



Celebrating the Employed Bar

The Bar Council's Employed Bar Awards showcase the wealth of talent among employed barristers. This year, the Bar Council partnered with Gray's Inn to host the Awards alongside their Employed Bar Dinner. There were five award categories. Here are the winners...

John Battle Employed Barrister of the Year in Commerce, Finance or Industry

John is a barrister for ITN, and he was crucial in the drafting and production of the Reporters' Charter, a guide to court reporting rights. He also chairs the Media Lawyers Association.



first became interested in the law watching the 1970's Granada Television series *Crown Court*. I can remember it clearly: over three days the viewers would follow a criminal trial seeing inside the courtroom – prosecution case, defence, then summing up and verdict. Each episode lasted half an hour, was broadcast

around lunchtime and a 'real' jury made up of members of the public reached a verdict.

Fast forward 50 years and as ITN's Head of Legal and Compliance I have recently been awarded Employed Barrister of the Year in Commerce, Finance or Industry. I have been in this role for over 20 years; before that I worked for five years apiece in the two biggest newspapers groups, Associated Newspapers and News UK. Prior to that I worked in independent practice at the Bar for five years following my call in 1985 by Lincoln's Inn.

I got onto the path of becoming a media lawyer by working as a night lawyer for newspapers. While practising during the day as a common law barrister travelling to various Magistrates' Courts, County Courts and Crown Courts, I would spend two evenings a week in the newspapers. The job

entailed going to the newspaper offices at about 5pm and trying to prevent any libel, contempt and other potential media law problems going to press. During one shift in a tabloid newspaper I was offered a full-time employed role. I decided to take it. I was earning more from my media work than in chambers and the delights of travelling on British Rail to various courts in the South East had its limits.

The award is in recognition of several initiatives. I have been involved in the Reporters Charter which was adopted by the Ministry of Justice this year. It sets out the rights of reporters in the courts and recognises the role of court reporters as stakeholders in the legal system. I've also led the broadcasters on the issue of cameras in court for over 20 years. The filming of sentencing in the Crown Court took place for the first time in July this year. This is a significant development and the culmination of decades of lobbying. Filming has become commonplace in the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeal and public inquiries – and now the Crown Court. It has been a long road to get to this point. Along the way, the mood music has changed and there is recognition that public trust in our legal system and the rule of law demands transparency and adaptation to the digital age.

I have never regretted moving from private practice into the Employed Bar. The life of a media lawyer is exciting and interesting. Every day I play a part in advising reporters and editors on what we can broadcast or publish online and determining what millions of people see in their news. I've been involved in many high-profile cases and investigations, for example Channel 4 News on Cambridge Analytica and more recently the ITV News series of reports on 'Partygate'.

I am delighted to have been given this award by my peers. The awards recognise the work of employed barristers and I am honoured to be in such esteemed company.

Charlotte Pope-Williams Employed Barrister of the Year in a Law Firm

Charlotte is a Senior Associate at Pinsent Masons LLP specialising in financial services disputes. She is recognised in Legal 500 2023 and teaches advocacy, provides mentoring and coaching, and champions access and diversity at the Bar.



Winning the award for Employed Barrister of the Year in a Law Firm means the world to me. First, I am exceptionally pleased to receive this

award because it expressly recognises my status and qualification as a practising barrister. This type of recognition can be hard to come by as an employed barrister. It is a testament to the Bar Council and the Employed Barristers' Committee that these awards exist. It is no exaggeration to say that this award has been monumental in my career, even within the first few weeks of receiving it, given reactions of my lay clients and peers so far. It is a tangible and practical example of how paying the Bar Representation Fee, which funds the work of Bar Council, goes to improving the lot of practitioners.

Second, for me, this award not only symbolises the work that I have undertaken at Pinsent Masons LLP but all my work as an employed barrister to date. This includes but is not limited to: being the first and youngest Black Caribbean female barrister to ever work in the Bank of England's Legal Directorate; fighting for employed barristers to be insured to undertake pro bono work for almost a decade; and mentoring through schemes such as the Freshfields Stephen Lawrence Scheme and more generally. The odds of me qualifying as a barrister at all and practising at the Commercial Bar as a Black British Caribbean woman who has a financial services disputes specialism were not favourable. It follows that there was no hyperbole when I was initially asked about receiving this award, which recognises my employed and voluntary work; I said that I was absolutely elated (and I still am!).

The Employed Bar Awards acknowledge the richness that a career at the Employed Bar can offer. As regards a rationale for coming to the Employed Bar, people often focus on the perks of employment (ie, paid family leave, paid annual leave, a guaranteed stable salary, private health insurance and more discounts on a range of goods and services than you can shake a stick at). These perks are great; however, the true selling point for me is the quality and nature of the work that you can undertake, even as a junior. My career as an employed barrister has ranged from advising about G7 meetings, working on Western Europe's first Shari'ah compliant liquidity facility, conducting litigation and directly working with and advising the C-Suite of some of the UK's leading financial institutions, drafting legislation, developing policy, appearing in the High Court and working on multi-million pound commercial litigation. Furthermore, a career as an employed barrister enables a person to undertake all forms of advocacy, from courts and tribunals to internal decision-makers and boardrooms.

My career as an employed barrister has enabled me to carve out a path for myself that would be unavailable otherwise. For that I am, and I will remain, eternally grateful.

Cdr Caroline Tuckett RN Employed Barrister of the Year in the Armed Forces

Commander Tuckett is the Lead Legal Adviser, International Law for the Royal Navy. She has led the debate around the legal use of autonomous vessels in the Royal Navy, and her expertise has been recognised by the House of Lords Defence and International Relations Committees.



It is a real honour to receive this award, but I also feel slightly embarrassed! My work is always part of a larger team effort incorporating several different groups of people, rather than something I do on my own.

Life as a Naval barrister (or indeed as one in the Army or Royal Air Force) means that you often advise on multiple areas of law. We provide advice to the chain of command in several subjects: disciplinary and criminal, employment and administrative, and finally, operational and international law.

The Naval Legal Services is unique amongst the Armed Forces in that we recruit from within – we expect all our barristers to have proven themselves as Naval Officers first. This means that by the time we qualify, we have already had practical experience of operations at sea. When you are in an operations room in a Headquarters late at night, advising on rules of engagement to a ship which is far out at sea somewhere, having that insight can really help.

I joined the Service in 2006 as a Logistics Officer, and my first assignment was in a destroyer on a seven-month deployment to South America, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. Since then, I have travelled all over the world in both logistics and legal roles. My legal assignments have been very varied, as indeed have my ‘offices’. I have worked from ships, landing craft, tents, and of course in recent times, my spare bedroom.

The Royal Navy funded my study for a Masters by Research in International Law, and so having completed some roles in the disciplinary and advisory sphere, my focus is now more on operational and international law. In my current assignment, I provide legal advice on anything which has an international or operational flavour to it – there is no typical day or even week. Queries come in on topics ranging from naval wreck protection or intelligence collection, through to the legal issues surrounding events in places like the Black Sea and the South China Sea. A large part of my current work is dedicated to the operation of autonomous vessels: it has required some significant mental gymnastics to try and steer a lawful route through international maritime

treaties that were written at a time when autonomy was not envisaged. I am also very fortunate that I get to travel a great deal, speaking with Navies and government representatives around the world.

I would thoroughly recommend a career in the Employed Bar, and perhaps unsurprisingly, specifically in the Armed Forces. The past (nearly) 17 years have gone very quickly, because it has been rewarding, and a lot of fun. I am very grateful to the Bar Council for continuing to recognise the work of all barristers in the Armed Forces – it is an unusual role, but we do still consider ourselves very much as members of the Bar.



John Swords Employed Barrister of the Year in the Public Sector

John is Legal Adviser and Director of the Office of Legal Affairs for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). He played an active role in negotiating and drafting the NATO Summit Communiqué in June 2021. He was called to the Bar in 2002 and now works in Brussels.

John was nominated for the awards because he is NATO’s Chief Legal Adviser and Director of its Office of Legal Affairs. He is the first British national to hold this position and has been credited for the strides made by the 30 nations at NATO within the field of international law this year, as well as for his personal contributions to law outside the Alliance.

John’s role in negotiating and drafting the NATO summit communiqué in June 2021, with its strong rule of law focus, earned praise in academic circles. However, in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, John’s efforts have gained broader recognition and impact. Notably, John convened and chaired an unprecedented meeting of the 30 nations’ chief Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defence legal advisers (85 lawyers in total) which helped galvanise legal agreement on permissible forms of support to Ukraine and on accountability mechanisms for international humanitarian law violations. John is now facilitating negotiations for the historic accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO.

Outside of NATO, John has spoken at numerous academic legal initiatives this year, including at events hosted by the American Society of International Law, the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as Harvard and Oxford Universities.

Lord Verdirame KC from Twenty Essex chambers nominated John for the award and said:

‘I knew John, in both a professional and academic capacity, when he was working as a senior civil servant lawyer. It was in the middle of the first COVID wave that he moved to Brussels to take up the post of NATO Legal Adviser; little could one have known then that worst challenges lay ahead.

‘John brought serious expertise, wise judgment and clear thinking to his new role. From the response to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine to the accession of Sweden and Finland to NATO, he has been at the heart of developments in public international law of historical significance over recent months.’

Government Legal Department: Department of Health and Social Care Legal Team of the Year

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) legal team supported the government through its initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic, producing more than 90 pieces of secondary legislation ensuring legality and the rule of law were upheld. Professor Chris Whitty described the team’s work as ‘remarkable’.

Caroline Croft – Legal Director DHSC says: ‘It is humbling to receive this award, especially knowing the incredible work that the other nominees have done in the last few years in very challenging circumstances. I am really proud that my team has received recognition for their amazing work supporting the government’s response to the pandemic. Right from the start we were working with colleagues across all of government who represent the best of lawyering – holding the fine balance of truly creative, novel legal thought, while maintaining integrity; communicating legal risks whilst delivering government’s intent, however uncharted the territory. As you might imagine, we had to pull together, and pull hard, month after month as the pandemic evolved, but the support, professionalism and good humour of the whole team helped keep our legal thinking sharp through it all.’

David Robertson, lawyer in the DHSC legal Team says: ‘The most enjoyable part of the work is the genuinely novel thinking. Very few lawyers get to do actual blue-sky thinking. We faced an unprecedented problem and had to design effective laws to deliver a previously unthinkable lockdown and borders restrictions to stop an (initially) entirely unknown disease. We had to turn emerging public health advice into law that would actually influence behaviour, and would withstand



Pictured above (L to R): Mark Ferhalls KC, Chair of the Bar, Mike Jones KC, Chair of the Bar Council Employed Barristers’ Committee and Sir Peter Gross, Master Treasurer of Gray’s Inn presenting the Legal Team of the Year award to the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) legal team at the Employed Bar Dinner hosted by Gray’s Inn on 20 October 2022. The DHSC team (pictured above) includes Caroline Croft – Legal Director DHSC, Saoirse Cowley – Deputy Director DHSC, Katharine Charles – Senior Lawyer DHSC, Bethan Mackey – Senior Lawyer DHSC, David Robertson – Lawyer DHSC, Shahnaz Khan – Lawyer DHSC and Sam Littlejohns – Senior Lawyer GLD.

challenges. And we had to land our advice with stretched ministers who were operating in an inherently deeply complex environment. It was a long, gruelling process, but it involved the most dynamic legal thinking, on the most important issue, any of us has been part of. Being described by Professor Chris Whitty as ‘remarkable’ just underlines what an impact our work had and what an amazing effort we were part of.’

Sam Littlejohns, Senior Lawyer GLD says: ‘Training as a barrister equips one with the skills to excel in a wide range of work opportunities. At the Employed Bar, particularly in public sector work, there are unparalleled opportunities to work on something genuinely world changing. Government is grappling with any number of issues, all of which have a daily impact on the country, and being there to advocate for the rule of law while crafting brand new, fit-for-purpose law is a true privilege. The structural support that the Employed Bar can provide, whether training, paid leave or professional and personal support networks, is highly prized by those in the Employed Bar. For instance, the exposure given to pupils and trainees is huge – core members of our COVID team qualified while they were with us. For more experienced lawyers, the change to working in a collaborative team with enduring common purpose, and the ability to lead that team, can be very refreshing.’

Caroline Croft concludes: ‘I joined government over 20 years ago and I have never regretted it – it’s an enormously rewarding, varied career, and immensely collaborative and sociable – so it was great to attend the Employed Bar Awards with so many of my good friends, and to celebrate our achievements together.’ ●