

Sean O'Sullivan QC

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Sean O'Sullivan QC has a wide-ranging commercial practice.

His practice has a particular emphasis on:

- Shipping & Commodities
- Energy
- Insurance & Reinsurance

Recent cases include:

Fluor v. Shanghai Zhenua Heavy Industry [2018] EWHC 1 (TCC); Neon Shipping v. Foreign Economic [2016] 2 Lloyd's Rep 158; The "CV Stealth" [2016] 2 Lloyd's Rep. 17; The "Proikonissos" [2015] 2 Lloyd's Rep. 115; Expofrut v. Melville Services [2015] 2 CLC 218; Wuhan v. Emporiki Bank [2013] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 161; [2014] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 273; The "Saldanha" [2011] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 187; Parbulk v. Kristen Marine [2011] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 220; Guangzhou Dockyards v. ENE Aegiali I [2011] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 30; Vitol v. Conoil [2009] 2 Lloyd's Rep. 466; The "A Turtle" [2009] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 177; The "Florida" [2007] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 1; Gold Coast v. Naval Gijon [2006] 2 Lloyd's Rep. 400; NB Three Shipping v. Harebell Shipping [2005] 1 Lloyd's Rep. 509; BMBF v. Harland & Wolff [2001] 2 Lloyd's Rep. 277.

Sean is qualified to undertake Public Access work.

Shipping & Commodities

Sean is often instructed in the full range of 'dry' shipping disputes concerning charterparties, bill of lading contracts and the equivalent, and commodities/sale of goods disputes more generally. He also deals with unsafe port claims and other cases about marine casualties. He is instructed by shipowners and charterers, shippers, receivers, shipyards and brokers in disputes of all shapes and sizes, from demurrage disputes to the most technical disputes about massive shipbuilding projects. He is generally thought to be one of the leading shipbuilding silks.

Featured Shipping & Commodities cases

Acting for a shipowner in a complex dispute concerning the operation of a force majeure clause in relation to infectious diseases.

Acting for a charterer in relation to the cancellation of a bareboat charter for a very sophisticated diving support vessel, with issues about the networking of the dynamic positioning system.

Acting for a charterer in relation to a dispute about the frustration of a time charter as a result of prolonged detention in Venezuela.

Acting for a shipowner on a series of disputes about redelivery following long term bareboat charters, with issues about the condition of the vessels and other aspects.

Acting for the importer of fertiliser into Africa in relation to a quality claim against the manufacturer/ exporter, with issues about the cause of caking and the scope for resale.

Acting for a shipowner in relation to urgent disputes and applications for injunctions (up and down a charter chain) about putting up security pursuant to LOIs in response to an arrest in support of a huge claim by a B/L holder.

Advising a charterer in relation to the operation of interlocking off-hire clauses linked to a right to cancel a long-term charterparty.

Acting for shipyards and buyers in numerous newbuilding cancellation disputes about high value projects, including projects concerning the construction of accommodation units, drillships, FPSOs and offshore support vessels.

Acting for a shipowner in a highly technical dispute concerning the cause of damage to a crane.

Acting for a shipowner in relation to a claim by a shipyard for additional time/ disruption costs in relation to the conversion of a deep sea cable-laying vessel.

Acting for a shipowner in relation to a dispute about the operation of the Interclub Agreement in the context of damage to soybean cargo.

Acting for a shipyard in a dispute concerning allegations about the fuel consumption of the main engine.

Acting for a shipowner in relation to a large claim arising out of a collision between an OSV and a platform.

Acting for a disponent owner in relation to a large demurrage claim, with particular regard to the application of the timebar.

Acting for a shipowner in relation to a claim for damage to coatings caused by a corrosive cargo.

Acting for a shipowner in an unsafe port claim concerning contamination damage caused to a container ship while at a berth.

Acting for a charterer in a dispute about the supply of bunkers alleged to have been “off-spec”.

Energy

Sean is instructed in a range of upstream disputes but especially shipbuilding, ship conversion, ship repair, ship sale and purchase, and offshore construction disputes which have an energy aspect as a result of the service for which the ship or project is intended.

His clients include shipyards, buyers, owners and designers and he has been involved in disputes about all aspects of the different projects.

He also acts for oil companies, traders and contractors in relation to disputes about oil exploitation and drilling for or transportation of oil and gas. He is instructed in a number of cases concerning sales of oil and gas and other fuels including coal and biofuels.

Featured Energy cases

Acting for an African mining company in relation to claims and counterclaims arising out of a contract for the purchase and transportation of duty free fuel.

Advising a Chinese shipyard on a series of sales of offshore accommodation and drilling units.

Acting for an oil trader in litigation concerning supply of off-spec low sulphur fuel oil.

Acting for a Korean shipyard in relation to various disputes about the construction of a rig installation/ decommissioning vessel.

Acting for a shipyard in an ICC arbitration concerning the construction of an FPSO for use in Iraqi waters, with issues about the reasons for delay and the consequences of delivery incomplete.

Acting for a Chinese contractor in litigation concerning the welding of structures for a wind farm.

Acting for an oil company in relation to disputes arising out of an oil exploration joint venture concerning decisions made and costs incurred by the operator.

Acting for a shipyard in an LCIA arbitration against the manufacturer of DP thrusters.

Acting for one oil major against another in a dispute about an alleged loss of crude oil from an oil tanker.

Acting for a major coal trader in relation to a dispute with a large power company about a long-term coal supply arrangement.

Insurance & Reinsurance

Sean is variously instructed in coverage and other insurance related disputes, both marine and non-marine, relating to both primary layers as well as reinsurance.

Featured Insurance & Reinsurance cases

Acting for a shipowner in relation to a war risks claim concerning damage to the vessel arising out of prolonged detention by Somali pirates.

Acting for a reinsurer on a number of claims on a XL policy protecting a book of E&O covers.

Acting for a reinsurer in relation to the rescission of a facultative arrangement for reinsuring private healthcare insurance in the UAE on grounds of non-disclosure/ misrepresentation.

Acting for a reinsured in relation to a claim for additional premium arising out of a long term arrangement for the reinsurance of retail life and critical illness cover.

Arbitral Appointments

Sean also takes arbitration appointments in disputes within the areas of practice outlined above. He was appointed by the parties as sole arbitrator in an ICC arbitration between two entities based in the Middle East concerning an offshore project, and again in another ICC arbitration about the provision of logistical services. He is currently acting as chairman in an LMAA arbitration concerning a range of disputes about the charters of tugs and was also appointed by the ICC Court as chairman in an arbitration concerning various bunker sales.

He has been appointed in several LCIA arbitrations, including disputes about structured finance and sales of commodities. He has also been appointed by the parties in number of LMAA arbitrations, including a claim concerning a luxury yacht and a dispute about a ship management agreement, and a series of related arbitrations about a chain of sales.

He is a supporting member of the LMAA. In 2018, Sean was also admitted as arbitrator on the EMAC Panel.

Appointments

- Admitted to practise in the Cayman Islands

Publications

- Co-author of “Civil Appeals: Principles & Procedure” (Sweet & Maxwell)

Education

- Dip Law (City)
- MA (Oxon) Modern History (1st Class)

Recommendations

Sean is listed in the Chambers 100 top barristers. Comments in the directories have included:

- Super intelligent, phenomenally talented and easy to deal with
- One of the most outstanding commercial barristers of his generation, and a first rate advocate
- His delightful manner and credible advocacy ensure his many loyal instructing solicitors use him time and time again
- His bedside manner with clients is excellent
- Extremely personable, very clever and fantastic at getting to grips with the details in a case
- An exceptional strategist
- Super bright and user-friendly
- He is simply fantastic. An absolute star