

Sheila Cameron CBE QC DCL (Jurisprudence, 1953)

Sheila Cameron has enjoyed a distinguished career as a barrister and ecclesiastical judge. After graduating from St Hugh's in 1956, she entered a professional world in which there was strongly voiced opposition to women, with some Chambers announcing that their policy was not to accept women as tenants. Despite having been told by her senior clerk when she was offered a tenancy that "this is against my express wishes: as far as I am concerned I will offer return briefs to the men in Chambers before you, even if they rank lower than you in seniority", Sheila went on to prove herself to her colleagues in magistrates' court while representing clients of the Mary Ward Legal Advice Centre, and to forge a successful career as a barrister. She practised at the Bar from 1958 until 2001. Outside her practice, Sheila's major interest has been ecclesiastical law, a field in which she achieved a number of firsts and continued to work until 2009.

As a barrister, Sheila specialised in Family Law for around 20 years. She took silk in 1983 and developed a specialist practice in commons and town and village greens, which involved many inquiries and court appearances up to the House of Lords. She also appeared before Parliamentary Committees promoting or opposing private legislation. Her longest planning inquiry was that into Terminal 5 at Heathrow, which she attended for three years on behalf of nine local authorities in the area.

In the field of ecclesiastical law, Sheila was a pioneer for women. In 1969 she became the first female diocesan Chancellor in the Church of England on her appointment as Chancellor of Chelmsford; in 1983, the first female Vicar-General of the Province of Canterbury; and in 1992, the first female Chancellor of the Diocese of London. In 2001 she was the first woman to be appointed to the appellate offices of Dean of the Arches, Canterbury and Auditor of the Chancery Court of York.

Between 1983 and 2009 Sheila was ex officio a legal member of the General Synod and was heavily involved in the drafting of legislation.

She received a Lambeth DCL in 2002 and a CBE in 2004 for her contribution to ecclesiastical law.

We were delighted to welcome Sheila as a guest speaker at the St Hugh's Alumni Association's symposium celebrating the life and legacy of Gwyneth Bebb (Jurisprudence, 1908) in September 2018. To watch the recording of the event, please click [here](#).