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Christopher Stead



Called: 2008
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PROFILE

Christopher is a commercial chancery barrister, with particular specialism in insolvency, company, and commercial litigation, as well as real property and private client work. His cross-disciplinary expertise enables him to navigate the frequent and intricate interplay between corporate, property, and probate law, while delivering strong advocacy and strategic advice in each domain individually.

Christopher is a robust and accomplished courtroom advocate who thrives on the rigour of trials and contested hearings. He provides advice, drafting services, and advocacy, at all levels and stages of litigation, as well as assisting through ADR processes such as round-table negotiations and mediation. He regularly appears in the ICC, the High Court, and the County Court and Property Tribunal. Practical and responsive, Christopher often accepts instructions at short notice, including at a late stage in proceedings or just prior to trial. Clients particularly value his ability to cut through complexity, identify the core issues, and offer clear, realistic and commercially aware advice.

He originally practised as a tenant in the business and property team at Kings Chambers, specialising in insolvency and property work. After a career break during which he pursued ordained ministry and academic work in theology and church history, he resumed his busy practice at chambers in London, and deals with complex cases across the spectrum of chancery commercial litigation. He also often speaks at seminars for professional clients across the areas of business, property, and probate law.

EXPERTISE

Commercial Litigation

Christopher acts for both major corporations and smaller traders or individuals in a wide range of contractual

and business disputes. His practice encompasses everything from interlocutory matters to full trial and appeal. He also handles cross-jurisdictional issues and conflicts-of-laws questions. His typical work includes misrepresentation and deceit, fiduciary duty claims, trusts and tracing, agency and authority disputes, restitution, sale of goods and supply of services, and enforcement issues such as security for costs, freezing injunctions and other interim remedies. He has particular experience with guarantees, indemnities, and security (e.g. mortgages). He finds that an increasing part of his practice involves issues of civil fraud.

Christopher has a growing professional negligence practice, particularly involving claims against solicitors and other professionals arising out of commercial disputes, property business (contentious and non-contentious), and company law matters.

Examples of Christopher's commercial dispute practice:

- Sole counsel in High Court proceedings arising out of a complex commercial contract dispute.
- Sole counsel in a significant solicitors' negligence High Court claim involving substantial damages.
- Advising on a bailment and conversion claim involving prestige cars.
- Acting for directors in a breach of covenant claim.
- Advising on a significant dispute involving claims of unjust enrichment, mistake, and duress.
- Assisting leading counsel on advising on anti-suit injunctions and cross-border litigation.
- Acting in a high-value contractual dispute involving agency, authority, and allegations of fraud.
- Defence of a pre-action disclosure application in a civil fraud case, successfully resisting the application.
- Acting for lenders in loan enforcement cases.
- Drafting and advising in guarantee and indemnity disputes.
- Settlement of pleadings in injunctions restraining breach of covenants or retention of documents.

Insolvency and Company

Christopher advises on, and acts in, matters of personal and corporate insolvency, often accepting urgent instructions such as setting aside statutory demands and restraining presentation/advertisement of winding up petitions. He acts for both debtors and creditors in bankruptcy and winding-up proceedings, including regularly dealing with complicated disputes. He has expertise in enforcing personal guarantees, indemnities, and security, and is able to provide fast-turnaround advice and robust advocacy in hearings.

He appears in the ICC and interim applications list in the High Court on all applications related to the commencement of insolvency processes. He accepts instructions on behalf of insolvency practitioners and directors bringing and defending misfeasance/misapplied funds and breach of duty claims, with a focus on fast resolution and efficient creditor recovery. He is happy to advise on all matters relating to the administration of company and individual assets.

His property litigation expertise means he is able to deal with the complex crossover involved in insolvency scenarios that relate to property, including enforcement, disclaimer, landlord claims, and secured debts, amongst other things.

Christopher accepts instructions in all matters in relation to company and partnership law, including shareholder fallouts, derivative claims, and unfair prejudice petitions.

He has a particular interest in claims involving breach of duties and fraud, and is able to ground such claims in insolvency routes where appropriate. He also takes on cases involving professional negligence and company law disputes.

Clients have found that his pastoral experience gives him an extra set of skills to help aggrieved parties

articulate and achieve the result they really want.

Christopher is happy to provide bespoke training on insolvency and company matters, having recently delivered seminars on shadow and de facto directors, and procedural matters in the Business and Property Courts, for firms of specialist commercial solicitors.

Examples of Christopher's insolvency and company practice:

- Acting for and advising office-holders on claims against directors and NewCo in relation to misapplied assets, wrongful trading, and phoenixing.
- Acting for an individual bankrupt in a complicated annulment application.
- Acting for and advising creditors in formulating creative routes of recovery in a complex set of property transactions involving sections 238, 239, and 423, of the Insolvency Act 1986.
- Successfully resisting a claim for a beneficial interest in a property on behalf of a trustee in bankruptcy, as well as obtaining a costs order for the trustee.
- Assistance in a large disclosure exercise in a multi-million pound claim brought by company liquidators against former directors.
- Appearing on the return of a freezing injunction against a former director and successfully resisting an application for costs.
- Successfully applying for an urgent administration order which resulted in the rescue of a company and dozens of jobs.
- Regularly appearing on administration extension applications.
- Securing validation orders.
- Advising a company director on personal liability and piercing the corporate veil.
- Advising personal representatives on issues arising out of the death of a sole shareholder and director.
- Settling and appearing in proceedings relating to the Companies House register, including restorations and rectifications.
- Appearing in disputed bankruptcy petition proceedings, arising out of liability of directors under personal guarantees for a significant debt.

Property

Christopher is experienced across the whole spectrum of property litigation, both commercial and residential.

In real property cases, he has acted, advised, and drafted in relation to boundary disputes, rights of way, easements, nuisance and trespass, adverse possession, and proprietary estoppel and constructive trusts. He frequently appears in cases involving orders for sale and other possession matters. He handles claims of misrepresentation in sale of property disputes, and claims of professional negligence against surveyors, conveyancers, and builders. He receives instructions in TOLATA claims and in other cases involving the establishment of interests in land. His extensive probate and inheritance practice means that he is well-versed in the interplay between estates and property proceedings.

In landlord and tenant matters, Christopher acts for landlords and tenants in residential possession proceedings (including as against trespassers), handling the various and complex issues that arise under the different routes to possession. He is regularly instructed in disrepair claims, both on behalf of landlords and tenants. His landlord and tenant practice includes social housing, and he has successfully obtained numerous anti-social behaviour injunctions, access injunctions, and possession orders against occupiers in succession disputes.

He has appeared in long leasehold disputes, advised on leasehold enfranchisements and has appeared successfully in residential service charge proceedings. He regularly deals with issues arising from breach of

covenant and forfeiture, and advises and acts in leasehold disputes in the county court and property tribunal.

He has successfully acted for landlords in commercial leasehold claims, including renewal of business tenancy, dilapidations claims, and recently advised on a dispute concerning implied surrender and re-grant and the implications for a 1954 Act tenancy.

Examples of Christopher's property litigation practice:

- Drafting statements of case in a High Court claim involving commercial property, and being led by Nicolas Grundy KC he successfully resisted the bulk of orders sought in a highly contested interim-injunction application.
- On behalf of a trustee in bankruptcy, secured a favourable judgment after a multi-day trial concerning the existence of beneficial interests in a property.
- Successfully resisting forfeiture proceedings against a commercial tenant.
- Advising and assisting in resolving a long-running and high-value TOLATA dispute on behalf of an executor.
- Settling pleadings in a terminal dilapidations dispute with a high six-figure damages claim.
- Successfully representing the defendant in a multi-day trial in the tribunal involving a determined boundary application and counterclaim in adverse possession.
- Successfully obtaining summary judgment against a claimant in a property damage claim involving allegations of conspiracy and fraud.
- Advising and settling pleadings in numerous cases of nuisance involving flooding and tree root encroachment.
- Successfully securing a finding of contempt for breach of an anti-social behaviour housing injunction.
- Obtaining an advantageous settlement during a boundary dispute trial.
- Settling pleadings and appearing in TOLATA disputes.
- Advising in several cases involving allegations of misrepresentation in the sale of property.

Private Client

Christopher has extensive experience in probate, inheritance, and estate-related litigation. He advises on the administration of estates, duties and powers of executors, the construction rectification and validity of wills, and contested estate and beneficiary disputes including the removal of executors and claims for directions or conduct of estate administration.

He regularly appears in contested probate proceedings, including challenges based on capacity, undue influence, fraudulent calumny, and forgery, as well as regularly acting for claimants and defendants in applications under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependants) Act 1975 ('1975 Act claims'). He has been involved in numerous mediations involving these issues, and is well able to handle sensitive disputes and issues with empathy and clarity, his pastoral background lending him the unique skills to offer reassurance at the most difficult times.

Christopher also represents clients in proceedings concerning trusts and trust-related issues, including the duties and powers of trustees, breach of trust claims, and issues arising out of allegations of fraud, sham, and/or mistake.

Christopher is happy to present bespoke training for solicitors on probate and contentious inheritance law. Most recently he delivered a seminar to the probate team of a national firm on undue influence, testamentary capacity, and the implications of proposed probate law reforms. He also recently delivered several sessions at Five Paper's Property Conference 2025, one on contentious probate, and another on trusts of land.

Education/Qualifications

University of Leeds – Law (LLB) – First Class
BPP Law School (Leeds), BVC – Outstanding (highest in year)
Baron Dr Ver Heyden Lancey Prize (Middle Temple)

Professional Memberships

Chancery Bar Association
COMBAR – Commercial Bar Association
R3 – Association of Business Recovery Professionals

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