



➤ **BIG BUSINESS** Spinningfields is Manchester's Business Quarter and is home to some of the most prestigious developments in the city

# Firms a law unto themselves...

SHERYL MOORE

**T**HE region's law firms have been on the move over the past 12 months, taking advantage of the new and prestigious developments in the city.

Halliwells relocated its entire 700-strong Manchester workforce to 3 Hardman Square at the £1bn Spinningfields development.

Ian Austin, managing partner at Halliwells, which now has an annual turnover of £90m, said: "We brought together five separate offices to a single site at Spinningfields, making it the biggest ever relocation of a Manchester firm."

"It was a really pivotal moment for the firm taking us to a whole new level. The new office is a great boost for our people and clients."

Across the city Pinsent Mason, who last year got a new managing partner when Helen Ridge took over at the helm, is preparing to join its rival at Hardman Square.

Cobbetts moved from King Street to Mosley Street as part of its ambitious expansion plans and says the new premises reflect its position as a top 50 firm. It also said goodbye to its first ever managing partner, Stephen White, who retired after 35 years.

Hammonds celebrated 15 years in Manchester city centre with a number of new partner appointments and converting to a limited liability partnership.

There were also a number of new arrivals on the legal scene including McGrigors, insurance specialist Kennedys, Aaron & Partners and Greenwoods, while another new name appeared when Betesh Fox ditched its moniker after 34 years in favour of being re-named Ralli Solicitors.

Elsewhere, firms have been busy boosting their annual results. Brabners Chaffe Street celebrated another record breaking year with turnover hitting the £30m mark – up from £27m the previous year.

Stephensons also had a record year with its turnover up to £16m from £13m, while employee numbers have almost doubled from 260 to 465 over the last two years.

Turnover at Pannone has now reached

the £50m mark for the first time – an 18 per cent increase on last year. Managing partner Stephen Grant says the figures are testament to the great efforts by staff and 'a direct consequence of the firm's long term strategy of attracting and retaining talented lawyers and support staff'.

But what does the next 12 months hold for the legal community and what affect is the credit crunch having on law firms?

Nick Peel, head of Weightmans in Manchester, which also announced its office relocation this year, said: "By now the first effects of the economic downturn have started to bite, especially for law firms with a significant corporate or commercial dependence. Firms with a balanced portfolio of clients and specialisms will be better equipped to remain profitable."

"Although the market is cautious at the moment, lawyers don't seem to lack confidence in their ability to reinvent themselves whether that's on a temporary basis or over a longer term period."

"Until the markets pick up again I suspect most firms will move people around internally towards areas which are less dependent on the economic climate."

Ian Austin at Halliwells says the market is tough for law firms at the moment. He said: "The credit crunch has hit the Manchester market for sure. There is also a degree of nervousness about the year ahead. When the economy slows there is always downward pressure on professional fees."

Nigel Dale, partner in the banking team in the Manchester office of international law firm Eversheds, says the limited funds available have resulted in deals taking longer to put together.

He said: "There are less buyouts and borrower friendly deals are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. Over the summer we anticipate there will be an upturn in restructuring work, which may lead to a rise in insolvency work by the end of the year."

In addition to the credit crunch, Ian says that another challenge for law firms is the Legal Services Bill which will see law firms looking at third party funding or even flotation in the future.



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# Law firm backs young athletes in quest for Olympic glory

Two of the UK's most promising sporting talents are heading for Beijing later this year and law firm Halliwells is sponsoring their bid to bring back gold, writes **Sheryl Moore**



**GIRL RACER** Shelley Woods already adds winner of the Los Angeles and London marathons to her list of triumphs, and now she's Beijing bound

**L**AW firm Halliwells is sponsoring two of the most exciting young athletes in the UK - Francesca Halsall and Shelley Woods - as they aim for Olympic glory later this year.

Shelley Woods is one of Great Britain's best talents in wheelchair athletics.

Shelley became wheelchair-bound when, at the age of 11, she fell 20ft from a tree when a branch snapped. Sport was part of the rehabilitation. She tried everything, from basketball to table tennis, but by 15 she was hooked on racing. It has certainly worked for her. Recently referred to as 'the next Tanni Grey-Thompson', Shelley has won the Los Angeles and London marathons and is Beijing bound.

At the Manchester Commonwealth Games, Francesca Halsall scooped two silver medals before her 16th birthday.

Now the swimming star is smashing records and has become one of the most exciting young athletes in Great Britain having scooped a gold medal at this year's European Championships and in the process qualifying for the British Olympic Association's 35-strong Great Britain swimming squad for this summer's Olympics.

Commenting on the decision to sponsor Francesca and Shelley, Ian Austin, Halliwells' ma-

naging partner said: "Both Fran and Shelley have the potential to be future Olympic champions and they're an absolute delight to work with."

"They're both driven to succeed - in Shelley's case after becoming disabled at a young age - and it's a real example of what can be done through commitment and dedication."

"Our involvement with Shelley and Fran is very much a two way thing. We obviously support them financially but they help us too. We are in the process of arranging a day when Shelley and Fran will come into our Manchester office and talk to some of our younger solicitors about the challenges they face in a competitive environment. There are a lot of similarities between sport and business in terms of what it takes to succeed. Shelley and Fran are both athletes who want to be the best and that is what we aim for as a business and also look for in our people."

Shelley Woods said: "I'm really grateful for Halliwells' support."

"When I was disabled, I went through a phase of 'why me?' but you can't go through life like that. It could have been worse. I could have been paralysed from the neck down and totally dependent. So after a year I decided life's too short, you have to make the most of what you have. Now I can do anything I want. I just have to wheel myself around."

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**SWIMMING SENSATION** Francesca Halsall scooped two silver medals at the Manchester Commonwealth Games

# Against the odds

■ Working to make the improbable possible

SHERYL MOORE

**W**HEN Laura Nadal was six the primary school she attended asked her mother to take her out saying 'she wasn't worth educating'.

Laura had been born with cataracts on both eyes and had limited vision. At the age of three she had the lens in her left eye removed which left her with no sight in that eye, and in her early teens Laura had an artificial lens fitted in her right eye which gave her partial vision.

Yet despite her disability, the 27-year-old is one of the top performing employment lawyers at DLA and has an impressive academic pedigree.

Laura's mother, who is a teacher, refused to take her out of school, however she did teach her daughter to read and write.

Laura said: "I spent much of my time at primary school doing very little, and when my mother put me in to take the 11-plus exam, the school even wrote to the local authority saying it wasn't appropriate for me to take the test."

Nevertheless, Laura passed with flying colours and went to

grammar school which she says was much more supportive of her needs. She later gained three grade As in her A level exams and then got a first class honours degree at Sheffield University before going on to law school at Nottingham.

She joined DLA in August 2004 and is an assistant solicitor. Laura has advised a number of high profile local clients, including Pure Leisure Group and also acts for Trinity Mirror newspapers.

She has worked tremendously hard to overcome the obstacles posed by her disability and has adopted her own strategies to cope with these challenges, including innovative use of technology, developing a powerful memory, first class forward planning and quickly adapting to difficult situations such as when clients or witnesses produce documents in formats she can't easily read.

Laura, who also consistently beats all financial and fee earning targets, has defended high profile clients in complex discrimination claims. She recently advised on a race discrimination/constructive dismissal test case on use of the word Nazi as a form of racial abuse.

She has particular specialist expertise working with US par-

ents of UK companies on all aspects of employment law including consultation issues, dismissals/severances and contractual disputes.

It is a remarkable achievement given her primary school gave up on her but Laura says others, who like her have a disability, can achieve what they want if they put their minds to it.

She said: "You need to have a lot of personal drive and believe in yourself. There are people out there who have prejudices and are quick to make assumptions. Some people tried to dissuade me from studying law because of all the documents that need reading, but if you want something in life then you should go for it. You may need to put more effort in than others, but it will be worth it."

And it seems many of her clients are pleased she pursued her legal dreams. Eugene Duffy, group managing editor at Trinity Mirror Group, said: "I have seen Laura working with some very high powered executives within the newspaper industry and she has never been phased by status - or reputation."

"For someone in the first years of her career she is an outstanding talent and continues to be a joy to work with."



➤ **LEADING LIGHT** Despite numerous setbacks Laura Nadal has established herself as one of the most promising new talents in the legal world



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# Band on the run...

■ Music lawyer  
regroups 80's band

■ Industry experience  
keeps him on top

SHERYL MOORE

**A**NDY Booth and his band, The Cassandra Complex, are getting ready for their first international tour in more than two decades.

Guitarist Andy, who is head of creative industries at Turner Parkinson, was a founder member of the band which last year was approached to reform. The band played the alternative Wave Gotik Treffen festival in Leipzig, Germany, and the Machina Festival in Sao Paolo, Brazil, and is now preparing to tour Germany later this year.

Andy joined the legal profession after leaving the band in 1988. He specialises in the music business and acts for well-known artists including Ian Brown, Johnny Marr, The Coral and The Zutons, amongst many others.

He also acts for a number of local independent record labels. Most recently, Andy has advised Miles Kane, one half of The Last Shadow Puppets, which also includes Arctic Monkeys front man, Alex Turner and recently reached number one in the UK album charts. Andy also worked with Utah



**HANDY ANDY** Andy Booth of Turner Parkinson, and his band, The Cassandra Complex, are back on the road and hoping to record new music - if they can find the time

Saints on its deal with Ministry of Sound to release its top 10 single, Something Good '08. Andy Booth said: "The majority of my work comes through referrals. Clients in this area are told from an early stage in their music careers that they need to get a lawyer and quickly.

"While this isn't always true at that time, it is well worth building a relationship with a professional who knows the industry and will be able to advise them as their profile increases. There does come a point where they definitely need a lawyer,

and my clients like the fact that I am here in Manchester and on hand, rather than 200 miles away in London."

He says that people in the music business don't want a professional 'suit', but want someone they can talk to as a peer, who really understands from their perspective, the issues faced and the language used.

"For that reason the work I do tends to come via referrals from others in the music business that know me and trust my experience both as a lawyer and

as a musician. The fact that I have done both add to my credibility, and that counts for a lot in the industry.

"I left The Cassandra Complex in 1988 with the specific intention of continuing to be involved with the music industry through my legal work and by being based in Manchester rather than London. However, in 2007 the original band was approached to reform. There is also the possibility of some new music being recorded and released, but we all have to find the time!"

## Wedded bliss for the legal eagles who find barbershop leads to a harmonious partnership

THEY may work at rival firms but for Simon Pedley and Nancy Kelsall theirs is a harmonious marriage in more ways than one.

While Simon is head of litigation at Pannone and Nancy is a corporate finance partner at Addleshaw Goddard, the couple are united in their love of barbershop singing.

Simon is a member of Bolton's Cottontown Chorus and Nancy makes up the Eu4ia Quartet which are the current European champions.

The pair are regulars on the barbershop circuit performing at concerts around the UK and Europe.

Simon, whose chorus has twice been British champions, says he first became really interested in the world of barbershop singing after meeting his wife.

He said: "It was a big step for me when I joined the chorus because I was not a very confident singer.

"But it is such a big change from the legal scene and my wife and I have travelled extensively and met so many different people through singing.

"We certainly have a harmonious marriage - in all senses of the word!"



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Nancy Kelsall

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# FACT OR FICTION?

## FACT

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