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Other lives

Barristers

Nigel Ley obituary

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Nigel Ley was a workaholic, but tried to balance his legal preoccupations with varied outside interests

My friend of 45 years and fellow legal eagle Nigel Ley, who has died aged 73, was a barrister who specialised in drink driving law and false imprisonment cases.

Nigel was born in Hackney, east London, as the only child of Jewish parents, Gerald Ley, a clothing dealer, and his wife, Grace (nee Betesh), who served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during the second world war. He was educated at Battersea grammar school and Manchester University, retaining great affection for the latter, to which he bequeathed a third of his estate.

Called to the bar in 1969, he became a member of Gray's Inn in London and an expert in drink driving law and false imprisonment, writing standard law books on both subjects, including *Drink Driving Law and Practice* (1993) and *False Imprisonment* (2001). I was often his instructing solicitor.

A workaholic, Nigel sometimes toiled all night in chambers before an important hearing. To preserve his sanity, however, he nurtured many outside interests, including as a Territorial Army captain in the Lancashire Hussars Yeomanry. A keen horseman, he frequently took part in the annual bar point to point and was a member of the Cottesmore hunt in Rutland.

An ardent supporter of the Liberal Democrats, he stood as the party's parliamentary candidate for the Holland with Boston constituency, Lincolnshire, in 1992, coming third with 16% of the votes.

Barristers, like actors, have a high divorce rate because of their peripatetic lifestyle. Nigel avoided this by never marrying, and instead enjoyed an active social life, attending inns of court social functions, horse races and hunt balls. His closest relatives were his cousins.

He had outstanding qualities: he was big-spirited enough to admit when he had been mistaken (a rare quality in the legal profession), and he was also charitable, providing free legal advice to people who could not afford counsel's fees and giving another third of his estate to the Injured Jockeys Fund.

He was also great company, enjoying a drink or two after a conference with counsel or court hearing and, with his dry sense of humour, recounting stories about various characters he knew in law and politics.

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