

Address of Deemster Corlett to pay tribute to

His Worship Thomas Michael Moyle

27th December 1946 to 31st December 2021

19th January 2022

Mr President, Chief Minister, Mr Solicitor General, Your Honours, Your Worships, Members of the Manx Bar, distinguished guests.

It is fitting that the Manx Bar and the Manx Judiciary should gather here today to pay our own particular tribute to Thomas Michael Moyle, who served the Isle of Man as Government Advocate from 1974 to 1995 and then as Deputy High Bailiff from 1995 to 2002 and finally as High Bailiff from 2002 to 2010.

To me he will always be "Mr Moyle". This is because in 1981 when I became articled to William Cain, then the Island's Attorney General, Mr Moyle was the Government Advocate in the AG's Chambers and I spent a great deal of time under his supervision. He always commanded great respect (which sometimes verged on terror!) and this feeling of respect remains with me to this day. It still feels a little over familiar to use his Christian name. But I will (respectfully) do so.

As has rightly been said by others, Michael had very high standards and he expected others to live up to them. I well remember my attempts as an articled clerk to draft informations and summonses for him and his justified displeasure when he pointed out my many errors.

However his insistence that things be done correctly and accurately has hopefully remained with me and it taught me a valuable lesson, as was his excellent practical advice "Never have 2 sets of papers open on your desk at the same time".

Others have also made mention of Michael's sartorial issues and that Junemary often despaired at his allegedly scruffy appearance. All I can say is that Michael was always immaculately attired in chambers and in court, wearing the traditional barrister's black jacket and waistcoat

and striped trousers, with shiny, well-polished, black toe-capped shoes. I obviously must have thought in those days that a different and less traditional approach to legal dress was appropriate. It was my habit in those days to attend work in the Attorney General's Chambers in brown brogues accompanied by a light grey suit. This attracted Michael's wrath and he regularly admonished me, in his inimitable style, insisting that I, as "his student", should invest in "black toe caps" instead of going around in "co-respondent's shoes".

He had nicknames for virtually everyone – I was known as "Shirley Temple". In case you are wondering, this was I believe on account of my rather long and curly blondish hair (difficult to believe now I know).

As the song puts it "It was acceptable in the 80's", and things were certainly different then. I recall that Michael was in the habit, once he had dealt with a couple of short appearances at the Court House in Athol Street, of taking his students to Cannell's Café in Duke Street for coffee and tea cakes – a very civilised way to spend time and be regaled with his excellent stock of anecdotes. Trips to Coroner's auctions (a regular occurrence in those days) or to Peel were also a regular occurrence. They were to arrest Irish or Scottish fishing vessels caught fishing illegally in Manx waters. Colourful exchanges occasionally occurred with the aggrieved crew. I was also on occasion invited after work to the Gentlemen's Bar at the Woodbourne (otherwise known as Michael's branch office) where I would gently sip my beer in the company of the convivial characters who regularly welcomed him there.

After I left chambers to enter private practice in 1984 Michael's workload (along with that of the legal profession generally) undoubtedly increased, yet he single handedly managed it all to an exceptionally high standard. He was rightly elevated to the judiciary in 1995 to a post which he clearly loved. His ability to work through very lengthy lists as Deputy High Bailiff and then High Bailiff are well known and a tribute to his expertise. I confess that I did not regularly appear in his courts although I did become a fairly frequent visitor when I acted for the Road

Transport Licensing Committee from which many appeals were brought to the High Bailiff by aggrieved taxi operators. He conducted the hearings with conspicuous fairness and efficiency.

It has been implied elsewhere that he was more inclined to convict defendants than other judges and that he was invariably pro-prosecution. This is not correct. The criminal defence bar will I am sure attest to Michael's even handedness and that their clients were more than content that he had given them a fair trial even when found guilty. His sentencing was marked by humanity and fairness.

What is undoubtedly true is that Michael was a generous man who has inspired great loyalty from court staff. One example of his generosity is that at the Summary Court Christmas dinner in 2008 he bet three court clerks (Lynn McMechan, Kate Alexander and Liz Humphries) that they would not be able to walk to Peel at the following year's Parish Walk. He promised that he would pay £500 to the clerks' chosen charity if they did get to Peel. These three ladies took Michael up on his challenge and the Three Moylesketeers, complete with matching t-shirts, were born. In June 2009 they did indeed walk to Peel and Michael not only honoured his promise to pay £500 but also matched the total amount which the Moylesketeers had otherwise raised by themselves, the result being that three Isle of Man charities benefitted considerably from Michael's generosity. There are many other examples of his generosity and help to charities and indeed to court staff and other individuals, which inspired his staff to go above and beyond the norm in their work and provide him with the excellent support which he greatly appreciated

In his retirement I was particularly impressed by his time at Oxford where he and Junemary devoted their time to academic study and to the social life of Harris Manchester College. It struck me that this was such a refreshing and worthwhile way to spend one's retirement and it was wonderful to see how much they were obviously enjoying the experience.

There is no doubt that Michael Moyle made an indelible mark on the Isle of Man's justice system, both as an excellent prosecutor and as a fair judge. The way in which he spent his

well-earned retirement is an inspiration to us all, (especially me!). I remember him with admiration, amusement and respect. Junemary, he will be greatly missed.