

# Melanie Williamson

Year of Call: 1990

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## Introduction

Melanie was called to the Bar in October 1990, and practised as a Barrister from March 1991, specialising in Chancery and Commercial matters – corporate and personal insolvency, directors' disqualification proceedings, partnership disputes, trusts and the administration of estates, commercial contract disputes, and judicial review applications.

Melanie is a highly skilled and experienced advocate, having appeared before District Judges, Circuit Judges, High Court Judges, and the Court of Appeal in contentious matters. She has also represented clients at mediation proceedings.

In June 2008 Melanie was appointed as a Coroner for West Yorkshire (Eastern District). Her role as Coroner has entailed involvement with a number of different public bodies and regulatory organisations – Prison Service, Prisons and Probation Ombudsman, Health and Safety Executive, General Medical Council, Care Quality Commission, and Local Authorities.

Melanie has dealt with all manner of Inquests, including a number of lengthy and high profile Inquests – Edward Slaney (wind tunnel effect caused by design of Bridgewater Place in Leeds), Ernest Rodgerson (Network Rail employee, health and safety), Lexie Harrison (oesophageal varices banding procedure for infants/children), Kassa Osebu (HMP Leeds).

Melanie has given many training seminars and has delivered key note speeches at Regional Policing Conferences upon Coronial law, practice, procedure, and the implications of ECHR.

In April 2016 Melanie joined the Regulatory Team of St Philips Chambers.

Examples of coronial work that Melanie has undertaken in the last year include:

- Appearing on behalf of a local authority further to the death of a vulnerable young boy with Asperger's Syndrome who hanged himself at his care home further to revealing that he had been abused by a former carer. High profile, sensitive matter.
- Appearing on behalf of a local authority further to the death of a geriatric woman in hospital caused by a subdural haematoma as the result of an incident at a care home.
- Appearing on behalf of a private care home operator (insurer funded) further to the death of a geriatric gentleman having suffered a fall at a care home
- Appearing on behalf of a pharmacist following the death of a woman connected to a 'mix up' with a monitored dosage system.
- Appearing on behalf of a pharmacist further to the death of a woman after the incorrect prescription drugs were inadvertently couriered to her address. 4 day inquest. Case attracted national media interest.

Melanie has also been instructed to appear on behalf of a number of professionals including teachers, pharmacists, healthcare professionals and a chartered surveyor in relation to professional misconduct hearings heard by their respective professional bodies.

# Inquests & Coronial

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## Credit Hire

Her experience within credit hire is broad and Melanie has run and defended credit hire claims within the small claims track and fast track. Melanie is keenly aware of the commercial considerations underpinning credit hire claims as well as the impact upon and experiences of lay clients attending court in relation to credit hire claims. Melanie is well versed in the technical arguments run in credit hire cases and looks forward to sharing her knowledge with solicitors within this complex, and developing, area of law.

She is particularly interested in claims involving fraud. Her significant experience in the small claims track, fast track and multi track has gleaned a sound knowledge of the sorts of arguments judges find attractive. Melanie is therefore especially well placed to advise upon prospects where there are arguments as to liability, causation and allegations of fraud/fundamental dishonesty.

Her busy court practice consists of trials, interlocutory hearings and disposal hearings. Melanie is keenly aware of the commercial considerations underpinning credit hire claims as well as the impact upon, and experiences of, lay clients attending court.

She is happy to advise in writing as well as dealing with advocacy work..

Before being called to the Bar, Melanie read English Literature at the University of Bristol where she graduated with first class honours and was ranked first in her year. She received substantial scholarships to complete her legal studies and, most recently, has been nominated for Junior Professional of the Year.

Recent cases include:

- Successful defence of a multi track credit hire claim where liability/negligence remained in issue
- Achieving a substantial reduction in damages award where need had not been established for storage/recovery
- Achieving summary dismissal of a claim for credit hire where the claimant had filed unintelligible documents and failed to make out its case
- Achieving dismissal of a claim for credit hire where a claimant, during cross examination, conceded they had not signed the hire agreement and therefore the agreement was unenforceable
- Acting on behalf of a defendant who, following settlement of a personal injury claim within the MOJ portal, discovered cogent evidence of fraud and sought to vitiate any agreement made (making of agreement not being admitted)
- Appearing at CCMCs and making the usual submissions regarding costs budgets
- Dealing with matters of track allocation