

## About the Land Registry

Most properties in England and Wales are now registered at the relevant Land Registry which is the central record of property ownership giving a government backed guarantee to the information stored in its database.

It all started in 1862 when the idea of a central record of land ownership began to take shape. At this time registration was not compulsory. Compulsory registration was introduced gradually and at first counties could opt in or out. Registration became fully compulsory on changes of ownership with trigger events in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The Land Registry was private, and the public were not entitled to inspect the register of titles other than their own. This lasted until 1990 when the Registry became open to all.

The purpose of the Land Registry was and is, to create certainty of title, facilitate proof of ownership, and enable dealings with land to be dealt with more simply and economically.

There were major changes in society during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including a huge increase in property ownership after the second world war. This combined with the increase in compulsory registration throughout the country meant that the Land Registry was very busy and between the 1960s and the end of the century, many more Land Registry offices were opened.

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the rapid advances in IT saw the law relating to land registration and in particular the statutes of 1925 needing modernisation. In 2002, a new Land Registration Act which had as one of its main purposes the objective of bringing land registration into the digital age, was passed.

Currently there are few plots of land which remain unregistered, and this typically occurs when owners have not sold since compulsory registration some 30 or more years ago. Over time it is likely that the Land Registry will achieve its objective of registering every bit of land in the country. The effect of registration is that although ownership and other dealings in land are effected by the relevant deed, e.g. a sale or mortgage it is only when these are registered that the entitlement of the owner or lender is legally guaranteed.

The Land Registry has particular rules about plans which are set out in one of its practice guides and this to make sure that the mapping (based on the latest available ordnance survey maps) is consistent and up to date. In the earlier years, maps would be drawn by hand and coloured manually and bound up with a certificate of registration which would be stitched together and given to the owner as proof of his title instead of a bundle of deeds. There were criminal penalties for tampering with Land Registry certificates. Now the plans are created digitally using modern methods and land certificates no longer exist. All Land Registry documents and plans are based entirely on electronic data.

After the major changes in 2002, the Land Registry developed its educational role including providing information leaflets for the public or practice guides for the profession, both available from its website. This continues and the public can access advice on what

registration involves and topical items for example on how to protect your home against fraudsters.

For more information please browse the Land Registry's website, [www.landRegistry.gov.uk](http://www.landRegistry.gov.uk).  
If you need further information please do not hesitate to contact us at Alison Fielden & Co on 01285 653261, or via e-mail: [alison@alisonfielden.co.uk](mailto:alison@alisonfielden.co.uk).