

Obituary

Frank Wooldridge

(1928 - 2014)

Francis (Frank) Wooldridge was born in Brighton on August 22, 1928, the second child of George Albert and Ivy Sarah Ellen Wooldridge. His mother was a teacher and his father came from a family some of whom had held distinguished university chairs. Frank loved London, where he lived most of his life. He attended William Ellis and Quentin Grammar Schools although his education and upbringing was altered radically by evacuation to rural Lincolnshire during the “blitz”, in World War II (an event that killed his sister). In 1948 he won a Leverhulme Scholarship to the London School of Economics, where he graduated in Law in 1952. In 1964, he obtained the London LLM, and in 1971 a CNAA PhD in comparative company law under the supervision of Professor C M Schmitthoff. This was the first PhD awarded in the social sciences by the Council for National Academic Awards.

After graduation Dr Wooldridge worked briefly as a civil servant and for several years was a schoolmaster and tutor. In 1954, he was appointed Lecturer in Law at what is now Manchester Metropolitan University and, from 1966-71, became a Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Law at what is now London Metropolitan University (originally City of London Polytechnic). From 1971-73, he was Lecturer in Law at the University of Kent at Canterbury and, during the years 1973-88, Lecturer and Senior Lecturer in Law at the University of Birmingham. He was seconded to the post of Senior Research Fellow in European Company and Commercial Law, funded by the Law Society and held at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS), Charles Clore House, London during the years 1990-92: he was in fact the first holder of this post. He was Professorial Fellow at the British Institute of International and Comparative Law 2002-07, and also Professorial Associate Fellow at the IALS Centre for Financial and Corporate Law since 2007. After his official retirement he taught part-time for several years at the University of Notre Dame’s London Campus, where he was Adjunct Professor, and did a good deal of postgraduate teaching there.

His main academic interests were in the fields of company law, public international law and European Community law, and he published extensively in these areas. He had fluent reading command of the principal continental languages.

Some of his most original work was done in the field of comparative company law, including articles in journals such as *International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, *European Law Review*, *Amicus Curiae*, *The Company Lawyer*, *European Business Law Review* and *The Journal of Business Law*. He was specially interested in private companies and groups of companies. He compared the treatment of groups of companies across several jurisdictions, including a contribution on Germany and Brazil published in the *Festschrift volume Essays for Clive Schmitthoff* (1983).

Frank received much recognition for his work in company law, and in particular for the way in which he uniquely managed to combine the perspectives of English law, EU law and comparative law in scholarly work that was appreciated also by legislators and practitioners. The Law Commission under the chairmanship of The Rt Hon Lady Justice Arden relied on him for expertise in both EU and comparative European company law. He could have profited financially to a significant extent from his vast knowledge of these commercially important subjects, in consultancies or in legal practice, yet he remained consistently unimpressed by such opportunities. He had a great love of scholarship for its own sake.

He wrote three books himself, namely, *Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and Enforcement*, (Intellectual Property Institute, 1997); *Company Law in the UK and the European Community: Its Harmonisation and Unification* (Athlone Press, 1991); *Groups of Companies: The Law and Practice in Britain, France and Germany* (Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, University of London, 1981). He co-authored three others (with Professors Mads Andenas, Friedl Weiss and Clive Schmitthoff, respectively) and helped to edit further work. The truly magisterial *European Comparative Company Law* (with Mads Andenas) of 600 pages was published by Cambridge University Press in 2009, with subsequent paperback editions and several reprints. He was also among the authors of the first English edition of the *Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (completed 2003), and contributed to a bio-bibliographical appendix in *Jurists Uprooted. German-speaking Emigré Lawyers in Twentieth Century Britain* (Oxford 2004).

In 1998 Frank visited Ukraine as an European Union

consultant to advise the Ukraine Government on their proposed accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and, in particular, amendments they needed to make to their intellectual property laws. After the first seminar session, word spread throughout the Ministries that a famous English legal academic was in Kiev and for the rest of the week the huge eastern bloc style auditorium was packed daily to the rafters with interested civil servants, politicians, lawyers and journalists who came to listen to him explaining, amongst other matters, the law on confidential information (using, for instance, the improbably named Court of Appeal Case of *Faccenda Chicken Ltd v Fowler* [1986]). Despite everything being communicated through a simultaneous translator, the audience was rapt by Frank's explanations of the TRIPS Agreement and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of Ukraine. He made many friends on the trip, not least by excelling at the traditional competitive vodka toasting during the farewell dinner. Ukraine eventually acceded to the WTO and Frank's generous contribution played a part.

As a parting gift, Frank promised to review the whole copyright law of Ukraine and compare it to the UK's law! True to his word he undertook this huge task totally free of charge and sent it to the grateful Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations & Trade. The work was later published in Sweet & Maxwell's *Intellectual Property Quarterly*, with Liam Davies as a co-author (despite the latter's confessed minimal contribution). He continued to publish as recently as summer 2012 (notably in *Amicus Curiae*) following a typical burst of energy and brain power, despite his advancing years.

Frank's unwavering commitment to the EU integration project also included assistance provided to the Polish government in support of their preparation for EU membership. Thus, in the framework of an EU TACIS Project, he co-authored (with Friedl Weiss) an analytical report on the EC's Services Sector for the Polish Ministry of Economic Affairs (1998), and also participated in a Seminar for Polish Civil Servants at the Instytut Europejskiej in Lodz (June 2003).

Although he was naturally required to do a good deal of undergraduate teaching, his main enthusiasm was for postgraduate teaching, supervision and research. He derived great pleasure from research, and from trying to assist his

former students when possible. They found him to be a great inspiration and were encouraged to undertake their own legal research in a manner reflecting his own clarity of thought and eye for detail. He was generous to them and many others, not only with his time, energy and understanding. Among those who are indebted to Frank for all his kind and considerate support in various ways are Mr Ian Inasley, Dr Gino Naldi, Dr Rose D'Sa, and Dr Peter Macalister-Smith, all of whom were his postgraduates at the University of Birmingham.

His main non-legal interests were politics, classical music, literature and cricket. He was a widely travelled and most erudite person, well versed in world literature and philosophy as well as politics and, perhaps unusually for a UK citizen, a staunch republican. He disliked nationalism and distrusted patriotic discourses, and he never hesitated to openly express his critical stance in these matters even if, predictably, it landed him in altercations with mainstreamers.

He maintained extensive correspondence with colleagues abroad and had lectured in Canada, India and Nigeria as well as Europe. Although Frank had many female friends he remained unmarried. He enjoyed the affection and respect of many friends to whom he was regarded as family. He was also an excellent baby-sitter! His abiding interest was for his cats, notably Grimalkin, Moto, and most recently, Thomas. His other obsessions included the state of the Labour Party, Hitler, men in white coats, visitors from Saturn and the prospect of getting cancer. The Ukrainian project certainly gave rise to one of the strangest expense claims: it arrived in Frank's unmistakable (and almost illegible) handwriting and read "Alperton Cattery x 7 days"! It was immediately honoured in full.

He died in his home city on 28 March 2014, aged 85, following a brief illness, which he faced with characteristic equanimity. He will be remembered as a learned scholar who was both compassionate and generous, and who enriched the lives of many people by his common humanity as well as outstanding acts of personal kindness and consideration for others.

The Institute of Advanced Legal Studies would like to express its thanks to the former students of Dr Wooldridge who compiled this obituary for making it available to Amicus Curiae, and to Professor Charles Chatterjee for his help in obtaining it.