



## **PETER WATSON, Solicitor Advocate**

**Levy & McRae, Glasgow**

The 57-year-old Solicitor Advocate, who is married with two children, is Senior Partner and Head of Litigation at Levy & McRae, one of the most respected law firms in Scotland.

He was in September 2010 appointed as a Visiting Professor in the Law School at the University of Strathclyde. The Law School has an international reputation for academic excellence and sits within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Under his leadership, Levy & McRae have built up a worldwide reputation in areas of expertise such as media law, licensing, aviation, international claims, public inquiries, employment law and tax and revenue investigations.

Mr Watson's university education began at Strathclyde where he studied Economics and Psychology. He studied law at Edinburgh, research at the Scandinavian Maritime Law Institute at Oslo University and studied Petroleum Law at Dundee.

In recent years he has led teams involved in some of the biggest litigation claims in British legal history following major international disasters. These include:-

- Setting up the Piper Alpha Disaster Group following the fire and explosion aboard the North Sea rig in July 1988 which claimed the lives of 167 crew members. Peter participated in the official accident inquiry under the chairmanship of Lord Cullen and was a lead negotiator in settling claims by the families of the victims.
- Secretary of the Braer Disaster Group formed after the sinking of the super-tanker Braer off Shetland in January 1993 with the spillage of 85,000 tonnes of oil. In environmental terms, this was more than twice the amount spilled by the Exxon Valdez.

- Secretary of the Lockerbie Air disaster Group responsible for the co-ordination and representation of almost all the British claims following the destruction by terrorists of the Pan Am flight in December 1988. These multi-million lawsuits involved constant interaction with Counsel in Scotland, England and the United States and are widely regarded as a landmark in worldwide litigation.
- Represented the family of the late RAF Chinook pilot, Flight Lieutenant Richard Cook, following the crash of his aircraft in June 1994 which resulted in the deaths of 25 Secret Service personnel and two aircrew. An RAF Board of Inquiry came to the conclusion that pilot error was the cause of the accident on the flight between Ireland and Scotland but this was rejected at a Fatal Accident Inquiry after strong representations by Mr Watson.
- Represented major commercial interests in the aftermath of massive oil pollution following the grounding of the super tanker Sea Empress at the entrance to Milford Haven harbour in February 1996. Peter represented Bourne Leisure Group Ltd, a major leisure company who operate large holiday parks in the affected areas and has now submitted a claim to the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund.
- Represented Aeromega Ltd, an aircraft leasing company, when one of their helicopters crashed in October 1996 resulting in the deaths of multi-millionaire Matthew Harding and four others. Despite being an English-based firm, Aeromega decided to be represented by a Scottish solicitor because of his unrivalled expertise in aviation matters.
- Represented the families of the 16 pupils and one teacher murdered in the Dunblane Primary School massacre of March 1996. Peter played a key role in the Tribunal of Inquiry under Lord Cullen which examined three distinct issues – the certification and availability of firearms, school security and the vetting of adults working with children and young people. The outcome was a recommendation, now law, restricting the availability of certain calibres of handguns.
- Represented the Scottish Nurse facing execution in Saudi Arabia and securing her release in 1997.
- Represented Flight Lieutenant Malcolm Williams (RAF) acquitted after Court Martial into the fatal crash of two American fighter planes

- Represented Shirley McKie, a police officer accused of attempting to pervert the Course of Justice based on wrong fingerprint identification. This was the first successful challenge to finger print evidence in the world.
- Represented the family of the late Colin McRae MBE in relation to the AAIB inquiry into the circumstances surrounding his fatal helicopter crash and currently representing the family in a Fatal Accident Inquiry being held at Lanark Sheriff Court.

Mr Watson is a Part-time Sheriff and has written on a number of matters. These include:-

- Civil Justice System in Britain – ISLA Journal of International & Comparative Law
- Dunblane – A Predictable Tragedy
- Crimes of War – The Anton Gecas case. Nova Southeastern University
- The Truth Written in Blood – DNA and the Criminal Trial. Strathclyde University.
- The Rule of Law and Economic Prosperity – United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Rome October 2003
- Access to Justice - A Roadway to Empowering the Poor - United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Rome December 2004

Among the posts he holds are:-

Visiting Professor of Law, University of Strathclyde  
 Chairman, Yorkhill Children's Foundation  
 Official Collaborate, International Labour Organisation, Geneva  
 Past-President of the Society of Solicitor Advocates (1997)  
 Past-President of the Society of Media Lawyers  
 Former Chairman, Association of Mediators  
 Member of the Criminal Rules Council  
 Member of the Board of the Sports Law Centre, Anglia University  
 Member of the British Association for Sport & Law  
 Member of the Association of Trial Lawyers of America and the International Bar Association  
 Visiting Scholar Nova University, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Honorary Citizen of Nashville, Tennessee  
Former Chairman in Scotland of the Reliance group of companies

In recent years Mr Watson has worked with the United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe. The work of the Commission is concerned with preparing for a Special UN High Commission to be formed next year to promote the circumstances for economic growth of 'transition economies'. The focus is mostly on countries in Eastern Europe, formerly part of the Soviet Union. Mr Watson's role is focused on Access to Justice and the integrity of their legal systems. The goal is to promote the rule of law by ensuring access to justice, the strengthening of the independence and the appropriate training of the Judiciary. It will also include the promotion of training, ethical and professional standards for the legal profession and appropriate mechanisms to ensure adequate regulation and compliance capable of meaningful measurement and comparison internationally.

Levy & McRae, who have a caseload of approximately 3,600 cases, are involved in litigation around the world. Currently this includes such places as France, Spain, Turkey, Italy, India and the United States. A network of associated companies world-wide give them access to local counsel when required.

One of their niche areas is in the media and clients include such blue-chip firms as ITN, Mirror Group Newspapers, SMG, Newsquest, Border Television, Channel Four, Reuters News, GMTV and Sky News.

Other prestigious clients include the British Field Sports Society, the majority of Police Federations in Scotland, the Prison Officers' Association Scotland and many other public bodies and private individuals.

