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**Osborne Clarke partner and newly appointed chair of the Property Litigation Association discusses female leading lights in the profession, social mobility and being born to argue**

**What was your route into the profession?**

I qualified at Brabners in the north west, and then moved to Osborne Clarke LLP (OC) upon qualification in 2000. After a couple of years in OC’s Bristol office, I have built and led the hugely talented London team at OC. Always recruit people who have the potential to be much better than you! I left OC very briefly but returned after a couple of years when I realised I was already working in my ideal firm.

**What has been your biggest career challenge so far?**

I was the first person in my family to go to university. My late mum believed, however, in the value of education. She has been my most influential mentor. Entry into the legal professional felt like swimming against the tide. I will always be eternally grateful to Brabners for giving me the opportunity to train and qualify as a solicitor. My advice to all aspiring lawyers out there is to keep the faith; it is a job worth waiting for.

**Which person within the legal profession inspires you most?**

All my leading lights within the legal profession are female: my first boss at Brabners, [Amanda Webster](https://www.harrison-drury.com/people/amanda-webster/); my current boss at OC, [Leona Briggs](https://www.osborneclarke.com/lawyers/leona-briggs/); my wife, Pip, a former in-house lawyer; and my sister, [Emma Le Wita](https://www.bclplaw.com/en-GB/people/emma-le-wita.html), a partner at BCLP. Amanda inspired me to be a litigator, instilling in me an indelible mantra that it is always an honour and privilege to be paid to advocate the views of others. Leona has taught me that one can rise to the very top by being excellent, yet humble and understated. Pip and Emma between them have provided sage counsel throughout and supported me every step of the way, particularly when I stumbled (which has been often).

**If you weren’t a lawyer, what would you choose as an alternate career?**

I was always single-minded about becoming a lawyer. I toyed with the idea of being a diplomat until somebody pointed out I would then become the single biggest threat to world peace. I was born to argue.

**Who is your favourite fictional lawyer?**

Atticus Finch (*To Kill A Mockingbird*): ‘[real courage is]…when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.’ Every litigator can relate to that.

**What change would you make to the profession?**

I would make it more diverse. My particular passions are people development and social mobility. I fear the profession is less accessible now than when I started. If your company is not currently working with VisionPath ([*www.visionpath.co.uk*](http://www.visionpath.co.uk/)), I would urge you to reach out to Patrick Philpott and his wonderful team to get involved.

**How do you relax?**

I used to have the most expensive gym membership in London but am now trying to get more bang for buck from my annual subscription. I have two children, Henry and Imie. They keep me honest. I am a lifelong supporter of Blackburn Rovers. They usually leave me depressed. I play golf. Gary Player was wrong: the more I practise, the unluckier I get!

**Gary Lawrenson is a partner in the London office at**[**Osborne Clarke LLP**](https://www.osborneclarke.com/)**and is the new chair of the**[**Property Litigation Association**](https://www.pla.org.uk/)**.**