

Richard Wheeler

Year of Call: 2004

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Inquests

Richard has broad experience of coronial law. He has appeared on behalf of bereaved families and has acted many times for Government Departments in inquests. Richard has appeared in several inquests where the Coroner has appointed Counsel to the inquiry and has frequently appeared alone where other interested parties having instructing Queen's Counsel.

Most recently Richard was instructed by the MOD in the Deepcut inquest (Sean Benton) arising from a death from gunshot wounds in alleged mysterious circumstances at Deepcut Barracks over 20 years ago. Richard was instructed to represent three former soldiers accused of bullying Sean Benton prior to his death. The case involved applications for special measures, reporting restrictions and cross-examination of a vulnerable witness.

Several inquests have raised issues such as to whether Article 2 is engaged, whether a jury should be summoned. Richard has frequently dealt with submissions involving allegations of unlawful killing, neglect, and Reg. 28 type issues. Richard has attended many PIRs on behalf of interested parties and bereaved relatives and secured the necessary evidence and directions for an effective inquest. In one ongoing matter cross-jurisdictional issues arise involving disclosure from French, Dutch and German military authorities.

Recent notable cases include:

- Acting for MOD in inquest into sinking of French fishing vessel the Bugaled Breizh. The families and boat owner allege involvement of HM naval submarine in the sinking, denied by MOD.
- Acting for family in inquest arising from alleged negligent care in a hospital resulting in hypoxic brain injury. Acted for three former soldiers in Deepcut inquest (Sean Benton). The three were accused of bullying Sean Benton prior to his death from gunshot wounds, in 1995.
- 14 day Article 2 inquest into death of prisoner at Winchester prison. Neglect, breach of human rights, negligence, ACCT process.
- Acted for motorist in 8 day jury inquest into death of undercover policeman in Southampton. Public interest immunity regarding the operation the police were conducting at the time of the fatal accident. Article 2 jury inquest involving a prisoner suicide in Exeter prison. Alleged early closure of ACCT, safeguarding, and mental health issues.
- Article 2 inquest following prisoner suicide in Chelmsford prison.
- Acted for family in 3 days, jury inquest. Window fitter killed working at height.
- Inquest following death of prisoner, inquiry into use of prisoner restraints.

Recommendations

'Richard is excellent at inquest work. He is a tenacious advocate but is also very intuitive and can read a coroner well in order to adapt his approach. He is excellent with clients and extremely personable, which is so crucial in inquest work. Richard is always fully prepared and readily grasps the key points in any inquest.'

Legal 500 2024/Inquests and Inquiries/Western Circuit/Leading Juniors

'Richard is an excellent barrister. He has a great eye for detail and is able to pick up on salient points quickly.'

Legal 500 2024/Personal Injury, Industrial Disease and Insurance Fraud/ London Bar/ Leading Juniors

'Richard is probably one of the best all round barristers around. Both his advocacy and paper work is exceptional. He is excellent with clients and extremely personable,

Legal 500 2024/Personal Injury/Western Circuit/Leading Juniors

'Richard is able to approach difficult issues flexibly and pragmatically to achieve the best outcome for his client. He is very personable and builds up a good rapport with his clients.'

'very knowledgeable' and 'meticulous with his preparation and attention to detail'

Legal 500 2024/Personal Injury/ South Eastern Circuit/ Leading Juniors – Tier 1

'Richard is excellent and extremely detailed when assessing quantum and has a particular speciality in dealing with complex fatal cases. His advice is always meticulous and considered.'

Legal 500 2023/Personal Injury/South Eastern Circuit – Ranked Tier 1

'Richard is a brilliant barrister. He is a fearsome and well prepared advocate, who pushes hard for his clients.'

Legal 500 2023/Personal Injury/Leading Juniors/London Bar

Richard Wheeler is 'tenacious' and 'excellent tactically with significant insight and experience to progress complex cases'.

'Richard is very knowledgeable, and quick to get to grips with the essential elements of the case. His advice is always meticulous and considered.'

Legal 500 2023/Personal Injury/Western Circuit

'Richard is a determined advocate who is always thorough and well-prepared. He leaves no stone unturned when investigating complicated quantum issues. You know if he is fighting a case to trial he believes in it.'

Legal 500 2022/Personal Injury/South Eastern Circuit

'Richard is tenacious and works hard in preparation and in action for his clients. His advice is clear, concise and tactical reflecting a keen analytical mind, and his advocacy is both engaging and persuasive. He understand the pressures affecting the client and he is able to address their concerns sympathetically.'

Legal 500 2022/Personal Injury/Western Circuit

What Treasury Counsel Panel referees say:

"He's great – advices are clear and concise, skeletons are accurate and tactical."

"his advocacy was both engaging and persuasive"

"I instruct Richard in complex matters ... his analytical skills are always an asset and he always adds to the case."

"He has a keen analytical mind."

"great knowledge of the issues and pressures affecting the client"

"I have always found his advice to be practical, thorough and clear."

"clear, fluent and efficient in handling the complex issues in the case"

"Richard is excellent – nice relaxed style, makes him compelling in conference as well as in trial. He's very good at explaining even complex issues."

"personable and easy to talk to quite often we will just talk out any issues over the phone which is really helpful."

Academic qualifications

- BA Hons, Warwick (First Class, 2000)
- CPE, Merit, 2003
- BVC, Very competent, 2004
- Inner Temple Horace Avory scholarship, 2004

Professional qualifications & appointments

- Recorder, South Eastern Circuit, 2019
- Deputy District Judge, South Eastern Circuit, 2015
- Treasury Counsel (London A Panel)
- Inner Temple Bar Liaison Committee member
- New practitioner advocacy trainer, Inner Temple
- Mediation Advocate

Professional bodies

- Personal Injury Bar Association