The loneliest solicitor in England

Steve Clark, London, October 2001

Photography: Adrian Higget
Two of his three children are dead. His wife is in jail for their murder. And he’s sure that she is innocent.

Matthew Rushoton meets Steve Clark, a City finance lawyer who must also now campaign for justice

Steve Clark won’t let us take his picture. He’s nervous about it. "I’ve been told" by Dr Alan Williams, following challenges to his recent investigation, that the doctor certified the death of both babies from natural causes. It’s a far cry from the City, this arena. It’s the dirty, low-end of the law. ‘The jury were 12 people just dragged through the streets,’ he says. ‘They didn’t know my wife was innocent; I lost all faith in the criminal justice system – the system I was taught to respect, the system that’s held up as an example to the world,’ he says.

Threats to society

The jury found Sally guilty by a 10-2 majority. The resulting double life sentence followed as a matter of course. By pleading ‘not guilty’, the Crown Prosecution Service had all the ammunition they needed to take the case. The Clarks’ constituency MP. However, including Martin Bell OBE, formerly of Top of the Pops fame, and Sally’s constituents, knew that somehow he will succeed. But still he lost his way, that’s how Sally got to jail. Five years of haunting misery to Sally. Sally was sentenced to a term of 10 years. Sally had given up any chance of sympathy. But the system is rejected wholesale by all those innocent mothers accused of this crime. Our society is rejected wholesale by all those who know her personally, and – since Sally’s appeal was not granted.

Emotions

The emotive nature of sudden infant death seems to complicate society to hold itself accountable. But sudden infant death is a fact of life.

The Sally Clark case

At last, Sally’s story is coming to the end. Sally with her children.

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runs “One in 73 million” as its headline on the case, how can the Court of Appeal decide that it didn’t influence the jury?”, he asks, shrugging his shoulders. Yet the Court of Appeal found the case against Sally overwhelming. Steve makes no attempt to disguise his contempt for its decision, saying the judgment was at best ‘intellectually dishonest’. He believes that the Court cherry-picked only the evidence that upheld the prosecution’s case. He claims that the Court failed to acknowledge that Dr Williams’s reliability was critical to the safety of the conviction. He claims that the Court gave disproportionate weight to Dr Meadow’s evidence — in particular his unproved behavioural theories about parent killers — and ignored the testimony of defence experts of equal standing. He claims that the Court relied on inadmissible evidence regarding Sally’s alleged drink problem to support their judgment. And finally — and fundamentally — he believes that the Court drew illogical, unsafe and categorically incorrect conclusions from the evidence presented.

Courage and conviction

Anyone who’s been through as much as Steve over the last five years, and hauled himself back into the upper echelons of a tough profession like the law, deserves credit.

Steve Clark knows that his personal credibility — his absolute belief that there has been a miscarriage of justice — offers as strong a case as there is for Sally’s innocence. The courts didn’t like his evidence, but Clark is laying it on the line: ‘I am not some lovelorn fool doggedly supporting my wife out of some misplaced sense of loyalty. I am a 39-year-old Cambridge University law graduate, a qualified solicitor, who has pored over the evidence and who has taken expensive, high-level legal and medical advice throughout. I know my wife did nothing to harm our children.’

He’s no fool, agreed. But it is for the Home Secretary to decide whether Sally is set free. And only the Criminal Cases Review Commission can overturn her conviction. In the meantime, the Clarks need all the support they can get.

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he Legal Business readership is one of the most well-connected, influential, and intelligent that any magazine is lucky enough to have. We’d ask anyone reading this to utilise any or all of those traits, should they share the mounting concern over the treatment of Sally Clark.

Full press debate, articles and details of whom to contact are available through www.sallyclark.org.uk.

Among the leading lights — in the legal profession and beyond — who have already declared their support or expressed reservations about the case are Roger Pannone, senior partner of Pannone & Partners, and Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, as well as the Lords Parry Mitchell and David Owen.

Supporting Sally

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