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JOHN STEEL

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Areas of Practice

- Construction & Engineering
- Professional Negligence
- PFI
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Infrastructure & Utilities
- Public Procurement

Clerks' Details

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Practice Overview

John Steel has practised at Keating Chambers since September 2020, having successfully completed his pupillage in Chambers. He undertook his pupillage having been granted the Michael Hodge Scholarship from the Inner Temple to complete the BPTC. He was called to the Bar in 2018.

Since becoming a tenant in Chambers, John has acted as sole counsel, in both the High Court (TCC) and County Court, as well as undertaking led work. Reflecting the core areas of Chambers' work, John's focus is on construction and engineering disputes, energy and infrastructure projects and procurement proceedings. He also has experience in insurance (relating to construction projects), professional negligence cases and major PFI projects.

John can accept instructions to advise, draft pleadings and represent clients in relation to a broad range of commercial matters. He has particular experience in NEC3 form of contracts, large-scale waste to energy projects, procurements relating to major national infrastructure, and adjudication work (both in written submissions and in oral advocacy to enforce a decision).

Recent Cases

Construction & Engineering

- Acting on behalf of parties enforcing an adjudication award. These have included hearings in which the court was asked to address developing areas of law, such as: (i) Phelan Construction Limited v Elliots Construction Limited [2021] EWHC 428 (TCC), a case involving an enforcing party who had entered into a CVA; and (ii) DMD Environmental Ltd v Mitchell Demolition Ltd [2021] H20CL003, which involved questions as to the scope of the Adjudicator's jurisdiction in the context of a 'no contract' submission.
- Appearing on behalf of the responding party in an application for stay of proceedings following the issue of Pt 7 proceedings. The background involved countervailing adjudication decisions.
- Acting for a main contractor responding to a circa £1m claim from a sub-contractor in adjudication proceedings. The dispute required detailed submissions on delay and sequencing and resulted in the Referring party withdrawing its Referral on receipt of the Response.
- Acting for a main contractor to formulate and execute an adjudication strategy to address an impasse reached with the developer. This involved overcoming claims of repudiation advanced by the employer. It resulted in a significant win for, and payment to, the contractor.
- Acting for and advising a firm of architects in a successful adjudication claim against a main contractor, following termination. This entailed detailed technical work with the client team. It resulted in a significant win for, and payment to, the architects.
- Acting for a sub-contractor following termination. This resulted in successful enforcement proceedings of a first adjudication decision, and the main contractor / developer withdrawing its Referral in a second adjudication on receipt of the sub-contractor's Response.
- Drafting pleadings in a wide range of construction disputes. Select examples include: (i) a Defence for a main contractor following a payment / delay related dispute with a sub-contractor; (ii) drafting a Defence in response to a claim by a sub-contractor in a final account dispute; (iii) drafting Particulars of Claim in multiple disputes, including adjudication enforcement proceedings.
- Advising in a similarly wide range of construction and engineering matters. Select examples include: (i) advice to a main contractor in a wide-ranging defects claim in respect of Pt 8 proceedings; (ii) advice and drafting in respect of major cladding disputes on behalf of client's with an interest in student accommodation; (iii) advice to a major housebuilder in respect of disputes with sub-contractors – this included the formulation of a litigation strategy which was then implemented.

Energy & Natural Resources

- Advising and acting as lead junior counsel for a major international engineering firm responding to an adjudication claim of circa £7m. The case involved in-depth expert evidence relating to a waste to energy plant. It resulted in success for the engineering firm, who received a net award of circa £1m in its favour. Also advising in the follow-on litigation strategy for the company.
- Assisting in advising a power plant operator in a claim against a maintenance contractor for damage and loss of income following a fire. The points of advice went to both questions of waiver of privilege over expert reports and the measure of damages for loss of profits.
- Assisting in advising an overseas company with an interest in a power plant on next steps in arbitration proceedings.

Public Procurement

- Acting as junior counsel in Siemens' challenge to HS2's award of rolling stock contracts. This has entailed detailed work in respect of The Utilities Contracts Regulations 2016, liaising with industry experts and managing disclosure exercises.
- Assisting in preparing for a hearing involving an application for security for costs and an application to amend.

Infrastructure

- Advising a major national infrastructure body in managing a series of adjudications. This focused on work under amended forms of the NEC3 contract, as well as other elements of the project relating to delay.
- Assisting in drafting pleadings in adjudication proceedings for a major domestic infrastructure project.
- Assisting in drafting pleadings and taking witness statements in a major arbitration dispute relating to an infrastructure project in the Gulf.

Professional Negligence

- Advising a company in respect of a fire at a manufacturing unit. This entailed extensive review of the professional obligations owed by those who built, maintained or inspected the unit prior to the fire.
- Assisting in drafting particulars of claim against an architect as part of a major project to provide performing arts facilities.
- Assisting in advising a client on obtaining an injunction to prohibit solicitors acting for another party in adjudication proceedings. The advice, and subsequent hearing preparation, related to concurrent adjudication proceedings.

Education & Professional Career

Tenant, Keating Chambers	2020
Pupil, Keating Chambers	2019 – 2020
Called to the Bar, Inner Temple	2018
Bar Professional Training Course, City Law School	2017-2018
Paralegal, Peters & Peters LLP (Commercial Team)	2017
Legal Intern, Hausfeld & Co LLP (Competition Litigation)	2016
Graduate Diploma in Law, City Law School	2015 – 2016
- Director of the School Exclusions Project, as well as volunteering for FRU and the Vocalise initiative to teach debating in prisons.	
MA International Peace and Security, King's College London	2013 – 2014
- Core course was in Public International Law supervised by Dr Guglielmo Verdirame.	
- Dissertation on privatisation in the Middle East and North Africa.	
MA History, University of Edinburgh	2009 – 2013
- Erasmus Scholarship 2011 – 2012 to study History at the University Aix-Marseille.	
Newcastle Royal Grammar School	2002- 2009

Awards & Scholarships (selection)

Jane Lemon QC Memorial Prize, 2nd place	2020
<i>("Bribes for Contracts, and Contracts for Bribes" - Comparative analysis of English and French law on bribery, contracts and arbitration.)</i>	
Society for Construction Law Hudson Prize, 2nd Place	2019
<i>("A Ticket to the South of France or Rough Justice? Construing Ambiguity in Manchikalapati v Zurich Insurance" - the essay assessed the Court of Appeal decision in Manchikalapati v Zurich Insurance)</i>	
Michael Hodge Scholarship awarded by the Inner Temple	2017
Crown Office Moot Finalist/ City University Essay finalist on GDL	2016

Languages

English, French (fluent), Italian (conversational).

Additional Information

John is a keen runner, cross country skier and has a particular love of the Shetland Islands.