

Raising the bar in Chancery & Commercial

# ANNUAL CASE REVIEW 2024

6

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# Welcome to Serle Court's review of 2024.

We hope you will find this round-up of Serle Court's 2024 to be interesting and engaging. As ever, our members find themselves involved in highprofile, lawmaking cases both in England and Wales and across the world, from California to New Zealand and many places in between (particularly the Caribbean, the Crown Dependencies, the UAE and Far East).

We bring to bear our strategic nous, legal knowledge, courtcraft and commerciality on disputes involving governments, prominent businesses, complex wealth-holding structures, individuals and families, and charities. These cases involve the full range of our practice areas and often span more than one of them - the Review well illustrates our expertise in multidisciplinary matters.

It also indicates how Serle Court members contribute to law by editing leading practitioner textbooks. Similar such contributions, not noted in the Review but just as noteworthy as part of our year, include work for the government on the ratification of the Hague Judgments Convention 2019, and engagement in the ongoing life of the Bar, through the Inns of Court, the Bar Council, the Chancery Bar Association and Combar, a wide range of other professional bodies as well as legal charities.

Thank you for reading this, and indeed for your support in providing us with such great work to do.

Elizabeth Jones KC Head of Chambers

# In 2024, Serle Court's barristers were instructed in some of the most substantial and high-profile cases across the spectrum of Commercial and Chancery law in England and around the world.

### UniCredit Bank GmbH v RusChemAlliance

**LLC [2024] UKSC 30** claim for a final injunction in the English courts to restrain the continuance of Russian court proceedings brought in breach of a clause providing for arbitration in Paris. The Supreme Court held that the arbitration clause was governed by English law, so there was a jurisdictional gateway; and that England and Wales rather than Paris was the proper place to grant final injunctive relief, providing valuable guidance in relation to the legal principles underlying both issues. Prof. Jonathan Harris KC (Hon.) appeared for the successful respondent.

In *Lifestyle Equities v Amazon UK Services* [2024] UKSC 8, the Supreme Court dismissed Amazon's appeal on whether its amazon.com site had targeted customers in the UK. This now becomes the leading judgment on targeting of a trade mark and provides helpful, detailed guidance on the matter. Michael Edenborough KC acted for the successful respondent.

In Hirachand v Hirachand [2024] UKSC 43,

the Supreme Court held that conditional fee agreement success fees could not form part of any relief granted under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975. This decision will have significant and far-reaching implications for litigation funding for claims under the 1975 Act. Constance McDonnell KC appeared for the respondent.

In Zedra Trust Company (Jersey) Ltd. v THG plc [2024] EWCA Civ 158, the Court of Appeal overturned 40 years of received wisdom and held that unfair prejudice petitions are subject to limitation periods. Lance Ashworth KC and Dan McCourt Fritz KC appeared for the successful appellants. A further appeal was heard by the Supreme Court in February 2025.

In *Bidzina Ivanishvili v Credit Suisse Trust Limited* [2024] SGCA(I) 5, the Singapore Court of Appeal upheld the first instance decision that Credit Suisse Trust had acted in breach of trust and pursuant to a conflict of interests in failing to safeguard trust assets, holding that the scope of duty principle was not applicable to breaches of fiduciary duty and considering the circumstances in which Trustees are required to act when they are on notice that the interests of the beneficiaries are at risk of harm. Sophie Holcombe and Jamie Randall acted for the successful respondents to the appeal.

#### In Carmon v Cuenda [2024] DIFC CA 003,

Zoe O'Sullivan KC appeared for the successful appellant. In possibly the most important case in the DIFC Court in 2024, the Court of Appeal held, overruling its own earlier judgment in *Sandra Holding v Al Saleh*, that the DIFC Court has jurisdiction to grant a freezing order in support of proceedings pending in a foreign court. The case is also the first to consider the circumstances in which the DIFC Court of Appeal can overrule its own previous decision.

Viegas v Estate of Jose Luis Cutrale [2024] EWCA Civ 1122 concerned, among other things, principles of private international law in the context of administration of estates and succession. The defendants successfully argued that hundreds of claims should be struck out due to the failure on the part of the relevant claimants to obtain grants of representation in England to bring claims in respect of losses suffered by deceased persons. The Court of Appeal's judgment provides valuable guidance on the distinction between issues of administration and succession for private international law purposes and the corresponding requirement to obtain a grant in respect of persons who died domiciled outside England, including in a jurisdiction which adopts the principle of droit de saisine. Thomas Fletcher acted on behalf of the successful defendants.

# In Docklock Ltd v Christo & Co Ltd [2024]

**EWCA Civ 45**, the Court of Appeal held that the rule in Clayton's Case (the first in, first out rule) operates in the case of a running account between a property management company and its client. Accordingly, payments out of the account were automatically appropriated to sums standing to the credit of the account at the time and were not available to set off against other sums received in a later period. The Court of Appeal held that neither a subsequent Family Division order nor a related settlement agreement between the companies should be construed so as retrospectively to undo that prior appropriation. Daniel Lightman KC represented the successful appellant.

## Re BHS Group Ltd (in liquidation) [2024]

**EWHC 1417 (Ch)** concerned claims brought by the liquidators of four BHS group companies for alleged wrongful trading, misfeasance, breach of statutory and fiduciary duties. Leech J's judgment in what is thought to be the largest ever claim for wrongful trading is of significant interest to the insolvency community because of his finding in relation to a novel claim of 'misfeasant trading'. Daniel Lightman KC, Charlotte Beynon and Tim Benham-Mirando represented Dominic Chandler, a respondent and one of four former directors of BHS.

Following a hearing in 2024, in early 2025 the Supreme Court gave judgment in *Invest Bank PSC v EI-Husseini* [2025] UKSC 4, in which it held that the wording of section 423 Insolvency Act 1986 is wide enough for creditors to bring challenges to transactions consisting of a debtor procuring that their company transfer away an asset owned by the company. Section 423(1) is not limited to transactions involving the transfer of / dealing with an asset beneficially owned by the debtor. It suffices that the creditor is prejudiced by the shares in the company which the debtor beneficially owns and against which the creditor would wish to enforce being diminished in value by the transfer away of the underlying corporate asset. Notably, the Supreme Court also: (i) reasoned on the basis of the same interpretation of "transaction" for s.423 also applying to sections 238 & 339 of the Insolvency Act; (ii) clarified that a "transaction" would cover other types of prejudicial action, such as a debtor releasing a debt or surrendering a lease; (iii) provided guidance on "consideration" for the purposes of s.423; and (iv) considered how the statutory bona fide purchaser defence for onward transferees of property may operate in the circumstances of corporate asset transfers. Marc Delehanty acted for the respondent bank.

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# What to look out for in 2025...

The Supreme Court hearing of the appeal from URS Corporation Ltd v BDW Trading Ltd [2023] EWCA Civ 189, concerning the extent of the retrospective effect of section 135 of the Building Safety Act 2022 and the consequential effect on claims under the Defective Premises Act 1972 and the Civil Liability (Contribution Act) 1978, took place in December 2024. This appeal was the first time the Supreme Court had considered the DPA and the BSA and the judgment, which will undoubtedly have wide ranging implications for the liability of developers and contractors for remedying historic defects in residential buildings, is expected in 2025. Michael Walsh acted in the Supreme Court in an intervention by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Duomatic principle provides that if the articles of a company require a course of action to be approved by a group of shareholders at a general meeting, that requirement can be avoided if all members of the group, being aware of the relevant facts, either give their approval to that course of action, or conduct themselves so as to make it inequitable for them to deny that they have given their approval. Fang Ankong v Green Elite Ltd on appeal to the Privy Council from the British Virgin Islands concerns the scope of *Duomatic* and in particular the role of intention and certainty in its operation. The appeal was heard in November 2024. Judgment is awaited. John Machell KC appeared for the Respondent.

#### Dawson-Damer v Grampian Trust Company

*Ltd*, an appeal to the Privy Council from the Bahamas Court of Appeal due to be heard in May 2025, will consider the circumstances in which a wish/intention can be attributed to a corporate settlor of a trust, and the applicable causation test (if any) when considering a breach of the trustee's duty of adequate deliberation. Richard Wilson KC and Sparsh Garg act for the appellant.

In Wong v Grand View Private Trust

Company Ltd Dakis Hagen KC (assisted by Emma Hargreaves, Stephanie Thompson, and Richard Hine) continued to act for the Plaintiff. Richard Wilson KC and Jonathan Harris KC (assisted by James Weale, Adrian de Froment and Charlotte Beynon) continued to act for the counterclaiming defendant, and Jonathan Adkin KC (assisted by Adil Mohamedbhai and Niamh Herrett) continued to act for the five defendant trustees. The first instance judgment handed down in 2022 is the subject of four appeals which were heard by by the Bermuda Court of Appeal in January 2025. The Court directed that the Justices of Appeal would sit in London for the 10-day appeal hearing, but the Court was to be convened in Bermuda by way of a public broadcast in that jurisdiction ([2023] CA (Bda) 18 Civ). Giles Richardson KC and Andrew Gurr act for the Plaintiff in related proceedings concerning the administration of the trusts.

In *Município de Mariana v BHP Group*, one of the largest group actions ever commenced in England and Wales, the Stage 1 trial on liability commenced in October 2024 and is due to conclude in March 2025. It is described as a *"landmark trial"* for 2024 in The Lawyer's *Top 20 Cases for 2024*. A team of Serle Court barristers (Nicholas Harrison, Jonathan McDonagh and Sophie Holcombe) continue to represent more than 620,000 Brazilian victims of the Fundão Dam disaster.



# Our leading civil fraud and asset recovery practice is a particular strength of Chambers

In *Kuwait Ports Authority v Williams* [2024] UKPC 32, a claim concerning the allegedly fraudulent mismanagement of a Cayman Exempted Limited Partnership, the Privy Council decided that where a general partner of an ELP is owned by an alleged wrongdoer and closely associated with others it is under a disqualifying 'inhibition' that prevents it from deciding whether to bring claims against the relevant persons on behalf of the ELP, such that the Plaintiff limited partners were entitled to bring those claims derivatively. Dan McCourt Fritz KC appeared for the successful plaintiffs.

The Court of Appeal's judgment in **Navigator Equities Ltd and Chernukhin v Deripaska [2024] EWCA Civ 258; [2024] B.C.C. 526**, provides important guidance on the principles applicable to committal applications. James Weale acted for the appellants.

In *İşbilen v Turk*, a c. £40 million fraud claim which has involved several applications for interim relief, the claimant (Mrs İşbilen) successfully applied for a committal order against the main defendant (Mr Selman Turk), resulting in a substantial sentence of imprisonment ([2024] EWHC 505 (Ch); [2024] EWHC 565 (Ch)), and resisted a challenge to the committal order in the Court of Appeal ([2024] EWCA Civ 568). The committal proceedings, and the related appeal, raised significant and controversial issues about the substantive and procedural law concerning committal applications. Dan McCourt Fritz KC and Andrew Gurr continue to act for the claimant.

### Carey Street Investments Limited (in Liquidation) v Brown [2024] EWCA Civ 571

concerned an alleged fraud arising out of a series of property transactions within a Jerseybased trust structure. The Court of Appeal upheld the High Court's finding that there was no fraudulent breach of duty by either defendant. The issues raised by this appeal included important questions as to: (i) the circumstances in which a corporate trustee may be vicariously liable for breaches of duty by an employee who acts as a director of a company within a trust structure and/or directly liable as a shadow or de facto director; and (ii) the nature and scope of such an employee director's duties. Hugh Norbury KC and Dan McCourt Fritz KC acted for the defendants.

### Republic of Mozambique v Credit Suisse International [2024] EWHC 1957 (Comm)

concerned claims for bribery and corrupt procurement in respect of multi-billion dollar naval and shipbuilding contracts in relation to events which have become known as the "tuna bonds" or "hidden debts" scandal. Following a 13-week trial in the Commercial Court in 2023 (one of The Lawyer's *Top 20 Cases of 2023*), Mr Justice Knowles delivered a landmark judgment in favour of the Republic of Mozambique, awarding damages and an indemnity for future losses totalling over \$2 billion against the Privinvest Group. Jonathan Adkin KC and Zahler Bryan acted for the Republic of Mozambique.

In *Jaffé v Greybull Capital* LLP [2024] EWHC 2534 (Comm), a three-week Commercial Court fraud trial in which the court was faced with conflicting accounts of two "equally patently honest and truthful witnesses", Cockerill J. developed the approach in *Gestmin* by reference to matters raised by Popplewell LJ in his 2023 lecture, "Judging Truth from Memory", and concluded that the alleged representations had not been made. Thomas Elias appeared for the successful defendants.

In *Instituto de Salud para el Bienestar v Viva Enterprises Limited and another* [2024] EWHC 1152 (Ch), concerning an alleged fraud relating to the supply of ventilators by an English electrical retailer to an entity within the Mexican federal health system resulting in the loss of over \$40 million, the claimant successfully resisted the defendants' strike-out application. Zoe O'Sullivan KC and Andrew Gurr acted for the claimant.

In *Lin & Ors v Lin* [unreported], a major dispute in the BVI Commercial Court concerning the beneficial ownership of BVI companies which ultimately own valuable real estate in the PRC worth hundreds of millions of dollars, an order for security for costs was made against the claimants in July 2024 on novel ground that the existence of the *Abouloff* (fraud) exception for enforcement of judgments under BVI private international law meant that there was a real risk that a BVI costs award would not be enforced by a Taiwanese court on the ground of lack of reciprocity. The claimants' application for security in respect of the counterclaim was refused: this application raised interesting points regarding the circumstances in which security should be ordered against a counterclaiming defendant. Philip Marshall KC (assisted by Adil Mohamedbhai) acted for the defendant.

#### In Invest Bank v El-Husseini and others [2024] EWHC 2976 (Comm), Calver

J dismissed a claim under section 423, Insolvency Act 1986 finding that the claimant had not proved that the debtor had the statutory purpose of prejudicing the creditor bank's claims against him when he effected the transactions and that the seventh defendant, a professional trustee company, had innocently received the relevant asset and distributed its proceeds in good faith. The judgment determined that the heightened pleading standard for fraud claims is in general applicable to s.423 claims and it also provides important guidance regarding (i) use of objective evidence in ascertaining a debtor's subjective purpose, and (ii) drawing adverse inferences from a defendant's non-participation in proceedings. Marc Delehanty acted for the claimant and Emma Hargreaves for the seventh defendant.

In *Glenea Contracts v Friel* [2024] EWHC 1243 (Ch), the High Court held that a trusted employee in control of his employer's bank account could be denied a limitation defence in relation to historic misappropriations of the money, as a "true" (constructive) trustee. Max Marenbon acted for the successful claimant.

In *Gallahue v Tripathi* [2024] EWHC 1740 (Ch), proceedings in which it is alleged purchase of shares were induced by misrepresentation, the first defendant resisted an application to increase the enjoined sum under a worldwide freezing order. This decision provides a helpful illustration of the application of the "good arguable case" test in the context of worldwide freezing orders. John Eldridge acted on behalf of the first defendant.

# Elizabeth Jones KC, Professor Jonathan

Harris KC (Hon.) and Gareth Tilley act for Kea Investments in continuing litigation in relation to a \$130m Kentucky default judgment which Kea alleged was obtained by fraud. The Kentucky claimant was a New Zealand company purporting to act as trustee of a New Zealand Trust. Kea succeeded in establishing fraud at first instance before the High Court of New Zealand, obtaining permanent anti-suit and anti-enforcement injunctions, and those findings were affirmed by the New Zealand Court of Appeal (Kea Investments v Wikeley Family Trust Ltd [2024] NZCA 609), but the Court discharged the permanent injunctions on the basis that comity required that steps first be taken to discharge the default judgment in Kentucky. Interim injunctions were also obtained against one of the defendants in Queensland, Australia, along with a passport confiscation order (affirmed on appeal: Kea Investments Ltd v Wikeley [2024] QCA 201). Applications for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court of New Zealand and the High Court of Australia are pending.

# What to look out for in 2025...

**Public Institution for Social Security v Al Rajaan**, a \$900+ million claim against multiple defendants arising out of the alleged bribery of the former Director General of the fund, is listed for a trial to commence in March 2025 and not forecast to finish until March 2026. This "mammoth" case was named as one of The Lawyer's *Top 20 Cases of 2025*. Hugh Norbury KC continues to co-lead a large counsel team (including Ruth Jordan and Jon Turnbull) for the Kuwaiti state pension fund, and James Mather, Tim Benham-Mirando and Ramyaa Veerabathran act for one of the defendants.

5

# Often "bringing innovation to the practice area", Serle Court's barristers have a "first-class reputation" for company, partnership, insolvency and restructuring work in England and offshore

### In Caldicott Worldwide Ltd v Siong (VG

**2024 CA 017)**, the Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeal considered the effect of a (common form) arbitration agreement in a BVI company's articles of association on an unfair prejudice claim, upholding the decision of the first instance court to grant a stay of proceedings. This judgment, together with the second appeal judgment in these proceedings, are the leading BVI authority on the matter. Timothy Collingwood KC appeared for the successful respondents.

#### In East Riding of Yorkshire Council v KMG SICAV [2024] EWHC 2845 (Ch),

Richard Smith J upheld the dismissal of a winding-up petition in respect of a sub-fund of an investment company incorporated in Luxembourg, deciding that section 220 of the Insolvency Act 1986 is not capable of encompassing entities that are neither companies nor associations, and that the sub-fund was not an entity that Parliament reasonably intended to be wound up as an unregistered company. Daniel Lightman KC acted on behalf of the successful respondent.

### In Loveridge v Povey [2024] EWHC 329 (Ch)

the court dismissed an application seeking directions that administrators of a caravan park business reject a proposed rescue by its majority shareholder. It also dismissed a linked application for a proprietary injunction aimed at preventing the use of a related company's funds from being deployed to facilitate the rescue. The court made a novel order directing the unsuccessful applicant to pay the additional costs incurred in the administration as a result of its prolongation pending disposal of his application, pursuant to the wide power to make consequential orders under paragraph 74(3) of Schedule B1 to the Insolvency Act 1986. Dan McCourt Fritz KC and Ramyaa Veerabathran appeared for the respondent majority shareholder Ivy Loveridge and Jennifer Meech appeared for two corporate respondents.

**Re Palmer [2024] EWHC 1722 (Ch)**, which determined that *ex gratia* payments planned to be made to discharged bankrupt postmasters aggrieved by the Post Office Horizon IT scandal did not form part of their bankrupt estates, is a leading authority on the meaning of "property" under s.436(1) of the Insolvency Act 1986. Gareth Tilley successfully acted as counsel for the Secretary of State for Business and Trade.

**Re London Resort Co Holdings Ltd [2024] EWHC 3287 (Ch)** concerned irremediable breaches of the terms of a substantial company voluntary arrangement (CVA) by an insolvent company and the refusal of the CVA supervisor to terminate the CVA in response to such breaches. The application was a rare example of a successful challenge to a decision/omission of a CVA supervisor under section 7(3) of the Insolvency Act 1986. Lara Kuehl appeared for the successful applicant, Paramount Licensing, Inc.

## In Invenio v Goyal [2024] EWHC 1236

**(Ch)**, Timothy Collingwood KC and Gregor Hogan obtained injunctive relief against the defendants preventing them from asserting that one of them (who was a former director) was other than a Bad Leaver for the purposes of transfer provisions under the company's articles of association.

### In Kulkarni v Gwent Holdings [2024] EWHC

**1357 (Ch)** the High Court rejected an attempt to exercise pre-emption rights arising on the commission of a 'material or persistent breach' that, if capable of remedy, was not remedied within a particular time. The court found that the breaches in question were remediable and dismissed the claim. It rejected the claimant's submission that repudiatory breaches were, by their nature, incapable of being remedied: that issue is likely to be considered by the Court of Appeal during 2025. Justin Higgo KC and Thomas Braithwaite appeared for the successful defendant.

#### In Peter Waddell Holdco Ltd v Bluebell Cars Holdco Ltd [2024] EWHC 3040 (Ch), Mr

Justice Trower handed down a judgment which examined the role which the company could play in the section 994 petition of which it is the subject, and the appropriateness of a stay on case management grounds of a related Part 7 Claim. Daniel Lightman KC and Thomas Elias represent the petitioner, and Mark Wraith represents the other principal shareholder and one of the company's directors.

In *Re Mallet Footwear Ltd*, a derivative claim against Tommy Mallet, an influencer and entrepreneur made famous by The Only Way Is Essex, interim relief was obtained in April 2024 ([2024] EWHC 966 (Ch)). Thomas Elias is instructed by the claimant.

In *Re Uphold Ltd* (FSD Cause no.134 of 2022, Cayman Islands, 25 April 2024), the applicant succeeded in striking out the relief sought against it in a just and equitable winding up petition. Applying principles from analogous English cases on unfair prejudice, Segal J held that the case for a buy-out order was plainly unsustainable and the case was hopeless so the claim for that relief had to be struck out. Timothy Collingwood KC acted for the successful applicant.

*Klaturov v Revetas Capital Advisors LLP* [2024] EWHC 495 (Comm) concerned the interrelationship between an LLP Agreement and an extraneous agreement for payments of remuneration/compensation. James Weale acted for the claimant.

The 7th edition of *Minority Shareholders: Law, Practice, and Procedure* was published by Oxford University Press in March 2024. The contributors (Victor Joffe KC, SC, Daniel Lightman KC, Tim Collingwood KC, Giles Richardson KC, David Drake, Thomas Elias and Zahler Bryan) are all present or former members of Serle Court. What has become the leading practitioner textbook on minority shareholder rights and litigation was reviewed very positively in the New Law Journal, which praised it for "*its impressive range and depth of content,*" which "will be an essential companion to legal practitioners..."

# MINORITY SHAREHOLDERS

Law, Practice, and Procedure

SEVENTH EDITION

VICTOR JOFFE KC, SC DAVID DRAKE GILES RICHARDSON KC DANIEL LIGHTMAN KC TIMOTHY COLLINGWOOD KC THOMAS ELIAS ZAHLER BRYAN



# What to look out for in 2025...

Judgment is currently awaited in *Changyou. com Ltd v Fourworld Global Opportunities Fund Ltd,* an appeal to the Privy Council from the Cayman Islands. The case concerns whether minority shareholders in a shortform merger (i.e. a merger where the parent company owns at least 90% of the shares) are entitled to appraisal rights under section 238 of the Cayman Companies Act. Judgment is currently awaited. Jonathan Adkin KC and Adil Mohamedbhai act for the respondents (Fourworld). **Re Fifty Asset Management Ltd** is due to be tried in spring 2025. The claim concerns allegations of breach of partnership and unlawful means conspiracy made in the context of the breakdown in the relationship between shareholders in companies operating a wind turbine aggregation platform. Justin Higgo KC and Andrew Gurr act for the defendants.

Judgment is awaited in *Wickers v Humbles* from a 7-week trial in the Isle of Man (the longest trial in the Isle of Man in recent years), in which allegations of fraudulent misrepresentation and myriad breaches of directors' duties were made in connection with the £240 million development of a terrace of John Nash properties in Regent's Park between 2007 and 2014. Lance Ashworth KC and Gregor Hogan represented the defendants.

#### In *Kijani Resources Limited (in liquidation) v The Royal Bank of Scotland International Limited* Matthew Morrison and Matthew

Innes are instructed by the Joint Liquidators of two Gibraltarian companies bringing claims for >US\$100m in the names of the companies based on alleged breaches of the duty of care owed by the Royal Bank of Scotland in failing to detect and take appropriate action in respect of fraudulent payments out of the companies. A multi-week trial will take place in Gibraltar in May 2025.

# Serle Court's barristers are engaged in a wide range of commercial and finance litigation, both in London and globally

James Weale is part of a team acting for ING Bank in defending a claim under a performance bond: LLC Eurochem North-West 2 v Société Générale SA. The case raises important questions relating to the application of international sanctions and whether illegality in the place of performance (pursuant to Ralli Bros) enables a defendant to avoid contractual liability. In the same proceedings, James successfully resisted a jurisdiction challenge by a Part 20 defendant, which gave rise to an important judgment addressing principles of submission to the jurisdiction as against third parties [2024] EWHC 1084 (Comm). The substantive trial has been listed for 5 weeks in June 2025 and is listed as one of The Lawyer's Top 20 Cases of 2025.

Lara Kuehl acts for the Secretary of State in three substantial connected £500 million claims concerning contracts for the manufacture and sale of Covid lateral flow tests: Mornington 2000 LLP (t/a Sterilab Services) v Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. In 2024 she appeared in a successful application concerning the circumstances in which a party to litigation has "practical or de facto control" over a third party's documents for the purposes of its extended disclosure obligations under PD 57AD ([2024] EWHC 1708 (TCC)) and a subsequent related application in which sanctions were imposed on the claimants for breach of their disclosure obligations ([2024] EWHC 3180 (TCC)).

In *Morris v Williams & Co Solicitors* [2024] EWCA Civ 376, the Master of the Rolls (with whom Lewison and Falk LJJ agreed) gave guidance about the circumstances in which a group of claimants can join together and use one claim form. In short, they can do so, as set out in the CPR, when their claims can be "conveniently disposed of in the same proceedings". Jennifer Meech was part of the successful respondent team.

In Commission Recovery Ltd v Marks & Clerk LLP [2024] EWCA Civ 9, Nugee LJ

gave important further guidance on the use of representative actions under CPR 19.8 as a form of class action, particularly in cases involving alleged breach of duty and secret commissions. John Machell KC appeared for the appellants, and Ryan Tang assisted in a later stage of proceedings.

In Andreewitch v Moutreuil [2024] EWHC 2326 (Ch), the court dismissed the claimant's appeal against an order striking out his claim on the basis of *Henderson v Henderson* abuse. James Weale acted for the successful respondent.

David Drake acted for the claimants in Secretary of State for Health and Social Care v Lundbeck Ltd [2024] CAT 42, a limitation dispute in which, following transfer from the High Court, the Competition Appeal Tribunal ruled that the NHS's claims against a number of pharmaceutical companies were not time-barred. The decision shed light on the interaction between the different limitation regimes historically applicable in the High Court and the CAT.

In **The Motoring Organisation Limited v Spectrum Insurance Services Limited [2024] EWHC 261 (Comm)**, which concerns the wrongful appropriation of an opportunity to provide insured warranties for cars manufactured by the Korean car manufacturer SsangYong (now KMG), the Commercial Court made the exceptional finding that fiduciary duties had been owed and breached in dealings between two commercial counterparties. Matthew Morrison acted for the successful

claimants in the liability trial and continues to act, leading Richard Hine, in respect of the remedy and quantum phase.

*Gilbert v Broadoak Private Finance Limited* concerns claims for repayment of various loans made by the claimants to the defendant for onward lending to a third party. In 2024 the claimants successfully resisted an application to set aside a default judgment, and obtained a Worldwide Freezing Order and novel enforcement orders including an extraterritorial third-party debt order and a charging order over a registered charge on land, worth an approximate total of £2 million **[2024] EWHC 2046].** Gareth Tilley, Jamie Randall, Max Marenbon and Ryan Tang continue to advise the claimants.

#### In Walkers Snack Foods Limited v HMRC [2024] UKFTT 00031 (TC), HMRC

successfully resisted an appeal against its decision that Walkers Sensations Poppadoms are subject to VAT because they fall within the exception of products similar to potato crisps and made from potato. Giselle McGowan acted for HMRC, and will also act for HMRC in the appellant's appeal to the Upper Tribunal.

# What to look out for in 2025...

Judgment is awaited in *IBM United Kingdom Ltd v LzLabs GmbH*, a substantial claim for breach of a licence agreement on the basis of alleged reverse engineering of IBM Mainframe software. The claim was the subject of a 3-month trial before Mrs Justice O'Farrell in April-July 2024 and was identified as one of The Lawyer's *Top 20 Cases for 2024*. James Weale acted for the claimant.

#### Buttonwood Legal Capital Ltd v Huttunen,

which is due to be tried in early 2025, concerns the validity of funding arrangements entered into by an entity within the '*Centaur Group*' litigation funding ponzi scheme and the claimant in a \$100mn bilateral investment treaty arbitration claim. The dispute raises the interaction between consumer credit regulation and litigation funding loans, as well as a challenge to the bona fides of a settlement agreement entered into part-way through the funded proceedings. The trial is likely to involve competing expert evidence on the proper standards of commercial conduct within the litigation funding industry. Andrew Gurr continues to act for the defendant.



# We enjoy a leading Chambers presence in the Middle East, in particular the Dubai International Financial Centre

Rupert Reed KC and James Weale acted for the successful respondents in a 3-day appeal before the DIFC Court of Appeal in **SBM Bank** (Mauritius) Ltd v Renish Petrochem FZE and another [2022] DIFC CA 011. The case raised important questions as to the applicable test for implied representations as a matter of DIFC law as well as the standard of proof and pleading requirements in respect of allegations of fraud. In the same proceedings, James Weale successfully obtained a committal order resulting in the defendant being referred to the Attorney General of Dubai and being fined USD 100,000 ([2018] CFI 054, 11 June 2024).

Zoe O'Sullivan KC appeared in *Neal v Nadir* [2024] DIFC CA 001, where the Court of Appeal held that the DIFC Court has jurisdiction pursuant to Articles 42 to 44 of the DIFC Arbitration Law to recognise and enforce an interim award for a freezing order made by an arbitral tribunal, even where the seat of the arbitration is outside the DIFC.

Rupert Reed KC and Max Marenbon represented the successful appellants in *China*  **State Engineering Corporation (Middle East) LLC v Zaya Living Real Estate Development LLC [2024] DIFC CA 009**. Chief Justice Wayne Martin held that the term "*officer*" in RDC Part 50 (the equivalent of CPR 71), which provides for officers of a corporate judgment debtor to be required to attend court for questioning, should be given a functional rather than a technical meaning.

Zoe O'Sullivan KC acted for the reinsured in *AIG* (UK) Ltd v Qatar Insurance Company (CA 008/2024, 3 September 2024). The Court of Appeal held that payment of the reinsured's insurance claim would not be contrary to US-Iran sanctions.

In *Punjab National Bank v Shetty* (CFI No. 079/2020, 19 January 2024), where Zoe O'Sullivan KC acted for the claimant bank, the DIFC Court held that the 2023 amendments made to the UAE Federal Banking Law in relation to guarantees do not apply in the DIFC or to guarantees of corporate lending or with retrospective effect.

# We are renowned for our private client, trusts and probate expertise both in England and offshore

In *Volpi v Delanson Services Ltd*, Dakis Hagen KC, Gareth Tilley, Stephanie Thompson, and Tim Benham-Mirando are assisting Bahamian counsel in challenges and appeals relating to a trust arbitration **[BS 2024 SC 72 and BS 2024 CA 42]**. The Bahamian courts have handed down a number of important decisions on the scope of the Bahamian legislation which allows trust arbitrations (such as BS 2023 SC 212).

#### Dan McCourt Fritz KC and Ramyaa

Veerabathran assisted the successful respondents in Kazzaz and Others v Standard Chartered Trust (Guernsey) Limited and Another [2024] GCA 058. This was a wideranging appeal against the Royal Court of Guernsey's dismissal of claims brought by the beneficiaries, creditors and new trustees of two Guernsey trusts against the original trustee and the sole director of a trust company. The Court of Appeal dismissed the appeal in its entirety and clarified the various principles that are relevant to Guernsey trust disputes. The Court confirmed that a statutory time bar provision, namely section 76 of the Trusts (Guernsey) Law 2007 operates as a rule of limitation rather than prescription and held that, where the beneficiaries' claims against the original trustee were time-barred, the claims of new trustees who were appointed by the beneficiaries after they had acquired knowledge of their claims would also be time-barred. The Court also provided guidance on the fact-sensitive nature of a trustee's duty to act en bon père de famille; the admissibility of the judgment of a foreign court in Guernsey proceedings; and the high threshold for appellate interference with findings of fact made by the Jurats at trial.

#### Thomas Braithwaite acted in *Marcus v Marcus* [2024] EWHC 2086 (Ch), which concerned the interpretation of a trust in favour

of the settlor's "children". The issue for the High Court was whether the class of beneficiaries included someone whom the settlor believed to be his son but who, according to DNA evidence, was the product of an extra-marital relationship. The Court gave a wide meaning to "children" and found that the non-biological son was a beneficiary of the trust. Constance McDonnell KC and George Vare (assisted by Anneliese Mondschein) acted for the successful claimants in Leonard v Leonard [2024] EWHC 321 (Ch). They successfully argued that the deceased neither had testamentary capacity at the time of executing a purported final will, nor knew and approved of its contents. The comprehensive judgment of Mrs Justice Joanna Smith DBE includes guidance as to the court's approach to medical expert evidence in such cases, and clarifies the operation of limbs 1 and 4 of Banks v Goodfellow. Constance and George also successfully argued at the consequentials hearing that a Part 36 offer made by the claimants shortly after issue of the claim was a genuine offer of settlement, even within a contentious probate context. At their instigation, the Judge also agreed to take the unusual step of including in the Order a provision enabling any party to apply to join the will-drafting firm to the proceedings for the purposes of seeking a non-party costs order against them under s.51 SCA 1981 and CPR 46.2 ([2024] EWHC 979 (Ch)).

Timothy Collingwood KC acted for the trustee in the **Representation of BOS Trustees Limited [2024] JRC 124**, where the Royal Court of Jersey addressed the principles governing an application by a trustee for leave to make a distribution from the trust fund despite third party claims to the trust assets. The Court considered that the correct approach was for the Court to determine whether the trustee could safely disregard the claims asserted.

In the *Representation of Summit Services* [2024] JRC 222 the Royal Court of Jersey sought to grapple with the conflicting views of the role of protectors in the trustee decisionmaking process and how to resolve a deadlock situation between trustee and protector. In the circumstances of that case, while blessing the trustee's decision, the Court adopted a pragmatic approach, expressing guidance to the protector and inviting it to reconsider its position. Timothy Collingwood KC and Zahler Bryan acted for one of the beneficiaries

# What to look out for in 2025...

Sparsh Garg acts for the primary respondents before the Court of Appeal on the appeal from Morina v Scherbakova [2023] EWHC 3253 (Ch) concerning the will and applicable law of succession of the late Russian businessman, Mr Vladimir Scherbakov. The appeal is due to be heard in March 2025. It will explore the circumstances in which the Court can find that a testator died an English domiciliary notwithstanding that this was not claimed by any party, and whether the testator's alleged intention to die in a particular jurisdiction leads to a conclusion that the testator acquired the domicile of that jurisdiction. Richard Wilson KC and Oliver Jones act for the interim administrators of the estate. Dakis Hagen KC and Emma Hargreaves acted for the appellant at an earlier stage of the proceedings.

In **Re A, D and B Trusts** Dakis Hagen KC and Oliver Jones and Giles Richardson KC, Sophie Holcombe, Emma Hargreaves and Stephanie Thompson advise, respectively, the two adult beneficiaries of three discretionary trusts holding very valuable corporate assets, in proceedings in the Royal Court of Jersey brought by the trustees for directions concerning the future of the trusts and the corporate assets. Thomas Fletcher advises the trustees and Jonathan Adkin KC advises the Protector.

Richard Wilson KC (assisted by James Weale, Zahler Bryan and Harry Martin) acts for the beneficiary defendants to a claim for the removal of a trustee and other related litigation in various jurisdictions including The Bahamas in Hammersmith-Stewart v Cromwell Trust Company Limited and Others. Emma

Hargreaves acts for the guardian of minor/ unborn beneficiaries. The substantive trial in the Supreme Court of The Bahamas is expected to be listed in 2025. The trusts forming the subject matter of the dispute include a trust which holds the Sandals Hotel group. The proceedings have already generated a number of landmark judgments including as to the meaning and effect of a 'no contest' clause (2021/CLE/gen/01043, 22 June 2023) and the application of privacy restrictions to trust proceedings (SCCivApp. Nos. 108 of 2022 &

### 132 of 2022).

Constance McDonnell KC, Amy Proferes and Matthew Innes act for the claimant in *Scott v Scott*, in which the claimant challenges the last will of his late father and seeks a remedy by way of proprietary estoppel over the family farm. The trial of the claim is due to be heard in the Chancery Division in the middle of 2025.

James Weale and Matthew Innes acted for the defendants in a 3-week trial before HHJ Monty KC in Central London County Court in *Gurtata v Gurtata* in October 2024. The claims included serious allegations that certain of the defendants were party to sham transactions and a dishonest conspiracy and the claimants sought to set aside a will on the basis of undue influence and also sought relief under the 1975 Act. Judgment is awaited.

Giles Richardson KC and James Weale act for, respectively, the first and second defendants and appellants in a substantial matrimonial claim in *Faraj v (1) Ahmad (2) IIB Group Holdings WLL*. Following the 2023 judgment of Sir Jonathan Cohen ([2023] EWFC 209), the case will be the subject of a 2-day hearing in the Court of Appeal in March 2025. The appeal raises important questions of procedural fairness in the context of matrimonial proceedings.

Justin Higgo KC continues to represent the defendant trustee in **Dorset Limited v Triantfyllidis** in a claim for an indemnity in respect of the administration of shares in a private investment company to be heard in the Chancery Division in 2025.

James Weale acts for the trustee in proceedings brought by the Enforcement Directorate of India alleging that the entirety of the trust's assets represent the proceeds of fraud in **The Union of India v Modi and others**. In the same proceedings, Oliver Jones also acted for the trustee and successfully applied for an order for sale of a valuable London property held within the trust.

In **Oak Trustee (Guernsey) Limited v Stewart & Ors** Justin Higgo KC represents the settlor of a Guernsey discretionary trust in proceedings in the Royal Court to resist a challenge to the resettlement of trust assets onto the trust.

George Vare advises the First to Third Respondents in *Geneva Trust Company SA v D* in Jersey, in an action concerning the assessment of a trustee's fees on an *Alhamrani*  assessment. The case is listed before the Jersey Court of Appeal in March 2025 on the question of what the Royal Court's approach to an appeal of the Judicial Greffier's taxation should be.

# We are at the forefront of major charities cases

Jonathan Fowles, the incoming Treasury Counsel in Charities Matters, acted for the successful Respondents in Mohammed v Daji [2024] EWCA Civ 1247. At first instance, the Respondents successfully established that a very substantial site in East London was held by them on a charitable trust associated with a particular Sunni Muslim community in the London region, rather than by the Appellants upon charitable trusts associated with another community. Both communities are associated with the worldwide Tablighi Jamaat movement, and the dispute took place in the context of a worldwide schism in that movement which caused rancour between the communities. The Court of Appeal unanimously dismissed the appeals. The leading judgment of Newey LJ contains important points about the task of the trial judge in discerning the donors' intentions in giving money to a charitable appeal and identifying the terms of the charitable trusts

arising out of them, where the documentary evidence is limited.

Jonathan Fowles acted for the Attorney General in The Keepers and Governors of the Possessions, Revenues and Goods of the Free Grammar School of John Lyon, within the Town of Harrow-on-the-Hill v Attorney General [2024] EWHC 2857 (Ch). The case concerned Harrow School's claim for a cyprès scheme to expand and update its objects originally set out in a Royal Charter of 1572. In his judgment the Hon. Mr Justice Rajah rejected the claim. The judgment is important for its discussion of the cy-près jurisdiction and as the first authority on certain provisions of the Public Schools Act 1868 which was passed to reform the affairs of 7 leading public schools, including Harrow, following the report of the Clarendon Commission.



# Our wide-ranging property practice continues to expand in strength and depth

Michael Walsh is acting in the Supreme Court for the appellant in Prescott Place Freeholders Limited v Donovan & others (on appeal from [2024] EWCA Civ 298, which considered Henderson v Henderson abuse of process, s.19 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1987, and equitable leases). This is the first time the Supreme Court will consider the right of first refusal under the statutory scheme in Part I of the LTA 1987. The Supreme Court will consider (i) whether the LTA 1987 creates proprietary rights or merely personal ones; (ii) whether it is an abuse of process for a beneficiary under a trust to re-litigate issues about trust property already determined in proceedings involving their trustee; (iii) the priority of interests between beneficiaries under a trust and tenants with rights created by the LTA 1987; and (iv) the Court's power to grant injunctions to enforce statutory rights and its own orders.

#### In Valbonne Estates Ltd v United Homes Ltd [2024] EWHC 876 Jennifer Meech

successfully defeated an application for reverse summary judgment. The case involves the interesting question as to when the buyer's constructive trust arises in the purchase of a leasehold interest in land.

In the ongoing Canary Riverside Litigation Jonathan Upton appeared in Unsdorfer v Octagon Overseas Ltd [2024] UKUT 59 (LC); [2024] L. & T.R. 22 in which the court considered whether a tribunal manager is an accountable person under the Building Safety Act 2022. Permission has been granted for a second appeal to the Court of Appeal.

# In Blackhorse Investments (Borough) Ltd v Southwark LBC [2024] UKUT 33 (LC),

Jonathan Upton successfully resisted an application to set aside the whole of a final order modifying covenants in a lease of a public house. It was the first case in which the Upper Tribunal considered its jurisdiction to set aside a final order. The UT also held that a covenant which prohibits the assignment of "any part or parts (as opposed to the whole) of the demised premises", is not a restriction as to the user of the land and, accordingly, the tribunal did not have jurisdiction to modify that covenant.

Jonathan Upton acted for the successful appellants in *Zaid Alothman Holdings Ltd v Better Intelligent Management Ltd* [2024] UKUT 253 (LC) where the Upper Tribunal held that commencing proceedings without first sending a letter before action was unreasonable conduct justifying a costs order.

Andrew Bruce acted in the significant case of *Merlin Real Estate Ltd v Balaam* (**Case no. JOOPE843**, commented upon at Estates Gazette 2024, 2427) relating to the intensification of use of a right of way in rural Essex.

Amy Proferes successfully defended a heated boundary dispute claim in **Shearn v McKeown** on the basis of an oral boundary agreement, and obtained an order for partial indemnity costs.

Andrew Bruce successfully represented mortgagees on an application to cancel a Mental Health Crisis Moratorium in *West One Loan Limited v Palmer (Claim no. H10CL170* 

# What to look out for in 2025...

Michael Walsh and Claudia Barry act for the respondents in the Court of Appeal in **Abacus Land 4 Limited v Bradley & Rhodes.** The Court will consider the meaning of reasonableness in the context of the exercise of a contractual discretion in service charge clauses under a lease. The Court will be asked to resolve the conflict between authorities of the Upper Tribunal and determine whether the test is objective reasonableness or mere rationality in the *Braganza* sense.

Michael Walsh has been instructed by the Secretary of State to intervene in two landmark Court of Appeal cases about the interpretation of provisions of the Building Safety Act 2022. In Adriatic Land 5 Ltd v Various Leaseholders of Hippersley Point the appellant challenges the retrospectivity of Schedule 8 of the BSA and argues that it is not compliant with Article 1 Protocol 1 of the ECHR. In Stratford Village Development Partnership & another v Triathlon Homes LLP & another the Court will consider the extent of the jurisdiction under section 124 and the just and equitable test. The appeals are listed for a week in March 2025.



# Our intellectual property practice goes from strength to strength

Michael Edenborough KC and Stephanie Wickenden successfully represented Crafts Group in the Court of Appeal relating to disputed jurisdiction and the scope of a stay pending parallel proceedings in *EUIPO Crafts Group v M/S Indeutsch International* [2024] EWCA Civ 87.

Michael Edenborough KC and Thomas Elias appeared in *Marks and Spencer plc v Aldi Stores* [2024] EWCA Civ 178, a registered design appeal regarding light-up snow globe gin liqueur bottles. The Court of Appeal held that the statutory priority and grace periods applied not only when considering the validity of the registered design, but also when considering infringement.

Michael Edenborough KC and Stephanie Wickenden appeared in the Court of Appeal in *Easygroup v Easy Live (Services)* [2023] EWCA Civ 1508, which concerned damages for passing-off.

In *Lifestyle Equities v Royal County of Berkshire Polo Club* [2024] EWCA Civ 814 Michael Edenborough KC appeared in the Court of Appeal, which gave guidance on establishing a likelihood of confusion in trade mark matters.

Adrian de Froment acted for the successful respondent in *Bionome v Clearwater* [2024] EWHC 3155 (Ch), an appeal in a patent entitlement matter involving issues of contractual construction and the validity of alleged declarations of trust. Adrian also acted, led by Michael Edenborough KC, for the defendants in *iMiracle (HK) Limited v Vapes-Bars Limited*, a set of complex, high-value trade mark infringement and invalidity cross claims, which concerned the vapes branded 'Lost Mary' and 'Found Mary'. Michael Edenborough KC leading Stephanie Wickenden and assisted by Niamh Herrett acted for the claimant in *Easygroup Ltd v Beauty Perfectionists Ltd* [2024] EWHC 1441 (Ch), which involved subtle questions concerning the similarity of the signs and the trade marks relied upon in the context of longstanding use by the defendant.

In *Easygroup v Easy Live (Services)* [2024] EWHC 2282 (Ch), Michael Edenborough KC led Stephanie Wickenden and Ryan Tang, in the dispute involving complex questions of use of acceptable variants to establish genuine and where permission to appeal has recently been granted.

Michael Edenborough KC acted in *Easygroup v Easyfundraising* [2024] EWHC 2323 (Ch), which involved issues of appropriate limitation to trade mark specifications in cases of non-use and is also going to appeal.

The IP team has also had an especially busy year in the trade marks registry. Michael Edenborough KC, Stephanie Wickenden, Adrian de Froment, John Eldridge, Niamh Herrett, Anneliese Mondschein and Ryan Tang collectively appeared in 16 matters before the tribunal and 5 matters before the Appointed Person, in disputes relating to a broad range of businesses and goods including motorsports, women's fashion, coffee, agriculture and reggae music.



# What to look out for in 2025...

Members of chambers are acting in the high profile case of *Jersey Heritage Trust v Chris Levine*, relating to still and holographic images of her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Stephanie Wickenden acts for the claimant charity, Thomas Elias and Jamie Randall act for the defendant artist. The matter has been listed for July 2025.

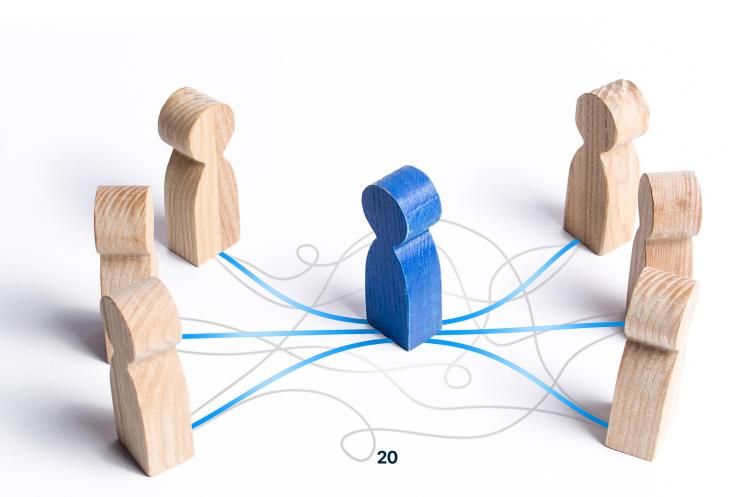
#### Stephanie Wickenden and Anneliese

Mondschein continue to represent Crafts Group in the upcoming trial which focuses on the validity and scope of the defendants' figurative trade marks, and whether the claimant's multicoloured knitting needles infringe those marks. Stephanie Wickenden and Niamh Herrett acted in a look-a-likes packaging trial in *Thatchers Cider v Aldi Store* [2024] EWHC 88 (IPEC), and continued to act, led by Michael Edenborough KC, before the Court of Appeal in December 2024 ([2025] EWCA Civ 5). Having won at first instance, Aldi is applying for permission to appeal to the Supreme Court.

# In an important year for mediation, Serle Court's mediators have helped resolve disputes across multiple jurisdictions and industries

It has been a buoyant year for the Mediator Group at Serle Court. Over 134 disputes have been mediated.

In an overview of 2024, there should be mention of two pivotal changes to the mediation landscape. First, the decision in *Churchill v Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council* [2024] 1 WLR 3827 and second, the subsequent amendments to the ADR provisions of the CPR. Both have combined to embed within all litigation an obligation to consider and use ADR for the resolution of disputes, thus creating ever-greater demand for our core group of mediators (including Liz Jones KC, Beverley-Ann Rogers, Jennifer Haywood and Paul Johnson). Some unusual examples from this year include a dispute involving litigation in two European jurisdictions and California settled by Beverley-Ann Rogers, and a mediation between over 100 parties conducted by Jennifer Haywood.



# Serle Court's members act as arbitrators and counsel in a range of high-stakes arbitrations

Our barristers regularly act as counsel in arbitrations conducted under the rules of all major arbitration centres in relation to the whole gamut of Commercial and Chancery disputes.

Many of our members of chambers sit as arbitrators in ad hoc and institutional arbitrations. For further details about our offerings in this area of expertise, visit our <u>arbitration page</u>.



# Members of Chambers

# King's Counsel

Elizabeth Jones KC Patrick Talbot KC Kuldip Singh KC Paul Chaisty KC **Dominic Dowley KC** Conor Quigley KC Philip Marshall KC Philip Jones KC Lance Ashworth KC David Casement KC FCIArb Christopher Stoner KC Michael Edenborough KC John Machell KC Hugh Norbury KC David Blayney KC Jonathan Adkin KC **Rupert Reed KC** Zoe O'Sullivan KC Andrew Moran KC Daniel Lightman KC **Richard Wilson KC** Prof. Jonathan Harris KC (Hon.) Dakis Hagen KC **Constance McDonnell KC** Justin Higgo KC **Timothy Collingwood KC Giles Richardson KC** Dan McCourt Fritz KC

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### Juniors –10 Years

Charlotte Bevnon **Gregor Hogan** Mark Wraith Sparsh Gard Jamie Randall Stephanie Thompson Tim Benham-Mirando Max Marenbon John Eldridge Andrew Gurr George Vare Wilson Leung Niamh Herrett Stefano Theodoli-Braschi Anneliese Mondschein Ryan Tang Matthew Innes Ramyaa Veerabathran Claudia Barry **Richard Hine** Jon Turnbull





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