

Lord Hughes of Ombersley
Doctor of Civil Law
Durham Cathedral, 5 July 2019

Anthony Philip Gilson Hughes, Lord Hughes of Ombersley, is one of Durham University's most accomplished law graduates. His road to success is a story about making the most of the opportunities before us with an appetite for constant challenge.

Originally from the Midlands, Lord Hughes came to Durham for the first time after being invited to interview for a place on its then Law and Economics joint degree. The Department of Law, as it was then, was newly established after King's College, Durham became what is now Newcastle University leaving Durham without a single honours law programme. So this joint honours course was the only one Lord Hughes had applied for and he felt lucky to get a place joining Van Mildert College.

Lord Hughes was lucky once more when the university decided to launch a single honours law programme after all. He leaped at the chance to join Durham's first cohort of eleven students taught by six academic staff. He recalls their being a small knit group who knew each other well forging connections continuing long after their studies had ended with several enjoying highly successful legal careers.

Since school, Lord Hughes had had ambitions to join the Bar. At the time, there were Bar exams but no compulsory course or advocacy training. That meant finding employment whilst undertaking further training part time to qualify. Lord Hughes applied for a job at the newly created Law Commission but by the time it was his turn to be considered for a place there were effectively none to be had. As luck would have it, the head of what was then Queen Mary College, now Queen Mary, University of London, Professor Roger Crane, was phoned right then and asked if he was still looking for a new junior lecturer. Lord Hughes came home that day with a new job – not at the Law Commission he had first visited, but at Queen Mary – which he enjoyed thoroughly. His teaching covered a diverse range of subjects including legal system, family law and contract law. He enjoyed educating non-lawyers about general legal principles sharing his passion for the law as well.

Durham was never far from his mind either. While teaching in London, Lord Hughes also returned to Durham to teach Public International Law on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. The university timetable has changed since, but Lord Hughes's

Honourable Society of Inner Temple, one of the oldest Inns of Court. His year in office sees long-planned significant redevelopment through Project Pegasus creating an attractive, flexible space with state-of-the-art facilities for delivering legal education for students, pupils and practitioners and securing the long-term future of the Inn. His passion for promoting legal education remains as strong now as ever.

Lord Hughes's story is about opportunities and an appetite for challenge. He may have felt lucky to come to Durham but we know how lucky we are to count him as one of our own. A graduate of our first single honours class, Lord Hughes became the first to join the Supreme Court and only head of an Inn of Court. Durham has been a part of his life since graduating in this cathedral fifty years ago. He has regularly supported our students in law and at his college sharing his experiences over a cup of tea and a sticky bun (or more often a pint) that has been invaluable for all who have followed him to the Bar. His most recent event this past January drew two hundred students eager to learn more about becoming a barrister. They could have no finer exemplar.

Today we return to the place of his graduation half a century ago to honour one of our most distinguished graduates and one of this country's best legal minds.

Chancellor, I present Lord Hughes of Ombersley to receive the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, *honoris causa*.

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