

THE INCLOSURE OF DRAYTON PARSLOW.

BY THE EDITOR.

The whole working of the machinery which made inclosure by a private Act of Parliament possible at the close of the eighteenth century is carefully explained by Mr. W. H. R. Curtler in "The Enclosure and Redistribution of Our Land,"¹ 1920; the section of that valuable work entitled, "The Actual Work of Enclosure," occupies pages 159 to 169, and seems to exhaust the subject, but an actual illustration within our county is afforded by the original Minute Book which relates to the parish of Drayton Parslow. The kindness of Mr. S. P. Wigley, of Winslow, has placed this book in the hands of the Editor, and it is proposed to give such a précis of the contents as will show the way in which effect was given to the Act entitled, "An Act for Dividing, Allotting, and Inclosing the Open and Common Fields, Common Meadows, Common Pastures, and other Commonable and Waste Lands, in the Parish of Drayton Parslow, in the County of Buckingham;" the Act was passed 37 Geo. III. (1797).

The Act, which is bound at the beginning of the Minute Book, appointed as Commissioners John Chamberlin, of Croperdy, co. Oxford; Thomas Hopcraft, of Crowton, co. Northampton; and John Fellows, of Foscot, co. Buckingham; it also appointed William Collisson, of Brackley, to act as Surveyor. The first manuscript entry is a copy of a notice which was "affixed on the principal door of the parish church" on Sunday, 30th July, 1797; this gave notice of the first meeting of the Commissioners.

¹ It is an odd fact that the word Inclosure is spelt with an "E" in the title, and generally, though not invariably, in the text,—and this in a work printed by the Clarendon Press, who have laid it down that Inclosure with this meaning shall always be spelt with an "I." (See "Rules for Compositors and Readers at the University Press, Oxford, 25th edition, p.18.")

1. Then begin the Minutes proper; all meetings took place at the "Bell Inn, Winslow," and the first was on 7th August, 1797; it was then reported that "such part of the field which would have been fallow in case the inclosure had not taken place, had already been sown with barley or oats and also with broad clover." To this the Commissioners gave their approval, and then proceeded into the field "and began upon the quality thereof, and continued therein from day to day until Saturday the 12th day of August."

At the same meeting it was ordered "that all sheep commons be suspended from 14 August," and the "several commons be stocked with horses, cows, and other great cattle, in the same proportion as heretofore." The Surveyor was instructed to begin his survey immediately, and the several proprietors were ordered to "mark all their known arable, ley, meadow, and pasture land with such marks as the Surveyor shall direct, distinguishing the freehold, copyhold, or lands in settlement, or lands held by any other tenure from each other."

A further notice was issued, directing claims of property in writing to be delivered by the 27th September, and making distinction between the various kinds of lands and the nature of the tenure as in the case of the physical marks on the land.

2. The Commissioners sat again from the 26th to the 30th September, when the claims of property were received, the "old inclosures" were valued, and the valuation of the open fields was revised.

The list of claims was ordered to be affixed to the church-door, in order that objections, if any, might be raised, and omissions might be rectified.

It was also ordered that "all rights of common over the arable part of the field planted with clover-seed be suspended from 9th October."

3. On the 6th November, when the Commissioners next met, they "settled the quality and set out the several public roads and highways and ordered the same to be staked out."

The notice regarding the roads was to be published for two weeks in the "Northampton Mercury," to be affixed to the church-door, and to be left at the "Three Horse Shoes," Drayton Parslow.

The "public carriage road and highway" was to be forty feet wide; one such road began at the "lower or north east end of the village," covering the "present tract called Miller's way," past Ford's Close, and including "Lanchlot Way, and over part of the Homeward Common till it enters the parish of Stewkley, being part of the present road leading from Drayton Parslow towards Leighton Buzzard."

Another road led from Ford's Close, named above, and extended north-west in a straight line to Newton Ford, "being part of the road from Drayton Parslow towards Newton Longville."

A third road went in a straight line northwards from Ford's Close over Hay Leys Common "till it enters the parish of Stoke Hammond, being part of the road from Drayton Parslow towards Fenny Stratford."

A fourth led "from the upper or southward part of the village, being part of the present road from Drayton Parslow towards Winslow."

A fifth road led from the first one, north-easterly from Drayton Homeward Common, towards "the parish of Stoke Hammond at a certain gate called Tithe Gate."

Then there was a 15ft. bridle road from Bates' Close and Emanuel's Close, extending north-west to "Salden Inclosures, near the Windmill."

At this meeting the clerk was told to write to the proprietors "requiring them to deliver a request in writing (sealed up) where they would wish to have their allotments laid."

The same meeting authorised the issue of a notice to the effect that "all right of common in, over, and upon the lands and grounds by the said Act directed to be divided and inclosed, shall, from 22nd November, be suspended."

4. From 27th to 30th November the Commission sat again; they received the award of an arbitrator regarding the disputed question as to whether Gore Leys, Clackhill, Clack Close, and Clackhill Common should pay tithe to Drayton Parslow or to Stewkley.

They also received an objection from Dr. William Lord,² rector of Drayton, in consequence of which the fifth road named above (which was originally intended to be a bridle road only) was made a 40ft. road, and the road which led to Salden windmill was to be "of such additional breadth as the Commissioners shall hereafter direct."

5. The Commissioners were filled with zeal, for they next met on Boxing-day, and were very busy; the Surveyor was instructed to "make the calculations and ascertain the values of the lands to be allotted." The allotments were "schemed on the plan," and the Surveyor was ordered to "stake the same out accordingly."

A rate of 30s. in the £ was levied on "all the proprietors of the open fields estates;" and notice was given inviting objections to the proposed allotments to be made by the 22nd January.

6. On 24th January, 1798, the clerk was instructed to write to the rector and to Mr. Stephens³ requesting their attendance at the next meeting "to give the Commissioners directions respecting their Exchanges."

7. At the meeting on 6th February the exchanges spoken of at the previous meeting were settled on a basis which seems to be somewhat complex, for the difference resulting from the exchange was to be added

² Dr. Wm. Lord was son of the Rev. John Lord, the former rector, and father of Rev. Jas. Lord, the succeeding rector. John was the rector who made curious entries in the parish registers, see p.p. 95-101 of the published register (1913); he it was who bought the advowson. In an appendix to that volume (p. 175) are some interesting notes upon the Lord family by Cole, in his usual caustic manner. William (D. D.) was also rector of Beaconsfield.

³ He was agent for Mr. Greenwood the owner of the manor; the Greenwoods held Drayton Parslow from 1735 until they sold it to Lord Carrington early in the nineteenth century.

to the "allotment of Mr. Greenwood in a straight line after the rate of fifty shillings per acre contained in the old inclosures intended to be exchanged, and one twenty-seventh part of the balance of the value of the buildings intended to be exchanged."

As the result of various objections some alteration was made in the proposed allotments; the Surveyor was directed to amend the plan, and "at the same time insert the quantity and value of each allotment, together with the quantity and value of the old inclosures."

At this meeting it was ruled that all right of common shall, from and after 13th February, be utterly extinguished and void; and that all leases at rack rents should cease from the same day and the lessees or tenants should be reasonably compensated.

The Surveyor was ordered to make a valuation of the hedges "standing as boundary and sub-division fences, together with the trees left standing therein;" also to prepare a statement showing the quantity and value of all the land which would have been fallow but for the Act, and was sown with oats. In addition he was to value the grass-land, and the horse-, cow-, and sheep-commons, and the old inclosures; besides furnishing "such other information as may be necessary to enable the Commissioners to settle the broken rent to be paid by the tenants to their respective landlords."

At this same-most important meeting an agreement was made with William Powell, of Stanwell, co. Middlesex, and Michael Messor, of Dunsten, co. Oxford, to "do all and every part of the public fencing directed to be done, after the rate of 13s. for every perch of 8 yards, and also the sum of 14s. for each stile, and two guinea for every gate."

Finally the offer of Hugh Williatt, of Mursley, to form or repair all the roads was accepted, and it was agreed to "pay him such compensation for his trouble therein as shall be hereafter settled by the Commissioners."

8. When the Commissioners met next, on 5th March, a reply from Williatt was received in which he declined to accept the office of Surveyor of the roads, and the appointment was given to George Fether, of Aynho, co. Northants.

The Surveyor then "produced the lengths of the boundary fences of the several new allotments and such sub-division fences as the Commissioners thought should be made on each estate," and it was ordered that "each person was to pay and receive for having too much or too little fencing." There follow two lists, the first of proprietors who had "to pay for having less than a proportionate share of fencing;" the second of those who had to receive for having more; in each case the total sum was £78:6:0.

Presumably this meant that if the particular circumstances of a new holding involved the owner in a smaller charge for his fences than in direct ratio to his holding, he paid in order that the aggregate sum for all fences might be maintained, and vice versa for those whose fencing was outside the direct ratio of the holding to the total area; it was an equitable adjustment of the accident of position.

At the same meeting the sums due from tenants for the fallow fields and old inclosures "from Lady-day O.S. to 13th February last" were set out: A to pay B so much.

An account was also rendered of the value of "all hedges intended to be left as boundary and sub-division fences;" this involved an equal amount of payments and receipts.

The Surveyor was told to "attend Mr. Wyatt and give him the necessary instructions for drawing the award, and Mr. Wyatt was to produce the draft thereof" at the next meeting.

9. This was produced at the meetings which took place from 21-26 May; it was approved and ordered to be engrossed, and the Surveyor was ordered to get "two reduced plans of all the lands and grounds within the parish to be deposited with the award and inrollment thereof as the Act directs."

At this meeting William King, of Drayton Parslow, was appointed Surveyor of all the "public carriage and drift roads," so the appointment of George Fether, at meeting No. 8 apparently failed to be effective.

Rates were levied at 10s. in the £ on the value of all the allotments made, and at 12s. in the £ upon the old inclosures; each proprietor was to be separately advised of the amount due from him, together with the amount due to or from him on account of the old hedges, and through having more or less than a proportionate share of fencing.

10. At the meeting which began on 2nd July and continued until 7th July the engrossed award and reduced plans were submitted, verified on oath by the Surveyor, and duly "settled and perfected" by the Commissioners. Orders were issued that unpaid calls were to be collected without further delay, and a statement of receipts and payments was laid before the Commissioners; slightly summarized and re-arranged, it is as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Cash received, rate made 1797	1,837	8	0½
" " " 1798	705	16	0
" " making roads	734	19	2
	<u>3,278</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2½</u>
	£	s.	d.
Less, outstanding—			
Bradford and Terry	76	12	1½
Willison	49	10	1½
Kirke	4	10	6½
Jeffs	13	2	
Wallis	10	4	
		<u>131</u>	<u>16 3½</u>
	<u>£3,146</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>

	£	s.	d.
Messrs. White, clerks in Parliament, and interest	262	16	0
Morrell of Oxford, Bishop's Secretary, fee and trouble	10	10	0
Mr. Stephens, "soliciting the Act"	274	12	0
Mr. Collisson, journeys and attendances in London to prove the allegations of the Bill	50	0	0
Mr. Wyatt, journeys previous to obtaining the Act	28	7	7

	£	s.	d.
COMMISSIONERS—			
Chamberlin	151	4	0
Fellows	149	2	0
Hopcraft	180	12	0
			480 18 0
ARBITRATORS—			
Chamberlin	10	10	0
Burnham	8	8	0
Rev. J. Horseman	16	16	0
Hopcraft	10	10	0
			46 4 0
SURVEY—			
Collisson	260	0	0
Labourers and stakes	39	13	6
Plans	25	1	0
			324 14 6
GRASS-SEED AND SOWING			79 16 6
FENCES			573 12 11
ROADS	527	5	0
Surveyor	207	14	2
			734 19 2
Sundries			49 11 0
Clerk's Bill			256 11 9
			734 19 2
			49 11 0
			256 11 9
			<u>£3,166 13 5</u>

11. On 20th June, 1801, the Commissioners “proceeded to Drayton to view the public roads in order to get the same certified at an adjourned sessions of the peace to be holden at Aylesbury on 27th June.” The estimate for the roads was evidently inadequate, for the Surveyor produced an account which made it necessary to levy a further rate of 3s. 6d. in the £ on the value of all allotments. The sum of this rate (£214:7:2), however, covered “other incidental expenses and for finally settling and completing the said division and inclosure according to the direction of the said Act.”

These are the final minutes, and one presumes, therefore, that the total cost of effecting the inclosure was about £3,400; the area of the parish is 1,750 acres, all of which might not be included in the scope of the Act; but it is clear that the cost of inclosure was little less than £2 per acre; the average cost of inclosure according to the Board of Agriculture Report of 1808 was about £1 per acre, but from a comparison of the

Drayton Parslow figures with those given by Curtler⁴ the sum spent on roads seems to be extremely high.

The minutes are admirably written, and are evidence of an extremely businesslike procedure throughout; the Commissioners were aware of their great responsibility and seem to have done their work very well,—it would be interesting to know whether the people affected by their decisions were equally convinced of their fair administration.

⁴ *Op. cit.* p. 165.