

# BUSINESS LAW

EIGHTH EDITION



**EWAN MACINTYRE**

# **Business Law**

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# Business Law

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**Eighth edition**

Ewan MacIntyre

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# Preface

## Changes in the law

This edition considers in detail **the Consumer Rights Act 2015**, which has finally come into force. The bulk of the new material, some 10,000 words, is set out in Chapters 5 and 8, considering the CRA's implied terms and its rules on exclusion of liability. However, the CRA has made smaller changes to several other chapters. The **Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013** are also considered in detail, as they have replaced the Distance Selling Regulations 2000 and the Cancellation of Contracts made in a Consumer's Home or Place of Work etc. Regulations 2008.

New cases are included throughout the text. The most important of these, in the order in which they appear in the text, are:

*North Eastern Properties v Coleman* [2010] 3 All ER 528  
*Lloyd v Browning* [2013] EWCA Civ 1637  
*Salt v Stratstone Specialist Ltd* [2015] EWCA Civ 745  
*El Makdessi v Cavendish Square Holdings BV* [2013] EWCA Civ 1539  
*Cavendish Square Holdings BV v Talal El Makdessi/ ParkingEye Ltd v Beavis* [2015] UKSC 67  
*Simpole v Chee* [2013] EWHC 444(Ch)  
*Blankley v CMMCUH NHS Trust* [2015] EWCA Civ 18  
*FHR European Ventures Ltd v Cedar Capital Partners LCC* [2015] 1 AC 250  
*Warren v Drukkeri J Flach B.V.* [2014] EWCA Civ 993  
*Michael v Chief Constable of South Wales* [2015] UKSC 2  
*Les Laboratoires Servier v Apotex Inc* [2014] 3 WLR 1257  
*McCracken v Smith, the MIB and Bell* [2015] EWCA Civ 380  
*Coventry v Lawrence* [2014] UKSC 13  
*Lawrence v Fen Tigers Ltd (No 2)* [2014] UKSC 46  
*Environment Agency v Churngold Recycling Ltd* [2014] EWCA Civ 909  
*Mohamud v Morrison Supermarkets plc* [2014] EWCA Civ 116  
*Wood v Capital Bridging Finance Ltd* [2015] EWCA Civ 451

*Durkin v DSG Retail Ltd* [2014] UKSC 21  
*Plevin v Paragon Personal Finance Ltd* [2014] 1 WLR 4222  
*Thompson v The Renwick Group plc* [2014] EWCA Civ 635  
*Jessemey v Rowstock Ltd* [2014] EWCA Civ 185  
*Yapp v Foreign and Commonwealth Office* [2014] EWCA Civ 1512

## The aim of this book

This book aims to provide a comprehensive treatment of business law in a way which is both interesting and easily understood. The text covers most areas which could be classified as business law in an academically rigorous way. More specifically this text aims to be:

- **Comprehensive** in its scope, covering not only the more traditional business law subjects, but also the English Legal System, Employment, Consumer Credit, Intellectual Property, Trade Descriptions, Misleading Price Indications, Competition Law and Product Safety.
- **Holistic** in its approach. In every chapter there are numerous cross-references to other sections of the text, demonstrating the inter-relationship between the various subject areas.
- **Thorough** in its treatment of the law. Despite the easily readable style of the text, difficult issues are dealt with thoroughly even in areas where the law is highly technical.
- **Easy to read.** The style of the text is straightforward and accessible. The policy behind the law is explained, making comprehension of the law much easier.
- **Well structured.** In every chapter the text frequently reminds the reader of the main issues involved and the context of the particular subject being considered.
- **Up to date** in its treatment of the law. The text reflects the changes made by recent cases, and legislation and above all by EU law. The accompanying websites will deal with changes to the law and keep the text as up to date as possible.



## Who should use this book?

This book is intended to be suitable for a wide variety of students who study Business Law; for example:

- **Undergraduates** who study one or more law modules as part of their accountancy, business studies or business-related degrees.
- Students on **professional courses**, such as ACCA, CIMA, ILEX, ICAEW, IComA and ICOSA.
- **HNC/D students**.
- **Postgraduate students** who need a thorough grounding in business law.

## Distinctive features

### Clear structure

The book is very clearly structured. The text in each chapter is broken up with several sets of ‘Test your understanding’ questions. These are designed to keep the reader firmly focused on the main issues with which the text deals. ‘Key Points’ at the end of each chapter have the same aim. The text is detailed, but the reader is frequently reminded of the context and structure of the material.

### Study skills section

The study skills section is designed to give students a clear explanation of the skills they should apply when answering legal questions. The technique of answering a problem-style question is considered in some detail. I very much hope that this section will inspire readers and allow them to see that legal assessments do not require rote learning and reproduction of facts, but do invite evaluation, analysis and application of conflicting principles.

### Multiple choice and summary questions

Each chapter ends with a selection of multiple choice and summary questions. These questions are designed to be intellectually demanding and to give the reader the chance to apply the law contained in the preceding chapter to problem situations. The answers to the questions can be found in the Instructor’s Manual, which is available to lecturers.

### Selected further readings

At the end of the book there is a short bibliography, suggesting further reading for those who want to know more about a particular subject area.

## Table of cases

Cases that have received detailed treatment in case summary boxes are indicated in **bold** in the case name and in the appropriate page number

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- Aas v Benham [1891] 2 Ch 244; (1891) 65 LT 25, CA **428**
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- Abouzaid v Mothercare (UK) Ltd** [2000] EWCA Civ 348; [2000] All ER (D) 2436, CA **345, 346**
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- Adams v Lindsell** (1818) 1 B & Ald 681; [1818] 106 ER 260 l, li, **70–71**
- Addis v Gramophone Co Ltd [1909] AC 488 **597, 598**
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# Study skills

## Get organised from the start

When you start your course, decide how much time you can afford to devote to your study of each subject. Be realistic when doing this. There will be a lot to learn and that is why your time must be managed as effectively as possible. Listen to your lecturers, who will explain what is expected of you. Having made your decision to devote a certain amount of time per week to a particular subject, stick to what you have decided. If it will help, draw up a weekly chart and tick off each period of study when you complete it. You should attend all your lectures and tutorials, and should always read the pages of this book which are recommended by your lecturer. Steady work throughout the year is the key to success.

## Take advantage of what your lecturer tells you

Many lecturers set and mark their students' assessments. Even if the assessment is externally set and marked, your lecturer is likely to have experience of past assessments and to know what the examiners are looking for. Take advantage of this. If you are told that something is not in your syllabus, don't waste time on it. If you are told that something is particularly important, make sure you know it well. If you are told to go away and read something up, make sure that you do. And if you are told to read certain pages of this book, make sure that you read them. You may be told to read this book after you have been taught, so as to reinforce learning. Or you may be told to read it beforehand, so that you can apply what you have read in the classroom. Either way, it is essential that you do the reading.

## After the lecture/tutorial

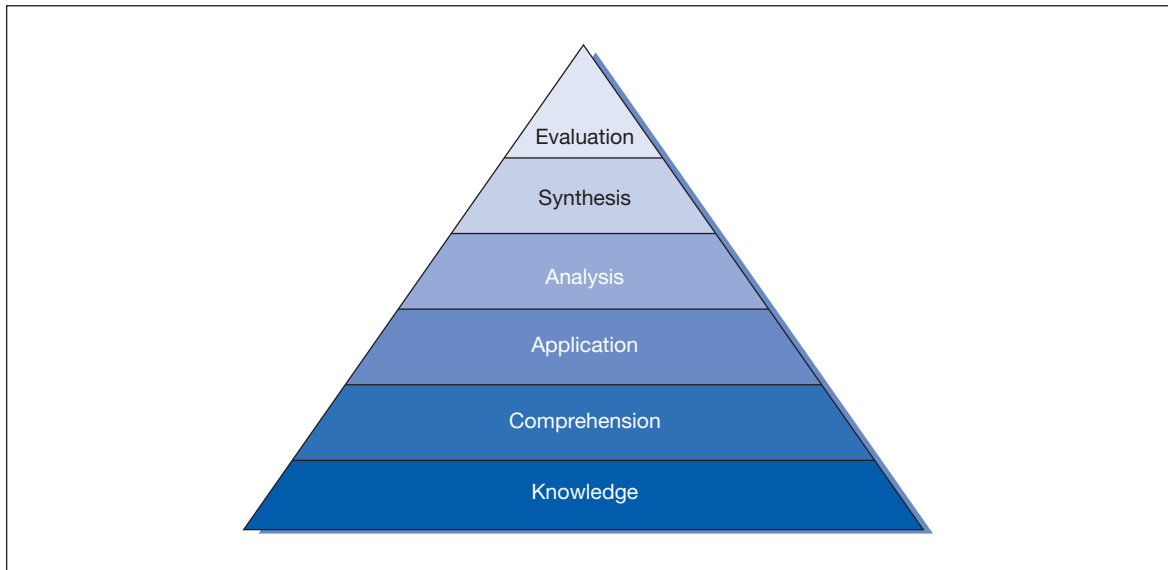
As soon as a lecture or tutorial is over, it is tempting to file your notes away until revision time. You probably understood the ground that was covered and therefore assumed that it would easily be remembered later. However, it is an excellent idea to go over what was covered within 24 hours. This need not take too long. You should check that all the points were understood, and if any were not you should clear them up with the help of your notes and this book. Make more notes as you do this. Give these notes a separate heading, something like 'Follow up notes'. These additional notes should always indicate which aspects of the class seemed important. They should also condense your notes, to give you an overview of the material covered.

In many cases your lecturer will be setting your exam or coursework. If a particular area or topic is flagged up as important, it is more likely to be assessed than one which was not. Even if your assessment is externally set, your lecturer is likely to know which areas are the most important, and thus most likely to be tested. Fifteen minutes should be plenty to go over a one-hour class. Each 15 minutes spent doing this is likely to be worth far more time than an extra 15 minutes of revision just before the exam.

## Answering questions

### What skills are you expected to show?

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom categorised the skills which students are likely to be required to display when being assessed. These skills are shown in Figure 1. Each skill in the pyramid builds upon the one beneath it.



**Figure 1** Study skills

Before deciding which skills you might be required to demonstrate, a brief explanation of the skills, in a legal context, needs to be made.

**Knowledge**, on its own, is not nearly as important as many students think. On the one hand, knowledge is essential because without knowledge none of the other skills are possible. But mere knowledge is unlikely to score highly in a traditional law assessment. Most assessments require comprehension, analysis and application. An exam question **might** require mere knowledge by asking something such as, ‘List the terms implied by the Sale of Goods Act 1979’. But not many assessments are so limited. Far more likely is a question such as, ‘Describe the terms implied by the Sale of Goods Act 1979 and analyse the extent to which they adequately protect buyers of goods’. This is a very different question. It requires knowledge, of course, but it also requires the higher level skills. It is these later skills which gain the higher marks. In ‘open-book’ exams especially, mere knowledge is likely to be worth very little.

**Comprehension** cannot be shown without knowledge. Some questions do require just knowledge and comprehension, for example, ‘Explain the effect of the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999’. But you should make sure that this is all the question requires. For example, if the question had said, ‘Consider the extent to which the Contracts (Rights of Third Parties) Act 1999 has changed the law relating to privity of contract’, most of the marks would be gained for appli-

cation, for showing how the Act would have affected the pre-Act cases such as *Tweddle v Atkinson* and *Beswick v Beswick*. Knowledge of the Act, and comprehension of it, would be needed in order to achieve this. But if there was no application then the question would not have been answered.

**Application** of the law is very commonly required by a legal question. There is little point in knowing and understanding the law if you cannot apply it. The typical legal problem question, which sets out some facts and then asks you to advise the parties, always requires application of the law. It is not enough to show that you understand the relevant area of law, although some credit is likely to be given for this, you must then apply the law to advise the parties. These problem questions frequently also allow you to demonstrate analysis, synthesis and evaluation, as we shall see below when we consider how to answer such a question. However, this is not always true. When there is only one relevant case, and where it is obviously applicable, mere application of that case is all that is required.

**Analysis** of the law occurs when you recognise patterns and hidden meanings. You break the law down into component parts, differentiating and distinguishing ideas. For example, you might explain how one case (*Adams v Lindsell*, set out at 3.2.1) introduced the postal rule on acceptance of contracts, and how another case (*Holwell Securities Ltd v Hughes*, set out slightly later at 3.2.1) limited its application. Having

made such an analysis of the law you could apply it to a problem question.

**Synthesis** is the gathering of knowledge from several areas to generalise, predict and draw conclusions; precisely the skill required to deal with the more complex problem questions!

**Evaluation** of the law requires you to compare ideas and make choices. It is a useful skill in answering problem questions. For example, in a problem question on offer and acceptance you might need to evaluate the applicability of *Adams v Lindsell* and *Holwell Securities Ltd v Hughes*. Evaluation is often asked for in essays, for example, ‘*Consider the extent to which the Consumer Rights Act 2015 has improved the protection given to consumers who buy defective goods and services from traders. Do you consider consumers now to be adequately protected?*’ When you evaluate you are giving your own opinion, realising that there are no absolutely right and wrong answers. But it is not pure opinion which is required. You must demonstrate the lower level skills described above in order to give some justification for your opinion. You also evaluate when deciding which legal principles are most applicable and should therefore be applied.

When you look at past assessments, try to work out which skills are required. Then make sure that you demonstrate these skills. Do not introduce the higher level skills if they are not expected of you in a particular question. For example, the very simple question, ‘*List the terms implied by the Sale of Goods Act 1979*’, is looking only for knowledge. No extra marks will be gained for evaluating the effectiveness of the terms. It must be said that such a question would be more suitable to a test than to an exam. But the point is this: see what skills the question requires and make sure that you demonstrate those skills.

## Answering problem questions

Almost all law exams have some problem questions, such as the end of chapter questions in this book. These questions require application of the law rather than mere reproduction of legal principles.

You should always make a plan before you answer a problem question. Read the question thoroughly a couple of times, perhaps underlining important words or phrases. Problem questions can be lengthy, but the examiner will have taken this into account and allowed time for thorough reading of the question.

So don’t panic or read through too hurriedly. Next, see what the question asks you to do. (This is usually spelled out in the first or the last sentence of the question.) Then identify the legal issues which the question raises. Finally, apply the relevant cases to the issues and reach a conclusion.

The following question can be used as an example. It requires knowledge of the law relating to offer and acceptance of contracts. The law in this area is set out at the beginning of Chapter 3, between 3.1 and 3.22, and at the beginning of Chapter 4, between 4.1 and 4.1.1.1. So it might be a good idea to read these pages before you use the example.

Acme Supastore advertised its ‘price promise’ heavily in the *Nottown Evening News*. This promise stated that Acme was the cheapest retailer in the city of Nottown and that it would guarantee that this was true. The advertisement stated: ‘We are so confident that we are the cheapest in the area that we guarantee that you cannot buy a television anywhere in Nottown cheaper than from us. We also guarantee that if you buy any television from us and give us notice in writing that you could have bought it cheaper at any other retailer within five miles of our Supastore on the same day we will refund double the price difference. Offer to remain open for the month of December. Any claim to be received in writing within 5 days of purchase.’ Belinda saw the advertisement and was persuaded by it to buy a television from Acme Supastore for £299. The contract was made on Monday 3 December. On Saturday 8 December, Belinda found that a neighbouring shop was selling an identical model of television for £289 and had been selling at this price for the past six months. Belinda immediately telephoned Acme Supastore to say that she was claiming double the difference in price. She also posted a letter claiming this amount. The letter arrived on Monday 10 December. Acme Supastore are refusing to refund any of the purchase price. Advise Belinda as to whether or not any contract has been made.

The final sentence of the question tells you what you are required to do – advise Belinda as to whether or not a contract has been made. If you have read the relevant extracts from Chapters 3 and 4 you will have seen that the requirements of a contract are an offer, an acceptance, an intention to create legal relations and consideration. So if these are all present a contract will exist. Notice that all the question asks you is whether or not a contract exists. It did not ask what remedies might be available if such a contract did exist and was breached. It might have done this, but it did not. So make sure you answer the question asked.

The first legal issue is whether the advertisement is an offer. So first define an offer as a proposal of a set of terms, with the intention that both parties will be contractually bound if the proposed terms are accepted. Then you apply your legal knowledge in depth. The advertisement might be an invitation to treat. *Partridge v Crittenden* (considered at 3.1.2) established that most advertisements are not offers. If advertisements were classed as offers problems with multiple acceptances and limited stock of goods would soon arise. The advertisement here, like the one in *Partridge v Crittenden*, uses the word 'offer'. But this advertisement can be distinguished from the one in *Partridge v Crittenden* because it shows a much more definite willingness to be bound. Nor would possible multiple acceptances cause a problem here. There would be no need for Acme to hold unlimited stock. If many people accepted, Acme would need only to make multiple price refunds, which would probably be small. So the multiple acceptance issue would not indicate a lack of intention to make an offer.

You then compare the advertisement in the question to the one in *Carlill's* case (see also considered at 3.1.2), noting similarities and differences. (Analysis, evaluation and synthesis will be shown in a really good answer.) There is no need to reproduce all the facts of *Carlill's* case. You might point out that the advertisement in the question said that it was guaranteeing that what it said was true, and that this is similar to the Smoke Ball Company's advertisement, which said that money had been deposited in the bank to show that they meant what they said. You would explain that whether or not there is an intention to create legal relations is an objective test and that in this commercial context it would be presumed that there was an intention unless there was evidence to suggest otherwise. Again, a comparison could be made with *Carlill's* case where, as in the question, the advertisement was made in a commercial context. You might explain that, as in *Carlill's* case, the advertisement set out what action was required to accept the offer and that acceptance could be made only by performing the requested act. In both the question and *Carlill's* case a valid acceptance could not be made by merely promising to perform the requested act. It is a feature of an offer of a unilateral contract that acceptance can be made only by performing the act requested. Acme's offer, like the one in *Carlill's* case, seems to be the offer of unilateral contract.

Next you would consider whether the offer had been accepted within the deadline, noting that the

terms of the offer ruled out acceptance by telephone. The letter would have been within the deadline only if the postal rule applied. The rule should be explained and analysed, along with the limitations put upon it by *Holwell Securities Ltd v Hughes*, which is set out at 3.2.1. An analysis of this case would probably lead you to conclude that the postal rule would not apply, particularly as the advertisement in the question said that the acceptance had to be received before the deadline. In *Holwell Securities Ltd v Hughes* the Court of Appeal refused to apply the postal rule because acceptance had to be made 'by notice in writing' and it was held that this meant that it had to be received to be effective.

Next we would explain that there could have been consideration from both parties. Acme's consideration would have been their promise to give the refund. Belinda's consideration would have been performing the act requested. You might think it a waste of time to mention consideration. It would be a waste of time to consider it at length. But consideration is a requirement of a valid contract and you were asked to advise whether or not a contract existed. If you were absolutely certain that there was no valid acceptance it might be all right to say that there was therefore no need to consider consideration. But whether or not the postal rule would apply is not a matter of certainty. You might be wrong to say that it would not apply. If this was the case, consideration would be a part of the answer. If you reach a conclusion very early on, which makes further investigation of the question unnecessary, you should conduct that further investigation anyway. It is most unlikely that a question has been set where the first line gives the answer and the rest of the question is irrelevant. For example, you might have decided that Acme's advertisement was definitely an invitation to treat. If this were true then there could have been no contract. (Belinda would have made an offer which was not accepted.) So if you did decide that the advertisement was an invitation to treat, by all means say so. But then explain that it might possibly have been an offer and go on to consider the rest of the question.

You should reach a conclusion when answering a problem question. But your conclusion might be that it is uncertain how the cases would apply and that therefore there might or might not be a valid contract. Do not be afraid of such a conclusion. Often it is the only correct answer. If a definite answer to any legal problem could always be found cases would never go to court.

Finally, do not be on Belinda's side just because you have been asked to advise her. Belinda wants an objective view of the law. A lawyer who tells his or her client what they want to hear does the client no favours at all. The client may well take the case to court, lose the case when the judge gives an impartial decision, and then be saddled with huge costs. If the news is bad for Belinda, as it probably is, then tell her so.

Try to practise past problem questions, but make sure that they are from your exam, and that there is no indication that future questions will be different. It can be very helpful to do this with a friend, or maybe a couple of friends, and to make a bit of a game of it. Find some old questions and give yourselves about ten minutes to make a plan of your answer. Then go through the questions together, awarding points for applying relevant cases or for making good points. It is probably best to keep this light-hearted but perhaps gently criticise each other (and yourself!) if you are missing things out.

Finally, it can be an excellent technique to get together with a small group of friends who all set a problem question for each other. First, you have to define the subject you are considering, perhaps formation of a contract. Then go over all the past questions. Then each try and set a similar question, along with a 'marking plan' showing how you would allocate a set number of marks (maybe 20). In the marking plan make sure that you list the skills which should be shown, analysis, application etc. This will get you thinking like the examiner. It is hoped that it will show you that all of the questions have great similarities and that the same things tend to be important in most answers. Lecturers who set a lot of exams know that most questions on a particular topic are looking for the same issues, that the same cases tend to be important, and that it is very difficult to invent wholly original questions. By the time you have set each other questions in this way the real exam questions should look a lot easier.

### Using cases and statutes

Whenever you can, you should use cases and legislation as authority for statements of law. In the section above, on answering problem questions, we saw how *Carlill's* case might be used. Notice how different that use was from writing *Carlill's* case out at great length and then saying that the advertisement in the question is just the same and so *Carlill's* case will be applied. To do that not only wastes a lot of words but, worse, it shows little application of the law. You have

recognised that the case might apply, but you have not applied it convincingly. To apply the case well you will need to analyse it, and to evaluate arguments and ideas. As we have seen, these are the skills which score the highest marks.

If a question on satisfactory quality within the Sale of Goods Act 1979 concerned a car sold by a taxi driver, you would want to apply *Stevenson v Rogers*, which is set out in Chapter 8 at 8.2.4. There would be no point in writing out all of the facts. You might say that *Stevenson v Rogers* established that whenever a business sells anything it does so in the course of a business for the purposes of s.14(2) SGA. Better still, you might say that the taxi driver will have sold the car in the course of a business for the purposes of s.14(2) SGA, because this is essentially the same as the fisherman in *Stevenson v Rogers* selling his boat. In each case what was sold was not an item the business was in business to sell, but a business asset which allowed the business to be carried on.

As for sections of statutes, there is usually little point in reproducing them in full if you can briefly state their effect. But they might be worth reproducing in full if you are going to spend a lot of time analysing them. For example, if a large part of a question was concerned with whether or not a car was of satisfactory quality, you might reproduce the statutory definition of satisfactory quality in full, or at least fairly fully. But you would do this only because you would then go on to analyse the various phrases in it, perhaps devoting a brief paragraph to each relevant phrase. Reproducing a statute is particularly likely to be a bad idea if you can take a statute book into the exam with you.

In this study skills section I have concentrated on how to answer legal questions. I hope that this will be useful to you. I also hope that you enjoy the subject and enjoy reading this book. Above all, I hope that you appreciate that the study of law is not a dry matter of learning facts and reproducing them. Some learning is necessary, but the true fascination of the subject lies in the endlessly different ways in which legal principles might apply to any given situation.

Lastly, I wish you good luck with your assessments. But in doing so I remind you of the famous reply of Gary Player, the champion golfer, when he was accused of winning tournaments because he was lucky. He admitted that he was lucky, but said that the more he practised the luckier he seemed to get. So practise your study skills, put in the work and make yourself lucky!



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# The legal system

## Introduction

This chapter considers the following matters:

### 1.1 Features of the English legal system

- 1.1.1 Antiquity and continuity
- 1.1.2 Absence of a legal code
- 1.1.3 The law-making role of the judges
- 1.1.4 Importance of procedure
- 1.1.5 Absence of Roman law
- 1.1.6 The adversarial system of trial

### 1.2 Classification of English law

- 1.2.1 Public law and private law
- 1.2.2 Common law and equity
- 1.2.3 Civil law and criminal law
- 1.2.4 The distinction between law and fact

### 1.3 Sources of English law

- 1.3.1 Statutes
- 1.3.2 Judicial precedent

### 1.4 European Union law

- 1.4.1 The institutions of the European Union
- 1.4.2 Sources of Community law
- 1.4.3 The European Court of Justice
- 1.4.4 Supremacy of EU law

### 1.5 The European Convention on Human Rights

- 1.5.1 The Human Rights Act 1998
- 1.5.2 The European Convention on Human Rights
- 1.5.3 The European Court of Human Rights
- 1.5.4 The impact of the Human Rights Act

## 1.1 FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH LEGAL SYSTEM

The English legal system is unlike that of any other European country. An outline knowledge of the features which make the English system so distinct is essential to an understanding of English law and the English legal process.

### 1.1.1 Antiquity and continuity

English law has evolved, without any major upheaval or interruption, over many hundreds of years. The last successful invasion of England occurred in 1066, when King William and his Normans conquered the country. King William did not impose Norman law on the conquered Anglo-Saxons, but allowed them to keep their own laws. These laws were not uniform throughout the kingdom. Anglo-Saxon law was based on custom and in different parts of the country different customs prevailed.

In the second half of the twelfth century, King Henry II introduced a central administration for the law and began the process of applying one set of legal rules, ‘the common law’, throughout England. Since that time, English law has evolved piecemeal. For this reason the English legal system retains a number of peculiarities and anomalies which find their origins in mediaeval England.

For the past few hundred years, world history has been a litany of revolution and conquest. The new rulers of a country tended to start afresh with the law. In the Soviet Union the communists introduced Soviet law, in France Napoleon introduced the Napoleonic code, in the United States the founding fathers wrote the American Constitution. But England is one of the very few countries to have survived the last nine hundred years with no lasting revolution from within or foreign conquest from abroad. Some English laws and legal practices have evolved continuously since the time of King Ethelbert, who became King of Kent in the year 580. The Norman