

IN THE MATTER OF RICHARD CHARLES STRONG, solicitor

- AND -

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

---

Miss J Devonish (in the chair)  
Mrs J Martineau  
Mr G Fisher

Date of Hearing: 8th February 2007

---

## **FINDINGS**

of the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal  
Constituted under the Solicitors Act 1974

---

An application was duly made on behalf of the Law Society by Iain George Miller, solicitor and partner in the firm of Bevan Brittan LLP, Fleet Place House, 2 Fleet Place, Holborn Viaduct, London EC4M 7RF on 10th August 2006 that Richard Charles Strong of Ilford, Essex, solicitor, might be required to answer the allegations contained in the statement that accompanied the application and that such order might be made as the Tribunal should think right.

The allegations against the Respondent were that he had been guilty of conduct unbecoming a solicitor in that:-

- 1) He wrote a letter to the Law Society dated 23rd April 2002 which purported to be signed by a principal in his firm without the knowledge of that principal;
- 2) He misrepresented the progress of matters he was dealing with both to his principals and clients.

The application was heard at the Court Room, 3rd Floor, Gate House, 1 Farringdon Street, London, EC4M 7NS on 8th February 2007 when Iain George Miller appeared as the Applicant. The Respondent appeared in person.

The evidence before the Tribunal included the admissions of the Respondent, who addressed the Tribunal, and his (undated) statement as faxed to the Tribunal on 7th February 2007.

At the conclusion of the hearing the Tribunal made the following Order:-

The Tribunal Orders that the Respondent Richard Charles Strong of Ilford, Essex, solicitor, be struck off the Roll of Solicitors and it further Orders that he do pay the costs of and incidental to this application and enquiry fixed in the sum of £2,500.

**The facts are set out in paragraphs 1 to 3 hereunder:-**

1. The Respondent, born in 1969, was admitted to the Roll in 1995. The Respondent was until May 2002, and at all material times, an assistant solicitor in the practice of Ronald Prior & Co of 163-165A Hoe Street, Walthamstow, London, E17 3AL. The Respondent had not held a Practising Certificate since 10th February 2003.

Allegation 1 - Providing a misleading letter to the Law Society

2. The Respondent sent a letter dated 23rd April 2002 purportedly from his principal, Mr Barley, to the Law Society in connection with a complaint against him which was at that time being investigated. The Respondent forged Mr Barley's signature. Mr Barley discovered this in May 2002 and by letter dated 30th May 2002 he informed the Law Society of this and of the fact that he had not seen the Law Society's adjudication/report on the complaint, both of which had been intercepted by the Respondent.

Allegation 2 - Misrepresentation as to the progress of matters

3. When the above matter came to light, the Respondent admitted to Mr Barley and his partners that there was a number of matters with which he had been dealing where clients, and the partners, had been misled as to progress. A search at the Respondent's home revealed eight files with unopened correspondence. Three matters handled by the Respondent gave rise to particular concern:
  - a) Mrs XB. The Respondent had taken on a clinical negligence matter after expiry of the limitation period. The Respondent told Mrs B, who paid monies on account, that proceedings had been served and that he would seek judgment in default of defence. This was not true.
  - b) Mrs YB. The Respondent had again taken on a clinical negligence matter. The Respondent told Mrs YB's daughter that the other party to the matter had admitted liability. This was not true.
  - c) Mr M. The Respondent failed to issue proceedings in a personal injury claim which then became time-barred. The Respondent nevertheless told the supervising partner that proceedings had been issued.

**The Applicant's submissions**

4. The Applicant acknowledged that the Respondent had been in "sad circumstances" at the time of the misconduct in question but this could not provide an answer to what he had done. He had forged his principal's signature on a letter purportedly from his principal to the Law Society and furthermore had misrepresented facts in cases he was handling to both his principals and to his clients. These were all very serious matters which went to the heart of the nature of a solicitor's work. These were matters of dishonesty.

**The Respondent's submissions**

5. The Respondent confirmed that he admitted the allegations and acknowledged that he had at the time of the conduct in question acted dishonestly. He further acknowledged that the appropriate course would have been to have told his principal of the difficulties he was finding himself in as regards his work.
6. The Respondent referred to matters in his statement: his father's illness as from 1996 until his death in November 2005, the failure of Respondent's marriage in 2002 within months of the wedding, and his illness with depression. The Respondent confirmed that he had not worked as a solicitor since May 2002 and that he had been dismissed by his firm in early June of that year. The Respondent said that he had since had work with firms of estate agents and had begun a permanent job as a sales progressor for a firm of estate agents in Wanstead on Monday of this week.

**The Tribunal's findings**

7. The Tribunal found the allegations, including the assertion of dishonesty, proved on the Respondent's own admissions.

**The Tribunal's decision and its reasons**

8. The Tribunal found this a sad case. The Respondent had undoubtedly had personal difficulties at the time that he committed the conduct in question. However, the Applicant rightly pointed out that the Respondent's conduct struck at the heart of what the public properly expected of a solicitor, namely that he be a person of unquestionable integrity, probity and trustworthiness. A person who transgressed such standards could not remain on the Roll of Solicitors. The Tribunal therefore ordered that the Respondent be struck off the Roll of Solicitors and furthermore that he pay agreed costs in the sum of £2,500.

Dated this 26th day of March 2007

On behalf of the Tribunal

J Devonish  
In the chair