

The UK barristers working on global investigations

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For more than a decade, GIR has been sending UK-based reporters to cover court hearings in cases linked to corporate investigations. From magistrates' courts and employment tribunals to the Central Criminal Court and the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom, GIR reporters have been in the room to cover the cases that matter to the global investigations and white-collar crime community.

GIR has trawled through our vast archive of articles to identify some of the most active barristers on such cases, which have included criminal prosecutions, civil fraud claims, extradition disputes, deferred prosecution agreement hearings, sanctions designation challenges, whistleblower lawsuits and many other topics.

We reached out to the barristers to learn more about their journey to the white-collar bar as well as the types of cases that make them tick and how they spend their time outside of the courtroom.

A peculiarity of the England and Wales legal system, barristers are specialist legal advisors who present arguments in court, distinct from the solicitors who instruct them on behalf of the client. Their employment situations also differ from those of most solicitors; barristers are generally self-employed but belong to specific chambers, where they share clerks and office space with other barristers.



Clare Montgomery KC, Matrix Chambers

It is impossible to be a GIR reader for long without stumbling upon a case featuring Clare Montgomery KC. She is one of the most sought-after and highly-rated barristers in London, consistently landing roles in high-stakes international investigations to defend, and occasionally prosecute, major companies and high-profile individuals. She won the [GIR award for](#)

[investigations professional of the year](#) in 2022.

Montgomery KC is a woman of firsts; she was the first person in her family of doctors and missionaries to become a lawyer and has since built a career on precedent-setting, factually and legally complicated cases. Her work on [the Natwest prosecution in 2021](#), for example, was the FCA's first prosecution of a bank for anti-money laundering failures. Montgomery KC enjoys working on "first-of-their-kind" cases and believes in doing one's best and not looking back or repeating thematically similar matters, regardless of the result.

"I think it's important to stay fresh and focused. Doing the same task over and over again is not as enjoyable," she said. "I like cutting new ground."

The Matrix Chambers barrister has been at the forefront of headline-grabbing cases in the past few years: she acted for Swiss commodities trader [Glencore in 2022, on its guilty plea](#) over paying \$28 million in bribes to officials in five countries between 2011 and 2015; for security company [G4S Care & Justice](#) in its £44.5 million deferred prosecution agreement (DPA) with the Serious Fraud Office in 2020 over fraud; for Kazakh mining company ENRC in its successful lawsuit against the SFO and Dechert, and for Canadian plane-maker [Bombardier in an SFO foreign bribery investigation](#) that was dropped in November.

She was the lead barrister for Anzhelika Khan, the wife of oligarch German Khan, in an [unsuccessful recent appeal against her UK sanctions listing](#); represented former owner of the Formula 1 franchise Bernie Ecclestone on [his guilty plea for tax fraud in 2023](#), and defended Ukrainian oligarch Gennadiy Bogolyubov in [the \\$1.9 billion civil fraud lawsuit](#) brought by Ukrainian state lender Privatbank.

Montgomery KC began her trajectory in criminal law on human rights and extradition work, which included instructions on [the Soering case](#), which led to a landmark judgment establishing that the UK's proposed extradition of a German national to the US violated the European Convention on Human Rights given his potential exposure to the death sentence.

She described her career since then as a "fantastic experience"; she likes the intensity of her job and revels in the processes: receiving a case, working out a winning strategy and getting it over the line.

Being one of the most in-demand barristers in town means that Montgomery KC has little time to unwind, but she goes to yoga classes or the gym whenever her schedule allows. When not in English courtrooms, Montgomery KC sits part-time as an appeal court judge in Jersey, Guernsey and the Cayman Islands, and is writing books about fraud and extradition.



Hugo Keith KC, Free Raymond Buildings

Hugo Keith KC is a big name in high-profile public inquiries and inquests. He represented the late Queen Elizabeth II in the inquest into the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and led the inquests into the deaths of the 52 victims of the 2005 London terrorist bombings. When he spoke to GIR in early January, the barrister was busily preparing for the start of the fourth stage of a public inquiry into the UK's response to the covid-19 pandemic, for which he is lead counsel.

The barrister said public inquiries are "particularly demanding" because they often concern tragic circumstances. "But they are the paradigm example of legal work done in the public interest, so there is an enormous reward," Keith KC said.

Outside of public hearings, Keith KC has been instructed on many financial crime cases: the barrister acted for Airbus subsidiary GPT Special Project Management in its [2021 guilty plea](#) for corruption, and represented Gulnara Karimova, the daughter of a former Uzbek president, in a [challenge against a civil recovery order](#) sought by the SFO.

But Keith KC said the most "remarkable" financial crime case he's worked on was [Airbus's foreign corruption settlement](#) in 2020, which saw him advising the company in a \$4 billion resolution across three jurisdictions. "It was just the sheer scale of it; the size of it was gargantuan because of the number of alleged instances of bribery of airlines," the barrister said. "It was an absolutely mammoth case."

He added that the outcome for the company was "very good". "If these matters had been prosecuted, it would have posed an existential threat to the survival of Airbus," Keith KC said.

The barrister was instructed for Monaco-based energy services company Unaoil and its owners in a [2016 judicial review](#) of the SFO's evidence-gathering efforts in a bribery investigation. He acted for sanctioned Russian-Israeli businessman [Mikhail Fridman](#) in his successful challenge in 2023 against the National Crime Agency's execution of a search warrant and for sanctioned Russian oligarch [Petr Aven in a similar challenge](#) against an account freezing order obtained by the same agency in 2022.

He is currently representing a former Glencore executive [charged with conspiring to bribe](#) public officials in West Africa in a case set for trial in 2027.

Keith KC said his job is "all about delivery". "It is about applying the most hard-nosed, professional edge that you can and getting through the job at hand and doing it to the best of your ability," the barrister told GIR over a video call, against the backdrop of a floor-to-ceiling cabinet overflowing with papers and files.

"There's no margin in any of these cases for error or shortcuts or light touch. It's about delivering as professional and as competent an outcome as you can possibly muster."

The barrister comes from a long line of lawyers: his grandfather and both parents were judges and his brother is also a barrister. But his children are showing "no particular inclination" to follow the same path. "And I respect them more for that," Keith KC said.

At Christmas dinner, the family does their best not to talk about the law, he added ruefully.



Katherine Hardcastle, Fountain Court

When she has time to spare, Katherine Hardcastle races in a sailboat slightly older than herself. She described what she enjoys about sailing as the same thing she loves about her work: being in an uncomfortable, high-pressure situation with people you must trust and work with to get through.

"And it wipes the tapes," the barrister said about her nautical hobby. "You feel like you've been away for ages; you feel like you've had a week's holiday and you've only been out for a few hours."

Hardcastle began her career as a banking and finance solicitor at Slaughter and May, working in debt capital markets until the global financial crisis hit in 2008. The lawyer then pivoted to work on the many disputes arising out of the crisis, until a barrister suggested she might enjoy the bar.

"The truth is I had always wanted to go to the bar but didn't know how to do it without having a lot of money and taking on a lot of risk," Hardcastle told GIR in an early January video call which was punctuated by her easy, infectious laugh.

Hardcastle has built an enviable commercial crime practice through "dogged determination and luck". An example of her tenacity: she once chased a CEO's car down on foot, banging on the window to prevent him from leaving the city without hearing the other side's final settlement offer.

Before her move to Fountain Court in June, Hardcastle spent most of her career at the bar at 6KBW. She was instructed for [Rolls Royce in the company's DPA](#) with the SFO – which she called the "grandfather of big DPAs" – as well as for [Amec Foster Wheeler](#) in the tenth DPA for the UK's specialist fraud prosecutor. The barrister told GIR she sat through negotiations for [security company G4S's DPA](#), which was finalised in "record time" during the covid-19 pandemic, with her six-week-old baby in her lap.

"My husband is a key worker and I had a newborn baby and a two-and-a-half-year-old at home, and I had no childcare at all," Hardcastle said, adding that this was also around the time when she was first instructed in the investigation that resulted in [Entain's £615 million DPA with the Crown Prosecution Service](#), which saw her act for the gambling company.

The lawyer credited the people she worked with on both cases for supporting her through the process. "Everyone was great at being understanding and that bit more human, and realising we couldn't do things the way we had ordinarily done them," she said.

Hardcastle was also instructed for Canadian aircraft manufacturer [Bombardier in a recently dropped SFO probe](#) and for [Glencore in its guilty plea](#) in 2022. She has also represented high-profile businessmen including former Formula 1 owner [Bernie Ecclestone](#) and ex-Deutsche Bank trader [Carlo Palombo](#) who was convicted in 2019 for manipulating an interest rate benchmark. Hardcastle is preparing to argue the trader's case at the Supreme Court in March.



Rachel Scott, Three Raymond Buildings

Rachel Scott grew up the daughter of two French teachers and lived for a year in a little village in the Beaujolais wine-making region of France. Many years later, her fluent French and a decision to spend a few years in Paris put her in the middle of a multi-agency investigation into aircraft manufacturer [Airbus and subsequent settlement negotiations](#) with French, British and US prosecutors.

Scott was living in Paris on sabbatical when she got a call from lawyers at Clifford Chance acting for Airbus, asking if she wanted to join the case. "I'd actually gone there to have a break from doing cross-border corruption cases," Scott said with a laugh. "But it was just such a good case, I couldn't say no."

The barrister spoke to GIR over coffee – an Americano with a splash of oat milk – in January. She always knew she wanted to be a barrister and imagined her job as something straight out of *Rumpole of the Bailey*, a fictional defence barrister who frequents London's Central Criminal Court, known colloquially as the "Old Bailey".

Armed with a music degree from Manchester University, Scott's pupillage at Three Raymond Buildings led her towards extradition, financial crime and sanctions matters. The barrister recalled being in the Supreme Court for a high-profile extradition hearing early in her career and thinking: "This is my job, I'm doing this for a living. How lucky am I?"

Among her major extradition instructions, Scott acted for [Anthony Patterson](#), a UK trader who unsuccessfully fought extradition to Denmark in 2022 over cum-ex charges, and [Asante Berko](#), a former Goldman Sachs banker who tried to resist extradition to the US to face foreign bribery charges in July. Scott was also instructed by Chinese tech company Huawei's chief financial officer, [Meng Wanzhou](#), in UK proceedings in 2021 against HSBC linked to her efforts to contest extradition from Canada to the US on sanctions evasion charges.

Scott was instructed for the SFO [in its civil dispute](#) with mining company ENRC, and for the agency when French train-maker [Alstom attempted to overturn](#) its 2018 conviction over a Tunisian bribery scheme. The barrister acted, alongside Keith KC, for sanctioned Russian-Israeli businessman [Mikhail Fridman](#) in his successful challenge in 2023 against the National Crime Agency's execution of a search warrant and for sanctioned Russian oligarch [Petr Aven in a similar challenge](#) against an account freezing order obtained by the same agency in 2022.

Scott is acting for Israeli investigator Amit Forlit as he [resists extradition to the US](#) where he faces fraud and computer hacking conspiracy charges related to his work on behalf of ExxonMobil.

The barrister plays the piano and said her friends often push her to play something whenever they come across the instrument at a party. "The last time that happened to me, I ended up playing a bit of the *Moonlight Sonata*, which is actually just really depressing and nobody wants to listen to that at a party," Scott said. "I don't have a repertoire of fun tunes, which I regret."

Two weeks after GIR spoke to Scott, the King's Counsel Selection Panel [announced that she will be appointed](#) a King's Counsel in March.

Tim Akkouch KC, Essex Court Chambers

Tim Akkouch KC told GIR he entered the bar almost by chance, having enjoyed playing the role of prosecutor in a mock trial based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth* at school. He secured a mini-pupillage at 16, where he saw first-hand how an appeal argument was put together, and never looked back on following the law "in a very practical sense".

Since then, Akkouch KC has found the practice area that best suits his calm, attentive demeanour: high-stakes civil fraud. He represented Privatbank in the Ukrainian lender's [\\$1.9 billion fraud lawsuit](#) against its ex-owners, and Brazilian mining company Vale when it [sued Israeli businessman Beny Steinmetz](#) over a joint project in Guinea that collapsed amid



allegations of bribery. The barrister also acted for ENRC in its lawsuits against the SFO, Dechert and former partner Neil Gerrard; the cases were excitingly innovative but also demanding for Akkouch KC, who felt the pressure when the mining company's pleadings were strongly criticised by the SFO. When the agency was [ordered to pay ENRC's costs on an indemnity basis](#) at the end of the trial, the barrister felt vindication and huge relief. "We had been right to plead the case out," he said.

A keen climber and mountaineer, Akkouch KC said that working out a route up a mountain is similar to working out a way through a complex civil case. But while climbing is a solo activity, his favourite thing about being part of big trials is the camaraderie that comes with working in large teams; he recently went to India on a cricket trip with an instructing solicitor and reflected that the friendships he's made along the way have helped make the sacrifice of "throwing work-life balance out of the window" more bearable.

The son of a Moroccan father, Akkouch KC is "a bit of a computer geek" who enjoys navigating the intricacies of complex frauds, including the often complicated technology that helps facilitate them.

The barrister is also keenly interested in cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence, particularly how the latter technology will shape the future of law, and how fraudsters will use AI to increase the sophistication of their schemes. To his alarm, he has been able to get ChatGPT to produce fake bank statements and company accounts with just a few prompts.

"I like to understand how things work. I try to come up with a theory and then test it, you know: 'Is this how they did it?'," he said. "That sort of detective work, trying to build a case of fraud, I get a massive buzz out of it."



Miranda Hill KC, 6KBVW

Miranda Hill KC is a self-described "detail-merchant" who loves crunching facts. She has always been keen to get as much information as possible for her cases, which in her earlier career were mostly prosecutions, but she's since focused on defending individuals and companies in criminal cases.

Her first foray into the white-collar crime world was as the junior barrister for the SFO in the seven-month trial in 2008 of the former executives of liquidated company RBG Resources who [orchestrated a \\$700 million fraud](#). When the other junior in the case had to withdraw due to illness, Hill KC stepped in to collate the evidence and write the case statement. The process helped her realise that business crime was the type of work that suited her skillset and was what she really wanted to do.

The RBG case took the barrister all the way to Missouri; the brother of the principal defendant had pleaded guilty in the US over his role in the conspiracy and agreed to appear as a witness in the related SFO case. Hill KC and her team visited the national archives at Kansas City to review material the DOJ had gathered as part of the disclosure process for the UK criminal trial.

Her big break in the white-collar crime space was when Linklaters instructed her to act for defence company BAE Systems in a multi-agency investigation that resulted in the business [agreeing in 2010 to pay \\$400 million](#) to UK and US authorities after admitting arms export violations, fraud and corruption charges linked to its conduct in Saudi Arabia, the Czech Republic

and Tanzania. Hill KC subsequently represented pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline in a five-year corruption investigation [dropped by the SFO in 2019](#), and [Rolls-Royce](#) and [Amec Foster Wheeler](#) in cases that were resolved with DPAs.

Hill KC told GIR that she admires the resilience of David Perry KC, who led the team of barristers acting for Rolls-Royce and Amec Foster Wheeler, recalling how he tuned in to hearings for the Rolls Royce matter from overseas, where he had reached the end of his court day.

“He would join the hearings remotely on a video link after long court days while Katherine Hardcastle and I were physically in court,” she recalled. “Sometimes David would be making submissions and we would be getting instructions from the client. It was hard to decide when we should stand up and interrupt his submissions,” she said with a laugh, adding that it was a “great experience”.

Hill KC, who enjoys an outdoor swim to “think about nothing except for counting laps” and speaks “rusty” German after completing a European studies and German degree before studying law, is working on the [defence of former Petrofac executive Marwan Chedid](#) in an SFO bribery prosecution.

She said that representing individuals is as “equally rewarding” as acting for a company. “An individual is capable of telling you about the facts, but often when you’re working for a company, you rarely have access to the people who know about the issue and have to work it out yourself.”



Rachel Barnes KC, Free Raymond Buildings

Rachel Barnes KC has some things most of her peers don't: a doctorate in the United Nations Security Council's use of economic sanctions, and a pet Labrador who accompanies her on early morning runs.

The barrister, who has run the London marathon twice, described her journey to the bar as “slightly circuitous”. After completing her undergraduate law degree in the UK, she moved straight to the US for a master's degree at Harvard Law School and ended up as an associate at Shearman & Sterling (now A&O Shearman) in New York.

She worked almost exclusively on white-collar crime matters in the US, which set the stage for the rest of her career. “Rather than being a young associate shoved into a data room to go through disclosure on some civil trial, I had this amazing exposure where, for example, I worked on a US Senate inquiry [and] I did a really interesting internal investigation for an American bank concerning its Latin American operations,” Barnes KC said.

She was then seconded from the law firm to the prosecutor's office of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, before returning to the UK to study for a PhD and join the bar. While the barrister struggles to pick a favourite between London and New York – both are “fabulous” – one of the reasons she chose to practice in the UK was for the opportunity to build a career in court. “The court exposure you get as an advocate in the UK is greater than you would get as a partner in a big US firm,” she said.

The barrister was instructed by the Crown Prosecution Service for the [extradition proceedings against British businessman Mike Lynch](#), who was eventually sent to the US to stand trial for fraud in 2023. A year later, a [jury acquitted him](#). Barnes KC also [acted for the Financial Conduct Authority](#) in its prosecution of former Goldman Sachs analyst Mohammed Zina, who was sentenced to nearly two years in prison following a conviction for insider dealing and fraud.

The barrister is an expert on sanctions and has acted in some of the most closely watched challenges to designations on the UK's Russia sanctions list. She was instructed for Mikhail Fridman in the [sanctioned Russian-Israeli businessman's 2023 challenge](#) to the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementations' “basic needs” sanctions waivers. The same year she acted for Russian-born businessman Oleg Tinkov in a [successful effort to have him](#) delisted by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

Barnes KC seems the epitome of efficiency, often powering through a couple of hours of work and taking her dog out for a run before her young children wake. Being a runner means the lawyer enjoys her food and always has some on her while in court. She recalls a colleague describing the experience of working with her as like working with a Labrador. “I constantly

eat,” she joked, “just like labradors are known to constantly eat because they don’t have the switch in their brain that tells them when they’re full.”



Adrian Darbishire KC, QEB Hollis Whiteman

Adrian Darbishire KC told GIR on a phone call in early February that he didn’t always know that he wanted to be a barrister; when he finished university, he took various “business-type” jobs. Colleagues kept telling him that he was argumentative and should give some thought to becoming a barrister. The turning point came at 23, when he was on a plane next to his then-boss, a chartered accountant, who asked about his career plans. When the young Darbishire KC admitted he was considering training as a barrister, the accountant’s face changed and he proceeded to tell his employee that he had always wanted to be a barrister, but stayed in accountancy for financial reasons.

“For his whole life, he had harboured this feeling that being a barrister had been the career for him, and he’d missed his chance,” Darbishire KC said. “I decided there and then that I was not going to end up like him.”

The rest is a history of notable defence work in SFO cases: he represented former Tesco executive Christopher Bush in a prosecution for false accounting [which collapsed mid-trial](#) in 2018; Simon Marshall, a Serco executive in a fraud prosecution [that also collapsed](#), in 2021, amid disclosure issues; Ziad Akle, a defendant in the Unaoil case [whose bribery conviction was quashed on appeal in 2021](#); Bluu Solutions executive Rob Simms Davis, who [was acquitted after a bribery trial in 2023](#); and former trader Tom Hayes, for whom Darbishire KC will challenge a 2019 conviction for manipulating an interest rate benchmark at the Supreme Court in March.

“So few criminal cases end up in the Supreme Court that plenty of criminal barristers go through their whole careers without ever getting there, so I’m very glad that I’ll be able to tick that off,” he said. “It will probably be my only chance, so I’m very excited, and also quite nervous”.

Darbishire KC’s other recent work includes successfully fighting what he describes as “misconceived and improper” private prosecutions, including one against [a former chief financial officer of the company](#) behind the Yellow Pages phone directory, and another against [former British prime minister Boris Johnson](#).

Having built his career acting for individuals, Darbishire KC said he thrives in the “particular intensity” of representing people at trial. He finds the vast amounts of preparation before arguing in front of a judge and jury very rewarding – especially if he is successful.

The barrister enjoys the process of learning new things for every case and applying his experience to dealing with the novel issues that come up with each new set of facts.

“It’s all still very interesting and, in a way, it gets more interesting the more I do it,” he said.

Unlike many of his peers, being in court isn’t Darbishire KC’s favourite part of the job. He prefers performing another crucial part of the job: drafting, whether it’s skeleton arguments, submissions or – his favourite text of all – letters. Emails are just not the same, he said.

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