

WHEATLEY COMMON

DISPUTED RIGHT TO WHEATLEY COMMON – A GENERAL RIOT – Luke Miles, labourer, was charged with assaulting William Mitchell, at Littleworth. The complainant stated that, on the 16th May, there was 300 or 400 people out on Wheatley Common. Witness, who as a cottager, considered he had a right to stock the common, took his cow thither by a halter, but he and his cow were both pushed by the mob into the ditch. The defendant declared that witness pushed him, and using threatening language he pushed him with his hands and wanted to fight. He was persuaded by some to go away at once, but he came back again. Witness could not go out of doors but what some one was on him. There was a dispute about who had a right to stock the common. – Capt. Fane: It seems that those who have no stock complain of those who have stock making use of the common. – Defendant said Mitchell pushed him, and when he asked, “What do you mean by this?” Complainant replied, “Anything you like.” Defendants rejoinder was, “I am of the same way.” – Henry Munt said 300 or 400 people went up to turn the cattle off. He saw Mitchell, who had his cow, push Miles. Pretty nearly all the men were in the ditch at one time or another. They pushed one another. All the crowd pushed Miles, and Mitchell helped. Mitchell tried to keep his cow out of the ditch but he could not. (Laughter.) The case was dismissed. – George Clarke, labourer, of Wheatley, was summoned for assaulting George Munt, who claimed to be haywarden of the common, an office he said he had held for 25 years. He was in the act of removing from the common a horse belonging to a gentleman from Horspath parish when the defendant interfered. Cooper and Mitchell, two stockers, authorised him to remove the horse, and he was going to take it to Mr Chapman’s own land. Defendant struggled to get hold of the halter, and pushed witness about so that he must have fallen had he not held on by the horse’s head. At last witness’s brother slipped the halter off and took the horse back to the common. – The defendant replied that Munt fetched the horse off his (defendant’s) land. He did not appoint him Hayward. – The Magistrates dismissed the case cautioning the defendant against any conduct tending to a breach of the peace.

SLIGHT DAMAGE

Wm Rogers, labourer, pleaded guilty to damaging a fence the property of G.G.Maitland, Esq., Wheatley; but he said he was forced to do it as a great crowd of people threatened that if he did not take his mare off the common without delay they would slaughter her and cut her up in joints. They brandished knives, and swore at him. Defendant was fined 6d. and costs, which were mitigated to 8s. (?) Mr Walsh kindly forgoing his fees.

THE WHEATLEY RIOTERS

James Munt, John tombs, Edward tombs, Geo. Clarke, Thomas Maloney, and John Munt, labourers, were charged with having, on Monday the 16th May, with others, numbering 200 and more, unlawfully and riotously assembled, and created a great noise and disturbance, to the terror and alarm of Her Majesty’s subjects, and against the Peace of Our Lady the Queen. Defendants pleaded not guilty.

Joseph Perry Frampton deposed that he was a cooper, living in the parish of Wheatley. With his cottage he purchased a right of common on Wheatley Common, which is about 20 acres in extent, and had exercised the right for 44 years, all the summer through. On the 15th he saw a notice on the church door:-

“Notice is hereby given by the poor inhabitants of Wheatley to the tradespeople, that they will have to remove their cattle from off the common (allotted to the poor) on or before Monday, the 16th day of May, 1870. On behalf, G.C. – Wheatley, Oxon, May 15, 1870.”

On the evening of the 16th, about half past 7, in consequence of the notice, he went up to the common where witness had a mare. Standing there with the hayward, George Munt, he saw 200 or 300 people coming up the road towards the common, shouting and yelling. They had a flag on a pole, a sheep bell, and most of them had sticks of various sizes. When the crowd came up to the gate, George Clark commenced to dig up one of the gate posts. The noise made by the crowd was calculated to frighten inoffensive people. When Clark began digging half the crowd had gone through the gates. Witness went to him and said, “George, I would not attempt anything of the sort if I was you.” Clark replied, “I’ll do it if I have to go to gaol for a twelvemonth, for I’ll have my rights.” Witness went away about 30 yards on the common. Clark, the two Munts, and twenty or thirty others came up to him.