

MARGARET BICKFORD-SMITH QC

Master, Worshipful Company of Arbitrators October 2019-20



Margaret was brought up in Newcastle-under-Lyme where her father was Headmaster of an endowed voluntary-aided school (subsequently independent). Her parents were both educationalists, her mother having been a University Lecturer in London and Aberdeen. When she was 13 her father moved to Oxford to head the then Oxford and Cambridge Examinations Board, and her mother started to take part in civic life, eventually becoming Lord Mayor of the City of Oxford.

Margaret attended Headington School, and then Lady Margaret Hall Oxford, where she studied Classical *Litterae Humaniores* (Honour Moderations) and then Jurisprudence (Final School). At Oxford she became Librarian (i.e. Vice-President) of the Oxford Union; and she met and married her husband Stephen.

She practised initially at the leading London-based set of North Eastern Circuit chambers, where she undertook a very wide range of common law circuit work ranging from serious criminal cases to commercial, construction, and professional negligence claims, trusts, property and planning. She ultimately developed a heavy specialist practice in mining cases, industrial disease and injury and clinical negligence claims, and environmental and regulatory work.

In 2000 she became a member of her current Chambers, and she has continued to practise in London and nationally. She has been a Recorder since 1997.

From 2003 upon taking silk she developed her interest in ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution), becoming an accredited mediator and a Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. From 2012 to 2015 she was Chair of the London Branch of CI Arb.

Life experience for her cases has been interesting. The mining work entailed 2 technical pit visits, going on the conveyor and crawling along the longwall face; for disease and pollution cases she visited foundries; yet other cases have involved shooting, fishing, and a cow (allegedly) eating a plastic bag.

She has a continuing interest in education. She was *inter alia* a London Borough Councillor, education spokesman and school governor for 8 years. A Governing Bencher of the Inner Temple since 1993, she served for many years as member of the Inn's Education and Scholarships Committees, and for 4 years as Master for student debating and mooting. From 2012 to 2014 she was Chair of the Inns of Court Conduct Committee (covering all bar-student disciplinary matters) overseeing all panels and chairing some herself.

From 2016 to 2019 she has been a member of the Financial Services Group of the Livery Companies of the City of London, whose China delegation ("City to City Awareness Trip") she took part in August 2019.

Her husband Stephen (a Liveryman of the Arbitrators, a Freeman of the Bowyers of which his father was Master, and a Freeman of the City of Oxford) is a real property barrister, and an arbitrator and adjudicator. Their son James, erstwhile history academic, now (another) barrister, is a commercial and employment practitioner, a recent Freeman of the Arbitrators, and married.

Margaret is interested in music and opera: she is a Trustee of the Temple Music Trust, and she and her husband are supporters of English National Opera and Welsh National Opera. When she gets the chance, she is also interested in art, and in Italy.