

Littlehampton Observer 7th February 1917 page 1

FOR AVIATION.

MILITARY PROPOSAL TO TAKE LAND AT TANGMERE AND BOXGROVE.

COUNTY COUNCIL PROTEST.

An important proposal for the acquisition of land in the parishes of Tangmere and Boxgrove by the military authorities for aviation purposes, came before the West Sussex County Council at their meeting on Friday at Chichester.

The War Agricultural Committee reported that they had considered the following report of the Agricultural Organizer (Mr. W. Lawson):—

The military authorities are at present considering the advisability of acquiring land in the parishes of Tangmere and Boxgrove for the purposes of Aviation, and the tenants of the arable land have received notice that they are not to proceed with any cultivation or spreading of manure.

The total area proposed to be taken is about 183 acres, 154 of which are arable, the remaining 29 acres being meadow.

I have gone over this land, and the arable land is of a high-class nature, capable of growing large grain crops and equally suitable for roots. I understand that 50 bushels of wheat per acre can be relied on in an average year, and this year, part of the land yielded 60 bushels of wheat per acre. The meadows are old established and very good.

The farmers affected are Mr. Ellis, Tangmere, who uses a meadow of twelve acres to keep a few milk cows; Mr. George Bayley, Church Farm, Tangmere, has received notice in respect of 107 acres; of this 17 acres are meadow used for fattening bullocks, 20 acres are at present in roots, and would come to corn next year, 46 acres are in clover seeds, and this comprises all the "seeds" on the farm, so that if they are taken Mr. Bayley will have no seed hay next year, and no clover root for wheat in the following year, 12 acres are sown with winter oats, and the remaining 12 acres were intended for roots next year, and have already been partly manured with farmyard manure; Mr. C. W. Atkey, East Hampnett Farm, has received notice in respect of 64 acres of his arable land, of this 46 acres are in clover seeds and are all the seeds on the farm, so that he would be in exactly the same position as Mr. Bayley; the other 18 acres have already been sown to wheat.

In both cases, the arable land that it is proposed to take is the best on the respective farms, it is naturally drained, seldom becomes too wet, and never suffers from drought.

I should like to quote the opinion of Mr. A. D. Hall, the well-known agricultural expert, on the land in the district as expressed in his essays on a "Pilgrimage of British Farming"; Mr. Hall notes that the maritime district of Sussex, though a country little known, contains some of the richest arable land in England. After Mr. Hall had travelled through it and inspected some of the farms on it, he concludes, "the great characteristic of Sussex maritime country is, however, neither its sheep nor its cattle, but its power of producing heavy corn crops; no land and no farming we had seen so far had given us the same impression as a big manufactory of produce."

I think it is right that the value of this land for food production should be pointed out, and, unless there are very strong military reasons for it, it should not be allowed to go out of cultivation.

The Committee resolved that the Clerk send this report to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, and protest against the War Office taking for aviation purposes good arable land in the county, capable of growing considerable quantities of food, when other land is available.

The proceedings were confirmed by the County Council without comment, but the decision of the War Office on the matter will be awaited with a good deal of interest.