

5 KING'S BENCH WALK



Ben Holt

Call 2006

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- Tel +44 (0) 20 7353 5638
- clerks@5kbw.co.uk
- 5kbw.co.uk

Practice Profile

Ben Holt is a specialist criminal barrister. He has been instructed as leading and led junior for the prosecution and defence in a wide range of criminal cases and is ranked in the 2021 edition of Legal 500.

Ben is a Grade-4 CPS advocate on the general crime, special crime and fraud panels as well as Grade-3 on the counter-terrorism panel. He has recently been appointed to Panel B of the SFO's panel of advocates.

Ben is instructed in a wide variety of cases. Recently, he has been involved in a number of substantial cases involving fraud and money laundering; both acting as sole counsel and being led, for the prosecution and defence. Ben has prosecuted a number of cases of violence involving multiple defendants (as led and leading counsel). He regularly receives instructions from Specialist Units within the CPS.

He has specific experience in dealing with complicated disclosure issues; these have included the handling of particularly sensitive material and reviewing cases which have involved evidence from Covert Human Intelligence Sources and RIPA warrants. He has been instructed by the CPS to review disclosure on various matters and has worked together with the NCA and specialist units of the Metropolitan Police in this regard. He has advised on large-scale fraud investigations at the pre-charge stage including matters relating to LPP material.

Ben has spent a 9-month period of secondment with HSBC conducting a past-business review into mis-sold interest rate hedging products.

Upcoming cases:

Operation Venetic [Southwark CC] 2021

Five-handed conspiracy to supply cocaine trial. Evidence obtained as part of Operation Venetic. Defendants alleged to be involved in conspiracy to supply £10m of cocaine. [Instructed by CPS, SCU]

Operation Antelope [Maidstone CC] 2021

Three-handed aggravated burglary [Instructed by CPS, Kent].

Operation Pearland [Kingston CC] 2021

Two-handed 'Ponzi fraud'. Defendants are alleged to have defrauded their investors of £8m. Instructed by CPS SFD London as led-junior [Instructed by CPS, SFD].

Operation Localizer [Kingston CC] 2021

Instructed as sole-counsel in seven-handed conspiracy to supply cocaine allegation. Evidence comes from Operation Venetic material and surveillance operation [Instructed by CPS, London].

Operation Reconverge [Croydon CC] 2021

Twelve-handed conspiracies to launder money and assist unlawful immigration. Defendants split into two trials. Led by Charlotte Newell QC [Instructed by CPS, IJOC].

Operation Scoutfish [Kingston CC] 2021

Ten-handed money laundering conspiracy. [Instructed by CPS, IJOC].

Operation Northleigh [Isleworth CC] 2021

Three-handed allegations of fraud arising from the Grenfell Tower disaster. One of the defendants was a genuine resident of the Tower at the time of the tragedy. [Instructed by CPS, SCU].

To view the privacy notice for Ben Holt please click [here](#).

Areas of Practice

- General Crime
- Prosecution
- Appellate
- Confiscation, Civil Recovery & Asset Forfeiture
- Public Access
- Fraud & Financial Crime
- Military Law
- Road Traffic
- Serious & Organised Crime
- Sexual Offences
- Cyber Crime
- Homicide & Corporate Manslaughter
- Terrorism

What The Directories Say

‘A hard working junior with an unflappable and laid back style. Fierce in cross-examination when required’. *Legal 500 2021*

Panel Appointments:

- CPS General Crime – Level 4
- CPS Special Crime – Level 4
- CPS Fraud - Level 4
- CPS Counter Terrorism – Level 3
- SFO - Panel List B

Recent Cases

- **Operation Photal [CCC] 2020**

Attempted arson with intent to endanger life

Ben Holt acted for the Crown in this case where the Defendant was convicted of attempted arson with intent to endanger life after placing an incendiary device in the exhaust pipe of a diplomatic car parked outside the Iranian Embassy [Instructed by CPS, CTD].

BBC News report:

- **Operation Footprint [CCC] 2020**

Buying a grenade over the ‘dark web’

Ben Holt acted for the Crown in this case where the Defendant was convicted of buying a grenade over the 'dark web' [Instructed by CPS, Thames & Chiltern CCU].

ITV News report:

- **Operation Northleigh [Isleworth CC] 2020**

Grenfell Tower Fraud

Ben Holt prosecuted this two-handed trial. Both defendants were convicted by a jury of having committed fraud by lying that they were living in Grenfell Tower at the time of the disaster [Instructed by CPS, SCU].

News report

Met Police report here.

- **Operation Hillside [CCC] 2020**

Attempted Murder of Police Officers

James Brown led Ben Holt for the Crown in this high profile trial involving the attempted murder of Police Officers during a gun fight following an armed 'car jacking'. The defendant was convicted by a jury and received a life sentence.

News report here.

Link to Met Police report.

- **Operation Baghrash [Bristol] 2019**

Conspiracy to defraud the N.H.S and D.o.H

Ben Holt appeared in this 8-week, seven-handed, prosecution trial acting as led junior. Allegations related to the application to the Department of Health for grants in order to improve care homes by a Hospice in Somerset. Seven-handed conspiracy to defraud the NHS and DoH in relation to tenders made for building projects. Instructed by CPS SFD Manchester.

- **Operation Banjax [Southwark] 2019**

£Multi-Million MTIC Fraud

James Martin, leading Ben Holt, were instructed on behalf of Mr Aslam by Bark & Co Solicitors.

The case was an MTIC Fraud which was part and parcel of Import Duty Diversion on Beers, Wines and Spirits. According to HMRC the OCG were accountable for significant losses to the UK Exchequer through associated large scale VAT and Excise duty frauds. The group also conducted a substantial money laundering operation in relation to the proceeds of these crimes which was believed

to be in excess of £86 million.

13 different individuals were said to be involved along with a whole host of MTIC and Buffer companies some of which sold on the BWS to end user Cash & Carriers who were never investigated.

The case was split into two trials with Mr Aslam D1 in Trial 2. As the case developed there were significant issues with the evidence and associated disclosure problems which related to material that had been withheld by HMRC and should have been disclosed far in advance of the trial itself. After considerable legal argument in Mr Aslam's case we were able to restrict the alleged loss to HMRC to less than £7k.

Ultimately Mr Aslam was convicted but only received a Suspended Sentence Order. ?

- **Operation Italici [C.C.C] 2019**

Importation of Anabolic Steroids from India & Singapore

Ben Holt has successfully prosecuted a case involving the importation of unlicensed anabolic steroids (AAS) from India and Singapore. The gang imported more than 40 tonnes of illicit anabolic steroids and is said to be 'the most prolific of its kind ever uncovered'. One member of that gang was also linked to another gang involved in the production and distribution of steroids from an underground AAS factory in the United Kingdom. Five Defendants were convicted following two six week trials.

Instructed by the CPS Organised Crime Division; investigated by the NCA in Belfast.

[News Report Here](#)

[News Report Here](#)

- **Operation Major [Guildford] 2019**

Multi handed conspiracy to money launder and commit fraud

Jonathan Polnay led Ben Holt for the Crown in this seven-handed conspiracy to launder the proceeds of a two-million-pound fraud. Instructed by CPS Specialist Fraud Division.

- **Operation Pearland [Isleworth] 2018**

£7 million Ponzi Fraud Scheme

Ben Holt led Junior counsel in Prosecution of two defendants accused of a 'Ponzi' fraud. Losses amongst the defendants exceeded £7m. Both defendants convicted after trial. Both received the maximum sentence available – 10 years' imprisonment.

- **R v JN [Isleworth] 2018**

Rape of ex-wife and two daughters

Ben Holt, instructed by the RASSO Unit at the CPS and led by Catherine Pattison. Trial of defendant

who was accused of raping his ex-wife and two daughters. Convicted and sentenced to a custodial sentence of 27 years with an extension period of 8 years.

- **Operation Tandil [Croydon] 2018**

Violent disorder arising out of an attack on an asylum seeker in Croydon

Two linked trials. Jonathan Polnay led Ben Holt in the first and Ben Holt led Dickon Reid in the second. A total of 14 defendants were charged with violent disorder arising out of an attack on an asylum seeker in Croydon. The case attracted international media attention. Instructed to SCU at CPS London.

Daily Mirror report here

Daily Mail report here

- **Operation Northleigh [Isleworth] 2018**

Fraud of the Grenfell Tower victim fund

Ben Holt prosecuted the Finance Manager of the Grenfell Finance Team. She was employed by the RBK&C to assist in providing financial assistance to victims of the Grenfell Tower disaster. However, she stole £62,062 from prepaid credit cards that were allocated to survivors of the fire. During the course of the investigation into that allegation, it transpired that the defendant had defrauded her previous employer, the NHS. Defendant received a custodial sentence of 5-and-a-half years. Instructed by SCU, London.

BBC News Report here

The Guardian News Report here

- **R v. Abdikarim [Isleworth] 2017**

Acid Attack

Ben Holt was instructed by the Prosecution for the trial of an 'acid attack' case. The victim was lured to a park in Isleworth by the defendant. A substance was thrown at him by another, unidentified, male. Victim lost his eye as a result of the attack. He gave evidence with the assistance of an intermediary. Defendant was convicted and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment.

News report here

- **R v. S [St Albans] 2017**

Blackmail and misconduct in a public office

Ben Holt was instructed to defend a Detective Constable charged with blackmail and misconduct in a public office. S had used the PNC to find out personal details of an individual who was using the services of a prostitute. He then blackmailed him. Pled guilty. Sentence referred to the CoA by the

A-G as being unduly lenient. Instructed by Slater & Gordon.

News reports:

BBC report here

Daily Telegraph report here

- **R v. Ahmed [Snaresbrook] 2017**

Attempted Murder

Ben Holt was Prosecution counsel at this trial of attempted murder. The defendant had run over an acquaintance with whom he was having a disagreement. Convicted of section 18 and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment.

- **R v. Daniels & ors [Isleworth] 2017**

Conspiracy to steal motor vehicles

Ben Holt acted for the Crown, Daniels was charged with two others with conspiracy to steal motor vehicles. He worked for a BMW dealership and was convicted of stealing car keys and customer's personal details before passing them on to other conspirators who would steal the cars that had been sold from his place of work. His co-defendants pleaded Guilty at PTPH; with one of them giving evidence for the Crown against Daniels. On conviction, Daniels was sentenced to 63 months' imprisonment.

News reports:

Evening Standard

Daily Mail

- **Operation Manningtree [Inner London] 2017 2017**

13 handed Violent Disorder following illegal 'rave'

Catherine Pattison led Ben Holt in the Prosecution of 13 defendants for violent disorder that arose out of an illegal rave organised to take place on the night of Hallowe'en 2015 by a group called 'Scumtek'. The violence was described as the worst in London since the riots of 2011 and resulted in the largest deployment of Police Officers since that time.

News reports here:

Evening Standard

The Guardian

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R v. Oorloff & Dickinson [Guildford] 2016

£2m 'Rare Earth Metal' Fraud

Jonathan Polnay led Ben Holt in this “boiler room” rare earth metals fraud. Both Defendants were convicted after trial of selling worthless Rare Earth Metals as part of an investment. The total value of the scam was £1.9m. Both defendants were convicted and sentenced to a total of 11 years’ imprisonment. Instructed by CPS Headquarters Central Fraud Group.

News report here.

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Operation Tineid [Blackfriars] 2015

Fraud

Catherine Farrelly led Ben Holt for the Crown. Defendants were charged with arranging co-defendants to take driving test on behalf of other people. NCA investigation, instructed by the Organised Crime Group at the CPS.

News report here.

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R v. A & ors [C.C.C] 2015

Standing Order Fraud

Jonathan Polnay led Ben Holt for the Crown in a nine-handed standing order fraud that was set up and orchestrated by an inside man working with Nationwide bank. Case involved a considerable amount of forensic and banking evidence. (Investigated by DCPCU, instructed by CPS SCU). Jury were unable to reach a verdict on defendant said to be “inside man”. Prosecuted re-trial alone and the defendant was convicted. Mail Online news report.

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R v. S 2015

Armed Robbery

Ben Holt prosecution counsel in an armed robbery trial. Crown’s case relied solely on ANPR, cell site and other circumstantial evidence. Defendant convicted and imprisoned for life.

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R v. M & M [Woolwich] 2015

NHS fraud

Ben Holt represented the husband of an NHS employee, in a prosecution brought by NHS Protect. The wife was alleged to have stolen £300,000 from her employer whilst working for the NHS. The husband was said to have acquired the criminal property. Significant quantity of evidence served (over 10,000 pages). Ben acted alone; other parties in the trial had two counsel. Hung jury. Evening Standard news report.

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R v. S & ors [C.C.C] 2014

Card fraud by ATM skimming

Catherine Pattison led Ben Holt for the prosecution in two separate sets of proceedings relating to Romanian nationals who were charged with card fraud by ATM “skimming”. This was sophisticated organised crime group who were making equipment to capture individuals’ bank account details when they inserted their cards into an ATM. A total of 13 defendants were charged with offences ranging from conspiracy to defraud, possessing articles for use in fraud and transferring criminal property. (Investigated by DCPCU, instructed by CPS SCU). Mirror Online news report.

- ## **Operation Kennedy [Portsmouth] 2014**

Conspiracy to supply class A drugs

Gordon Carse led Ben Holt for the defence in this multi-handed Class A conspiracy trial. The defendant was alleged to have been part of a conspiracy to supply over £600,000 of cocaine in and around the Portsmouth area. The defendant’s involvement and role were underpinned by cocaine found in his possession, call data and text messages. The defendant was acquitted. Sentences totalling 54 years imprisonment were handed down.

- ## **R v. T [Chelmsford] 2014**

Firearms and drugs

Ben Holt represented a defendant charged with possession of firearm with intent to endanger life and drug supply offences. Convicted of the drug matters and simple possession of the gun. Sentenced to an eight-year term of imprisonment.

- ## **R v. R & ors [Croydon] 2013**

Kidnap trial

Catherine Pattison led Ben Holt for the prosecution in this 5-handed kidnap trial. This case involved counsel reviewing a considerable amount of unused material. This included downloads from over 40 mobile telephones. There were numerous issues relating to sensitive disclosure. The case against the defendants was solely reliant on cell-site and tracker evidence. One defendant was convicted and received a prison sentence of 12 years. Instructed to draft respondent’s notice to appeal. Leave refused; renewed in front of the full Court and refused. (Investigated by Kidnap & Special Investigation Unit of the Met, instructed by CPS SCU).