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IN THE CITY

Out-Foxed

A VERY long time ago, when most of the readers of these pages were still at primary school, I wrote a story in this newspaper about a bold young lawyer who was taking the brave step of setting up a new firm in the City with a view to challenging the established top names — especially in the area of employment and partnership law.

Ronnie Fox was his name, and Fox Williams, the firm that he established, flourished beyond all reasonable expectations. The intoxicating adrenalin of a start-up, however, can be addictive. So almost 20 years later Ronnie Fox is departing amicably from Fox Williams — and doing it all over again.

His new firm — Fox — opens its doors this morning in Cornhill with a total staff of about half a dozen lawyers and back-up (some following Ronnie from Fox Williams). The focus will still be on employment and partnership law but with a twist. Ronnie plans to make his own expertise on the management of small and medium-sized law firms available as a consultancy service to a wider audience. After all, going to him for the consultancy might, longer term, save you from going to him for the law.

When I spoke to him last week, he was on a high at the prospect of starting out and doing it all again — at an age when many of his contemporaries have already been pensioned off. The result is that “Fox” joins “Berwin” as one of the rare names to feature in the titles of two London law firms. It is a distinction that Ronnie Fox likes particularly.

“Just doing this make me feel ten years younger,” he says. “Besides, by comparison with US lawyers, the British stop far too young — it’s a great waste. People are starting to want to work longer and I feel that I am part of that new trend.”

Rest assured, Ronnie — I’m right behind you. Well, the resting bit anyway.