

**SWEARING IN  
OF  
THE LORD CHANCELLOR,  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP  
IN THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE'S COURT  
On 30<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

The Lord Burnett of Maldon

It is our great pleasure to gather this morning and to have received the oaths and declarations of the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain and Her Majesty's Solicitor General. We are delighted to welcome the Lord Chancellor's wife and children and the Solicitor General's parents and siblings to join us at this short ceremony to witness the next steps in two distinguished careers.

My Lord Chancellor, the office you hold is one of the most historic. It is a great office of state and an office of constitutional importance. The offices of Lord Chancellor and Lord Keeper of the Great Seal are ancient but this ceremony is a recent development that reflects the constitutional evolution of the office in recent times. We greet you in our full ceremonial robes which we wear infrequently. But the solemnity of the occasion is designed to reflect the important position that the office of Lord Chancellor occupies in our constitutional settlement. That importance is reflected in the statutory oath which we have just heard. All ministers are required by the Constitutional Reform Act to uphold the independence of the judiciary but you, my Lord Chancellor, have a special duty to defend that independence as well as to respect the rule of law and ensure that necessary financial resources are made available for the courts and tribunals. At a time of political and constitutional flux, the rule of law remains a bedrock of our civil society. The

constitutional role ascribed to the Lord Chancellor by the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 has never been more important.

My Lord Chancellor, you are a proud Welshman. That was apparent by your taking the oaths in both English and Welsh. You were born and educated in Llanelli. From St Michael's School in Llanelli you went to Hatfield College, Durham where you studied law. You were called to the Bar by Inner Temple in 1991 and then practiced at the Criminal Bar principally in Swansea, Cardiff, Merthyr and Newport. You were a member of the Attorney General's A list of Crown Counsel. In 2009 you were appointed a Recorder of the Crown Court. The first communication from my office to yours, within hours of the announcement of your appointment, was that you should resign your judicial office. I really am sorry. But at least it provided you with the unique opportunity of informing yourself of your decision.

You were elected to parliament in 2010 to represent South Swindon, a seat you had fought in 2005. Your early time in the House of Commons saw service on the Joint Committee on Human Rights, the Committee on Standards and the Committee on Privileges as well as the Justice Select Committee. In 2014 you were appointed Queen's Counsel and became Solicitor General.

In the years that followed, my Lord Chancellor, you became a frequent advocate in this building, indeed in this court, personally arguing that some sentences imposed in the Crown Court were unduly lenient. And then in May of this year you moved to the Ministry of Justice as Minister of State with particular responsibility for prisons and probation.

It has become de rigueur when swearing in a new Lord Chancellor to explore how the appointment marks a first. Yours is no exception. I wondered whether it was particularly noteworthy because you are the first solicitor General to become Lord Chancellor. Alas no. Many of your predecessors occupied that position at some stage in their political careers, the last being Lord Falconer of Thoroton. Maybe it is because you have sat as a Recorder and thus have first-hand experience of delivering justice. But again the answer is no. Many, including, Lord Irvine of Lairg beat you to it. Is it because you are the first Lord Chancellor from Llanelli? I thought I might be on safer ground there until I was reminded that is not the case. I shall not steal your thunder on that. But there are two firsts that stand out. You are unquestionably the first Lord Chancellor to have sworn your oaths in Welsh. And you are also the first Lord Chancellor to assume office having been a Minister in the department of justice.

Your experience at the Bar, sitting in the Crown Court, as a law officer of the Crown as Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice provides you with a unique set of qualifications to enable you to discharge the duties of your office with distinction.

There is one aspect of the plans that you have made for the summer and early autumn which public statements of the Prime Minister's demands on the time of his cabinet may make difficult. Your Instagram feed describes you, with becoming modesty, as "Ikea builder, runner, thinker, fixer and doer". I might claim one of those labels, but will not divulge which. There is then a fetching photograph of our Lord Chancellor training to do the Swindon half marathon in September 2019. It is not clear whether it is a staged photograph

or a real action shot. But I was struck by the juxtaposition with the next photograph: “pulling pints at newly opened pubs”. With the cabinet in almost constant session over the summer, there may be less time for both running and pulling pints but we look forward to working closely with you in our joint endeavour to uphold the rule of law and independence of the judiciary and to improve the administration of justice.

Mr Solicitor, yesterday evening, Her Majesty was pleased to appoint you one of her counsel learned in the law. It is fitting that you have taken your place within the Inner Bar.

The Criminal Bar will consider itself particularly fortunate that two of its members should have assumed high office in the legal political firmament.

Mr Attorney, our new Solicitor General’s career has in many ways mirrored that of our freshly minted Lord Chancellor. They were born less than a year apart although whilst the Lord Chancellor was honing his skills in Welsh in Llanelli the Solicitor General was born and brought up in Northampton. He went from Wellingborough School to Buckingham University where he took a first-class degree in British Constitutional law. He was called to the Bar by Middle Temple in 1993 and thereafter practiced at the Criminal Bar for 17 years. Like my Lord Chancellor, the Solicitor General was elected to parliament in 2010. He has represented Northampton North since then. He too cut his teeth on select Committees. In May 2015 he was appointed parliamentary private secretary to the then Home Secretary, the Right Honourable Theresa May MP, and in July 2016 became Deputy Leader of the House of Commons. In January 2018 the Solicitor General was appointed Minister for Arts, Heritage and Tourism at the Department for Digital, Culture,

Media and Sport. His portfolio covered the arts rather than sport and so enabled him to indulge his many interests in the cultural arena. It is perhaps not widely known that it was our new Solicitor General who placed a temporary export ban on Mr Justice Byrne's personal copy of Lady Chatterley's Lover used by him during the famous trial. It has been suggested that it was Lady Byrne who underlined the racier bits and wrote a separate list of significant passages, assiduously cross-referenced. It was also suggested that she made a damask bag to enable the judge to travel with the book discreetly obscured. What perhaps is rather extraordinary, at least to me, is that somebody paid over £56,000 for it at auction. My overnight researches have not revealed whether that sum was raised to keep this priceless piece of your national heritage in this country.

But after three years as Arts Minister, in May 2019 the Solicitor General became Minister of State at the Department for Transport. His time there was brief and he returns now to what might be regarded as his natural home as a law officer of the Crown where his practical professional experience will equip him to perform the many varied and important functions of the Solicitor General. We look forward to working closely with him and to welcome him as an advocate in our courts.