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Justice Eady libel judge highest profile legal figure

- Fiona Shackleton retains top spot as highest profile lawyer
- Credit crunch litigation so far fails to reveal any new star lawyers

Justice Eady, the senior libel judge, is this year's most high profile member of the legal profession, featuring in 334 press articles over the past 12 months, reveals research carried out by Sweet & Maxwell, the leading legal information provider.¹ (See table of results below)

Justice Eady has attracted the attention of the media for what some commentators see as controversial judgements restricting press freedoms. According to Sweet & Maxwell, a Thomson Reuters business, press coverage of Justice Eady accelerated in the wake of his ruling on the privacy case brought by Formula One chief Max Mosley against the News of the World.

Other high profile cases Justice Eady has ruled on over the past year include Madonna's privacy case against the Daily Mail, actress Sienna Miller's privacy case against photographic agency Big Pictures and footballer Michael Owen's libel action against the Daily Express.

Leading divorce lawyers continue to attract column inches

Fiona Shackleton has retained the top spot as the UK's highest profile solicitor this year. The leading divorce lawyer has featured in 247 national and regional press articles over the past 12 months, after representing Madonna in her divorce from director Guy Ritchie. Divorce lawyers dominate the rankings of the highest profile lawyers.

Guy Ritchie's divorce lawyer, Lady Helen Ward, also features in this year's Top 10 as a new entry, taking seventh place. Family lawyer Ward has been cited in the press 70 times in the last year and is reported to have acted for Formula One Chief Bernie Ecclestone in his divorce from Slavica Ecclestone and Caroline Spencer in her divorce from Earl Spencer.

Divorce lawyer Raymond Tooth has also entered the Top 10 this year in fifth place. Tooth acted for Ingrid Myerson, the former wife of City fund manager Bryan Myerson who failed in his attempt to renegotiate their divorce settlement after seeing his net worth plunge as a result of the financial crisis.

¹ Coverage based on mentions in Sweet & Maxwell's Westlaw UK's online UK news database for the year to June 30 2009. Sweet & Maxwell would welcome suggestions of lawyers who should be included in future reviews – please email jl@mattison.co.uk

Human rights lawyer Clive Stafford Smith enters Top Three

According to Sweet & Maxwell's research human rights lawyers have tended to dominate press coverage of the legal profession in recent years. However, the only human rights lawyer to feature in the list of Top 10 most high profile lawyers this year is Clive Stafford Smith.

Stafford Smith, who is acting for the former Guantanamo Bay detainee Binyam Mohamed who alleges that he was tortured with the knowledge of UK intelligence services, has featured in 174 press articles over the past year.

Human rights lawyers Phil Shiner and Imran Khan who have featured in the Top 10 for the past two years running have fallen to 15th and 24th place respectively this year.

Recent research by Sweet & Maxwell has revealed that the number of reported cases making use of Human Rights Act arguments fell by 14% between 2007 and 2008 although the use of Human Rights arguments is now being used in a far greater variety of cases.

Corporate solicitors still outside Top 10 despite credit crunch litigation

Despite the credit crunch triggering an increase in litigation the work of corporate lawyers continues to receive comparatively little attention in the national and regional print media.

Bruce Buck, who is the second most high profile solicitor for the second year running is the only corporate lawyer in this year's Top 10, with 167 press mentions. However, Sweet & Maxwell points out that almost all of these articles refer to his role as Chairman of Chelsea FC rather than his work as a Partner at Skadden, one of the world's highest grossing law firms.

Aside from Bruce Buck, the highest profile corporate lawyer this year is Nigel Boardman, Partner at Slaughter and May who has featured in 21 press articles over the past 12 months. Boardman has received press coverage for his role in advising the Government on the recapitalisation of RBS, Lloyds TSB's takeover of HBOS and the collapse of the Icelandic banks.

From the world of barristers David Pannick QC (acting for hedge funds in the Northern Rock litigation against the Government) and Cherie Booth QC (acting for pension funds against RBS in shareholder litigation) receive more attention from the media placing them as the second and fourth highest profile barristers.

Alina Lourie, Business Unit Director at Sweet & Maxwell, comments: "The legal profession plays such a central role in some of the most contentious areas of public debate. Whilst the public's attention is instinctively captured by legal stories involving the rich and famous, it is always interesting to see how other legal topics such as human rights, shareholder rights and press freedom move in and out of the media's attention."

Most frequently cited solicitors in UK newspapers

		Press coverage July 2008 – June 2009	Recent area of expertise*
1	Fiona Shackleton	247	Madonna's divorce lawyer
2	Bruce Buck	167	Chairman of Chelsea FC
3	Clive Stafford Smith	174	Representing former Guantanamo Bay detainee Binyam Mohamed
4	Nick Freeman	117	Dubbed "Mr Loophole" after defending celebrities charged with driving offences
5	Giovanni di Stefano	112	Representing Ronnie Biggs
6	Raymond Tooth	81	Ingrid Myerson's divorce lawyer
7	Julian Young	77	Represented Sean Hodgson, wrongly jailed for murder
8	Lady Helen Ward	70	Guy Ritchie's divorce lawyer
9	Paul Marsh	69	President of the Law Society
10	Mark Stephens	64	Media lawyer with Finers Stephens Innocent

Most frequently cited barristers in UK newspapers

		Press coverage July 2008 – June 2009	Recent area of expertise*
1	Jonathan Laidlaw QC	197	Prosecution barrister in the Glasgow airport terror attack trial
2	David Pannick QC	151	Representing Northern Rock shareholders
3	Michael Mansfield QC	149	Representing Scotland Yard Commander Ali Dizaei
4	Cherie Booth QC	119	Representing pension funds suing RBS
5	Derek Ogg QC	97	Senior Advocate Depute
6	Geoffrey Robertson QC	75	Constitutional expert
7	Helena Kennedy QC	72	Labour Peer
8	William Clegg QC	71	Represented Barry George in his retrial for the murder of Jill Dando
9	James Price QC	58	Max Mosley's QC
10	Lord Lester QC	56	Human rights expert

Most frequently cited members of the judiciary and Government in UK newspapers

		Press coverage July 2008 – June 2009	Recent area of expertise*
1	Justice Eady	334	Senior libel judge
2	Lord Justice Judge	330	Lord Chief Justice
3	Justice Wilkie	197	Ruling on "back from the dead" canoeist trial
4	Justice Mackay	187	Ruling on the Glasgow airport terror attack trial
5	Sir Michael Wright	181	Coroner in the inquest into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes

6	Justice Irwin	178	Ruling on murder trial of Rhys Jones
7	Justice McCombe	159	Ruling on Karen Matthews' trial
8	Lord Hamilton	148	Leading the Lockerbie bombing appeal
9	Judge Stephen Kramer	147	Ruling on the Baby P trial.
10	Justice Foskett	138	Ruled atomic test veterans case against the MoD

* Legal areas and job titles bracketed are a guide to the press coverage rather than an attempt to sum up that lawyer's overall workload or areas of expertise

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Notes to Editors:

Sweet & Maxwell (www.sweetandmaxwell.co.uk) is a leading provider of information and solutions to the legal and professional markets in the UK and Ireland. With over 200 years of history and heritage in legal publishing, Sweet & Maxwell offers detailed and specialist knowledge, understanding, interpretation and commentary across a wide range of subjects in a variety of formats to meet customers' needs - books, journals, periodicals, looseleaves, CD-ROMs and the market leading online services, Lawtel and Westlaw UK. Sweet & Maxwell is part of Thomson Reuters.

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Press enquiries:

Jane Lougher or Nick Mattison
Mattison Public Relations
Tel: 020 7645 3636

Peter Wylie
Corporate Communications Manager
Sweet & Maxwell
Tel: 020 7393 7123