

House of Commons.

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE

WANDSWORTH COMMON BILL.

Friday, 21st April, 1871.

PRESENT :

Dr. BREWER.
Mr. FELLOWES.
Mr. GOLDNEY.
Mr. MORRISON.
Mr. LOCKE.
Mr. PHILIPS.
Mr. COWPER-TEMPLE.
Mr. PELL.

Mr. GOLDNEY IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. VENABLES was heard to open the case on behalf of the promoters of the Bill.

Mr. THOMAS SIMON WATSON, *sworn*.

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

1. You live on Wandsworth Common, I think?—Yes.
2. And have done so for a great many years?—For twenty-two years last Michaelmas.
3. When you first recollect Wandsworth Common will you tell the committee about the extent of it?—It was nearly double the size it is now. Some few portions had been then taken.
4. It was nearly three hundred acres?—Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think we need travel into that; all that we have got to deal with is the thing as it stands now. Lord Spencer has rights to sell, and we cannot alter it, and the commoners seem to have adopted Lord Spencer's view in the Bill.

Mr. LITTLE: I suppose with regard to Lord Spencer, you will adopt the same course that the Committee did in the former Bill, anything he has to say, if he has anything to say, may be disposed of in clauses.

The CHAIRMAN: It is part of the agreement that it extends to everything since 1868, we cannot cure what took place before that. I do not think it will tend to elucidate the matter to examine witnesses

Mr. THOMAS
SIMON WATSON.
21st April, 1871.

about anything that has occurred before. We have got the agreement before us, which is all we can deal with. There is a stipulation in the agreement that what Lord Spencer has done before 1868, is not to be interfered with.

Mr. LITTLER: That is a thing which is binding upon the promoters.

The CHAIRMAN: It is binding upon the promoters, and you need not examine any witnesses about it. You can ask the witness as to what the extent of the common is now.

5. Mr. THOMAS: What is the extent, 150 acres?—About 160 now, it was upwards of 300.

6. I believe what is left is situated nearly in equal proportions in two parishes, is it not?—Battersea and Wandsworth.

7. As regards the population of those parishes, do you happen to know that by the last census the population of Battersea was 19,600?—Yes.

8. And that of Wandsworth lying to the west of Battersea 13,346?—Yes; but both have very largely increased since.

9. You are aware, I think, that litigation has been going on respecting the common for the last two or three years?—Yes.

10. Since the beginning of 1868?—About that time.

11. You were not a member of the committee who carried out that litigation?—No, I was not.

12. Do you remember being present at a meeting held at Wandsworth with reference to that litigation, or with reference to the preservation of the common?—Yes.

13. What was the particular object of that meeting?—It was to raise funds to meet Mr. Peek's offer.

14. To raise funds to meet the offer made by Mr. Peek; was that an offer to pay £1,000?—To pay £1,000 on his part, provided the inhabitants of Battersea and Wandsworth could pay £4,000.

15. For the purpose of commencing proceedings for fighting the question?—Yes; to try Lord Spencer's rights.

16. Was that a large meeting?—It was a very large meeting.

17. A public meeting?—A public meeting.

18. Was this the resolution that was passed: "That this meeting thankfully accepts the spirited offer of Mr. Peek, and pledges itself to raise as large a proportion as possible of the sum required in the parish of Wandsworth"?—Yes.

19. Was a committee appointed at that meeting to collect funds for that purpose?—There was.

20. After a large portion of the sum had been collected, did it come to the knowledge of the Committee that Lord Spencer was willing to treat for an arrangement?—Yes.

21. In the mean time Chancery proceedings had been instituted?—Yes.

22. Then came negotiations with Lord Spencer about the terms?—Yes.

23. The terms, I think, as first proposed, were an annuity of £500 a year?—An annuity of £500 a year.

24. The Wandsworth Conservators taking a pond called "the Black Sea"?—Yes, that was intended to be included.

25. But did the negotiations ultimately result in the present arrangement which gives Lord Spencer an annuity of £250, he taking "the Black Sea"?—Yes.

26. Do you, as an old inhabitant of Wandsworth and the neighbourhood, approve of the arrangement?—I think it is the best arrangement that can be made, under the circumstances.

27. And do you also approve of the scheme of rating in the Bill?—I think it is the only fair one that can be devised.

28. The only fair one under the circumstances of the case?—Yes.

29. Is it the fact that round the neighbourhood of Wandsworth Common there are houses of all descriptions and classes?—Immediately on the common there are.

30. Occupied by rich and poor?—Yes.

31. Is this a common which is largely used by the labouring classes of these parishes?—Very much so, indeed.

32. Do you think that the proposed scheme of management of the common is one that is satisfactory?—I think that those who pay for the common should have the management of the common.

33. You think that a scheme of local management for the common is desirable in this case?—Decidedly so.

34. Having said that, I suppose I may take it that you have considered the question of the management of the common by the Metropolitan Board?—I have.

35. Do you think that would be satisfactory?—I do not.

36. Will you state why?—The policy of the Metropolitan Board has been almost invariably to sell a considerable outlying portion of the spaces they have taken in order to recoup the cost of the whole. If that were done in the case of Wandsworth Common, many of the most valuable parts would be sold and the inhabitants would be deprived of the open space to that extent.

37. Assuming that difficulty to be got over, and assuming there to be no sale, do you think that the management by the Metropolitan Board, that is to say, by the surveyor of their board, or by the Wandsworth District Board, by their surveyor, would be equally advantageous to that which is contemplated by this Bill?—I do not think it would, by the specimen we have already had of the management of the district board, or the control which the board already exercise.

38. You mean the Wandsworth District Board?—Yes.

39. You have told us your own opinion. Have you also had an opportunity of knowing the opinion of the neighbourhood generally?—I have so.

40. Can you state that that opinion is in favour of this scheme or not?—Most decidedly so, to a very great extent, with very few dissentients.

41. Are you acquainted with the particulars of the agreement which has been come to by all parties with reference to the land bought by the Brighton Company, and afterwards sold for building?—Yes.

42. Do you think that arrangement is also a desirable one under the circumstances?—I think it is very desirable.

43. As regards the state of Wandsworth Common for the last few years, I suppose you have had an opportunity of seeing it constantly, have you not?—I have.

44. What has been that state?—It has been continually encroached upon; a bit here and a bit there taken for building.

45. That is as regards encroachments. I meant rather with regard to nuisance?—In some parts there have been considerable nuisances.

46. Have there not been deposits of filth of all kinds?—Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think we need go into that; whoever has the management under this Bill must have the ordinary power to remove nuisances, whatever body has the management of the common will have the power to take care of it. This witness says, there is a general feeling in the neighbourhood in favour of the Bill, and that he has known it a long time. I do not see how he can go further.

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Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

47. There is a general feeling in the neighbourhood, is not there, that the common should be preserved, and kept an open space?—Yes.

48. And that it should be under proper regulation?—Yes, there is.

49. With regard to the particular bill, or the particular scheme of the bill, of course I may take it, I suppose, that the Committee is to understand from you that there is a general feeling that the agreement with Lord Spencer should be carried out?—There is.

50. And that it is a favourable opportunity for terminating a position of matters which is not creditable to the neighbourhood—there are nuisances we know?—It is so.

51. With regard to the question of the common itself, it is resorted to, is it not by a large number of people from all parts of London?—A very large number.

52. From all parts of London?—I believe so.

53. It is not exclusively local?—No, it is more particularly local, and enjoyed by the inhabitants, of course.

54. Of course the nearer people are, the greater facilities they have to go over it?—Yes.

55. Is that what you mean?—Exactly.

56. With regard to the principle which I understand you to have spoken in favour of, you said that you thought the management ought to be placed in the hands of those who pay for it?—I did.

57. Now, with regard to the question of management, what local interests are that particularly require consideration as distinct from metropolitan interests?—I do not understand your question exactly.

58. Is there any reason why the management if equally efficient and under proper restrictions, should be in the hands of the local authority more than in that of the Metropolitan Board?—Yes.

59. What are the reasons?—Because people living on the spot are more likely to take an interest in the common than persons at a distance, who are public officers for instance.

60. Persons on the spot are more likely to take an interest, and more likely to manage it better?—Just so.

61. The question that I put was one that involved the assumption that the management was equally good in either case, what then is the objection?—I do not admit that the management would be equally good in either case.

62. Will you answer my question—if it were what would be the objection then, assuming that it is equally good?—I do not know that there would be any objection then.

63. I did not understand what objection it was you mentioned assuming a sale, that objection would be cured by whatever body had the management, having a clause put in the Act that there should be no sale?—I observe that that is the usual course with the Metropolitan Board to sell part of the land.

64. To what case do you refer?—The case of Finsbury Park.

65. Are you aware that there was no commonable right there, and that Parliament expressly sanctioned it?—It was an open space.

66. No, it was not an open space?—It was made into an open space.

67. By the board, Parliament giving them power to purchase a tract of land for a park and to sell the fringe round, to recoup the expense of making the park?—Just so. The same, I believe, occurred in the case of Southwark Park.

68. Neither being open spaces. Is there any other instance that you have in your mind in the way of a sale?—I do not recollect any other.

69. As to the question of management, what is there on the part of the Metropolitan Board that you complain of?—In the case of Kennington Common it was enclosed by iron railings, and plantations were made, and gravel walks were also laid down, and instead of the open common which we had, we have now a London square.

70. That you object to?—I do.

71. That you attribute to the Metropolitan Board of Works?—
Yes.

72. Now let me tell you that that is the brown; what do you say to that?—Merely that I was mistaken in the agent.

73. But you are instancing that as a specific objection to the management of the Metropolitan Board. Now as you are mistaken in your instance of Finsbury Park and Southwark Park, and now Kennington Common, is there any other instance of management you complain of?—No. I do not recollect any.

74. So that the only instance you give me, and which turns out to be not in point, fails you. Will you explain to the Committee what special interest a ratepayer living at Nine Elms would have in this common which is three miles off?—As much interest as all those whom you speak of as coming from London to the common use.

75. And no more?—In proportion to the distance from the common, of course the interest diminishes; that is a truism.

76. You gentlemen who promote this Bill propose to tax a person living at Nine Elms?—If that is in the parish certainly.

77. Nine Elms is in the parish of Battersea—on what principle of fairness and equity can you refuse to tax his neighbour who happens to live within the same distance, if it is not within the parish?—That is only one of the instances which must occur in all taxation.

78. The principle is, according to you, to spread the burden as far as you possibly can fairly over those who derive the benefit?—There must be some limit and the parochial limit appears to be the most sensible one.

79. Now Clapham parish would not be rated at all, which is within half a mile of the common?—Clapham has its own common.

80. Let me understand you, gentlemen who are promoters of this Bill—do you say that each district should take its own common?—As far as may be.

81. To the exclusion of the other commons of the Metropolis—that each district may take its own and manage its own?—Just so.

82. Do you think there would be no advantage from uniformity of management of all Metropolitan commons?—I think it is of very little consequence.

83. Do you think there would be no disadvantage in having separate staffs of officers, and separate establishments to manage each one common in each particular neighbourhood?—None at all.

84. Assume that this scheme passes, and you have sanction for this Bill, would you object on the part of the parish, that is in the sectional area here, to be taxed for other Metropolitan commons—for instance, for Hampstead Heath or Hackney?—I should object, if I thought it was of any use.

85. You do not recognise the fact that these commons, or public spaces, are Metropolitan rather than local?—I do not.

86. Local they are, and local they are to be, if Parliament sanctions it?—Just so.

Re-examined by Mr. THOMAS.

87. As regards Battersea, you have been asked as to a ratepayer
[11813]

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living at Nine Elms, are you aware that the vestry of Battersea have petitioned in favour of this Bill?—I am.

88. And that a very large majority of the ratepayers are also in favour of it?—They have signed a petition in favour of it.

89. Mr. LOCKE: Have you read the evidence of Sir John Thwaites before the Open Spaces Committee?—I have not.

90. Have you read the report of that Committee?—No, I have not.

91. Mr. MORRISON: Do you know the ground or the principle on which the payment of £250 was fixed?—Yes; the amount of interest proposed, I believe, was shown to be the amount derived by Lord Spencer from the common by digging gravel and cutting turf, and so on—that was £500. At the interview with Lord Spencer much discussion took place upon the subject, and his lordship expressed his great anxiety to meet the wishes of the inhabitants of Wandsworth, and afterwards the result of the negotiations through his solicitor was that £250 was fixed, on condition of that portion of the common called "The Black Sea" not being included.

92. Can you tell the Committee what are supposed to be the present rights of the commoners?—I know nothing of the commoners' rights.

93. Mr. PELL: Are there any commoners?—There are some, but they have to be searched for very diligently.

94. What constitutes a commoner?—I suppose holding a copy of the court roll.

Mr. FELLOWES: You have no intention, I suppose, in case this Bill is carried of putting the inhabitants of the metropolis on any footing than that of these parties?—None at all.

95. It would be perfectly open to everybody to go wherever they pleased?—Yes, perfectly free to all.

96. That is the object of the promoters?—Yes.

97. Mr. LOCKE: Just let me call your attention to page 24 of the evidence of Sir John Thwaites—read it, if you please?—"Sir John Thwaites informed your committee that the Metropolitan Board of Works were willing to undertake the charge of the open spaces, and that that Board had passed the following resolution—'That it is highly desirable to preserve the open commons and spaces near the metropolis for public recreation and enjoyment, such open spaces to remain uninclosed, and that the Board should compensate the Lords of Manors and the commoners in respect of any rights of which they may be deprived. That towards meeting the expenditure to be incurred, power should be given to this Board to sell certain portions of such spaces for building or other purposes? The same witness, however, stated that it would be impossible to carry out the plan proposed by the Board, unless the Board had sufficient power to dispose of a portion of the land for building purposes, and also some other means of raising funds than by a sewers' rate. 'We must be aided by some indirect means, either by an addition to the coal tax, or by a property tax.'"

98. Are you aware that that is the course which, since that evidence was given has been adopted by the Metropolitan Board of Works—that they have adhered to those views?—I believe so.

(The Witness withdrew.)

Mr. VENABLES: I think it is convenient I should state, with reference to a question asked by an Honourable Member, that if the Committee require evidence as to the basis upon which the £250 was settled, we should be able to call Lord Spencer's representative upon that point.

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The CHAIRMAN: I think the last witness has said quite enough, that it was based upon what he had actually received from gravel and turf, and so on.

Mr. EDWIN RAYNER RANSOME, *sworn*.

Examined by Mr. VENABLES.

99. I believe you are a merchant carrying on business in London?
—I am.

100. And you are the owner of a house and garden near Wandsworth Common?—Yes.

101. You have resided there for some time, I believe?—I have, for some years.

102. Of course you are, therefore, interested in keeping the common open?—I am.

103. What parish are you in?—My house is in both parishes—Wandsworth and Battersea.

104. You, I believe, have been aware of the several attempts which have been made to prevent further enclosures of the common?—There have been such attempts made.

105. Do you remember an application being made to the District Board for the purpose of its communicating with the Board of Works in 1868?—Yes; I do. I took some interest in it. I applied to the District Board first. They told me that was the right course, with a view of getting them to apply to the Metropolitan Board of Works.

106. Do you happen to know whether they did apply to the Metropolitan Board of Works?—They did make an application to the Metropolitan Board of Works. They first of all received us as a deputation.

107. Who do you mean received you?—The district board, before we presented our memorial. They then made an application to the Metropolitan Board of Works, and we, some of the inhabitants, feeling an interest in the matter, were informed that it would be an advantage and would help the district board if we also appeared at the Metropolitan Board in person, and we did so.

108. You were one of the deputation?—I was.

109. And did you then represent your opinions and wishes to the Metropolitan Board?—We did; we came to endorse the requisition from the district board.

110. What came of that? anything?—I do not know what they did, but no practical result ever came of it. After waiting some little time, I thought there seemed to be nothing moving, as far as we could judge, and I went privately and had an interview with the late Sir John Thwaites upon the subject. He expressed himself most anxious that these commons should be preserved, but he stated that in regard to Wandsworth Common there was an insuperable difficulty in the Metropolitan Board dealing with it, inasmuch as there were certain lawsuits afloat in connection with it, and that as long as anything of that kind existed, the Metropolitan Board of Works could not deal with the question.

111. The lawsuit that has been referred to is going on still, I believe?—Two or three as far as I have understood. I am not concerned in them.

112. Probably you do not at all know when they will end?—Not in the least, except that I am perfectly persuaded of this, that when we

Mr. EDWIN
RAYNER
RANSOME.

21st April, 1871.

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21st April, 1871.

have secured this common, which I have not the slightest doubt we shall do, all lawsuits will at once cease, because those who have been engaged in those lawsuits, so far as I can understand it, have done so simply with a view of securing the common; when we have secured the common for the parishes, they will have no longer any object in continuing the lawsuits; therefore, they will cease, and there will be an end to that ill feeling which has existed for so long a time in the locality.

113. Did you attend meetings which were held to consider Mr. Peek's offer?—I did.

114. Were there two, one in each parish?—They were in more than one parish certainly; there were one or two others, and besides, there was one held at the Mansion House.

115. Committees were appointed by both parishes?—Yes.

116. Were you appointed on the Committee?—Yes; I was appointed for both parishes, inasmuch as my house is in both parishes, they put me on both Committees.

117. Were you also one of the Sub-Committee to negotiate with Lord Spencer?—Yes.

118. Were you present at the interviews with Lord Spencer?—Mr. Watson and I were the only two parties who were present.

119. I believe the only question there was as to the commons being handed over to the local representatives for the two parishes?—There was no other question raised.

120. Lord Spencer expressed his wish to comply with the wishes inhabitants?—He did, he made is an offer for £500, we told him we thought it was rather more than the parishes ought to be called upon to pay, and inasmuch as it was for public purposes, I thought if he made it £250 we should be able to carry it—he considered it, and we afterwards received an intimation that he was willing to accept our offer.

121. I suppose you satisfied yourself that Lord Spencer had some reason for claiming compensation?—We were informed by his agents, and we had no reason to doubt their information, that he derived a considerable income from the gravel and turf, and his rights upon the common.

122. On such information as you were able to get, do you think the arrangement a fair one?—Yes, quite.

123. As you have taken an active part in this, I suppose you are of opinion that if this Bill is carried, and the arrangement executed, it will be beneficial to the parishes and to everybody concerned?—Quite so.

124. I daresay you are of opinion that if it is to be settled, it will be a very good thing to settle it now?—Quite so, whilst there is a chance of doing it.

125. Have you considered the agreement with the Brighton Company and Mr. Todd?—Yes; that matter has been under my consideration.

126. You know generally, I daresay, the arrangement which has been come to?—In reference to that strip of land that was formerly part of his purchase, I am acquainted with that.

127. Are you of opinion that it is for the interest of the ratepayers that that agreement should be confirmed?—It is a very strong wish on the part of a large number of the ratepayers, and I fully concur in it, that it would add very much to the beauty of that part of the common to retain it.

128. As to the question which has been asked of every witness, do you think that that would be better done by people on the spot than by people who represent a great many other districts besides?—Most unhesitatingly.

21st April, 1871.

129. Do you happen to know what the general feeling in Battersea and Wandsworth is?—In regard to what?

130. As to the arrangements proposed in this Bill?—As to whether it should be under its own management?

131. I pointed rather to this—whether they approve or object to the rate-paying for keeping the common open?—They approve of it generally. I have had a conversation with a number of people, and I have not heard one, except they were connected in some way with the Metropolitan Board of Works, raise any objection.

132. When you say conversation, has that been with people of your own station, or of all classes?—Working men and tradesmen.

133. And they generally approve of the plan?—Yes.

134. Knowing perfectly well that they will have to pay the rates? Yes, I put that question directly to them many times.

135. You have mentioned the working men, now do you happen to know that they take a great interest in this matter?—I am sure they do.

136. I believe many of them subscribed largely in proportion to their means, to the preservation of the common?—They did.

137. Were you at a public meeting at Wandsworth, which was held on the 1st of March?—Yes, I was.

138. Were you in the chair?—No, I sat next to the chairman.

139. As you know all the people about there, should you say that it was a good representation of the district?—Yes, very fair. I should say there were pretty nearly 700 people present. The room was packed as full as it could be, except just at the entrance and up the middle of the room. I should think that all parties were represented—working-classes and all.

140. Was there a fair and open discussion?—Quite; it was very fairly conducted. The chairman acted in a very fair and straightforward manner.

141. You saw a division ultimately taken?—Yes.

142. There was a clear majority in favour of the Bill?—Oh dear, yes. I think there were three hands held up on the opposite side.

143. I believe the Battersea people who happened to be present were asked not to vote?—They were.

144. Do you think that that really represents what the real feeling of the people was?—Yes, undoubtedly.

Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

145. The Battersea people go chiefly to Battersea Park, do not they?—I do not know that. I expect they come to Wandsworth Common. It is called Wandsworth and Battersea Common.

146. I am suggesting that Battersea Park, which is nearer to the Battersea people, would be more resorted to by them?—I do not know why it should be nearer, inasmuch as this is in the parish of Battersea, which is round it.

147. You signed, as I understand, first, a memorial to the district board of works, and went up with a deputation to the Metropolitan Board?—Yes.

148. Just let me call your attention to what was stated in the memorial to which you put your name, that the whole of Wandsworth and Battersea Commons are within your jurisdiction, and that from time immemorial those commons have been kept entirely open, and so on, but that notwithstanding their present neglected state they are still greatly resorted to by the inhabitants of the Metropolis, the access by rail being comparatively easy, and the fares low; and then that there

MR. EDWIN
RAYNER
RANSOME.

21st April, 1871.

has been a great feeling of regret that the state of the common, which has resulted in an application to the Board of Works to the Wandsworth district (*reading the passage*), "and that in consideration of public works the Board will be pleased to direct immediate steps to be taken to put the Commons Preservation Act, 1866, into operation, and to secure and maintain unenclosed and for the benefit of the public in perpetuity the existing commons of Wandsworth and Battersea." Have your views been changed since that time?—They have a little.

149. In what respect?—Because I see that the district board does not manage things so well as they might do.

150. This was for a scheme of the Metropolitan Board to put in force the Act of 1866?—Just so; which would involve the district board having a finger in the pie.

151. What makes you say that?—There is not the slightest doubt about it, because the Metropolitan Board delegate to the district board matters affecting localities in they are supposed to have authority.

152. Is that so as a matter of fact. I want to know whether you express an opinion, or whether you are saying something that you know?—I express that which I believe to be a fact.

153. Are you aware that the powers and functions of the district board are limited by certain Acts of Parliament, and the Metropolitan Board, by certain Acts of Parliament?—They are. The Metropolitan Board have representatives on the district board, to take the management of those local matters, looking after the roads and buildings, and the gas and water.

154. Are you aware that Parliament has expressly limited those to the local board?—There is a connection between the two, because the chairman of the district board is a member of the Metropolitan Board, and whether rightly or wrongly, we assume that they would have the management.

155. What is the objection to the management?—Because they would not manage the things so well as persons living in the locality, the ratepayers having a check and control over them by their election.

156. Do not the ratepayers have a check and control over the representatives of the board? Only a very small portion thereof of course, many other parishes on the same board, and they outvote our representatives.

157. Your fear is that the local interests should be outvoted by the Metropolitan Board?—Yes.

158. Can you give me an instance where that has been done by parties in Battersea or Wandsworth parish?—You have had an instance.

159. An instance in which your local representatives have been outvoted to the disadvantage of the parish?—Yes.

160. Will you tell me when?—This very case,—this common. When the question was before the district board, there was a majority of the representatives of the parish of Wandsworth and Battersea in favour of this present application, and there were others who did not agree, and they were outvoted with the assistance of members from other parishes.

161. I ask on the board?—That was on the board of the district.

162. That was this matter which was under debate. I ask you can you give me any other instance?—I do not want any other; that is quite enough.

163. Are you aware that other parishes have petitioned against it?—What parish?

164. The district board of Wandsworth?—Yes, because they were set in motion by the vestry; when I say that they were set in motion

it is my belief that they were set in motion by a portion of the vestry of Wandsworth, who are also members of the district board, but that was not the feeling of the locality by any means.

165. Were you aware that there was a resolution proposed, and a division, the numbers being 7 and 6 out of 14 present, and then afterwards the matter was adjourned, and then there was a further meeting when the majority was 17 to 9?—Yes, because there were some there from other parishes, and the other parishes out-voted our interests.

166. Are they not rated under the Bill?—No, they have nothing to do with it.

167. Are they not rated to the district board?—They are not rated for Wandsworth Common nor would be.

168. I mean as to representation?—That is the question we are now upon, and has nothing to do with the other rates—the other parishes would neither be rated or have any representation in taking care of the common, therefore they have nothing to do with it.

169. Do you ignore the fact that the common is a Metropolitan common?—It is Metropolitan so far as this, that if people choose to come from the Metropolis they can, but it is not under their management, it is under our care.

170. And you wish that it should be under your care?—Yes, no doubt.

171. It is largely resorted to?—Yes, it is largely resorted to by the inhabitants of the locality, and there are also others who come from other parts—they may come from London or from any part of England.

172. The memorial says, largely resorted to by the inhabitants of the metropolis, the access by railway being easy, and the fares low, is that correct?—Just so. Battersea being a part of the metropolis, and there being railway facilities, they may come to the common.

173. Surely that statement is not intended to apply to Battersea and the immediate locality?—No, but it includes them.

174. With regard to taxation, let me ask you what you are rated at?—I forget exactly what I am rated at; I pay upon £72—there is something taken off to reduce it to £72.

175. You are in two parishes?—Yes, £12 in one, and £60 in the other.

176. Mr. LOCKE: I believe you are aware that there is a clause in this Bill to prevent any building by the conservators upon the common when it is reclaimed?—There is.

177. Are you aware of the evidence that Sir John Thwaites gave before the Open Spaces Committee?—I have not read it.

178. Just look at this, will you; No. 4256, an answer to a question by Mr. Doulton, who was likewise a member of the Metropolitan Board of Works at that time?—He was “Supposing the board to be empowered to sell portions of the commons and open spaces which are the subject of our inquiry, for the purpose of meeting the expenses, would the board be willing to raise the small sum of money that would be required for their management?—I think that the board would; the question has been carefully considered by the board, and the resolution has been agreed to which, with your permission, I will read: ‘That it is highly desirable to preserve the open commons and spaces near the Metropolis for public recreation and enjoyment, such open spaces to remain uninclosed, and that the Board should compensate the Lords of the Manors and the commoners for any rights of which they may be deprived. That towards meeting the expenditure to be incurred, power should be given to this Board to sell certain portions of such open spaces for building or other purposes.’ That was passed on the 5th of May in this year.”

MR. EDWIN
RAYNER
RANSOME.

21st April, 1871.

MR. EDWIN
RAYNER
RANSOME.

21st April, 1871.

179. Now, will you read the next question?—"Was it an unanimous expression of opinion on the part of the board?—Yes."

180. Are you aware that the Metropolitan Board have made any change whatever since that in the rule which they have laid down?—I have not heard of any change.

181. That then is the course which in all probability they might have pursued if they had taken to the purchase of this common?—We were afraid to trust them, we should be very much afraid of them.

182. Have you heard that there are those who have a very great objection to the common being built upon?—Yes, very strong.

183. Is that one of the principal reasons why people have subscribed their money, and are willing to be rated for the reclamation of this common?—The strongest reason is, that they wish to have it kept open and unenclosed as it is now, and in a better condition.

184. Nothing to be built upon it?—No.

185. Mr. PHILLIPS: When was it that you first made application to the Metropolitan Board?—In 1868.

186. Has application been made to them since that time?—On y when I went privately to Sir John Thwaites. I am not aware of any application having been made since; we have of course asked local members what has been going on, but we could never learn anything precisely.

187. A formal application has never been made since 1868 to the Metropolitan Board?—I am not aware of any.

(The Witness withdrew.)

Mr. JAMES ANDERSON ROSE, sworn.

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

MR. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.

21st April, 1871.

188. Are you a solicitor practising in London?—I am.

189. Do you live near Wandsworth Common?—I do; I live adjoining Wandsworth Common.

190. I believe you have lived there for a long time?—Yes, for 20 years.

191. We have had the quantity of common that there is now left—150 acres?—Yes, that is approximately right.

192. I think you have acted as solicitor to the Committee in the litigation which has taken place with Lord Spencer?—I filed a bill against Lord Spencer and others on the 7th January, 1868.

123. I will ask you a question or two about something else before I ask you about that. Did you attend a public meeting that took place at Battersea and Wandsworth immediately before the litigation commenced?—I attended a public meeting at the "Spread Eagle," Wandsworth, immediately before this Bill was filed.

194. At that meeting I believe a committee was appointed for the purpose of taking steps for undertaking the common?—Yes, a very crowded and unanimous meeting against the inclosure then being made by the Brighton Railway Company, and on the following day there was an open air meeting held on the common.

195. There was an open air meeting on Wandsworth Common?—Yes, adjoining the inclosure last made. There was a very large assemblage, about 5,000 people at least, the people came there to pull the inclosure down, but Mr. Buckmaster, in the neighbourhood, and myself urged the crowd not to touch the fences or to commit a breach of the peace, there being a large collection of police there.

Mr. COWPER-TEMPLE: I do not think the Committee want to go much into the past history, the points are so very small, and extend over so small an area.

196. Mr. THOMAS: A question was asked as to the rights and claims by Lord Spencer and the commoners, this witness will answer that (*to the witness*). You filed a Bill in Chancery?—I filed a Bill in Chancery

197. And you are acquainted with all the proceedings that have taken place since?—I am.

198. Will you state shortly what the Bill claimed, and also what Lord Spencer claimed?—The Bill claimed a right of common for the copyholders to cut turf, gorse, and also rights of pasturage, also rights of way and public rights of way, recreation and amusement.

199. In answer, what did Lord Spencer claim?—Lord Spencer claimed to be absolute owner in fee of so much of the common as remained uninclosed, and to be entitled to inclose the same, and to authorise it to be enclosed, and to sell it for his own benefit as and when he should think fit.

200. Mr. MORRISON: Without any concurrence from the commoners?—Yes.

201. Mr. THOMAS: Did he also deny the existence of any right of common?—He denied the existence of any right of common in the plaintiffs, on whose behalf the Bill was filed.

202. Or in any of the tenants of the manor?—Yes.

203. We have heard that this litigation was going on at the time that negotiations for a compromise first took place?—It is going on now practically, that is to say, the Bill and answer are now waiting for a hearing.

204. At the present time there is a *lis pendens*?—Yes.

205. Which would be put an end to by the passing of this Bill?—Yes, I am willing to consent to this Bill in Chancery being dismissed without costs, as against Lord Spencer and the Brighton Railway Company on this Bill passing; in point of fact, it will settle all questions far more satisfactorily than can possibly be hoped by the most successful termination of this Bill in Chancery on behalf of the plaintiff. If he gets a decree and all the costs, the arrangement now made is far superior both for him, the plaintiff, and for the public at large.

206. When you state that you are willing, acting on behalf of the Committee, to discontinue that suit on the passing of this Bill, do I understand that that means on a scheme being sanctioned for local rating and local management?—The scheme of this Bill.

207. Something has been asked of previous witnesses as to communications made to the Metropolitan Board of Works. I think, without going into the whole, you were a party to some of the communications made to the Metropolitan Board of Works with reference to this matter?—Yes, I have been to the Metropolitan Board personally and with deputations.

208. And you have written to them?—Yes. I have been in correspondence with them and have seen Sir John Thwaites with reference to this Bill—with reference to the preservation of Wandsworth Common.

209. When you say this Bill, you mean the Chancery Bill, I suppose?—Yes.

210. What was the result of all that?—The result was, that the Metropolitan Board of works never took any steps whatever to preserve the common in any way, they applied for a copy of this Bill and the pleadings—they were furnished to them at the time, but they have never taken any steps either with reference to sustaining the suit which I offered to give to them, nor with reference to the preservation

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
20th April, 1871.

of the common. I have repeatedly seen Sir John Thwaites on the subject of the preservation of the common.

211. I think you have also been a party to representations made to the District Local Board?—I have been in correspondence with the District Local Board for many years. I find a letter dated in 1866.

212. You have been in correspondence from that time down to the present?—Yes, to prevent nuisances, not to take any step at law, but simply to prevent nuisances. I consider the Wandsworth District Board of Works the worst agent for the destruction of the common and for the continuation of the nuisances there.

213. Have the nuisances of late years been very great?—Yes.

214. Have you made representations continually with reference to those nuisances to the Wandsworth District Board?—I have repeatedly, to stop putting the refuse of excavations from buildings and debris of repaired houses and all that sort of thing, which has been done always under the authority of the Wandsworth District Board, which fact is explained by the builders on that board having paramount authority and influence there.

215. When you have had to complain of the nuisance, the answer has been an order to put more builders' refuse into the pond; is that so?—Yes; there was a most beautiful piece of ornamental water there which was being filled with liquid filth. I applied to the board to stop that, and they told me in reply that they had instructed their surveyor to fill up the pond, which was of course to bring the excavations of the whole surrounding district; to allow the builders to bring them there. They did not deposit it in the water; it was trouble and danger to put it in the water, so they put it all round the bank.

216. Was that a great detriment to the common?—It destroyed that ornamental water as ornamental water entirely, and made it a greater nuisance than it had ever been.

217. Do you think from the experience you have had that any management by the Wandsworth District Board, directly or indirectly, would be very injurious to the objects of the promoters of this Bill?—Yes. We have the fact that the inhabitants had a lease direct from Lord Spencer years ago, and then it was as well managed and as beautiful as Clapham Common is now. It was on the cessor or termination of that lease that it began to get into the condition in which it is now.

218. You have mentioned Clapham Common—Clapham Common, as everybody knows, is a preserved common, and very beautiful?—Yes.

219. Do you know how that is managed?—Clapham Common is managed by leases from two lords of the manor—for Lord Spencer's lease still exists, and there is also a lease from Mr. Bowyer for the term of 30 years. They manage it themselves, and they pay a small sum annually to Mr. Bowyer—a nominal sum—and then the inhabitants subscribe round the common, and the lessees of that lease preserve it in the cheapest and most useful way possible for the public as an open space round London.

220. Mr. PHILIPS: You say "they"—who are "they"?—The lessees.

221. Mr. COWPER-TEMPLE: Did the lessees pay a nominal rent to Lord Spencer for Wandsworth Common?—They had a right to dig gravel—it is hard to say exactly what their rights were—it is difficult to answer your question—it might be that they made a profit even out of it. I think it is probable they did. Mr. Puckle, the chairman of the committee who managed Clapham Common, told me that the expense of that was £400 a year only.

222. Mr. PHILIPS: What acreage is that?—400 acres, speaking from memory.

223. Mr. COWPER-TEMPLE: My question was about Wandsworth Common?—Yes, I answered that—it is the learned counsel who asked me about Clapham Common.

224. Mr. THOMAS: Going back to Wandsworth Common, the original state of things there was, that it was managed locally also during the continuance of the lease?—Wandsworth Common?

225. Yes?—Certainly it was managed by five lessees.

226. You say it was well managed?—Yes; it was admirably managed.

227. Was it kept ornamentally, and in all respects as the inhabitants would wish at that time?—To answer for myself. I lived there then. I should say it was as well kept as Clapham Common is now.

228. I need hardly ask you whether you approve of the arrangements proposed by the Bill?—Considering Lord Spencer's rights as I know them in this suit, I consider that he has made a most liberal arrangement for the inhabitants about Wandsworth Common, as embodied in this Bill.

229. Do I understand you rather to suggest that the arrangement was made more liberally in consequence of his relations with the inhabitants of Wandsworth and Battersea?—I cannot tell what the negotiations were, because I have been acting adversely to him. I have had nothing to do with the negotiations. I only speak from what I know to be the facts, through my being solicitor to this Bill.

Cross-examined by Mr. RODWELL.

230. I think you say you were in correspondence and communication with the Metropolitan Board with regard to this matter?—Yes.

231. May I take it that if the Metropolitan Board will undertake this work, you think they are the proper parties to have it?—I do not.

232. When did you change your opinion?—Since this suit has been pending, that is within the last three years—whilst this suit was pending.

233. In 1868, I think this was your language. “It were much to be wished that the Metropolitan Board of Works having no local or personal interest in the matter, and being influenced by a noble public spirit, would take such steps as would save this common for public use and enjoyment, the more necessary as thousands of houses are being erected on the adjoining lands”?—They had not the noble spirit that was suggested. I suggested that if they had, it would be a good thing, but they had not.

234. You say a little more than that—you say, “Having no local or personal interest,” did you object to local and personal interest?—I now approve of local and personal interest.

235. When did you change your mind as to local and personal interest?—I cannot say when I changed, but I am stating what I consider to be my mind now.

236. I should like to know a little about your change of mind?—I look at the whole arrangement with Lord Spencer and I give reasons for my evidence.

237. Have you got a grant of the common yourself?—I have not.

238. I want to know when you changed your mind, when you thought it would be better to put this power in the hands of the local people?—I suggested that the Metropolitan Board of Works should take up the matter and save the common.

239. You wished them to take up the suit?—Yes.

240. Taking up the suit is one thing and taking the management

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
21st April, 1871.

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
21st April, 1871.

of the common is another?—They have waited till the suit has produced the result of saving the common and now they come in to have all the benefit of that suit and manage the common.

241. What benefit will the Metropolitan Board have?—I cannot tell.

242. Then what did you mean?—They want the management of it.

243. You considered that they were the proper parties to manage it in 1868?—They declined.

244. That may be matter of regret to you—why then is it that you have changed your mind, and think that they are not the proper parties to have the management?—Because the parties who have arranged with Lord Spencer seem to me to have made so admirable an arrangement with him, and have so well managed it that they had better go on and manage the common for the future.

245. They are local bodies?—They are.

246. With a personal interest?—They have a personal interest living round the common, and wishing to enjoy it.

247. In 1868 you thought they were not the proper persons to have the management of the common?—I had not an alternative case my mind, nor does my letter express it.

248. You say having no local or personal interest in the matter?—It refers to the Wandsworth District Board of Works, who were then the only local authority. As between them and the Wandsworth District Board of Works I should be in favour of the Metropolitan Board.

249. Did not the Metropolitan Board help you?—Never in the slightest.

250. You received a letter from them?—Yes.

251. You got this resolution from them, I daresay. This was on the 28th of September, 1868. "That the solicitor be instructed to ascertain the position of the suit of the copyholders of Lord Spencer and others from Mr. Rose; that the board are desirous of co-operating, as far as possible, in the steps taken for the preservation of the common, but are not to be held liable for the costs?—They did not put that in their letter.

252. You have got the resolution, have not you?—No. They wrote me a letter, but I do not see that in it.

253. I have got it in the resolution?—I never proposed in any way that they should be responsible for the costs. I have never made such a suggestion to them.

254. You offered to hand them over the whole suit, and, therefore, they would have the whole costs then, I presume?—You mean at the termination?

255. Yes.—Certainly they would at the termination.

256. You offered to hand them the suit; and if they conducted the suit, they were so have the management?—Yes.

257. You did not really mean it were much to be wished that they should have the control, inasmuch as they had no local or personal interest; that was a little compliment to them to induce them to take the suit?—You are putting into my mouth what I never said, and what I never meant to say.

258. Read your own letter?—"It were much to be wished that the Metropolitan Board of Works, having no local or personal interest in the matter, and being influenced by a noble public spirit, would take such steps as would save this common for public use and enjoyment, the more necessary as thousands of houses are being erected on the adjoining lands." That is signed, "John Anderson Rose." That is my signature. That letter is dated August, 1868. The Board of Works did nothing.

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
21st April, 1871.

259. Mr. THOMAS: Read the previous paragraph?—It says, “Thousands of loads of filth of every description have been and are still being placed upon the common, simply from the neglect of the surveyor of nuisances; in fact the active men in the Wandsworth District Board of Works are interested in destroying and building upon the common.” It is dated August, 1868. The Metropolitan Board of Works never did anything at that time, nor have they since, until they appear now to get the management of the common.

260. Mr. RODWELL: Supposing that they had said “yes” to you at that time, what should you have thought? Should you have thought them the proper people?—In 1868, if they had taken the common?

261. Yes. Supposing they had said, “Mr. Rose, we quite agree with you, and we will do what we can,”—what should you have said then?—I cannot say, indeed, in 1868.

262. I think you can venture to imagine what you would have said?—I do not know.

263. You would not have objected then, should you? or did you mean to get them into the suit, and then leave them high and dry?—No. I think the suggestion is an unworthy one to make to me, because I have never done anything of that sort, as I have shown by the whole of my conduct since.

264. You do not suppose that I am putting it to you personally? But I ask you seriously, if in 1868 they had accepted your suggestion, would you have entertained it?—The case which exists now is entirely different.

265. I am not asking now, but in 1868, would you have accepted them if they had come to your terms?—Of course.

266. Why?—Because they were the Metropolitan District Board of Works.

267. Were they, in your judgment, the proper people?—The proper people to do what.

268. To have the control of the Common?—If they had made all these arrangements, they would have been the proper people, but the state of things that exists now did not exist then. These persons have made an entirely new arrangement with Lord Spencer.

269. Was not the object of this letter to the Metropolitan Board that they should make an arrangement with Lord Spencer?—Certainly.

270. I am assuming that they made an arrangement with Lord Spencer?—You are assuming what they did not do.

271. You wanted them to do it?—Yes.

272. Assume that they had made an arrangement with Lord Spencer, in your judgment, were they the proper people to have the management of the Common?—Not so good as these conservators.

273. Why?—Because these conservators are on the spot—they are gentlemen who are known in the neighbourhood, to whom you can have access at all times, who would listen to our complaints, and who would be much more likely to be influenced for the good of others, and to manage the Common well, than the Metropolitan Board of Works.

274. Tell me whether you have not exactly described your local people—the people who have a personal interest?—I said the Wandsworth District Board of Works.

275. Where is there a word about the Wandsworth District Board of Works in that paragraph. I ask you when you used the words “local or personal interest,” did you refer to the Wandsworth District Board?—Yes.

276. You did not contemplate then having a Board of Conserva-

MR. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
21st April, 1871.

tors?—No; because no such scheme as this [was in anybody's contemplation at all—that is subsequent.

277. You do not consider it a Metropolitan common at all, but merely a local luxury?—I think it is a mixture of both.

278. Have you considered at all the effect of the rating in this case?—I have not.

279. Do you know Nine Elms?—I do know it through passing that way.

280. On what principle has this taxing been made?—I have not considered the question of rating at all.

281. You have come to speak in favour of the Bill?—I am not come to speak about the rating, I do not understand it.

282. That is a very important part of the Bill, the rating?—I look at the produce of the rating £600 a-year, and it seems to me for keeping up this common that that is a very moderate sum.

283. What parish is your house in?—Streatham.

284. What would you be liable to?—Nothing.

285. Your house is on the common, is not it?—My house is on the common.

286. You would like to pay something?—I have subscribed a great deal of money to prevent its being enclosed.

287. Do not you think that persons abutting upon the common ought to contribute to it?—It would be impossible. There are four houses stretching about three miles from Streatham Common proper, and those are the only four houses in Streatham which are near the common.

288. I suppose that although you knew nothing about the rating, you knew you were not to be taxed; you got as far as that?—Yes.

289. What do you think about people at Nine Elms being taxed three miles off?—It is a very small tax, a halfpenny.

290. Yours is nothing?—It cannot be less than that.

291. You are on the common, and will have the full benefit of this Act?—Yes.

292. The Nine Elms people, three miles off, are to have to pay something; can you see any equity in that?—If you will take my undertaking, I am willing to be rated.

293. I am not putting the question personally to you. I am look at the principle of the Bill, not at the effect upon you. Do you think it would be fair to leave people who have the full advantage to pay nothing, whereas the people three miles off at Nine Elms will have to pay the general rate?—According to your principle, the whole of the metropolis who have nothing to do with it should pay.

294. Does not the whole of the Metropolis use the Common?—Very little indeed. Wandsworth Common is not like Clapham Common.

295. Then it is not metropolitan at all in its nature?—I do not say so much as that—you put my language too far.

296. You said just now it was partly local, and partly metropolitan?—Yes, and I say so again.

297. Then, if it is partly local, and partly metropolitan, why should not they contribute to it?—If they are not, why should they.

298. You are not asked?—I do not object, why do you object.

299. Do you think it fair that the people at Nine Elms should be taxed, and that the people on the common should not?—I am a witness to facts; the Committee hear them, and are much more competent to form an opinion as to what is fair than I am.

300. Have you an opinion about it or not?—I have an opinion that it would be advisable to carry out this Bill as it is brought before this Committee in the mode in which it is brought.

301. As one element of that Bill, do you think the principle of taxation fair, that a person living on the common should pay nothing, and that a person living three miles off should pay? That is a very simple proposition?—It is so simple that it does not represent the facts at all.

302. In what way does it not represent the facts?—It puts a hypothetical distance and an inapplicable case to the whole principle and spirit of this Bill.

303. What objection is there to the assumption I have made? I am told that I am stating the facts of the case: you pay nothing who are abutting upon a common you have the full advantage of, whereas other people living a considerable distance from the common, and who have no advantage at all comparatively, as far as the value of their property is concerned, are taxed. In your judgment, is that a fair principle?—As you put the case, it is not.

304. Is that the principle in this Bill?—Accidentally in this corner it is, but the principle for the whole of the district which will be 50,000 inhabitants in Wandsworth and Battersea, it is not true, for us four gentlemen in this corner it is true, but for the 50,000 of Battersea and Wandsworth, it is not true.

305. Is it not a question of degree only?—Yes; I put the degree at 4 and 50,000.

306. That is to say that the people who get the greatest advantage are not to be taxed at all, do you think that right?—If I were to explain the whole advantages, I should be in litigation for ever, this portion of the common which I adjoin belongs to the London and Brighton Company, who put it up for sale by public auction, so that although I appear to be adjoining the common, I am not upon the common at all.

307. I think you filed a Bill claiming the right of pre-emption, did not you?—As you ask me the question, let me explain, the Brighton Railway Company put us this range, the effect of that would be that there would be a row of privies against my property from this point to this, and that being so, I filed a Bill in Chancery to have my right of pre-emption to prevent their doing so, and I got a decree.

308. The CHAIRMAN: As an adjoining landowner under the general Act?—Yes, I got a decree which is enrolled now, and therefore you see that I am not an adjoining owner to the common. In truth I am an adjoining owner to the Brighton Railway Company that was the common.

309. Mr. RODWELL: Do you know that there has been a petition presented by the Wandsworth Vestry, or the Wandsworth Board, against this Bill, are you aware of that?—The Wandsworth District Board against the Bill.

Mr. THOMAS: This is a petition which is not appeared upon.

310. This is the resolution as to the Wandsworth and Wimbledon Common Bills, agreed to by the Metropolitan Board of Works for the Wandsworth District: "That this Board, whilst cordially approving of the principle of the proposed Wandsworth Common and Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bill, is decidedly of opinion that the future care and management of such commons ought to be vested in the Metropolitan Board of Works instead of the Conservators to be elected in the manner proposed, and further, that the proposed rating clauses ought to be struck out of the Bills, and that the expenses of the future maintenance of such commons ought to be defrayed under the provisions of the Metropolitan Commons Act, 1866. That the Metropolitan Board of Works be requested to adopt such measures as they may deem advisable for securing such amendments being made in the Bills." Are you aware of that resolution?—Is it a resolution of the Wandsworth District Board.

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE.
21st April, 1871.

311. Yes, I suppose it is; are you aware of that?—I know nothing about it, personally.

312. Do you know that there is a considerable feeling in Wandsworth against this proposal?—No, I do not know that. On the contrary, I know the very reverse, that there is the strongest possible feeling in Wandsworth and Battersea, and the districts which I know, in favour of this Bill.

313. You mean they prefer being taxed themselves, taxed locally, instead of having the expenses paid out of the general rates?—They do. They had their meeting.

314. Were you at that meeting?—I was not.

Re-examined by Mr. THOMAS.

315. In 1868, at the time you wrote that letter, there was nothing going on but litigation. Was not that so?—Yes, nothing but litigation, and the destruction of the common, and the creation of dreadful nuisances—that is to say, they were sifting cinders there, and burning the refuse, which made a stench which went all over the common. That was one of the nuisances I wished them to stop.

316. There was an existing nuisance, and there was also a litigation of a very expensive character going on?—Yes, there were 300 gipseys, tramps, and vagabonds opposite my house for ten months. I wanted them to remove, but they refused.

317. Is it a fact that in addition to other difficulties in the litigation there was also a want of funds?—Yes.

318. That is generally the case—was it the case there?—It was.

319. Were you anxious to get anybody with funds to take up the matter, for the purpose of getting rid of those nuisances?—Certainly, I was.

320. What is the date of the arrangement being come to, as a practical arrangement, with Lord Spencer?—I do not know.

321. Was it not last year?

321*. The CHAIRMAN: We have got the agreement scheduled—we have got the date in the Bill?—I had not negotiated with Lord Spencer at all, because I was considered adverse to him, and I withdrew in order that others might do it.

322. Mr. THOMAS: The arrangement was come to with Lord Spencer two years after that letter of yours was written?—Three years—the arrangement with Lord Spencer is quite recent.

323. Did the negotiations for the arrangement with Lord Spencer suggest the new arrangement by means of conservators? At the time you wrote your letters you have told the Committee you had no idea of any arrangement for managing the common by means of conservators?—Nothing of the sort was ever contemplated then by anybody. It is in consequence of an interview had by some gentlemen with Lord Spencer, who, as I understand, met them in so fair a manner that they then went back and said, “we can settle with Lord Spencer; he is quite willing to come to reasonable terms;” and the whole arose out of that.

324. At the time you wrote the letter, were you fighting the case for the commoners under great difficulty?—Against everybody.

325. And under great difficulties?—Under great difficulties in every way.

326. Were you anxious to get in a powerful ally, such as the Metropolitan Board, with money?—Certainly, I thought it was their duty to do it.

327. You think that this arrangement, which was not suggested

till two years afterwards for the conservators, is the better one?—I do; far better and cheaper.

328. Something has been said about this being a metropolitan common and people from other parts of London using it; from your observation what is the majority of the people who use it, local people?—Yes, for this reason that the common has been so excavated and is so much under water now, that it is only that portion nearest to Wandsworth and Battersea towns which can be used for sports or for enjoyment. A great portion of the common could not be used by metropolitan visitors until it is drained, and it has not been useable for several years in consequence of the excavation and want of drainage, so that it is more than any common around London a local common.

329. Assuming a man to start from the other side of the Thames to a common, Wandsworth common would not be the one he would choose?—Certainly not; there is Kennington Park and Clapham Common.

330. And Wimbledon?—Wimbledon and Putney.

331. A word about this piece of the common to which you refer; it is in that inclosure marked in the Bill railway inclosure,—the south-east corner?—It is marked A on the Bill. *Digby v. Spencer*.

332. It is the railway enclosure to the South East. That, I think, has been enclosed for a long time?—It has been enclosed for ten years—more than ten years, because the right of pre-emption arose—the Bill excludes that altogether, it leaves us to fight it out as well as we can.

333. You live in the Parish of Streatham?—Yes.

334. Streatham has a common of its own, has it not?—Yes, which is maintained in the same way that this Bill would maintain Wandsworth Common, and practically cost nothing to keep up.

335. Mr. MORRISON: You say that the surveyor of the Wandsworth District Board of Works was in the habit of giving lease to builders to commit nuisances on the common. Did the Board claim that as a right?—This letter, which is a very short one, will show exactly—"Referring to your complaint, as to the state of the ponds in Bolingbrook Grove, Wimbledon Common, I beg to inform you that by the instructions of the Board, I have written to the Lord of the Manor, requesting his permission for the same to be filled up."

336. I understand that the surveyor gives permission not only to deposit rubbish on the pond but elsewhere in the common?—All over the common practically. There is nobody to control them. We have no keeper and when they once got leave to fill them up, they brought it and put it where it was most convenient for their carts and horses, and the ponds were dangerous.

337. I suppose the only person who could have taken action in that case was Lord Spencer?—Exactly so.

338. Could the commoners have taken action in such a case?—We could have applied for an injunction, but that would have involved the case being heard entirely on affidavits, and would have been immensely costly. In fact I did apply for an injunction, and the affidavits on both sides were so enormous that we withdrew—the expenses would have destroyed us.

339. Dr. BREWER: Was the common made a common shoot for other than the Wandsworth parish?—Yes, it was, for this reason, that the people from Clapham brought their rubbish there.

340. Who received the money for that shoot?—No money was received by anybody.

341. Was it advertised as a shoot?—No. The District Board of

Mr. JAMES
ANDERSON ROSE,
21st April, 1871

Works gave consent by their surveyor to people coming, and then there was nobody to prevent them coming.

342. Merely to fill up holes?—Yes.

343. Which are ordinarily in swamps?—No, they were ornamental pieces of water then.

344. Did they fill up the ornamental pieces of water?—They remain there now. The excavations are put on the banks.

345. Where was the rubbish shot—in holes in the common?—It was shot on the borders of these ornamental waters, and it is there now, and can be seen by anyone.

346. Mr. PHILIPS: You changed your opinion about the Metropolitan Board of Works. When you first applied to them, did they do anything? Did they reply or seem to take any very great interest in you?—I knew Sir John Thwaites.

347. I mean in the common, not in yourself?—I cannot tell, they did not do anything.

348. Is it not owing to their not doing anything that you have changed your opinion?—Yes.

349. And you think that those who live on the spot would attend to your business and do it better than the Metropolitan Board?—Yes.

350. That is the reason you changed your opinion?—Yes.

351. And for no other reason?—This state of things having arisen.

352. The Metropolitan Board did not seem to be very anxious to do anything three years ago?—No, they did nothing at all, and have not since.

353. They have only just now begun to be very anxious to take care of your property?—Only now, they never took any steps whatever before.

(The Witness withdrew.)

Mr. GEORGE FREDERICK WHITE, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

Mr. GEO.
FREDERICK
WHITE.

21st April, 1871.

354. Do you live at West Hill, Wandsworth?—I do.

355. Are you a magistrate for the county of Surrey?—Yes.

356. Were you the chairman of the public meeting held in March last at Wandsworth?—Yes.

357. Do you know that the meeting was called by notice?—It was.

358. Can you tell the Committee about how many you think were present?—I think about 400 or 500 persons.

359. Did you explain to the meeting the objects of the meeting?—I did.

360. Was this resolution proposed—"That in the opinion of this meeting the Bill now pending in Parliament for the preservation of Wandsworth Common affords the best means for securing the object in view, and that the provisions of the Bill will be beneficial to all the inhabitants of the parish that it is not desirable that Wandsworth Common should be placed under the care and management of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and that this meeting deeply regrets that with a view of so placing the said common the Metropolitan Board has deemed it necessary to oppose the Wandsworth Common Bill now pending in Parliament and will thus cause money to be spent in Parliamentary strife which would otherwise have been available for

the improvement of the common." I believe that resolution was moved and seconded?—It was.

361. Did you put it to the meeting?—I did.

362. What then took place?—There was a very large show of hands in favour of it.

363. Did you tell them, in the first instance when the show of hands took place, that the Battersea men were not to vote?—Yes.

364. Did you ask the Battersea people to take down their hands?—I did.

365. Did you then take the result by what remained?—Quite so.

366. What was the minority?—The minority, as near as I can judge, was some half dozen persons.

367. Not more than half a dozen person?—I think not.

368. I think then there were subsequent resolutions to this effect: "That the Chairman be requested and authorised to send on behalf of the meeting the petition now read." That was, I think, passed unanimously?—It was.

369. "That this meeting deeply regret the course taken by the vestry of Wandsworth in respect to the Bill, and believes the vestry does not on this question represent the opinion of the parishioners and the public"?—That was put and carried.

370. Were the proceedings orderly and fairly conducted throughout?—Very much so.

371. Do you think from your knowledge of the district, that meeting expresses the sense of the parish?—I should have said so.

372. Do you think it was a fair representation?—I think so, quite.

373. I presume you are well acquainted with the proposals of the Bill?—Yes.

374. Do they meet with your approval?—Quite so.

375. Do you think that the arrangement is a good one?—I do, for the inhabitants.

376. Are you one of those who prefer local management of the common?—In this case I do unquestionably.

Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

377. Do I understand that there were somewhere about 400 or 500 people at the meeting altogether?—Yes.

378. About how many do you number of ratepayers?—I do not know that I can answer that question.

379. It is a very large parish; there are something like 20,000 people in it, I believe?—No; the parish of Wandsworth proper is not so many as that. I should have thought about 12,000 or 13,000 inhabitants.

380. I am told it was 13,000 in 1861. How many were there at the meeting who abstained from voting, who put down their hands when you asked that only Wandsworth people should vote, half the meeting?—No; I should have thought about a third.

381. Were there a great number there of what are called "roughs" who came in also?—No; I am not able to say. All those that were in my view and sight were decidedly anything but rough.

382. Those gentlemen who were immediately round you I daresay were not?—As far as one could see, I could see to the end of the hall, it was not a rough meeting.

383. Do you remember one gentleman attempting to speak in the opposite sense of that which you told us the meeting arrived at?—Quite so.

Mr. GEO.
FREDERICK
WHITE.

21st April, 1871.

MR. GEO.
FREDERICK
WHITE.

21st April, 1871.

384. And his being hooted down?—His sentiments were not acceptable to the meeting; he did not find favour.

385. They were so unacceptable that he was not heard?—He was not heard.

386. There were all sorts of unparliamentary noises?—He was not heard.

387. Is that what you call a fair meeting?—Yes, quite so.

388. On one side?—Yes.

389. How about the other side?—It is the way in which meetings are generally conducted.

390. That is another matter. They did not hear this gentleman?—There was nobody at that meeting who did not eventually have a hearing.

391. They did not hear this gentleman?—The gentleman to whom I suppose you refer, spoke once, twice, and thrice, and he succeeded at last in saying all he had to say.

392. That is to say all that they would hear?—No; I think all he wished to say.

393. Possibly we may see him. Nothing that he could say could be put to the meeting—he could get nothing into the shape of a resolution which the chairman would put from the chair?—I do not recollect that he proposed a substantive resolution.

394. They cut him short before he could get to it?—That I know nothing about.

395. Did you get the paper he wanted to have put? Was it handed up to you? Did it get so far as that? Do you recollect it being snatched away by one of the milder gentlemen who you do not allow to be rough?—No.

396. Was there any little incident of that kind at this orderly public meeting which expressed the fair opinion of the inhabitants of Wandsworth?—Anything that had been put to me as chairman to propose or to submit to the meeting I should have put, unquestionably.

397. You will quite understand that I am sure you would do it fairly in every way; but do you remember this gentleman who made the ineffectual attempt to hand up an amendment, or paper, which was collared in its course across, and could not get to the chair?—He might have done so.

398. This meeting expressed an opinion that the vestry did not fairly represent the views of the inhabitants in the matter. What was the resolution of the vestry that attracted the attention and condemnation of the meeting?—I do not know that I can charge my memory at the moment with it.

399. Was it a resolution in opposition to the scheme of the Bill?—Yes, it is the district board.

400. Yes, that is an error of mine. It is the district board. You have given evidence generally that you think the principle of the Bill is a right one. Would you exclude from rating those who border upon the common or open space, is that right?—I have formed no opinion upon that at all.

401. You say you believe the scheme is a proper one. Do I understand that in saying that you do not take into account the rating clauses?—Naturally those who border upon the common would pay.

402. They ought to?—I presume so. There may be exceptional circumstances which may exclude some, which I know nothing of.

403. Can you give any reason why the rating should be put upon the metropolis, rather than upon the immediate parish?—I share the opinion of the inhabitants that a matter of this sort is better dealt with and managed locally, and therefore, I prefer a local rate to a metropolitan rate.

404. In order to secure the management you will pay the rate?—
Yes.

405. May I gather that there is at the foundation of that view an objection on the part of the inhabitants to be taxed for other spaces of a similar nature in the metropolis. Supposing London Fields, or Hackney Downs, or Hampstead Heath, or any of those places were kept open, or purchased by the metropolitan rating, what would you say to taxing the people in Battersea and Wandsworth?—I suppose they would have to submit to it.

406. If it were sanctioned they would have to submit, but in this case if this is sanctioned the parish will take the burden?—I presume that the principle that applies to us would perhaps apply to other cases.

407. That is to say, in your view the principle should be that these commons and public spaces should be charged upon the locality?—In the ordinary way. There may be exceptional circumstances.

408. Each case would depend on its own circumstances?—Certainly.

409. Would you think it fair that a Hackney man should be taxed to pay for keeping up Wandsworth Common?—No.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think you need follow that up. Will Mr. Thomas state to the Committee what further evidence he proposes; we do not want this evidence continued.

Mr. THOMAS: I have any amount of it here, as you may suppose.

The CHAIRMAN: No doubt you can continue it to any extent because of the number of the inhabitants who could come one after another. Mr. White is a very proper witness, he is chairman of the meeting. I think the Committee are prepared to hear anything in opposition to the evidence which has been given. That seems to be the general feeling of the Committee.

410. Mr. THOMAS: In reference to the District Board, I will call one witness. I ought to have asked this witness one question. (*To the Witness*). You are not a member of the Committee for preserving Wandsworth Common?—No.

(*The Witness withdrew.*)

Mr. JOHN CLEAVE, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

411. What are you?—I am a member of the District Board.

412. You live, I think, in the Parish of Battersea?—I live at New Wandsworth, in the Parish of Battersea.

413. Are you a member of the Wandsworth District Board of Works?—I have that honour.

414. Will you just tell the Committee what that is composed of?—It is composed of representatives who are selected by the vestries, not by the ratepayers. It is composed of six parishes, Clapham, Streatham, Tooting, Graveney, Battersea and Wandsworth. We number in all 57 members, who are elected by the vestries in June, that is to say, a third of the members go out annually and are eligible for re-election or to be replaced by others; but we do not represent the ratepayers directly. We represent the vestries.

415. It has been said that a resolution was passed unfavourable to this Bill at that board, that is so, is it not?—There was a resolution.

[11813]

Mr. GEO.
FREDERICK
WHITE.

21st April, 1871.

Mr. JOHN CLEAVE
21st April, 1871

Mr. JOHN CLEAVE
21st April, 1871.

This question was, I may say, three times before the board. It was first mooted, I think by the chairman, who is a member of the Metropolitan Board of Works. He, together with the clerk to the board, thought it was a matter which should come under our consideration. I, on that occasion said, I felt it was a question with which we had nothing to do, and we had better leave it alone between the ratepayers directly and a Select Committee of the House of Commons, and I thought it would be most improper if we incurred or prompted any expense in the matter. On the second occasion, we were called together by a special notice of motion, virtually disapproving of this Bill, and they were unable to carry this resolution at that meeting.

416. A resolution condemnatory of the Bill was proposed, and it was not carried?—There was not a majority of the members present in favour of the resolution.

417. Then it was proposed a third time?—Yes.

418. Was this the resolution which was proposed: "That this Board, whilst cordially approving of the principle of the proposed Wandsworth Common and Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bills, is decidedly of opinion that the future care and management of such commons ought to be vested in the Metropolitan Board of Works instead of conservators to be elected in the manner proposed, and further that the proposed rating clauses ought to be struck out of the Bills, and that the expenses of the future maintenance of such commons ought to be defrayed under the provisions of the Metropolitan Commons Act, 1866?"—That was the resolution moved on the 8th day of February.

419. And, "That the Metropolitan Board of Works be requested to adopt such measures as they may deem advisable for securing such amendments being made in the Bills"?—Yes.

420. Upon that resolution was there a division?—There was an amendment moved, first that resolution covered two commons, which some of us felt were altogether dissimilar in character, that is to say, Wimbledon Common and Putney Common, the Bills for the preservation, being separate bills to this House, it was a discourteous proceeding to class the Bills together, and several members felt that we should not consider them together. We moved an amendment that they should not be considered together. Then a subsequent amendment was moved, which I may read—"That, under existing circumstances, the Board approved generally of the Bill that was about to be presented to Parliament for the preservation of Wandsworth Common as an open space for the enjoyment of the public, but they reserve any opinion as to the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Bill."

421. The CHAIRMAN: There was a division on that?—Yes.

422. Mr. THOMAS: What were the numbers?—For the motion as moved originally, 17; against it, 9.

423. The resolution, which stated that the expenses ought to be defrayed under the provisions of the Metropolitan Commons Act, 1866, was carried by a majority of 17 to 9?—That is true.

424. As regards the representatives present—how many representatives of the two parishes affected were there?—There were seven representatives of the parish of Battersea voting in the minority, and six representatives of the parishes of Wandsworth and Battersea voting in the majority—that is to say, leaving out Streatham, Clapham, and Tooting Graveney—we had an absolute majority of the Board in favour of the principle of the Bill.

425. It would have been 7 to 6?—Yes.

426. If the Battersea and Wandsworth representatives alone had voted it would have been 7 to 6 against the resolution and in favour of the Bill?—Quite so.

Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

Mr. JOHN CLEAVE
21st April, 1871.

427. That is to say of the purely local representatives, you had a majority of one?—We dealt with the Bill on its merits.

428. I did not ask you to presume anything but to answer as to the fact. Of the purely local representatives you would have had a majority of one?—Of the representatives of the parishes of Battersea and Wandsworth, as distinguished from the other parishes, we should have had a majority of one.

429. On the previous occasion it came forward three times, did it not?—There were several divisions taken on the previous occasion.

430. On three separate occasions?—Are you speaking now of board meetings or divisions which took place germane to this meeting?

431. There was a board meeting of the 25th January, 1871?

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps you had better put the minutes of the district board in. (*The same were handed in.*)

(*The Witness withdrew.*)

Mr. WHITFIELD FOSTER, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

432. Do you live at Wandsworth?—I do.

433. Are you well acquainted with the parish of Wandsworth?—Thoroughly acquainted with it.

434. I think you are beadle of the parish?—I am.

435. Have you inspected the rate-book?—I have.

436. It is in the custody of the Vestry Clerk of the parish of Wandsworth?—Yes.

437. What is the result with reference to the annual rating value of all the property in the parish?—£101,000 is the rateable value.

438. Have you examined the rateable value of those who have signed the petition in favour of the Bill?—I have.

439. What is that?—£45,000.

440. What is the proportion that you have to deduct for void houses?—£11,000, and for public buildings a similar sum, leaving a residue of £34,000.

441. What is the number of persons who signed the petition in favour of it?—To the best of my recollection, about 1,580 in Wandsworth.

442. What is the total number of assessments?—33,000.

443. What would a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate produce, deducting void houses and persons excused?—It would produce only £208 for Wandsworth alone.

444. The CHAIRMAN: Do you know what it would produce for Battersea?—No.

Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

445. As I understand, you did not take the petition round?—Yes, I did.

446. I suppose the parties who signed the petition were informed that it was a petition for securing the commons being kept open?—Yes.

447. And to carry out the bargain with Lord Spencer? I presume there was no information as to whether the Metropolitan Board would carry out the Bill or not?—No.

(*The Witness withdrew.*)

Mr. WHITFIELD
FOSTER.
21st April, 1871.

Mr. THOMAS HARRAP, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. THOMAS.

Mr. THOMAS
HARRAP.
21st April, 1871.

448. Are you vestry-clerk in the parish of Battersea?—I am.
449. And as such, of course, you have charge of the rate-books?
—I have.
451. Have you signed the petition to Parliament in favour of this Bill?—I have.
452. Have you made an investigation as of the annual rateable value to those who have signed?—Yes.
453. First, what is the rateable annual value of all the property in the parish?—£256,774.
454. And of the property in respect of which the petition has been signed?—£75,384.
455. What is the rateable value of public buildings?—£96,875.
456. What is the remainder?—£84,515.
457. Where are the void houses?—All over the parish in every part.
458. They have not been deducted in this case?—They are included in the £84,515.
459. You have estimated them in estimating what the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ would produce?—I have.
460. What would it produce?—£400.
461. You have estimated a deduction there for void houses and for poor excused?—Everything.

Cross-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

462. Can you tell us how many authorities or people there are in Battersea collecting rates?—There are four collectors of rates, but the persons who make the rates are the overseers of the parish.
463. How many authorities are laying rates?—The overseers make the rates.
464. That is one?—They are the only ones, the churchwardens and overseers make all the rates.
465. They make the rates in part for the district board who send the precept?—Yes.
466. Then there is the poor rate?—The guardians and the district board.
467. Is there a county rate?—It is included in the guardians' precept.
468. Although it all comes through the guardians, there are all these jurisdictions laying rates?—Yes.
469. There is the poor rate and the county rate?—Which is included in the poor rate.
470. The CHAIRMAN: They are all collected by the overseers, and they send separate warrants for them?—Yes.
- Mr. THOMAS: That is our case.
- Mr. PHILBRICK: In the absence of my friend, Mr. Rodwell, I propose to call our witnesses first,

Mr. THOMAS DODSON LANDON, *sworn*.

Examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

471. Do you live at South View, South Fields, Wandsworth?—
I do.

472. How long have you lived in the parish?—I think between
nine and ten years.

473. Have you personally taken rather a warm interest in the pre-
servation of this common as an open space?—I have.

474. I think you are a member of the Wandsworth vestry?—Yes.

475. Are you also a member of the District Board of Works of
Wandsworth?—I am.

476. Were you asked to subscribe to the fund of the intended con-
servators, the promoters of the Bill?—I was.

477. Were you placed upon the conservators' committee?—I was
so asked, and I agreed to be placed, feeling desirous to secure the pre-
servation of the common.

478. You have always been an adherent to the policy of keeping
the common open?—Yes.

479. Was the proposed plan of the promoters communicated to
you?—No; not at the onset when I was asked to subscribe.

480. Afterwards did you become acquainted with the plan now
embodied in the Bill before the Committee?—I did not attend the
meetings of the committee. They were held at times inconvenient to
me; but I heard of it, and as soon as I heard of it, I dissented from
the clauses vesting the power in the local conservators, and also levy-
ing the rates on the two adjacent parishes.

481. The CHAIRMAN: You say you subscribed in the first in-
stance?—Yes, for a plan for the preservation of the common.

482. Mr. PHILBRICK: That you are perfectly willing to sub-
scribe for?—I am, and have been at any time.

483. The CHAIRMAN: I understood the witness did actually
subscribe?

The WITNESS: When I was asked I subscribed.

484. And paid?—I paid my money.

485. Mr. PHILBRICK: What is the ground of objection you
have to the proposed scheme?—I look upon the Wandsworth Common
as a Metropolitan Common most decidedly, to all intents and purposes.
I always visit it as such, and my first impression was, and it is
impressed on my mind, that it should be looked upon as a Metropolitan
common—that the Metropolis generally certainly to my mind enjoys
the benefits of which that common confers in the shape of fresh air
and recreation, and that the rate should be levied upon the Metropolis.
I thought formerly and I think now, that the Metropolitan Board of
Works, whatever faults they may have—and I consider no human
institutions are perfect—were the proper responsible public body to
take charge of open spaces, particularly as I understood, whether I am
wrongly informed or not, I do not know, that they have power by
Act of Parliament to deal with these open spaces whenever they may
come to their hands.

486. Is there anything exclusively local in the nature of this
common, which in your judgment would be a reason for putting the
expense of preserving it and carrying out the arrangement with Lord
Spencer upon the parishes alone?—I know of nothing at all.

487. Even if you were to apply that principle of taxing the
locality, does the scheme of the promoters carry it out in taxing only

Mr. THOMAS
DODSON
LONDON.
21st April, 1871.

Battersea and Wandsworth?—I should think not, from what I have heard to-day.

488. The parish of Streatham we know abuts on the common at one corner?—It does.

489. Near the railway enclosure?—Yes.

490. Are parts of the parish of Battersea as much as nearly three miles away?—I believe so.

491. A considerable distance, at all events?—Two miles, at least.

492. Is there anything which would make a distinction between those persons who live in that part of the parish, and those who dwell in another part of the parish equally distant from the common?—Nothing whatever to my mind.

493. We have had some reasons mentioned here. First of all, it is alleged that the inhabitants are willing to pay a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate. What do you say to that?—I am not able to say, because I have not taken any part in canvassing the inhabitants, or asking their views upon the matter.

494. Supposing the question were put generally, from your knowledge, whether they would be willing to pay the rate which would come to a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. or lose the common altogether, what would be the general feeling—to pay the rate rather than lose the common?—To pay the rate rather than lose the common no doubt.

495. If the question were put to them in that way, they would be in favour of the rate?—No doubt.

496. It is said that the Metropolitan Board and the district board have let the matter sleep and done nothing. Were you not a party in 1868 to the deputation, or rather to the proceedings by the local board?—No. I was not a member then.

497. As to the management by the local board, supposing they were the authority to carry out the improvements in, and the maintenance of the common, would there be any objection to that?—None that presents itself to my mind at all.

The CHAIRMAN: The learned counsel is asking whether there would be any objection by other parties besides yourself.

498. Mr. PHILBRICK: Are you aware of any objection in the parish or amongst the ratepayers generally to confide the management to the Metropolitan Board?—Those to whom I have spoken have said, "I think what you think is quite fair, that the Metropolitan Board should have the management of the common, which certainly belongs to the Metropolis," and they think with me that the Metropolis should therefore pay equally to the support of that which is a Metropolitan common.

499. In cases like Hackney or Shepherd's Bush would you personally object to pay in the general rating?—As a Metropolitan resident I should not.

500. Supposing you were specially rated or taxed in your particular neighbourhood, or required to keep up the common at your own expense, what would you say then?—I should think it very unjust to do that and to have to pay for the other commons also. I did think so from the first.

501. Were you present at the meeting of the 1st March, the chairman of which, Mr. White, we have had to day?—I was.

502. Was that meeting, in your judgment, a fair meeting?—It was called a meeting of the ratepayers of Wandsworth but I did not so consider it.

503. On what ground?—I looked around me and I could see no more than about 30 or 35 as far as I could make out of the real ratepayers of Wandsworth that I know, and I know a great many, most of the Wandsworth towns people and trades people.

Mr. THOMAS
DODSON
LONDON.
21st April, 1871.

Battersea and Wandsworth?—I should think not, from what I have heard to-day.

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503. On what ground?—I looked around me and I could see no more than about 30 or 35 as far as I could make out of the real ratepayers of Wandsworth that I know, and I know a great many, most of the Wandsworth towns people and trades people.

504. How was the meeting conducted. I do not mean any reflection upon Mr. White, the chairman?—It was very noisy. I went there to propose an amendment, but I found that my friend Mr. Brown who attempted to speak was hooted at so much that he could not be heard. He could not get out what he had to say, and I made up my mind that I would not put myself in that position. I therefore declined to speak, and I left the meeting before it was over. I was disgusted with the way in which the people at the back conducted themselves.

MR. THOMAS
DODSON
LONDON.
21st April, 1871.

Cross-examined by Mr. THOMAS.

505. One word as to that meeting. Do you know Dr. Brown?—Yes.

506. He was one of the opponents?—He was.

507. Was not he called up from the body of the meeting on to the platform in order that he might express his opinions in opposition?—He was.

508. He went up on to the platform and was there heard?—Well, I do not call it heard; there was a noise at the back that prevented him from being heard. I could not hear him.

509. You were at the back of the meeting, were you?—No; I was in the front.

510. Was he called up?—Yes. He attempted to speak.

511. Did not he speak several times?—Yes; after a time.

512. All that he wanted to speak?—Of course I cannot say that.

513. You did not try to speak?—I did not.

514. Do you mean to say that you know all the ratepayers in Wandsworth?—No; I did not say so, nor do I say so.

515. You are not prepared to say that a great many of the ratepayers of Wandsworth whom you do not know were not there?—I do not know; I cannot tell.

The CHAIRMAN: We have got the general facts of the meeting. I do not think you need go into all the details of it.

516. Mr. THOMAS: I understand your opinion to be, that all commons and open spaces in and around London should be paid for by a central body out of a central fund?—A general rate.

517. You would be quite ready to carry that out in this way, that whenever an open space or common were made, you would still be willing to be rated for that as the population grew?—As a principle of equity I should.

518. You are of opinion that the Metropolitan Board have power now by Act of Parliament to take the management of all metropolitan commons?—That is my opinion.

519. And upon that view you give your evidence?—Certainly.

Re-examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

520. As to the Commons Act, of course that is one thing. There is litigation, and that Act cannot be applied. The question I put to you was, supposing the Metropolitan Board took the obligations that are put upon the promoters' Bill, taking the Bill as it stands, would you then object to their having the management?—You mean the Bill as it is, with the alteration of the clauses?

521. Yes. That is to say, that the Metropolitan Board instead of the conservators are to be the controlling body, and the rate is to be spread over the metropolis at large?—Those are the only two clauses in the Bill to which I object.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. EDEN CAGE GREVILLE, *sworn*.

Examined by Mr. PHILBRICK.

Mr. EDEN CAGE
GREVILLE.
21st April, 1871.

522. I believe you are a solicitor in practice in the city, but your private residence is at Garrett Lodge, Wandsworth?—Yes.

523. How long have you been an inhabitant and ratepayer in Wandsworth Parish?—For 17 years.

524. I need scarcely say that like all the people in Wandsworth, you take a great interest in the preservation of the common, and in its proper management?—A very great interest.

525. With regard to the Bill as introduced into the House before the Committee, can you tell us what your feeling and the great feeling is of those whom you know with regard to the establishment of a body of conservators, and rating the two parishes only?—My own opinion upon those matters is precisely what you have heard from Mr. Lindon, but I have not roally questioned the ratepayers generally, and I can hardly give an authoritative opinion. The few people I have spoken to have expressed those views.

526. Which way?—In favour of the Metropolitan board having the management, instead of local conservators.

527. Can you tell the Committee what the feeling of the vestry is upon the matter?

528. The CHAIRMAN: Are you a member of the vestry?—I am the vestry clerk. I have not got the dates before me, but a meeting of the elected vestry was summoned in March this year to take into consideration whether it was expedient to petition in favour of the Bill. There were 12 members of the vestry present on that occasion, nine voted against supporting the Bill, and three in favour of it. At a subsequent vestry, about 10 days later, it was brought on as a substantive motion whether it was expedient that the vestry should sign a petition against the Bill as it stood, and the motion was carried unanimously by the members of the vestry then present.

529. How many were present then?—To the best of my recollection, nine.

530. Were they the same nine who voted on the previous occasion?—The same nine.

531. Mr. PHILBRICK: What was the objection that was entertained?—Those two points: That the vestry considered it was more desirable that the the arrangement should be placed in the hands of the Metropolitan Board of Works than of local conservators, and that the rate should be a metropolitan one, not confined to the two parishes of Battersea and Wandsworth.

532. As you have opportunities of knowing something about the management of district matters, by reason of being vestry clerk, I will ask you, is there an objection to a purely local—I mean a parochial—management of a thing of this kind which does not apply to a larger body?—I do not follow your question. What do you consider parochial management?

533. Management by those exclusively who are elected by the parish, and who represent the parish.

The CHAIRMAN: Not exclusively there are to be three nominated.

534. Mr. PHILBRICK: In this case there are three nominated. Supposing the Common were to be managed by conservators who were elected from the parish, and from the parish only, would you consider that as good as a management by a more central body not so

intimately connected with the locality?—I think not, and principally for this reason. My belief is, but it is a matter of belief only, that if this were placed under the management of the Metropolitan Board of Works they would delegate the management of it to the Local Board of Works, and they would have representatives present at every meeting from every parish in the district and every proposal for dealing with the common, everything proposed to be done in the way of improvements or anything else would come under the view of all the representatives of the different ratepayers of the parishes in the district.

MR. EDEN CAGE
GREVILLE.
21st April, 1871.

535. Mr. COOPER TEMPLE: There are five?—Six.

536. Mr. PHILBRICK: Wandsworth, Battersea, Tooting, Streatham, Putney and Clapham?—Yes.

Cross-examined by MR. VENABLES.

537. Were there any of those nine gentlemen of the vestry who were members of the District Board?—Three certainly of those nine were members of the Board.

538. Was it represented at that meeting that the alternative of this scheme being carried out would be that the Metropolitan Board of Works would have the management?—Certainly it was so understood.

539. Are you a solicitor?—Not in practice.

540. Still you are a lawyer by training?—Yes.

541. Have you ascertained how that would be?—There was nothing to ascertain. It was conjectural what it would be for; it has failed.

542. Have you ascertained whether there was any law under which the Metropolitan Board of Works would have the management?—I cannot say that I went into it very carefully, but I was aware of the existence of the Commons Preservation Act of 1866.

543. Probably you are now aware that the Commons Preservation Act does not give the management to the Metropolitan Board of Works?—No, I am not.

544. That was the understanding of the vestry when they debated the question?—Yes, it was.

545. It puzzles me a little why the vestry representing the parish should think that the parish was not a good authority to have?—If I am invited to make an observation they considered that the parish would be represented better in the other way.

546. The parish would only have had one vote in six on the district board if the district board had had it, whereas it will now have one vote in two.

The CHAIRMAN: Two in six.

547. Mr. VENABLES: Battersea approves of the Bill. The Parish of Wandsworth would only have one vote in six on the District Board, and one vote in two under this Bill. Can you suggest why the parish would prefer to have less power rather than more power?—For this reason which I have heard stated by more than one individual. The conservators who would be in power for one year could do what they chose, and if they made any objectionable alterations in the common they could not be interfered with in any way till the close of the year. Certainly the ratepayers then could get rid of them and elect others, but mischief might be done in the meantime.

548. Suppose the District Board had the management. Would not the case be just the same. Nobody could interfere till the next election?—No, but all questions are discussed at the Local Board.

MR. EDEN CAGE
GREVILLE,
21st April, 1871.

549. Do not you suppose that the conservators would discuss any question that concerns them?—Among themselves, but not before the ratepayers.

550. Then is your objection that these people would debate in private, whereas the District Board debate in public?—Quite so.

551. And that is all?—Principally.

552. Have you any other objection?—No, no other objection.

553. Is the district board open to the public?—I cannot say; I am not a member.

554. The only objection you now have to this scheme as compared with the district board having the management is that the district board would be more public than this. Do they hold their debates in public?—I did not intend to say more publicly, but in the presence of the representatives of the ratepayers.

555. Do they hold their debates in the presence of the ratepayers?—Of the representatives of the ratepayers; the ratepayers are represented.

556. These conservators are going to represent the ratepayers. They are to be elected by the ratepayers?—The working of the board is that their minutes are published every fortnight, and an agenda paper is published in anticipation, so that everybody knows what is going to be brought before them.

557. Would you be satisfied if the conservators were to announce to everybody whom it concerned what they had done?—Probably there would be no objection, or the objection would be very considerably lessened if there was an opportunity of being heard before the conservators in the same way.

558. Were you in the room just now when Mr. White was examined?—No.

559. I daresay you knew that a large public meeting was held of the inhabitants of Wandsworth in consequence of this vote of the vestry?—Yes.

560. And that a resolution was passed expressing their great regret at the vote of the vestry?—I am aware of that.

561. Were you aware of that meeting before it was held?—I was.

562. Did you attend it?—I was unable to attend it, I wished to have done so.

563. You are aware at any rate that except for any personal engagement you might have had you were at liberty to attend the meeting?—Certainly.

564. And express your opinion?—Certainly.

565. I daresay you heard that, I believe, unanimously a vote had been carried disagreeing from the opinion of the vestry?—At that meeting?

566. Yes?—I cannot say, I was not there; I believe it was nearly unanimous, if not quite.

567. Mr. PHILIPS: I understood you to say that if this went to the Metropolitan Board of Works, then they would refer it back to the local board?—That was the anticipation of the vestry.

568. Then I suppose you would get the local management, and you would get the public funds. You would get the two objects then, would you not?—Quite so.

569. That is what you would like to have?—The local management in that shape?

570. Yes, and the funds from the metropolitan area?—Yes.

571. And yet without their interference?—Quite so.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. GEORGE LARNER, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. RODWELL.

572. Do you live at High Street, Wandsworth?—Yes.
573. What are you?—A bookseller and stationer.
574. You have heard of this proposed Bill for preserving Wandsworth Common?—Yes.
575. And the principle upon which the rating is to be conducted, and also the constitution of a board of conservators?—Yes.
576. I believe you do not approve of it?—No.
577. Do you think it is unfair and unjust that the people of Wandsworth should have an addition made to their rates for the purposes of this common?—To their rates in what way, by the conservators, or by the Metropolitan Board of Works?
578. By the conservators?—Yes.
579. What are your rates now? Are they high at Wandsworth?—No, not so high as in most of the surrounding districts.
580. You would prefer as I understand, that this should be in the hands of the Metropolitan Board of Works?—By all means.
581. You have given that answer very emphatically. Will you tell me why you prefer it; why you say, by all means?—Upon principle.
582. Why do you say, by all means let the Metropolitan Board have it?—Because we shall have to pay for the other commons that are preserved, and it will be a double rate as it were, to the inhabitants of Wandsworth and Battersea.
583. If the Metropolitan Board are to carry out the Act of Parliament which enables them to preserve commons, you will be rated for them in addition to being rated for your own?—Just so.
584. What you think would be the fair thing, would be that those who hereafter may have their commons preserved at your expense should contribute towards yours now?—Just so.
585. With regard to the feeling at Wandsworth upon the subject, did you attend a meeting on the 1st of March?—I did.
586. Where was that held?—At the "Spread Eagle" Hotel, High Street.
587. What sort of a meeting was that?—A very noisy and low meeting, with the exception of the gentlemen that were on the platform, and the vestrymen, and, of course, a few parishioners that were there, I saw very few indeed; in fact, I could only discern about six of the ratepayers of Wandsworth, the others seemed to be composed of a lot of rough fellows. I do not know who sent them, or why they came there.
588. Not ratepayers, you think?—I should not think so—not direct ratepayers.
589. Are you prepared to say that that was not a meeting representing the feeling of ratepayers in Wandsworth?—I should think not. Decidedly not.
590. Have you taken the trouble to ascertain what is the feeling in Wandsworth?—I have, amongst a few, and they are of the same opinion that I am.
591. With regard to the control, do you think it will be more satisfactory to have the control in the hands of a larger body like the Metropolitan Board than to have it in the hands of local persons?—Yes.
592. What are your objections to the local persons having the

Mr. GEORGE
LARNER.

21st April, 1871.

Mr. GEORGE
LARNER.
21st April, 1871.

control?—The objection that I raised at the commencement, that I should prefer it being under the Metropolitan Board of Works.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not an answer to the question.

523. Mr. RODWELL: You mean you look at it in this way as a question of rating, and whoever pays the rates so to speak should have the control?—That is so.

594. And upon that ground you think that the Metropolitan Board of Works ought to have the control?—Yes, I am perfectly satisfied with the Board.

595. The last witness seemed to have a somewhat peculiar view, namely, that he wanted to have the local control as it were, but the Metropolitan money. You do not go that length?—No.

596. You are willing to give the control to the Metropolitan Board if the expenses are paid out of the Metropolitan funds?—Just so.

597. You seem to treat the matter of local control with indifference so long as it is not a local rate?—Yes.

598. That is your view?—Yes.

599. May I take it that that is a view which is shared by other people in Wandsworth, as well as yourself?—By a great many more, I am positive, although I only know of a few cases where I have spoken to them, but I feel sure that it is the opinion of a great number.

600. The CHAIRMAN: That is a mental view that you have?—Just so.

Cross-examined by MR. VENABLES.

601. Do you know that there are a great many people that generally agree with you about things in Wandsworth—that is what you mean?—I do not know that they do as a rule.

602. Will you tell me whether the ratepayers who hold your opinion, held any meeting about this?—No, not that I know of.

603. As you attended that meeting at the "Spread Eagle," of course you must have known beforehand that it was to be held?—I did not hear of it till the day before.

604. There were bills up?—Yes.

605. Anybody who liked might go there?—Yes, I believe so.

606. There was no meeting ever held to the contrary?—Not that I know of.

607. You say it would be hard upon you to pay for protecting the other commons and also to pay specially for your own: what do you say if the other commons also were to be protected by local rates, and you were not asked to protect them?—I do not exactly understand you.

608. You are afraid that you will have to pay for keeping open commons in other parts of the Metropolitan district and also have to pay a separate rate for keeping your own?—Just so; we should pay a double rate.

609. I am going to suggest a way of getting out of it. Suppose those other commons were not kept open at the metropolitan expense out of your pocket but at the expense of the people in the neighbourhood of these respective commons?—That would be another thing altogether, I have not considered that at all.

610. Do you think it a good thing that Wimbledon is to be kept open at the expense of the people at Wimbledon?—No.

611. It will save you a rate?—That I should not mind about.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think we want speculative opinions.

612. Mr. VENABLES: I want to know what your plans practically would be for the management of the common. The Metropolitan

Board of Works lives in London; somebody must manage it. Who would you say was the person to manage it?—The person individually?

613. Person or persons?—The Board of Works.

614. The Board of Works must do it or somebody else. Who would they employ for the local management?—Do you mean a man to take care of the common and drive the boys off, or what?

615. I mean somebody rather to superintend the man who drives the boys off?—I do not know of anybody.

616. Surely you must admit that there must be some authority in the neighbourhood delegated by the Metropolitan Board of Works to look after the common?—I should say that the Metropolitan Board of Works should appoint some responsible person or persons. Of course, I should expect that there would be several persons to take care of it, to lay it out, and keep it in order; and it should be kept entirely by the Metropolitan Board of Works.

617. They would have to pay them, I suppose?—Just so.

618. Any question relating to it would have, after all, to be referred to somebody who had local knowledge, would it not?—No.

MR. GEORGE
LARNER.
21st April, 1871.

Re-examined by Mr. RODWELL.

619. I suppose there would be no greater difficulty in their managing that from the head office than there is in the case of other things?—Not the slightest.

620. Mr. VENABLES: Have you ever calculated what is the largest rate you could have to pay under this Act? It is a half-penny in the pound, how much would that be to have if it were all levied?—I believe I am rated at £36 a-year.

621. At a penny in the £, that is 1s. 6d.—I do not think that would ruin you?—No.

622. Mr. RODWELL: It is not the amount that makes you hostile to this measure, but you think it is a wrong principle?—That is a wrong principle.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. CHARLES LEE, *sworn.*

Examined by Mr. RODWELL.

623. I think you live at Putney, do you not?—Wandsworth Hill; a mile and a half from this common.

624. What property have you in Wandsworth?—In Wandsworth and Battersea I have about £25,000 worth of property; besides that in Battersea, I have land upon which about 300 houses are built—that is Battersea Fields.

625. I believe some of Wandsworth Common is in Battersea?—The division runs up the centre of the common. It is about half in Battersea and half in Wandsworth.

626. You, as a resident and ratepayer in Wandsworth, have come here to state your reasons and your objections against this Bill?—First of all I object to the rating clause undoubtedly, because if the decision of the Committee is correct in respect of Wimbledon, I say this is most incorrect. I am rated at sixpence in the pound for Wimbledon, and now I am a mile and a half away from this common; I have no property within a mile, but yet I am to be rated for this com-

MR. CHARLES LEE.
21st April, 1871.

Mr. CHARLES LEE
21st April, 1871.

mon. I have got property three miles away, which cannot be benefited in any way, and they never come near it. The use of this common, so far as the inhabitants are concerned is very limited. It is only those just around it. In Battersea Fields they have Battersea Park, which is a very fine park, well kept up, where they can play cricket, row boats, bathe, and do anything, and that costs nothing—it is at the expense of the nation. Therefore I say all those at a certain distance from the Common ought not to be rated for the Common. No doubt there are one or two gentlemen who live facing the Common, and to them it is of great importance. But my opinion years ago was that that Common ought to be enclosed, except the part by what is called the Black Sea, which is on the north side of the railway, for the other part is so cut up into bits—

627. The CHAIRMAN: I do not think we need go into that, because the object is to keep it open some way or other?—I might be asked why I lent myself formerly to enclose it; because I was one of the homage. Now, I say if I am to be rated to Wimbledon, I being near Wimbledon Common, then I ought not to be rated for Battersea and Wandsworth.

628. Mr. RODWELL: I suppose your case is not an individual case of hardship?—No. Then I heard say that a great number of the poor men, and so forth, voted for it. They would all vote for it, I dare say, because they do not pay the rates and taxes. We pay the rates and taxes in Battersea and Wandsworth; they pay their six shillings a week, and if twopence or threepence in the £ were put on, we should only get their six or ten shillings a week. The working men would not pay one sixpence more.

629. I understand your case is this, that you are called upon to pay for that which will be no earthly advantage to you?—Neither to me or to my tenants. I have no tenant within a mile; I have tenants just upon three miles off.

630. In addition to the burden you have to bear for these local improvements or advantages you then have to pay a metropolitan rate for Hackney and other places?—Yes; I am within the metropolitan district.

631. I believe there are many people living on the verge of the common who will not be rated?—I was going to observe that. Tooting and Clapham are both on the margin, they can both use that common just as much as the people in Battersea and Wandsworth, the ditch only separates them.

632. Can you see any reason or principle upon which that can be justified?—Certainly not, particularly if the Wimbledon principle is correct, because there the Kingston and Richmond people are separated by the brook, and yet they are to be taxed.

633. It has been suggested by my learned friend, Mr. Venables, and perhaps you can enlighten the Committee upon that, that there would be a difficulty in the management being placed in the hands of and conducted by the Metropolitan Board of Works?—I cannot see it at all, I have had a great many dealings with the Metropolitan Board, and I have had no difficulty with them. I have been employed by the Metropolitan Board, and I have had large transactions with them. I have never found any difficulty,

634. The CHAIRMAN: You have acted as surveyor for them?—And against them too, and in other transactions. I was concerned in purchasing Finsbury Park and Bermondsey Park, I have never found any difficulty in dealing with them.

635. Mr. RODWELL: Do you think the affairs are likely to be administered as well by a large body like that with the representatives of

the parish on the Board as they would be if in the hands of local parties?—I prefer the larger body. I think local boards have become cliques. We know it is so in parish vestries. They all become cliques.

MR. CHARLES LEE
21st April, 1871.

636. Do you know there is what is called a Parks Committee, in the Metropolitan Board, for the especial purpose of taking cognisance of and exercising jurisdiction over the parks?—Yes.

637. And you know they are by the Commons Act, the persons who are scheduled as the proper local authorities for carrying out the Bill?—Yes.

638. To give this power into the hands of a local authority, would be to a certain extent inconsistent with the scope of the Bill?—Yes.

639. The CHAIRMAN: I take it the local party have quite as much power to set the Bill in motion, certainly the lord of the manor has. The stand exactly in the same category as far as that goes?—I judge what may take place by what has taken place. All that has been done has been done by a clique on each side. Wimbledon was a clique; the same with Wandsworth. A few gentlemen who live round the common, think it is essential to keep the common, and they get up an agitation. We who are further a-field have never been consulted, and never heard anything about it, never attended the meetings, nor had notice of them.

640. Mr. RODWELL: You have never had an opportunity of expressing your opinion until this moment?—No.

641. It has got into the hands of a few people who have arranged for you?—Yes.

642. You are perfectly of opinion that something ought to be done to preserve the common?—Yes, I should like the common, particularly that part by the Black Sea to be preserved, that is used very much by the people of Wandsworth and Battersea for cricket. They have their matches, and there they are of a summer's evening. I think that ought to be preserved, and very carefully preserved. At the back of what they call Half Farthing Park the worst of characters come.

643. A question I asked you when you gave evidence in the other Bill was, Do you think as a man of business and a surveyor used to these matters that the infliction of this tax will have a sensible effect upon the value of the property?—I cannot say that to a very great extent. It would of course be objected to by a great number of people, but then the amount is not large. I object to the principle. I think what is good in one case ought to be good in the other.

644. The CHAIRMAN: Will you confine yourself to the question?—I don't think $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the pound upon a small house will come to much.

645. Mr. RODWELL: What is the value of your property?—I am rated at £212.

646. You have other property?—I have got about £50,000 worth of property altogether. It is sure to come out of my pocket in the end.

647. You deal in such large figures, that you do not mind these little sums?—Yes, I do.

648. I understand you to say that in the Wimbledon case whenever you had an increase in taxation it created a sort of prejudice and feeling, and affected the value of property?—Yes. When I first went there—and I have known that district for 35 years—taxes were about 3s. 6d. or 3s. 8d. in the pound. I could then let houses without any difficulty. Now they are about 6s. 6d. or 6s. 8d., and I have great difficulty in letting houses when they become empty. I have now about £500 a year in Wandsworth and Putney to let.

Mr. CHARLES LEE
21st April, 1871.

649. The higher you get the rates, the more appreciable is a small increase?—Yes.

650. The CHAIRMAN: How do you account for 5,500 rate-payers signing a petition of that sort, if they had no notice of it?—I cannot account for it. This petition was brought to me, and I did not sign it.

651. You cannot account why 5,500 people should sign it?—I think I could go there and get that number of people to sign, because a great many of them have no interest at all. The landlords pay the rates and taxes.

Cross-examined by Mr. VENABLES.

652. You say you would have the common kept open by somebody?—Yes.

653. I suppose it must come pretty much the same whether it is kept open by one body or another?—I think the Metropolitan Board of Works could do it cheaper. They have got the machinery at their hands.

654. Suppose the Metropolitan Board of Works had the general control, how would you have the local control managed?—I do not care about the local control.

655. Do not you think it an advantage that there should be people near at hand who see the common constantly, from time to time, to see whether any nuisance requires to be abated?—There are plenty of eyes always at work, and the Metropolitan Board of Works would be soon informed of it.

656. What is the practical inconvenience you anticipate from what you call a "clique"? These conservators are to be elected by the ratepayers, except the official conservators?—Yes, and so are parish vestries. The Wandsworth vestry is a complete clique.

The CHAIRMAN: This is a general speculative opinion. I do not think we need follow it.

Re-examined by Mr. RODWELL.

657. Do you know at all whether these are compound householders?—I cannot tell. All the property under £20 a year there is compounded. I could get 1,000 or 2,000 people to sign any petition of that kind without any trouble.

658. Mr. PHILIPS: You said you had a great many houses to let, is the population decreasing in that neighbourhood?—No.

659. Is it increasing?—The population is rather increasing.

660. Then where do they live?—A large number of houses have been built there—a great many new houses.

661. It is depreciated owing to the new houses?—They have a greater choice.

662. You said you objected to be rated in Wimbledon and Battersea?—In Wandsworth.

663. You have property in all those places?—Yes.

664. Battersea Park you say will do for the whole neighbourhood?—All about there.

665. Because it costs nothing?—Because it costs nothing, and it is a beautiful park too.

666. If it costs nothing, how is it maintained in this beauty; who pays for it?—The Crown; it is under the Metropolitan Board of Works.

667. You think the inhabitants of Liverpool and Manchester,

who have no earthly advantage in Battersea Park, ought to pay for the maintenance of it?—No, I do not.

668. But they do do so?—They do do so, for all the London parks.

Mr. CHARLES LEE
21st April, 1871.

(The witness withdrew.)

Mr. JOHN CHARLES HUMPHREY, sworn.

Examined by Mr. RODWELL.

669. You are one of the clerks in the service of the Metropolitan Board of Works?—I am.

670. Do you produce certain memorials which have been presented to the Board with reference to this matter?—Yes.

Mr. JOHN
CHARLES
HUMPHREY.

21st April, 1871.

671. The first I want to put in is July, 1867, from Mr. Buckmaster

Mr. VENABLES: I do not know whether the committee think those memorials are admissible. If the committee are of opinion that it is desirable to have them, I should not object.

The CHAIRMAN: My notion is he is going to show that the Board have been put in action by somebody.

Mr. RODWELL: These are *quasi* public documents.

Mr. VENABLES: These are the opinions and wishes of the memorialists.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think we want the contents of the memorial to be on the notes, but only the fact that parties have set them in motion and applied to them to act.

Mr. RODWELL: Perhaps the witness will tell the committee shortly what is the nature of the memorial of the 12th of July, 1867.

672. The CHAIRMAN: Set out the dates of the memorials, and state the general purport of them. Who is that from?—From Mr. Buckmaster, who was a churchwarden of St. Mary's, Battersea, at that time. There is a memorial of the 4th of October, 1867, of some people calling themselves the Wandsworth Common Preservation Society. On the 17th July, 1868, there is a memorial from the inhabitants of Wandsworth and Battersea, and also a memorial from the Board of Works of the Wandsworth District.

673. Mr. RODWELL: Will you read the memorial of the 4th October, 1867?—That is a memorial purporting to be signed by Mr. Anderson Rose.

674. This is the memorial:—"The inhabitants of Wandsworth and Battersea are most anxious to preserve what remains of Wandsworth Common for public use and enjoyment. Two large meetings have been held at Wandsworth, at which resolutions to this effect have been unanimously passed," and so on. Then "That a deputation attend the Metropolitan Board for the purpose of presenting a memorial on the subject of the enclosure of Wandsworth Common," and so on.

The CHAIRMAN: On that a deputation did attend.

675. Mr. RODWELL: Yes. Then "Your memorialists on the special grounds, and on other grounds applicable to every case of inclosure of commons in the neighbourhood of London earnestly pray the Metropolitan Board of Works to take such steps as may be necessary to prevent the inclosure of Wandsworth Common by the Brighton Railway Company and their agents as a building speculation, and to stop the buildings now being erected thereon at New Wandsworth." The resolution upon that was, "That the memorial be referred to the

Mr. JOHN
CHARLES
HUMPHREY.

21st April, 1171.

works and general purposes committee for their consideration." Perhaps the shortest plan will be for me to put in the memorial of the 4th October, 1867, the letter of the 1st November, 1867, the memorial of the inhabitants of Wandsworth, of the 17th July, 1868, and the letter of Mr. Rose, of August 7th, 1868, to which you referred. Have you got the originals of those?—Yes, they are here.

676. Have you also got the resolution of the Wandsworth District Board of the 10th February, 1871?—Yes. (*The same was handed in.*)

677. This is the last resolution of the Board of the 24th March, 1871. It is an important one. (*Handing same to the witness.*) Will you read it?—"The solicitor reported that the Wandsworth Common Bill would probably be before the Select Committee of the House of Commons next week. Resolved, on the motion of Mr. Newton, and seconded by Mr. Meaden, that the Select Committee be informed that the Board are prepared to take up the position of the promoters of the Bill."

(*The Witness withdrew.*)

(*Adjourned to Monday next at 12 o'clock.*)

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SESSION 1871

THE COMMONS

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

1871

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

SESSION 1871.

WANDSWORTH COMMON BILL.

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE,

April 21, 1871.

	PAGE
<i>Mr. Thomas Simon Watson</i> - -	3
<i>Mr. Edwin Rayner Ransome</i> - -	9
<i>Mr. James Anderson Rose</i> - -	14
<i>Mr. George Frederick White</i> - -	24
<i>Mr. John Cleave</i> - - - -	27
<i>Mr. Whitfield Foster</i> - - - -	29
<i>Mr. Thomas Harrap</i> - - - -	30
<i>Mr. Thomas Dodson Landon</i> - -	31
<i>Mr. Eden Cage Greville</i> - - - -	34
<i>Mr. George Larner</i> - - - -	37
<i>Mr. Charles Lee</i> - - - -	39
<i>Mr. John Charles Humphrey</i> - -	43

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