



Inner Temple Library



International Women's Day

8th March 2016

Women at the Inns of Court

Profiles of a selection of
noteworthy female members of
the Inns of Court.

Mary Arden



Inn: Lincoln's Inn

Called in 1971, Mary Arden became a QC in 1986 and was appointed a judge of the High Court in 1993; she was the first female judge ever to be assigned to the Chancery Division. Upon her appointment in 2000, she was the third female judge to sit in the Court of Appeal. She is a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague, and Head of International Judicial Relations for England and Wales. In 2013 she was assessed as one of the 100 most powerful women in the United Kingdom by Radio 4's Woman's Hour.

Vera Baird



Inn: Gray's Inn

Vera Baird's legal career has involved many cases in which she has defended political protesters, including activists from Greenham Common and women who carried out damage against shops in protest against pornographic magazines. During the 1984-85 miners' strike she represented miners in hundreds of cases, including that of the Battle of Orgreave. In 1995 she defended Emma Humphreys, who had been convicted of murdering her violent and abusive pimp at the age of 17, ten years previously; the Court of Appeal overturned her sentence and she was released. The judgment in this landmark case spelt out for the first time that judges needed to analyse and explain the significance of any history of abuse to the jury, and reinforced the idea that courts should take long-term issues such as "battered wives' syndrome" into account.

Baird was Labour MP for Redcar from 2001 to 2010, and Solicitor General for England and Wales from 2007 to 2010. She has been Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria since 2010. She was Chair of the Fawcett Commission on Women and Criminal Justice from 2002 to 2006 and has been Secretary of the Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Committee. While she was Solicitor General, the CPS launched its first ever violence against women strategy in 2007. She founded the Gender and Criminal Justice Forum at the Fawcett Society and the Astraea Institute for Gender Justice, and is a National Patron of the Rape Crisis Foundation and a Steering Committee Member of Labour Women's Network.

Joyce Bamford-Addo



Inn: Inner Temple

Called to the English Bar in 1961, Joyce Bamford-Addo spent many years working as a state attorney in Ghana.

In 1973 she became Chief State Attorney. She was appointed Ghana's Director of Public Prosecutions in 1976 and a Supreme Court Judge in 1991. From 2009 to 2013 she was Speaker of the Parliament of Ghana, and the first female Speaker ever appointed in West Africa.

Cherie Booth



Inn: Lincoln's Inn

Booth was called to the Bar in 1976 and is a QC specialising in employment, discrimination and public law. She is a founding member of Matrix Chambers, which specialises in human rights law. She was a Recorder from 1999 to 2015. In 2008 she founded the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, a development organisation which aims to support female entrepreneurs in developing countries. She was appointed CBE in 2013 for her services to charity and women's issues.

Elizabeth Butler-Sloss



Inn: Inner Temple

Elizabeth Butler-Sloss was called to the Bar in 1955. In 1979 she was the fourth woman to be appointed a High Court judge, and in 1988 she became the first woman to be appointed a Lord Justice of Appeal. In 1999 she became the President of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice and consequently the highest-ranking female judge in the UK. During her judicial career she chaired the Cleveland child abuse enquiry (which led to the Children Act 1989) and was responsible for the ruling that the child killers of James Bulger should receive lifelong anonymity. She was created Baroness Butler-Sloss, a life peer, in 2006.

Barbara Calvert



Inn: Middle Temple

Calvert was called to the Bar in 1959. She became the first female Head of Chambers in 1974 when she founded Four Brick Court, which had four women as founding members. She went on to be the first female QC to be called to the Bar of Northern Ireland, the first female QC to take a case to the European Court of Human Rights, and the first woman to be Chair of the Industrial Tribunals (in 1986). As Reader of Middle Temple, she delivered a reading on the history of women at the Bar in 2001, "Sex - Does it Really Matter?", concluding "Yes in your private lives, but no longer in your professional lives. There is no height a woman cannot scale".

Shami Chakrabarti



Inn: Middle Temple

After being called to the Bar in 1994 and working as a barrister for the Home Office, Chakrabarti became an in-house counsel for Liberty, an advocacy group which campaigns for civil liberties and human rights; she has been director of Liberty since 2003. Campaigns carried out by Liberty under Chakrabarti's leadership include the reform of extradition laws, opposition to the extension of detention without charge for terrorism suspects, and criticism of the anti-terror measures arising as part of the "War on Terror". She was appointed as one of six independent assessors in the Leveson Inquiry in 2011 and was named as one of the 100 most powerful women in the UK by Woman's Hour in 2013.

Amal Clooney



Inn: Inner Temple

Clooney practises at Doughty Street Chambers, specialising in international law and human rights. She has been appointed to several UN human rights commissions, was a judicial assistant to the presiding judge in the trial of Slobodan Milošević for genocide and crimes against humanity, and is currently representing Armenia before the ECHR in a case for recognition of the Armenian genocide. She is a member of the UK's team of experts on preventing sexual violence in conflict zones, and of the UK Attorney General's panel set up to advise and represent the government on cases relating to public international law.

Mónica Feria-Tinta



Inn: Middle Temple

Mónica Feria-Tinta is a leading public international lawyer who has worked on numerous cases involving genocide and crimes against humanity. She pioneered the rights of victims in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, advocating the need for a Victims' Fund to ensure equality of access to justice. She is the first Peruvian-born lawyer to receive the Diploma of the Hague Academy of International Law, and has also been awarded the Inge Genefke International Award (awarded to people who have carried out outstanding work against torture) and the Gruber Justice Prize (given to individuals or organizations for contributions that have advanced the cause of justice as delivered through the legal system).

Hazel Genn



Inn: Gray's Inn

Currently Dean of the Faculty of Laws at University College London, Genn is a leading authority on civil justice whose work has influenced policymakers around the world. As a Commissioner of the Judicial Appointments Commission from 2006 to 2012, she was responsible for appointing members of the judiciary, including Justices of the Supreme Court. She was appointed an honorary QC in 2006, and an honorary Master of the Bench of Gray's Inn in 2008.

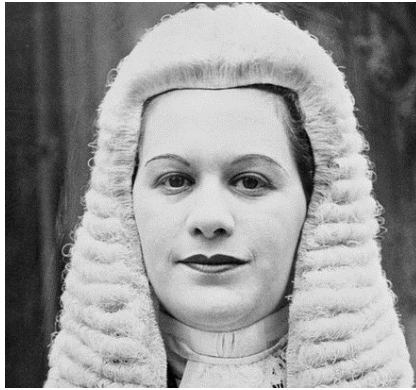
Heather Hallett



Inn: Inner Temple

Upon her election in 1998, Heather Hallett became the first woman to be chairman of the Bar Council. After several years as a High Court Judge, she became the fifth female judge ever to sit in the Court of Appeal when she was appointed in 2005. She is a former Treasurer of the Inner Temple. She chaired the 2010 inquest into the deaths of the victims of the 7/7 London bombings, and overturned the conviction for murder of Sam Hallam, one of the UK's youngest victims of a miscarriage of justice, in 2012. In 2013, Woman's Hour named her as the eighth most powerful woman in the UK.

Rose Heilbron



Inn: Gray's Inn

Heilbron was a prominent trailblazer for women at the Bar, being the first woman to win a scholarship to Gray's Inn, one of the first women (along with Helena Normanton) to be appointed KC, the first woman to lead in a murder case (defending the gangster George Kelly in the 1949 Cameo Murder case), the first female Recorder (she was appointed Recorder of Burnley in 1956), the first woman to sit as a judge in the Old Bailey (in 1972) and the first woman to head one of the Inns of Court when she was appointed Treasurer of Gray's Inn in 1985. She said of this last appointment: "The legal world does not discriminate by sex or race and this is possibly an example of it working rather well". She was the second woman to become a High Court Judge (after Elizabeth Lane) in 1974, and was appointed DBE.

In 1975 she chaired a commission considering the reform of rape laws, which went on to recommend that the identity of rape victims be kept secret and that the defence should be limited in its ability to cross-examine the complainant about their sexual history and so attack their character. She was a member of Soroptimist, an organisation for women in management and the professions to work to improve the lives of women and girls around the world.

Rosalinde Hurley

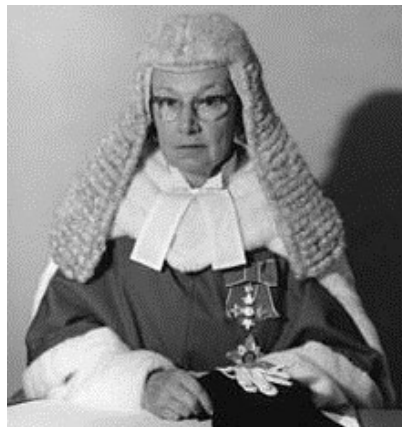


Inn: Inner Temple

Rosalinde Hurley studied law alongside medicine, and was called to the Bar in 1958 while working as a doctor. Although she did not practise law, her interest in it remained, and permeated her medical career.

She was Chair of the Medicines Committee from 1982 to 1983, a board member of the Public Health Laboratory Service (where she established and chaired an ethics committee), chaired the Nuffield Council bioethics committee on human tissue and served on the Council of the Royal College of Pathologists for ten years, giving them legal advice on the storage of human tissue. She was appointed DBE for her services to medicine and public health.

Elizabeth Lane



Inn: Inner Temple

Despite having previously decided not to attend university (she planned instead that after leaving school she would be “done with academics and have a good time”), Elizabeth Lane joined her husband when he decided to read for the Bar. They studied law together and she was called to the Bar in 1940.

Her legal career involved many firsts: after becoming a KC in 1950 (only the third woman to do so), she was the first woman to be appointed Recorder of Derby in 1961, the first woman to be appointed a County Court judge in 1962, and the first woman to be appointed a judge of the High Court in 1965; when she became a Bencher of Inner Temple in 1966, she was the first female Bencher of any Inn. This often led to some logistical problems, such as when she was the first woman to act as Commissioner of the Crown at Manchester in 1961: she describes how, typically, “all those who sat at the Manchester Crown Court were addressed as ‘My Lord’ The decision was reached that ‘My Lord’ was the only proper form of address, ‘My Lady’ or ‘Madam’ being impermissible. So ‘My Lord’ I became. [...] Occasionally the jury looked a little puzzled when counsel used the traditional phrase ‘My Lord will direct you as to the Law.’ Perhaps they wondered when His Lordship will condescend to put in an appearance.” Having agitated for a separate robing-room (she was initially expected to share the men’s), she notes that county courts sometimes had difficulties with this. “In one of them my persistence was rewarded by the exclusive use of a room on the door of which was a large notice ‘GAS KEEP OUT.’” Despite these difficulties, she said that “once I had become an established practitioner I think that I was treated in the same way as any other member of the Bar”.

Victoria McCloud



Inn: Lincoln's Inn

When she was made a Master of the High Court (Queen's Bench Division) in 2010 at the age of 46, McCloud was the youngest person ever to be so appointed, in addition to being only the second woman and the first trans person. She has been an editor of the White Book since 2000 and is the author of a number of titles, including the Civil Procedure Handbook. She was a member of the Bar Equality and Diversity Committee from 2004 to 2010.

Helena Normanton



Inn: Middle Temple

Helena Normanton was one of the first women to qualify as a barrister in England, and the first female barrister to practise. When her initial application to become a student member of the Middle Temple was refused, she lodged a petition with the House of Lords, and reapplied within hours of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919 coming into force. She did not change her name upon her marriage in 1921, and in 1924 became the first married British woman to be issued a passport in her own name. She was also the first woman to obtain a divorce for her client, to lead the prosecution in a murder trial (in 1948), to conduct a trial in the US (in 1925, in a test case confirming a married woman's right to keep her maiden name) and to be briefed at the High Court (1922), the Old Bailey (1924) and the London Sessions (1926). Alongside Rose Heilbron in 1949, she was one of the first two women to be appointed King's Counsel.

She campaigned for women's suffrage, equal pay and divorce reform, and was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union and subsequently of a breakaway group, the Women's Freedom League.

Joan Sawyer



Inn: Gray's Inn

After spending seven years as a judge of the Supreme Court of the Bahamas, Joan Sawyer was appointed Chief Justice of the Bahamas in 1996. She held this position until 2001, and was then the President of the Court of Appeal for the Bahamas from 2001 to 2010. She was the first woman to hold either of these positions. She is currently the patron of the Bahamas branch of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

Patricia Scotland



Inn: Middle Temple

The founder of 1 Gray's Inn Square Chambers, Scotland is the youngest woman and first black woman to be appointed Queen's Counsel and became a Labour life peer in 1997. She was the first black woman to be appointed Deputy High Court Judge, Recorder, and Master of Middle Temple. She introduced the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, under which familial homicide first became an offence and the circumstances under which non-molestation orders could be imposed were extended to include same-sex couples and cohabiting couples on an equal basis with married couples. Scotland is the Patron of the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence. She was appointed Attorney General for England and Wales in 2007 and Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations in 2016; she is the first woman to hold either position.

Ingrid Simler



Inn: Inner Temple

Having been made a Recorder in 2002, QC in 2006 and High Court judge in 2013, Ingrid Simler was appointed President of the Employment Appeal Tribunal in 2016, the first woman to hold this position. At the Women in Law debate during the 2011 Women of the World Festival, she spoke out against the gender inequality in the profession, calling the current situation a “disgrace” and saying that “if [using quotas] means women only getting jobs because they are women then so be it – men have been getting jobs because they are men for years”.

Ivy Williams



Inn: Inner Temple

In 1922 Ivy Williams was the first woman to be called to the English Bar, receiving a certificate of honour (first class) in her final bar examination. While she never practised, she taught law at the Oxford Society of Home Students (now St Anne's College, a women-only college until 1979) from 1920 to 1945: she was the first woman to teach law at an English university, and the first to be awarded a Doctor of Civil Law degree. She represented Britain at the Conference for the Codification of Civil Law in the Hague in 1930. Her ambition to become a barrister was due in part to her wish to offer free legal advice to the poor.

Former Inner Temple Treasurer Heather Hallett names Williams as her legal hero. "She is someone who never practised as a lawyer but who opened the door for other women to do so and for women to expand their horizons generally. She did not chain herself to railings or throw herself under the King's horse.

She patiently and persistently knocked at the door of the bar, a male bastion if ever there was one.

If the legal profession, and the judiciary drawn from it, are to continue to command the confidence of the public, they must properly reflect the society they serve, preferably at every level. It takes pioneers such as Williams to make this happen. I hope there will be a growing and continuing stream of others like her ready to fight the good fight.”

Timeline

1919 - Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act comes into force in December, allowing women to be admitted to the Inns of Court for the first time.

1922 - Ivy Williams is the first woman to be called to the English Bar (10th May). Several other women follow later in the year, including Helena Normanton (the first woman to practise as a barrister in England).

1936 - Rose Heilbron is the first woman to be awarded the Lord Justice Holker scholarship at Gray’s Inn.

1949 - First female KCs appointed (Rose Heilbron and Helena Normanton).

1955 - First female Recorder (Rose Heilbron, at Burnley).

1962 - First female County Court judge (Elizabeth Lane).

1965 - First female High Court judge (Elizabeth Lane). She subsequently becomes the first female Bencher of an Inn (Inner Temple).

1968 - Gray's Inn elects its first female Bencher (Rose Heilbron).

1974 - First female head of chambers (Barbara Calvert, 4 Brick Court).

1979 - Middle Temple elects its first female Bencher (Margaret Booth).

1985 - First female Treasurer of an Inn (Rose Heilbron at Gray's Inn).

1986 - Lincoln's Inn elects its first female Bencher (Mary McMurray).

1988 - First female Lord Justice of Appeal (Elizabeth Butler-Sloss).

1991 - Appointment of first black female QC (Patricia Scotland).

1998 - First female head of the Bar Council (Heather Hallett).
First female Treasurer of the Inner Temple (Elizabeth Butler-Sloss).

2009 - First female Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn (Elizabeth Appleby).

2010 - Victoria McCloud is the youngest person to be made a Master of the High Court, as well as the first trans person.

2011 - First female Treasurer of the Middle Temple (Dawn Oliver).

2015 - Bar Council publishes Snapshot: The Experience of Self-Employed Women at the Bar. It concludes that "significant challenges still remain for women who choose to practise".