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William Gelley

Barrister
Call 2024

Scope of Practice

• Administrative & Public Law • Agency • Arbitration • Civil Fraud and Investigations • Company and Insolvency • Commercial Litigation • Contempt of Court • Group Litigation • Energy and Natural Resources • Professional Negligence • Restitution

Overview

William undertakes commercial work across all of Chambers' core practice areas. He has experience in multiple areas including contractual disputes, civil fraud, company law, jurisdiction challenges, commercial agency and contempt of court proceedings.

William's notable current and recent cases include:

- **Xenfin v GFG**: A dispute arising from the widely reported collapse of Dolphin Group, which ran a property investment scheme in Germany. The Claimant, a Guernsey company, made two loans to Dolphin entities secured over German property developments which never materialised. Only a fraction of those loans was repaid. The Claimant alleges that its own directors and investment manager caused it to make the loans without adequate security. It also brings claims for various other breaches of contractual, tortious and fiduciary duties by the Defendants. William assisted (during pupillage) in the Claimant's successful resistance of a jurisdiction challenge brought by the Defendants. William was subsequently instructed (together with Alexander Brown KC) in the ongoing proceedings.
- **A v B (confidential)**: William is instructed in a professional negligence claim against a leading national law firm for its failure to bring a tort claim before the expiry of the relevant limitation period. The claim is currently at the pre-action stage.
- **Bourlakova v Bourlakov**: A $3 billion claim by a Russian billionaire's wife and daughter against their late husband and father and a network of his relatives, associates, and their corporate entities. Related proceedings are ongoing in numerous other jurisdictions including Florida, Russia, Switzerland, the Isle of Man, Cyprus, Monaco and Panama. The Claimants allege that, following the breakdown of the Bourlakovs' marriage, Mr Bourlakov conspired to defraud them of their rightful share of the family's assets by (*inter alia*) inventing a fictitious partnership with his brother-in-law, forging documents purporting to create security interests in the Black Pearl superyacht and in the family's $100 million Monaco flat, and misappropriating assets via several Panamanian companies. Assisted Neil Kitchener KC, David Caplan and Patrick Harty (during pupillage).
- **Municipio de Mariana v BHP Group**: A c.£33 billion claim arising out of Brazil's worst ever environmental disaster, the collapse of the Fundao tailings dam in 2015. The case is the largest ever group litigation in the English courts, involving around 600,000 individual claimants. One of The Lawyer's "Top 20" cases of 2024. Assisted Nicholas Sloboda KC, Maximilian Schlote and Oliver Butler (during pupillage).

- **The New Lottery Company Ltd v The Gambling Commission:** A procurement challenge over the Fourth National Lottery Competition (2020–2022), in which the licence to run the National Lottery was awarded to Allwyn. The claim is brought by Northern & Shell Plc and its subsidiary, The New Lottery Company, who finished third in the competition. The Claimants challenge the fairness and integrity of both the competition's process and its outcome, on the basis that the Gambling Commission committed several breaches of the Concession Contracts Regulations 2016. The Claimants also allege that the Gambling Commission made substantial modifications to the contracts after the award which changed the economic balance of the contract in favour of Allwyn. Assisted Daniel Toledano KC and Maximilian Schlote (during pupillage).

Examples of Recent Cases

Administrative & Public Law

- **The New Lottery Company Ltd v The Gambling Commission:** A procurement challenge over the Fourth National Lottery Competition (2020–2022), in which the licence to run the National Lottery was awarded to Allwyn. The claim is brought by Northern & Shell Plc and its subsidiary, The New Lottery Company, who finished third in the competition. The Claimants challenge the fairness and integrity of both the competition's process and its outcome, on the basis that the Gambling Commission committed several breaches of the Concession Contracts Regulations 2016. The Claimants also allege that the Gambling Commission made substantial modifications to the contracts after the award which changed the economic balance of the contract in favour of Allwyn. Assisted Daniel Toledano KC and Maximilian Schlote (during pupillage).

Agency

- **Junction Power Ltd v Eltas Transformator Sanayi ve Tricaret A.S:** A dispute arising from the termination of an agreement under which the Claimant was to act as an agent to sell transformers in England on behalf of the Defendant, a Turkish manufacturer. The claim is for unpaid commissions and compensation under the Commercial Agents (Council Directive) Regulations 1993. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).
- **A v B (confidential):** A claim against a European producer of well-known table wines for breach of contract, unpaid commissions and compensation under the Commercial Agents (Council Directive) Regulations 1993. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).

Arbitration

- **A v B (confidential):** An arbitration involving a c.£1 billion claim against members of a Middle Eastern royal family. Assisted Henry Hoskins and Joshua Crow (during pupillage).
- **A v B (confidential):** An arbitration involving claims for bribery and breach of contract against a well-established African mining company. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).
- **A v B (confidential):** An arbitration involving a claim for unpaid invoices by a producer of vehicle parts against a car manufacturer and counterclaims by the manufacturer for liquidated damages for delay and breaches of health and safety regulations. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).

Civil Fraud and Investigations

- **Bourlakova v Bourlakov**: A $3 billion claim by a Russian billionaire's wife and daughter against their late husband and father and a network of his relatives, associates, and their corporate entities. Related proceedings are ongoing in numerous other jurisdictions including Florida, Russia, Switzerland, the Isle of Man, Cyprus, Monaco and Panama. The Claimants allege that, following the breakdown of the Bourlakovs' marriage, Mr Bourlakov conspired to defraud them of their rightful share of the family's assets by (*inter alia*) inventing a fictitious partnership with his brother-in-law, forging documents purporting to create security interests in the Black Pearl super yacht and in the family's $100 million Monaco flat, and misappropriating assets via several Panamanian companies. Assisted Neil Kitchener KC, David Caplan and Patrick Harty (during pupillage).
- **Magomedov v TPG Group Holdings:** A $14 billion wide-ranging conspiracy claim by the jailed Russian businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov against numerous individuals and entities. Mr Magomedov alleged that his imprisonment by the Russian authorities was part of a campaign waged against him for political reasons, with the aim of wresting two seaports (which were deemed to be of strategic significance to the Russian state)

from Mr Magomedov's control. Mr Magomedov claimed that each of the Defendants were part of the conspiracy to wrest at least one of the ports from him. The Defendants successfully challenged the English Court's jurisdiction to hear the claim. Assisted David Caplan (during pupillage).

Company and Insolvency

- **Xenfin v GFG**: A dispute arising from the widely reported collapse of Dolphin Group, which ran a property investment scheme in Germany. The Claimant, a Guernsey company, made two loans to Dolphin entities secured over German property developments which never materialised. Only a fraction of those loans was repaid. The Claimant alleges that its own directors and investment manager caused it to make the loans without adequate security. It also brings claims for various other breaches of contractual, tortious and fiduciary duties by the Defendants. William assisted (during pupillage) in the Claimant's successful resistance of a jurisdiction challenge brought by the Defendants. William was subsequently instructed (together with Alexander Brown KC) in the ongoing proceedings.
- **Xtellus v DL Invest**: A dispute concerning a €123.4 million financing deal between Macquarie and a Polish real estate developer. The deal was brokered by the Claimant, a New York-based investment bank. The developer refused to pay the contractually agreed success fee to the Claimant, arguing that the Claimant's mandate was with a separate entity outside the Defendant's corporate structure and that the signatory lacked the actual and apparent authority to bind the Defendant. The claim raised issues of contractual interpretation, foreign law, agency and ratification. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).

Commercial Litigation

- **Veranova Bidco LP v Johnson Matthey plc**: A £120-million M&A claim for breach of warranties and fraudulent misrepresentation brought by an American healthcare investment company (Veranova) against Johnson Matthey. The claim concerns Veranova's acquisition of Johnson Matthey's healthcare business, which produces pharmaceutical ingredients including Buprenorphine HCl, required for the manufacture of drugs to treat opioid use disorder. Veranova alleges that it was induced into the share purchase agreement by fraudulent misrepresentations in a draft disclosure letter from Johnson Matthey about its ongoing pricing negotiations with Alvogen, a major US customer. Assisted David Caplan (during pupillage).

- **Maloney v Falcon VII Investments Sarl**: A dispute over the correct interpretation of exit provisions in the contractual arrangements underpinning a private equity fund's investment in Workhuman, a tech company valued at over £1 billion. One of The Lawyer's "Top 20" cases of 2025. Assisted Nehali Shah (during pupillage).

Contempt of Court

- **Municipio de Mariana v BHP Group (contempt)**: A strike-out application of committal proceedings arising out of the main proceedings in *BHP*. The committal proceedings are based on allegations that BHP funded a claim at Brazil's Supreme Federal Court designed to prevent Brazilian municipalities from continuing to take part as claimants in the main English proceedings. This was the first time that an English court considered whether bringing or procuring legal proceedings abroad is capable of constituting a criminal contempt. Assisted Maximilian Schlote (during pupillage).

Group Litigation

- **Municipio de Mariana v BHP Group**: A c.£33 billion claim arising out of Brazil's worst ever environmental disaster, the collapse of the Fundao tailings dam in 2015. The case is the largest ever group litigation in the English courts, involving around 600,000 individual claimants. One of The Lawyer's "Top 20" cases of 2024. Assisted Nicholas Sloboda KC, Maximilian Schlote and Oliver Butler (during pupillage).

Energy and Natural Resources

- **Alimov v Mirakhmedov**: A claim for breach of contract in relation to a bitcoin-mining business in Kazakhstan. The claim arose out of an alleged oral agreement between Kazakh businessmen which was made during an Iftar meal in Hampstead Garden Suburb. The Claimant alleged that an agreement was reached whereby he would procure land and cheap electricity for use in the Defendants' bitcoin mining enterprise and that, in return, he would receive sums including 35% of the bitcoin obtained by the Defendants. The Defendants successfully challenged the English Court's jurisdiction to hear the claim. Assisted David Caplan (during pupillage).

- **A v B (confidential):** An arbitration involving claims for bribery and breach of contract against a well-established African mining company. Assisted Alexander Brown KC (during pupillage).

Professional Negligence

- **A v B (confidential):** William is instructed in a professional negligence claim against a leading national law firm for its failure to bring a tort claim before the expiry of the relevant limitation period. The claim is currently at the pre-action stage.

Restitution

- Acting unled (pro bono) in the County Court for a purchaser of a car on a hire-purchase agreement. The Claimant alleged that he traded in his old car as part-exchange at an undervalue and brought a claim for restitution of the old car or its market value. The Claimant further alleged that the new car was faulty and brought claims for misrepresentation and for breach of terms implied under the Consumer Rights Act 2015.

Conflict of Laws and Jurisdiction

- **Xenfin v GFG:** A dispute arising from the widely reported collapse of Dolphin Group, which ran a property investment scheme in Germany. The Claimant, a Guernsey company, alleges that its own directors and investment manager caused it to make two loans without adequate security. The Defendants challenged jurisdiction on the basis that Guernsey was the more appropriate forum. Challenges were also made by two of the Defendants to the validity of the service effected upon them. William assisted (during pupillage) in the Claimant's successful resistance of all the jurisdiction challenges brought by the Defendants. William was subsequently instructed (together with Alexander Brown KC) in the ongoing proceedings.
- **Magomedov v TPG Group Holdings:** A $14 billion wide-ranging conspiracy claim by the jailed Russian businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov against numerous individuals and entities. Mr Magomedov alleged that his imprisonment by the Russian authorities was part of a campaign waged against him for political reasons, with the aim of wresting two seaports (which were deemed to be of strategic significance to the Russian state) from Mr Magomedov's control. Mr Magomedov claimed that each of the Defendants were part of the conspiracy to wrest at least one of the ports from him. The Defendants successfully challenged the English Court's jurisdiction to hear the claim on the basis that, even though there was a real risk that the Claimant would not obtain justice in Russia, no jurisdictional gateway was available against the Defendants against whom there was a serious issue to be tried (and in any event, Cyprus was a more appropriate forum than England). Assisted David Caplan (during pupillage).
- **Alimov v Mirakhmedov:** A claim for breach of contract in relation to a bitcoin-mining business in Kazakhstan. The Defendants successfully challenged the English Court's jurisdiction to hear the claim on the basis that Kazakhstan was a more appropriate forum for the claim. The Defendants who were served out of the jurisdiction also succeeded in setting aside permission to serve them out of the jurisdiction on the grounds of failure to give full and frank disclosure (and in relation to one of the Defendants, the lack of a serious issue to be tried). Assisted David Caplan (during pupillage).

Education and Awards

Bar Course (ICCA)

· First place in BSB examinations for Criminal Litigation; second place for Civil Litigation.

Harvard Law School, LLM

· Attended Harvard Law School as a Frank Knox Fellow.

· Achieved Honors in all graded courses.

· Harvard Law School Writing Award for the best paper on Biblical law.

University of Cambridge, BA Law

· Graduated with a Double First.

· Achieved best, third-highest and fourth-highest overall mark in respective years of the Law Tripos.

· Clifford Chance CJ Hamson prize for the highest mark in the Law of Contract.

· CJ Hamson prize for the highest mark (Starred First) in Aspects of Obligations.

· Littleton Chambers prize for the highest mark (Starred First) in Labour Law.

· John Hall Prize for the highest mark in Family Law.

· Highest mark in the year for Criminal Law (Starred First).

· Winner of 3VB Team Moot and Serle Court Speed Moot; Best Oralist award in two intervarsity mooting competitions.

Publications

- 'Ye Shall Do No Injustice in Judgment – Are Religious Courts to blame for the Agunah Problem?' [2023] Oxford Journal of Law and Religion 75 (co-authored with Lord Wolfson KC).
- 'Consent by Coercion: The Limits of External Solutions to the Agunah Problem' [2021] Child and Family Law Quarterly 4

Awards

Chambers TOP RANKED UK Bar 2026 One Essex Court

TOP TIER SET Legal500 UNITED KINGDOM 2026

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