



Ambassador's Activities

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58 Knightsbridge, SW1X 7JT London
E-Mail: press@ambafrance-uk.org
Web: www.ambafrance-uk.org

Speech by HE Bernard Emié,
French Ambassador to the United Kingdom

Award of the insignia
of *Chevalier de Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur* to Michael Brooke
and of *Chevalier de Ordre du Mérite* to Simon Horsington
at the French Residence in London
19 December 2012

Cher Simon Horsington,

Cher Michael Brooke,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm delighted that we've been able to organize this joint ceremony at the French Residence today, which allows me to bring together two eminent jurists and present them with some prestigious decorations: Michael Brooke with the insignia of *Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Légion d'honneur*, and Simon Horsington with those of *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite*.

Allow me to begin with you, *cher* Michael Brooke, and tell you how happy I am to present you with the insignia of our most prestigious national order, created by Napoleon Bonaparte in recognition of exceptional services rendered to the French nation by its recipient.

Through me, the French Republic is today honouring your exemplary career and the attachment you have shown to our country throughout it.

I should now like to summarize that career. You were born on 8 May 1942; after going to school at the *Lycée français* in London, you showed yourself to be a brilliant law student in Edinburgh and then in Paris, where you obtained your master's in 1966. In 1968, you were called to the bar and devoted yourself to the complex but fascinating area of medical liability, particularly compensation for injury.

In 1987 you were called to the bar in Paris, where you practised for 18 years: as both a good French speaker and a great Francophile, you thus confirmed your solid ties to our country. And I don't say this solely because you're the happy owner of a boat moored in Paris: Maître Idrac, who is here with us, can testify that you're also a fine chef, and I believe she still remembers a delicious *boeuf bourguignon* savoured together with you on the banks of the Seine.

In 1994 you were appointed to the prestigious post of Queen's Counsel, a title which, I should emphasize, distinguishes barristers recognized by their peers and by the most senior judges as the best in their field. Your subsequent career was also distinguished, because in 2000, after

training to be a magistrate, you were appointed to the senior post of Recorder and then Circuit Judge in 2002 at Basildon Crown Court.

Cher Michael Brooke, your commitment to training young lawyers can only be admired: in 1999 you created a bold exchange programme between the Paris Bar and Gray's Inn, one of the four eminent Inns of Court in London, which have exclusive responsibility for training barristers. The programme has enabled many British lawyers to practise in France and many French lawyers to come to the UK to practise in English and perfect their knowledge of the common law system. Those exchanges have been fruitful; they've even led to barristers settling in Paris and French lawyers in London. Once again I'll cite Maître Idrac, who now lives in London and who, thanks to your programme, had a memorable and enriching experience and – as the cherry on the cake – got to know the man who is now her husband.

So your work on Franco-British cooperation is remarkable in many respects. Whether it be through the development of mock trials by which French and British lawyers familiarize themselves with procedures in force on either side of the Channel – no doubt a fascinating experience – or through your always active involvement on the parole board of Broadmoor Hospital, a high-security psychiatric institution, your career is marked by rare humanism and professionalism.

The high distinction you are being awarded is proof of the admiration and gratitude France has to a jurist who has contributed so much to the understanding of the French and British judicial systems. I congratulate you on and thank you for this contribution, which is essential at a time when the European enterprise may seem to be as much a challenge as a necessity. I'd also like to pay tribute to your wife, Mireille, who has supported and encouraged you throughout your career. This decoration is also partly for her.

Michael Brooke, au nom du président de la République et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, nous vous faisons Chevalier de l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur.

I now turn to you, *cher* Simon Horsington: it's an honour and a pleasure for me to present you with the insignia of *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite*. I'm especially happy today to be

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presenting to a British citizen this high distinction of the French Republic, created nearly half a century ago by General de Gaulle to reward great merit and services rendered to the French nation. Your father, who bravely enlisted during the Second World War, would be proud to see you receiving this distinction, and your 97-year-old mother will certainly be happy to know you are being honoured in this way.

Before mentioning the many services you've rendered to our country, I'd like to return to what strikes me as a characteristic feature of your personality: your openness to the world, your taste for foreign languages and your passion for all cultures. Indeed, apart from your mother tongue, English, you are fluent in French, German and Spanish.

Cher Simon Horsington, you were born in the English town of Redditch on 18 July 1947, and the international and in particular *European* dimension of your education very soon manifested itself. Among other things, you attended the famous Lycée Henri IV thanks to a school exchange, and you later studied French literature at the Sorbonne. You were a brilliant student in both Paris and London: you obtained your honours degree at the prestigious French university, and your exploration – in French – of medieval history and the development of Islam was rewarded with a BA Honours degree from the University of London. You also attended courses at the University of Clermont-Ferrand, and this toing-and-froing from one country to the other perfectly illustrates your intellectual openness and insatiable curiosity. Far from killing the cat, this curiosity is an invaluable quality which leads you to a deeper knowledge of the widest range of disciplines.

This is demonstrated by your resolutely European academic career: you've travelled the length and breadth of Europe and attended courses at Karl Marx University, Leipzig, the Helsinki School of Economics, the ICADE Business School, Madrid, and the Free University of West Berlin. Even the thesis with which you completed your studies at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University testified to your taste in things foreign, venturing beyond Europe this time to analyse "Export Marketing to the People's Republic of China". Both your education and your interests, *cher* Simon Horsington, thus recall the humanist tradition of the Renaissance, where individuals acquired culture by dint of journeys across Europe and dialogue with groups of distinguished intellectuals.

Following your studies, your activities were varied: first of all you taught English, before being called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in 1978. You were trained at 4 Essex Court Chambers, then in different business law firms in central London, where you were trained in French law. You were subsequently a company lawyer for the Glaxo Group, and in addition to your knowledge of international, European, commercial, aviation, banking and financial law sectors, you're an expert on maritime and insurance law. This expertise, moreover, earned you the rank of *Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite Maritime* in February 2009.

You worked for very large international private companies for more than 25 years, and your expertise has earned you invitations to give many speeches at international conferences. Your specialisms demonstrate the breadth of your knowledge, covering specifically English as well as French and European law. Your encyclopaedic knowledge of European history also enables you to compare French and British history with as much subtlety as our two countries' respective legal systems.

Finally, *cher* Simon Horsington, throughout your career you've constantly sought to develop and maintain the strong ties between the UK and France, through numerous initiatives. It's this commitment in particular that earns you today's distinction. First and foremost, I'll cite the Franco-British Lawyers' Society, created in 1988, of which you're one of the founder members and were for several years Vice-President. You also continue to be involved in the society and play a voluntary role there, even though you're now retired. The society is a very fine example of Franco-British cooperation and friendship: it keeps lawyers from each country abreast of legal institutions and practices in force on the other side of the Channel, it seeks solutions for overcoming incompatibilities between the two legal systems, and finally it tries to get lawmakers in our two countries to give those solutions legal status.

Furthermore, you've offered your wise legal advice to many French expatriates in Britain, setting up free legal consultations in London to guide French people in their efforts and explain common law to them. In 2004 you also founded and sponsored the "*Prix Universitaire Entente Cordiale et Jour J Libération*" (Robertson-Horsington Memorial Prize) to help exchanges between young lawyers from our two countries, and you contributed to the creation of the Franco-British Student Alliance. Finally, you've organized several seminars in France and the four countries of the United Kingdom with their three jurisdictions: England

and Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Among other things, I could mention the Franco-British Lawyers' Biennial Maritime Colloquium, which you created in 2006.

So over the years, somewhat in the manner of a diplomat, you've helped strengthen the ties uniting our countries; your knowledge and skills – encompassing our two countries' legal systems but also their history and culture – mark out a “shared space”, the interface necessary for mutual understanding and friendship.

I'd also like to pay tribute to your wife, Anne, who has supported you throughout your career.

I'm happy to be addressing a genuine friend of France whose personality combines, in an entirely original way, such a British and such a Francophile spirit. Your taste for our country isn't just as the gourmet and fine chef you clearly are (I've heard that your seven-hour lamb is exquisite) or as a discerning lover of French wine and owner of the remarkable cellar you've built in your London home: your attachment is also clear from the country house in Charente which serves as your “base” in France. Furthermore, in restoring that fine 19th-century home, you were apparently careful to respect its distinct historical identity, and you therefore chose to rebuild the windows entirely rather than have double-glazing installed, which might have detracted from the picturesque charm of the place. And you've even created an English garden around that house in Charente: what a fine symbol of the Entente Cordiale!

For all these reasons, for the outstanding services you have rendered to France and for your contribution to Franco-British relations in the legal field in particular, the Republic is expressing its recognition to you today.

Simon Horsington, au nom du président de la République et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, nous vous faisons Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite.