



New Park Court

Robert Woodcock QC

#### Leeds

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# Robert Woodcock QC

Year of call 1978 / 2009

For enquiries please call +44 (0)113 203 5504 or email

Robert Woodcock QC, known by many as Bertie, was born in 1953, called to the Bar in 1978 having been educated in Cheltenham and Bristol, and took Silk in 2009. He is a “through and through” criminal law advocate with experience across the full calendar of serious crime and unafraid of any challenge whether in serious fraud or infant homicide.

Robert has been practicing criminal law all his professional life and is deemed an expert within the field. Widely respected amongst his peers for his considerable experience both defending and prosecuting murder, organised crime, serious sexual offences and fraud.

He is a highly skilled performer in all aspects of his craft and his jury speeches have commanded admiration and the respect of Bench and Bar for many years. “His interpersonal skills with clients and professionals alike are first class”, enabling him to achieve strong working relationships and consequential good results.

## Crime

Robert has for many years prosecuted and defended cases of the utmost seriousness and, sometimes, sensitivity. He has considerable experience in cases involving allegations of sexual abuse by perpetrators of all ages and on victims of all ages and both sexes. Prior to taking Silk he led for the Crown in numerous homicide prosecutions and conducted them alone. Since taking Silk he has also led for the defence in numerous large-scale drug conspiracies, homicides, child sexual exploitation cases and cases involving allegations of corruption. Fraud cases are also handled by him.

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## Representative Cases

- *R v Mills (2016)*

This lady was the “matriarch” resident of a household which included her son and who, with her knowledge, repeatedly beat and eventually murdered his friend. The friend was also resident at the house. Mills was accused of causing or allowing that death by her indifference to the treatment by her son of the deceased to whom she administered drugs and for whom she consistently denied medical help or assistance. Other members of the household were also accused and their trial lasted 9 weeks. Robert was instructed by Haswells (Newcastle) and led Mr Peter Schofield of New Park Court Chambers.

- *R v Gordon Smith (2016)*

This young man was accused of Murder. It was said that he, with the gunman and a second accomplice, planned, pursued and shot dead their victim. The motive was a dispute between the victim and the gunman. Smith denied knowledge of any firearm but admitted presence at the shooting. He was acquitted of Murder but convicted of Manslaughter. The gunman and the second accomplice were convicted of Murder. Robert was instructed by Taylor Goodchild (Teesside) and led Mr Paul Cleasby.

- *R v Prigmore (2015)*

This man was accused of murder and represented by Robert. His part was said to be the provider of knives with one of which his accomplice and friend had committed the killing and at which killing the defendant was said to have been an enthusiastic participant. The principle evidence came from bystanders and neighbours and former girlfriend of the killer who told the court that the defendant had run to his house nearby, selected the knives, given them to the killer and then run to the scene of the killing with his friend. The accused was arrested soon after and the murder weapon bearing his fingerprints in blood found at his feet. The defendant was acquitted of murder and manslaughter after a two week trial in which the defendant’s case was that his friend was alone responsible and indeed had collected the weapon for himself.

- *R v Mawson (2015)*

Defendant was accused of two conspiracies in which he was said to be a key member of a gang who reconnoitred, planned and carried out violent robberies of elderly folk in their isolated homes and who were believed to be in possession of large amounts of cash at home or in their nearby businesses. The people were tied up, threatened and assaulted by masked men carrying weapons. In some cases they were abducted to their business premises where safe combinations were demanded and their businesses ransacked. The evidence against this defendant in two trials was that of two co-conspirators who had been signed up as witnesses under powers granted by Serious and Organised Crime Act legislation and who themselves awaited sentence. The defendant was acquitted in each trial after detailed and prolonged cross-examination by Robert of the accomplices.

- *R v Spanswick (2014)*

This man was accused of manslaughter arising from one punch to a man who died. The neuropathology in this case was extremely complicated. The fall from which he died happened some hours after the punch

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and at a completely different location. The case depended therefore upon proof that the consequences of the punch had been a contributing cause. The scientific evidence was further complicated by the presence in the blood of the deceased of high alcohol content. Some of the country's most eminent medical experts gave evidence in this case and their cross-examination was task demanding of the highest skills.

- *R v Brennan (2014)*

The accused was one of 19 men arrested in connection with the murder of a completely innocent man in the course of what was alleged to be a drug war. After two trials, each of ten weeks in length, he was acquitted when represented in each by Robert. The killer was convicted alone. The entirety of evidence against this accused was an accumulation of circumstances including CCTV evidence of the gathering at the scene of the entire gang and the moment of the shooting. In addition this defendant was shown, in distinction from the others, to have been the only one amongst them with a real motive for any attack upon the intended victim who never attended. It is highly probable that were these facts to be repeated they would still fall foul even of the recent Joint Enterprise ruling of the Supreme Court.

## Principal cases involving Non Accidental Head Injury in Children

### Representative Cases

- *R v C (2011)*

This man was accused of shaking his one month old baby daughter in a rage and causing serious injury. The full array of medical science was amassed against him in support of the so-called "shaken baby syndrome" but which failed to secure his conviction when defended by Robert.

- *R v D (2011)*

This man was accused of assaulting a baby he had adopted as his own. The mother was also tried. The child was severely compromised by reason of congenital defects made horribly worse by the joint actions of the accused. His defence required exploring such avenues as Fictitious Injury and the extent to which the proven violence upon the child by the mother when in hospital with the child had in fact been responsible for her terrible injuries. The evidence from a host of specialists was relied upon by the Crown and challenged by the defence. In no small part this was a cut-throat defence. The case for this defendant, represented by Robert, was to a large degree strengthened by the fact that he was able to show significant ill-treatment of the infant when her mother alone had access to her and that even when the child had was out of hospital and was being visited under supervised visits by the mother further assaults occurred.



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## What the directories say

"Esteemed silk highly regarded by market sources for his specialism in homicide matters. He represents clients in cases across the spectrum of criminal law, making regular appearances both on the North Eastern Circuit and before the Old Bailey." "He is a tenacious advocate and very skilled in his approach to the jury."

*Chambers & Partners 2019 (Crime)*

"Very experienced in sexual abuse cases."

*Legal 500 2018 (Crime)*

"He is a great jury advocate."

*Chambers & Partners 2018 (Crime)*

"His areas of expertise include murder, sexual abuse and large scale drugs conspiracies."

*Legal 500 2017 (Crime)*

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## Appointments & Memberships

Criminal Bar Association

North Eastern Circuit

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