

Latimer Hinks' property department enjoys strong first half of 2017

Latimer Hinks Solicitors handled more than £72million-worth of property deals during the first half of the 2017 – an increase of almost 50 percent from the same period last year.

Figures from the property department at Latimer Hinks indicate that the Darlington-based legal firm is on track to surpass last year's trading, which saw it handle more than £150million-worth of property deals over a 12 month period.

During the first half of 2017, the property department, which offers clients agricultural, residential and commercial property services, handled more than £72million in property sales and purchases – around 47 percent more than the same period in 2016.

The largest area of growth came from instructions to purchase, where the total figure for the value of properties exceeded £35million, a 60 percent increase from 2016.

The growth in the value of work carried out by Latimer Hinks coincides with the 125th anniversary since it began offering legal services in the region.

Anne Elliott, Chief Executive at Latimer Hinks, welcomed the results. She said:

"These outstanding figures indicate that we are on track for a record year at Latimer Hinks. It seems that sales and purchases in the region's urban and rural locations have continued unperturbed by last year's EU Referendum result, and the uncertainty associated with it."

Martin Williamson, a Director and Head of Residential Property at Latimer Hinks Solicitors, believes that the growth is a result of the legal firm's approach to dealing with its clients.

He said: "We have seen a surge in demand for our services across the board, with a particularly high number of instructions relating to rural properties. This is in part due to referrals from existing clients and partners, who recognise that we offer a personal service geared to pro-actively manage their transactions.

"Latimer Hinks is known for its personalised service. We don't just follow a tick box exercise, instead we take an individual approach to ensure that we fulfil and exceed our obligations to our clients."

To view a video discussing the success of the Latimer Hinks Property Department please go to <http://tinyurl.com/yc48zmon>



Directors, Martin Williamson and Nicola Neilson

Set up a trust to protect the family business, says Latimer Hinks

People looking to protect the longevity of their family-run businesses should think seriously about the merits of putting in place a Discretionary Trust (whether in lifetime or under a will) according to advice from Latimer Hinks.

The law firm has issued the advice following an increase in the number of older clients enquiring about how they can protect the future of their family-run businesses when handing over the

management reins to the next generation.

Anne Elliott said: "We are seeing more and more people wishing to make sure that businesses they have set up, nurtured and taken forward are passed on for the benefit of family members and indeed the employees and other key players working in the business and that any wealth they pass on is used sensibly. Usually this has a caring motive, with parents and grandparents wanting to instil in future generations, for their own good, a strong work ethic but also there is the wish to ensure protection of the legacy of the family business.

"Trusts can ensure that family wealth can be protected in the event of premature death or during divorce as the shares or partnership interest are held by the Trustees, rather than individual family members or employees.

"Use of Discretionary Trusts inevitably involves professional advice, charges and costs – but so often this is insignificant as against the security provided to both older and younger generations, anxious to secure the family capital and income source."

For further information call 01325 341500.





Looking back at 125 years in business

In 2017 Latimer Hinks celebrates 125 years in business however, according to Chris Lloyd of the Northern Echo, Latimer Hinks could be older than 125 years. Chris Lloyd tells our story in the Northern Echo on Saturday 8th July 2017.

ONE hundred and 125 years ago on July 11th a young, Darlington solicitor learned that he had passed his legal exams and that the Law Society in London had signed and sealed his fitness to practice certificate.

He immediately rented a room above a stationery shop on High Row and set himself up in business – a business which bears his name to this day.

He was John Fenwick Latimer and so the solicitors, Latimer Hinks, of Priestgate, must be one of the oldest practices in the North-East.

The founder, though, had a more profound impact on Darlington than just establishing a business.

He was born in 1870 in Stanley. His mother was from the Fenwick family of Sunderland shipbuilders; his father was a Primitive Methodist minister, and so the family moved frequently. The boy was educated in York and London but, because his father was now in charge of the Greenbank Road Methodist chapel in Darlington, he decided to base himself in the town when, on July 11, 1892, his articles were signed in London.

The 22-year-old hired a room above the original Dressers shop which was near the northern end of High Row.

He established himself as one of the top legal minds in the region. But it was as a councillor that he really made a mark. He was in the Liberal camp with Sir Charles Starmer, the managing director of The Northern Echo, and during the Great Depression of the 1920s and 1930s, they tried to build Darlington out of the economic troubles – the library, for instance, was deliberately extended in this period.

Latimer was chair of the Streets Committee, and he spent £70,000 widening the Bank Top Cut which takes Parkgate under the East Coast Main Line.

Latimer had interests beyond the council. He was a Rotarian and was deputy mayor in 1932 when Sir Alan Cobham's flying circus came to Morton Palms Farm. Latimer took to the skies in an open-topped bi-plane and then, with his hair blown awry, he addressed the crowd "through a microphone".

While doing all this public work, the solicitor's practice was expanding. In the first years of the 20th Century, he moved his office from High Row into a newly-built office in Priestgate, which his firm still occupies. Then, in 1927, he took on a newly-qualified solicitor, Charles Hinks, as his partner, and renamed the firm Latimer & Hinks.

Hinks, 22, was the son of Alderman JD Hinks who served on the council with Latimer during the troubled economic times.

Latimer died suddenly in 1937 aged 65, he collapsed from a heart attack on the school lawn.

His obituary gives a hint at the real man behind the good works. It speaks of his love of rugby and his Old English Sheepdog, and it says: "When behind the wheel of his powerful car with a long straight road in front, he would sparkle with the exhilaration that comes from speed."

SOLICITORS are sensible people who have no truck with silliness, but it is said that on the top floor of Latimer Hinks in Priestgate there lurks an unearthly presence.

JF Latimer moved his office into Priestgate before 1910. He took over a sharebroker's office which had just been built on the site of the



JF Latimer

London Tavern, a beerhouse of no great repute. Perhaps the unearthly presence dates back to the time of the inn.

Over the course of the 20th Century, Latimer Hinks expanded eastwards down Priestgate, first into a grocery and bootmaker's shop and then into the Darlington Co-op's drapery department which had been built in 1931 on top of a little square of tumbledown houses.

LATIMER HINKS could be older than 125 years. In 1953, the business merged with Wilkes, Wilkes, Marsham & Little which had been founded in 1881 when JJ Wilkes went into business with his brother RM Wilkes.

The Wilkes brothers, who were based above the Find It Out tobacconist on the corner of Tubwell Row and Bakehouse Hill, were the sons of JK Wilkes, who was mayor of Darlington in 1885.

JF LATIMER made Charles Hinks a partner in 1927, and he stayed with the firm until he retired in 1969. Towards the end of his career, he was on the Lord Chancellor's law reform committee, for which he was made an OBE.

His son, Richard, was with the firm until he retired in 1997.

The Hinkses, then, witnessed some of the most memorable events in the company's recent history.

For example, in the days when you could park in Priestgate, Diana Dors pulled up in a large limo and swore an affidavit to Charles.

Those were different days – a bullock once escaped from a town centre abattoir and got its horns stuck in the solicitors' front door.

When there was a mutiny at the Humbleton Camp near Barnard Castle, Latimer Hinks acted for the six mutineers, with armed military policemen manning every exit from the Priestgate office while the solicitors received their instructions.

And finally, and perhaps most famously, Latimer Hinks once defended Laurence Olivier when he was caught speeding through Newton Aycliffe.

In 125 years of business, you certainly see some sights and meet some people.

Latimer Hinks knockout team raises over £500 for St Teresa's Hospice

Latimer Hinks Solicitors joined other local businesses to compete in St Teresa's Hospice's It's a Knockout fun-filled fundraiser and raised an impressive £545.

Latimer Hinks' team name is "Hel's Angels" in honour of a much loved colleague and friend, Helen Thomas, who received support from the hospice prior to passing away from cancer in July 2016, aged 33.

The event was held at Darlington's Blackwell Meadows on Sunday 16th July and set corporate teams from across the area against each other on a challenging assault course inspired by the famous television show.

The Darlington-based legal firm is raising the money as part of its 125th anniversary pledge to raise £10,000 for the hospice, which will culminate in a charity ball in November. So far it is more than halfway towards its total.

Natalie Palmer, Director at Latimer Hinks and member of Hel's Angels, said of the light-hearted competition: "The day was all about having fun with other local businesses who, like us, care about the services St Teresa's provides for the local community.

"It was gorgeous weather and we were delighted to win one game, although we did

eventually finish last! All the teams competed in good spirits and for a wonderful cause; an opportunity to raise money and have fun at the same time. By continually raising money for this brilliant charity we feel we are doing something positive to remember our friend and colleague Helen.

"We are delighted to reach the halfway mark in our fundraising. It's a Knockout was

our 10th fundraising activity for St Teresa's Hospice since January and we are eager to meet, and hopefully exceed our target to support the hospice and the remarkable work it does with those suffering from serious illnesses and their families. I know that Helen greatly appreciated the care she received and I'm sure she would be delighted to see us supporting the hospice."



The Hel's Angels It's a Knockout Team.

Latimer Hinks calls on law change to protect people's digital legacies

Latimer Hinks Solicitors is calling for the Government to legislate in order to protect the digital legacies of those who have passed away.

The firm wants to see a change in the law to enable people to decide what will happen to their digital presence when they die.

Although families of the deceased are able to request access to digital assets, including social media accounts and cloud storage, or ask to have them deleted, the final decision rests with the service provider.

There is no consensus amongst online platforms as to who can gain access to digital assets and each provider has its own policies.

For example, Facebook UK has a procedure, which allows the executor of a will to request that an account is shut down or 'memorialised', however, Google considers

each case individually and may or may not heed to pleas from the deceased's family.

Daniel Williams, solicitor at Latimer Hinks who specialises in wills, trusts and probate, believes that the UK Government should legislate to reflect the changing digital world and increasing number of people using online platforms, including social media, virtual currency, cloud storage and online banking.

He would like to see the introduction of a US-style extension of administrative powers to allow named trustees to manage all of the deceased's property, including a person's online presence.

Daniel said: "It's time that the law reflected modern life. Currently there is no proper provision in UK Law, which properly grants executors and trustees the power to take

ownership of the digital assets when dealing with the estate of a deceased person.

"This is fraught with difficulties and often emotion. People are increasingly using the internet for banking, paying bills and staying in touch with friends and family.

All of this leaves a digital legacy, which ought to be properly managed when someone passes away.

"Ultimately though this is about allowing the deceased person's wishes, preferably recorded in their last will and testament, being carried out in full. We need to follow the American's lead and make sure that there is the legal power to properly deal with digital legacies."

For further information contact Daniel Williams on 01325 341500

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Private Client Team: Anne Elliott, Andrew Way, Elizabeth Armstrong, Jennifer Quayle, Luke Busbridge, Gillian Ibbotson, Nadine Kilvington, Daniel Williams.

Residential Conveyancing Team: Nicola Neilson, Martin Williamson, Jonathan Sturgeon, Laura Richardson.

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How to stay on the right side of the law as a landlord

According to figures from HMRC from 2014, there were 1.75 million landlords in the UK with the figure expected to rise due to the increased availability of buy to let mortgages.

With more of us choosing to rent out properties, it is important to understand exactly what documentation needs to be completed to ensure you don't inadvertently break the law. Landlords who don't could find themselves landed with hefty fines or imprisonment, so always take the time to do your research before finding your first tenant.

In the North-East, some Local Authorities require private rented properties to be licenced by the council. This is certainly mandatory in selected areas in County Durham and Middlesbrough, and landlords could be subject to a fine if they fail to hold the licence. The areas tend to be prominent targets of anti-social behaviour or suffer from low housing demand, and the licence aims to support the landlord while making the area a better place to live. If you are unsure if you need a council licence, you can check on your Local Authority website or speak to someone in their housing department.

If your property is a leasehold you should confirm with the landlord of your property whether you are permitted to sub-let. Leases are specific to the property, so there is no particular rule as to whether this is 'allowed' or not without checking the agreement you have with your landlord.

Tenant safety is always a major concern for landlords, and as you would expect, there are many checks and measures in place to ensure regulations are met. Before you rent a property out, you must get have a gas safety inspection performed by an engineer who is on the Gas Safe Register. These need to be completed annually, and you will be issued with a record for both you and your tenant. You should also get a registered electrician to check for any potential issues, and check that any electrical equipment you've bought has the CE safety mark on it. If you are renting to four or more people from different households, for example, a student house, you are required by law to

have the property inspected by a qualified electrician every five years.

Fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are essential in any home and must be regularly checked to ensure they work correctly. Durham and Darlington Fire Brigade offer a free safe and wellbeing visit service to help you make sure your home or rented property is safe and will fit free smoke alarms if they are needed.

All landlords must produce an Energy Performance Certificate if requested. This document rates the property's energy efficiency on an A-G scale. In the UK, a property must have an efficiency level of A-E, otherwise, it is unsuitable for rental. The certificate is valid for ten years, and landlords can face a fine of up to £5,000 if they fail to produce the certificate when asked. An accredited Domestic Energy Assessor issues the certificates and you can find your nearest one on epcregister.com.

Although some of these checks cost money and may require some time on your part, they are certainly worth having. Local Authorities need to ensure that their residents are safe and that landlords are not putting their tenants at unnecessary risk. The research and up-front investment may save you a fortune in court fees and fines down the line!



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