

Mark Cannon QC

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His great tactical and commercial acumen keeps him ahead of the competition.

- Legal 500

Head Of Chambers

Described in the directories as "superb", "extremely solid and punchy" and "technically excellent", Mark Cannon QC is a well-established commercial silk, whose practice is mainly focused on the areas of professional liability in a commercial context, insurance and reinsurance and construction.

He is an experienced and highly effective advocate in trials, arbitrations and appellate courts and has appeared in numerous leading and reported cases. Much of his work involves the preparation of cases for trial. He also has a strong advisory practice and accepts appointments as an arbitrator.

His qualities are consistently recognised in the directories:

Ability: "immense intellect and awe-inspiring knowledge of the law", "off-the-charts clever" "not only charming and friendly, he has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of complex areas of law which he applies in a way that is easy to understand", "what he doesn't know about professional negligence is not worth knowing", "second to none in terms of intellectual ability", "a velvet-gloved grasp of the law", "scarily clever", "brilliant at assessing the law", "very, very clever and is afforded great respect", "a very clear-thinking lawyer", "a very impressive intellect", "bright, erudite and incisive", "off-the-charts clever".

Acumen: "very good at recognising the commercial parameters within which his clients operate", "very good judgment in all that he undertakes", "a great ideas man", "gives very commercial advice backed up with a very strong commercial understanding of the law", "spot-on analysis", "has excellent judgement", "provides clear, reliable advice", "phenomenally clever, with practical and commercial sense as well", "his opinion is well respected by his peers and holds weight in any negotiation".

Advocacy: "an excellent advocate", "very attractive advocacy style", "impressive in court and possessed of a very agile brain", "highly intelligent, good on paper and on his feet", "his manner of expression as an advocate is very impressive", "a real trooper who holds his corner in court well".

Application: "responsive, hands-on and hard-working", "prepared to roll up his sleeves and get into the facts and documents", "always reliable and responsive", "very user-friendly", "very hard-working and serious lawyer".

Mark likes to think that he lives up to these standards.

Over the last 30 years Mark has been instructed in a number of long-running, large cases, including group litigation. He is used to



working as part of a team of lawyers and experts in substantial litigation. He relishes the challenge of working with others to master complex facts and difficult points of law, to make the right tactical decisions, to put forward the best possible case and to achieve the best possible result at the right time. Mark welcomes the expertise, insight and contribution that all members of a team can provide.

Mark is co-author of Cannon & McGurk on Professional Indemnity Insurance (OUP, 2010; 2nd edition 2016) and has been an editor of Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability (Sweet & Maxwell; 2017; 8th edition) since the 3rd edition (1992).

He is a former chairman of the Professional Negligence Bar Association and is also a member of the Chancery Bar Association, COMBAR, London Common Law & Commercial Bar Association, Teubar and the Western Circuit. Mark is also a member of the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Privacy Policy

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Areas of Expertise

Professional Liability

“Very much in demand for all the most complex and sensitive work. Very good attention to detail and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the law. Persuasive and strategic in court. Achieves great results in very difficult cases.” – *Legal 500, 2021*

“He has got an incredible depth of knowledge and a good eye for detail.” “He is very good on insurance professional negligence and his written analysis is worth its weight in gold.” – *Chambers & Partners, 2020*

“Phenomenally quick with a tremendous intellect and a keen commercial eye.” “He’s extremely bright and absorbs information very quickly.” – *Chambers & Partners, 2019*

Mark enjoys a very high reputation in the area of professional liability.

Described in recent editions of The Legal 500 as **“one of the brightest silks on professional indemnity law”** and in Chambers & Partners as an **“excellent”** leading silk in this area and who is **“user-friendly and provides clear, reliable advice”**, **“able to quickly get to grips with complex professional negligence litigation”** and **“an out-and-out professional negligence expert – he knows the law backwards”**.

Mark’s work in this area concentrates on professional liability in a commercial context. Mark regularly acts for both claimants and defendants, both because he is professional bound by the “cab rank” rule to do so and because he feels that it is important to understand how cases appear to both sides.

He enjoys working as part of a team with professional, expert clients, specialist solicitors and expert witnesses. He is sensitive to the commercial and other pressures which claims against professional firms and individuals entail.

As well as extensive experience of claims against a wide range of professions, Mark regularly acts and advises in coverage disputes under professional indemnity policies.

Mark has been an editor of Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability (Sweet & Maxwell, 6th edition, 2007) since the 3rd edition (1992).

In the 3rd and 4th editions he edited the chapter on Insurance Brokers and in the 4th edition he wrote the chapter on Members’ and Managing Agents at Lloyd’s. In the 5th 6th and 7th editions Mark edited the chapters on Duties, Remedies, Contribution between Defendants and Defences. In the current 8th edition he has retained responsibility for the chapter on Defences and taken over editing the chapter on Accountants and Auditors.



Mark is a former chairman of the Professional Negligence Bar Association.

Accountants, Auditors & Actuaries

Mark has acted in many claims against accountants and auditors, including claims for negligent audit work, negligent preparation, review and audit of management accounts and negligent advice (including negligent tax advice, both corporate and personal). He is highly numerate and has a thorough understanding of the audit process, the statutory and regulatory regimes and the relevant auditing standards.

Mark's experience in large-scale audit claims goes back over 20 years to when he acted for Maxwell pension funds (in particular MCC pension fund) against the auditors of pension funds and fund managers.

He edits the chapter on Accountants and Auditors in the current edition of Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability.

Cases

- **Rushmer v. Mervyn E. Smith & Co**
Successful defence of a claim by director/shareholder /guarantor against auditor and accountant of company; issues as to duty of care, causation, loss, reflective loss and abuse of process.
- **University of Keele v. Price Waterhouse**
Loss of a chance to implement a valid profit related pay scheme
- **Claim against an auditor**
Acting for a City firm of solicitors in a claim against a major firm of accountants for failure to detect theft of client money by a partner.
- **Acting for accountants**
Acting for a major firm of accountants on a claim for allegedly negligent tax advice in relation to a complex commercial property transaction.
- **A v B**
Acting for co-defendants in contribution proceedings between them and a major firm of accountants for allegedly negligent drafting of financial instruments issued as part of a takeover.
- **Advising for a potential claim**
Advising a university as to a potential claim against its former auditors, a major firm of accountants.
- **Claim against auditors**
Acting for a credit management services company on a claim against its former auditors, another major firm of accountants.

Construction Professionals

"He was outstanding and super clever." – Chambers & Partners, 2019 (Leading Silk – Professional Negligence: Technology & Construction)

Extensive experience of acting for claimants and defendants including claims in relation to design, contract administration, ground investigations and foundations.

In relation to design, claims in which Mark has been instructed have involved defective architectural and engineering features and failure to provide the information to which the contractor was designed in time.

In relation to contract administration, Mark has sued and defended project managers, architects and quantity surveyors for allegedly inadequate advice as to a wide variety of matters including how to respond to issues which arise during the course of a project, cost



and delay.

In relation to ground conditions, Mark has extensive experience of cases involving a range of foundations in a variety of ground conditions, from simple slab foundations to piled foundations in peat bogs and landfill sites. Cases have included a housing estate where the houses were adequately supported by piles but the roads, paths, services and drains sank several metres and a housing development in a landfill site where negative skin friction on the piles caused the show house to collapse before the other houses had been finished.

Mark has been involved in cases concerning a wide range of buildings and structures, including complex structures such as hospitals, nuclear power stations and theatres and relatively simple structures such as warehouses. He relishes the challenge of mastering technical engineering issues.

Mark is listed as a leading silk in the area of professional negligence in technology and construction in the current edition of Chambers & Partners.

Cases

- **A v B**
Defending a specialist sub-contractor against a claim for negligent design/specification and acting on a Part 20 Claim by the sub-contractor against a firm of engineers.
- **Birse Developments v. Co-operative Group Ltd**
Defending specialist design and build flooring sub-contractors. Issues of amendment and limitation.
- **Acting for engineers**
Defending engineers in a claim for negligent advice in relation to a system of water drainage on a development site.
- **A v B**
Acting for a local authority in an arbitration against the professional firm which had managed and designed the construction of a children's centre.
- **MAC Hotels Ltd v. Rider Levett Bucknall UK Ltd**
Defending a firm of project managers against a multi-million pound claim concerning the development of a country house hotel (recent issues as to s.14A of the Limitation Act 1980 and amendment).
- **Acting for engineers**
Defending a firm of civil engineers against a claim for allegedly negligent design of a container unloading pavement.
- **Acting for geotechnical engineers**
Defending a specialist geotechnical subcontractor in relation to settlement of a large warehouse.
- **Royal Brompton v. Hammond**
Acting for the claimant NHS trust in *Royal Brompton Hospital v. Hammond* litigation against project managers, architects and M&E engineers: reported decisions include [2002] UKHL 14; [2002] 1 WLR 1397 (HL) on the Civil Liability (Contribution) Act 1978.
- **Acting for engineers**
Acting for consulting engineers in the defence of a claim arising out of a major tunneling project.
- **Try Build Ltd v. Invicta Leisure Tennis Ltd**
Design duties of engineers (TCC).
- **Chesham Properties v. Bucknall Austin**
Acting for defendant architects in claim arising out of a residential development in Belgravia: issues as to limitation and scope of



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duty.

Insurance Brokers & Agents

Work in this area is related to Mark's extensive practice in Insurance and Reinsurance. He was first instructed in a broker's negligence claim in 1987. He has sat alongside an underwriter at Lloyd's and knows how brokers and underwriters deal with each other in practice.

Mark edited the chapter on insurance brokers in the 3rd and 4th editions of Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability and wrote the chapter on members' and managing agents at Lloyd's in the 4th edition. He is also co-author of the chapter on insurance brokers in Cannon & McGurk on Professional Indemnity Insurance (OUP, 2nd edition 2016).

Cases

- **Pryke v. Gibbs Hartley Cooper**

Acting for 28 Lloyd's syndicates in claim against a Lloyd's broker concerning reporting on the holder of a binding authority.

- **A v B**

Advising major public transport authority on possible claim against brokers in relation to a 2 year public liability policy.

- **Claim against Insurance Brokers**

Acting for brokers on a claim for breach of duty in placing professional indemnity policy.

- **Claim against insurance brokers**

Defending brokers against a claim for alleged negligence in failing to obtain suitable terms or to advise the insured of them in relation to commercial property insurance.

Lawyers

Mark has very extensive experience of acting for claimants and defendants in claims against solicitors and barristers, including claims arising from commercial, corporate and property transactions, claims concerning lost or mishandled litigation, investment schemes (including fraudulent schemes, collective investment schemes and other claims concerning Financial Services legislation and regulation) and mortgage fraud.

The underlying litigation and transactions in cases in which Mark has been instructed range from shipping and aviation litigation in the Commercial Court to high volume personal injury litigation and from multi-million property and share transactions to the purchase of relatively modest homes. He has acted in claims against lawyers for allegedly negligent drafting of and advice concerning a wide range of corporate transactions. Mark has acted on claims against top City firms and High Street sole practitioners.

Mark has acted for defendant solicitors in group litigation concerning allegedly negligent failure to advise as to home income plan/equity release mortgages and in relation to the exercise of the right to buy local authority housing. He has particular experience of the interaction of a solicitor's retainer with the regulatory regime which applies to financial and mortgage advisers.

Mark also acts and advises as to disputes as to coverage under professional indemnity insurance policies, including issues of alleged dishonesty. He is co-author of Cannon & McGurk on Professional Indemnity Insurance (OUP, 2nd edition 2016).

Cases

- **Anderson Properties Ltd v. Blyth Liggins**

Defending a firm of solicitors against a claim that they had negligently drafted a conditional contract for the purchase of a development site.

- **Claim against solicitors**

Defending a firm of solicitors against a very large number of claims for alleged negligence in the exercise by local authority tenants of their “right to buy” (in November 2015 the trial of lead cases settled on terms that the claimants discontinued on terms that each side bore its own costs after Mark’s cross-examination of the lead claimants).

- **Schumann v. Veale Wasbrough**

Defending solicitors against a claim for allegedly failing to identify a valid wrongful birth claim.

- **A v B**

Defending a firm of solicitors against allegations of breach of contract and fiduciary duty in the sale of a construction company.

- **A v B**

Acting for a group of buy-to-let purchasers in a claim against solicitors, valuers and mortgage lenders for conspiracy to defraud.

- **A v B**

Advising a major City firm of solicitors and their professional indemnity insurers as to the merits of claims against them for allegedly failing to identify a conflict of interest between different companies in the same group for whom the solicitors were acting and for allegedly negligent advice to the directors of a company which was in severe financial difficulties as to their duties under the Insolvency Act 1986.

- **A v B**

Defending solicitors against a claim for allegedly negligent drafting of a PFI contract.

- **A v B**

Defending a solicitor alleged to have negligently exposed a client to claims under the Insolvency Act 1986 as a result of the structure of a corporate transaction.

- **A v B**

Advising as to the effect of sale/assignment of loans by way of warehousing and securitisation.

- **Sutherland Professional Funding Ltd v. Bakewells**

Appearing for insurers in claims against their insured related to third party funding of disbursements: *Sutherland Professional Funding Ltd v. Bakewells* [2011] EWHC 3457 (QB): issues included to the existence and scope of fiduciary duties, professional codes of conduct and limitation.

- **West Wallasey Car Hire Ltd v. Berkson & Berkson**

Defending a barrister against a claim for alleged negligence in the context of commercial litigation.

- **Fulham Leisure Holdings Ltd v. Nicholson Graham & Jones**

Acting for the major shareholder in a football club in an action against the solicitors who advised it on the purchase of a controlling interest in the club: *Fulham Leisure Holdings Ltd v. Nicholson Graham & Jones* [2008] EWCA Civ 84; [2008] PNLR 22; [2006] EWHC 2017 (Ch) (decision on extent of waiver of privilege reported at [2006] 2 All ER 599).

- **Cumbria Waste Management Ltd v. Baines Wilson (a firm)**

Defending a firm of solicitors against a claim for several million pounds for alleged negligent drafting of a contract for the disposal of animal carcasses during the foot and mouth epidemic in 2001: *Cumbria Waste Management Ltd v. Baines Wilson (a firm)*: issue as to disclosure of documents from mediation of underlying litigation: [2008] EWHC 786 (QB); [2008] BLR 330.

- **A v B**

Acting on claims against 2 firms of solicitors and a barrister for loss of claims for up to US\$ 77 million in the Commercial Court.

- **A v B**

Defending a firm of solicitors alleged to be liable for a multi-million pound reinsurance fraud (3 month trial in the Commercial Court).



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- **Regent Leisuretime v. Skerrett**
Defending a solicitor accused of negligently failing to issue proceedings in time (defence of reliance on specialist counsel): *Regent Leisuretime v. Skerrett* [2005] EWHC 2255 (QB); [2006] EWCA Civ 1184; [2007] PNLR 9.
- **JJ Coughlan Ltd. v. Ruparelia and Others**
Defending a number of solicitors in relation to claims arising out of “prime bank guarantees” and similar “investments” (one claim was dismissed at first instance and on appeal: *JJ Coughlan Ltd. v. Ruparelia and Others* [2003] EWCA Civ 1057; [2004] PNLR 4, now a leading case on the vicarious liability of “innocent” partners).
- **Somatra Ltd. v. Sinclair Roche & Temperley**
Acting for ship owners in a claim against a city firm for negligence in relation to earlier marine insurance litigation in the Commercial Court: interlocutory issue in the Court of Appeal reported as *Somatra Ltd. v. Sinclair Roche & Temperley* [2000] 1 WLR 2543; judgment given against defendant solicitors after 36 day trial: [2002] EWHC 1627 (Comm); decision of trial judge upheld on appeal: [2003] EWCA Civ 1474; [2003] 2 Lloyd’s Rep 855.
- **Investors Compensation Scheme Ltd v. West Bromwich Building Society**
Investors Compensation Scheme Ltd v. West Bromwich Building Society: Acted for over 200 firms of solicitors in claims brought against them in relation to home income plans marketed by incompetent FIMBRA members between 1988 and 1990: preliminary issue in House of Lords reported at [1998] 1 WLR 896 and trial of lead cases reported at [1999] Lloyd’s Rep PN 496.
- **A v B**
Defending a firm of solicitors against a claim for negligence in relation to the conveyance of a development site which was contaminated.
- **A v B**
Defending solicitors alleged to be vicariously liable for fraudulent representations and conspiracy in relation to an international sales contract and subsequent arbitration.

Surveyors & Valuers

Mark has acted for and against valuers in claims involving high-value residential property and commercial property following the falls in property prices in the late 1980s and after the collapse of Lehman brothers in 2008.

He has been involved in numerous cases involving residual valuations and is well versed in the arguments as to the margin of permissible error in relation to the components of such valuations as well as the overall figure. He appeared in the leading case of *Merivale Moore v. Strutt & Parker* [1999] Lloyd’s Rep PN 734. He is currently instructed in a number of high value claims against valuers in relation to development sites and commercial properties.

Arguments as to contributory negligence and failure to mitigate are frequently raised in such claims and Mark has extensive experience of issues as to allegedly negligent lending and failure to take steps to take possession of the mortgaged properties.

Mark appeared for lenders on an appeal as to whether syndication of a loan resulted in the claim for damages disappearing into a black hole: *Helmsley Acceptances Ltd v. Lambert Smith Hampton Group Ltd* [2010] EWCA Civ 356 and has advising in cases involving sale/assignment of loans by way of warehousing and securitization.

Financial Services Professionals

Mark has been involved in numerous claims against financial services professionals. He is fully familiar with the regulatory regime under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000, including conduct of business rule books, the working of the Financial Ombudsman Service and the Financial Services Compensation Scheme.

Mark’s experience in this area goes back to claims for breaches of conduct of business rules under the Financial Services Act 1986.



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He appeared in *ICS v. West Bromwich Building Society* [1999] Lloyd's Rep PN, which concerned the mis-selling of equity release mortgages/home income plans. He has acted in claims for mis-investment of pension funds, including claims for "churning" and inappropriate selection of investments. More recently, in the Right to Buy litigation, Mark defended solicitors against claims relating to mortgages taken out by people exercising their right to buy in the context of MCOBS.

Mark also advises as to claims for compensation to the Financial Ombudsman Service and Financial Services Compensation Scheme and appears in related applications for judicial review. Recent cases include *Emptage v. Financial Service Compensation Scheme Ltd* [2013] EWCA Civ 729 (acting on successful challenge to assessment of compensation for mortgage mis-selling by FSCS) and advising a group of investors claiming compensation for mis-selling of traded life policy investments.

Qualifications & Memberships

B.A. (Oxon) (First Class) in Modern History, Lincoln College, Oxford, 1983. Part 1B of the Law Tripos (First Class), Robinson College, Cambridge, 1984. Called to the Bar of Northern Ireland: 2014.

Insights

Nesbit Law Group LLP v Acasta European Insurance Company Limited [2018] EWCA Civ 268

1 March 2018

In *Nesbit Law Group LLP* the Court of Appeal had to determine the proper construction of an exclusion clause in a series of Fidelity Guarantee Indemnity policies and whether the insurer should be permitted to amend its defence (the application having been made weeks before the hearing of the appeal) to allege various breaches of a loan agreement by insured which breaches were necessary for the insured to be caught by the exclusion clause.

Editor of Jackson & Powell on Professional Liability (8th Edition)

1 December 2016

Cannon & McGurk on Professional Indemnity Insurance

18 February 2016

Author