

Everyone here this evening is involved in the industry of dispute resolution. In its most primitive form, dispute resolution consists of “taking it outside”. True to our roots, in general we’re a pugilistic bunch. Putting the point at its lowest, litigation is a competitive sport.

It is therefore particularly enjoyable to have a moment like this where we can step back from the fray. I want to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have helped me get to this point – I couldn’t have done it without you.

I will try to speak to many of you during the course of this evening to thank you individually. Within the few minutes I have now I want to thank you collectively.

My instructing solicitors – advocates are nothing without cases. They are like boxers without a ring, which if you think about it is a dangerous thing. Often the hardest fights are within the team. These contribute hugely towards achieving the best outcome for the client. I have had such fun with my solicitors and I want to thank you all – long may it continue!

My clerks – for battling with me to increase my fees and overriding my protests. (You know who you are ;-)) For the sheer relentless amount of photocopying and admin chasing they do for me. Thank you.

My opponents for fighting the good fight, Queensberry Rules, and with good humour and humanity.

Sometimes in this job it feels as if our main opponent is the Judge. I always bear in mind the advice I was given as a white wig by Sir Brian Leveson. He said: from where they sit and from where you stand, they cannot even reach you. Opponents and judiciary alike contribute so much skill and grace to the enterprise of dispensing justice. I thank you.

I want to thank my colleagues in chambers for being a warm and accepting family, with Philip Kolvin QC and Elizabeth Woodman at the head, providing inspired leadership in a world of uncertainty.

I cannot thank my wonderful, amazing wife Cassandra enough. She has been with me on this journey every step of the way. “Back to back.”

I have to make a special mention of James Findlay QC, because that was the condition on which he lent me the QC gear for the ceremony. It’s an occupational hazard that barristers are spoken of in relation to their latest high profile case. For James this was an unsuccessful outing in the Supreme Court about a windfarm off the Scottish coastline, in which he represented Donald Trump.

That provides the link to my wrap up. We are living at a time when – it feels almost daily - terrible events are happening in the world. Across the globe, but also just across London. It is right that we are shaken by these events and they make us question who we are.

My response is to acknowledge – or perhaps to hope – that there is more that we have in common than divides us. As lawyers and others involved in the law, we share a commitment to true facts, not fake facts, fundamental rights and basic humanity. I embrace the challenge of being a QC in that spirit.