



serle court

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Richard Wilson KC

Year of Silk: 2016 Year of Call: 1996

"One of the stars of his generation - equally good for strategic advice in conference as he is on his feet in court, Richard is the go-to barrister for any complicated trust matter."

Legal 500 2022

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Practice Overview

Richard Wilson KC has a practice encompassing litigation, drafting and advisory work across a wide range of traditional and commercial chancery, with a strong emphasis on trusts and probate (both contentious and non-contentious), related company and partnership law, claims under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975, tax, professional negligence and civil fraud.

Richard has been involved in many of the most significant and high-value cases in those areas in recent years, including: *Futter v. Futter* [2013] UKSC 26 (the leading case on the Rule in *Re Hastings-Bass*); *Gany v Khan* [2018] UKPC 21 (claim to establish ownership of companies by BVI trust and setting aside appointment by trustees); *Grand View Private Trust Company v. Wong* [2020] Bermuda Court of Appeal (challenge to exercise of trustees' powers on the basis that it destroyed the 'substratum' of the trust) and the *Dawson-Damer litigation* (high value breach of trust claim in The Bahamas with related litigation in England and Bermuda). He is also currently acting in a number of disputes concerning the estates of UHNWIs in England.

His work frequently involves offshore matters and issues of private international law. He has appeared in the Privy Council, the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of Gibraltar, the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of Bermuda, the Supreme Court of The Bahamas, the Grand Court of the Cayman Islands and the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court and Court of Appeal. He has also given expert evidence of English Law in the Royal Courts of Jersey and Guernsey. He frequently acts in cases in all of the principal offshore jurisdictions including those mentioned above and in an increasing number of cases in Hong Kong.

Before commencing practice at the Bar, Richard worked as a tax consultant with Price Waterhouse.



Areas of Expertise

Private Client Trusts and Probate

Richard has extensive experience in trust and probate matters, ranging from contentious matters to applications under the Variation of Trusts Act 1958 and *Public Trustee v. Cooper* applications. Whilst Richard acts in the full range of trust and estate litigation, he has developed particular specialisms in assisting trustees and their advisers to deal with the consequences of mistakes in the creation and administration of trusts (appearing in most of the leading cases in this field in numerous jurisdictions) and also in claims involving allegations of fraud, where he is frequently called upon to assist trustees holding assets that may be the subject of criminal proceedings and/or proprietary claims.

Recent cases include:

Grand View Private Trust Company v. Wong [2020] Bermuda Court of Appeal: Richard acts for one of the beneficiaries of a Bermuda Trust challenging the exercise of the trustee's discretionary powers on the basis of the substratum doctrine. Instructed by MJM.

Dawson-Damer v Taylor Wessing [2020] EWCA Civ 352: Richard appeared (with Antony White QC of Matrix Chambers) in this appeal under the Data Protection Act 1998 for the successful applicant seeking to obtain her personal data from solicitors acting for the trustees of a settlement under which she is a beneficiary. The case decides the extent to which trustees may assert legal advice privilege against beneficiaries. Instructed by McDermott Will & Emery.

Sofer v Swissindependent Trustees SA [2019] EWHC 2071 (Ch): Richard appeared (with James Weale) appeared for a trustee who succeeded in striking out a high-value claim for breach of trust at an early stage in proceedings. Instructed by Radcliffes Le Brasseur.

Hartogs v Rothschild Trust (Schweiz) AG [2019] EWHC 1915 (Ch): Richard appeared for the applicant who successfully set aside transfers into trust worth millions of pounds, on the grounds of mistake. Instructed by Linklaters.

Cowan v Foreman [2019] EWCA Civ 1336: Richard appeared for the executors of the estate in this leading decision on the jurisdiction to extend time for bringing claims under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975. Instructed by Farrer & Co.

Gany Holdings v Khan [2018] UKPC 21: Richard appeared (together with Alan Boyle QC and Zahler Bryan) for the successful Respondents in this case involving allegations that a trustee had wrongfully failed to account for trust assets worth \$100m and that an appointment by trustees should be set aside. Instructed by Stephenson Harwood and Ogier.

Dawes v. Dawes [2017]: Richard acted for winners of the 'Euromillions' lottery who in this high-profile case were sued for proprietary estoppel by a son to whom they had provided significant financial support. The claim was dismissed. Instructed by Boodle Hatfield LLP.

Henchley v. Thompson [2017] EWHC 225 (Ch): Richard appeared (leading James Weale) for the successful claimants who obtained an order against a trustee who had failed to provide information over a number of decades and who contested the right to an account. Instructed by Withers LLP.

RBC v. Stubbs [2017] EWHC 180 (Ch): Richard appeared for the successful Claimants who obtained rectification of two deeds of revocation and reappointment that had inadvertently given rise to a significant charge to tax. Instructed by Farrer & Co. LLP.

Inchbald v. Inchbald [2016]: Richard appeared (leading Oliver Jones) for the first defendant in this high profile probate dispute involving a want of knowledge and approval challenge to the last wills of the famous designer, Michael Inchbald. Instructed by Farrer & Co. LLP.

Van der Merwe v. Goldman [2016] EWHC 926 (Ch): Richard appeared for the claimant who successfully applied to set aside transfers of property and a settlement on the grounds that he had been mistaken as to the tax consequences of doing so. Instructed by Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP.

Royal Society v. Robinson [2015] ChD (Nugee J): Richard appeared for the Royal Society in this application to construe a will which referred to assets in the UK as meaning that it extended to Jersey and the Isle of Man. The Court held that in the context of the will, the term 'UK' did extend beyond its ordinary meaning. Instructed by Withers LLP.

RNID & Others v. Turner [2015] EWHC 3301 (Ch): Richard acted for the charities in their successful claim to challenge a will on the basis that it was not duly executed as the deceased was not present when the witnesses signed. Instructed by Royds LLP.

Fielden v. Christie-Miller [2015] EWHC 2940 (Ch): Richard appeared for the trustees who successfully resisted an

application to amend the claim to bring a claim to rectify a will out of time and to seek removal of the trustees, having previously obtained an order striking out their original statement of case. Instructed by Boodle Hatfield LLP.

Dawson-Damer v. Taylor Wessing [2015] EWHC 2366 (Ch): Richard (led by Jonathan Swift QC) appeared for the claimants who sought disclosure of documents from solicitors under the Data Protection Act 1998. Instructed by McDermott Will & Emery UK LLP.

Futter v Futter [2013] UKSC 26: Richard acted in the High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court for the trustees who applied at to set aside the exercise of their discretion under the principle in *Re Hastings-Bass*. The case is the leading authority on the circumstances in which the exercise of a trustee's power can be set aside. Instructed by Withers LLP.

Commercial Litigation

Richard's practice includes acting in a range of commercial disputes, often involving applications for freezing injunctions and other interim relief. Recent cases include:

Chaggar v. Chaggar [2018] EWHC 1203 (QB): Richard appeared (leading James Weale) for the successful claimant in this dispute over an agreement for the sale of shares in a private company. The case involved issues of contractual construction, financial assistance, estoppel and economic duress. Instructed by Shakespeare Martineau.

Professional Negligence

Richard is frequently instructed by Claimants, Defendants and insurers in matters relating to professional negligence, in particular relating to solicitors and accountants. Most of these claims settle on confidential terms. Richard has developed a particular specialism in assisting defendants and their insurers to mitigate loss by rectifying or setting aside transactions.

Birdseye v. Roythornes [2015] EWHC 1003 (Ch): Richard appeared for the First and Second Defendants in this professional negligence case arising out of the drafting of a codicil by solicitors.

Civil Fraud

Richard has acted in numerous civil fraud cases, particularly in the context of trusts, companies, accessory liability and MTIC fraud. He has extensive experience of making (and defending) applications for injunctions and disclosure orders, including freezing injunctions and search orders.

Richard has recently assisted Guernsey advocates in relation to claims to recover assets for liquidators of a hedge fund that had been the subject of a major fraud. He has also developed a particular specialism in assisting trustees and other fiduciaries in situations where trust funds are the subject of criminal investigations. Recent cases have involved him appearing in the BVI for trustees seeking to distribute assets in circumstances where the family who set up the trust are being investigated by the authorities in the UK; advising Jersey trustees having to deal with issues arising out of criminal proceedings brought against beneficiaries in Italy; and assisting Jersey advocates in a claim to secure the release of company funds which the defendant bank refuses to release because of orders made by the US Courts in the context of criminal proceedings in that jurisdiction. Richard also has considerable experience in relation to proceeds of crime matters, having acted in the past for the Crown in a number of criminal confiscation matters.

International and Offshore

A substantial part of Richard's practice involves matters in offshore courts. Current cases include matters in the Channel Islands, Gibraltar, Cayman, the Bahamas and the BVI, as well as an appeal from the BVI to the Privy Council. Recent cases include:

Grand View Private Trust Company v. Wong [2020] Bermuda Court of Appeal: Richard acts for one of the beneficiaries of a Bermuda Trust challenging the exercise of the trustee's discretionary powers on the basis of the substratum doctrine. Instructed by MJM.

Dawson-Damer v. Lyndhurst [2019] SC (Bda) 8 Civ: Richard appeared for the applicant who successfully obtained an injunction to preserve assets pending the determination of proceedings in The Bahamas. The case involved the question of whether the Bermuda courts would grant such an injunction in the absence of proceedings in that jurisdiction. Instructed by McDermott Will & Emery and Conyers.

Gany Holdings v. Khan [2018] UKPC 21: Richard appeared (together with Alan Boyle QC and Zahler Bryan) for the successful Respondents in this case involving allegations that a trustee had wrongfully failed to account for trust assets worth \$100m and that an appointment by trustees should be set aside. Instructed by Stephenson Harwood and Ogier.

Tchenguz v. R&H Trustees SA [2018] BVI Commercial Court and Court of Appeal: Richard represented the trustees both before the Commercial Court and Court of Appeal in these applications for disclosure by a beneficiary under the Schmidt v. Rosewood jurisdiction and from the Court files under the BVI Civil Procedure rules.

M v. St Anne's Trustees [2018] Guernsey Court of Appeal: Richard assisted Guernsey advocates in this successful appeal against the refusal of the Lieutenant Bailiff to set aside an exercise of discretion by trustees under the rule in Re Hastings-Bass.

Re: Poon [2015] JCA 109: Richard assisted Jersey advocates in this appeal against the Royal Court's decision to approve the exclusion of a beneficiary following divorce proceedings in Hong Kong. Instructed by Carey Olsen.

Schroder Cayman Bank & Trust v. Schroder AG [2015] Cayman Grand Court: Richard appeared for the successful Plaintiff who established that purported appointments were void for excessive execution. The case involved the resolution of an apparent conflict between Cayman and Jersey 'firewall' legislation and the mistake jurisdiction in Cayman. Richard also assisted Jersey advocates in the application to the Royal Court for recognition and enforcement of the Cayman order. Instructed by Farrer & Co LLP and Mourant Ozannes.

J.F. & M.F. v Hexagon Investments Ltd [2014] Cayman Grand Court: Richard appeared for the applicants who successfully established that assets transferred by them to a company were not held on the trusts of a settlement created by them, thereby saving substantial amounts of UK tax. Instructed by Withers LLP and Turners.

Company

Richard has acted in numerous cases in this field, particularly those involving allegations of breach of duty by office holders or unfair prejudice. Notable cases include:

TIPP v Chagala [2018] BVI Commercial Court: Richard appeared for Defendants applying to strike out an unfair prejudice petition against it in relation to a BVI company. Instructed by Ogier.

Hurd v. TPL Holdings [2014] All ER (D) 266: Richard appeared for the petitioner in this application to strike out a petition under s.994 of the Companies Act 2006. The application to strike out was successfully resisted and the case

involved consideration of the important question of the extent to which a petition may be based on past conduct. Instructed by Stewart-Moore Solicitors.

Goldfarb v Poppleton [2007]: Richard appeared for the liquidator in this case concerning the applicable limitation period for claims brought under s.212 of the Insolvency Act 1986. Instructed by Moon Beaver.

Private International Law

Richard's cases frequently involve issues of private international law and he has appeared in a number of leading cases in this field, including:

Dawson-Damer v. Lyndhurst [2019] SC (Bda) 8 Civ: Richard appeared for the applicant who successfully obtained an injunction to preserve assets pending the determination of proceedings in The Bahamas. the case involved the question of whether the Bermuda courts would grant such an injunction in the absence of proceedings in that jurisdiction. Instructed by McDermott Will & Emery and Conyers.

W v. Line Trustees [2017] Gibraltar Supreme Court and Court of Appeal: Richard appeared for a husband involved in English divorce proceedings who was a defendant to a claim brought by trustees of a family trust in Gibraltar to determine the validity of previous actions taken by them. The wife sought to challenge jurisdiction under the Brussels Regulation but withdrew her applications, then sought to appeal the Judge's decision to determine jurisdiction and hear the substantive claim.

Schroder Cayman Bank & Trust v. Schroder AG [2015] Cayman Grand Court: Richard appeared for the successful Plaintiff who established that purported appointments were void for excessive execution. The case involved the resolution of an apparent conflict between Cayman and Jersey 'firewall' legislation and the mistake jurisdiction in Cayman. Richard also assisted Jersey advocates in the application to the Royal Court for recognition and enforcement of the Cayman order. Instructed by Farrer & Co LLP and Mourant Ozannes.

Tadros v. Barratt [2014] EWHC 2860 (Ch): Richard appeared for a Dutch Foundation, successfully opposing an application for anti-suit and freezing injunctions where probate proceedings had been brought in both England and the Netherlands. Instructed by Boodle Hatfield LLP.

Property

Richard has extensive experience in real property matters, in particular matters relating to trusts of land and proprietary estoppel. Recent notable cases include:

Habberfield v. Habberfield [2018] EWHC 317 (Ch) and [2019] EWCA Civ 890: Richard appeared for the Defendants in this claim for proprietary estoppel relating to a farm in Somerset. Instructed by Wilsons.

Gaspar v. Zaleski [2017] EWHC 1770 (Ch): Richard acted for the Defendant to this claim relating to a London property, involving arguments on constructive trusts, construction of express trusts and proprietary estoppel. Instructed by Macfarlanes.

Chancery

Tax

Matrimonial Finance: Trusts and Company law

Recommendations

Private Client Global Elite Directory (2023)
Top Recommended Contentious Trust Lawyers - Offshore and Trusts (Spears500, 2022)
Traditional Chancery (Chambers & Partners HNW)
Private Client (Who's Who Legal: UK Bar, 2020)
Offshore, Private Wealth: Trusts UK (Chambers Global)
Private Client (Who's Who Legal: UK Bar, 2019)
Private Client Global Elite 2018 by Legal Week
Traditional Chancery (Chambers & Partners)
Offshore (Chambers & Partners)
Trusts (Chambers & Partners)
Private client: trusts and probate (Legal 500)
Chancery; Trusts and Personal Tax Law (Best Lawyers)
Richard is also listed in the Citywealth Leaders' List as a prominent barrister in the field of trusts.

Quotes

"Richard Wilson is an elite barrister: experienced, incisive and with a fantastic client-side manner." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard has been involved in big cases. One of the things that I picked up working with him is his invaluable ability to approach cases from a novel angle and come up with effective solutions." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard Wilson is excellent. He is what you want a leader to be in a case. He works well with his junior and has a real gravitas with clients." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard has huge experience when it comes to marrying up chancery law and family law." Chambers & Partners 2026

"A real heavyweight advocate who commands respect from opponents and judges." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard Wilson is really brilliant, he's an eminent contentious trust specialist and the quality of his work is remarkable." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard is excellent, easy to deal with and super smart." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard has incredible trusts knowledge and is outstanding. He will give you the support technically, but is also very friendly and approachable. I trust him absolutely." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard's mastery of trust law, combined with unflappable courtroom presence and razor sharp advocacy, makes him the go-to silk for high-stakes, multi-jurisdictional disputes." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard is excellent to work with. He's very prepared and totally immersed in the case." Chambers & Partners 2026

"Richard has been involved in big cases. One of the things that I picked up working with him is his invaluable ability to approach cases from a novel angle and come up with effective solutions." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2025

"He is excellent, what you want a leader to be in a case. He works well with his junior and has a real gravitas with clients. He knows what he is doing." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2025

"Richard Wilson is an elite barrister: experienced, incisive and with a fantastic client-side manner." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2025

"Richard is responsive, technically strong and very user-friendly." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Extremely bright, good on his feet and a pleasure to work with." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard is clever, highly commercial, very approachable and incredibly responsive. His advocacy is fantastic; he's very calm, he doesn't get rattled and he is very specific." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard is very practical and strategic in his thinking, and adept at readjusting, speedily and accurately, when matters take an unexpected course. He's accessible, proactive and client-friendly." Chambers & Partners 2025

"He is much in demand by solicitors and brings a very unique, lateral approach to problem solving. He thinks independently and creatively, and applies his technical capabilities very well." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard has got excellent judgement and knows the law inside out. In court, he has real presence." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard quickly absorbs even complicated factual scenarios and is able to impressively master every element of a trust brief." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Approachable, diligent, experienced and really pleasant to work with, as well as someone who brings a whole new perspective to a case." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard is awesome. He is so thorough, very collaborative and so user-friendly." Chambers & Partners 2025

"He is very good - extremely bright, good on his feet and a pleasure to work with." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard is one of the leading KCs for offshore trust work." Chambers & Partners 2025

"Richard is clever, incisive and creative in his problem-solving." Legal 500 2025

"Richard is very commercial, very approachable and incredibly responsive. His advocacy is fantastic. He's very calm, doesn't get rattled, and is very specific and very clever." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2024

"Richard is incredibly practical and strategic in his thinking and adept at readjusting with speed and accuracy when matters take an unexpected course. He's accessible, proactive and client-friendly." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2024

"He is much in demand by solicitors and brings a very unique lateral approach to problem solving in these cases. He thinks independently and creatively and applies his technical capabilities very well." Chambers & Partners High Net Worth, 2024

"Richard is extremely approachable and a pleasure to work with. His manner of presenting arguments is elegant and charming - he is someone you really want on your team." Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024

"Richard is very natural on his feet and has been instructed on some of the most seminal trust and probate matters in the industry." Chambers & Partners UK Bar 2024

"Richard Wilson KC has a particularly strong advisory practice. He is often instructed in complex trust cases and is also noted for his handling of offshore and other overseas matters" Chambers & Partners 2024

"He provides advice of superb quality." Chambers & Partners UK Bar, 2023

"He's just brilliant. We love the fact he's amazing with the clients as he can communicate really complicated legal issues in a way they can grasp immediately." Chambers & Partners UK Bar, 2023

"Richard Wilson is an exceptional advocate. He is a leading trusts silk at the height of his powers, and is one of the go-to silks for highly complex cases." Chambers & Partners UK Bar, 2023

"Richard Wilson is very charming and has a good bedside manner. Highly knowledgeable and very easy to deal with, he is immensely valuable to any team." Chambers & Partners UK Bar, 2023

"He is a real pleasure to work with. He is an able litigator with an affable court manner who swiftly establishes rapport with the judge." Chambers & Partners UK Bar, 2023

"Richard is excellent at providing sound strategic advice and incredibly likeable in court." Chambers & Partners HNW 2023

"Richard is extremely approachable and a pleasure to work with. His manner of presenting arguments is elegant and charming - he is someone you really want on your team." Chambers & Partners HNW 2023

"Richard is very natural on his feet and has been instructed on some of the most seminal trust and probate matters in the industry." Chambers & Partners HNW 2023

"Very clever, very responsive, he explains things very clearly and makes complicated points seem like a matter of perfect common sense." Legal 500 2022

"Absolutely fantastic." Chambers & Partners HNW 2021

"He knows everything there is to know in this field of law, he's really one of the best." Chambers & Partners HNW 2021

"very down-to-earth and easy to get along with." Chambers & Partners HNW 2021

"very commercial, practical and responsive" Chambers High Net Worth, 2020

"He's just fantastically user-friendly - always at the end of the phone if you need him. He's also so good strategically." Chambers High Net Worth, 2020

Client Testimonials

"Richard Wilson QC is a go-to silk for high-profile international UHNWs, representing clients from Australia to Bermuda, the Bahamas, the Cayman Islands and Hong Kong, as well as UK and Crown dependencies. His expertise in international finance legislation has been built up over a career that also included a spell as a tax consultant at Price Waterhouse. He was called to the Bar in 1996 and took silk in 2016. Getting the best result as quickly and cost-effectively as possible for clients is key. 'I always aim to be pragmatic and commercial in my approach,' he says. 'In many cases emotions can run high amongst family members, and one of our main jobs is to provide the objectivity that helps to achieve the best result.' "

(Spears 500, 2022)

"A fantastic advocate, an insightful adviser; responsive and good value."

Rupert Ticehurst (Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP)

"Great to have on your side"

Edward Mackereth (Ogier)

"Serle Court is a market leader and a go-to set for contentious trust and offshore work. Over the years, we have worked with a number of different silks and juniors on both litigation and arbitration matters, often with a cross jurisdiction aspect. This has included Alan Boyle QC, Dominic Dowley QC, John Machell QC, Richard Wilson QC, Dakis Hagen QC, Sophie Holcombe, and Oliver Jones. The quality of their work has been consistently excellent, and their commercial nous and practical advice certainly sets them out from the pack. Head Clerk, Steve Whitaker, runs a tight ship and is always a pleasure to deal with."

Jeremy Kosky and Maxine Mossman (Clifford Chance LLP)

Publications

[*What to consider when looking at assisted suicide*](#), FT Advisor, April 2019.

[*Relief from flawed decisions*](#), Trusts and Estates Law & Tax Journal, November 2018, together with [Alan Boyle QC](#) and [Zahler Bryan](#).

Richard writes extensively on subjects within his fields of expertise. He has had numerous articles published in journals such as Private Client Business, The Trusts and Estates Law and Tax Journal and Elderly Client Adviser. He is the co-author of 'The Trustee Act 2000: a Practical Guide' (Jordans, 2001) and is currently co-writing the 'Trust Litigation Handbook' which is due to be published by Jordans. Richard is a former editor of the Trusts Quarterly Review, and is currently a member of the editorial boards of the Wills and Trusts Law Reports. He is also currently contributing to the latest edition of 'Contentious Probate Claims' (Thompson Reuters) and is the Consultant Editor of the 'Trusts and Settlements' volume of Halsbury's Laws of England.

Seminars and Lectures

Richard lectures on a wide range of subjects. He has spoken at the Legal Week Trusts and Estates Litigation Forum on numerous occasions. He has lectured to a number of STEP branches in the UK and around the World, including the Cayman Islands, Guernsey, New York, Gibraltar and Bermuda.

In the Press

'Importance of will writing, particularly during times of COVID-19' BBC Radio London Interview

[*'Demand for wills surges following Covid-19 reality check'*](#) The Daily Telegraph, March 2020

[*'A whole new world'*](#) Solicitors Journal, February 2020

[*'Judge blames 82-year-old for costly Habberfield farm inheritance row'*](#) The Times, 24 May 2019

[*'What to consider when looking at assisted suicide'*](#) Financial Times Adviser, 17 April 2019

Education & Qualifications

Richard read Law at the Universities of Sheffield (LLB) and London (LLM).

Memberships

Chancery Bar Association

ACTAPS

STEP

Professional Negligence Bar Association
