeremy's. His main concern towards the end of the endeavour was that the MMC was not thinking through the consequences of its recommendations. And in this Jeremy has been proved entirely correct. The Brewing Industry today is a shadow of its former self.

I said there was a third thing – a lesson.

In the course of the Beer case, I and my team at Simmons & Simmons worked very closely with Jeremy and Stephen. Often this took the form of our preparing an initial draft and Jeremy correcting (with 'sno-pake', scissors, selotape, glue and exquisitely neat handwriting). The MMC's initial summary of the industry facts, which they sent to us in draft, seemed very one sided and I prepared an angry and rather rude draft answer.

Jeremy took his red pen to it (not to mention the other instruments of correction) and turned it into a very polite, but still firm, document. He said, there is never any point in being rude to officials. They are only doing their job and will think much less of you if you insult them. That was a lesson I took very much to heart and have tried to apply it in my subsequent dealings.

And this is not to mention the numerous occasions when Jeremy provided wise legal advice on all kinds of topics. Wise but often very witty. For another thing I learnt from Jeremy was that there is no situation from which some element of humour cannot be extracted. He could always see the funny side.

Then there was all the kindness he showed to so many, including

helping my wife's students, when she was teaching at Oxford, and to countless others.

Sir Jeremy, I salute your memory and offer my heartfelt thanks and appreciation. We all stand in your shadow.

**January 2026**

## **Tribute from Jonathan Stone**

I first met JFL in 1957/1958 when he was still at Nuffield College, and we struck up a lifelong relationship.

Most of the Friends of Jeremy are very distinguished lawyers; but I do not, by any stretch of the imagination, come remotely into that category. Lawyer, by profession (an unsuccessful period at the Bar, and then a short period in practice as a Solicitor); but I call myself a Problem Solver, and I have been solving problems for clients for more than 50 years. You all know the extent of Jeremy's genius - because "genius" is what it was; but, for some mysterious reason that I never fathomed, Jeremy recognised my expressly non-legal talents, to such an extent that he sought my help:

\*\*when he got into a personal pickle with some of his investments;

\*\*when he rightly perceived that All Souls was being badly advised on a very major property transaction; and

\*\* when he was advising Irish Distillers on competition matters ("Whiskey" v "Whisky"), his clients told him that they were concerned about the threat that they perceived that they were under from Seagrams, the mega Canadian drinks company. I remember him saying that they needed a London solicitor, and he would be pleased to introduce them to L&P, Slaughters, A&O, etc, "but you might like to consider Jonathan Stone, who, is also a solicitor, but he will bring a very different perspective to bear". And, Irish Distillers, did, indeed instruct me.

So, I remain grateful to Jeremy for so many things on so many fronts; I certainly never really recognised my own minimal abilities, but, as I have said above, for some unknown reason, he did. So, dear Jeremy, I shall never forget your many kindnesses over so many years; and I MISS YOU VERY MUCH.

## **Tribute by Stephen Kon**

I had the privilege of working with Jeremy in a wide variety of cases over many years. I can say without hesitation that not only was he the most brilliant and creative counsel with whom I have worked, but working with him was both personally uplifting and great fun.

I first worked with Jeremy in 1983 on a case which raised no competition issues but which was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission because the English establishment (which included the then Minister for Trade and Industry who made the MMC reference) objected to Sotheby's being acquired by two American entrepreneurs who were art lovers but who acquired their wealth selling up-market office furniture. They were as a result considered to be the wrong sort of people to own such a venerable English institution. The interplay between Jeremy and the two American entrepreneurs was something to behold. Jeremy's stunning intellect seeking to develop our argument as to why no legitimate public interest concerns were raised and exploring with these tough American businessmen why they were fit and proper persons to own Sotheby's. After several all-night drafting sessions (supported by Jeremy's favourite malt whisky), Jeremy had prepared a powerful and persuasive case to put to the MMC. However perhaps not altogether surprisingly the Americans stunned Jeremy by announcing as he was about to enter the hearing room that they had just sold their shares to another American (at a vast profit) who was considered far more "suitable". Jeremy was not amused but perhaps a little relieved given the views he had formed of the gentlemen concerned. In fact, the "more appropriate" American gentleman who had bought the shares was some years later indicted in the US for price fixing and was sentenced to a year and a day in prison.



That experience contrasted with a case we did together a few years later where Jeremy's outstanding advocacy skills were brilliantly displayed. He successfully argued in the Datafin case before the Court of Appeal that the Takeover Panel should be amenable to judicial review. His submissions to the Court covered the entire history of Judicial review before the English courts and he successfully argued that because the Takeover panel was a private body exercising public functions the so-called source of power test should not be the only test for determining whether a body should be amenable to Judicial review. The case was of enormous importance for the City of London and when Jeremy was sitting down after over a day and a half of the most brilliant legal analysis the Master of the Rolls Donaldson MR complimented Jeremy on his "masterful" submissions, an accolade seldom bestowed on counsel by one of our most senior judges. The Datafin case and the influence Jeremy had on that judgment remains a leading authority on Judicial review.

Jeremy was not only a great advocate, but he also had a very special ability to get under the skin of a business and the markets in which it operated. He would often say that an ounce of fact was worth more than a pound of assertion. His fact-finding skills were often innovative and could be very entertaining. I worked with Jeremy on several cases for the UK bookmaker Ladbroke who were trying to use the sword of competition law to break down domestic horse race betting monopolies in a number of EU Member States. The most entrenched of these state monopolies was the Pari Mutuel ("PMU") in France. There were good legal arguments that the French horse race betting market operated as an anti-competitive monopoly; however, the political opposition in France and most other EU member states was enormous as those monopolies were very significant sources of state revenues. Jeremy decided that in order for us to be able to convince the

European Commission of the anti-competitive nature of those monopolies it was essential to show the consumer detriments and the very poor quality of services they offered. In particular we needed to show in the case of, the PMU in France that the consumer was not being served by the PMU monopoly. For this Jeremy decided that we would need to go to Paris and visit a wide variety of different PMU outlets (and racecourses). The sight of Jeremy with his very eminent junior and myself marching into a variety of smoky, dingy PMU outlets dressed hardly “incognito” but very obviously as UK lawyers must have very puzzling for the Gitane smoking French punters. Equally asking in our best French not who was going to win the next race but whether the PMU provided them with adequate consumer benefits only increased the sense of confusion on the part of the French punters. The PMU punters seemed generally indifferent to the consumer benefits they may have been missing, but rather were more interested whether we had any tips on the next race! Jeremy was of course entirely impervious to how odd we might appear to the French punters, and we did in fact learn a lot from these site visits. Jeremy led on drafting a compelling complaint which absent political interference would in all likelihood have prevailed and which led to a series of leading cases on the subject before the European Court of Justice.

Finally, there is one experience of working with Jeremy that stands out above all others. There was a complex monopoly investigation before the MMC into the supply of fine fragrance in the UK. We were acting for one of the most prestigious brand names and the investigation turned on why most of the leading brands were not prepared to supply a well-known consumer goods retailer who claimed that they were not being supplied because of concerns that they would price discount. Our client argued forcefully that the reason for not supplying the retailer was because of the low-end nature of its retail shops and because the shop sign (“enseigne“) of the retailer concerned denigrated

the high-end image and reputation attaching to our client's brand. We spent much time as always gathering factual and economic evidence to produce persuasive submissions that the refusal to supply the retailer was justified within the context of the selective distribution system that it operated. We arrived at the hearing and in the room reserved for counsel and shortly before our time to enter the hearing Jeremy began to remove his suit and reveal underneath that he was wearing dungarees and a casual shirt. We were stunned and had no idea what had brought this transformation in Jeremy's appearance. He, however, was completely unabashed and walked into the hearing room in his dungarees to the shock of the MMC panel. There emerged Jeremy's genius; he opened by saying how, no doubt, the panel was surprised to see him attired as he was; they may think it entirely inappropriate and not want counsel to be present in such apparel. Such a view he continued was entirely understandable in the same way it was entirely appropriate for our client's most prestigious and high-end brands not to be sold in the denigrating environment and shop sign of the retailer concerned. The MMC cleared our client and all other fine fragrance manufacturers unconditionally.

When I last visited Jeremy, I saw in a very prominent place in his living room a photograph of him in his dungarees at the MMC.

That was the measure of the man ; whether it was his brilliance as a competition lawyer and advocate or his ability to get to the core of matters and find new ,innovative ways of getting his arguments across Jeremy was the Doyen of competition lawyers and will be greatly missed by all those who were privileged to work with him .

## Written tribute by Robin Griffith

I was running the Coward Chance office in Brussels in the 1970s. At that time, Japanese exports began to flood into Europe, the reaction of the EU to pressure from EU industry being to start anti-dumping proceedings against such imports. One day I got a call saying that Nippon Seiko KK (NSK), a Japanese Ball Bearing company, with a manufacturing subsidiary in Peterlee on Teeside, had had a large anti-dumping imposed upon it by the EU that it wanted to challenge, with the company wanting to meet in Brussels with their senior management coming both from Japan and the UK.

At that time solicitors only did court cases with Counsel, but especially in this case as neither I nor anyone else in the firm had ever done an ECJ case (no CFI or General Court in those days), and Counsel are of course always our best protection against negligence claims, important to me as I was still making my way up the firm and did not want to make a mistake. So of course I looked around for “EEC Counsel”, and with JFL, both a lot in Brussels and with his (then) Art 85 reputation, he was an obvious choice, with David Vaughan as his Junior from Brick Court. I felt in very safe hands!

We set up a meeting in my office with JFL and DV in the morning, with the clients coming in that afternoon. JFL arrived in his immaculate grey suit and blue tie, and after some coffee and chit chat about Brussels etc we began to discuss the case, and then came the 3 bomb shells from JFL that shattered my feeling of safety, does, says JFL without a smile but I remember him spreading his fingers, anyone know (a) the procedure before the ECJ, (b) know how to make an application to the ECJ and (c) what is dumping?.... and we were meeting the clients in about 4 hours!

And all this from the person I was instructing (and paying) to keep me and the firm out of trouble!

I recall spending much of the morning on the phone to the ECJ discussing with the wonderful Christine (forgotten her last name) who ran the English language part of the Registry in the Court about how to make the application, and of course JFL performed magnificently and with authority and knowledge that afternoon in front of the clients, and we went on to win the case (Case 119/1977) with Warner as the AG. The opposition was strong with Patrick Neill for the Council and Tom Bingham for the Commission. Subsequently, we were retained by the Council and Commission to defend them in a dumping case before the ECJ brought by Ulick Bourke of Clifford Turner (now the “Clifford” in ‘Clifford Chance’)......he quickly gave up when he saw our defence (and both the Council and Commission were pretty ungrateful to us).

I remember well the discussions with JFL that morning about what was “dumping”, generally spoken of in terms of “the ex-factory export price to the EU being lower than the ex-factory domestic price in the country of export”; simple enough in words, but after some discussion JFL immediately saw that really the key issue was not so much about the “prices”, but about “the deduction of the costs from the prices” to get back to the ex-factory levels. It was perhaps the most valuable lesson I ever learned about dumping calculations, served me very well in the many cases I did afterwards and some with JFL in the ECJ, and this on the very morning of my meeting him and him seemingly not knowing what dumping was at the start of the discussion.....an indication of his intellect and clarity of thinking. When I put the point to other “dumping lawyers” in Brussels that “dumping” was all about “costs” and not “prices”, they looked at me strangely.

And so began a more than 30 year wonderful working and friendship

relationship with JFL and a wonderful mentor.

JFL was also the great defender for more than 40 years of the Net Book Agreement (NBA), and he very kindly referred the Publishers Association, its administrator, to me. We worked together on the EU aspects of it for at least 25 years, but very strangely, in all that time, we never discussed what books either of us read; in fact, I never recall seeing JFL read a book, but he loved the newspapers. There was no stronger supporter of books and bookshops, and especially small ones, such as the Pelham Bookshop in Havant of Irene Babbidge, who gave evidence in the RTPC on the NBA in 1962, where JFL was the Junior for the publishers.

Almost at the end of my time at Clifford Chance I was doing the British Energy State aid case with him, and one day the Head of my Department asked to have a word with me. He asked if I had heard that a Cabinet Member had referred the firm and me to the Law Society because something we were doing or refusing to do was costing HMG a lot of money (and it seemed there was some reference to this in Parliament but I could never find it in Hansard): I said I had not heard about it and asked what I should do and was told in effect “Nothing, because I told the Senior Partner that Robin was working on the case with Sir Jermy Lever QC, so whatever he was doing was OK”. I later discovered that the delay we had allegedly caused had actually saved HMG money as the cost of borrowing went down, but we never got an apology, and I never heard a word either from the Senior Partner of Clifford Chance nor from the Law Society! So JFL unknowingly became a great protector.

JFL was always full of anecdotes, which made sandwich lunches in the office memorable. One that made him laugh was the prisoner in Hong

Kong who had just been given a very long sentence, saying to the judge “but I shall die in prison,” with judge replying, “well you must do your very best and live as long as you can”.....JFL chuckled after telling that for quite a long time! But some of the discussions were serious, one being the purpose of the law and lawyers which JFL simply described as being.....”to protect the administre” [with an acute accent on the “e”].

I have often thanked NSK for bringing me for a lifetime into the orbit of Jeremy.

**Sir Jeremy Lever KCMG KC**

Fellow of All Souls College, 1957–2017

Honorary Fellow, 2017-2025

Tributes delivered in  
All Souls College Chapel  
on 29 November 2025 by:

Katherine Rundell

Sir John Vickers

Jenny Skilbeck



## Tribute by Katherine Rundell

I was twenty-one when I was elected to the college. On my first day as a Fellow, one of the first people I was welcomed by was Sir Jeremy Lever, and that welcome never dimmed or diminished in all the years I knew him. I was over-awed by my surroundings, and he treated me and my college twin Elizabeth Chatterjee with the same serious grace as he did Justices of the Supreme Court.

To the youth of the college, when I arrived, Jeremy Lever was universally beloved. We admired his beauty – memorialised in the bust in the Common Room. We admired his extraordinary knowledge of beautiful things. During a discussion about the new coffee service in Domestic Committee, he bought in the Bonham's catalogue of his porcelain collection – the Jeremy Lever porcelain collection, numbering more than 200 exceptional pieces, was sold in 2007 – and passed it round so that the College could consider a particular shade of azure blue. We admired, too, his unexpected enthusiasms – he would apologise for not staying for dessert, but he could not miss the start of *Downton Abbey*.

We admired his inclusivity. Fred Wilmot Smith, on first joining the college, was enjoined by Jeremy to come to chapel. “I hope that you will come. It is a broad church.” Fred replied, “I’m an atheist.” To which Jeremy, after a brief pause: “It is a *very* broad church.”

In Chapel, I was Junior Dean to his Senior Dean for several years. His generosity to me was enormous. He would enquire after my work – about the precise logistics of my children’s fiction – with exactly the same gravity and focus with which he enquired after the workings of competition law. It is a great thing to be given, when you are young, a

model of how to ask the opinion of everyone around you, and to treat their most faltering thoughts with earnest and thoughtful respect. He brought dignity into the room with him, and bestowed it on the uncertain.

In 2012, Jeremy preached a sermon in this Chapel. He said, “Despite my lack of faith, I believe that the Universe is a creation of a superior intelligence to whom I shall refer as God.” The focus of his sermon was, in part, the miraculous nature of the engines of existence. He said, “The laws and processes which, starting from nothing – though there probably is no such state as really nothing – or starting with something that I cannot comprehend, the so-called naked singularity, produce some thirteen billion years later our amazing Universe are, to my mind, miraculous – miraculous, in the sense of God-given miracles. At even the trivial level, it turns out that the number of petals and the arrangement of seeds of at least some flowers conform to a structure based on so-called Fibonacci numbers.” It is a gift, to be able to perceive miracles.

The sermon ended with simplicity. “I have to come back to the fact that, the Universe having been designed as it has been, we have evolved as moral creatures who can recognise the difference between right and wrong. At the end of it all, we have to get on with living our lives as best we can until we depart this earth.”

The first night that one of my contemporaries was elected to the Prize Fellowship, he sat between Sir Jeremy and another equally august fellow. He asked them, if they remembered how they had felt the day they were elected. His first neighbour said, he remembered feeling very clever. Jeremy said, he remembered feeling very stupid. I think, historically, there are always some Examination Fellows who take

election as proof of their genius, and others who are humbled by their company. He was the latter. Sir Jeremy Lever did not allow his brilliance to stand in the way of his generosity. For that, I will never cease to be grateful.

## Tribute by Sir John Vickers

The white smoke on that day in 1957 signalled the election to Fellowship of two Jeremys. The life of Jeremy Wolfenden – son of the author of the Wolfenden Report, journalist, and spy – ended at the age of 31. Our Jeremy lived to 92, and for sixty of those years was a Fellow here, and then an Honorary Fellow. He was thus a unique bridge from the Old College of the 1950s – a glorious decade for the Prize Fellowship –to us today.

At the time of his election, Jeremy was a student at Nuffield, writing a thesis on anti-monopoly legislation. His proposed career on the All Souls application form, in his distinctive manuscript, was “Either Bar or Industry”. The Bar was the right choice. Industry was however to feature later, not only in respect of his clients, but also as a company director of Dunlop and of Wellcome.

So began decades of term-time weekending in College. As Jeremy’s seven years of Prize Fellowship neared its end, Warden Sparrow wrote to say that “unless you marry ... you will surely be elected to a £50 Fellowship”. No doubt that happened by acclamation, but the Warden could not resist teasing afterwards that: “It was a very close thing, but I just managed to get it through, using my personal authority”. Jeremy replied: “It is impossible for me adequately to express my gratitude to the College for its past and present kindness to me”. This was deeper than courtesy. A heartfelt sense of devotion and obligation to All Souls always stayed with Jeremy.

In the 1970s, Brussels became the centre of Jeremy’s professional life, and he even contemplated a position at the European Commission. But

apart from a period away for fiscal reasons, the Oxford weekending continued largely unabated.

I met Jeremy in Paris just after my Finals in the summer of 1979. My tutorial partner and I had been invited by Derek Morris, who taught us Economics at Oriel, to work on the IBM case. Jeremy, who was IBM's lead Counsel, cleverly persuaded me to sit the All Souls exam by predicting that I would enjoy doing it but would not be elected. I owe my career to that summer, and therefore to Derek and Jeremy.

The European Commission's case was that IBM was abusing market power in the computer industry by way of various anti-competitive practices. It was by far the most important competition law case that Europe had seen, and it bears comparison with cases years later against Microsoft, Google and others.

IBM, which had a lot at stake, naturally wished to be represented by the best competition lawyers in Europe, and that meant Jeremy. These were still the early days of European competition law, and in addition to the technical complexity of the subject matter, the law itself was uncharted in important respects. Article 86 of the Treaty of Rome prohibited the abuse of a dominant market position, but what exactly did that mean in practical terms? This made the intellectual effort required of Jeremy, as lead Counsel, all the greater. Likewise for all his rigorous contributions to development of the law, both in his practice and in his various academic writings.

Despite its importance, the IBM case features little in the competition law textbooks because, rather sensibly, it was settled – mainly by IBM agreeing to disclosure of information about its computer architecture – rather than litigated. A procedural point did go to the Court in Luxembourg in 1981, which I mention for its listing of Jeremy's

extraordinary team of barristers – David Edward, John Swift, Christopher Bellamy and Nicholas Forwood, all of whom went on to high judicial or regulatory office.

The cultural differences between Jeremy and the IBMers were a constant source of entertainment. While they naturally tended to favour the use of computers, Jeremy’s working methods, then and for years later, involved a fountain pen, biros, scissors, tippex, gluestick and sellotape.

Another issue was drink. Whereas IBM was fiercely teetotal, fine legal minds sometimes required lubrication at 6pm. The solution was to deem that the barristers’ quarters lay outside the IBM curtilage, and to refer to the Famous Grouse as cold tea.

Although lodging in Paris at the Hotel Bristol, Jeremy was otherwise parsimonious to a fault. As the rest of us pored over a restaurant menu, and wine list, after a hard day at the office, he advised that, while we had the good fortune that the client would cover the expense of our evening meal, we should make our menu selections as if we ourselves were paying. “And the *prix fixe* menu looks remarkably good value”. The starter was *carottes râpées*. And which silk but Jeremy would take summer holidays, year in year out, without electricity, at the *Chalet des Anglais* in the French Alps?

Jeremy stood at the top of his profession for years and years. In the *Fine Fragrances* case of the 1990s he famously appeared before the Monopolies and Mergers Commission wearing dungarees, which you can see on the back of the service sheet. The point was that image matters – perfume is not just liquid in a little bottle. It worked. The MMC duly found that the selective distribution arrangements of the perfume houses were not against the public interest.

I once saw Jeremy the economist at work, on the MMC inquiry into the supply of beer. A question was how demand responded to price changes. “I believe that there are men in this country”, he averred, “who spend the *entirety* of their disposable income upon beer. I have calculated that, for them, the price elasticity of demand equals one”. Indeed.

\*\*\*

But let us return to those weekends in College. On the way here you have all come past Jeremy’s ground floor rooms on the staircase near the Chapel entrance. In the set opposite was Charles Monteith, chairman of Fabers. For in the Old College, the key to £50 Fellowship was bachelorhood. The Fellowship was smaller then, at about sixty. All were men. Even in 1980 a majority were or had been Prize Fellows, and almost half of them had been to Eton or Winchester. A number had first been elected pre-War.

Dinner was black tie at weekends, and, unlike now, coffee was served in the Coffee Room, and in the Smoking Room there was smoking. On winter Sundays there were crumpets at tea, with Jeremy the master of toasting, and in his memory they will be served in the Hall afterwards.

Other Fellows in Law included Lords Hailsham and Wilberforce, and the Professors were Brownlie, Honoré and Treitel, who had taught Jeremy as an undergraduate. Not bad.

In Jeremy’s rooms was a TV set, which on Saturday evenings was tuned to the alluring game show *Cilla’s Blind Date*. Perhaps alone among the ten million or so viewers, Jeremy had the difficulty that the programme did not always finish in time for dinner at All Souls. Recording apparatus was therefore in place, since the best bit was

often at the end. Further anguish arose from the appalling choices, in Jeremy's estimation, made by some contestants. "What was she thinking?" was a typical lament.

Even Jeremy could not continue for ever as a £50 Fellow. One of the first acts of Warden Davis was to secure Jeremy's election, in 1996, to Distinguished Fellowship, in which role he served a further 21 years.

Jeremy held the office of Senior Dean, which, in addition to its Chapel duties, involved the presentation of Fellows for University degrees, and conducting the voting by urn at College meetings. Then there was the committee work, especially on the finance, investment, and property committees, the last of which involved an annual visit to the College's rural estates. In the late 1980s Jeremy had even offered to take on the Estates Bursarship, but by then the College needed a midweek, not a weekend.

Beyond the College, it might appear puzzling that Jeremy, as someone so public-spirited, was not appointed to judicial or other public office. But there is the natural explanation that the hearing damage sustained during national service effectively deprived him, and us, of that opportunity. He was nevertheless the inaugural chairman of Oftel's advisory body on fair trading in telecommunications. And there was arbitration work, notably on the dispute between the US and UK over Heathrow airport charges, where Jeremy issued a powerful dissenting opinion, based on economic analysis of rates of return on capital.

The immensity of Jeremy's contributions to public life and the law was at last recognised by his KCMG in the 2002 Birthday Honours, for services to European Community and competition law.



\*\*\*

Jeremy preached a sermon in this Chapel thirteen years ago. It began: “This is in the nature of my final progress report to my dear colleagues here at All Souls after 55 years in Fellowship”. He ended with words from the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Bible. Without worrying too much about faith, Jeremy urged us to heed the conscience with which we have been endowed:

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man”.