

Gangbuster lawyer trashed in court before Crown Office took her on

- By [Russell Findlay](#) | 26 Aug 2012 11:50

AFTER Asil Nadir was jailed, it was revealed that Lorna Harris had been disciplined over the probe into the Polly Peck tycoon 18 years ago.

A LAWYER hired as Scotland's chief gangbuster was branded a liar by a judge after her evidence at a hearing into millionaire conman Asil Nadir.

After Nadir was jailed last week, it emerged that Lorna Harris, 63, was also disciplined over the original probe into the Polly Peck tycoon 18 years ago.

But despite being heavily criticised by her then bosses at the Serious Fraud Office, she was later taken on to head the Crown Office's Civil Recovery Unit, targeting crime lords' dirty money in Scotland.

Harris led the original SFO investigation into Nadir, 71, who was last week jailed for 10 years for a £30million fraud.

Trial judge Mr Justice Holroyde condemned Harris for giving "untruthful evidence" at a pre-trial hearing last year.

The judge said one answer she gave was "plainly a lie" and added: "It seems to me she consistently put forward an account which I find she knew was not the whole truth."

In 1994, a damning report by future SFO head Robert Wardle found Harris wrote letters of such "disingenuity" that bosses were "shocked".

He said she asked for a column of figures to be left blank to "play around with in due course". She was also said to be "revelling in publicity" and accused of failing to keep proper files.

But she went on to land the prestigious Crown Office post in 2003. She retired in 2008.

Last night, the Crown Office refused to say if references had been obtained from the SFO.

Labour justice spokesman Lewis MacDonald said: “I would expect in these circumstances that anyone being hired for a sensitive public post would have references.”

Top employment lawyer Laura Salmond said: “In such a high-profile role, one would expect at least one detailed reference to be obtained from the previous employer addressing such issues as discipline and integrity.”

Scottish Tory justice spokesman David McLetchie said: “We need to know if full background checks were taken up in view of the public criticism of the honesty and integrity of this individual by a judge.”

Harris was investigated by police for alleged perjury but it was decided in March that she should not be charged.

She then refused to give evidence during the trial.