

# Judge who was born in Oxford loved horse racing

RICHARD Cole made sure that court cases he was hearing as a judge didn't interfere with his passion for horse racing.

He would adjourn the morning session, run down the hill to the racecourse, watch two races, then be back for the afternoon court hearing.

And who would have believed that heading to the House of Lords to be sworn in as a judge by the Lord Chancellor, he committed a traffic offence by driving through the gate of Marble Arch?

Judge Richard Cole, who has died aged 87, was born in Oxford in 1937 to Bunny and Edith Cole and went on to enjoy a distinguished career in the judiciary.

After studying at the Dragon School and St Edward's School in the city, he became a partner in the family firm of solicitors, Cole & Cole, in 1962. He regularly appeared in Oxford courts defending clients.

Other links with Oxford included being a member and president of the Frewen Club and a member and chairman of the Dragon School governing board.

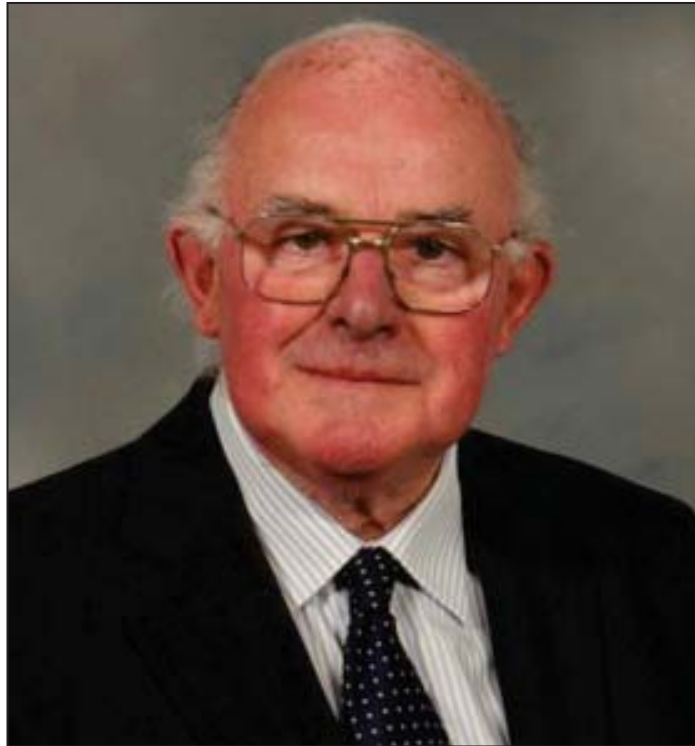
While living in Burford, he became chairman of the parish council and the town's first mayor, combining his official duties on one occasion with dressing as Father Christmas and handing out presents.

He was appointed a deputy circuit judge in 1975 and later a recorder. When he became a full-time circuit judge in 1984, one of the few solicitors to be given this role, the family moved to Warwickshire.

He became a judge at Warwick and Coventry Crown Courts and honorary recorder of Coventry.

When asked why he no longer appeared as a judge in Oxford courts, he replied that he had defended most of the criminals in the city!

It was at Warwick Crown Court that he would disappear at lunchtime



and head to the nearby Warwick racecourse to watch the horse races.

And of the traffic 'misdeed' in London, son James said: "He always insisted he had no idea of the offence he had committed while heading to meet the top lawyer in the country and yet, I'm sure he always told me that a lack of knowledge of the law was no defence!"

Judge Cole held numerous posts in Warwickshire, including acting as a deputy lieutenant of the county.

Outside the legal profession, he enjoyed farming, gardening and all sport, particularly cricket and, of course, racing.

He also wrote a book, a family history based on his father

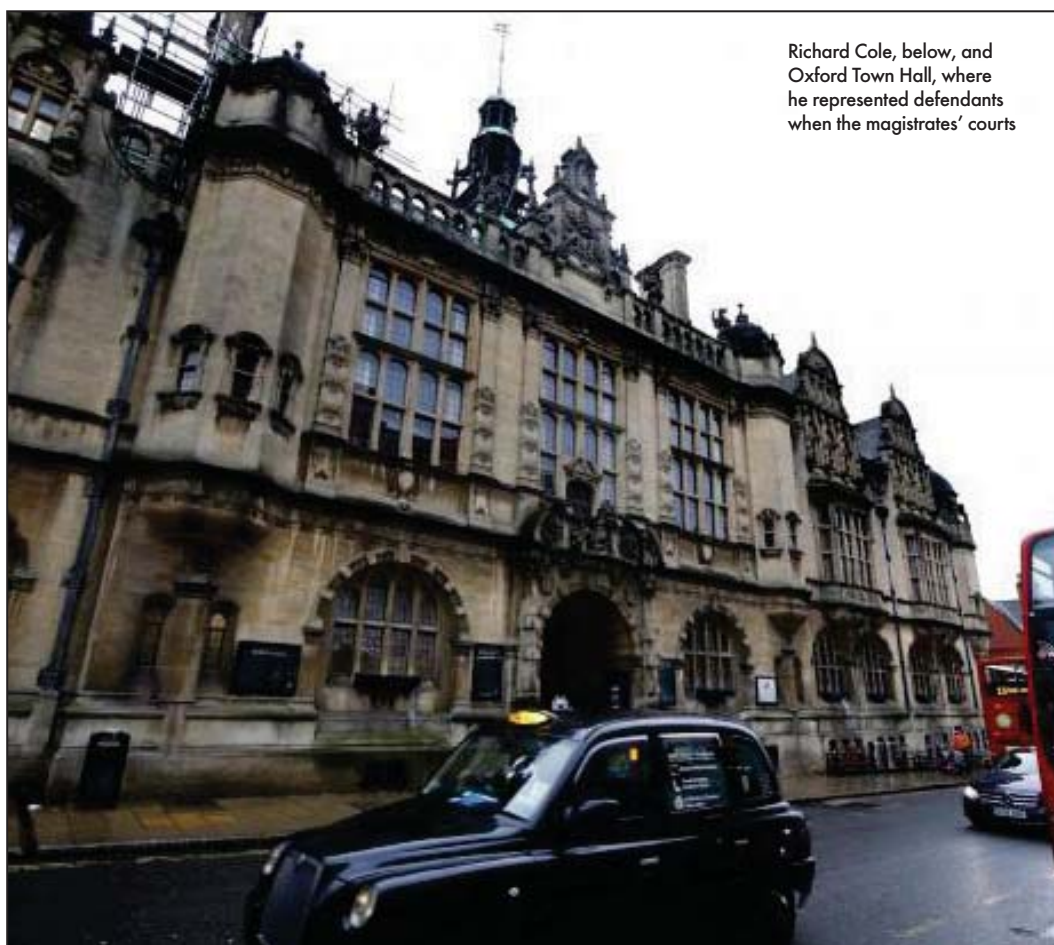
Bunny Cole and, much to the embarrassment of his family, even tried to sell a copy to the then Prince Charles, now the King, at a chapel service. Charles laughed heartily and said he would be delighted to read it.

Judge Cole leaves his wife Sheila, to whom he was married for 62 years, daughter Alison, son James and four grandchildren.

Among the many tributes paid to him was one which said: "The Judge was indeed a great man who achieved so much. We all loved him. He was always exceptionally kind and generous to us."

Others said that he was "always remembered by the Bar for his commitment to justice".





Richard Cole, below, and Oxford Town Hall, where he represented defendants when the magistrates' courts

