

Alumni newsletter



February 2026

Welcome to our latest alumni newsletter. It is almost a year since I found myself writing the introduction to the last one and it has been quite a year. In this edition we feature an update from a couple of faces that will be familiar to many of you. Towards the end we also have an interview with our very own [Tim Sarson](#) who is due to retire at the end of March – he will be sorely missed having been a key player in all that has been achieved in the last 17 years.

We also look at some of the new partners who have joined us this year, many of whom have joined our now thriving [Bristol](#) and [Sevenoaks](#) offices as we build these to be on a par with our more established offices. It is encouraging that there seem to be so many good people keen to join us and help us become a real presence in these new markets. It is hard to believe that it has been less than 18 months since we opened our doors in Bristol and less than three years since we opened in Sevenoaks. In both locations we have already had to take on new office space as it has become available.

We also look at some of the charitable events which have been put on across the offices. These are just a snapshot as there is so much more we could talk about alongside our charitable giving to the various “foundations” which operate across our patch.

Finally, we take a brief look at some of the sectors which have been key to the growth of the firm. We have deliberately chosen some which might be seen as a bit different, and it may surprise some that we can show such great depth of expertise in these niche areas.

I shall look forward to seeing some of you at the event we are holding in London on 21st May. Invitations will follow shortly. This will be my last event as a member of the Birketts team as [James Dinwiddy](#) (Agriculture Partner in Ipswich) takes over from me at the end of March. Although I will be retiring as a Partner, I am going to be a Consultant for a year and so will not join your ranks as an alumnus until April 2027.



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Where are they now?

Nick Burnett

In the period up to my retirement (May 2020), I was worried. Over my career, I can say that I loved my job - not all of the time of course, with periods of contentment regularly interrupted by times of stress, anger and (occasionally) professional terror. So, I worried - how would the enormous gap left by work be filled?

I need not have been concerned. I have missed my friends, colleagues and the thrill of being a part of what is (I now know) a unique and exciting firm. But work itself? Not a bit - something of a surprise to me, Alyson and the family.

We have travelled (a lot...) and not just visiting children and grandchildren (now nearly a football team) in America, Germany, Wales and Essex. This year's adventures include Colombia and Chile. I have also walked, and walked...and many of you have supported my 1,000 mile challenges....with more to come this year. The picture is of me walking the Broomway - an infamous and ancient tidal way off Foulness Island. I'm not as lost as I look....



Colin Undrill

Since I retired in June 2014, I have continued to travel on nature-based holidays, including in May/June 2025, when I would previously have been preparing accounts and dealing with auditors, and unable to take holidays. Highlights include seeing tigers in India, snow leopards in Mongolia, penguins in the Falklands, and over 500 bird species in Colombia.

I have become much more involved in my village, where I am part of our litter picking group and our speedwatch group, for which I was group co-ordinator for nearly five years. I also play petanque for which we have a pitch on the village playing field, and weather permitting, play Tuesday afternoons and Sunday mornings, followed usually by a visit to the local farm café to have a natter and put the world to rights!

I am still a keen birdwatcher and have been helping carry out farm surveys as a volunteer for the RSPB. I regularly go on day trips with the Essex Birdwatching Society and also with a friend who is a tour guide who runs his own company.



Our latest highlights

New partners

We look forward to another bumper year of recruiting the right talent and growing our presence in our new territories. We have already welcomed four new partners in 2026, bringing our total partner headcount to 149, with more additions on the horizon.

In 2025, we welcomed 24 new partners, with five being promoted internally. Congratulations and welcome to the partnership to:

- [Helen Cordingley](#) - Private Client, Norwich
- [Alex Forwood](#) - Corporate, Chelmsford
- [Sarah Holsgrove](#) - Shipping and International Trade, London
- [Laura Tanguay](#) - Property Litigation, Ipswich
- [Olivia Toulson](#) - Employment, Cambridge

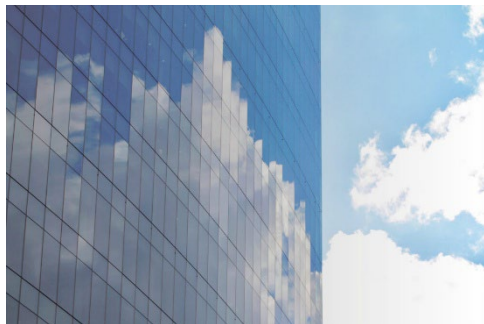
We were also delighted to welcome the following new partners to Birketts:

- [Caroline Alexander](#) - Private Client, Bristol
- [Philip Brown](#) - Residential Development, Bristol
- [Michael Conway](#) - Intellectual Property, Bristol
- [Barry Croft](#) - Private Wealth Disputes, Bristol
- [Stephanie Kingdon](#) - Disputes Resolution, Bristol
- [Sian Leonard](#) - Dispute Resolution, Norwich
- [Mark Li](#) - Commercial Real Estate, Bristol
- [Will MacFarlane](#) - Private Client, Bristol

- [John England](#) - Commercial Real Estate, London
- [Sarah Evans](#) - Construction, London
- [Helen Garner](#) - Corporate, Sevenoaks
- [Nicola Gooch](#) - Planning & Environment, Sevenoaks
- Alastair Gunn - Corporate, Cambridge
- [Stephen Horscroft](#) - Private Client, Sevenoaks
- Katy Jarratt-Poole - Corporate, Cambridge
- [Damocles Merry](#) - Corporate, Bristol
- [Phillippa O'Neill](#) - Dispute Resolution, Cambridge
- [Simon Oats](#) - Dispute Resolution, Cambridge
- [Salim Somjee](#) - Corporate, Sevenoaks
- Edward Venmore - Agriculture, Bristol
- [Patrick Wetherall](#) - Property Litigation, Bristol
- [Ian Williamson](#) - Commercial & Technology, London
- [Stuart Wortley](#) - Property Disputes, Cambridge

Birketts breaks trainee qualification numbers for a second year in a row

In October we were delighted to announce that 25 trainees have [qualified and taken seats at the firm](#).



Launching Resolve

In June [the employment team launched Resolve](#), a specialist resource designed to effectively manage and resolve workplace challenges. The team also [launched a new microsite](#), providing a “one-stop-shop” for employee / employer issues. This comes hot on the heels of the new microsite we [launched for the ecclesiastical team](#). These new sites allow us to focus our messaging to our key employment and ecclesiastical audiences providing a streamlined user experience, faster response times and increased engagement.

2025 charity events

We were proud to support a number of charitable causes last year.

2025 saw us introduce a new event to the calendar with our inaugural charity five-a-side football tournament at Portman Road, raising over £20,000 for three local charities: Ipswich Town Foundation, East Anglian's Children's Hospices and Little Lifts.

In April we held our annual golf day at Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club, raising £20,200 for East Anglia's Children's Hospices.

To keep up-to-date with all of our fundraising in 2026 and beyond, [follow us on LinkedIn](#).



Essex Soup

Our now annual Essex Soup event was held in June and raised £5,000 for four wonderful charities.

Taking place at Braxted Park Estate, the event was hosted alongside Essex Community Foundation in aid of Alpha Vesta CIC, SAFE Essex, St Vincent de Paul Society, Springfield, and Thurrock LGBTQ+ Network.

Since grassroots charities often struggle for funding and recognition compared to larger, established ones, this event aims to raise the profile of local charities to the Essex business community by showcasing their impact

on the community and demonstrating how increased exposure and even small donations can significantly enhance their outcomes.

Over a three-course dinner, guests heard from several inspiring charities and collectively decided how donations from the evening would be distributed among these deserving organisations.

Accolades

It has been a positive year for the firm, and we're proud to have received various accolades, rankings, and awards.

- We were recognised in [The Times Best Law Firms 2026](#).
- We received the [Supplier of the Year - Advisory award at the National Care Awards 2025](#).
- [eprivateclient](#) named us as one of its Top Law Firms.
- We were announced as winners of an International Green Apple Environment Award 2025.
- We were winners of the 'Customer Delight' award at the Gatwick Diamond Business Awards 2025.
- We achieved Accredited Living Wage Employer status.

After another successful year for the firm, we're also proud to announce that Birketts has [risen to 42nd](#) in this year's UK Top 50 Law Firms by [Law.com](#), climbing two places from last year.

Super sectors

We continue to grow our key sector groups and have seen encouraging growth in our charities, ecclesiastical and equine groups. Here the team leaders summarise the expertise in these unique groups and the ways they are busy helping clients across the country and internationally.



Charities

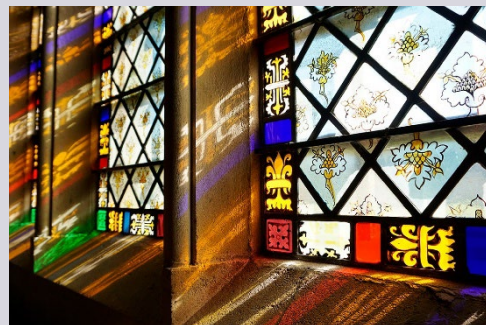
Birketts' charities, not for profit and ecclesiastical sector group is made up of specialist lawyers who provide the full range of advice including best practice and good governance for charity clients and their trustees. If you are involved in this sector, you may like to subscribe to our regular newsletter, *Essential Trustee*.

Our [Charity Trustee Induction and Refresher Training](#) is very popular and a good way to stay up to date in a trustee role. Trustees are celebrated during Trustee Week which takes place each November and the [charities team](#), led by [Liz Brownsell](#), host an event where charity leaders, influencers and trustees gather to celebrate the sector and the work of volunteers.

This sector group works collaboratively across our seven offices and is very proud to name Barnardo's, Amnesty International, East Anglian Air Ambulance and The Royal Horticultural Society amongst its many clients. In 2026, the team are ranked by the Legal 500 (UK) for East Anglia but also London, a very competitive market, which is a huge testament to the work of Liz Brownsell and the team.

Ecclesiastical

On the ecclesiastical side, led by [Kevin Wilson](#), we house the Registries for the Dioceses of Norwich, London, Guildford and St Edmundsbury, Exeter and Ipswich. We act for parishes and their clergy



and senior lay administrative staff, as well as diocesan and suffragan bishops, diocesan secretaries, senior diocesan staff and diocesan boards of finance and education. To find out more [visit our website](#) and check out our latest series of videos that answer FAQs often posed by parishioners to their local church clergy.



Equine

With Newmarket so close to a number of our offices it is no surprise that we have chosen to have [a sector dedicated to all things equine](#). The team comprises 21 lawyers who are also keen horse enthusiasts with the ability to combine their legal expertise and their practical equine knowledge. They cover a range of legal disciplines - property, litigation, property dispute resolution, intellectual property, commercial, corporate, family and private client – and act for a wide variety of clients in the equine community, be they business owners, professional riders, charities or hobbyists. Here is a picture of some of the team on Holkham beach.

Tim's Times

It is with a heavy heart and a fond farewell that we lose Chief Operating Officer, Tim Sarson, to retirement in March. To mark the occasion, the marketing team sat down with Tim and asked him to reflect on his 17 years at Birketts.



Save the date

We have paused our Ipswich alumni event for 2026 but will be back at Providence House in 2027. In the meantime we're excited to be bringing the alumni event to our London Wall office on 21 May 2026. Invitations will follow in early spring so keep an eye on your inbox.

[Find out more](#)

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