The prologue and first chapter of this history give a brief overview of the solicitors’ profession in Ireland from the 7th century A.D. to the early years of the 20th century and an account of the Northern Law Club (later the Northern Law Society), formed in 1861, the immediate ancestor of the present Society. The book then traces the development of The Law Society of Northern Ireland from its birth in the turbulent circumstances of the partition of Ireland through the inter-war years, the Second World War and the “Troubles”, and shows how it has dealt with the many challenges it has faced both from changing social circumstances and from the attentions of successive Governments. It charts the great numerical growth of the profession, particularly in the last thirty years, including the very significant increase in the number of women solicitors, and deals at length with statutory changes in the regulation of the profession and the Society’s role in legal education, the legal aid system and the promotion of publications for lawyers. It records the many initiatives taken by the Society in the interests of the public and the profession alike and gives accounts of the building of the new Law Society House, opened in 2009, and the effects of the recent recession. There are cameos of some of the characters and sporting heroes of the profession in Northern Ireland, and the book is illustrated by 48 pages of photographs, many in full colour.

After taking law degrees at The Queen’s University of Belfast and the University of Michigan, Alan Hewitt qualified as a solicitor and joined L’Estrange & Brett, one of the oldest and largest firms of solicitors in Northern Ireland. He was the firm’s senior partner from 1994 to 2005. A member of the Council of the Law Society of Northern Ireland from 1991 to 2003, he was President of the Society in 2002. He has served on many of the Society’s committees and was a member of the Project Board which oversaw the building of the new Law Society House.

All profits from the sale of the book will go to the Solicitors Benevolent Association.

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