

Law of Ancient Lights

Andrew Steele's article on rights of light (10 February 2006) starts: 'Rights of light are sometimes described as ancient, but despite their longevity they can cause problems . . .' The word 'ancient' does not refer to the longevity of rights of light as a legal institution but to the longevity of an individual enjoyment of light on particular premises.

One still occasionally sees an old dwelling displaying a sign 'ancient lights'. This applies to windows through which the access of light has been enjoyed otherwise than by consent for 20 years or more, attracting rights under the Prescription Act 1832 (see section 3). A right so acquired is known as an ancient light or an anciently of light.