



serle court

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James Weale KC

Year of Silk: 2026 Year of Call: 2007

“James is a fiercely intelligent and incredibly versatile advocate. His oral advocacy is particularly impressive, and his strategic vision is second to none.”

“One of the cleverest people around. Nothing fazes him and he cross-examines impeccably.”

“He's all the things you want in a modern barrister”

Chambers & Partners

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Practice Overview

James has a very busy commercial chancery practice with a focus on domestic and international commercial and trusts disputes. He is recognised as a leading practitioner in those fields in Chambers and Partners, Legal 500, Chambers Global, Chambers High Net Worth, and Who's Who Legal where he is described as a "brilliant lawyer" and a "Superstar". He was Chambers and Partners' Chancery Junior of the Year in 2023.

He regularly appears (both as sole and junior counsel) in the English High Court and has appeared several times in the Court of Appeal. He also has considerable experience in overseas jurisdictions (including as sole counsel) including Bermuda, the DIFC, the BVI, Cayman, Jersey, Guernsey, Gibraltar and Panama.

Areas of Expertise

Commercial Litigation

James has experience across a wide range of commercial litigation. Recent examples of his cases include:

LLC Eurochem North-West-2 v (1) Societe Generale S.A. (2) Societe Generale Paris (3) Societe Generale Milano (4) ING Bank N.V. (5) ING Bank N.V. – Milan Branch (6) Tecnimont S.P.A. (7) LLC MT Russia (ongoing) [2025] EWHC 1938 (Comm); [2024] 1 WLR 4705. Instructed by Clifford Chance LLP. James acted (with Neil Kitchener) KC for the successful ING Bank defendants in a substantial claim for payment under performance bonds (one of The Lawyer's Top 20 cases of 2025). This is one of the most significant cases on sanctions in recent years.

IBM United Kingdom v LzLabs GmbH & Ord (ongoing) [2026] FSR 4; [2025] EWHC 532 (TCC); [2023] EWHC 2142 (TCC); [2023] EWHC 1595 (TCC); [2023] EWHC 1183 (TCC). Instructed by Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP (UK). James acted (with Nicholas Saunders KC, Matthew Lavy KC and Fred Hobson KC) for the successful claimant in a substantial claim based on (among other matters) the alleged reverse engineering of IBM Mainframe software in breach of contract. The three-month trial was one of The Lawyer's Top 20 cases of 2024.

Wong v Grand View Private Trust Company and ors (Case No. 44 of 2018) (ongoing). Instructed by MJM Ltd (Bermuda), Baker McKenzie (Taipei) and Stewarts (UK). James acts with Richard Wilson KC in one of the highest-value trust cases to have been litigated in any jurisdiction. The claimants sought to set aside multi-billion dollar purpose trusts on various grounds. A 6-month trial took place between April and October 2022. The judgment ([2022] SC (Bda) 44 Com (22 June 2022)) was the subject of an appeal in the Bermuda Court of Appeal which was heard over 10 days in January 2025.

Navigator Equities Ltd v Deripaska [2024] BCC 526; [2022] 1 W.L.R. 3656; [2022] 2 All E.R. 995, Times, February 7, 2021, Times, April 1, 2022, [2023] EWHC 788 (Comm). James acted (with Jonathan Crow KC) for the claimants in committal proceedings against Oleg Deripaska. The case was the subject of two appeals to the Court of Appeal, which gave important guidance on the conduct of committal applications.

Gurtata v Gurtata [2025] 12 WLUK 438. James acted (with Matthew Innes) for the successful defendants in a substantial claim based on alleged undue influence which was the subject of a three-week trial in October 2024. James subsequently obtained a "put up or shut up" order against third parties which raised a novel jurisdictional issue.

Klaturov and Anor v Revetas Capital Advisors LLP and Anor [2024] EWHC 495 (Comm); [2023] EWHC 470 (Comm). Instructed by Willkie Farr & Gallagher (UK). James acted for the Claimants in a substantial partnership claim for unpaid remuneration, a buyout payment and a profit share, which was the subject of a trial in the High Court in December 2023.

Private Client Trusts and Probate

Wong v Grand View Private Trust Company and ors (Case No. 44 of 2018) (ongoing). Instructed by MJM Ltd (Bermuda), Baker McKenzie (Taipei) and Stewarts (UK). James acts with Richard Wilson KC in one of the highest-value trust cases to have been litigated in any jurisdiction. The claimants sought to set aside multi-billion dollar purpose trusts on various grounds. A 6-month trial took place between April and October 2022. The trial judgment ([2022] SC (Bda) 44 Com (22 June 2022)) is now the subject of an appeal to the Bermuda Court of Appeal, which was heard over 10 days in January 2025.

Hamersmith-Stewart v Cromwell Trust Company Ltd and Ors (ongoing). Instructed by Graham Thompson (Bahamas) and Macfarlanes (UK). James acts with Richard Wilson KC for one of the defendants in substantial trust litigation in several jurisdictions. The principal litigation (a trustee removal claim) has been listed for a 3.5-week trial in The Supreme Court of The Bahamas in June 2026.

Trident Trust Company (Singapore) Pte v Union of India, Nirav Modi and Ors. Instructed by Withers. James acts for the trustee of a trust (with assets worth c.£30 million) which is alleged (by the Indian Enforcement Directorate) to represent the proceeds of fraud. There are two substantive claims to the ownership of trust assets.

Grand View Private Trust Co Ltd v Wong [2022] UKPC 47, [2023] WTLR 149, 25 ITELR 630. Instructed by MJM Ltd (Bermuda), Baker McKenzie (Taipei) and Stewarts (UK). James acted for one of the successful appellants in a conjoined appeal before the Privy Council. The decision gave important guidance on the proper purpose rule.

Gurtata v Gurtata. Instructed by Weightmans. James acted (leading Matthew Innes) for the successful defendants in a claim to set aside a will and various inter vivos transactions relating to substantial assets on the basis of undue influence. The case was the subject of a 3-week trial before HHJ Monty KC with judgment handed down in March 2025.

AB v B [2025] EWHC 1891 (Fam). Instructed by Payne Hicks Beach. James acts for the administrator in a substantial claim under the 1975 Act. James acted for the successful applicant in an unusual application to obtain non-party disclosure against a company involving sensitive commercial information.

SwissIndependent Trustees SA v Sofer [2024] EWHC 1543 (Ch). James acted (with Richard Wilson KC) for the trustee in relation to long-running litigation by a beneficiary. Following a strike out application ([2020] WTLR 1075) the case settled, and the winding up the trust was later the subject of a blessing application.

Insolvency

Company

Art & Cultural Property

Sports, Entertainment & Media

Regulatory and Disciplinary

Insurance and Reinsurance

Banking and Financial Services

Civil Fraud

Professional Negligence

Charities

Matrimonial Finance: Trusts and Company law

James is regularly instructed in high-value and complex matrimonial litigation involving companies and trust structures. Examples of recent cases include the following.

Ahmad v Faraj [2025] EWCA Civ 468; [2025] 2 FLR 915. Instructed by Level. James acts for the husband in complex proceedings involving a Bahraini bank. The case was the subject of a 2-week trial before Sir Jonathan Cohen and is now the subject of an appeal listed for 2 days in April 2025. The case also gave rise to an important CA judgment on Hadkinson orders.

SM v BA [2026] EWFC 9. Instructed by Wedlake Bell. James acts for the intervenor in matrimonial proceedings involving a prominent family. It is alleged by W that a London property is held by the intervenor on constructive trust for W. The case was the subject of a High Court trial in February 2026.

X v Y. Instructed by Melius law. James acted for the trustee in high value proceedings involving a celebrity. The case was the subject of a trial in 2025.

AB v B [2025] EWHC 1891 (Fam). Instructed by Payne Hicks Beach. James acts for the administrator of a substantial estate in respect of a claim brought by a widow under the 1975 Act. The case involved a novel application for non-party disclosure against a company involving sensitive commercial information.

UAE & DIFC Litigation

James has held a DIFC Part II Practising Certificate since 2016 and is a contributor to DIFC Courts Practice. He has extensive experience of DIFC litigation and has appeared before the CFI and Court of Appeal. Examples of his recent cases include:

Aptiva Technologies FZE v Liberty Steel Group Holdings (EMEA) Ltd [2024] DIFC CFI 076. Instructed by Arbor Law. James acted for the defendant in a claim for breach of a software licence.

Emirates NBD Bank PJSC v Almakawi and Ors (2025-). Instructed by DWF (Middle East) LLP. James acts for the claimant bank in relation to claims worth c.\$90m.

YS GM Marfin II LLC and Ors v Lakhani and Ors (2023-). Instructed by Kobre & Kim. James acts for the claimants in complex fraud and asset recovery proceedings in relation to assets worth c.\$70 million.

SBM Bank (Mauritius) Ltd v Renish Petrochem FZE and Ors [2022] DIFC CA 011; [2018] DIFC CFI 018. Instructed by Dentons. James acted (with Rupert Reed KC) for the claimant bank in a substantial and long-running fraud claim against various defendants. The claimant was successful at trial and in the subsequent appeal. James also successfully obtained a committal order against one of the defendants.

International and Offshore

Recommendations

Chancery: Traditional (*Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2021-2023*)

Private Client (*Who's Who Legal: UK Bar 2020*)

United Arab Emirates: The English Bar: Commercial (*Legal 500 EMEA*)

Chancery: Traditional, Chancery: Commercial (*Chambers & Partners*)

Disputes Resolution: Commercial Chancery (*Chambers Global*)

Private Client: Trusts and Probate, Commercial Litigation (*The Legal 500*)

Private Client (*Who's Who Legal: UK Bar*)

Quotes

"James is a great advocate and a very fine cross-examiner." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"James Weale is a KC in all but name. He is a fiercely intelligent and incredibly versatile advocate whose oral advocacy is particularly impressive. His strategic vision is second to none." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"One of the cleverest people around. He's a first rate junior, who's got balls of titanium and a backbone of steel. Nothing fazes him and he cross-examines impeccably." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"James Weale is at the top of his game as a junior lawyer. He's incredibly busy and produces phenomenal work product – I don't know how he finds enough hours in the day.." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"James is a great advocate who is good at cross-examination. He's incredibly hands on, and his written work is excellent as he gets stuck into the details." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"He is very, very good, and crosses the domestic and international probate divide. He is also extremely hard-working and has an inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"James works tirelessly for his clients and is very robust. What is good about him is that he has a lot of commercial

experience, which helps for trusts." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"James is excellent, really user-friendly and quick at turnaround. He's happy to engage in strategic conversations." (Chambers & Partners, 2026)

"He is very, very good, and crosses the domestic and international probate divide. He is extremely hardworking and has an inexhaustible supply of enthusiasm." (Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2025)

"James works tirelessly for his clients and is very robust. What is good about him is that he has a lot of commercial experience which helps for trusts." (Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2025)

"James has extraordinary experience for his years. He works incredibly hard, is completely unflappable and is someone you can always rely on." (Chambers & Partners, 2025)

Education & Qualifications

LL.B (Hons) (1st Class) - University of Bristol (highest overall marks in second and final years)

BCL - University of Oxford
(Lincoln College)

BVC - BPP Law School (Outstanding)

Memberships

Chancery Bar Association

COMBAR

Association of Partnership Practitioners

2018: Registered as an Advocate before DIFC Courts
