

Kim Darroch
Doctor of Civil Law
Durham Cathedral, 5 January 2024

Kim Darroch, the Lord Darroch of Kew, of St Mawes in the County of Cornwall is one of Durham University's most accomplished graduates. His career is a testament to inspiring public service for our country.

Born in South Stanley not far from this cathedral, Lord Darroch came to the University and to Hatfield College to study zoology graduating in 1975. It would be the further study of political animals that would focus his attention for the many decades of his distinguished roles and achievements that followed.

Lord Darroch began his career in foreign affairs joining the Diplomatic Service in 1976. He soon held a number of positions from First Secretary in Tokyo to Head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's press office, including serving in Rome and Brussels. In between these achievements, he was appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George in 1997. In 2004, he worked in 10 Downing Street as Head of the Cabinet Office European Secretariat and EU Advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair, who also had deep roots in Durham from his childhood. Lord Darroch became the British Permanent Representative to the European Union three years later. He was knighted in 2008 and, in 2011, became National Security Advisor. Lord Darroch oversaw issues of significant consequence during this time, including the collapse of the government in Libya, civil war in Syria, the rise of Daesh and Russian aggression in Ukraine to name only a few.

In 2016, Lord Darroch became the UK's Ambassador to the United States of America. During this turbulent time in American politics, Lord Darroch was rightly praised by the Prime Minister for his service and providing "an honest and unvarnished view" of the US administration in Washington, DC. As a dual citizen of the UK and United States, I can fully endorse this praise.

In 2019 Lord Darroch stepped down as Ambassador and was made a crossbench life Peer in Theresa May's resignation honours list. In his maiden speech, he spoke with

authority on the prospects of a new trade partnership between the UK and Japan. This returned him to discuss his first posting in Tokyo, but also his following work engaging with the EU where he highlighted the difficult landscape of what he called the “post-Brexit forest.” As chair of the non-partisan Best for Britain, helping our country find its path back to prosperity has remained a continuing interest.

Lord Darroch’s story is about public service and service to our University. He has been a loyal supporter of Durham staff, students and alumni throughout his career leaving all in his company inspired. Following his zoology studies in Durham, Lord Darroch’s world leading expertise in political animal studies has seen him play a crucial role representing our country on the world’s stage. Britain could not have had a finer ambassador nor could our University.

Today we return to the place of his graduation nearly half a century ago to honour one of our most distinguished graduates and one of this country’s best diplomats.

Vice-Chancellor, I present Kim Darroch to receive the degree of Doctor of Letters, honoris causa.