

Parish meeting at Birchington – March 1898

Opposition to the Drainage Scheme

A parish meeting was held on Monday evening at the Infants' Schoolroom, Birchington¹, in connection with the nomination and election of the candidates for the Parish Council. Mr. W. Tomlin presided, and the following gentlemen were also present:- The Vicar (the Rev. H.A. Serres), Messrs, A.M. Green, C.E. Matthews, R. Grant, J. Johncock, J. Pemble, C.R Haig, G. Pointer, H. Tapsell, H. Histed, and Geo. Cousins.

At the commencement of the meeting it was resolved that the meeting tender their heartfelt sympathy to Mr. Alderman Rayden and family on the occasion of the death of Mrs. Rayden.

The names of those nominated were Messrs. H. Amos, G. Cousins, Edgar Edwards, Alfred Erlebach, H.A Erlebach, A.M. Green, C.R. Haig, John Knott, W.P. Lightfoot, J. Pemble, G. Pointer, T. Pointer, B.R. Rayden, A.G. Sayer, C.E. Solly, and Edward Warner.

Mr. George Pointer said it appeared to him as though they were nearly all candidates there that evening, and it would be rather awkward for one candidate to ask another a question, but he should be pleased to answer any that might be asked of him. He would like to ask Mr. James Pemble whether he advocated drainage for Birchington or not?

Mr. James Pemble, in reply, said that he thought the question of drainage was a very important one, and that the Parish Council should do all in their power to stop it being carried out. He did not think it would come off for another ten years, and if they re-elected him on the Parish Council he would vote against drainage until that period had elapsed. Probably at the end of the ten years Birchington would be in a position to lay out the money which would be required to carry out a system of drainage.

Mr. C.R. Haig said he should like to tell them that the matter of drainage was at present in the hands of the Local Government Board, who had been asked by the Parish Council to let the wants of the parish be thoroughly known before the plans were made and settled. He should like to ask Mr. G. Cousins whether he would continue his duties as hon. clerk.

Mr. G. Cousins said he thought the question of clerkship might be left in abeyance, it was not because he did not like the work that he had given it up - he always liked to do anything in the interest of Birchington (applause). It was because his mental state had of late become very bad, and he was unable to undertake any duties extra to his business. When he found his mental state had improved, he would most likely take up his duties as hon. clerk once more. He would not press drainage upon the inhabitants of Birchington, as none objected to large rates more than he did himself. The great difficulty with the present system, was the likelihood of contamination of the water which was a very serious matter. There was no doubt but apart from this they had a very good system of cesspool drainage at Birchington. He hoped that a Government inquiry might be held, and he believed it would be so before long. They all knew his work on the Council, which he had done to the best of his ability (applause), and he had made it a rule to have neither friends nor foes among the Councillors which was in his opinion the only way to do one's duty. (Loud applause).

¹ This was in the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Albion Road.

Mr. C.E. Solly said that he hoped that Mr. Cousins would be re-elected, as he had saved Birchington in the past a considerable amount of money which would otherwise have been paid as a clerk's salary. He did not, however, altogether agree with him on the question of drainage.

Messrs. H. Histed and E. Edwards were the tellers appointed to count the votes accorded to each candidate by those present. The result was H. Amos 24, G. Cousins 46, Edgar Edwards 5, H.A. Erlebach 10, Alfred Erlebach 29, A.M. Green 25, C.R. Haig 49, J. Knott 27, W.P. Lightfoot 28, J. Pemble 43, G. Pointer 56, T. Pointer 20, B.R. Rayden 47, A.G. Sayer 14, C.E. Solly 53, and Edward Warner 49.

The Chairman informed those who had given votes for the various candidates, that if they felt disposed to demand a poll it must be supported by five local electors.

A poll was demanded, and the Chairman announced that it would take place on April 4th, and in answer to Mr. C.R. Haig, he said he should think it would cost the ratepayers about £7 or £8.

Mr. Doorne, a ratepayer, said it would be the fairest thing to have a poll, as it would give every one a chance to vote as well as those who had attended the meeting that evening. He did not suppose the cost of the poll would fall heavily upon the ratepayers individually, as the sum would be widely divided.

Mr. A.M. Green, in order to give those present some idea of his views, delivered a short speech in which he said that as far as he had studied the drainage question, he was not in favour of the tubular system, but if he was elected he would endeavour to find out the feeling of the people before doing anything in the matter. What he should do would be for the benefit of the place (applause).

The Chairman then asked if the five gentlemen who had demanded a poll would withdraw their demand and receiving a reply in the negative, the meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to Mr. W. Tomlin, the tellers, and the late hon. Clerk of Council, Mr. G. Cousins.