

## Court of Appeal verdict in Charman v Charman

**m u n d a y s**

The Court of Appeal has just confirmed that Beverley Charman, wife of the insurance chief, John Charman, can keep her £48 million divorce award. It is thought to be the largest contested divorce award made in England and Wales.

John Charman, head of the Axa insurance group, had offered his wife £20 million of his £131 million fortune. Sir Mark Potter and the other appeal judges agreed that this was insufficient after a 27 year marriage and upheld the order made by Mr Justice Coleridge in July last year, awarding Beverley Charman £48 million, or 36 % of the overall assets.

The case is important not just because of the size of the award, but because of the further guidance provided by the Court of Appeal for assessing awards in cases involving significant assets. The Court ruled that family assets should generally be divided equally between the breadwinner and the homemaker and that only in "exceptional cases" would the breadwinner be able to argue for a larger share, on account of their special contribution towards the welfare of the family. The Court agreed with the wife that the husband's purpose in establishing a trust in Bermuda into which he placed £68 million was obviously fiscal and that this money should be available to satisfy her claims.

The one part of the judgment that might, perhaps, be more to the liking of John Charman, was the recognition by the judges of the need for reform and for the legal recognition of binding pre-marital agreements.

**update**

### For more information please contact



01932 590500  
graham.coy@mundays.co.uk

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Mundays LLP  
Cedar House  
78 Portsmouth Road  
Cobham  
Surrey KT11 1AN

DX 36300 Esher  
tel +44 (0) 1932 590500  
fax +44 (0) 1932 590220  
email [enq@mundays.co.uk](mailto:enq@mundays.co.uk)  
web [www.mundays.co.uk](http://www.mundays.co.uk)

**mundays**  
solicitors