

REF/2013/0486/0487/1050

THE LAND REGISTRATION DIVISION OF THE PROPERTY CHAMBER OF THE FIRST-TIER TRIBUNAL

LAND REGISTRATION ACT 2002

IN THE MATTER OF A REFERENCE FROM HM LAND REGISTRY

BETWEEN

(1) CHRISTOPHER BOURNE-ARTON (2) GILLIAN BOURNE-ARTON (3) RICHARD BOURNE-ARTON (4) MICKLEY HYDRO SCHEME LIMITED

APPLICANTS

and

(1) DAVID MICHAEL ARTON BRYANT
(2) PATRICIA FRANCES HARLING
(3) DAVID BERNARD KLEMZ
(Trustees of the Manor of Mickley)

RESPONDENTS

Property Address: Land at The Mill and adjoining Mill House, Mickley, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 3JE

Title Numbers: NYK393419, NYK394776 and NYK368102

Before: Judge Brilliant

Sitting at: Leeds Employment Tribunal, City Exchange, 11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES

On: 22 and 23 March 2016

Site view: 21 March 2016

Applicants' Representation:

Mr W Horne of counsel

Respondents' Representation:

In person (His Honour David Bryant).

DECISION

A private access road owned by the respondents leads to and runs alongside Mill House which is owned by the first and second applicants.

The disputed land is a narrow strip lying between (1) the front of Mill House and the side of an adjoining property and (2) the access road.

Cross applications by (1) the first and second applicants and (2) the respondents for first registration of the disputed land. Issues as to whether title to the disputed land has already been determined in the respondents' favour, and, if not, whether the first and second applicants or the respondents have a paper title to the disputed land, and whether the first and second applicants have a title by adverse possession to the disputed land.

Application by the respondents to remove other land from the third applicant's registered title following earlier proceeding. Confirmation of various prescriptive rights of way in favour of the applicants.

<u>St Magdalen College v Attorney-General (1857) 6 HL Cas 189; Pennock v Hodgson</u> [2010] EWCA Civ 873; Jayasinghe v Liyanage [2010] 1 WLR 2106; Chief Land <u>Registrar v Silkstone [2012] 1 WLR 400</u>.

Introduction

- Mickley is an attractive village near Ripon, and is situated on the southern side of the River Ure. For centuries a watermill, now disused, has been situated in the village ("the mill"). It stands on a mill race flowing from the river to the water wheels and then back into the river. The mill race is shown on plan 1 attached ("plan 1")¹, partly coloured light blue.
- The first and second applicants, Mr and Mrs Christopher Bourne-Arton (to whom with no disrespect I shall refer respectively as "Christopher" and "Gillian"), are the freehold owners of Mill House, Mickley, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 3JE.
- 3. Mill House is unregistered land and is part of the Tanfield Lodge Estate ("the estate"). It is situated to the south of the mill race, and the 3 separate buildings within its title are shown coloured green on plan 1. These buildings are first, the house. This itself consists of two buildings which are joined together. Secondly, the garage. Thirdly, an outbuilding which was formerly a grain store.
- 4. Christopher was born in 1941. His great-grandfather, Mr Thomas Arton, bought the estate from the Marquis of Ailesbury in 1889. It then consisted of 2,659 acres. In 1892 Thomas' son, Mr William Arton, bought the mill and adjoining land which are adjacent to be estate.
- 5. Mill House has no direct access to the public highway. A private access road ("the access road") runs north from the public highway to a bridge crossing the mill race. As well as leading to the bridge, the access road gives access to Mill House which lies to the east of the access road.
- 6. There is a lordship or manor of Mickley. The lords of the manor are the

¹ Both attached plans are for illustrative purposes only. For the sake of simplicity, in describing the layout of the land I shall treat the mill race as running west to east rather than from south west to north east.

freehold owners of properties in the village². The respondents ("the trustees") are the current trustees of the land belonging to the manor³.

- 7. The access road is part of the land which I determined in earlier proceedings⁴ is owned by the trustees. The access road was defined in the earlier decision as "the pink land" and is shown coloured pink on the plan⁵. The trustees' title to their land goes back to 1789.
- The third applicant, Mr Richard Bourne-Arton ("Richard") is the son of Christopher and Gillian. He was born in 1966. He owns a substantial area of land close to Mill House under title number NYK368102 ("Richards's land").
- The fourth applicant, Mickley Hydro Scheme Limited, is a family company of which Christopher, Gillian and Richard are the directors. It owns the mill and mill race under title number NYK376526 ("Mickley Hydro's land").
- 10. These proceedings primarily concern the ownership of a thin strip of unregistered land lying between (1) the front of Mill House and the side of Mill Lodge, an adjoining property to the south, and (2) the access road ("the disputed land"). The disputed land is shown coloured dark blue on plan 1.
- 11. The dispute as to the ownership of the disputed land is between Christopher and Gillian, on the one hand, who say that the disputed land belongs to Mill House, and the trustees, on the other hand, who say that the disputed land

 $^{^2}$ Before 1926 the land belonging to the manor was held by the several freeholders in undivided shares. As a result of the transitional provisions of the Law of Property Act 1925 the land belonging to manor became vested in the Public Trustee on the statutory trusts. In 1978 a number of freeholders were appointed trustees to hold the land belonging to the manor in place of the Public Trustee.

³ Mr Brian Baker was also a respondent at the commencement of these proceedings Sadly, he has died. There is no purpose in his estate being a party to these proceedings and I remove him as a respondent pursuant to rule 10(1) of the Tribunal Procedure (First–tier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013.

⁴ Adjudicator to HM Land Registry Ref/2010/0796, heard on 14 and 15 July 2011 at Harrogate County Court ("the earlier decision").

⁵ The illustrative plans used by Land Registry in these proceedings do not accurately show the entirety of the pink land. The illustrative plans omit (1) a small rectangular area immediately to the north of the mill race and (2) a larger triangular area immediately to the south of the mill race. It is important to note that the definition of the pink land in the earlier decision was restricted to the access road: see paragraph 7 footnote 7 of the earlier decision. Contrary to the argument of the trustees, the pink land in the earlier decision did not include the disputed land in these proceedings.

belongs to them as part of their title.

12. The disputed land can itself be divided up into 3 separate sections.

The grass strip

13. The first section is a grass strip which runs north from the public highway along the wall at the western boundary of Mill Lodge ("the grass strip"). It is shown coloured green on the plan at page 62 in the trial bundle⁶.

The garden strip

14. The second section is a strip immediately to the north of the grass strip, which forms part of the front garden of Mill House ("the garden strip"). It is shown coloured yellow on the plan at page 62.

The triangle

15. The triangular area of land shown coloured ochre on the plan at page 62, which lies between the garden strip and the first part of the house ("the triangle") is not in dispute. It is shown coloured red on plan 1. It is accepted that it is owned by Christopher and Gillian. It contains a flowerbed and parts of the steps leading to the front door of Mill House, as can be seen in the photograph at page 77.

The concrete strip

16. The third section is a concrete strip immediately to the north of the garden strip, which runs along the face of the second part of the house and the garage ("the concrete strip"). It does not extend to the face of the granary. Part of it is shown coloured brown on the plan at page 62.

⁶ References to page numbers hereafter will be to pages in the trial bundle.

An outline of the conveyancing history

The trustees' title

- 17. The trustees' title to their land derives from an Award made in 1789, which is at pages 96–97. I refer to this in some detail in paragraphs 25, 26, and 34-50 of the earlier decision, to which reference should be made for a fuller understanding.
- 18. The plan on the Award shows that the eastern boundary of the trustees' land is what was then described as Matthew Tomlinson's and John Atkinson's Old Enclosures and the mill race. The plan at page 96 shows the location of John Atkinson's Old Enclosures. Mill House now stands on John Atkinson's Old Enclosures. Mill Lodge now stands on Matthew Tomlinson's Old Enclosures.

Title to Mill House

- 19. Mr William Arton died in 1945. Title to the estate and to the mill and adjoining land then passed to his daughter, Margaret Elaine Bourne-Arton ("Mrs Bourne-Arton"), by an assent dated 2 February 1953 ("the 1953 assent"). This title included Mill House. It did not include Mill Lodge, and there is no evidence that the estate ever included the land on which Mill Lodge now stands.
- 20. By a vesting deed dated 15 June 1995 made between (1) Mrs Bourne-Arton and (2) Christopher and Gillian ("the 1995 vesting deed"), Mrs Bourne-Arton settled Mill House on Christopher and Gillian as trustees under the Settled Land Act 1925.
- 21. A trust deed dated 15 June 1995 made between the same parties set out the trusts upon which Mill House is held ("the 1995 trust deed").

The applications

22. There are 3 separate applications to Land Registry which have been referred to the Tribunal and are the subject of these proceedings.

The trustees' first original application

- 23. On 5 January 2012 the trustees applied to be registered as the first proprietors of the disputed land and the triangle ("the trustees' first original application"). The trustees claimed that in paragraph 74 of the earlier decision I had determined that the disputed land was part of the pink land which belonged to them.
- 24. Richard objected to the trustees' first original application. This was on the grounds that the disputed land was not part of the pink land. He also asserted that Christopher and Gillian had a good paper title, alternatively a possessory title by adverse possession, to the disputed land.

Christopher and Gillian's original application

- 25. On 24 February 2012, Christopher and Gillian applied to be registered as the first proprietors of Mill House ("Christopher and Gillian's original application"). Christopher and Gillian based their title to Mill House on the 1995 vesting deed.
- 26. Christopher and Gillian included all of the disputed land within their application. They accepted that the plan to the 1995 vesting deed did not include the grass strip, but maintained that the plan did not accurately reflect the extent of Mill House as conveyed to them. Alternatively, they claimed that they had acquired a possessory title to the grass strip by adverse possession.
- 27. The trustees objected to Christopher and Gillian's original application, but only in so far as it included the disputed land. This was on the basis that the disputed land belonged to the trustees. The trustees claimed that in paragraph 74 of the earlier decision I had determined that the disputed land was part of

the pink land which belonged to them.

The trustees' second original application

- 28. On 6 January 2012 the trustees applied to Land Registry to remove from Richard's title number NYK368102 (1) an area of land which I explained in paragraph 5 of the earlier decision was agreed to be owned by the trustees⁷, and (2) an area of land which I held in the early decision was owned by the trustees⁸ ("the trustees" second original application").
- 29. On 12 April 2012 Richard objected to the trustees' second original application.
- 30. Richard did not dispute that the trustees were entitled to remove this land from his title. But he asserted that he had certain prescriptive rights of way over this land.
- 31. On 11 June 2013 Land Registry referred (1) the trustees' first original application and (2) Christopher and Gillian's original application to the Tribunal under section 73(7) of the Land Registration Act 2002. These became respectively references 2013/0487 and 2013/0486.
- 32. On 2 December 2013 Land Registry referred the trustees' second original application to the Tribunal under section 73(7) of the Land Registration Act 2002. This became reference 2013/1050.
- 33. Subsequently, directions were given so that all 3 references could be case managed and heard together.

The issues

⁷ This land is coloured pink on the illustrative plan accompanying Land Registry's notice dated 8 March 2012. It is not the pink land referred to in this decision but the northern part of The Batts coloured green in the earlier decision.

⁸ This land is coloured blue on the illustrative plan and is the orange land in the earlier decision

- 34. The following are the issues which I have to determine:
 - (1) Did the earlier decision decide that the disputed land is owned by the trustees?
 - (2) Do Christopher and Gillian have paper title to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?
 - (3) Do Christopher and Gillian have title by adverse possession to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?
 - (4) Do the trustees have paper title to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?
 - (5) What rights of way do any of the applicants have over the trustees' land?

Did the earlier decision decide that the disputed land is owned by the trustees?

- 35. I have already said in paragraph 7 footnote 5 above that I do not accept the trustees' argument that the earlier decision decided that the disputed land is owned by them.
- 36. The pink land was defined in the earlier decision as consisting of the access road. I said in paragraph 42 of the earlier decision at page 49 of the trial bundle that I had reached the conclusion that the <u>access road</u> lies within the eastern boundary of The Batts (to which the trustees' have title) and that John Atkinson's Old Enclosures did not include the access road. I said nothing about the disputed land as such.
- 37. In the earlier proceedings there was no discussion about, or investigation into, who owned the disputed land. At no time at the earlier hearing was any

question raised as to the precise nature of the features marking the boundary of the trustees' land. The ownership of Mill House was not an issue in the earlier proceedings.

- 38. Moreover, Christopher and Gillian were not parties to the earlier proceedings and therefore are not bound by its result. It is true the Christopher gave evidence in the earlier proceedings, but Gillian did not.
- 39. Accordingly, I decide the first issue in favour of Christopher and Gillian.

Do Christopher and Gillian have paper title to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?

- 40. I am satisfied that Christopher and Gillian remain the current owners of Mill House. They allow it to be rented out by their daughter, Fiona, who is one of the beneficiaries under the 1995 trust deed.
- 41. In support of their case that they have paper title to at least part of the disputed land, Christopher and Gillian rely upon the 1995 vesting deed. The parcels clause is as follows:

The Settlor as Settlor hereby conveys onto the Trustees ALL THAT the property more particularly described in the First Schedule hereto and for the purposes of identification only edged red on the plan attached hereto

42. The First Schedule is as follows:

ALL THAT freehold dwellinghouse together with the outbuildings and garden enjoyed therewith being known as Mill House, Mickley and for the purposes of identification only shown edged red on the plan attached hereto as now in the tenancy of Mrs Clover...

43. The plan is an Ordnance Survey plan. The red edging abutting the access road

approximates to the edge of the area coloured green on the plan annexed to this decision. There are two significant observations to be made. First, the red line follows the building line of Mill House and does not include the triangle, the garden strip or the concrete strip. Secondly, the red line does not include the grass strip which adjoins Mill Lodge.

- 44. I will deal first with the construction of the 1995 vesting deed. I was reminded of the principles set out in <u>Pennock v Hodgson [2010] EWCA Civ 873</u>.
- 45. Mummery LJ said at [12]:

Looking at evidence of the actual and known physical condition of the relevant land at the date of the conveyance and having the attached plan in your hand on the spot when you do this are permitted as an exercise in construing the conveyance against the background of its surrounding circumstances. They include knowledge of the objective facts reasonably available to the parties at the relevant date. Although, in a sense, that approach takes the court outside the terms of the conveyance, it is part and parcel of the process of contextual construction.

- 46. I accept the evidence of Christopher that the physical layout of Mill House and the disputed land has not changed since he was a small boy and is still as he remembers it just after the last War.
- 47. I am persuaded that anyone looking at Mill House in 1995 with a copy of the 1995 vesting deed in his or her hand would construe it as including within the land conveyed both the triangle and the garden strip. The photograph at page 77 shows the planting, the steps and the handrail which are all features intimately linked to the house itself.
- 48. The same cannot be said about the grass strip. There would be no reason for anyone to suppose that the grass strip was in the ownership of Mill House. As I understand Mr Horne's closing submissions he does not pursue his case on a

paper title to the grass strip, save in respect of a small section of grass which he says is in fact within the garden strip.

- 49. The question of the concrete strip is more nuanced. It is clearly a distinct surface and appears separate in kind and quality to the access road. I am not persuaded by the trustees' argument that the concrete strip is the remnant of a pavement provided for the convenience of the estate workers. On the other hand, I am not persuaded by Mr Horne's argument that the drains and manholes serving Mill House in the concrete strip are evidence of ownership. These features are equally consistent with easements benefiting Mill House.
- 50. On balance, I am not persuaded that the concrete strip was conveyed as part of Mill House. There are no unequivocal features indicating that it has a function or purpose making it more likely than not that it belongs to Mill House.
- 51. Accordingly, as a matter of construction, I find that the 1995 vesting deed intended to pass title of the garden strip to Christopher and Gillian, but did not intend to pass title of the grass strip or the concrete strip to them.
- 53. Mr Horne submits that as Christopher and Gillian can show a paper title of more than 15 years they are entitled to be registered as proprietors of such land as I determine, on the true construction of the 1995 vesting deed, was vested in them. He argues that it is not open to me to enquire as to whether Mrs Bourne-Arton herself had title to the garden strip to pass to Christopher and Gillian in 1995.
- 54. Mr Horne relies upon section 9(2) of the Land Registration Act 2002, which provides that a person may be registered with absolute title if the registrar is of the opinion that the person's title to the estate is such as a willing buyer could properly be advised by a competent professional adviser to accept.
- 55. I do not agree, with respect, with this submission. It is the function of the

Tribunal to determine the underlying issue between the parties⁹, and if the trustees are able to show an earlier better title to the disputed land they will succeed.

- 56. The plan to the 1789 Award shows a building situated in John Atkinson's old enclosures with its front elevation on the edge of the boundary line with the trustees' land. If Mill House and the triangle were built on the same boundary line, then Mrs Bourne-Arton cannot have had a good paper title to the grass strip.
- 57. Mill House is not the building shown on the plan the 1789 Award. It was not then built. The evidence is that Mill House was built sometime between 1820 and the mid-19th century when workers who had come from Ireland were employed at the mill and on other commercial activities being carried out around the mill.
- 58. The trustees have not elaborated as to why they wish to assert ownership to the disputed land. The disputed land does not appear to have any economic value. In these circumstances, it is not perhaps surprising that I have not had the benefit of any expert evidence from either historians or surveyors to assist me on the question of whether or not any part of Mill House was built on the same boundary line as shown on the 1789 Award.
- 59. The conclusion which I have reached on the balance of probabilities and on such evidence as I do have is as follows. It is that the present buildings and the triangle were built on the same boundary line as is shown on the 1789 Award. No part of the disputed land is situated on what was formerly Matthew Tomlinson's or John Atkinson's Old Enclosures.
- 60. My reasoning is as follows. Mill House forms part of the fourteenth parcel of land vested in Mrs Bourne-Arton by the 1953 assent. The plan referred to in the parcels clause, plan number 4 annexed to the 1953 assent, has printed on it

⁹ Chief Land Registrar v Silkstone [2012] 1 WLR 400, Jayasinghe v Liyanage [2010] 1 WLR 2106.

the words *Mickley Saw Mill (Disused)*. Accordingly, that plan must be dated after 1892 which is the year when I was told the mill fell into disuse.

- 61. The plan purports to show the access road abutting Mill House as located within Mrs Bourne-Arton's ownership. This cannot be correct, as the access road is known to have been included within the trustees' land by the 1789 Award.
- 62. It is instructive to compare the line of Mill Lodge's external garden retaining wall on the plan with the line of the boundary of Matthew Tomlinson's Old Enclosures as shown on the 1789 Award. In my judgment, Mill Lodge's external garden retaining wall does lie on that boundary. Also, in my judgment, the building line of Mill Lodge and the triangle on the plan similarly coincides with the boundary of John Atkinson's Old Enclosures on the 1789 Award. Therefore, the disputed land lies wholly within the trustees' title.
- 63. I should say for the sake of completeness that it was not argued on behalf of Christopher and Gillian that their open and peaceable possession of the garden strip for 20 years gave rise to a presumption that they had title to it and that the true owner had made a proper grant of it accordingly¹⁰. This presumption will not be applied where, as here, it is contrary to the evidence¹¹.
- 64. I therefore find for the trustees on the second issue.

Do Christopher and Gillian have title by adverse possession to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?

65. In his closing submissions Mr Horne rightly accepts that paragraph 9 of schedule 1 to the Limitation Act 1980 prevents time running against the trustees. Accordingly, it is not possible as a matter of law for Christopher and

¹⁰ see Jourdan and Radley-Gardner Adverse Possession Second Edition paragraph 4.08.

¹¹ St Magdalen College v Attorney-General (1857) 6 HL Cas 189.

Gillian to acquire a title by adverse possession to any part of the disputed land. I find for the trustees on the third issue.

Do the trustees have paper title to any, and if so which, sections of the disputed land?

66. In the light of my findings above I determine that the trustees do have a paper title to the disputed land by virtue of the 1789 Award. Accordingly, I find for them on the fourth issue.

What rights of way do any of the applicants have over the trustees' land?

- 67. There was a measure of agreement at the hearing as to the various prescriptive rights of way which the applicants have acquired over the trustees' land. It is to be hoped that the parties can agree to enter into the appropriate express deeds of grant.
- 68. I am satisfied that Mill House has the benefit of a prescriptive right of way with or without vehicles over the pink land between the public highway and Mill House where it abuts the pink land. The right of way is for all purposes in connection with access to and egress from Mill House.
- 69. I am satisfied that Richard's land and Mickley Hydro's land each have the benefit of a prescriptive right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, over:
 - (1) the pink land;
 - (2) a track 2.5 metres wide between points A and B on the second attached plan ("plan 2"); and
 - (3) the land coloured blue on the plan 2.
- 70. The right of way is for the purposes of maintenance of their respective land.

Conclusion

The trustees' first original application

- 71. I shall direct the chief land registrar to give effect to the trustees' first original application, save in respect of the triangle, as if the objection had not been made.
- 72. Pursuant to my powers under rule 40(3)(a) of the Tribunal Procedure (Firsttier Tribunal) (Property Chamber) Rules 2013 I direct that the pink land is subject to:
 - (1) A right of way with or without vehicles in favour of Mill House. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraph 68 of this decision.
 - (2) A right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, in favour of Richard's land. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.
 - (3) A right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, in favour of Mickley Hydro's land. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.

Christopher and Gillian's original application

73. I shall direct the chief land registrar to give effect to Christopher and Gillian's

original application, save in respect of the disputed land, as if the objection had not been made.

74. Pursuant to my powers under rule 40(3)(a) I direct that Mill House has the benefit of a right of way with or without vehicles over the pink land between the public highway and Mill House where it abuts the pink land. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 68 of this decision.

The trustees' second original application

- 75. I shall direct the chief land registrar to give effect to the trustees' second original application as if the objection had not been made.
- 76. Pursuant to my powers under rule 40(3)(a) I direct that the land coloured pink and blue on plan 2 is subject to:
 - (1) A right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, in favour of Richard's land. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.
 - (2) A right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, in favour of Mickley Hydro's land. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.
- 77. Pursuant to my powers under rule 40(3)(a) I direct that that Richard's land has the benefit of a right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, over the pink land and the land coloured pink and blue on plan 2.

The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.

- 78. Pursuant to my powers under rule 40(3)(a) I direct that that Mickley Hydro's land has the benefit of a right of way with or without vehicles, including agricultural vehicles, over the pink land and the land coloured pink and blue on plan 2. The extent of this right, having been acquired by prescription, may be limited by the nature of the user from which it has arisen. The extent and nature of that user is summarised in paragraphs 69 and 70 of this decision.
- 79. The parties should, within 14 days of receipt of this decision, serve on each other and the Tribunal written submissions as to as to what, if any, order should be made as to the costs of these proceedings. At this stage I do not require a schedule of the amount of costs claimed from either party.

Dated this 17th day of August 2016

BY ORDER OF THE LAND REGISTRATION DIVISION OF THE PROPERTY CHAMBER OF THE FIRST-TIER TRIBUNAL





