



Crime and Punishment

Oaksey

Claims Court

Thames Valley Drainage Board v W B Wilson

An Oaksey farmer, Mr W B Wilson, made a protest at Cirencester County Court yesterday against the levying of a drainage rate by the Thames Valley Drainage Board in connection with Flagham Brook, Oaksey. The Board claimed arrears of rate amounting to £3 11s 9d from Mr Wilson.

Mr Wilson said that in view of the fact that the case involved others besides himself, including the Wilts and Gloucestershire County Councils, and to some extent the Somerset County Council, he wished to draw attention to what he alleged was the gross neglect displayed with regard to a certain water course in the district, for the past 20 years to his knowledge and to the knowledge of his predecessors for 60 years.

There was nothing left for him to do, on advice, but to refuse to pay the rates in order to bring the whole case before the public notice.

Judge A R Kennedy allowed Mr Wilson to ask an employee of the Clerk to the Board certain questions.

Mr Wilson (to Mr J H Merchant): During the past 20 years have I been in and out of the office to ask for something to be done for the farmers adjoining Flagham Brook, and also said that if such work was done, the farmers would be willing to pay a special rate? No, I only agree as far as my personal knowledge goes. You have been in during the last two years and complained of the state of Flagham Brook.

In reply to a further question, Mr Merchant said that nothing had been done to the brook as the Board did not treat it as an arterial watercourse for which they were responsible. They deemed it the occupiers' liability, and had served notices on them in the past.

Mr Wilson: Why do you collect rates for work which is never done? We do not collect rates for work which is never done. We have never done any work at the Flagham Brook, but we collect rates for work in other parts of the district.

Judge Kennedy: It seems it would be much better if you addressed your remarks to the Wilts County Council. I have no influence. Judgment is given for the amount claimed. I allowed you to put these questions as I did not want you to go away without being heard.

"There are many matters," he added, "which you as a citizen of this country have to pay for but do not receive any benefit. There is nothing novel in that."

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