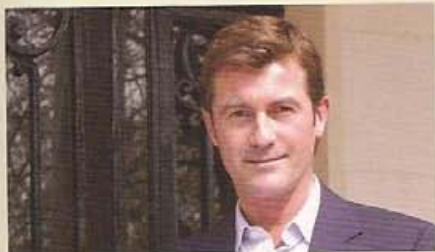


A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FINDER FOR THE

RICH & FAMOUS

The alarm goes off at seven, which is a little later than normal for me. I was out last night with a client so I'm treating myself to a bit of a lie-in. I should still be in the office by nine, though. I linger over a cup of coffee, bowl of cereal and a glass of orange juice before taking a quick shower and heading out the door. I usually have to drop off my laundry at the local dry cleaners before driving to the office, which is a short five minutes away.

by Robert Bailey



Every once in a while I contemplate giving up my car. The cost of driving in London is so astronomical that it just does not make much financial sense. My annual mileage rarely rises above 3,000 miles a year and once you factor in the congestion charge, insurance, depreciation and fuel, having a car is a huge luxury. I just had to relinquish my Mercedes to the dealership for five weeks to fix a plethora of faulty parts. But finding myself standing out in the pouring rain desperately trying to hail a cab on the Kings Road one too many times has changed my mind. It is more important to meet my clients on time than to arrive late and soggy. The car stays... for now at least.

One of the great aspects of my job is that no two days are the same for me. I am currently looking after 15 different clients who are all looking for different things in different areas. I always try to meet my clients in their own homes for the initial meeting so that I can assess their lifestyle, their needs and what their future requirements may be. Although a client may come to me with one set of requirements, these can often change after this initial meeting or after viewing a few properties and therefore the search is reignited. Sometimes it becomes apparent that their ideal property is just not for sale, and then I uncover the right property at the right price and in the right location and we are off again!



PROPERTY FINDER

Robert Bailey

Recently I was instructed to act on behalf of a German client looking for a family house in Kensington. He had been looking with another buying agent but this had proved fruitless so my client terminated the contract. As a high-ranking executive, he could not spare the time to look for a house and did not know the London property market as well as he would have liked. He was wary about taking on another buying agent given his past experience but we seemed to get along well. After our initial meeting, we narrowed down a list of streets with suitable properties and I put together a strategy to approach the owners of these individual homes.

I arranged for him to view three properties that were not on the open market and put an offer in on the one he liked best. I helped him put together a compelling package that appealed to the owners. My client completed on the house less than eight weeks after we began our search,



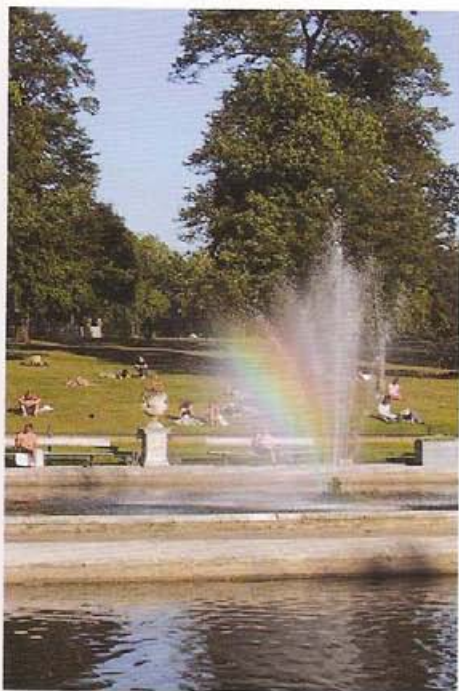
I HELPED HIM PUT TOGETHER A COMPELLING PACKAGE THAT APPEALED TO THE OWNERS. MY CLIENT COMPLETED ON THE HOUSE LESS THAN EIGHT WEEKS AFTER WE BEGAN OUR SEARCH. AND HE WAS SO GRATEFUL THAT HE HAS SUBSEQUENTLY INTRODUCED ME TO TWO OF HIS FRIENDS WHO HAVE GONE ON TO BECOME NEW CLIENTS.

and he was so grateful that he has subsequently introduced me to two of his friends, who have gone on to become new clients.

Once I get into the office, I take a call from a prominent architect based in Notting Hill. He is currently working with one of my clients to renovate the house we purchased last month. Because many of my clients are based abroad, they rely on me even after the house has been purchased because I have an extensive database of architects, builders, planning experts and gardeners at my fingertips. This morning, my client's architect wants to go

through plans for an extension and we agree that it is worth taking the time and trouble to level out the floors. It will be more expensive but, at the upper end of the market, there is no room for cut corners.

I make a few more phone calls to top-end estate agents and other industry contacts to find out what may be coming onto the market soon before reading through the stack of residential property market research that has landed on my desk. I am having lunch with a prominent journalist from a national newspaper and want to ensure that I am well prepared.





Location Chelsea, Agent Aylesford



Location Chelsea, Agent Aylesford

At least once a week I arrange to have lunch with a member of the press. I believe that keeping a high profile is important and often find that journalists value my insight into the market. Being a buying agent, they feel that I can provide an unbiased view of the market, whereas an estate agent may try to 'talk up' the market to keep prices high. I try to provide an unbiased view of the market as well as tell them what I think of particular high-profile properties that have recently come onto the market. An estate agent could not even dream of giving an opinion for fear of infuriating their client by giving away the property's failings. Although today's lunch goes well, the journalist invariably asks about what celebrities I am currently representing. I sigh and explain, once again, that I cannot reveal my client list as most of these high-profile individuals turn to me because of my discretion. Celebrities do not want the entire world to know where they are living, and consider their home a retreat

I SET OFF AGAIN AT 4PM TO VIEW A MAGNIFICENT HOUSE ON THE RIVER. MY CLIENT, A WORLD-RENOWNED MUSICIAN HAS AN ACUTE SENSE OF HEARING... THE 4.30 ARRIVAL OF A LARGE JUMBO JET APPROXIMATELY 1,000 FEET ABOVE OUR HEADS RATHER DESTROYS THE MOMENT, AND WITH IT HIS 'COUNTRY IDYLL'. WE AGREE TO CONCENTRATE ON QUIETER AREAS FURTHER AWAY FROM HEATHROW.

from prying eyes. We live in a celebrity obsessed culture, though, and journalists are forced by their editors to include any reference to a celebrity, past or present, to add interest to a story. Instead, I steer the journalist towards a story on market trends and the effect of policy changes by the government on the housing market. She seems happy with her scoop and we agree to meet up again soon.

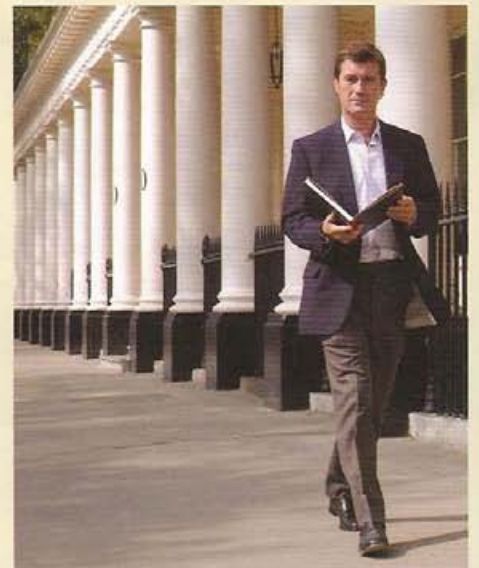
On my way back to the office, I get a call from a vendor who owns a beautiful house in Knightsbridge. My client has just agreed to purchase her home for several million pounds but the vendor wants to know if she can remove the bathroom tiles, a wall screen and the library shelves. I can only imagine she is starting her own salvage business! Thankfully, my client intends to completely gut and refurbish the house to his own taste so I am confident the salvage efforts should not present too much of a problem.

I set off again at 4pm to view a magnificent house on the river. My client, a world-renowned musician who has an acute sense of hearing, has fallen for the romance of living on the river. I caution him that the house is directly under a flight path, however, and he can barely stand this aural intrusion in Chelsea. The problems are bound to be even greater out here near Chiswick. As we gaze at the stunning Georgian exterior, the 4.30 arrival of a large jumbo jet approximately 1,000 feet above our heads rather destroys the moment, and with it his 'country idyll'. We agree to concentrate on quieter areas further away from Heathrow.

I drive back towards the office through Kensington. Two years ago I bought a house there for a wealthy widow. Security was a major concern for her and she was keen to find a house that had at least two entrances and exits. We managed to find her a grand home with a private garden connected to a mews

house to the rear. Her driver is able to whisk her straight into the garage, close the armoured door and she then transfers to the house via an underground tunnel. Problem is, you can always tell when she is in residence, thanks to the burly security guards stationed around the house. Inconspicuous it is not.

I get back to the office just before 6pm, reply to a few emails and then set off to the gym for a brief workout. I arrange to meet up with friends in Chelsea for dinner at a favourite restaurant. I am a patron of the Photographer's Gallery, a charity for contemporary photographers. As a group we attend lectures at least once a week or meet at a private collector's house to view their collections. It is a great way of socialising and expanding my knowledge of the art. Now if only I could figure out how to take a decent shot myself...



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