

## SMALL HOLDINGS AT BROUGHTON.

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD INQUIRY.

There was a fairly large attendance at the Commercial Room of the Greyhound Hotel, Broughton, on Wednesday evening, when Mr. F. Tulloch, M.I.C.E., held an inquiry on behalf of the Local Government Board into the application of Broughton Parish Council for sanction to borrow £1800 for the purpose of buying land for small holdings and expenses connected therewith. Among those present were Messrs. Hinwood (chairman, Parish Council), T. Blake (vice-chairman), F. Hurford, J. Leabourne, C. Judd, T. Marsh, and C. Gunstone (parish councillors), A. Hewlett, H. Munday, S. Tomkins, C. Rogers, C. Robinson, T. Watts, G. Hunt, G. Hinwood, W. C. Upshall (clerk to the Parish Council), and F. V. Barber (deputy clerk to the County Council).

Mr. UPSHALL having read the notice convening the inquiry, opened the case for the Parish Council. The work was commenced by the Parish Council receiving applications for small holdings early in the year, and they had found it necessary to make provision for the same, and thus they entered into negotiations for the purchase of 100 acres of land. So far these negotiations had been conditional on the approval of the County Council and the Local Government Board in accordance with section 12, Local Government Act, 1902. They now applied to the Board for sanction to borrow £1800 for the purchase of the 100 acres. Payment of compensation to the tenant, fencing, and legal expenses in connection with the transfer. It was proposed to let 60 acres of land facing the Romsey Road at 22s. per acre, which equalled £6; 20 acres fronting the Folly Road, at 20s. per acre, making £20; and 20 acres of back land, at 15s. per acre, making £15. He would point out that two strips of land here belonged to the glebe, and each measured about an acre, and they were let at £1 and 30s. respectively. He mentioned that to show that the Parish Council should not have much difficulty in obtaining the rents. The total expenditure, including repayment of interest and capital, tithe and land tax, amounted to £98 17s. 6d., and the income would be £101, leaving a profit of £2 12s. 6d. The Parish Council had taken no notice of the sporting rights, which were at present let at £10.

The INSPECTOR: There won't be much sporting rights when the ground is cut up.

The CLERK: I expect not, sir. Continuing, he said that the land would be taken up was shown from the applications received, and that before any question of the amount of rent per acre had been fixed by the Parish Council. For the purpose of comparison, and to show that the Parish Council were not asking too much for the land, he had made extracts from the rate book of the gross rental of small pieces of land in the parish. The total of the pieces was 23a. 3r. 22p., and the gross rental £53 17s. 6d., or £2 5s. per acre, but it was only fair to mention that the rents ranged from £1 to £10 per acre. If small pieces of land reached £2 5s. per acre, and there was still a demand, surely the Parish Council need not anticipate any land being left on their hands when the highest proposed rent was 22s. The Broughton and District Small Holdings Association had come forward and offered in writing to take the whole of the land from the Parish Council and to pay six months rent in advance, whereas the Act only required three months. This was sufficient to show there need be no disquietude on the part of the rate-payers as to the eventuality of re-payment falling on the rates; on the contrary, they might consider themselves with the fact that the rate would be more than six times what it is at present, viz., 3s. 3d. per acre. According to the rate book the farm was 309a. 2r. and the rateable value £37 2s., which worked out at 2s. 9d. per acre. There had been a steady decrease in the rateable value of the parish, so much so that a 1s. rate 30 years ago produced as much as a 3s. one did now. The area of Broughton was 3392 acres, and out of that no less than 3242 were let out in nine holdings. This in a parish numbering 840 did not leave much for small holdings or allotments. As to the price £16 per acre, he proposed, if necessary, to call witnesses whose evidence would bear upon the land in question. Church Farm formed part of the Norman Court Estate which was offered for sale by auction in May, 1907. Lot 29, which was purchased by Mr. Hinwood, measured 3a. 2r. 34p., made £80, or £22 per acre. Lot 28, purchased by Mr. Knapman, was 10a. 1r. 3p., and made £330, or £32 per acre. Lot 25, purchased by Mr. Leigh, was 8a. 3r. 34p., and made £190, or £21 per acre. Lot 23, purchased by Mr. Knapman, was 4a. 0r. 12p., and made £95, or £23 per acre. At the other end of the village Mr. Tomkins bought some land at £40 per acre, and Mr. Brown some at £60 per acre.

Mr. TOMKINS: That was a piece of accommodation land.

The CLERK: We shall contend that there is no

such thing as accommodation land. Accommodation land is land which has obtained an artificial value through being held up or cornered. Continuing, he said that at the Parish Council meeting the resolution to purchase was carried *mem con*, and at the parish meeting 31 voted for it and one against out of the 45 present. Any opposition which presented itself now would be somewhat belated, but they hoped to satisfy any honest doubt. As regards the suitability of the land with respect to water supply and drainage, there was a well on the land which had never been known to be dry even in time of the most severe drought, and the land was in excellent state of cultivation. There was no stale land and no wire worm. "Kindly, good-working land," were the words of Sir George Judd, one of the Commissioners who held the recent enquiry. Lord Northbrook and Major Chichester both concurred. The land was within 500 yards of the village, close to the present allotment ground, and abutting on a county road. They had entered into a provisional agreement to purchase and had received a letter from the solicitors to Mr. W. M. G. Singer, the present owner of the land, in which they stated that they had examined the title and had satisfied themselves that Mr. Singer was in a position to execute a conveyance of the fee simple of the land to the Parish Council free from any encumbrance.

Mr. STEELE TOMKINS remarked that he was not quite clear where they were. Were they going to recapitulate what was said at the last meeting?

The INSPECTOR said he supposed it was bound to be much the same as the last. Of course, his board were not aware of any of the circumstances and had sent a representative down to make enquiries.

Mr. TOMKINS said he would like to know whether the association was a co-operative society or an association formed to provide land for others. At the last enquiry, too, it said the association was being formed, now they were told it was formed.

The CLERK said it had been formed some months. Mr. TOMKINS again asked whether the association would work the land themselves or provide it for others.

The CLERK said if the association took the land from the Parish Council it would save a lot of clerical work. They were now in correspondence with the Board of Agriculture.

Mr. TOMKINS said there was a distinction in the Act. Was the association a Co-operative Society or an association formed to provide land?

The CLERK: I think Mr. Tomkins is a trifle hazy, sir. The Act is very intricate, and the Parish Council have their case laid out in the simplest manner possible. The Parish Council will purchase the land.

The INSPECTOR: The point is, what kind of an association is this?

The CLERK: It is an Allotment and Small Holdings Association, which the Act allows to be formed.

The INSPECTOR (to Mr. Tomkins): What is the distinction you point out?

Mr. TOMKINS: Are they going to work it themselves or let the land?

The CLERK: They will let the land to each individual.

Mr. TOMKINS: They are formed to provide the land for others?

The CLERK: They propose to let the land among themselves. Each individual member will rent from the association and work it himself. The association would rent from the Parish Council and guarantee the rent six months in advance.

Mr. TOMKINS: Then in point of fact it is a Co-operative Society?

The INSPECTOR: And a kind allowed by the Act?

Mr. TOMKINS: Certainly, sir. Continuing, he complimented the Clerk upon the very able way in which he had presented the case for the Parish Council (hear, hear). He must say it was admirable, although he could not agree with him in many points. He thought they should proceed carefully, because they did not want future generations to look back and say what fools the Parish Council of Broughton were in 1908. He thought they should take precautions.

The INSPECTOR: Can you suggest any precautions?

Mr. TOMKINS: Yes. He suggested that the price was a fancy one. The figures he had just heard in comparison with the value of the land and adjacent pieces were entirely misleading. There was no proper comparison between 100 acres of bare arable land and pieces of land adjacent to the village or to an owner's house, and there were other considerations which raised the price of course. The real comparison it was obvious was between the proper price of this 100 acres and the price of adjacent farms of the same kind. There had been a great deal of land offered for sale lately, and there was land on offer now. It was right to say so many thousand acres were held by a few people, but it should be added that a good deal of it was for sale.

The INSPECTOR: Can you assist me by giving such a comparison.

Mr. TOMKINS said the best comparison would be the price which had been given for other portions of that farm. He supposed the inspector knew that

although the contract was proposed to be made with Mr. Singer, it was not in one sense of the word with him at all. There was an intermediary, a gentleman by the name of Moody, who, it was stated at the last inquiry, had an option to purchase the land, and having got it he went to the Parish Council and said "Now I offer you so much land at such and such a price." There was every reason to suppose, though he had no evidence to prove it, that the land was purchased at about £12 per acre for the whole farm, including buildings.

The INSPECTOR: Was this land purchased at the sale?

Mr. TOMKINS: No, sir. The farm with a piece of land, about 37 acres, was bought in at £2490, and the conclusion any ordinary man would form would be that it was buyable at £2500. They believed it was bought for £3000, which was just about £12 per acre, including buildings. Now that plot was offered for £16 per acre, and it would follow that when the land was sold the speculators who had made this happy speculation would be in the possession of a farm house and buildings with land and cottages, which

had cost them nothing at all. Without the buildings the land would be about £3 an acre.

The INSPECTOR: What would you put the land at?

The CLERK: It is not a matter of opinion but of opportunity. We cannot go back and live two years ago.

Mr. TOMKINS: The Parish Council did not apply to Mr. Singer and ascertain whether he had land for sale.

The CLERK: I wrote to him.

Mr. TOMKINS: At the last enquiry the clerk said he had written to Mr. Singer, but on being pressed said he did not, but had written to his agent.

The CLERK: I said I wrote to Mr. Singer, and I know I did write to him. Unfortunately we do not possess a letter book.

Mr. TOMKINS: I think I remember; in fact I do remember. It was said by yourself that you had written to Mr. Singer, but withdrew that in favour of one to the effect that you had written to his agent.

The CLERK: I don't want to bring in any matter that is foreign to the question, but I was going to ask you if you ever had a slip of the memory yourself.

Mr. TOMKINS: Do I correctly report you or not?

The CLERK: Will you say it again?

Mr. TOMKINS: You said in the first instance that you had written to Mr. Singer, and then on being pressed withdrew that statement in favour of one to the effect that you had not written to Mr. Singer but to Mr. Singer's agent.

The CLERK: That is not correct if reported in the

Mr. TOMKINS: I accept what you say, but that is what I understood. Mr. Singer says he never heard anything of the matter from anybody connected with the Parish Council. Continuing, he said Mr. Singer offered three farms of about 400 acres each for sale, and only one of these farms had been sold when the enquiries were made, so it was obvious there were two other farms for sale. No communication was ever received from the Parish Council by Mr. Singer.

The CLERK: Can you produce a letter from Mr. Singer substantiating what you say.

Mr. TOMKINS: Certainly. He produced the letter and read it. It was addressed from 4, Charles Street, Belgrave Square, and stated that Mr. Singer had received no communication on the subject from the clerk, and to the best of his recollection he had never heard of it.

Mr. BLAKE said he knew one was sent. There was one to Mr. Singer, one to Mr. King, and one to the gentleman on the hill—they all went together.

Mr. TOMKINS said he thought the price was too high if they compared the price with the price of similar land.

The INSPECTOR asked how he was to do that. He was a stranger there.

Mr. TOMKINS said he believed Dr. Lyne-Stevens bought a farm of 500 acres for £4000.

The CLERK: The farm had been beggared up for 40 years (laughter). Replying to Mr. Tomkins he said the Parish Council assumed that the 22s. per acre would include the tithe.

Mr. TOMKINS: The tithe is rather high.

The CLERK: That will make it so much the better.

Mr. TOMKINS: I should think it would make it so much the worse.

A RATEPAYER: So do I. I think it should be done away with altogether. You should keep your own owners (laughter).

Mr. TOMKINS thought the question of whether it were better to hire than to buy should be discussed. They were asking for a loan of £1800, and they would want £2000 or £3000 to put buildings on the land, and there was a debt of £1000 or £2000 hanging over the parish for new schools.

The CLERK: That is not so.

Mr. TOMKINS thought that unless it could be shown that the figures were directly reasonable even economical, he thought there would be great objections to sanctioning such a loan as this.

The CLERK: Mr. Tomkins is trying to mislead you, sir. I don't know whether it is intentional.—  
The INSPECTOR: Don't make a personal matter of it.

The CLERK: It is an important matter.  
The INSPECTOR: It is an important matter to my Board. It is my duty to take down the evidence right or wrong, and if anyone is able to correct it I take that down, and then I have down both right and wrong.

Mr. TOMKINS said a new school was to be built at a cost of £2000, and Mr. Cowan hoped to get £1200 from Mr. McKenna's £100,000, and the balance of the cost would have to come out of the pockets of the ratepayers, and if by accident they could not get the £1200 the whole cost would fall on the parish.

The INSPECTOR announced that he had received a communication from Mr. W. F. Greenwell, which he would ask the clerk to read.

The CLERK then read the communication, which stated that as a ratepayer and as one of the Rural District Councillors for the parish he begged to protest against the loan on the following grounds:—

(1) That there is at the present time no bona fide demand for small holdings or allotments in this village (laughter). (2) If there were such demand sufficient efforts were not made by the Parish Council to obtain suitable land. (3) The price proposed to be paid by the Parish Council is in excess of the actual value of the land. (4) The whole scheme is a money making transaction on the part of certain individuals, and is not for the benefit of the ratepayers or the parish generally. As to No. 1 there is reason to believe that many of the applicants were induced to make application by the knowledge that they were at liberty to withdraw their application at any time, and that the Parish Council had no means to compel them to accept or take up any land allotted to them, and their applications were made for the purpose of making it appear to the Parish Council that there was such demand as would justify them in proceeding with this scheme. As to No. 2, at the County Council enquiry, held on July 18, the clerk of the Parish Council stated that he had written a letter to Mr. W. M. G. Singer, the owner of Church Farm, and his local agent and had received no reply. A copy of a letter, marked A, is attached, from which it appears no such letter has been received by Mr. Singer, and this matter has not been brought to his notice. There is other suitable land in the neighbourhood, but no efforts appear to have been made to obtain it. As to No. 3, Church Farm, of which the land proposed to be purchased is part, forms part of the Norman Court Estate, and, together with other lands, was offered for sale by auction at Salisbury on May 31, 1907. (A copy of the *Andover Advertiser* for May 31, 1907, containing a report of this sale accompanied Mr. Greenwell's letter). Lot 14 together with lot 19, including good house, extensive farm buildings, could have been purchased for £2500, or £10 per acre, and now it is proposed by the Parish Council to purchase from Mr. Ayles 100 acres, a portion of the farm, at £16 per acre. Mr. Ayles appears to have privately purchased this farm for £3000, about £12 per acre, and the higher price which is now proposed to be paid to Mr. Ayles by the Parish Council is greatly in excess of the actual value of the land. As to No. 4. At the County Council enquiry the chairman of the Parish Council and the clerk stated emphatically that Mr. Ayles was not the purchaser of the farm. A copy of a letter, marked B, is attached, in which Mr. Singer's solicitors state that Mr. W. J. Ayles, of Broughton, is the purchaser. If this is an honourable, straightforward transaction what is the meaning of so much mystery and secrecy about it, and why the anxiety to conceal the identity of the real purchaser, which was commented on by Lord Northbrook at the County Council enquiry. As a member of the Rural District Council he most emphatically protested against the part taken by Mr. Ayles in this transaction. He is surveyor and inspector of nuisances to the Stockbridge Rural District Council, and by the conditions of his office is bound to devote the whole of his time to the duties of his office. Mr. Ayles' conduct with regard to this and other transactions and speculations has been brought to the notice of, and is now under consideration by, the Local Government Board. Generally if it is necessary to acquire land for the purposes of small holdings or allotments obviously the cheaper land could be bought the better not only for the ratepayers and parish generally but especially for those persons

desirous of taking advantage of the Act and become owners of land. For those reasons he hoped the application of the Parish Council would be rejected. The letter was signed W. F. Greenwell, and dated July, 1908.

The CLERK replied to the four points raised by Mr. Greenwell. As to the first, he said they had already had application for 72 acres, and four more papers were out. As for making enquiries for land he wrote to Mr. Briscoe, Dr. Lyne-Stevens, Mr. Knapman, Mr. King and Mr. Singer. He produced the replies he had received. As to the price he would call evidence.

Mr. F. HURFORD, a farmer of 20 years standing, said he considered the 100 acres in question were as good as any 100 acres on the Manor Farm, water meadow excepted, and were worth £16 or £20 an acre.

Mr. WATTS, a farmer and haulier, said he would like to rent 20 acres of it at £1 an acre. He thought £16 an acre was a reasonable price.

Mr. GUNSTONE, a builder, also gave it as his opinion that the land was worth £16 an acre.

The CLERK, dealing with Mr. Greenwell's fourth point, said the Parish Council were dealing with Messrs. Tylee, Mortimer, and Attlee, and did not know that Mr. Ayles had bought the land. The solicitors letter shewed that Mr. Singer was the owner. As to its being a money making affair, he had not received anything out of it, and should not. He did not know of any of the parish councillors who were desirous of making anything out of it.

Mr. J. LEABOURNE thought it desirable they should know who was the vendor, Mr. Singer, Mr. Ayles or Mr. Moody.

The CLERK said Mr. Moody had an option on the land.

Mr. HINWOOD, chairman of the Parish Council, said they received an offer of the land from Messrs. Tylee, Mortimer and Attlee, and that was who they were dealing with.

The INSPECTOR said he would not go into the question any further.

The CLERK explained the position of affairs with regard to the school. The school was to cost £2000, of which the Board of Education had granted £1200, the County Council would pay £500, and the balance would come from the parish, while the trustees had £300 or £400 which they would have to hand over.

Mr. F. V. BARBER informed the inspector that the County Council Enquiry Committee had reported in favour of the loan being granted (applause), and the report had been adopted by the Small Holdings Committee, and would come before the County Council at their meeting on August 10. With reference to the ownership of the land, he said Mr. Singer was the owner of the fee simple. A gentleman, who should be nameless, purchased an option but the fee simple was not transferred. Some people thought that had Mr. Singer been

approached personally the land would have been obtained at a cheaper rate.

Mr. GILLINGHAM, who rents a cottage near the land, said his well was 75 feet deep and had 15 to 20 feet of water. He had never known it dry.

The CLERK said they estimated the cost of fencing at £100, but agreed to revise this estimate on the suggestion of the Inspector.

A vote of thanks was accorded the Inspector, on the proposition of Mr. BLAKE, seconded by Mr. HINWOOD, and the inquiry was then declared closed.

## BROUGHTON.

**HONEY PRIZES.**—At the Newcastle Show last week Mr. Sidney Leigh was awarded a couple of third prizes for honey, and was also highly commended.

**THE CHURCH MISSION.**—On Sunday afternoon the largest attendance yet seen was present at the Church Army van mission in the Rectory meadow. Before the service began the Broughton Band moved up the main street playing sacred selections in good style, returning to the van for the service and accompanying the hymns.

**SALVATION ARMY.**—On Sunday the local corps had a regular field day, the members being reinforced by a party of Salvationists from Andover. Short services were held during the day at different parts of the village, at which the addresses were of an earnest description and the singing accompanied by the band hearty. The collections amounted to about £1 10s.

**PAN-ANGLICAN THANKOFFERING.**—The sum of £7 10s. 10d. was sent to Rev. J. C. Yarborough (Rural Dean), Vicar of Romsey, as Broughton's contribution to the great thankoffering fund of church people all over the world. The principal collectors were Mrs. A. Woodin, £1 6s. 8d.; Mrs. Steele Tomkins, £1 4s.; Mrs. H. G. Butler (Boasington), 14s. 3d.; Mrs. T. H. Holt, 15s. 6d.; Mrs. W. F. Greenwell, 10s.; and Miss King, 8s. 3d. There were 16 smaller amounts.

**BENEFIT SOCIETY OUTING.**—On Saturday the members of the Woolston Workmen's Sick Benefit Society had an outing to this village, making the journey from Southampton in three three-horse brakes. The party numbered 74, and put up at the Greyhound Hotel. Mr. and Mrs. Soman provided dinner and tea for them, which the men thoroughly enjoyed, and also a ramble round the village. The return journey, after an enjoyable day, was made at 7 o'clock, the ride home in the cool of the evening being a very pleasant one. The day was gloriously fine although very hot. On Sunday another party of 27 from Southampton had tea at the Greyhound.