

IN THE CROWN COURT AT SHEFFIELD

Sheffield Combined Court Centre
The Law Courts, 50 West Bar
Sheffield, South Yorkshire
S3 8PH

Wednesday, 18th November 2020

Before:

HIS HONOUR JUDGE JEREMY RICHARDSON QC
THE RECORDER OF SHEFFIELD

E U L O G Y

for

ANDREW MOLLISON

(10.00 a.m.)

JUDGE RICHARDSON:

It was last Tuesday, just over a week ago that news arrived telling us of the death of Andrew Mollison. Judges, retired judges, barristers, retired barristers, solicitors, and court staff were all greatly saddened to hear the news.

Andrew was an institution in this court centre. He was the senior court watcher, the sobriquet given to him by my predecessor as the Recorder of Sheffield. It is a measure of the affection we all had for him that so many are present today. I say present because apart from quite a few people here, most people are actually watching and hearing this via a remote link far and wide. Andrew would have been delighted and perhaps amazed at the turnout.

During last week I have received so many messages of condolence and a range of remembrances from lords, justices of appeal, judges of all ranks and many others. All have written with genuine affection. They have been written to me almost as if Andrew was a member of the family. In a way he was. I am sure he regarded us all as something akin to family.

Normally we pay tribute in this way when a member of the profession or a judge dies in office. It is rarely done following the demise of a member of the public, however closely connected to the court they were. The judges and the profession, however, wish to pay a fitting tribute to Andrew.

In a few moments I will ask His Honour Judge Kelson QC to make the official tribute on behalf of the court.

Andrew was always at the House of Lords, standing at the railings, wishing us well on the day that North Eastern circuiters took silk. He was always in attendance at the legal services in Sheffield and York. It was always pleasing to see him there enjoying the ceremonial events.

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Over many years he has been very generous to so many of us, not only by being present on important occasions but by sending us countless gifts. It was just the other week when I received a small parcel enclosing the diary for 2021. It was his generous present to me. He gave many similar generous gifts to others. He remembered birthdays for many.

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Before I hand over to Judge Kelson, I simply want to state the following. First, Andrew was plainly a very kind man, a man we shall miss at a personal level. It is not often that judges receive little tokens of kindness. His tokens were, however, of great personal value to us. Second, the role he fulfilled, an informal role, was very important. It is so very easy to forget in the current crisis that our courts are open to the public. After all it is the public we serve. As juries represent the wider public in terms of judgment on a particular case, it was Andrew and others like him who represented the public as observers of the administration of justice.

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Mr Hussain, we shall miss him and I know there are many in attendance, whether here in Court 7 at Sheffield or around the country, who were close to him and will miss him even more. There are several here who were very kind to him. I have no doubt he valued their friendly support. We shall miss him.

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I shall now ask His Honour Judge Kelson to make the official tribute on behalf of the court.

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JUDGE KELSON: As the Honorary Recorder has just said, eulogies in the crown courts are normally reserved for judges and barristers, highly qualified women and men who wield power and influence within our society. Yet here we all are, gathered in greater numbers than ever, to remember a humble 74-year-old man with no academic qualifications who never had a job and who lived alone in his council flat in Parsons Cross. What on earth was it about Andrew that touched so many of us so deeply?

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The extent of how many of us he touched has only become clear following the wonderful piece on Andrew in the Sheffield Star online last weekend. I have seen or received messages including the following: from his neighbour whose bins he used to put out; from the café that he frequented at the bus station; from the canteen here at court; from Rita's Pantry; from a senior retired police officer; from solicitors, including solicitors' clerks.

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This morning, only half an hour ago, I received an email from Margaret Woolhouse, who many of you will remember, who even after she had moved to Leicester Andrew kept in touch with; from barristers; from district judges; from lord justices of appeal, including two of our former presiding lord justices, Lord Justice Males and Coulson; from high court judges including current and former presiding judges of the North Eastern Circuit; from many circuit judges sitting at Leeds, Derby, Manchester, St Albans, Exeter and other court centres; from numerous members of the court staff, security, ushers, clerks; from the Crown Prosecution Service; from journalists; even from his local chippy. The list goes on and on. Basically, it seems to cover everybody who he ever had cause to meet during his day.

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There was something in the way that he dealt with all of us. There was only one Andrew, and by that I do not mean just that he was unique. I mean it in the sense that he only had one face. There was simply no deceit in him. What you saw was what you got. You could trust him. He was profoundly loyal. He would travel the length and breadth of the country to support you. You could count on him.

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Those of you who have watched the television film called Marvellous starring Toby Jones will understand what I mean when I say that Andrew was our very own Neil Baldwin, or "Nello" as he is in that wonderful television film. If you have not watched it then I strongly recommend that you do so. The echoes with our Andrew are very striking. Like Nello, Andrew knew a lot of people in high places, very high places, including those eminent judges to whom I have already referred and like Nello he treated us all the same.

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Andrew's complete lack of deceit, his almost childlike transparency, also meant that he was fabulously, sometimes brutally honest, and let me give an example. It was only a few years ago that Judge Murphy QC, as he then was, and I attended the legal service here in Sheffield and went into the Cutlers' Hall to robe, leaving our wives outside the entrance. Along came Andrew to say hello to our wives, and Judge Murphy's wife said, "Hello, Andrew. Have you come to see Mike and Peter?" "Oh no," came the reply. "I've come to see a proper judge, Mr Justice Baker." And I am pleased to say that I believe Mr Justice Baker has joined us via the link, as indeed have so many. How wonderfully appropriate that so many of you are now court watchers.

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Our links with Andrew all stem from Judge Murphy, Mike, for it was way back in the late 1970s that their paths crossed at the old crown court in Castle Street. Not in a professional sense, I hasten to add. Andrew was already a court watcher, having started coming to court in the 1970s, and it seems that he knew one of the court ushers, Eileen, and she introduced him to Mike. I was Mike's pupil and therefore I have had the privilege of knowing Andrew since 1981. Well, I say knowing him but he was an immensely private man. I have only recently learned a little more about him and for these details I am indebted to Wayne Digby, Senior Clerk at Bank House Chambers here in Sheffield.

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Andrew was born and lived in the Ecclesfield area of Sheffield. His mum was a nurse. Later his parents took a pub at Owston Ferry called the Crooked Billet before divorcing when his mother moved away. After his father's death he used to visit his grave in Retford. He had a brother, Michael, who it is thought moved to live on a barge in the Midlands. Andrew always talked fondly of his Uncle Alf, Andrew's mum was Alf's sister, and Auntie Joan. Alf died a few years ago but Auntie Joan, now 87, is still alive and lives in Ecclesfield. Andrew still visited her now and again and phoned her regularly on a Sunday.

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The last reference to Andrew phoning her on a Sunday will resonate with some of you. He got his one and only ever mobile phone in 2011. It was a gift from Wayne who rightly says that it changed Andrew's life forever. It was a Tesco pay-as-you-go and it's still going strong and he loved to call his friends on a Sunday morning. That was his routine and Wayne has been through the address book of the phone and he concludes that the Sunday morning phone calls must have taken Andrew a few hours: Auntie Joan, Murphy, Kelson, Digby, Chantelle, there is a very long list and I now understand why Andrew tended to book me in for a slot. Ten o'clock in the morning was my slot and I was in big trouble if I wasn't there to answer the phone when he called and I now also understand why he never stayed on for more than a minute or so. Frankly, my weekly Sunday phone calls from Andrew were more time sensitive than the prison video links.

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Well, Andrew was not only a court watcher. At the weekends he was also a car park attendant. On a Saturday when the Blades were at home, he'd wait at Chambers from eight in the morning to ensure that Bank House Chambers car park was coned off and there was no illegal parking. The reason: so that, as he called them, his mate and his dad - that was Wayne and his father - could park there before walking to the Lane. This typical act of kindness by

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Andrew is all the more impressive when you consider the huge difference in their football allegiances for whilst Wayne is a Blade, Andrew was an Owl. And woe betide anyone who got in his way or tried to park. Even members of Chambers, Jim Baird and Head of Chambers, Kath Goddard QC, have been known to be turned away. I am confident that Jim forgave him. Afterall, it was Andrew's glasses that Jim often wore when addressing our courts, having forgotten his own.

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Andrew also loved his newspapers. He would buy three a day and he would also go to the library to read the free ones there and Wayne is convinced that by the time the next person came to read those papers the odd cutting of the successes of his favourite barristers and judges might just have been missing.

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Andrew also loved travelling the country and I have received a message from the Leader of Circuit, Richard Wright QC, saying, "We shall miss him. The packets of pens, the diaries. He travelled the country to watch us and it was always a delight to see him."

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He certainly did travel the country and he knew how to beat the system. No hotel stays for him on his trips to the Court of Appeal in London. He would get the overnight bus.

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Famously on one occasion the bus driver didn't seem to know the route into London and it was Andrew who ended up directing him into London and as you have heard from the Honorary Recorder, his trips to London were not just to watch a barrister or a judge in the Court of Appeal. When I was sworn in as a QC at the House of Lords, who should we see over the railings, waving furiously? Andrew, of course. And when myself, Paul Sloan and Neil Davey had our little drinks celebration courtesy of Arthur Blaney in London, who joined us? Andrew.

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On another of his trips to London he turned up to see the late Judge Jackie Davies and she took him around the Middle Temple where she was a Bencher, that is to say a very important person in the life of the Inn. I am conscious of the fact that there are a number of non-lawyers who will be linking in to listen to this and I apologise that some of these terms are rather legalistic and revolve around our life as lawyers, but as I say she was an important person in the life of this Inn of Court and the contrast between their sartorial elegance must have been striking. Jackie was always a very elegant lady, and in his own way Andrew will have worn his best hi-vis jacket. Things like that never bothered Jackie or Andrew and the

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A Inn officials probably thought that she'd rather gone off her head as she was walking around with Andrew, showing him the sights and glorious halls of the Middle Temple but one of the porters took to Andrew and showed him around, and provided some food for him. And so, you see, Andrew has even dined at an Inn of Court and as Mike Murphy pointed out, another eleven and he could have been called to the Bar.

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Continuing with Andrew's travels, His Honour Judge Peter Johnson, one of our own, sent this lovely message:

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"It was always a humbling delight when he came to visit me in Bournemouth where he was a firm favourite of the ushers. His travelling would have put Bear Grylls to shame with 3.00 a.m. starts from Yorkshire to Dorset via Victoria Coach Station."

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And Judge Murphy sent this:

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"Once he travelled all the way to Newcastle to see me on a Friday, the last day of my sitting, only to find that my list had collapsed and they'd sent me home on the Thursday. He stayed to watch the morning list at Newcastle Crown Court and to inspect the court, recognising some of the barristers who sat occasionally as recorders in Sheffield and they were astonished to see him in the North East, and he then began to hitchhike his way back to Sheffield. I was sorry to hear about his 200 mile hitchhike for nothing but he was completely unfazed by it and said that he had enjoyed seeing Mr Cosgrove and some other Newcastle recorders acting as barristers because he had only seen them acting as judges in Sheffield, and they'd all given him a warm and enthusiastic welcome. Typical Andrew. Typical Newcastle Bar."

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But for all his travels around the North Eastern Circuit, to courts and to judges' services and further afield, Sheffield was his home and as the years passed and travel became more arduous he concentrated his attention here and Andrew was very well looked after by the legal profession in Sheffield. Some of the barristers took him under their wings. Bank House Chambers were especially kind to him and their continuing kindness to him has been an ongoing source of pride for me and my old Chambers.

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A And then there's Wayne Digby. He will be embarrassed by my mentioning this but Wayne's kindness to Andrew has been amazing. He truly has been an angel for many a year. You've heard about the kindness in 2011 buying the phone. Well, 2012 was also a big year.

B Analogue TV stopped. Andrew was so sad, what was he going to do with no TV? And Wayne had a TV aerial and a Digibox installed for him, and a new colour TV, and Andrew loved his TV, particularly Morse, Frost and Sunday favourite, Columbo. He also loved watching the snooker and Wayne enjoyed pulling his leg by asking how Ray Reardon was getting on.

C Getting back to Nello who met many interesting people down the years, our Andrew also knew many interesting people. He once told me that he was going to see Giant Haystacks. For those of you under 60 years of age, he was a very popular wrestler in the 1970s and 80s and when I asked Andrew where he was going to see him wrestle he explained that he wasn't wrestling because he was unwell. He was going to visit him at his home. And I believe that he also knew Big Daddy and several of the famous wrestlers personally, the way he knew us. Typical Andrew.

D For some of us Andrew's friendship extended beyond the court building and he would occasionally visit us at our homes and he never overstayed his welcome and he was always a welcome visitor but his main love was the courts and Andrew knew everything about us and what we were up to and where we were going and how our careers were going, and I've brought along a very short letter from Andrew dated 2 June 2012 which is just typical Andrew:

E "Dear His Honour Judge Peter Kelson QC, I hope your Honour and family are well and I hope you have a good holiday next week. I will see you at Sheffield Crown Court on Tuesday, the 12th of June 2012. Did you know that Judge Goldsack QC is 65 years young on Wednesday, June the 13th 2012? I thought your sentence on the drugs was all correct. See you soon. Best wishes, Andrew, Court Watcher, Sheffield Crown Court."

F And then later in 2017 I received this "congrats" card:

A "To His Honour Judge Peter Kelson QC, many congratulations on your first murder trial. From Andrew, Senior Court Watcher of England and Wales."

B He even knew when I had received my Class 1 authorisation. We have all got letters from him.

C Perhaps one of the reasons why Andrew touched so many hearts was in part because he was a constant. He was, and I choose this word very carefully and respectfully, unchanging. In a world where everything seems to change so quickly, Andrew never altered. A message that the former Recorder of Sheffield, Mr Justice Goose, has asked me to read echoes this sentiment:

D "I am sorry that I am not able to attend the occasion when Sheffield Crown Court expresses its thanks for the almost unique contribution Senior Court Watcher, Andrew, has made to its life. His presence in these courts as well as many other courts in England and Wales has been an almost reassuring feature of the administration of justice. Andrew would have been proud of that because it meant that our courts are for the public to watch, including those who make it their life's work."

F Well, Judge Murphy goes on: "We shall miss him greatly. We might have been his family but in a funny sort of way he was part of ours." And there we get to the nub of it. Andrew was unique, loyal, constant and he was family. He was normality. He was reality. He was honest. He was deeply respectful. He gave generously and only rarely asked for anything and even then it was usually just enough to cover his bus fare home. I think we can all agree that if everyone behaved towards each other as Andrew behaved to all who knew him, the world would be a better place. But that is not a suggestion that we all start to buy each other pens.

H Well, he made it to the age of 74, I think. I only hesitate because, as I have said, the late Judge Jackie Davies always had a soft spot for him and arranged for his sixtieth birthday to be celebrated at Doncaster Crown Court and she made a good fuss of him. The problem was that Andrew had got confused about his date of birth and was actually only 59. The party went on regardless and so he ended up having two sixtieth birthdays.

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Returning to this year, I am so pleased that Andrew was able to make it back to court between the lockdowns, indeed attending only recently before the second lockdown and I know that he greatly cherished the personal welcome in court that he received from Judge Wright upon his return when she celebrated the fact that his reappearance in court represented the best evidence of a return to some form of normality.

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It is abundantly clear from the outpouring of sentiments following his death that Andrew was much loved and I truly believe that he knew he was loved.

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Well, as I have said, all of this, all of us in the legal professional owe our acquaintance with Andrew to Judge Murphy. It all started with him and therefore it seems fitting to me that it should all end with some of his words, bearing in mind that whilst judges are not permitted to make political comments His Honour Murphy is now retired. He says:

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"We think that with a record of 42 years Andrew was the longest serving court watcher in the country. If anyone should wish to challenge that title, please don't. We loved Andrew and we don't want any Trumpian challenge to the validity of that title."

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Thank you.

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JUDGE RICHARDSON: Mr Hussain.

MR HUSSAIN: My Lord, your Honour, we are currently living through strange and difficult times. Many of us have been deprived of our daily routine within these courtrooms. Despite the difficulties, we are comforted by the fact that sooner or later normality will return. The strangest experience for me, which I am sure many will have in the weeks and months to come was today. Walking up the stairs from the robing room, opening the door and walking onto the second floor, looking left and then right and not seeing Andrew. It was made all the worse knowing that his absence is sadly permanent.

In better times as I would make that walk and go through that door I was met with what became a common salute from Andrew. He would shout, "Mr Hussain, I was looking for a

A top barrister". All eyes would turn to me and for that brief second I would bask in the kind of light only enjoyed by Leeds counsel. Andrew by now would have made his way over to me, hand extended, and as we shook hands he would whisper, "So, do you know any top barristers?"

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Andrew was particularly dear to Bank House Chambers because he was a welcome fixture there for over 20 years. He served those two decades hand in hand with our senior clerk, Wayne Digby. Wayne regarded him as his right-hand man and what a mighty hand indeed.

C Wayne and his wife, Ellie, spent a great deal of time with Andrew that their humility prevents me from sharing details of. They were both very dear to him and he to them. Andrew spent a great deal of his day at Bank House Chambers and he formed strong friendships with the rest of our team there, Chantelle, David and Lesley in particular.

D My Lord, in today's world we can all say, "Hey, Alexa" and ask a question and receive an answer through the ether but long before the internet, long before Alexa, we in Sheffield simply asked one thing: "Hey, Andrew". He was a veritable font of knowledge. At times it was genuinely unnerving how much he knew and who he knew. It was almost as though he had a direct link to a higher power. Now, it's never been confirmed that every Lord Chancellor consulted Andrew first, but then again it's never actually been denied.

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As has already been mentioned, he would know about applications and appointments before anyone else. Given that fact, I thought it only right to tell him about my application and I am sure it was only because of a good word from Andrew that I crept over the line to silk.

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Andrew was a charitable man, ever thinking of the poor and the less fortunate. An example of this is despite formally being a Bank House Chambers man, he would still have time for those poor souls at Paradise Square. Joking aside, his most beloved barrister was a stalwart of those great Chambers and a legend at this court centre, His Honour Michael Murphy QC. Together with your Honour and my learned friend, Mr Sheldon, you all formed the earthly trinity that Andrew most loved.

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H Now, given that Andrew was the precursor to the internet, I thought I would Google him. Now, some would turn white with fear at the thought of what an internet search could reveal about them but for Andrew it was more of the same, and your Honour has made mention of

A it: "RIP good neighbour. Always fetched our bins in and bought us a calendar every year."
"RIP Andrew. Was a regular at the café where I worked in the bus station. A really lovely man." "He was a regular customer in my chippy. RIP Andrew."

B My Lord, when he greeted counsel or judges in public, you would sometimes catch a look of
confusion on the face of those who didn't know Andrew. Perhaps they were asking
themselves, "What is this guy after?" but that's only because they didn't know Andrew. A
minority that met him perhaps weren't as welcoming as they could have been. Well, that was
C their loss and now it's sadly too late for them to learn what we celebrate here today. The
truth is when it came to Andrew, his generosity and his consideration of others was a
character trait. It wasn't something he turned on for those with perceived power or influence.
If you were one of the fortunate ones he cared for deeply he would do almost anything for
you. Many in life make that claim but very few walk that walk and Andrew literally did.

D He would follow his favourites around the country, making a herculean effort to be there for
them. More than once I know he did so for your Honour. He knew there was an important
day for your Honour in London and he was determined to be there. Getting up at the crack of
E dawn, venturing south on a £1 coach ride that would have certainly taken the scenic route.
Once in the big smoke he walked all the way to where he knew your Honour would be and
would take up a discreet position and wait for your Honour and when he chose to reveal his
presence it would take your Honour completely by surprise. No one else would do all that
F for your Honour. No one else has done all that for your Honour, apart from those people that
your Honour still owes money perhaps.

G Andrew was a religious man and a regular at church. This Christmas his special friends got
their gifts before he left us for a better place. Now and forever more perhaps he will be
distributing Maltesers to a multitude of angels. Andrew could well be handing out diaries to
those angels who ensure that heavenly order is maintained. His black, blue and red pens are
perhaps with the heavenly scribes recording all our good and bad deeds, and perhaps in
keeping with his earthly role, he will gesture over to the archangel, walk slowly towards him
H and whisper, "Shall I tell you what the Almighty has got planned?"

Andrew gave so much and asked for so little in return. Yes, he loved the courts but above all
he loved the people within them. His legacy is not to be found in statute or case law. It is in

A what he taught us because be in no doubt he did teach each of us an important lesson, if we
were willing to listen. Pens, Maltesers, diaries, cards, we didn't need any of these things.
They were all things we could quite easily obtain for ourselves or do without but that was to
B miss the point. It was not the item that was important. It was the sentiment that it embodied.
Every small gift from Andrew was, "Hello, how are you? I like and respect you. I value and
appreciate what you do," and no doubt for the special few, "I love and care for you". That is
the legacy of Andrew, giving small parcels of happiness everywhere he went. He helped to
C make our court centre the best in the land. We in Sheffield and especially at Bank House
Chambers were lucky to have him.

The best way to honour and remember Andrew, whether that be from the bench, from
counsels' row, in chambers or everyday life is this: don't judge books by covers, take a
D minute and make the effort to listen to all those you meet every day, remember that even the
smallest act can brighten up someone's day, that sometimes a smile or simply a pen is the
perfect act of charity.

We today not about Andrew as we all wish it were not, he would be sat in the public gallery.
E For those of us in this court centre perhaps he always will be. So, I turn to where he would
sit and finish with this: thank you, Andrew, for being our friend.

F JUDGE RICHARDSON: Thank you, Mr Hussain. We shall rise.
(10.36 a.m.)

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*5 New Street Square, London EC4A 3BF
Tel: 020 7831 5627 Fax: 020 7831 7737
criminal@opus2.digital*

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