

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
CRIMINAL DIVISION

Royal Courts of Justice
The Strand
London
WC2A 2LL

Thursday 17th October 2019

B e f o r e:

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND AND WALES
(The Lord Burnett of Maldon)

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT
(The Baroness Hale of Richmond DBE)

THE MASTER OF THE ROLLS
(Sir Terence Etherton)

THE PRESIDENT OF THE QUEEN'S BENCH DIVISION
(Dame Victoria Sharp DBE)

and

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE HIGH COURT
(Sir Geoffrey Vos)

On the occasion of the retirement of

The Right Honourable Lady Justice Hallett DBE

from the position of Vice President of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division

Valedictory addresses by

The Lord Chief Justice

Mr Richard Atkins QC

and

Mr Nigel Wilkinson QC

Thursday 17th October 2019

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Well now, on this occasion, Mr Atkins, I am not going to call straight upon you.

Mr Wilkinson – or should I say Messrs Wilkinson, because you lead your son Nicholas this afternoon as we gather for the valedictory of Lady Justice Hallett, or Heather Wilkinson as she is known to many away from this building. There is something quite magnificent about the prospect of a speech from the Bar made by the husband of the retiring judge and all the more magical by the support of a son.

The Bench never enquires too deeply into the real authorship of submissions advanced by leading counsel, but perhaps later we might find out. It is perhaps just as well that two close family members occupy spaces in counsel's rows because there are many others here today in the more traditional spaces to my left. The other Wilkinson son, James, is here with his wife Lilly. Nick's wife Olivia is also here with her parents, Jonathan and Monica Hunt. Nephews and nieces and partners have come from Sweden and Texas, and I am told that one of them has flown all the way from Canary Wharf. You are all very welcome indeed.

It is very difficult to imagine that Lady Justice Hallett – Heather, if I may – is approaching the age at which statute has decreed judges should retire. It is all the more unfortunate because, as is obvious to all those who work with her, Heather is at the height of her powers with energy aplenty to continue to provide public service for many years to come.

This valedictory should not be seen as bringing down the final curtain on a remarkable career, but as a scene change accompanied by a short interval. And what a remarkable career it has

been.

Heather was the daughter of a policeman who started on the beat and finished his career as Assistant Chief Constable of Kent. Her early years were spent in Hampshire where she went to Brockenhurst Grammar School, before winning a place to read Law at St Hugh's College, Oxford. She has said that her interest in law was sparked by reading her father's books on prominent lawyers and legal cases. It should be no surprise that her real interest always was and is the criminal law. At Oxford she was a contemporary of a number of undergraduates who were later to move through the legal profession with her. One was a young Brian Leveson – he was once young. They knew each other. I did ask him whether they met at lectures or because of a burning desire to discuss over milky instant coffee such things as the rule in Foss and Harbottle; but he assured me that the connection was entirely social. More importantly, Mr Wilkinson, it was at Oxford that you and she met.

Heather was called to the Bar by the Inner Temple in 1972. She became a Bencher in 1993 and its Treasurer in 2011. She was a pupil at 6 Pump Court where she stayed as a tenant and practised in crime. Many of her early years were spent practising in Kent. I have tried very hard indeed to discover information about those early years, but with no success whatsoever. Clearly, what happens in Kent stays in Kent. But her practice blossomed and she took silk in 1989.

The list of silks in 1989 remains available to the diligent internet searcher – on this occasion me. There were 72 new Queen's Counsel that year, for its time a big list. Of the 72 only six were women. How things have changed. Miss Heather Carol Hallett was sixth from the bottom of the list, signifying that she was one of the youngest. It was striking for me to look at the list. Of the six women appointed, four went on to hold high judicial office. Tucked away in the list

one sees Mrs Brenda Marjorie Hoggett of Gray's Inn. I wonder what happened to her? And also, Elizabeth Gloster and Mary Hogg.

Heather's practice continued to power away, both prosecuting and defending – murders, armed robberies, serious sex crimes and the like. So far as I have been able to discover there was only one forensic failing during all that time. At Chelmsford Crown Court, her Ladyship was defending a man charged with murdering his wife. His evidence was deeply affecting. Heather took him, distraught and weeping, through his account. Apologies for that ambiguity: it was he who was distraught and weeping. Yet, he confessed between lachrymose sobs, "I did kill her"; but he went on to explain that it was part of a suicide pact. He described how he went to Beachy Head to throw himself off the cliff. Heather's next question: "And did you succeed?"

By this time Heather had become deeply involved in leadership of the Bar. She was leader of the South-Eastern Circuit between 1995 and 1997, became Vice Chairman of the Bar in 1997 and then its Chairman in 1998. She was the first woman Chairman, as she was known, of the Bar Council. It was a difficult year. The Bar was locked in dispute with the Government over legal aid. I see Mr Atkins, the current Chairman, here. How times have not changed. But significantly, as it seems to me at least, Heather was able to present an entirely different image of the Bar to the public from those who had preceded her.

Heather had become a Recorder in 1989 and then a Deputy High Court Judge in 1995. It was inevitable that she would be invited to become a High Court Judge. In 1999 she joined the Queen's Bench Division. She was detained there for only six years before going to the Court of Appeal. But in that time, she undertook the full range of Queen's Bench work, despite inevitably being deployed often to try difficult and high-profile criminal cases. She was Presiding Judge on the Western Circuit where she continues to be revered. There was a plan

floating around in the Department for Constitutional Affairs – I see Lord Falconer is here – towards the end of her time to redraw the boundaries of the circuit, rather as in the famous cartoon of European Statesman looking at Africa and carving it up in the 1890s. Someone appears to have decided that Hampshire would more conveniently sit within the South-Eastern Circuit. As is the way with such plans, they can take on quite a momentum before those affected and those who might have to make decisions become aware of them. The Officials concerned, it might be thought, had no sense of history, nor any conception of the potential traumatic effect of amputating Winchester from the Western Circuit. Heather saved the day. I am told that she found herself by chance one evening at a dinner sitting next to Lord Falconer, then Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs and Lord Chancellor. Ignoring her neighbour on the other side, she deployed all the skills of the seasoned advocate on behalf of the Circuit. Others suggest she battered him into submission to such an extent that he emerged blinking and shaking at the end of the dinner. At all events, the plan was dropped.

Since her appointment to the Court of Appeal in 2005, Heather has sat across the range of cases and has been responsible for many of the major decisions in the Criminal Division during that time. But she has also done extremely heavy lifting on behalf of the judiciary as a whole by undertaking many of the most important administrative roles. She joined the Judicial Appointments Commission at its inception in 2006 and was its Vice Chairman between 2007 and 2010. She was Chairman of the Judicial College, formerly the Judicial Studies Board, between 2010 and 2014 at a time when it was significantly expanding its role. She was Vice President of the Queen's Bench Division between 2012 and 2014 and, of course, since 2013 has been Vice President of the Court of Appeal Criminal Division. In all of those roles Heather has given of her time, but also her formidable organisational skills and her calm wisdom. She has been a member of the Judicial Executive Board since 2010. All of the roles I have just mentioned are of critical importance to the functioning of the judiciary and to the

administration of justice.

Yet there is one other which deserves special mention. Throughout her career Heather has been a role model. In the early seventies she entered an overwhelmingly male profession and quickly established herself as a force of nature. She progressed in that profession at breathtaking speed. As Chairman of the Bar she demonstrated that there were no longer any no-go areas in the profession. Then as a judge she has worked tirelessly to promote diversity: not only to increase the proportion of women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds in the judiciary from top to bottom but also to promote social diversity, the less visible problem that the legal profession and judiciary face. Heather has been Chairing the Judicial Diversity Committee since Lord Thomas' time as Chief Justice.

Many people talk about the need to improve diversity in both the legal profession and the judiciary. Rather fewer succeed in taking or promoting active steps which deliver measurable results. Heather has been at the forefront of devising and implementing practical schemes that foster talent and encourage suitable applications for judicial appointment from a wider range of talented lawyers. And we see the results of her efforts around us at every level in the judiciary. Diversity is not a discreet topic but infuses decisions made on a wide range of issues by the Judicial Executive Board. Heather's contribution to the Judicial Executive Board recently as lead on diversity has been remarkable.

This valedictory would not be complete without explicit mention of two particular roles undertaken by Heather, both of course with complete command and success. On 7th July 2005 bombs exploded in London. 52 people were murdered. Whilst the immediate responsibility for the attacks was clear, there was an understandable need for the inquests to explore more widely the backgrounds of those responsible and the extent to which they were known to

various authorities in this country. Heather was appointed Assistant Deputy Coroner for Westminster to enable her to conduct those inquests – a not altogether elevated sounding title, but undoubtedly one of the most important judicial functions of her career. Heather conducted those inquests over a period of five months in 2009, gaining the confidence of all those involved and never putting a foot wrong.

In March 2014 she was charged by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with conducting an independent review into what were known as "letters of assurance" to "on the runs" – that is those suspected of serious terrorist crimes connected with the troubles in Northern Ireland. That was another difficult and sensitive task which Heather completed to wide acclaim.

In this morning's Times, Heather made the case for raising the judicial retirement age. Many of us hope to see that come if not, sadly, in her time. Yet there is little prospect of retirement for Lady Justice Hallett in any usual sense. Of course, there will be more time to spend with Ruby, her wire-haired dachshund – and possibly also with you, Mr Wilkinson. I have to confess that when I first encountered Ruby in Heather's room, I assumed she was a draft excluder. And I have worried about her physical integrity when Steve, Lord Justice Simon's Jack Russell, is about. But we now know her also to be a tripping hazard – having caused, as I understand it, both you, Mr Wilkinson, and my Lady to fall over.

New challenges await. Heather has taken on the Chair of the Security Vetting Appeals Panel. We were all thrilled by her appointment to the House of Lords where she will be an active member on the Cross Benches. The letters patent were sealed on 11th October, and so we can celebrate the transition of the Right Honourable Dame Heather Hallett into the Right Honourable The Baroness Hallett DBE.

We shall somehow manage without Lady Justice Hallett but we shall miss her formidable skills, her inexhaustible good humour and her constant kindness. We thank her for all that she has done and wish her well for the future.

Mr Atkins.

MR ATKINS: My Lord, in December last year I made my inaugural address to the Bar Council in which I said that my aim for this year was to make the Bar a happier place. Since then, I have done the valedictories for Mr Justice Foskett, Sir Brian Leveson and now Lady Justice Hallett. I do hope that nobody thinks for a moment that saying farewell to these illustrious judges was part of my drive to make the Bar a happier place. Others, maybe, but not these – far from it.

I have very few regrets about my time so far at the Bar, but one of them is that I have never appeared before the Vice President of the Court of Appeal in any of her various guises. As I understand it though, that is not a regret shared by my Lady.

I believe that those following me may have greater knowledge of the Vice President than I, so I will not take up much time. My Lady's retirement though could not go unmarked by the Bar Council, the current Chair of the Bar, for, as you have said, my Lord, she became the first woman Chairman of the Bar in 1998, having been the first woman Leader of the South-Eastern Circuit from 1995 to 1997, and the collection of former Chairs of the Bar and Leaders of the South-Eastern Circuit are here to pay their respects.

My Lady was also a much-loved Presider of the Western Circuit. The current leader, Kate Brunner QC, former Leader and Chairman of the Bar, Andrew Langdon QC, and former Leader Sir John Royce are here today to pay their respects, too.

I am told that on one of her earliest trips to the Circuit she was accompanied by three male High Court Judges who were not known for their warm and cuddly approach, leading to the nickname of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears".

It is perhaps a shame that she was not a presider of the Midlands Circuit at the time when we lost Oxford, because I know that the Western Circuit remains eternally grateful to her for fighting off the proposal that Hampshire be transferred to the South-Eastern Circuit. I know, too, that my Lady has frequently returned to the Western Circuit to inspire the next generation and to assist with the setting up of the Circuit Women's Forum, a model that I shamelessly cribbed for the Midlands Circuit, and during my year as Chair has now become established across all the circuits; and many people are very grateful for the input she gave to that.

I understand that after one of my Lady's speeches to the Western Circuit, and probably after a couple of glasses of champagne, one young member of the Bar was heard to say: "If a grocer's daughter can do that, there is hope for us all". Well, there may have been a little alcohol-induced confusion about who you were and who your parents were, which I am sure your late police officer father will forgive, but I think we all understand the sentiment and share it.

Time does not permit me to list all of her firsts, although I should perhaps mention that she was the first and only mascot of the Midlands Circuit. But it is safe to say that she has been a trail blazer throughout her career, demonstrating how glass ceilings are there to be smashed.

I am delighted that something may have been found to keep you occupied now that you will no longer be coming down to the RCJ. You are far too great a talent to be lost to the law.

May I also add my congratulations to the many that have no doubt already been delivered on your elevation to the House of Lords. We very much look forward to your interjections in the days to come.

My Lady, you have been a huge source of inspiration to many, and a massive supporter of the Bar. You have given freely of your time to encourage social mobility and gender balance at the Bar. May I thank you for all that you have done and, on behalf of the Bar of England and Wales, wish you a long and very happy retirement.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Mr Wilkinson.

MR WILKINSON: My Lord, I appear without the benefit of a Practising Certificate, but with the advantage and support of my learned junior, Mr Nicholas Wilkinson, as your Lordship has already indicated.

Can I apologise at this stage for a great degree of repetition that may occur over the course of the next seven or so minutes – I hope there is no problem with that – because plainly there has been a lot said by both of you thus far which is going to be repeated by me.

My learned junior's mother and I – that does sound rather strange – met almost exactly 50 years ago in a lecture theatre at Oxford. We found ourselves sitting next to one another. The lecturer, I recall, was Professor Sir Rupert Cross, and he was, inevitably, brilliant. Regrettably, I can recall nothing of what he said, or what indeed was the theme or title of the lecture. I cannot remember anything about it at all.

We were both called to the Bar in 1972 and we married in 1974. By then I was a tenant in 2

Crown Office Row, and Heather was at 6 Pump Court. Our practices were in my case, generally civil, and in hers, generally criminal.

In 1975, the world began to be aware of John Mortimer's colourful, inimitable character at the Bar, Horace Rumpole. His professional address was 3 Equity Court – chambers that he shared with, among others, Phyllida Trant and Claud Erskine Brown. Many of us, I hope, will remember those two and a great number of others. They, of course, were married. Her practice was generally criminal, and his generally civil. Phyllida was a very successful member of the Bar. Claud was every clerk's worst nightmare.

In 1989, Heather took silk; and I remained a junior. When Phyllida took silk and Claud did not, I became his alter ego at dinner parties in South-West London. In due course, Mrs Justice Trant was appointed.

As life imitated art, Heather became the first female Leader of the South-Eastern Circuit, as we have already been told, and then went on to become the first woman to chair the Bar Council. She was, as your Lordship has said, made a High Court Judge in 1999 and moved to the Court of Appeal in 2005. Poor Claud.

Perhaps it was not entirely surprising that I developed something of a midlife crisis. In particular, I was gripped by a fascination for attractive women with grand-sounding titles. I would, for example, be found lunching in public with the Chairman of the Judicial College. I would be seen at popular dining spots in the company of the Vice Chairman of the Judicial Appointments Commission. I would stroll in the Inner Temple Garden with its Treasurer on my arm. Weekends would be spent in the country with the Vice President of the Queen's Bench Division. Matters, I think, came to a head when I found myself sharing a bed with the Vice President of the Criminal

Division of the Court of Appeal.

I needed help and I receive specialist counselling which seemed to have worked. Alas, I had to contact my therapist again only last week when I realised that I was due to go on holiday next month with a beautiful Baroness.

Throughout her working life, Heather has been involved heavily in the international aspects of the law. Since the 1980s she has been participating in conferences, attending multi-national meetings, making speeches, delivering lectures, and teaching all over the world. My learned junior has produced a schedule which she has left behind. It details her efforts in this regard. It is, understand, a brief document. It reveals that she has performed her ambassadorial roles in Canada, the United States, South America, the West Indies, many European countries, Israel, Qatar, Mauritius, India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, mainland China and Australia. I did not always accompany her, but I much enjoyed the role of bag and bottle carrier that I performed on many of these journeys that she made, and that also gave me another alter ego, which I found very difficult to shift, that of Dennis Thatcher. He was the one who was the origin of my nickname "Sticky" – not known to everybody, but known to many in this room. But we will not go into the background of that.

Family always comes first for Heather. You will not be surprised to hear that, regardless of her achievements, in her practice at the Bar, on the Bench and all the other activities that she has undertaken, those who have come top of the list in every day of her consideration have been her sons, their wives, now her grandchildren, her dog and her husband.

The little grandchildren are not here today, sadly. They are Annabelle, Juliet, Eadie and Alby – they are 3, 2, 1 and 0 – Alby is only five months old. It was thought that probably this might be a

bit of a daunting experience for them. I was thinking when they get a little bit older, and if they had the opportunity of contemplating Alice's strange activities in Wonderland, that they might have thought if they went down a rabbit hole and fell endlessly into a chasm, that they might land at the bottom in a room quite like this. It is an extraordinary spectacle to see everybody here, dressed in the way that they are, and I do think that Lewis Carroll must have had something very much like this in mind when he was dealing with the trial of the – was it the Knave of Hearts? I am not suggesting for a minute that the King or Queen of Hearts should be presiding in this or any other court, particularly having regard to their passion for summary capital punishment, but it is an occasion, I think, which many children would greatly appreciate – and indeed obviously have over the years appreciated – and it is sad that they are just too little for that to happen.

So far as the family element is concerned, as many will know here, Heather at the Bar regarded the Bar as an additional family. She shared the concern for others and cared for the institution as admirably as she shares the concern for those very close to her in her family life. That, I am sure, was also true when she was on the Bench. She much enjoyed and savoured the collegiate atmosphere and the mutual support that is available throughout all the judiciary, one would hope.

The Inn is another element of her family life – Treasurer, as your Lordship indicated in 2011. That is at least something that remains for her now. She is not, by virtue of being 70, precluded from taking part in the activities of the Inner Temple. But it may well be – and I strongly suspect that it will be – that as she proceeds down the Embankment, about a mile to the west, she will find another family background waiting for her which will be espoused by her in the way that she has hitherto always behaved.

Another lecture. Not long ago – a few months – I went to the Blackstone memorial lecture at Pembroke College. Your Lordship will know it well. I was part of a very distinguished audience,

which included senior judges – past and present – academics, students, Lord Hoffmann was there; and the lecturer was Lady Justice Hallett. She was talking about the jury system. In the front row was Sir Roger Bannister – sadly, no longer with us, but in a wheelchair then and hanging on every word she said – and she, like him, no stranger to determination and courage. The lecture went ahead. Her hair was shorter. She was not wearing hot pants. But it was brilliant, just like the one that we had been to 40 or 50 years before – and this time I hung on every word.

THE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE: Thank you. Lady Justice Hallett.

LADY JUSTICE HALLETT: Thank you, my Lord, Mr Atkins, Darling – it is my last day in court.

Much of the credit that you three have put at my door belongs with the teams who have supported me so brilliantly in 7/7, the Northern Ireland review, in the CACD and in promoting Diversity.

I have been extremely fortunate in so many ways: I come from a close-knit and supportive family who taught me that I could do anything I set my mind to – well, they were nearly right.

St Hugh's College Oxford was prepared to take a chance on me (even without the support of my school), and when I came to the Bar I met men like my pupil master Michael Parker, the resident judge in Kent, the wonderful John Streeter, and later, judges and politicians who genuinely believed in equal opportunities for all.

I was, I think as everyone knows, enormously proud to be a barrister, to be Leader of the South-Eastern Circuit, Chairman of the Bar Council, judge and Treasurer of the Inner Temple. There

are those who cannot see beyond the traditions and the ceremonial occasions and believe that as institutions they are hidebound. Nothing could be further from the truth and just as I challenged the editor of a national newspaper who published headlines referring to fat cat lawyers to examine the accounts of a publicly funded lawyer, namely me – I challenge the critics of the legal profession and the judiciary to examine the evidence. Lawyers and judges all over the country do a huge amount of pro bono work promoting an understanding of the law and its importance and reaching out to schools and communities, encouraging those like me from a non-traditional background to consider a career in the law. Qualification as a lawyer can open so many doors and for some it might mean ultimately a career on the Bench.

I know for many (although not me) the Bench can involve a considerable financial sacrifice, but it is an interesting, challenging and thoroughly worthwhile job and one I shall be sorry to leave.

I confess that in July I was feeling a bit strange after 20 years in this building. I knew I could find more challenging roles, but I did wonder if they would be enough. Then I got the phone call, completely out of the blue, from Cabinet Office asking me if I would accept a peerage. "Accept a peerage? I could bite your hand off!"

Suddenly another big door was opening... So, although I shall be sorry to leave the RCJ – my professional home for so many years – another home beckons.

So, what shall I miss? Well, first and foremost, the people – from the ushers to the stenographers, the security staff, the clerks, Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service staff, the Judicial Office team, and of course to my colleagues, the judges, so many of whom have become close friends. They, along with their colleagues all over the country, often in very

difficult circumstances, do all that they can to keep the system going and to provide a support system for each other. I won't name individual judges – there are too many of them, but I always knew they were there to offer help and the occasional comforting shoulder, whatever the other huge demands on them.

I WILL name my clerks, John, Janet and Rob, who have done everything in their power to ensure my life runs smoothly and to whom I shall always be grateful. Rob in particular, ably assisted by his brother, Daniel, has been extraordinary in the last few months arranging my move from the RCJ and arranging today.

I didn't have much choice about making that move, certainly by the end of the year, but I had no doubt that it was time to retire from a fully salaried job when I decided that happiness is no longer a slap-up dinner at the Ivy followed by a bit of clubbing. It is now sitting on the sofa, sipping a glass of white burgundy, with my husband, our beloved Ruby, watching Strictly Come Dancing ...

There, my secret is out. I am – somebody here certainly knows – a Strictly fan. I love the sets, the lighting, the music, the costumes, the drama – but most of all I admire the willingness of the celebrities to take on a new challenge. Those lawyers who have become highly specialised could learn a lot from them. Do not fear a different jurisdiction. We all qualified as general lawyers once and dogs CAN learn new tricks. If we challenge ourselves and others, we may be surprised at the result.

There are a number of judges present who are doing work they would not have dreamt of doing a few years ago – and doing it brilliantly. Knowing their talent and commitment, I am entirely confident the post baby boomer judges, will do the job as well, if not better, than we baby

boomers did. I only hope that they receive the support of politicians, the media and the public to which they are entitled.

Secondly, I shall miss deciding cases. I shall miss the challenge of deciding cases and solving legal problems. One of my strengths – and possibly one of my failings – is that if you give me a problem, I want to solve it.

Thirdly, I will miss being part of the justice system. I was proud of playing a part in trying to make the system work. There was a time when we could genuinely boast that we had one of the best, if not the best, justice systems in the world. Our justice system is a precious commodity and one we must treasure; but it has suffered some unnecessary blows in recent years. People do seem to forget that a healthy and functioning democracy depends on a healthy and functioning justice system. Many trumpet the importance of the Rule of Law but fail to put their words into action. As I once said at a conference in Brazil, to the consternation of the interpreters: "Fine words butter no parsnips". (I gave a box of chocolates afterwards.) I won't be here to do what I can to get the parsnips buttered, but I shall never give up the fight to get the recognition for the justice system that it deserves and needs. With the goodwill of the judges who have done so much to lead reform, with more money for staff and maintenance, and with the money committed to the Reform Programme, maybe – just maybe – we can turn what has been a very difficult corner.

We have made huge strides in the diversity programme and that is my fourth aspect of being a judge that I shall miss. I am proud of what we have achieved. But there is much more to be done. The Judicial Office team and the judges will need all their dedication and commitment to ensure the profession of law and the judiciary is open to all.

Do I have any regrets? Firstly, not doing more to simplify and shorten the number of directions a judge is required to give a jury in a criminal trial. Many of them are unnecessary and some are plain patronising.

Second, not being able to change the image of lawyers and judges in some parts of the media and social media and still seeing the lazy stereotypes of us being trotted out.

Thirdly, not having a major bonfire of the civil robes as I had threatened – or at least the coloured tabs that were never part of the original design.

Fourth, as you may have read in the Times this morning, not becoming Lord Chief Justice. I never expected to be in the running for the post but, as I always explain to colleagues, once you apply for something you persuade yourself that you are the best candidate and failure is hard to bear. But I came to accept that there is far worse in life than professional disappointment, as many in this courtroom can sadly attest, and bitterness is a destructive emotion.

I have so much for which I am eternally grateful: a wonderful career, and now of course a second career in the House of Lords; my health (apart from a few broken bones); and another loving and supportive family – here is where it gets difficult – my gorgeous boys James and Nick, who never complained about the impact of my career on them; their lovely wives, Alize and Olivia; my four adorable grandchildren, Annabelle, Edie, Juliet and Alby; my nephews; and my niece. They have been so brave during the past year as my big brother fought his fight against cancer and sadly lost.

Now, this is where the crying will stop, because I am coming to Nigel.

And, of course, my husband, Nigel. He encouraged me to strive and to succeed. For example, where other men may have felt threatened by the success of their wife, he told me to apply for silk a year before he was ready to do so. Have you noticed how, if a woman is married to a successful man, it is thought to be the natural order of things; but if a man is married to a successful woman, he must endure the endless teasing to which Nigel has referred? Yet he takes it in good part. He seems to understand that any success I might have achieved does not undermine him, or all that he has achieved in the law; that he has achieved in several sports (he represented Oxford at three of them), and, of course, at completing the Times crossword. Other men could learn from my husband's example. I shall therefore forgive him his rather cheeky remark on the day we met at a lecture, as he has told you over 50 years ago, that he wasn't interested in a long-term relationship... Well, he was the best-looking man at Oxford at the time – with apologies to anybody else who was present at Oxford at the time.

I shall conclude quickly, having regained and before I lose again my composure. The waterproof mascara has its limitations.

Thank you all for your support, for your friendship and for your kind words. For me, it is time to close this amazing chapter and move on to the next. I wish you all every success and happiness.