

The Pegasus Scholarship: “So, what did you actually do in New Zealand?”

- *Libby Anderson 2019 Pegasus Scholar*

In February 2019, following a lengthy paper application and a rather gruelling interview, I received the news that I had been awarded a Pegasus Scholarship to New Zealand. I have recently returned from twelve weeks at the Crown Law Office in Wellington, and have now had time to reflect on my experiences.

The Crown Law Office is something akin to a combination of the Government Legal Department and the Crown Prosecution Service. It provides legal advice and representation to the government in the areas of criminal, public, and administrative law. I spent twelve weeks in the criminal law team, although I did some work for the public law team as well. As well as observing court hearings at the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court, I was allocated my own caseload of criminal appeals, requests for mutual legal assistance, extradition requests, and claims against the Department of Corrections. Every case is considered by two counsel who provide a first advice and a second advice before providing advice to the client. The requests for mutual legal assistance were both incoming and outgoing, and most frequently related to details of previous convictions for use as bad character evidence at trial. The experience I gained in this area became relevant almost immediately upon my return to the United Kingdom, as one of my ongoing cases involves a substantial amount of material obtained under an International Letter of Request. I also gained experience of liaising with diplomatic staff, foreign law enforcement, and agencies such as INTERPOL.

Of course, the Pegasus Scholarship is not a one-way street; it is an opportunity to forge reciprocal links and develop mutual understanding. Although many of the basic legal principles of United Kingdom and New Zealand law are similar and may stem from the same historic legal tenets and authorities, the current authorities and procedural terminology may be quite different. Part of my role was conducting legal research to assist counsel with their cases, capitalising on my knowledge of the United Kingdom legal system. I researched and considered the law relating to a range of topics that varied from the admissibility of hearsay evidence to calculating the value of a shoplifted item, and drafted advices setting out the respective positions in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the USA. My colleagues at Crown Law were also keen to seek my opinion on prorogation, justiciability, Brexit, and Boris Johnson with alarming frequency. As part of the lunchtime lecture series at Crown Law, I spoke about the Bar, our education and training, my practice, and the Pegasus Scholarship.

I had the opportunity to attend a number of continuing professional development events both at Crown Law and through the wider Wellington legal community. A particular highlight was a seminar about Modern Day Gangsters, a joint presentation by the New Zealand Serious Fraud Office and the National Organised Crime Group. New Zealand and the United Kingdom are both island nations facing similar challenges in combating gang crime, in particular transnational crime and the evolution of gangs towards criminal business entities focussed on drug dealing and resultant money laundering. I also had the privilege of attending a lecture on appellate advocacy delivered by the President of the Court of Appeal. The New Zealand legal framework is distinct from that of the United Kingdom, but the principles of clear,

persuasive advocacy transcend jurisdictional borders and it was invaluable to hear tips direct from the Bench.

My role at Crown Law was Monday to Friday, 9 to 5. A major advantage of being a Pegasus Scholar is the opportunity to travel within the host country. Every weekend I visited a new part of New Zealand, from the Waitangi Treaty Grounds in the Northlands to Stewart Island off the southern tip. I abseiled into a glow-worm cave, got lost mountain biking, visited Hobbiton, saw fur seals and dolphins, and ate a lot of *kaimoana*, or seafood. I borrowed some outdoor kit and did some 'tramping', including a circuit of snow-capped Mount Taranaki in glorious sunshine, and the Routeburn Track in torrential rain. I finished my travels in New Zealand with a memorable week in the South Island, in which I unintentionally spent a night on a glacier, did a three-day tramp, enjoyed a winery tour of Central Otago, ran the Queenstown Marathon, and took boat trips on Lake Wakatipu and Milford Sound.

This was a truly invaluable experience, professionally speaking. I also made friends for life, including my fellow Scholars and the new friends I made in New Zealand. I am hugely grateful to the Pegasus Trust, the Inns of Court, and the Crown Law Office for allowing me this opportunity, and I emphatically recommend the scholarship to all junior practitioners.

