

The Treasurer

Master The Baroness Hale of Richmond DBE, PC, LLD, FBA, FRCPsych, was the second of three daughters born into a happy family of two teacher parents. Her father was the headmaster of a small independent school and her mother managed its boarding house and also did some teaching. The early years were happy ones for Brenda Hale: she was academically very able and easily stayed at the top of her junior and high school classes and her home life was encouraging and supportive. She did some drama but, being small of stature, tended to be typecast in the 'little old lady' parts. The games field, gymnasium or even the art studio were not for her – she was much happier in the library.

She sailed through the Eleven Plus and went on to Richmond High School for Girls. Then, tragedy struck at the age of 13 when her father died suddenly. She reflects on how her devastated mother overcame her loss, dusted off her teaching qualifications, became head of the local primary school, and continued to bring up her family alone but in straightened circumstances. She recognises now that her mother was a wonderful role model to her daughters. So life continued.

Master Hale had always had an extreme respect for education, and her dedication and ability made her a clear Oxbridge candidate. Her headmistress was an historian but suggested she should read economics. That did not appeal but she had enjoyed constitutional history which led her to consider reading law, a suggestion which, surprisingly, her conservative headmistress endorsed. Furthermore, it was a vocational subject and Master Hale had already decided that she did not want to follow her parents into school teaching. So, to Girton College with an Exhibition and where life as a Cambridge undergraduate, freer than at home and at school, proved to be very enjoyable. It is a mark of her optimism and realism that she would not say they were the happiest days of her life but only the happiest days so far!

She came down with a Starred First but what to do with her excellent abilities was more difficult. She investigated becoming a solicitor and was offered articles by a City firm but, despite her earlier reluctance to consider school teaching, she looked seriously at law lecturing appointments and, receiving offers from the Universities of Bristol and



Manchester, she chose Manchester, closer to home and where the Law Faculty was well-known and would encourage her to read for the Bar and then practise concurrently with her lecturing. This was the time of the great expansion of the universities post the Robbins Report. It was also there that that she met her first husband, who was a member of the Law Faculty at that time.

She had applied for an Inn scholarship in her first undergraduate year as was then customary – the dining requirement was a minimum of 36 over a period of three years which matched the duration of a law degree course. However, that application (to an Inn other than Gray's) was an off-putting experience but then she heard that Gray's was much more fun with its toasting and challenging (and it was closer to Euston Station!) so she applied here. She continued lecturing at Manchester while reading for the Bar by self-tuition through a correspondence course (as one could in those days). She topped the list for Bar Finals in 1967 and was awarded the McKaskie Scholarship as a result. But she had to wait until 1969 before she had eaten enough dinners to be called. She then did pupillage in Manchester followed by two years of part-time practice in the usual areas of the newly-called.

Meanwhile, her teaching was enjoyable in its variety including

constitutional and administrative law, contract, tort, commercial, family, and Roman law as well as the ever-growing law for social work. However, the time came when she had to make a choice: her practice was growing and chambers was splitting up and wanted her to become full-time while the University was pressing for more publications from her. Her husband had already decided to practise full-time, and she decided that one of them should stay with the security of a regular salary and pensionable family-friendly employment. It made sense for Master Hale to opt for academe.

Thus, she spent the next 12 years there, during which she became a family law specialist developing a reputation in the area and in social welfare law. In 1979 she was appointed a presiding legal member of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and, in 1980, a member of the Council on Tribunals. In 1982 she was one of a small group of academics to be appointed an Assistant Recorder. However, she was still ambitious and there came a time when the Law Commission advertised for a Family Law specialist. She applied and was appointed in 1984 as the youngest, and first-ever woman, Commissioner. She thoroughly enjoyed her time – extended by invitation – which she avers is one of the very best legal appointments for the practically reform-minded.

Her success at reshaping Family Law identified her as a leading lawyer in this field and she had already been awarded a Chair by the University of Manchester in 1986 (while on leave of absence at the Law Commission). She took Silk in 1989 in what was then a category of ‘employed barrister’. In December 1993, having served under four chairmen, her final term at the Commission was coming to an end and she had to decide what next to do. She could have returned to full-time academic work, and a Circuit Judge appointment had been mentioned but she had turned down this idea. In fact, it had been decided to offer her a High Court appointment but, not knowing this, she decided to return to practice, accepting a seat in chambers – for all of ten days! History records this as the shortest known tenancy as she was appointed to the High Court Bench on the eleventh day.

Her subsequent career speaks for itself about her abilities and the esteem in which they are held: she became a Lord Justice of Appeal in 1999 as only the second woman to be so appointed (the first being Dame Elizabeth Butler-Sloss), she became a Lord of Appeal in Ordinary in 2004 and is now Deputy President of the Supreme Court as the House of Lords Appellate Committee became in 2009. She is the most senior

female judge in the history of the United Kingdom and, in 2013, the BBC's Woman's Hour assessed her as the fourth most powerful woman in the United Kingdom. She is Chancellor of the University of Bristol, Visitor of Girton College, Cambridge and has been awarded several Honorary Doctorates of Law, although the honour of which she is proudest is Fellowship of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

In her personal life, she has a daughter from her first marriage and three step children. Her second husband is Dr Julian Farrand, formerly a Professor of Law at Manchester, then a Law Commissioner, and then Insurance and Pensions Ombudsman. Her outside interests are opera, the theatre and her life in Richmond in North Yorkshire, where she has a large family house and garden with many other family members living nearby. During her year as Treasurer she will be serving as Master of the Company of Fellmongers of Richmond, North Yorkshire.

Master Hale is only the second woman to be Treasurer of the Inn (the first being Dame Rose Heilbron DBE) and so, while Treasurer, she would like the Inn to celebrate the achievements of women at the Bar and on the Bench. She also will meet the many challenges now facing the Bar and try to maintain our tradition of successful inclusiveness – and to enjoy the best Miscellany ever! She is already a regular attender at the Chapel services and a great admirer of the Preacher, the Organist and the choir, so presiding on term-keeping Sundays will be an especial bonus for her. Her election as Treasurer of the Inn for 2017 is recognition of her achievements and the pride that the Inn takes in them.

Keith Lawrey

