Welcome...

Welcome to the Christmas 2017 edition of our Asbestos Newsletter. Please read on for details of events and causes we have contributed to and been involved in over the past three months. We are also delighted to have been recently invited to work with Disability First, a charity providing assistance and support to asbestos sufferers in the Blackpool and surrounding area, on their panel of solicitors, a further testament to our commitment to and work on behalf of those affected by asbestos-related diseases. We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

A great victory for David over Goliath

The recent victory for the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum led by Graham Dring (Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group) in its intervention for non-party disclosure of relevant documents held by Cape Intermediate Holdings, proves that there is still hope for justice against those who have profited from the sufferings of others.

The case of Dring-v-Cape Intermediate and Others is such a poignant one. Cape, which has been a worldwide producer of Asbestos containing materials since it was founded in 1893 has over many decades manufactured and supplied thousands of asbestos-containing products to retailers and other outlets, knowing that their products can cause significant progressive respiratory illnesses, such as asbestosis and fatal ones such as mesothelioma and Lung cancer. Many thousands of workers have been engaged in the production of such materials and have been directly exposed causing illnesses not just to themselves but also their loved ones, as they brought home Asbestos contaminated overalls to be washed by their spouses and whilst playing with their children. Generations of families have therefore been affected and their lives destroyed.

Graham Dring of the Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group brought an application in the High Court to prevent Cape destroying documents concerning its knowledge of the harm that can be caused by its asbestos containing products in the 1960s and 1970s, which were deployed in a separate action brought against Cape for a contribution for damages in a mesothelioma claim. Cape resisted the application and contended that it was a private matter and not one open to the public. With the support of the Forum and Leigh Day Solicitors, representations were made to the court as to why those documents should be preserved for future reference in other cases to be brought against Cape and in its many subsidiary companies. The court agreed that it was in the interests of justice to do so and ordered that those documents should not be destroyed but made available for inspection.

This is an illustration of how the determination of one group and its members can defeat the might of a conglomerate and is truly a story of David overcoming Goliath in its quest for justice and fairness.

National Asbestos Training Day - October 2017

On Monday 16 October, asbestos lawyers from across our UK offices attended our head office in Manchester office for our annual asbestos training day.

We were pleased to welcome Jeff Eaman from the Greater Manchester Asbestos Victims Support Group, Simon Kilvington QC, Chris Chambers and Ian Glendenning consultant engineers of Pragma Asbestos and Dr Philip Barber, consultant respiratory physician, who all spoke and took questions from the floor in relation to their areas of expertise as well as stayed behind for refreshments at the end of the day.

The day was useful and enjoyable. We benefitted from presentations by leaders in their field and plans are already in motion and speakers being identified for our 2018 event.

If you are interested in attending our 2018 training day, or any other of our training events, or would like to use our facilities for your own training events, please contact Dominic Smith.
Lawyer In the Spotlight

Meet Edmund Young, Head of London Industrial Disease Team

Q: Tell us a little bit about what you do at Slater and Gordon?
I head up the Industrial Disease Team in London with a strong emphasis on asbestos related claims.

Q: What inspired you to become a lawyer?
To help the most vulnerable and those who have become victims through no choice of their own. Whilst training, I was hugely inspired by the work the industrial disease lawyers did for victims and their families. So when it came to qualifying, I was delighted to join the team.

Q: What do you enjoy the most about your role?
Making a positive difference to the lives of others and improving the financial position of my clients and their loved ones.

Q: To date, what’s your greatest achievement during your career as a lawyer?
Winning a fatal mesothelioma case in the Court of Appeal and highlighting the unfairness of the treatment of damages for fatal accident victims.

Q: What has been most challenging during your career?
Adapting to Government legal reforms which have placed claimants on an unequal footing pitted against belligerent insurance companies.

Q: What do you do in your spare time?
Supporting charities and playing tennis.

Contact Edmund
If you would like more information about the work Edmund does, you can contact him at Edmund.Young@slatergordon.co.uk

Classrooms have been killing people

A Welsh teacher who taught over 2,000 students has died from mesothelioma having been exposed to asbestos in his classroom.

Geoffrey Lee, who was aged 71 when he died from his illness on 23rd October, worked at the City of Newport College for almost forty years as an electrical engineering lecturer.

Mr Lee worked in the College's Workshop Block where blue asbestos had been sprayed onto the structure of the building for insulation purposes. Over time, this insulation deteriorated and Mr Lee inhaled the deadly dust.

The lecturer was not alerted to the presence of asbestos in his classroom until the 1980s when the school called a meeting to discuss the insulation. Samples of the material were sent for testing and the classroom was stripped when the presence of asbestos was confirmed.

In an article published by Wales On Line, Mr Lee said shortly before he passed away, “I am really concerned for all my past pupils, the implications are huge. Classrooms across the UK have been killing people”.

“After three years of endless doctors and hospital investigations the news that I had tumours in my lungs and mesothelioma, left my wife and I dumbfounded. It was such a shock. The number of teachers that have passed away because of this awful condition is tremendous”.

Asbestos specialist lawyers John Browne and Ceri Clark achieved a six-figure settlement for Mr Lee in June 2017.

Here’s some recent feedback from our clients

“My solicitor dealt with my case very sensitively. I would not hesitate to recommend Slater and Gordon to anyone who needed to consult a solicitor.”

“Very enthusiastic, confident, clear and precise at all times and put us at ease.”

“Happy with what you have done for me and I would give you five stars! *****”

“Nothing was too much trouble. All questions were answered and everything was explained thoroughly in language we could understand. Thank you once again.”

“Thank you for all your hard work through what was a very difficult and sad case for us. You persevered when we hit challenging obstacles, and we are very pleased with the result you achieved for us. Your staff were always very understanding and supportive.”

I had the pleasure of attending this Conference at the Hilton in Gateshead on 2nd and 3rd of November 2017.

There were informative posters prepared by research teams from all over the UK. This offered a fantastic opportunity to speak to some of the brilliant minds at the forefront of research including lung cancer nurses who put in the hard work to support those diagnosed with this dreadful condition.

Day one looked ahead to the future of lung cancer with Karen Roberts offering inspiration and Paul Beckett setting out the future pathway for lung cancer. This was followed by a Mesothelioma update from Macmillan Lung Cancer Nurse Helena Stanley and Mesothelioma Clinical Nurse Specialist Team Leader Lorraine Creech. Vivian Swain shared her experience of her mesothelioma journey. The afternoon examined the issues with immune checkpoint inhibitors from trials to practice and the role of lung cancer nurses in immunotherapy treatment. This was topped off with a wonderful dinner and dancing and awards with Mick Peake getting the Star award.

On day two we saw the hotly contested poster competition, the special interest groups and a lively debate about the holistic needs assessment in mesothelioma and lung cancer cases. This was followed by a presentation regarding best supportive care for lung cancer and mesothelioma patients and findings from the Dimbleby Project. There was an interactive session on tobacco addiction and cessation.

My own highlight of the conference was Matthew Evison’s talk which was enlightening on the complexity of diagnosing mesothelioma and difficulties facing clinicians in deciding how to manage pleural effusions.

Well done to Liz Darlison of Mesothelioma UK who won the Slater and Gordon FitBit prize.

Congratulations to the Committee for yet another informative Conference and thank you for having us!

Mavis Nye Foundation Launch

It was with great pleasure that we attended the launch of the Mavis Nye Foundation on Thursday, 7 December 2017. As many would know Mavis was diagnosed with mesothelioma approximately 8 years ago and is a MesoWarrior of formidable force.

Representatives from the legal, medical, pharmaceutical and construction/building industry were at the launch in Richmond, London which is testament to Mavis’ continued drive to raise awareness of the dangers of asbestos and the impact of mesothelioma.
Fundraising

Slater and Gordon’s industrial disease team often participate in raising money for worthy asbestos related illness causes. Here are highlights from recent fundraising efforts.

Asbestos Support Central England Annual Quiz Night
On Wednesday 5 November 2017, two teams from Slater and Gordon attended Asbestos Support Central England’s annual quiz night in Birmingham. The quiz night was very well attended, with extra tables needing to be added on the night.

The quiz consisted of 12 rounds, in addition to a music round and a flag round. Our two Slater and Gordon teams battled against each other. Neither team won overall, but they say it is the taking part that counts! It was a fantastic evening and great to support such a fantastic Charity.

Christmas Bake Sales
Our Cardiff, London and Manchester offices hosted a Christmas bake sale in support of local hospice in their areas.

Hospices are vital to the wellbeing and support of many of our clients, their services revolving around symptom and pain management. They run day cases where people can come in, be assessed, socialise, drink tea and coffee, and then they’re home by tea time! Hospices are fantastic, invaluable resources that need as much support as possible.

The teams supported St David’s Hospice in Newport, St Michael’s Hospice in Hastings and Bury Hospice in Greater Manchester. Almost £700 was raised amongst the offices.

Dress Down Day for Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group:
Our industrial disease teams across the North West dressed-down to work in casual attire on 26 October 2017 in support of the Merseyside Asbestos Victims Support Group. The event raised over £700.00 for the Group.

Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation – Strictly Ballroom 2017
On Saturday 25 November 2017, our very own Dominic Smith participated in Roy Castle Lung Foundations Strictly Ballroom event.

We have supported the work done by the Foundation for many years and more recently supported the November 2017 “Head High” campaign which aims to eradicate the stigma surrounding a diagnosis of lung cancer. There have been inspiring stories posted on the internet and social media discussing the lives of those diagnosed with lung cancer. Lung cancer does not only effect elderly people who have smoked their entire lives.

The work of the Foundation is close to our heart as we meet with mesothelioma and lung cancer victims on a daily basis. We have seen over the years the fantastic work and support the Foundation has provided to these people and we want to do as much as possible to help continue their fantastic work and were delighted to sponsor the Foundations 2017, Strictly Ballroom.

The evening was a glamorous event to say the very least. A team of 10 from Slater and Gordon supported Dominic who danced the rumba. We were so proud of Dominic for getting stuck into what was a gruelling training regime, and for having the tenacity to put himself forward to dance in front of hundreds of people. He did not disappoint and managed to secure two trophies, one for Third Place and one for Most Improved Dancer.

We will continue to support the fantastic work done by the Roy Castle Lung Foundation. Now, “KEEP DANCING!”