

Remarks made by High Bailiff Needham at a Court of Summary Jurisdiction sitting at 10am on 28th September 2017 at Douglas in respect of the death of former High Bailiff John Weldon Williams

Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

I am very grateful to my fellow justices for allowing me to join them for a short time at the start of the sitting of this court of summary jurisdiction in order to mark on the court record the receipt of the sad news of the death of the former High Bailiff of the Isle of Man, Mr John Weldon Williams on Monday of this week.

Mr Williams was appointed as the Island's first full-time Deputy High Bailiff on 12 December 1977 and served for 10 years in that role until his appointment to the office of High Bailiff on 6 January 1988 which was upon the elevation of former High Bailiff, His Honour, the late, Henry Callow, to the office of Second Deemster. Mr Williams then served as High Bailiff for 7 years until his retirement on 31st January 1995.

As it is over 22 years since that retirement, it will be only the more senior members of the bar and the judiciary who appeared before him. For myself I did not know High Bailiff Williams in a professional capacity, although he presented as a kindly and gentle man when I met him sociably. Nevertheless from what I have gleaned from colleagues and people who appeared before him, he was a judge who certainly kept advocates on their toes and, in the traditional style of the judiciary in those days, he was extremely clear and precise in conveying where a practitioner was in error.

He was a proud Welshman who, it is said, would at times show, particularly to the poorly-prepared advocate, the fiery side of that antecedence.

Perhaps there should be no surprise as to High Bailiff Williams judicial approach combining exacting standards and attention to detail bearing in mind the skills he brought to bear from his previous professional experience. His meticulousness came from the discipline of being a statutory draughtsman within the Atty. Gen.'s Chambers on the Isle of Man, where he was very highly regarded and his ability to keep order and administer summary justice came from his experience as a resident magistrate in British colonial territory that then existed.

A perusal of the Manx Law Reports covering the years when High Bailiff Williams was in office show that he certainly left his mark on Manx jurisprudence. In particular his tenure covered the general developments in road traffic law brought about by the greater recognition of the need to curb drink-driving and the intricacies of disqualification. A read of the reported cases of *Caveney v Moore* 1981-1982 MLR from page 240; *Oake v Ward* 1993-95 MLR from page 33; and *Oake v Buckley* 1993-95 MLR from page 65 are mere examples in that field of the diligence that High Bailiff Williams applied.

There are of course the other cases reported, across the wide spectrum of jurisdiction that High Bailiff Williams held, but I do not intend to specifically cite them now.

A judicial colleague who remembers High Bailiff Williams well recalls the particular care and rigorous internal judicial questioning that High Bailiff Williams applied in reaching decisions on delicately

balanced matters. He was not quick to judge and went to great pains to reach the just decision.

From a former police prosecutor appearing before Mr Williams, I am told that the High Bailiff was exacting in his expectations but he also recognised the short-comings of those appearing before him who were not legally qualified and was sympathetic to their difficulties.

It is clear that he was a highly valued, distinguished and long-serving member of the Island's bench and on behalf of the Manx Judiciary I would wish to convey condolences to High Bailiff Williams' family for their loss.

High Bailiff Williams was a man of modesty, integrity and honour and it is with sadness that the court notes his death.

I would ask if we could mark his passing with a moment of sitting in quiet reflection.

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Thank you.

The bench will retire.