




THOMAS SAUNDERS

Q&A

Thomas has a busy practice across Chambers' specialisms including construction, energy, procurement and professional negligence. He represents his clients at all stages of the litigation process and is well-versed in advocating for them in court both as sole counsel and as a valuable member of larger counsel teams. Thomas has been instructed on several complex legal matters, including *Energy Works (Hull) Ltd v MW High Tech Projects UK Ltd*, in which judgments were handed down in December 2022 and May 2023.



Since being called to the Bar in 2019, your practice has flourished and become more diverse. Is there a specific area within your practice that you enjoy the most?

I honestly think the variety is my favourite part. Right now, I'm going from being very busy on an international arbitration about a solar power plant (with another member of Chambers and a silk from another set) to being very busy on a TCC case stretching back 20 years arising out of a PFI contract (with two other members of Chambers). In between, I've also managed to squeeze in advice, pleadings and an adjudication enforcement hearing in my own right as well as helping out with the upcoming new edition of *Keating on Offshore Construction and Marine Engineering Contracts*.

That said, if I had to choose just one element of the work, it would have to be the court-based oral advocacy. That is the most exciting part, and everything else is ultimately informed by how it will play out in that arena.

What is a typical day like for you?

It very much depends on what my balance of work is looking like at the moment. Unless I have a hearing, I tend to spend about three days a week in Chambers and work the other two at home. I could spend the whole day with my head down on a big case, but I'm much more likely to be spread between a handful of different matters, including dealing with emails and phone calls from solicitors, counsel and opponents. If I'm working in Chambers, I'll probably take the opportunity to pick someone's brain over a cup of tea or lunch in Middle Temple Hall.

What has been the highlight of your practice so far at Keating?

The five-week trial in *Energy Works (Hull) Ltd v MW High Tech Projects UK Ltd* – even though it took place during Covid-19, which meant that I could only spend a limited amount of time actually in the court – was a fantastic experience. I was part of a team of four, including Will Webb KC (before he took silk), and it was a three-party case, which meant that I got to see a really interesting mixture of styles and approaches both to running and preparing a case and to advocacy.

Otherwise, the highlight is always the most recent success – whether that's a win in court or a pleading I think turned out well – and the anticipation of the next one.

What's one thing that surprised you about being a barrister, that you didn't know before you were called to the Bar?

It's not so much about the day-to-day practice, but one thing I didn't know is that, after the new silks have been sworn in at Westminster Hall, there is a smaller ceremony in front of all the TCC judges for the new construction silks. Unlike the main swearing in, other barristers can attend. It's a rare opportunity (for the construction Bar) to wear the wig and gown, and more importantly a chance to congratulate people you might have worked with or know socially.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time, outside of Chambers?

I like to stay physically active. I particularly love playing rugby, although I'm not always very disciplined about getting to training every week. I also started taking ballroom lessons recently, which is a new sort of skill for me and not one I have any natural talent for, but something I'm really enjoying. Other than that, I like to read – it can be difficult to keep up a steady habit of reading fiction when you spend most of the day reading legal documents or technical records, but I generally have something on the go for the Tube or the evenings. When I can, I try to do some reading in Danish to improve my comprehension, but I still find it quite slow going.

If you could describe Keating in one word, what would it be and why?

Supportive. People are always genuinely interested in how you're doing and what you're working on, and happy to take time out of their day to act as a sounding board or talk through a knotty point. As a junior member of Chambers, it's absolutely invaluable.

