MAITLAND

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WATSON PRINGLE KC

CALL: 2005 **KC:** 2026

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OVERVIEW

Watson specialises in commercial and commercial chancery disputes, particularly those involving allegations of dishonesty and jurisdiction and conflicts of laws issues.

He regularly handles claims concerning breach of contract / warranty, misrepresentation, conspiracy, disputes between shareholders, partnership disputes, breach of fiduciary duty and breach of confidence, and professional negligence, as well as personal and corporate insolvency matters.

Watson was awarded 'Chancery Junior of the Year' at the Chambers and Partners UK Bar Awards 2022, having previously been nominated for that award in 2016. In 2023 he was nominated for Commercial Litigation Junior of the Year at the Legal 500 Bar Awards. He is consistently highly ranked in the legal directories, and is currently ranked in Band 1 by Chambers UK Bar for both commercial chancery and commercial dispute resolution.

He is experienced in both trial and application advocacy, and has written and oral advocacy experience in the county courts, High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court.He has also appeared in the ADGM Courts in Abu Dhabi.

Watson speaks French and has experience acting for French clients in commercial and chancery disputes in the English courts, including those involving parallel litigation in France.

He has been involved in some of the biggest cases in the Commercial Court and Chancery Division in recent years, including:

- ***Recovery Partners & anr v Rukhadze & ors***, a breach of fiduciary duty case relating to a corporate business opportunity, involving one of the largest and most complicated equitable accounts to pass through the English courts, in which Watson recently conducted part of the advocacy in the Supreme Court.
- Acting for Bidzina Ivanishvili, the former Prime Minister of Georgia, in his successful challenge to the

English court's jurisdiction in relation to a claim brought against him by Zaza Okuashvili.
- Appearing for JSC Far Eastern Shipping Corp (FESCO) in its successful jurisdiction challenge in relation to the $13.8bn claim against it by Mr Magomedov.
- Representing the Watchstone Group (formerly known as Quindell) in a series of pieces of large-scale litigation, including ***Slater & Gordon v Watchstone,*** a £637 million fraud and breach of warranty claim against Watchstone Group Plc arising out of the sale of the personal injury law firm Quindell in 2015, which settled in late 2019.
- Representing the well-known human rights activist Bill Browder in ***Browder v Nogotkov (Re Dalnyaya Step)***, a significant insolvency matter involving the pursuit of Mr Browder by the Russian State.
- Acting for Anastasia Goncharova in her claim to be recognised as the daughter of the late Georgian businessman and philanthropist Kakha Bendukidze.
- Acting for the widow and daughter of Arkadi Patarkatshvili in ***Berezovsky v Abramovich***, and the related ***Gudavadze v Anisimov litigation***.

EXPERTISE

COMMERCIAL LITIGATION & ARBITRATION

Watson has been involved in some of the biggest commercial disputes in the courts in recent years, which have regularly involved him in issues of disclosure, privilege, conflicts of laws, forensic accountancy and foreign law experts. He is equally at home in the Commercial Court and Chancery Division, and is familiar with the technology involved in modern commercial trials, including online trial bundles and disclosure databases, the e-disclosure protocol and simultaneous interpretation.

He has a particular interest in jurisdictional and private international law disputes, and often acts in jurisdiction challenges and cases involving other cross-border issues such as assistance between courts in obtaining evidence. He has written articles and been invited to deliver seminars and webinars on jurisdictional issues including the impact of the Brussels Regulation Recast and Brexit.

He handles commercial disputes of all shapes and sizes and has experience dealing with numerous different sectors of business and industry, as well as cases involving sports, media and entertainment.

Cases include:

- ***Okuashvili & ors v Ivanishvili & ors*** (2023-)*:* Junior Counsel for the former Prime Minister of Georgia in a claim against him for c.$43m based on allegations that he extorted money from his political opponents by intimidation.
- ***Union Properties v Trinkler & Ors*** (2025): Cross-examined the Defendants in a fraud claim in the ADGM Court in Abu Dhabi concerning misappropriation of tens of millions of dollars under cover of transactions involving derivative instruments.

- ***Recovery Partners & anr v Rukhadze & ors*** (2016-2025): Junior Counsel for the Defendants in a claim for an account of profits for breach of fiduciary duty arising out of the alleged diversion of a corporate

business opportunity to provide asset recovery services.

- ***Magomedov & ors v FESCO & ors*** (2023-2024)*:* Junior Counsel for FESCO in its successful challenge to the English Court's jurisdiction in a claim for $13.8bn in conspiracy in relation to the alleged misappropriation of shares in large Russian logistics and shipping companies.

- ***Raven Ventures v Entain & anr*** (2021-)*:* Sole Counsel for the Claimant in a contractual dispute arising out of the sale of a brokerage business by the large sports betting business Entain.
- ***Watchstone v PwC*** (2020-)*:* Junior Counsel for the Claimant in a claim for damages for breach of confidence and unlawful means conspiracy in relation to an illicit meeting between the Claimant's adviser and an adviser to its counterparty in a large commercial transaction at which the Claimant alleges that its confidential information was divulged.
- ***MAD International BV v Manes*** (2020-)*:* Junior Counsel for the Defendant, the chef Axel Manes, in a fraud claim surrounding the well-known chain of restaurants Atelier Joel Robuchon.
- ***Slater & Gordon v Watchstone*** (2016-19)*:* Junior Counsel for the Defendant in a claim in the Commercial Court for £637 million in damages for fraudulent misrepresentation and breach of warranty arising out of the sale of the personal injury law firm Quindell in 2015.
- ***Blue Tropic & anr v Chkhartishvili*** (2015-17)*:* Junior Counsel for the Claimant (and sole Counsel in a number of applications) in a claim by two BVI companies for damages under the Georgian law of delict in relation to the misappropriation of real estate assets in Georgia worth millions of dollars.
- ***Gudavadze & ors v Anisimov*** (2014): Junior Counsel for the Claimants in their claim for over $1.5 billion in damages, based on an oral agreement as to the use of $600 million of the proceeds of sale of a shareholding in a large metals business.
- ***Berezovsky v Hine & ors*** (2012-2014): Junior Counsel for the Family in claims brought by Boris Berezovsky against the Family of Arkadi Patarkatsishvili, based on oral joint venture agreements allegedly made between them in the 1990s and in 2000 in relation to all of their respective business interests.

CIVIL FRAUD

Watson is particularly effective in fraud cases. He is an experienced trial advocate and is effective in cross-examination, a skill that he honed during his early practice in frequent multi-day trials in the county courts. He has also regularly obtained and resisted the full range of pre-action and interlocutory remedies that typically arise, including freezing injunctions and orders under the ***Norwich Pharmacal*** and ***Bankers Trust*** jurisdictions. He has worked alongside criminal investigations and private prosecutions, and with IT and accounting experts, to locate stolen assets.

Cases include:

- ***Okuashvili & ors v Ivanishvili & ors*** (2023-)*:* Junior Counsel for the former Prime Minister of Georgia in a claim against him for c.$43m based on allegations that he extorted money from his political opponents by intimidation.
- ***Union Properties v Trinkler & ors*** (2025): Cross-examined the Defendants in a fraud claim in the ADGM Court in Abu Dhabi concerning misappropriation of tens of millions of dollars under cover of

transactions involving derivative instruments.

- ***Recovery Partners & anr v Rukhadze & ors*** (2016-2025): Junior Counsel for the Defendants in a claim for an account of profits for breach of fiduciary duty arising out of the alleged diversion of a corporate business opportunity to provide asset recovery services.
- ***Magomedov & ors v FESCO & ors*** (2023-2024): Junior Counsel for FESCO in its successful challenge to the English Court's jurisdiction in a claim for $13.8bn in conspiracy in relation to the alleged misappropriation of shares in large Russian logistics and shipping companies.
- ***Watchstone v PwC*** (2020-): Junior Counsel for the Claimant in a claim for damages for breach of confidence and unlawful means conspiracy in relation to an illicit meeting between the Claimant's adviser and an adviser to its counterparty in a large commercial transaction at which the Claimant alleges that its confidential information was divulged.
- ***MAD International BV v Manes*** (2020-2021): Junior Counsel for the Defendant, the chef Axel Manes, in a fraud claim surrounding a joint venture in relation to the well-known chain of restaurants Atelier Joel Robuchon.
- ***Abdulrida & ors v Larry & ors*** (2020): Sole Counsel for D13 and 14 in a claim in dishonest assistance and knowing receipt arising out of investments made by Kuwaiti investors in a UK property business.
- ***Slater & Gordon v Watchstone*** (2016-19): Junior Counsel for the Defendant in a claim in the Commercial Court for £637 million in damages for fraudulent misrepresentation and breach of warranty arising out of the sale of the personal injury law firm Quindell in 2015.
- ***Blue Tropic & anr v Chkhartishvili*** (2015-17): Junior Counsel for the Claimant (and sole Counsel in a number of applications) in a claim by two BVI companies for damages under the Georgian law of delict in relation to the misappropriation of real estate assets in Georgia worth millions of dollars.
- ***Gudavadze & ors v Anisimov*** (2014): Junior Counsel for the Claimants in their claim for over $1.5 billion in damages, based on an oral agreement as to the use of $600 million of the proceeds of sale of a shareholding in a large metals business.
- ***Berezovsky v Hine & ors***: Junior Counsel for the Family in claims brought by Boris Berezovsky against the Family of Arkadi Patarkatsishvili, based on oral joint venture agreements allegedly made between them in the 1990s in relation to all of their respective business interests.
- ***Roder v West & anor***: Sole Counsel for the Appellants in an appeal to the Court of Appeal relating to the interpretation of the Statute of Frauds (Amendment) Act 1828 in a claim in deceit.

PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW

Watson has a particular interest in cases involving private international law issues. He is very familiar with the international law points which regularly arise in large scale cross-border commercial litigation, such as pleading, and liaising with experts in relation to, foreign law. He is also experienced in jurisdiction challenges, applications for stays on jurisdiction grounds, and applications for assistance under the Hague Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil and Commercial Matters 1970. He has regularly given seminars and webinars, and has written articles and chapters of texts, on international law issues, in particular the workings of the Brussels Regulation Recast and the effect of Brexit on the UK's jurisdiction and choice of law rules.

Cases include:

- ***Okuashvili & ors v Ivanishvili & ors*** (2022-) Jurisdiction challenge in relation to an order for service out of the jurisdiction in a claim in intimidation, conspiracy and breach of contract, based on allegations that the former Prime Minister of Georgia extorted money from his political opponents.
- ***Magomedov & ors v FESCO & ors*** (2023-2024): Junior Counsel for FESCO in its successful challenge to the English Court's jurisdiction in a claim for $13.8bn in conspiracy in relation to the alleged misappropriation of shares in large Russian logistics and shipping companies.
- ***Re Dalnyaya Step (Browder v Nogotkov)*** [2018] Bus L.R. 789; [2019] B.C.C. 23: An application to set aside an order made under the Cross Border Insolvency Regulations 2006, recognising a Russian insolvency in the English courts. The basis for the challenge was that the process was being abused by the Russian government to enable it to persecute Bill Browder, a well known businessman and human rights activist.
- ***Blue Tropic v Chkhartishvili*** [2016] EWCA Civ 1259: An appeal to the Court of Appeal in relation to the application of s.35 of the Limitation Act 1980 to an amendment to introduce what was said to be a new cause of action under Article 990 of the Georgian Civil Code.
- ***Blue Tropic v Chkhartishvili*** [2014] EWHC 2243 (Ch): A jurisdiction challenge based on the claimed reflexive application of the Brussels I Regulation (following the decision in ***Ferrexpo***) to a dispute concerning the beneficial ownership of a company in the BVI, in circumstances where there was parallel litigation ongoing in both the BVI and Georgia.
- ***Blue Tropic v Chkhartishvili*** [2015] EWHC 3260 (Ch): an application for a case management stay based on the existence of parallel foreign proceedings which were proceeding through the appeal courts ahead of the English proceedings, despite having been issued later.
- ***Gonchorova v Zolotova*** [2015] EWHC 3061 (QB): An application under the Evidence (Proceedings in Other Jurisdictions) Act 1975, alternatively under s.25 of the Civil Jurisdiction and Judgments Act 1982, for an order requiring bodily samples from a deceased Uzbekh businessman, which were being held by the Westminster coroner, to be sent to Russia for testing to determine the Applicant's paternity and therefore whether she was entitled to a half share of his billion dollar estate.
- ***Official Receiver v Mitterfelner*** [2009] BPIR 1075: A contested application to annul an English bankruptcy order on the basis that the debtor's centre of main interests was in Germany rather than England.

COMPANY & PARTNERSHIP

Watson has acted in a number of company and partnership (including LLP) matters, in particular shareholder disputes involving unfair prejudice petitions, derivative actions and winding-up under the just and equitable jurisdiction.

INSOLVENCY & ASSET RECOVERY

Watson is regularly instructed in insolvency disputes, particularly those that involve allegations of fraud or jurisdictional issues. He has acted in private examinations and claims involving transactions at an undervalue, wrongful trading, misfeasance, and phoenix companies. He has been involved in two significant cases under the Cross-Border Insolvency Regulations 2006, and has also acted in cases concerning the centre of main interests

of a German bankrupt, and whether a debtor has "carried on a business" in the UK for the purposes of s.265 of the Insolvency Act 1986.

Cases include:

- ***OR v Bishop*** (2022-)***: Counsel for the Respondents in a claim by the OR for wrongful and fraudulent trading, misfeasance, preference and transaction at an undervalue in relation to the stewardship of a scrap metal business.***
- ***Re Tanmon Ltd*** (2019): Sole Counsel for the successful Respondent, a successful interior designer, in an application under s.234 of the Insolvency Act 1986 for delivery up of monies paid to her by her ex-husband's nightclub company.
- ***Re Dalnyaya Step LLC; Browder v Nogotkov*** (2017): Junior Counsel for the successful Applicants in an application to set aside a recognition order under the Cross Border Insolvency Regulations 2006 made on the ex parte application of the purported Russian liquidator of a Russian company. The Applicants' case was that the recognition order was the latest manifestation of a politically motivated campaign by the Russian state against Bill Browder, a well-known human rights activist.
- ***Re Powa Group Companies*** (2017): Junior Counsel for the Applicants in relation to rival applications to appoint administrators over the Powa group of companies, the main asset in the administration being a claim in damages in relation to the sabotage of a tech start-up with a multi-billion pound valuation.
- ***TST Group Limited*** (2012): sole Counsel for the company in a disputed debt winding up petition involving the application of the principles set out by the Court of Appeal in BNY Corporate Trustee Services v Eurosail.
- ***Official Receiver v Mitterfelner*** (2009): sole Counsel for the debtor in the trial, on the OR's application to annul, of his centre of main interests (COMI) for the purposes of the EC Regulation.

PROFESSIONAL NEGLIGENCE

Watson has acted in professional negligence disputes involving various different professions, including lawyers, auditors and builders.

Cases include:

- ***Global Fintech v Linklaters*** (2025-): Sole Counsel for the Claimant in a solicitors' negligence claim arising out of the high-profile collapse of the large middle-Eastern currency exchange group Finablr Plc.
- ***Watchstone v KPMG*** (2021 – 2022)***:*** A £14 million auditors' negligence claim brought by Watchstone Group plc against KPMG, involving an allegation that a significant dividend was paid unlawfully on the basis of the relevant audit.

DIRECTORY QUOTES

"Simply a very impressive lawyer- strong in all aspects - wonderful with clients and just as at ease on paper as he is on his feet in communicating complex issues clearly."

Legal 500 UK Partnership (2027)

"Watson's written work was excellent and he was great in court. He got the judge on side and calmly took complete control of the hearing. It was tremendous."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2027)

"Watson is super and calm. His written work is excellent and he is great in court. He can take complete control of a hearing."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2027)

Watson is a great team player who is client- friendly, hardworking and responsive. He has a real charm with judges and is a calming, reassuring and commanding presence in court."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2027)

"Watson is hardworking and intelligent. His excellent strategic advice reflects his extensive experience in heavy commercial litigation, and he is an effective courtroom advocate. He is also a great team player."

Legal 500 UK Commercial Litigation (2027)

"Watson is fantastic to work with. He really understands and thinks carefully about how judges will approach things, and how to position things accordingly, to put the client's best foot forward."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2027)

"A huge asset to any team. A great strategic thinker, team player and well rounded advocate. Very clear and concise submissions and able to grapple with details quickly. Highly recommended."

Legal 500 Partnership (2026)

"Watson Pringle is absolutely outstanding – a really able advocate who can go against silks more senior than him. He was excellent in his advocacy; he had the judge's attention from the start."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2026)

"Watson Pringle has total command of the material and a commitment to the cases on which he works. He is known for giving careful and well-thought-through tactical advice from the very start."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2026)

"Watson Pringle's advocacy has been very clear. He has been dealing with litigants in person on the other side, and he navigated that really well."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2026)

"Watson is an extremely talented advocate with an impressive ability to read a judge."

Legal 500 Fraud: Civil (2026)

"Watson has excellent instincts and a wonderful ability to distil complex matters into core elements and assist the judge in understanding the important detail."

Chambers UK Chancery Commercial (2026)

"Watson Pringle has total command of the material and a commitment to the cases on which he works. His work is excellent, and he quickly wins over clients."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2026)

"Watson's advocacy was very clear, and he navigated the case really well. The judge was very receptive to him."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2026)

"Watson is always calm, level-headed and able to assist. He's always willing to get stuck in."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2026)

"He is very efficient and effective in his advocacy."

Chambers UK Fraud: Civil (2026)

"Watson is a nice man and a very good lawyer. He's good at working with clients and solicitors. "

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2026)

"Watson is a really fantastic advocate, who will doubtless be taking silk soon. He is very calm and attractive in his advocacy style."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2025)

"Watson is a very sensible and down-to-earth practitioner, who picks up the key points well."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2025)

"Watson is very accessible and his advice is always very clear and well thought-through. One of the reasons I enjoy working with him the most is that he is honest in his assessment."

Chambers UK Chancery Commercial (2025)

"Watson is an excellent advocate who works well on his own and as part of a team. He is good at predicting how an argument will play out. He has a very nice style, effective without being overbearing."

Chambers UK Fraud: Civil (2025)

"He is very accessible, and his advice is very clear and thought through."

Chambers UK Fraud: Civil (2025)

"Watson is all over the detail and very pragmatic, and his judgement is spot on. He is one of those barristers that just gets it, who understands the procedure and when to make the points."

Chambers UK Fraud: Civil (2025)

"A solid junior, who gets right into the detail, and supports his leaders. Able to understand the commercial elements of a case well, he always understands the client's position. Watson has a good read of the courts and judges, and always deals with any arguments that come up efficiently. Last minute issues or questions not expected from the judiciary are not a problem for him."

CHAMBERS UK CHANCERY: COMMERCIAL (2024)

"Top drawer, he is an excellent commercial junior barrister, who works exceptionally hard and is very good in a difficult case. He's good at handling expectations and delivers first rate work."

CHAMBERS UK CHANCERY: COMMERCIAL (2024)

"Clients like Watson because of his friendly and approachable manner, and his expertise in complex areas. He works through difficult legal issues with lay and professional clients, and puts them at ease when there are high stakes in play."

CHAMBERS UK CHANCERY: COMMERCIAL (2024)

"Watson is a very impressive senior junior and a delight to work with. The quality of his work and the speed at which he produces it is second to none and he is clearly highly in demand."

CHAMBERS UK COMMERCIAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION (2024)

"He is extremely good on paper and with clients, and very intelligent and fierce in court."

CHAMBERS UK FRAUD: CIVIL (2024)

"Watson is an excellent technical lawyer. He has a real forensic appetite and the ability to see his way through a difficult fraud case."

CHAMBERS UK FRAUD: CIVIL (2024)

"Watson gets right into the detail and he is very happy to fight the client's corner. He has a good read of the courts and judges."

CHAMBERS UK (2024)

"Watson is hard-working and bright - a future star. A man with good commercial awareness, who has excellent client skills."

CHAMBERS UK DISPUTE RESOLUTION (2023)

"Very clever and very organised. He works very hard and produces top-quality work."

CHAMBERS UK COMMERCIAL CHANCERY (2023)

"Watson has an unerring ability to find the killer points and then deliver the winning blows. A top advocate."

Legal 500 UK Commercial Litigation (2022)

"Really very good. He has a good manner, is very amiable, is very focused and does some very heavyweight litigation. Watson moves in international circles and is aware of all the conflict of laws points. He is great."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2022)

"He's very intelligent and able to spot the tricky points and find solutions. He really gets involved and is excellent with clients."

Chambers UK Fraud: Civil (2022)

"Rare talent for hunting down the dishonesty and fraud in even the most labyrinthine dispute. A disentangler of complex thickets par excellence."

Legal 500 UK Fraud: Civil (2022)

"Very measured, thoughtful and practical, he is a calming influence in a case."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2022)

"Charming to both clients and opponents, he is detail-oriented and perfect in his presentation in court." "He is very strong on Russian matters."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2021)

"He is articulate, intelligent and responsive. He grasps the issues in a case very quickly and is good on his feet. He's also excellent with clients." "He is very bright, commercial and well balanced in his approach."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2021)

"An excellent commercial barrister, who works hard, displays sound judgment and always delivers. He can always be relied upon to produce top quality work."

Legal 500 UK Commercial Litigation (2021)

"A most accomplished advocate who combines brains with astute judgement - a really safe pair of hands."

Legal 500 UK Fraud: Civil (2021)

"He's a safe pair of hands and very hard-working. He's bright, rolls his sleeves up and gets stuck in."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2020)

"Very smart, very good with clients and very hard-working."

Chambers UK Commercial Dispute Resolution (2020)

"A fabulous civil fraud lawyer who grasps the complex issues quickly."

Legal 500 UK Fraud: Civil (2020)

"Very clever, straightforward and polite, and someone you can trust. "He is very, very compelling as an advocate and can more than hold his own against leading counsel. Judges warm to him immediately."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2019)

"Very clever, straightforward and polite, and someone you can trust. "He is very, very compelling as an advocate and can more than hold his own against leading counsel. Judges warm to him immediately."

Chambers Global Dispute Resolution: Commercial Chancery (2019)

"His written advocacy is first rate." "Very bright, very knowledgeable and very down-to-earth."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2018)

"His written advocacy is first rate." "Very bright, very knowledgeable and very down-to-earth."

Chambers Global Dispute Resolution: Commercial Chancery (2018)

"Charming, down-to-earth and very user-friendly. He gets the judge's ear from the get-go and really presents well."

Chambers UK Chancery: Commercial (2017)

MEMBERSHIPS

- Chancery Bar Association
- Commercial Bar Association
- Commercial Fraud Lawyers Association
- Professional Negligence Bar Association

QUALIFICATIONS

- MA (Oxon) Jurisprudence

AWARDS

Chambers UK Bar Chancery Junior of the Year 2022

LANGUAGES

- French (fluent)
- German (competency)

NOTABLE CASES

- *Magomedov v PJSC [2025] EWHC 59 (Comm)*
- *In The Matter Of Watchstone Group Plc Sub Nom Slater & Gordon (UK) 1 Ltd v Watchstone Group Plc (2017)*
- *In Re Dalnyaya Step LLC (In Liquidation) v Nogotkov Kirill Olegovich, The Official Receiver Of Danyaya Step*

LLC (In Lidquidation) (2017)

- *(1) Blue Tropic Ltd (2) Coppella Ventures Ltd v Ivane Chkhartishvili (2016)*
- *Boris Berezovsky v Roman Abramovich (2012)*