

## A Conversation with Mrs Cherry Hopkins

### Part 1

by

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Date: 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023

*This is the first interview with Mrs Charity (Cherry) Hopkins, Life Fellow of Girton College, University of Cambridge.*

*This interview was held at the Squire Law Library in Cambridge.*

*Questions in the interviews are sequentially numbered for use in a database of citations to personalities mentioned across the Eminent Scholars Archive.*

Interviewer: John Magyar (JM). His questions are in **bold type**.

Mrs Hopkins's answers are in normal type.

Comments added by JM, [*in italics*]. Footnotes added by JM.

**1. I am here today on behalf of the Eminent Scholars Archive with Mrs Cherry Hopkins, a trailblazing woman in law whose career here at the University of Cambridge has stretched across five decades, if you can believe it. It's a great privilege to interview you. I'd like to start just by summarizing your career so that those who are listening who don't already know can get an idea of who you are and what you have accomplished. You were born in 1941, I believe, in Abingdon.**

No. I was born in Salisbury, Wiltshire.

**2. Okay. You came to the University of Cambridge in 1959 as a member of Girton College where you studied Law. You completed your LLB in 1963, and then embarked upon graduate studies and you were also training for the bar at that time. You were called by Grays Inn in 1965. Then you completed a master's degree in 1966, and became a fellow of Girton College. Is that correct?**

No, I didn't have a master's degree.

**3. You did not? My mistake, but you did become a fellow of Girton in 1966.**

I became an official fellow – an official fellow having been a research fellow.

**4. I see. So you were a Research Fellow?**

Yes, from 1964 to 66.

**5. I assumed that you were doing graduate studies then.**

Well, I was, but as a fellow from 64 to 66 under a fellowship funded by the International Law Fund and the British Institute of International and Comparative Law.

**6. Excellent, and in 1966, as an Official Fellow, you became a lecturer and a tutor.**

Yes.

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**And then just to give a grand arc, from 1966 until your retirement in 2007, arguably, but for a five-year period in the 1970s when you took a pause, you occupied a variety of positions such as Director of Studies at various colleges, an Examiner, an Assessor and a Supervisor, in a career that spanned 41 years by a linear account. From 1974 until the year 2000 you were Assistant Editor of the *British Yearbook of International Law*, and from 1996 to 2006; you were a convening Editor and then a Note Editor of the *Cambridge Law Journal*. And at the early end of your career and then in retirement, you were a prodigious indexer.**

Yes.

**7. So if we could start at the beginning. You were born in Salisbury and raised?**

Yes, I was born in Salisbury. My father was a scientist and he worked at the Porton Down Research Station near Salisbury and we stayed there until I was six. At that point, he was one of the first members of staff of the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, so we moved to Abingdon, which was then in Berkshire, but now is in Oxfordshire.

**8. Right.**

So Abingdon really is the place where I grew up.

**9. Okay. So your father was a scientist, obviously, and I'm wondering what was important about your upbringing that led you to stay on in academia, to pursue university studies and ...**

It's difficult to say. I think I always assumed that I would probably go to university. My brother, who was nearly ten years older than me, he went – came to Sidney Sussex College when I was still quite young, and I think I assumed that that was the sort of thing you did. Also, one of my father's sisters was an Oxford mathematics don, so I was used to the idea of academic life. But I never had any thought of becoming – having a career in academic life at that stage.

**10. Certainly not, and how did you come to study law?**

There wasn't any history of law in my family. When I was... I think it was when I was in my O-level year at school, an old girl of the school came to give us a talk about law as a career for women. She was a solicitor, I think, in quite a small provincial firm somewhere.

**11. Do you recall her name?**

I think it was Anne Ashton. Anyway, she made it sound a very interesting sort of work, so I tried to find out a little bit more about it and, I looked at a few books and thought, this looks fun. And so it was just like that. I did Latin, Greek and ancient history for A-level.

**12. Classics.**

Yes and although I liked the Latin and Greek in particular, not so much the ancient history, I didn't see a lot of future. I didn't particularly want to become a teacher of those subjects so I thought, well, I'll try and do law, and being a solicitor sounded a good idea so that was my aim when I applied to read law at university.

**13. Excellent. And you were one of two students in your year?**



Yes, I was. The other one was at Newnham. She's Baroness Cohen of Pimlico.<sup>3</sup> There was somebody else admitted in my year at Girton, but after a week she changed to archaeology and anthropology so ...

**14. You were the only one.**

I was the only one in my year at Girton. In later years, a few people changed over but there were never more than single figures across the university of women reading law in those days. Of course, it all changed in the late 1960s largely thanks to so many of the men's colleges starting to go mixed and that meant there was much more opportunity for women to come to Cambridge to do law.

**15. Right, and possibly the Cultural Revolution that was taking place.**

Maybe, maybe.

**16. Are there any instances you recall that just stand out as being this lone female in this sea of men as a law student?**

I think it was something I got used to very quickly, but everybody was always amazingly courteous. We weren't really made to feel isolated at all. I think the time that sticks in my mind – this is jumping on slightly – but to the end of my second year when I'd obtained an International Law Fund scholarship for the long vacation to work in Clive Parry's<sup>4</sup> team on the *British Digest of International Law*, and I was called for an introductory meeting in Clive Parry's rooms in Downing and when I walked in, I was the last to arrive. Eight men rose to their feet simultaneously, and as a rather shy nineteen-year-old, I felt a bit daunted. But other than that, no, I can't remember anything much.

**17. Right. Do you have any recollections of your experiences as a fresher at Girton College?**

Well, it was all tremendous fun. I very quickly got involved in a lot of university music because I played the viola. Girton was a happy, friendly place. At that stage, in some ways it was very like the Girton you read about in Rosamond Lehmann's book, *Dusty Answer*,<sup>5</sup> that we used to gather late in the evening and talk and talk and talk. Men had to be at the college by half past ten and, after that, even those who'd had visitors for quite a large amount of the evening, we used to gather together and talk and talk and talk.

**18. And form friendships that last a lifetime.**

Yes, very much so. Yes. I'm still in touch with a number of my Girton friends because, although I was the only one in my year doing law in the first year, somehow or other the modern linguists, who were quite a large group, took me under their wing. So I have a number of modern linguist friends

**19. Well, linguists are very appropriate people to break bread with if you were a lawyer, it being very much a language game.**

Yes, sure.

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<sup>3</sup> Janet Neel Cohen, Baroness Cohen of Pimlico, British solicitor. Governor of the BBC 1994–99; Member of the House of Lords.

<sup>4</sup> Prof Clive Parry, (1917–1982). Lecturer, London School of Economics 1945; Lecturer, Reader, then Professor, University of Cambridge 1945–82.

<sup>5</sup> Rosamond Lehmann, *Dusty Answer* (Virago 2007).



**20. So you completed your undergraduate, and whilst doing that, you started working with the British Digest?**

Yes.

**21. Is that what led you to the fellowship after?**

Yes, it is, yes. I did that in the long vacation at the end of my second year. What we did was, we worked in the Foreign Office library, which was in those days in Stanford Street near Waterloo Bridge, and we were going through files and files and files in the Foreign Office library to try and extract material involving legal advice.

The British Digest, which sadly never really fulfilled its potential – only five volumes were ever published – those five volumes related to the first phase, which was 1860 to 1914. By the time I joined the team we were looking at the files for the period after 1914. The idea was to go up to 1960, and the great thing was to be able to spot the handwriting of the Foreign Office legal advisers, notably Sir Cecil Hurst,<sup>6</sup> Sir Eric Beckett,<sup>7</sup> and Sir William Malken<sup>8</sup> because if you saw their handwriting, you knew that a point of law was involved in the particular subject matter. And also the really big things went to the Secretary of State and one would see a big C, often in red pencil, and that meant that Curzon<sup>9</sup> had seen it, who was then Foreign Secretary.

So that was the way it worked. So I did that during my second long vacation and I was there again for six weeks the following summer. And then I embarked on the International law section of the LLB. And when I'd done that I was registered as a research student and Clive Parry was my supervisor, and the whole idea was that I would work under his guidance on The British Digest.

**22. And that your work as a fellow was it?**

Yes. Well, what happened then was – the original idea was that I would do the volume on treaties for the first phase of the British Digest, for which the material had been collected by earlier working parties, but shortly after I'd started to get cracking on that, Clive Parry, who was a person of great vision and imagination, he had come to realize that there was actually a great shortage of organized materials about international law and the state practice of this country. And he realized that one thing that was completely lacking was any comprehensive list of treaties concluded by this country. And the Foreign Office had no idea of some of our treaty engagements, although there was an official United Kingdom treaty series, by no means all treaties concluded by this country were published in it. And in any case I can't remember now when that series was started but there was a wealth of much older stuff. And so Clive set me to work on making a complete record of the treaty engagements of this country using obviously the published sources – *United Kingdom Treaty Series*, the *United Nations Treaty Series* and things like Hertslet's *Map of Africa by Treaty*<sup>10</sup> – but the really interesting part for me was going back to the very early stuff and looking, to some extent, in what the University Library has in the Anderson Room collections, but also going

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<sup>6</sup> Sir Cecil James Barrington Hurst, QC (1870–1963), British barrister. Legal Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1918–29; Judge of the Permanent Court of International Justice 1929–46; President of the War Crimes Commission 1943–45.

<sup>7</sup> Sir William Eric Beckett, QC (1896–1966), British barrister. Legal Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1945–53.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Herbert William Malkin, QC (1883–1945), British barrister. Legal Adviser to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office 1929–45.

<sup>9</sup> George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925).

<sup>10</sup> Sir Edward Hertslet, *The Map of Africa by Treaty* (Harrison & Sons 1909).



to the Public Record Office and seeing the original documents. And we went right back to 1101, which is the first known treaty.

**23. Do you recall very clearly what treaty that was?**

It was with the Duke of Flanders. And so that project really took over, and of course, this was long before the days of computers. So, everything had to be recorded by hand. Frequent trips to the Public Record Office, looking over all these dusty old documents...

**24. With a briefcase full of handwritten notes?**

Yes, yes. We devised a single sheet on which all the relevant information about parties, subject matter, date of entry into force, dates of signature and ratification.

**25. So you had a form.**

We had a form, yes, and just piles and piles of these forms.

**26. And did you single handedly create an index or you collaborated with a team or you were ...**

Yes. Well, I had one or two assistants for short periods – students who needed a bit of holiday money. It was Clive Parry who organized all this, but essentially, I did the donkey work. We got a typist to type up a lot of the forms, and then he and I together went through them and sorted things out and resolved it because we needed to index the subject matter as well as the party.

**27. Oh yes, that's really more important**

So we conferred a great deal.

**28. So you created an index you and...**

He was the senior editor and I was the junior.

**29. You and Mr. Parry created a comprehensive index of all treaties signed by Britain from...**

1101 to 1968, and that was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office

**30. In three volumes, was it?**

Yes, it was.

**31. Just off the cuff, do you remember roughly how many treaties that was?**

I'm afraid I can't tell you that. It's gone out of my mind.

**32. And how long did that take? When was that completed? Do you recall?**

It was completed... It was actually published, I think, in 1971. I can remember reading proofs late in 1970.

**33. It was 1970.**

Oh, well perhaps it did actually come out in 1970.

**34. And that was commencing around 1963 when you started that work.**

Yes, it was. Yes, it must have been.



**35. And around the same time you were also training for the bar.**

Well, not exactly. In those days you could get called to the bar simply by eating the right number of dinners and passing the bar finals exams, because a law degree exempted you from the intermediate exam, and it was generally thought to be sensible for somebody who might go on to have an academic career to get a professional qualification so that options were kept open. So again, on Clive Parry's advice, and you can see what an important influence he was in my life, I joined Gray's Inn in my third year as an undergraduate and started eating my dinners. You had to do twelve terms of dinners, though they kindly let me off the last one because I did well in the final exams

**36. Right.**

And then I just took one term off to do a massive swat for the bar final exams and I don't know, they weren't very... they didn't require deep academic knowledge, but they required quite a lot of fairly superficial knowledge, shall we say, in those days. I mean, I don't think it was a very good system of qualifying for the bar because you hadn't got the faintest idea of what things were really like in court. There was not much vocational element to it, really, but it was doable. But it involved papers in eight subjects, which was quite demanding, including civil and criminal procedure, which one learned entirely from the book. You do this without ever having set foot in a courtroom. Slightly crazy, really. But anyway, I took that, swatted jolly hard and things turned out well, so then I could be called to the bar in January 1965.

**37. And I remember you mentioning how when you were writing the bar exam, it was you and one other woman.**

No, it wasn't quite that, that there were more other women, but we were segregated from the men – so very different from Cambridge – and made to sit at one end of Middle Temple Hall, well away from the men which was a slightly strange experience.

**38. Yeah, that would seem odd.**

Yes. Having been fully integrated in Cambridge, why should we be treated in that way?

**39. Yes. And that was... you were called in 1965.**

Yes.

**40. Which gets us to your time at Girton, as an official fellow.**

Yes.

**41. In 1966. And how did you... did you apply for that position?**

Yes, sort of. The college really rather desperately needed another tutor and my husband was already a tutor at Downing so I knew what the job involved. I was already doing quite a lot of supervision of Girton students, but I reckoned I could take on a tutorship looking after the general well-being of non-law students. So I said I was interested in that. I don't remember ever being interviewed or anything like that. I don't think I was in competition with anybody, but in those days a tutorship necessarily entailed an official fellowship. By that time Poppy Jolowicz<sup>11</sup> was an official fellow in law at Girton. She was also secretary to the college council. She did a little bit of teaching and she was the director

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<sup>11</sup> (1929–2018).



of studies in law at Girton. So I came in as sort of number two official fellow in law and then a couple of years or so later Poppy became bursar and handed over direction of studies to me.

#### **42. Right.**

But she and I were actually the first law fellows that Girton had ever had. We were admitted as fellows, she as an official fellow and I as a research fellow, on the same day in October 1964. Because before that a fellow in another subject had always had to direct studies in law. My director of studies was Marjorie Hollond,<sup>12</sup> an economist who was married to one of the great figures of the law faculty, Professor Harry Hollond.<sup>13</sup> So she was my director of studies and it was she who interviewed me for admission and she to whom I went to talk about supervision reports at the end of term. But she actually used to farm the organizing of the supervisions to a fellow of one of the men's colleges I had. Geoffrey Wilson at Queen's was my director of studies in the other sense for two years and John Hall at St John's for one year, and they made all the supervision arrangements.

#### **43. What stands out during your first year as an official fellow at Girton? What do you remember from that time?**

Well, if I have to be brutally honest, a student who tried to commit suicide. The people always say the worst things happen in your first term as a tutor and that is certainly, in some cases, true. I don't know? I suppose I at that stage I was starting to take on more supervision anyway and I think the number of women reading law was beginning to increase a little bit. It was around then that Mary Arden<sup>14</sup> and her friend Catherine Wacey, who later became Catherine Lester, became the first women to be officers of the University Law Society. I can remember supervising them and great fun it was, too.

Before that, when I was a mere research student in 63 to 4, I had supervised Brenda Hale,<sup>15</sup> and I think when you're very young, you know when people are clever, and of course they were extremely clever, but you don't really think, "I'm supervising a future member of the Supreme Court." Later on in life there were times when I used to think, "this person is going to get a very long way." But you don't... certainly I never thought about their being future judge, though certainly their performance as students qualified them very well to achieve that status.

#### **44. And what do you remember about Brenda Hale? What were you supervising her in? Was she in law?**

Yes. Well, I was supervising her for the first year introductory paper to international law and also for the subject we all had to do in the first year back in those days called English Legal System, which was a pretty boring subject, but I suppose one acquired a lot of useful information from it.

#### **45. I have taught that course to a summer programme.**

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<sup>12</sup> (1895–1977) American born economist. Director of Studies in economics at Newnham College 1923–33; Director of Studies at Girton colleges 1923–63.

<sup>13</sup> (1884–1974) British barrister. Rouse Ball Professor of Law, University of Cambridge 1943–49; Vice-Master of Trinity College 1951–55; Reader in Legal History to the Inns of Court 1945–68.

<sup>14</sup> Lady Arden of Heswall, British barrister. Barrister at Erskine Chambers 1971–93. Judge of the High Court 1993–2000, Chair of the Law Commission 1996–99; Judge of the Court of Appeal 2000–18; Judge of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom 2018–22; President of the Supreme Court.

<sup>15</sup> British barrister. Judge of the High Court 1994–99; Judge of the Court of Appeal 1999–2003; Lord of Appeal in Ordinary 2004–09; Justice of the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom 2009–20; Deputy President of the Supreme Court 2013–17; President of the Supreme Court 2017–20.



Right, Right.

**46. And it's a pretty good foundation if you don't really know anything about law.**

That's right. And there were some bits that were more interesting than others. For instance, the doctrine of precedent and statutory interpretation. They were fine. It was all the stuff about the structure of the courts could be a bit tedious, not to mention legal aid. That was the real rock bottom.

**47. Indeed. Okay, so you're a few years in, you're lecturing and what subject were you lecturing?**

I did the occasional lecture in international law standing in for Clive Parry if he was away somewhere. The first course of lectures I did was in company law about which I now know absolutely nothing because it's all changed since then, and I didn't know anything when I had to write the lectures. What happened was company law had been just a subject in the LLB, not an undergraduate subject and a decision was taken to move it into the Tripos. I think this was connected with professional exemption requirements which were changing so that people needed to have a knowledge of company law. And it so happened that Ken Polack,<sup>16</sup> who was one of the leading company law people in the university at that time, was on leave in the year when this lecture course had to start. And so the faculty split the subject up between Len Sealy,<sup>17</sup> who I think did more lectures than anybody else, and of course, he knew a lot about it already. John Collier,<sup>18</sup> who probably knew more than I did, but maybe not very much, and I who had just done the bare rudiments for the bar finals. So my first eight lectures as a part of a proper course were on company law. But that was just for the one year, because then Ken Polack came back from his leave and took over.

**48. Ah, so you were spared that. John Collier, of course, being another very prominent international law lawyer.**

Well, he was part of the British Digest team. So he's a very dear friend

**49. Right. And at some point... it says here that you were an official fellow and lecturer in law from 1966 to 1971.**

Yes.

**50. There was some sort of transition after 1971, was there?**

Well, what happened was in 1971, our daughter was born. And there were... there was no maternity leave provided by colleges in those days, and having waited a little while before having any children, I very much wanted to look after my own children myself, and I didn't think that was compatible with continuing in my full time role at Girton. I had suffered slightly from having colleagues who had tried to do everything at once, and what tended to happen was that the fellows of Girton who didn't have children got put on to every conceivable committee and there was quite a big administrative burden. And I thought, "no, I really don't want to be in the position of making other people work harder because I've got domestic responsibilities," and so I decided to resign from my fellowship. I did keep on a bit of supervision for two years. So there are two academic years of Girton and Downing

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<sup>16</sup> (1933–95) British barrister. College Lecturer and Director of Studies, King's College 1960–93.

<sup>17</sup> (1930–2020), New Zealand lawyer. Lecturer, University of Cambridge 1961–91, SJ Berwin Professor of Corporate Law 1991–97. For a bio, see the Eminent Scholars Archive: <https://www.squire.law.cam.ac.uk/eminant-scholars-archive/professor-len-sealy>

<sup>18</sup> (1933–2016) British barrister. Lecturer, University of Cambridge; Fellow of Trinity Hall.





students who will remember cycling out to our house in Hills Avenue and being supervised by me quite often with a baby crawling about the floor.

But then when my second child was on the way, I thought, “this isn't going to work, I've got to stop for a bit.” So I decided to give up supervising. I was... during this time I was doing a bit of indexing. By that time the *Consolidated Treaty Series*,<sup>19</sup> edited by Clive Parry, had started to appear. So I was doing a bit of work. He wanted a comprehensive index of that series. It's something that I'm afraid I never got round to completing, but I was doing a bit of work on that, which of course related back to what I'd already done in compiling the Index of British Treaties.

**51. Yes, indeed, and so your pause for child rearing was from roughly 1973 to 1978?**

Yes, that's right. At that point in 78 I realised that I really was missing the contact with young people and feeling a blank at the beginning of the academic year when everything was revving up, and so I decided to pick up supervising again. It was a year when there was a change of Tripos and whereas in the Tripos – which was not the Tripos that I did, but the one that came in in about 1963 – that involved contract in the first year and tort in the second year. Well, the change that came in in 1978, reversed that so that it was tort in the first year, contract in the second year. But that meant that in 1978 there were two years needing tort supervision – the first and the second year people. My husband John was desperate to find another tort supervisor for Downing and he said, “do you think you could do it? And I'd always liked tort as an undergraduate. I was supervised by Richard Scott – Lord Scott, as he later became.<sup>20</sup> He was then a young barrister who used to come at weekends and supervise in a very lively way. He ended up, of course, in the Supreme Court. So I thought, well, I've got my tort notes so I thought, “well, yes, I probably can do that.” I must say, before the first tort supervision I was absolutely terrified. I thought, “I'm not going to be able to do it.” But in the end, it was all right, because tort is a fun subject to supervise.

**52. A very classic common law exercise, isn't it?**

It is, and as long as you don't let some of the dreadful things that happen to people get you down too much, it's all right. But I do remember one girl whom I was supervising at some stage, almost bursting into tears and saying, “It's all so dreadful!” But you know, you have to harden your heart a bit about these things.

**53. In law it's ever thus, isn't it? It's all about the bad stuff.**

So I went back to supervising, doing tort, and then picked up some international law – again, supervision – and contract, which I'd supervised in previously.

**54. And it seems to me that was really your favourite part of this kind of work, wasn't it. You liked the supervising, did you not?**

Yes, it was. Yes, I always enjoyed supervising much more than lecturing and I know some people have felt that there must have been some sort of discrimination so that I didn't get a university lectureship. The fact of the matter is I never wanted one and I never applied for one, and far from feeling any discrimination in the law faculty, I've always found it a thoroughly welcoming and inclusive place. So there's no trace of any discrimination.

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<sup>19</sup> Clive Parry, *The Consolidated Treaty Series* (Dobbs Ferry, 1969–81) Vols 1-1648.

<sup>20</sup> Sir Richard Scott KC, Baron Scott of Foscote, British barrister. Judge of the High Court 1983–91; Court of Appeal 1991–2000; Vice Chancellor of the Supreme Court 1994–2000; Member of the House of Lords 2000–16.



**55. You've always felt welcomed?**

Absolutely.

**56. And wanted?**

Yes.

**57. Okay, and so let me think, as of 1974 or so, just around the time when you were pulling back from your teaching responsibilities, that's when you became involved with the *British Yearbook of International Law*?**

Yes. That was a most fortunate thing. Robbie Jennings was the Senior Editor of the *British Yearbook of International Law*, and he... the then Assistant Editor resigned and he was looking for somebody to take over and asked me if I would be interested in doing it. And it really was the ideal work for me. It involved copy editing the typescripts that had been accepted by the editors for publication. So getting them all ready for the press. And then the proofs would come to me and I would read them myself, send them out to the contributors, get their corrected copies back, do a collated copy, and the editors would read the proofs as well and send their comments to me and send the collated copy back to Oxford University Press, deal with the second final proofs, do the table of cases and the index. But I could do almost all this from home.

**58. Right.**

I sometimes needed to come into the Squire to check up on something. If you see a footnote that doesn't look quite right that needs checking, it's often necessary to chase things up. But it was a job I enjoyed doing and it put me in touch with international lawyers really all over the world, and who contributed articles or case notes to the book. I sometimes felt a little bit as if my house was turning into a postal sorting office – parcels of things arriving and going out again – but it was an ideal job for me, really. Of course, in those days, printing by Oxford University Press was all done by the old hot metal typesetting process so you had to be very, very careful that the type scripts that went to them really showed what was required clearly.

**59. And had to be perfect.**

It had to be perfect and it was a question of making sure that everything complied with the OUP house rules, like spelling organized with a “z” not an “s”. So it required a lot of accuracy but that's something I like.

**60. And it's fascinating to me because of course I never knew this era. To have an internationally distributed journal and to deal with the authors by mail.**

Yes.

**61. It would be so slow and time consuming.**

It was indeed. I mean, the person I used to call my pen friend was James Crawford<sup>21</sup> and I think I may be the first person in Cambridge who had any contact with James. He had

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<sup>21</sup> (1948–2021). Whewell Professor of International Law, University of Cambridge, 1992–2014. Judge, International Court of Justice, 2015–21. For a bio, see the Eminent Scholars Archive: <https://www.squire.law.cam.ac.uk/eminant-scholars-archive/judge-james-crawford>



just finished his DPhil at Oxford under Ian Brownlie,<sup>22</sup> who was the number two editor, second to Robbie Jennings,<sup>23</sup> and Ian had recruited James to contribute the Public International Law Case Notes section of the British yearbook just at the time when I became assistant editor. James had gone back to Australia – he'd become a lecturer at Adelaide University – and so he used to send me his notes, or he used to send his notes to the editors and they would send them on to me, by airmail. I would send the proofs to him by airmail, back they came by airmail, so it was at least a week each way. But it worked and expectations were totally different then. Everybody knew it was going to take a long time to put a volume together.

**62. Interesting. And so you were able to do that. Were there any other aspects of the work for the university that you maintained during the seventies while you were...**

I acted as an assessor in the tripos exams every year from 1966 until my retirement in 2007, except for the one year when our daughter was born, and she was born on the last day of the Easter full term. So marking papers then might have been a bit inconvenient.

**63. No doubt.**

I think I had been appointed an assessor and had to resign.

**64. Yes, and fair enough.**

And so you're editor or co-editor, you've resumed tutoring. This is in 1978. Going forward, at some point you started involving... now as a note editor at the *Cambridge Law Journal*, I look back at your history, you started publishing way back in 1964. I think your first note was.

Oh, yes I think that was...

**65. 63.**

63 yes, it was before we were married but I wrote it jointly with my future husband.

**66. Right. Although I noticed that the ones afterwards you just wrote yourself.**

Yes, I did. Yes.

**67. You didn't really do much scholarship with him, did you? He was kind of off doing his own thing.**

No, I didn't. I was closely involved in actually typing and revising the volume of the *British Digest of International Law* that he prepared, which was the volume on Consuls.<sup>24</sup>

**68. Right.**

I spent one summer working very closely with him and Clive Parry on the final version of that volume. And I suppose I was rather largely doing it as a typist. Between leaving school and coming up to Girton I'd had six months – because in those days people did the what was known as the third year, sixth, you applied in the term after your A-levels – and

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<sup>22</sup> (1933–2010) British barrister. Lecturer, University of Nottingham 1957–63; Tutor, Wadham College, Oxford 1964–76; Professor, UCL 1976–80; Chichele Professor of Public International Law, University of Oxford 1980–99.

<sup>23</sup> Sir Robert Yewdall Jannings (1913–2004) British barrister. Fellow of Jesus College 1939–82; Senior Tutor 1949–55; Whewell Professor of International Law, University of Cambridge 1955–81. Judge of the International Court of Justice 1982–95, President of the Court 1991–94.

<sup>24</sup> Volume 8, *Organs of State: Consular Officers and Foreign Marriages*.



having got my Girton Place, I left school and I did a six month secretarial course. So I was quite a good typist and therefore I helped out with that, but also with a just a little bit of input into the content.

**69. And no doubt immense help with critique and ...**

Well, I hope so.

**70. Editing and so forth, as I would expect, but you took an interest in case notes, ended up doing a lot of that with the *Cambridge Law Journal*, and I noticed that – I didn't look at all of them, but kind of randomly picked a bunch – an awful lot of tort and contract, not a lot of international law there and ...**

No. Well, yes, I was... by the time I was writing most of those I was supervising in both contract and tort, and in international law, but in 1992 I became secretary of the Girton College Council, which involved quite a bit of administrative work, and the other subject that I supervised was commercial law. And I realised that I just couldn't keep going as a supervisor in four subjects and do the administrative work as secretary to the council and be a tutor. So I decided to stop supervising in international law because I knew that through my British Yearbook work, which of course was still going on, I could very easily get that subject back if I wanted to – to supervise it again. I think also I always found that the common law subjects were actually more fun for supervision purposes than international law, because it was easier to do a problem based approach and to have a set of facts and discuss them in a supervision.

**71. Right, where international law is a lot more ...**

It's a bit more theoretical, you... obviously you do a certain amount on a problem basis, but not quite so much.

**72. No, and of course it isn't... because it's international law, it isn't entirely predicated on common law doctrine, is it? It's kind of it's own thing. Interesting. But you did – I didn't count, but it looks to me like there's a good maybe 25 or 30 case notes.**

I'm sure there are many people who've written many, many more than that, but it was it was after I'd gone back in my second spell as a fellow of Girton. I think I had contributed a case note or two by then, and John Collier, who was the convening case note editor at that stage, asked me to join the team of note editors, and we all had a lot of fun together going through case notes that people had submitted. And then when he resigned as convening note editor I took over from him with... Michael Pritchard<sup>25</sup> was then the editor of the Journal, and it was lovely to work with him because he was one of my first supervisors. He supervised me for both my first and second years. It was very nice to work with Michael again.

**73. And by then you're into the 90s, you're actually getting into the era of email.**

Yes, indeed. I think I started using email in 1996 because I realised that some of my college colleagues, particularly the engineers of Girton, were getting annoyed because they couldn't send me things by email, so I thought ...

**74. Asking, “what the heck is email?”**

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<sup>25</sup> (1927–) British barrister. Lecturer in law, University of Cambridge 1951–95; Faculty Secretary 1962–65, 66–69; Life Fellow of Gonville & Caius. For a bio, see the Eminent Scholars Archive: <https://www.squire.law.cam.ac.uk/eminant-scholars-archive/mr-michael-j-prichard>



Yes, so I thought, I've got to learn to do this and I spent large parts of one long vacation with the assistance of the college computer officer in mastering it.

**75. Right. And of course, knowing how to type, you're fluent on a keyboard.**

Yes. That was no, problem, yes. Obviously by that time, computers had become fairly general and I was using an old fashioned computer. One of those little classic box Macintoshes ...

**76. The toaster Macs, we called them.**

Yes. Well, on which at least you could do corrections. It wasn't a question of having to start all over again or, or correct things with the horrible pink fluid that one used for correcting.

**77. Or that white cake-y stuff.**

Yes, that's right. Or if you were doing things on stencils you used some pink stuff that smelled peculiar.

**78. I remember using a razor blade in grade school for some – what do you call them – those carbon paper.**

Yes, carbon papers. But anyway, computers had come in, but yes, email started to become more general. And I found that with the British Yearbook, that was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Certainly things could come much more quickly, but it gave people too much opportunity to change their minds and I would think that I'd got a typescript completely ready for the press, and then I got another correction which come in by email and it had to be sorted out all over again. So there was a down side to it as well as the obvious advantages.

**79. Would you say that it meant more time on each article generally had to be spent as a result?**

I don't know that it was more time, but there was somehow a higher irritation.

**80. More hassle?**

More hassle, yes.

**81. So we've talked about your time with the [Cambridge] Law Journal and as note editor. I can't help thinking over all of these years there must be a number of people who we haven't yet discussed who made an important impression on your life and were very important in your career as it progressed.**

Well, if we go right back to my time as an undergraduate, I had some splendid supervisors, some who were less splendid, no names mentioned. The person who made a huge impression on me was K W Wedderburn<sup>26</sup> – Bill Wedderburn, he was always known as – he was a fellow of Clare at the time and he supervised me in my final year in contract because the way we did contract in the Tripos that I took was in the second year an introductory paper for your contract and tort which had bits of each of the subjects, and then in the third a full paper in contract, full paper in tort. So I went to Bill Wedderburn for contract and he was a brilliant man. He went off fairly soon after that to the LSE. There was

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<sup>26</sup> Kenneth William Wedderburn, Baron Wedderburn of Charlton (1927–2012) British barrister. Lecturer, University of Cambridge 1955–64; Sir Ernest Cassel Chair of Commercial Law, LSE 1964–92.



something that sort of... the questions he asked were so perceptive that there was a great contrast because the lectures in that year, most of them were given by Professor Jack Hampson,<sup>27</sup> and he had a great idea that you could study every topic in contract on the basis of just two cases.

**82. Wow! Okay.**

So for instance, with mistake, you took two contrasting cases and with frustration, you took two contrasting cases. He did the two cases that turned on the postponed coronation of King Edward the Seventh, which had contrasting outcomes. Anyway, he discussed these pairs of cases at length, extracting principles from them, and that was interesting but it meant that his audience had to do a great deal of donkey work for their supervisions. Wedderburn, by contrast, issued huge reading lists – masses and masses and masses of cases – and in order to keep up with what he was saying in supervisions, you jolly well had to look at what he'd asked you to look at. And so he was a very demanding supervisor, but a tremendously rewarding one. It really helped me to understand the subject in a marvellous way. So I found him a very inspiring person, although he was very left wing. I don't think anybody would describe me as left wing. On his door he had a CND poster which had a photograph of the Conservative Prime Minister Macmillan peering out of the CND badge in the middle of the poster. So that was interesting, but, they were interesting times.

**83. What role did politics play in over the course of your study?**

Very little. Very little, really. Certainly not party politics. Of course, international affairs were quite another question because in the year that I was taking the LLB – 62–63 – that was the year of the Cuban Missile Crisis in my first term of the international law LLB, and so we had endless discussions of whether quarantine was a concept of international law, how it differed from blockade, whether it was legitimate to have a quarantine without a declaration of war, all that sort of thing. So that was all very fascinating.

**84. And that reminds me, of course, that you grew up in the heat of the Cold War.**

Yes, I suppose so, yes.

**85. Which is something that, well, it dissipated, you know, by the time I got into early adulthood. It had all kind of cooled off.**

Yes, yes.

**86. Because there were... nuclear war was a genuine threat, was it not?**

Oh, certainly, yes it was indeed. I can't remember any particular precautions against it. Of course, nowadays one knows quite a lot. For a long time there were buildings in Brooklands Avenue, which I believe were to be used in the event of...

**87. They had a bunker underneath and...**

Yes.

**88. And of course your father was a nuclear scientist.**

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<sup>27</sup> (1905–87) British barrister. Lecturer, University of Cambridge 1934–48; Reader 1948–53; Professor 1953–73; Faculty Chair 1954–57.



He was, yes. And I never knew exactly what he had done in the Second World War, but he was for quite a while on a Pacific island, yes. And I think it was to do with the development of weapons, but of course, he could never tell us exactly what he'd been doing.

**89. Official secrets. That was understandable given what was going on in World War II.**

Yes. Later he became a great advocate for the peaceful uses of atomic energy and he finished his career at Harwell as an industrial liaison officer, and he used to travel a great deal explaining the benefits to which atomic energy could be put.

**90. Right, and so if we get into the later years of your career, so we're in of the late 1890s [correction: 1990s] you are primarily, if I understand you correctly, supervising and not editing.**

Yes.

**91. And what do you remember about that period of time in your career?**

Well, it was quite busy. I suppose I was probably doing about 8 hours a week of supervision.

**92. Every week?**

Yes,

**93. That's a lot. I mean that's...**

Well I suppose it's quite a lot but the... university teaching officers, I think were supposed not to do more than 6 hours of supervision. That was a rule that my husband ignored totally throughout his career. Somebody who was a college teaching officer was normally expected to do 12 hours a week. So I was getting up towards the point when I could do a larger amount. Of course, my children, by that time, were well launched in school and I was just beginning to think, well, maybe I could go back to a full time position, and in 1989 Girton advertised a fellowship in law, and so I thought, "Shall I? Shan't I? Will they even look at me after all this time?" But I decided to put in for it and Poppy Jolowicz was extremely encouraging when she knew that I was interested in it. I remember saying to her "well, what do you want somebody to teach?" And she said, "absolutely anything that you want to teach." So that was encouraging.

Stephanie Palmer<sup>28</sup> by that time was already in post at Girton as sole law fellow. But of course she was constitutional law was her main interest though she did teach EC law, as it then was, and I think legal history as well. But anyway, I decided to put in for it and I was interviewed with a number of other people, and I was lucky enough to get the appointment. So back I went to Girton. At this point it was, it was quite from the domestic point of view. My daughter started at Oxford that autumn, my son was away at boarding school. Although I'd been supervising for various colleges, the great bulk of my supervision had been for Downing, where the numbers reading law were large. And that same autumn when I went back to Girton, Graham Virgo<sup>29</sup> arrived as a fellow of Downing, and indeed, took on some of the teaching that I had been doing. He had, of course, been an undergraduate there and I had supervised him, so it's been a tremendous joy to see his progress and most recently to see him elected as Master of Downing.

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<sup>28</sup> Australian lawyer. Associate Professor, University of Cambridge; Fellow and Director of Legal Studies, Girton College.

<sup>29</sup> KC, British barrister. Professor, University of Cambridge; Master of Downing College.

