

EXTRACT FROM THE CHICHESTER OBSERVER AND WEST SUSSEX RECORDER WEDNESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 18, 1889

THE ANTI-DRAINAGE PARTY

A meeting called by the leaders of the anti- drainage party was held last Wednesday evening at the Unicorn Inn, Eastgate, to consider what steps should be taken to oppose the proposed scheme of Main Drainage. Mr. A. S. Bostock presided, and was supported by a large audience, who appeared to be entirely in accord with the question.

The CHAIRMAN, after a few opening remarks, drew the attention of the meeting to the report of the Drainage Committee. According to that report the Committee had visited various places for the purpose of acquiring information with regard to drainage systems. Well, he was very pleased to find that all those places were well drained, but had the Committee visited some other places of which he could have told them, they would have learned a little more about drainage. The Committee stated in their report that "a proper system of main sewerage and house drainage will remove the reproach which has so long existed against the city as regards the dampness of the soil and the consequent tendency of the climate to promote phthisis or consumption."

Now, he believed there were a certain number of people in the city who had "dampness of the soil" upon the brain. (Laughter.) It was said that the water in the wells would go on rising and rising, until within a few years' time there would be Eiffel Towers of water. But it was a well-known fact that water could not get beyond a certain level. A bucket of water or urine thrown on the ground would spread itself over the ground, be dried up by the sun, and in a short time there would be nothing to see or smell. The Mayor stated at a meeting of the Council that he had been assured by engineers that if drainage was carried out the cellars of the city would never again be troubled with water. That he perfectly endorsed, but the cellars instead, would be filled with sewer gas, which might make its way upstairs.

A grave accusation was made by the Committee in their statement that "there can be no doubt but that Chichester is an unhealthy place." Some twenty-four years ago a man came into the city and wrote to the *Times* stating that drainage ought to be carried out in Chichester. The people were up in arms over the letter and were ready to swallow the man who wrote it. (Laughter.) But a funny thing was that the same man stopped in Chichester and grew fat -(laughter)- while at the same time his brother went somewhere else and died. (Laughter.)

The letter in the *Times* brought to the city Mr. Hawkey, who was well known as a very eminent engineer, and who reported upon the sanitary of Chichester. Mr. Bostock read an extract from Mr. Hawksley's report, the most important part of it being the statement that "Chichester has been unjustifiably charged with being an unhealthy and unclean city." There were, he continued, some people in the city who still said that Chichester was unhealthy. It never used to be known who those people were, but the secret was now out, for they had signed the report of the Drainage Committee. Was it likely that anybody would come and reside in the city when five of its natives said the place was unhealthy? The number of deaths last year in the city were 165, and of those 15 died under one year, 84 under sixty years, and 66 above sixty years, and out of those 66 seventeen averaged 87 years. The Bishop of Chichester was sent here because it was believed his health would not last long, but he looked as if he was going to last out the lot of them. (Laughter.) Nothing but old age had killed those people who died at 66 years old, for the sewer gas was not laid on. (Laughter.) The place, he contended was perfectly healthy (Applause.) People might ask him how, if that was so, he obtained a living! Well, he did not

depend for a livelihood upon Chichester alone, but also its neighbourhood. This year, he guaranteed to say, was one of the healthiest that had ever been known in Chichester. (Hear, hear.)

The Chairman of the Horsham Local Board recently said to him; " We have laid out a lot of money on drainage, we have paid £500 compensation, we have to lay out more money, we are threatened with a law-suit every day, and we wish we had never seen drainage at all." It was stated in the report that " main drainage can no longer be said to be a mere experiment, and amongst sanitary experts there in no longer a diversity of opinion." He thought it doubtful, however, whether two similar opinions from engineers could be got on the subject of drainage. He did not mean to say that sewage could not be dealt with, but there were several ways of dealing with it.

In Chichester there were nine hundred tons of sewage taken away annually, and the present arrangement of taking it away was not a cause of illness. There were of course cases of typhoid fever just the same as there were in the country, and there was a cause for it. It was well known that milk would transmit fever more readily than any other liquid. The Committee were of opinion that the process known as " precipitant," the one in use at Southampton, was the best for dealing with the sewage of Chichester, but the Committee did not state in their report the nature of the process.

At Southampton the sewage could be let out into the sea, but that could not be done in Chichester. If he had suggested that the drains should be flushed from the Lavant Course the natives would have said he was fit for Haywards Heath- (laughter) - yet that was just what the Drainage Committee had done. They said that the Lavant Course when running would furnish abundance of water for flushing the drains, but it would soon be found that the Lavant Course did not run every day in the week, and then would come the question, "Don't you think you had better have the waterworks "? (Laughter.)

The cost of connecting a large house was estimated by the Committee at £10, but the chances were that it was more likely to cost £45. Drainage was very expensive. An ex-mayor of a large town said to him the other day, "Going to drain are you! I pity you. (Laughter.) The pipes go down after three years, and they have to be taken up and re-laid. But get the waterworks at the same time." Another man had expressed the idea that when a cesspool was filled up a new one should be made, and this would certainly be cheaper than drainage.

The "Mortality" Committee had muddled themselves even worse than the Drainage Committee, for they had effectually proved that the city was in a healthy state. In 1881 there were, according to the Committee, thirty cases of what the Committee called consumption, and in 1888 there were only thirteen cases. Surely that was an improvement, and there was no getting away from the fact. If the city was drained the place would be made more unhealthy. Why did not the Committee get their mortality figures from the Medical Officer Instead of from the Registrar-General's report? Because the figures of the former did not suit them. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Jones, the engineer, was game enough to come to the city, though he did not stop long, for he was anxious to catch a train back, but not before he had arranged for his five per cent. on the cost. (Laughter.) After expressing a doubt that the proposed scheme would deal, as the Committee believed, with the subsoil water and that Mr. Jones had even seen the site which he recommended for the sewage works, the Chairman asked the meeting to fancy the amount of compensation the city would have to pay if "this stinking thing" was carried out. The scheme

would cost at least double the sum estimated, and even then the city would be no better off than at present. Drainage would simply "kick up a stink," bring disease that the city was at present without, drive people away from the place and prevent others from coming to it. (Applause.)

Mr. Councillor EDNEY remarked that the proposed scheme would entail a rate of 1s. 7d. in the £, and defied any member of the "intelligent committee," as the medical officer called them, to put the rate lower than 1s. 6d. in the £. The legal expenses were estimated at £200, but they were more likely to be £800. The people ought not to be "rushed" in this matter but should have time so consider it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. W. ARMSTRONG contended that the question resolved itself into one of expense. (Hear, hear.) The statement of the Committee that drainage was earnestly and urgently demanded was entirely incorrect because no demand had yet been made for it by the majority of the citizens. (Applause) It was a funny thing that the Drainage Committee consisted of the same gentlemen who promoted the hospital scheme, the success of which he doubted. When he came to Chichester he weighed "nine stone seven," but at the present time his weight was "thirteen stone." (Laughter.) Non-drainage, therefore, had not affected him much, and as there was no better argument than that of experience, he was going to uphold the present state of things. (Hear, hear.) If cesspools were registered and better looked after there would be no need for drainage. Surely Mr. Jones could devise a scheme for new cesspools and make it effective. If drainage was an effective means of preserving life there would be a good reason for having it, but something like on Eiffel Tower would have to be constructed to get rid of the smells, and the people would run the risk of getting typhoid fever. Then in a matter of this kind one never knows where the expense would end. A member of the Council had said drainage would cost him 7s. 6d. in the £ a year on £50, but £7 a year would be nearer the mark, and that was leaving out the expense of connection with the main drain and of putting on the water. Unless it could be proved that Chichester was an unhealthy place, it would be better to let well alone. The demand for drainage had not sprung spontaneously from the city, but from that party who would gain the most benefit by it the same party who promoted the hospital. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Councillor HAYLER reminded the meeting that when he came before the electors as a candidate for the City Council he announced himself a non-drainage man, and was returned by a large majority at the head of the poll. The statement in the report that drainage was demanded was therefore quite incorrect. The deathrate of the city was as low as any place in the United Kingdom, and for that reason he did not think the people should be driven into this everlasting expense and stink.

Mr. Alderman HABIN, who was called upon by the Chairman, said that as he was senior alderman and a member of the Corporation, he should decline to make any remarks on the subject. It was only out of compliment to the Chairman that he had attended the meeting.

Mr. Councillor FIELDER said he was opposed to drainage but agreed that it would be best for members of the Corporation not to express an opinion that night. He should take the first opportunity of pressing for a division in the Council on the question and have the names of those for and against drainage recorded. The meeting, he suggested, might appoint a committee to bring forward candidates and make other arrangements for opposing drainage (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Councillor FOGDEN was of opinion that Chichester was not adapted for carrying out main drainage, and on that ground it would be advisable to stave it off as long as possible. If it was necessary to have drainage to compete with other places it would be a different matter, but the people would be better off without it if they had to spend as much money as had been spent over it in other places. He would hold up both hands against it. (Henr, hear.)

Mr. F. LONGLAND was totally opposed to drainage on account of its absolute failure at Bognor. The longer it could be prevented the better it would be for the people's health and pockets.

The following committee was then appointed :- Messrs. W. Gale, F. Longland, B. Crocker, A. Johnson, W. Butler, R. Urry, J. Gadd, S. Baker, and Canner.

Mr. ARMSTRONG proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for presiding, and this was unanimously accorded. Mr. Bostock concluded response as follows:- I hope you will tell people to come up to the horse show, one of the things I started for the good of the city: and don't drain, for goodness sake.