



BRITANNY PEARCE

Barrister

YEAR OF LEAVING: 2010



What was your favourite subject at school and why?

Up until A-Levels my favourite subject was Maths; we had an excellent teacher in Mr Jones and I liked the fact that there was no uncertainty as to whether you grasped the concept or not, your answer was either right or wrong! That being said, Maths and Further Maths at A-Level were far more challenging and my preference switched to History. Mr Perkins was an inspiring teacher and I enjoyed the range of topics we were encouraged to study.

What have you been up to since leaving school?

I studied PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics) at Hertford College (University of Oxford) and after that switched to Law (at Cardiff). I set my sights on practicing as a barrister and am now a member of Guildhall Chambers, in Bristol. I specialize in property and estates law, which focuses on matters ranging from boundary disputes to challenging wills. Much of my job is paper-based, and I have the flexibility that comes with being self-employed, so I tend to work remotely from my house on the Isle of Skye, in Scotland.

What experience and qualifications do you need to do your job, and do you have advice for current students looking to go into your sector?

Qualifications: a law degree (either at undergraduate level or obtained by way of a law conversion course), completion of the Bar Professional Training Course (a one-year professional course) and successful completion of pupillage (best described as a one-year long job interview!).

Advice: Firstly, there is no need to study law as a first degree, and no need to have gone to Oxbridge, but it is important to keep your grades up, after all, it is a fairly academic career! Just study a subject that you enjoy. Secondly, try and get as much work experience (normally called mini-pupillages) as you can, to get a feel for the different areas of law, as they are very different! For instance, criminal practitioners might be in court every day, whereas I only have a hearing once or twice a month. You have plenty of time to do this though. Finally, make sure you are comfortable with public speaking, as an important aspect of the job is trying to persuade a judge, or jury, to find in your favour.

At school, you might try acting, debating, or seizing any opportunity for class presentations.

What is one piece of advice you would give to current students?

Study the subjects you enjoy – it makes a huge difference to the learning process. I picked my subjects based on what I thought universities and employers would want, but if I was redoing my degree now I would probably pick a different subject, such as Archaeology & Anthropology, or History & Politics. I wish that I had kept up French at school; I only studied it to AS-Level but am now trying to pick it up again, through Duolingo and by reading the Harry Potter series en français!

What challenges have you faced in your life so far, and how have you overcome them? What is your next big goal?

I have been very lucky in life to have had a supportive family that have helped to smooth the path when it comes to challenges that crop up. I am proud of getting into Oxford and of making it as a barrister: it is a difficult career to get into, with a lot of competition for limited space. Whilst I was lucky to have a good support network, both of those successes depended on graft – making sure that I got the necessary grades and improving my chances by making sure that I took opportunities to improve my CV whenever I had the time.

My next goal is a boring, but necessary one: long-term financial planning. I am self-employed so need to start thinking about pensions, investments, et cetera, and balancing that with the life I would like to lead in the short-term!

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