

# THE TIMES

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## Lawyer of the week Sarah Kennerley-Fawcett

Sarah Kennerley-Fawcett, a lawyer at Thompsons Solicitors, successfully acted for Malcolm Gelsthorpe, a vintage train engineer who was awarded £495,000 by the High Court after being exposed to asbestos dust while restoring carriages of the Orient Express. Having done the work at the Steamtown Railway Museum in Carnforth, Lancashire, in the early 1980s, he was later diagnosed with cancer and sued his final employer, St Hogs Property Investments. Gelsthorpe died last month.

**What were the biggest hurdles you had to overcome in this case?** This was a novel claim in which the defendant denied that my client had been exposed to asbestos. It was therefore necessary to secure

persuasive evidence to put forward a strong case at the court hearing.

**What is the best decision you have taken as a lawyer?** Deciding to specialise in asbestos. It is an emotive area of law, and although challenging, it is immensely rewarding. It is an honour and privilege to be invited by clients into their homes when they are at their most vulnerable.

**Who do you most admire in the law?** Those in any area who fight for

the victims of injustice, unfairness and inequality.

**What's the best advice you have received?** Trust your instincts. Always fight for the good cause and never give up.

**What is the funniest thing that has happened in your job?** A client once told me that he had had lunch with an alien. I omitted it from his witness statement.

**What are the best and worst aspects of being a lawyer?** The best is making

a positive difference to a client's life. The worst is not having a nine-to-five job and taking the job home.

**What law would you enact?** One requiring the safe removal of asbestos, prioritising high-risk settings such as schools and hospitals, along with a central register to record the location and condition of asbestos. Asbestos is not a historic issue and still causes the deaths of more than 5,000 people each year.

**What is your favourite cocktail?** Any — if I have managed to get to the end of the week.

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