



COMMONS REGISTRATION ACT 1965

Reference No 238/U/30

In the Matter of The Village Green,  
Singleton, Chichester District, West  
Sussex

DECISION

This reference relates to the question of the ownership of land known as The Village Green, Singleton, Chichester District being the land comprised in the Land Section of Register Unit No VG. 54 in the Register of Town or Village Greens maintained by the West Sussex County Council of which no person is registered under section 4 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 as the owner.

Following upon the public notice of this reference no person claimed to be the freehold owner of the land in question and no person claimed to have information as to its ownership.

I held a hearing for the purpose of inquiring into the question of the ownership of the land at Chichester on 11 April 1978. At the hearing Singleton Parish Council were represented by Mr P A Norrell their chairman.

Mr Norrell, who has lived in the Parish all his life (55 years), and has been a member of the Parish Council for 15 years (their chairman for 2 years) said (in effect):- The land is about 40 to 50 feet long and about 40 feet wide. He understood there was on it at one time a pound (about 8 feet x 6 feet); the Parish Council Minute and Account Books show that from 1895 to about 1925 they paid the Earl of Bessborough an annual way leave of 6 pence for the pound; he, Mr Norrell, did not himself remember the pound. From 1895 onwards there are references in the Books to payments for cutting the grass on the Green, and the Council still employ a man part-time to mow the grass and keep the Green tidy. After the 1914-18 war, the Parish Council erected a flagpole there; they have also erected a public seat on it. On the east side there is a pond (separately registered), and on the other side there are small concrete posts (about 1 foot high) at intervals.

It may not matter much whether I am satisfied by the evidence summarised above that the Parish Council are the owners, because by subsection (3) of section 8 of the 1965 Act, if I am not satisfied that any person is the owner (there was no evidence that any person other than the Parish Council could now be the owner) I am required to direct their registration as owners. However although it seems possible that somebody deriving title from the Earl of Bessborough may be the owner, I conclude that the evidence summarised above shows that the Parish Council are now in possession in circumstances in which it is practically certain that their possession will not be disturbed. Possession in such circumstances is equivalent to ownership, and I am therefore satisfied that the Parish Council are the owners of the land and I shall accordingly direct the West Sussex County Council as registration authority to register Singleton Parish Council as the owners of the land under section 8(3) of the Act of 1965.