

British phone-hacking trial set for September 2013

LONDON, UK: Ex-*News of the World* editors Rebekah Brooks and Andy Coulson heard yesterday they will go on trial for phone-hacking in September 2013, leaving the scandal hanging over premier David Cameron for another year. A British judge set the date for the first trial in the scandal, which led to the closure of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch's tabloid in July 2011, after several defendants appeared at London's famed Old Bailey court.



The phone hacking scandal led to the closure of *The News of The World*.
(Image: Wikipedia)

Brooks, 44, is a former head of Murdoch's British newspaper wing News International and a close friend of Cameron, while Coulson, also 44, is the prime minister's former director of communications.

Judge Adrian Fulford gave directions for the management of two separate cases: one relates to the illegal hacking of mobile phone voicemails, while the other is over alleged attempts to pervert the course of justice.

The proposed trial date was 9 September 2013, with a further preliminary hearing on 12 and 13 December this year, Fulford said.

Brooks, dressed in a cream coat and black skirt, and all other defendants spoke only to confirm their names and their bail was extended.

Also in the dock... reporters, private investigator

Appearing with Brooks and Coulson on the phone-hacking charges were the *News of the World's* former news editor Greg Miskiw, former head of news Ian Edmondson, former chief reporter Neville Thurlbeck, reporter James Weatherup, and private investigator Glenn Mulcaire.

Stuart Kuttner, the *News of the World's* former managing editor, has also been charged with phone hacking but was not in court on Wednesday.

Police say the case involves the hacking of 600 people's voicemails, including Hollywood stars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie and Manchester United footballer Wayne Rooney.

Separately, Brooks faces three charges of perverting the course of justice by removing boxes of material from the archive of News International (NI) and trying to hide documents, computers and other material from police.

The charges relate to the last days of the 168-year-old *News of the World* in July 2011, as Murdoch was shutting it down.

Tight reporting restrictions

Rebekah Brooks' racehorse trainer husband Charlie Brooks, her personal assistant Cheryl Carter, her chauffeur Paul Edwards, NI head of security Mark Hanna, and Daryl Jorsling and Lee Sandell, who provided security for Brooks supplied by NI, also face one charge each.

The judge imposed tight reporting restrictions on the case, including whether any pleas were entered.

Rebekah Brooks edited the *News of the World* from 2000 to 2003 before taking up the same post at *The Sun*, Murdoch's top-selling British daily tabloid.

At one time she moved in the highest circles of British politics, and testified to a press ethics inquiry in May about her close friendship with Cameron.

She said Cameron signed off text messages to her "LOL", thinking that it meant "lots of love" and not "laugh out loud".

She resigned as NI chief executive days after the *News of the World* closed. Coulson edited the newspaper from 2003 to 2007 and went on to become Cameron's communications director, leaving that post in January 2011.

Cameron's closeness to two of the key figures in Murdoch's empire led to criticism from his political opponents and he set up a judge-led inquiry into the ethics of the British press in response.

Senior judge Brian Leveson is due to release his findings, which are expected to include recommendations on the regulation of newspapers, later this year.

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge