

Aidan Briggs

Called: 2009

"Incredibly bright with an approachable down-to-earth manner."
Private Client: Trusts & Probate - Legal 500 2020



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Practice Overview

Aidan Briggs has established himself as a specialist advocate and advisor for trusts, estates and property disputes. His regular trial experience in the High Court and the specialist property tribunals give him the edge in the courtroom and make him a favourite for factually complex cases where effective cross-examination may be the difference between winning and losing.

Aidan's practice covers the full range of private client matters: contested probate and 1975 Act claims, partnership disputes and contentious trusts work (both on- and offshore) as well as proprietary estoppel, commercial landlord and tenant disputes and trusts of land. His cases often involve multiple jurisdictions and issues of domicile.

Aidan is fully versed in the tax implications of private client disputes and regularly advises in relation to Inheritance Tax, Capital Gains Tax and Stamp Duty Land Tax matters, particularly as they affect farmland and farming families.

Aidan is an Associate Editor of *Lewin on Trusts* (20th Ed.) and a contributor to *Williams, Mortimer & Sunnucks on Executors, Administrators and Probate* (21st Ed.). His writing has appeared in *Trusts & Trustees*, the *Wills & Trusts Law Reports* and the *New Law Journal*.

Aidan is sought-after as a mediator and arbitrator in his main areas of practice.

Trusts and Estates

Since appearing in the leading capacity case of *Ashkettle v Gwinnett* [2013] EWHC 2125 (Ch), Aidan has been sought out for contested probate actions and claims under the Inheritance Act 1975 for his in-depth legal knowledge and skill as a cross-examiner, particularly where capacity is in issue or there are allegations of undue influence, as in *Re Chin* [2019] EWHC 523 (Ch). His recent experience has particularly involved estates spanning several jurisdictions with multiple fora of litigation and competing probate jurisdictions.

Aidan also advises in domestic and offshore trust disputes, including applications for the removal of trustees, *Beddoe* applications and VTA claims. He is competent to advise on the capital gains and inheritance tax consequences of most trust transactions, particularly where these overlap with variations to estates under s.144 IHTA. He is advising several beneficiaries of 'home loan' schemes.

Aidan has extensive experience in partnership and charity disputes, having advised a number of churches, charities and small partnerships on claims against negligent trustees, Charities Act 2006 proceedings and the ownership of charity or partnership assets.

Aidan stays at the sharp end of legal developments as an Associate Editor of *Lewin on Trusts* (20th Ed.) and contributes to *Williams, Mortimer & Sunnucks on Executors, Administrators and Probate* (21st Ed.). He has particular expertise in the disclosure obligations of trustees under the GDPR.

Property

Aidan's property practice is focussed on trusts of land, property fraud and injunctive relief. He recently appeared in *Saeed & Saeed v Ibrahim & Ors* [2018] EWHC 1804 (Ch); a complex warehousing fraud involving forged documents and six different property transactions under scrutiny, with issues of illegality and limitation all at play. He often advises the victims of property fraud regarding rectification or professional negligence claims.

Aidan is competent to advise on all aspects of rural property law, including agricultural tenancies, proprietary estoppel claims and applications to register Town or Village Greens under the Commons Act 2006, having recently acted for St John's College, Cambridge in an inquiry.

He is also confident preparing and presenting applications for injunctions relating to property. He recently acted against Thames Water in High Court injunction proceedings seeking to stop a major residential development. He acts in all manner of boundary and right-of-way disputes.

Commercial Litigation

Aidan is comfortable in commercial disputes of all shapes and sizes. He acted in the Blacklisting litigation with probably the largest disclosure exercise in history, and successfully defended a £7m claim by former socialite Koo Stark against her former partner in *Stark v Walker* [2020] EWHC 562 (Ch). He is often instructed to defend the spouses or beneficiaries of alleged fraudsters against s.423 applications to recover assets, or in tracing claims.

Aidan is above all a pragmatic and commercially-minded advisor, able to make swift tactical decisions to get disputes resolved. His in-depth knowledge of property, insolvency and trust law allow him to take a holistic view of his clients needs and to advise accordingly. He is happiest in cases with a complex factual matrix against which to cross-examine

Mediation

Aidan is much sought-after as a mediator of private client, property and commercial disputes. He was trained by the ADR Group in 2018. His expertise covers a range of disputes including the following:

- Contentious probate
- Claims under the Inheritance Act 1975
- Claims for breach of trust and for removal of trustees / executors
- Professional negligence.

Aidan brings to the mediation room a calm, constructive attitude focused upon understanding the needs and motivations of the parties and seeking creative paths to a compromise. He is willing to be forthright and challenging where necessary and brings the weight of his experience at the bar and his in-depth knowledge of the law to assist in resolving disputes.

Cases

Name: Arron Banks v HMRC

Reference: Banks v HMRC [2020] UKUT 101

Date: 16th April 2020

Court: Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery)

Facts:

Arron Banks' donations to UKIP gave rise to an Inheritance Tax charge because UKIP was not a qualifying political party, the Upper Tribunal has found.

Comment:

Banks v HMRC [2020] UKUT 101 (TCC) is a decision of the Upper Tribunal concerning whether the strict interpretation of s.24 Inheritance Tax Act 1984 (HTA) breached Mr Banks' human rights and constituted a breach of EU law.

To read more, please [click here](#)

Name: Baccarini v Andrews

Date: 16th March 2020

Court: Chancery Division

Facts:

The Defendants were the executors of a will, under which a substantial property was held on trust for the widow of the deceased for her lifetime.

A successful application was made to remove the defendants as executors in September 2017. However, one of the defendants continued to hold himself out as a trustee, and the question arose whether removal under s.50 Administration of Justice Act 1985 also led to removal as a trustee of the will trust.

The Chief Master held that it was; until the administration of the estate is complete, the trusteeship of the will trusts does not come into existence and it must be implicit in the removal of an executor that they are also removed as trustee. An earlier decision of Master Shuman - *Da Silva v Heselton* [2018] EWHC 1181 (Ch) - was followed.

Judge: Chief Master Marsh

Comment:

This is a helpful resolution of a moot point; often claimants applying for an order under s.50 do not also ask for removal of the defendants as trustees, and it will bring comfort to many that they need not issue a second set of proceedings.

Aidan Briggs represented the Claimants and was instructed by Rosalind Webster of Wellers Law Group LLP

Practice Area: Trusts and Estates

Name: Kathleen Stark v Warren Walker

Reference: [2020] EWHC 562 (Ch); [2020] EWHC 613 (Ch)

Date: 13th March 2020

Court: Chancery Division

Facts:

Former actress and royal love-interest Kathleen 'Koo' Stark has lost her latest multi-million pound claim against Warren Walker, the father of her child, with whom she has been litigating since 2000.

Ms Stark and Mr Walker began a relationship in 1995 and conceived a child, who was born in 1997. Ms Stark alleged that they had been engaged several times, and that Mr Walker had cancelled one wedding at only 10 days' notice.

Ms Stark claimed that in September 1997 Mr Walker had made a contract with her by which he promised to pay her £50,000 per annum, index-linked for inflation, plus all of her rent and household expenses, for the remainder of her life. The document on which the promise was written stated that it was *'more than any legal obligation [Mr Walker] is eligible for but he does this out of kindness and love and guarantees the amount'*.

Ms Stark and Mr Walker soon fell out over access to the Child and in 2000 Ms Stark flew to Florida and commenced the first of many claims. She subsequently brought proceedings in New York claiming roughly \$39 million, which were summarily dismissed. Mr Walker brought Hague proceedings for the return of the child from Florida. When those proceedings were settled, the settlement agreement, alongside a host of provisions for the maintenance of the child, included the following clause: *"Walker will pay Ms Stark 200,000 pounds for the purpose of securing housing in the United Kingdom"*.

There then followed 13 years of bitterly-contested proceedings in the Family Division pursuant to the Children Act 1989. Those proceedings were in private and no evidence or judgments from them can be reported, but they formed a substantial part of the evidence at trial. Ms Stark was made bankrupt in 2011.

After the conclusion of the Family proceedings, in 2014 Ms Stark served a statutory demand on Mr Walker claiming £200,000 due under the Florida settlement agreement. She then issued proceedings in the Chancery Division also claiming declarations that the 1997 contract was still binding.

The trial took place before David Halpern QC in January 2020. Giving Judgment, he found Ms Stark to be *'both evasive and combative … any of the many inconsistencies between her witness statement and the evidence … were blamed on the various lawyers who had acted for her over the last 25 years'*. He found

that Ms Stark was not a witness of truth. The trial judge was also critical of Mr Walker's evidence.

The trial judge found that the 1997 promise was not supported by consideration; Mr Walker had written it with the appearance of formality in order to gain access to his child, but it was not an enforceable contract.

As for the Florida settlement agreement, the deputy Judge found that the agreement was not, properly construed, for Ms Stark's personal benefit, but for the benefit of the child. It was therefore an agreement which the Family Court had jurisdiction to vary under the Children Act 1989.

Following the receipt of the draft judgment, Ms Stark made an application for the judgment to be completely anonymised to remove any details by which she could be identified, claiming that her daughter's and her own safety would be put at risk by being identified. The Judge rejected the application: the child was now an adult, and her identity had been known to the press since her birth, thanks to her mother giving interviews to tabloid magazines. The proceedings had been issued in public and listed for an open trial; the evidence regarding the child herself was now 17 years old and not prejudicial.

Ms Stark made an urgent application to the Court of Appeal for permission to appeal the decision to make the judgment public; the Court of Appeal refused permission.

Judge: David Halpern QC

Comment:

This was the latest in an extraordinary string of lawsuits across five different courts over two decades. Sifting through the evidence from dozens of Family Division hearings, New York proceedings and Hague convention proceedings in Florida to build a case took patience and forensic attention to detail. Ultimately, as with so many cases, it all turned on the oral evidence and cross-examination, and the demolition of Ms Stark's credibility was key to Mr Walker's success.

Aidan Briggs represented Mr Walker and was instructed by Tristan Benson of Tollers LLP

Practice Area: Commercial Litigation

Name: Re Ho Chau Ying Chin

Reference: [2019] EWHC 523 (Ch)

Date: 8th March 2019

Court: High Court

Facts:

Ivy Chin challenged a purported will of her mother, by which she disinherited her five daughters and gave nearly all her estate to her only son, the first defendant. She also challenged a lifetime gift of a substantial property to her grandson, the first defendant's son, which took place at about the same time. Both were challenged on the grounds of undue influence, and the will on knowledge and capacity.

The deceased was born in Hong Kong, but lived in Southend-on-Sea in a traditional Chinese household in which her life centred around the family takeaway and the Chinese community. She never learned to speak English, and much of the evidence at trial focussed upon the traditional Chinese attitudes regarding the rights of sons to

inherit at the expense of daughters. It was also alleged that the deceased's husband was an abusive and controlling character with a compulsive gambling addition who was violent towards her and his children.

The trial took place over 4 days and attracted considerable publicity:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ae9f8f40-36f2-11e9-a129-05a1d4d7c2a2>

<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/sisters-fight-millionaire-brother-after-being-cut-out-of-3m-family-fortune-a4074076.html>

Giving Judgment on 8 March 2019, HHJ Jarman QC held that the deceased had not known and approved of the later will and further found that, if she had, it had been procured by undue influence by the Son and Husband. He therefore found in favour of an earlier will, by which the deceased gave her entire residuary estate to her five daughters. He also ordered the lifetime gift of property to be set aside for undue influence.

Judge: HHJ Jarman QC

Comment:

Aidan Briggs was instructed by Neil Lloyd-Evans of LE Law.

Practice Area: Trusts and Estates

Name: Bhusate v Patel

Reference: [2018] EWHC 2362

Date: 13th September 2018

Court: High Court

Facts:

The recent decision of the High Court in *Bhusate v Patel* should be a warning to all those who remain in the marital home after the death of their spouse. The claimant Mrs Bhusate ended up receiving nothing from the estate of her late husband, and having no interest in the marital home, due to a combination of the equitable rules on self-dealing and the Limitation Act 1980.

Mr Bhusate survived his first wife who died in 1971, and then himself died intestate in 1990, leaving five children by his first marriage, and one child by his second wife, the claimant. His estate was principally comprised in the matrimonial home, which he had assented to himself beneficially after his wife's death. Letters of administration were granted to Mrs Bhusate in 1991, but the property remained registered in the deceased's name.

As surviving spouse, Mrs Bhusate was entitled to a statutory legacy of £75,000 and a life interest in one half of his estate, plus interest at 6%. The remainder was held on the statutory trusts for Mr Bhusate's children. She exercised her right to capitalise her life interest by a notice in 1992. There were discussions between her and the children of the first marriage with respect to the distribution of the estate, but ultimately no agreement was reached, nor was the property ever assented to her.

Although the property was briefly put on the market in 1992 it was never sold, and Mrs Bhusate and her son continued living in the property for another 26 years. Mrs Bhusate alleged that various assurances were given to

her that she could stay in the property, but ultimately the Court found that none of these was sufficiently unequivocal to give rise to a proprietary estoppel or common intention constructive trust.

Following a hearing in June 2018, Chief Master Marsh dismissed the claimant's claims to a beneficial interest in the property, and also replaced her as administratrix of her husband's estate. He concluded that:

- 1) The claimant as a surviving spouse was only entitled to her statutory legacy and capitalised life interest. That claim arose upon her husband's death, and became statute-barred after 12 years pursuant to s.22 Limitation Act 1980.
- 2) The claimant had no beneficial interest in the matrimonial home. There had been no appropriation or assent of the property to her, and even if there had been one it would probably be liable to be set aside under the rule against self-dealing - see *Kane v Radley-Kane* [1999] Ch 274.
- 3) The fact that the claimant had maintained the property for 26 years did not avail her; she was under a fiduciary duty to administer the estate, which included keeping the property in repair.
- 4) The claimant had not shown any resulting or common intention constructive trust between her and the beneficiaries which would give her some interest in the property.

The result was that the claimant was left with no inheritance from her husband's estate and no interest in the matrimonial home. She was reduced to making a claim under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975 some 27 years out of time.

Judge: Chief Master Marsh

Comment:

Although the result of this case seems extraordinary, the basic facts are not uncommon: a property in the sole name of a husband who dies intestate, and a widow who never assents the property and simply allows the years to pass by. Few such clients would imagine that after 12 years they would suddenly lose their interest in the estate. For deaths after 1st October 2014, the spouse will now receive an absolute entitlement to the residue, so this issue will no longer apply, but such cases may still arise for decades to come, if wily practitioners (or venal children) are able to spot them.

Practice Area: Trusts and Estates

Name: Saeed & Saeed v Ibrahim & ors

Reference: [2018] EWHC 1804 (Ch)

Date: 3rd August 2018

Court: High Court

Facts:

In 2005 Mr Saeed anticipated his wife might divorce him. He and the Defendant Mr Ibrahim together engaged in a classic 'warehousing' fraud to liquidate all of Mr and Mrs Saeed's matrimonial assets and conceal them. Signatures were forged on transfer and mortgage deeds, and Mr Ibrahim received over £590,000 in cash, which he then used to purchase properties in the names of his sons. Some properties changed hands several times, through various nominees. After all of their matrimonial assets had been hidden in this way, Mr Saeed went to Pakistan for 5 years. Upon his return, he demanded his assets back from Mr Ibrahim, who denied any knowledge

of the fraud and refused to repay anything.

Mr Saeed was subsequently reconciled with his wife and together they brought proceedings to recover property, rental income and cash worth over £800,000. The proceedings were defended on the facts, but the Defendants also relied upon the defence of illegality - *ex turpi causa non oritur actio* - and limitation, since most of the fraud had occurred nearly 9 years before issue of proceedings.

Following an unsuccessful application for strike-out by the Defendants - [2018] EWHC 3 (Ch) - the matter proceeded to an 8-day trial in the Chancery Division. Giving Judgment, HHJ Simon Barker QC made scathing comments about the First Defendant, calling him "*devious and unreliable*" - "*To describe [him] as an unimpressive witness would fall well short of the mark*" - and found that he was constructive trustee of over £290,000, and that his son and daughter-in-law were constructive trustees of a residential property.

Dealing with the illegality argument and applying the guidance from the Supreme Court in *Patel v Mirza* [2016] UKSC 42, he found that Mr Saeed was guilty of deliberate and serious illegal conduct which was central to the arrangements relied upon. However, he found that Mr Ibrahim was equally guilty. He concluded that to leave very substantial sums and property in the hands of Mr Ibrahim and his family "*would offend both policies underpinning the illegality principle and condone and produce an unjust outcome*".

As to limitation, he concluded that Mr Ibrahim, or his sons acting as his nominees, had either received the sums claimed as an express trustee, or had deliberately concealed that conduct from Mr and Mrs Saeed. He found that the knowing receipt of trust property by Mr Ibrahim as attorney for his sons amount to a breach of duty in circumstances where it was unlikely to be discovered for some time for the purposes of s.32 Limitation Act 1980.

Aidan Briggs appeared for the successful claimants, instructed by John Kenneally of Miller Rosenfalck LLP

[View judgement here](#)

Judge: HHJ Simon Barker QC

Comment:

Warehousing frauds of this kind are becoming increasingly common, as wealthy but unscrupulous actors seek to put their assets beyond the reach of creditors or spouses. What was unusual in this case was the intricate web of family connections, in a very closed traditional muslim community, used to achieve this purpose. Bags of cash were deposited at houses, powers of attorney were created in order to purchase properties in the names of family members, and bank statements in different names were used interchangeably to create a complex tracing exercise. There were also certain solicitors used on multiple occasions on interchangeable sides of the same transaction. It was also a case in which the judge concluded that the "*actual unreliability of almost everyone who gave oral evidence*" was a hamper to establishing the true facts.

This made preparation of the claim a careful forensic exercise, with a great deal of detailed scrutiny required of every document, which paid off in cross-examination.

Legally, the case is a rare example of the principles from *Patel v Mirza* [2016] UKSC 42 being applied at trial, rather than on a strike-out application, and placing some emphasis on the minority view of Lord Neuberger that in circumstances where both sides are equally culpable, the best course is to restore the status quo.

Practice Area: Trusts and Estates

Name: HMRC v Higgins

Reference: [2018] UKUT 280 (TCC)

Date: 18th June 2018

Court: Upper Tribunal (Tax and Chancery)

Facts:

The Upper Tribunal has clarified the law on the 'period of ownership' for which Capital Gains Tax relief is available on the disposal of a main residence.

In 2006 Mr Higgins exchanged contracts to purchase an off-plan apartment in the former St Pancras Station Hotel in central London for a purchase price of £575,000. A 10% deposit was paid, with a further 10% deposit payable in 2007, after which Mr Higgins could sub-sell the apartment if he chose.

Construction work was delayed by the credit crunch and eventually began in 2009, being substantially complete in December 2009. Completion of the purchase took place on 5 January 2010, after which Mr Higgins occupied the property as his main residence until 15 December 2011, when he exchanged contracts for a sale at £1.215 million. It was accepted that between 2007 and 2010 Mr Higgins had no other dwelling which was his main residence.

s.222 TGCA 1992 provides that no gain is chargeable if attributable to the disposal of a dwelling house '*which is or has at any time in [the taxpayer's] period of ownership been, his only or main residence*'. S.223 provides that where the property has only been a main residence for parts of the 'period of ownership', then relief applies to the fraction of the gain attributable to that part.

Separately, s.28 TGCA provides that where an asset is disposed of and acquired under a contract, the disposal is deemed to be made at the date of the contract and not the date of completion.

Mr Higgins argued that the 'period of ownership' ran from January 2010 when completion took place, until the exchange of contracts for sale, so that he was entitled to relief for the entirety of the gain. HMRC argued that the period of ownership ran from 2006, so that only part of the gain was subject to relief.

The Upper Tribunal **Held** that, applying s.28 TGCA, the 'period of ownership' commenced when unconditional contracts for purchase were exchanged in 2006 and ended when they were exchanged for the sale in 2011. The purpose of s.222 was to restrict the gain where the asset is not the taxpayer's main residence for the whole of the period, and it was not absurd or unreasonable to apply the deeming provision in s.28. The case of *Jerome v Kelly* [2004] 1 WLR 1409 - which held that s.28 did not apply to the substantive liability to tax - could be distinguished. Accordingly, Mr Higgins was only entitled to relief in respect of part of the chargeable gain.

Judge: Mrs Justice Rose; Judge Jonathan Cannan

Practice Area: Property

Name: McEneaney v Stevens & Ors

Reference: [2017] EWHC 992 (Ch)

Date: 2nd May 2017

Court: Chancery Division

Comment:

Please see the attached Judgment below.

Articles

Date	Title	Contributors
29th June 2020	Who can the Court compel to act reasonably? Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church [2020] EWHC 1493 (Ch)	Aidan Briggs
25th June 2020	Court orders third-party disclosure against witnesses to will - Gardiner v Tabet [2020] EWHC 1471 (Ch)	Aidan Briggs
18th June 2020	Pleading dishonesty against Trustees: Sofer v Swissindependent Trustees SA [2020] EWCA Civ 699	Aidan Briggs
2nd June 2020	Success fees in 1975 Act claims: SH v NH [2020] EWHC 1134	Aidan Briggs
2nd June 2020	Wife who beat husband to death with a hammer permitted to inherit his estate: Challen v Challen [2020] EWHC 1330 (Ch)	Aidan Briggs
26th May 2020	A dog's breakfast; defective trust instruments rescued - Bowack v Saxton [2020] EWHC 1049 (Ch)	Aidan Briggs

Date	Title	Contributors
12th May 2020	Causing the death of another and the Forfeiture Rule: <i>Amos v Mancini</i> [2020] EWHC 1063 (Ch)- today	Aidan Briggs
9th October 2018	CGT relief on residences bought off-plan Published In <i>New Square Chambers</i>	Aidan Briggs
9th October 2018	Falling between stools; a salutary lesson for widows Published In <i>New Square Chambers</i>	Aidan Briggs
2nd May 2018	Limited Liability Trusts? (<i>Investec Trust v Glenalla</i>) Published In <i>New Square Chambers</i>	Aidan Briggs
15th March 2018	Case Analysis: <i>Blenkinsop v Herbert</i> [2017] WASCA 87 Published In <i>Trusts & Trustees - March 2018</i>	Aidan Briggs
23rd February 2018	Overlap between court's jurisdiction to strike out a claim and grant summary judgment (<i>Saeed and another v Ibrahim and others</i>) Published In <i>Lexis PSL - February 2018</i>	Aidan Briggs
30th October 2017	How do the intentions stack up? Published In <i>STEP Journal: Volume 25/Issue 8</i>	Aidan Briggs
14th September 2017	Law Commission consultation on reform to the law of wills Published In <i>Trusts & Trustees - September 2017</i>	Aidan Briggs



Date	Title	Contributors
15th March 2017	E-Flash - Landmark Supreme Court decision on Inheritance Act claims Published In <i>New Square Chambers</i>	Aidan Briggs

Publications

Date	Title	Contributors
9th January 2020	Arbitration clauses in trusts: a human rights issue? Oxford University Press.	Aidan Briggs
