



Duncan McCombe, barrister at Maitland Chambers

Year of Call: 2012

Practice Area: Anything Chambers will give me but, broadly, Commercial Chancery.



My day starts with a 6am get up. For reasons that I still do not quite understand, I signed up for a Half Ironman triathlon which takes place in July, so training has now started in earnest. A disturbing facet of this decision is that I have joined the MAMILs (Middle-Aged Men in Lycra) prematurely, a feeling which is not helped by the fact that my 6am alarm is the Today programme on Radio 4...

After a session in the gym, I am at my desk and working at about 9:30am; late for a barrister! This is just in time to meet my [Pathways to Law](#) Student whom I am hosting for the morning. [Pathways to Law](#) is a programme run by universities which aims to get school children from non-traditional backgrounds to study law and become lawyers. This is a competitive programme to get involved in, so unsurprisingly Amber is extremely impressive. I have been tasked with setting her an advocacy exercise, which is a challenge given she has not studied law. I choose an application to adjourn a trial, which has the positive side-effect that I get to play a grumpy District Judge (not that any District Judges are grumpy, of course). While Amber is preparing I manage to get some work done on a thorny sale of goods problem for a client. Looked simple at first glance; it isn't. Amber then performs her

advocacy exercise and I give some feedback. The idea that I am qualified to teach anyone anything is still slightly beyond me, but I do my best. After which – Amber having performed with distinction – we have lunch with the member of Chambers who is organising the scheme.

The afternoon involves more work on my sale of goods problem. It is legally fascinating, and would be enjoyable, if I didn't actually have to give some practical advice at the end of it. At 4:30pm Bar Council duties call. This year that involves raising the profile of the YBC, especially amongst the senior judiciary and policy makers, which is just as well given the newly-published [Interim Report of Briggs LJ](#) into civil justice. Our 4:30pm meeting is with the Master of the Rolls, Lord Dyson, the head of civil justice. Much time is spent on discussing Briggs LJ's report and emphasising to the MR what effect this is likely to have on access to justice and the Young Bar (bad, in a nutshell) and the potential knock-on effect on the senior Bar and judiciary of the future. One of the best elements of being involved in the YBC is the opportunity to meet leading members of the profession and the judiciary and the respect accorded to your views. The meeting with the MR is no exception.

The meeting with the MR is immediately followed by a meeting of the YBC, where numerous matters are discussed from high policy (Briggs, Magistrates Court fees) to fun (the Young Bar dinner). This is followed by YBC drinks in Davy's and bed... eventually. No good for the Half Ironman training.