

John Grey

13 Jan 1835

Tues 13th Jan 1835. I reported formerly to the Board that Robert Curry, tenant of the small farm of Eads Bush & Allotments, who is a very industrious, decent man, had been unfortunately cheated of a sum of money by an Attorney into whose hands it had gone for other purposes & on being called on to make it good was compelled to make an assignment. I obtained from his assignee payment of the rent due at May day and an undertaking for that due at Martinmas, and sent for Curry to come and shew to me whether he had any prospect of continuing in the Farm after next May – for if not I must not loose the present season for letting it, though I should be glad if he could find friends to assist him, to recommend the Commissioners to allow him to remain, which I thought they would be inclined to do in consideration of his misfortune. He came to me today, & said that in a fortnight he hoped to have his Affairs settled, and then he would bring forward friends who would keep him in the farm.

28 Jan 1835

Weds 28 Jan 1835: Took advantage of the fine day to go through the several farms in Hexhamshire & among other proceeded to the distant & detached one of Eadsbush, wishing to ascertain from the unfortunate tenant whether he had yet obtained means of carrying it on, or had got security to offer, for his doing so. He happened however to be absent on that business. This is a small property entirely detached from any other belonging to the Hospital & of small value, consisting of only 26 acres, exclusive of some poor allotments on the Fell, which are at a distance & would attach as conveniently to other Farms in the Shire as to this. It is almost surrounded by Mr Crawhall's Land. He applied to purchase it last year & if it should meet the view so the Commissioners to sell it I have little doubt but he would give more for it, to square out his property, than ever they will make of it.

I proceeded westward to Gairshield & found old Thorburn – I had received £53 3/6 on his account from Mr Beaumont's agent for carriage of ore, but there is still a considerable arrear, which he cannot yet pay. He says they owe him more than that, but I fear he is not very correct in his accounts. I have got the arrear due from Mirehouse Farm, which he quitted last May, extinguished, & hoped he might have worked himself clear in Gairshield by allowing him to continue for a year or two. He promises to come to the Office in a day or two & let me know how he is likely to get on. Should it seem desirable to continue him on trial for another year it would be best to let Rowleyhead for one year also, that an opportunity might be taken of laying them together. The tenant offered for it £110, which I consider a full rent. I told Thorburn that I should give him Credit for £10, the value of his Machine before it was improved at the Hospital's expense. This he declared he would by no means agree to, as it had cost him

originally £40 and only wanted a trifling repair; when by order of the Bailiff it was altered at a great expense but very little improved by it. He declares that he remonstrated against the cost at the time but was told "to hold his tongue as he would get a good Machine for no outlay to him". How far this may be true I cannot say, but it does seem singular that the Hospital should have incurred the expense of repairing & almost remaking a Machine which a Tenant lays claim to. I told him that the Commissioners would unquestionably allow all that it was worth, if that could be known & if he would find any Millwright that knew it at the time and would meet Stokoe & they two would agree upon its value I should be satisfied with their award. This he engaged to do.

18 Feb 1835

Weds 18th February. Heard from Mr Crawhall that he intended calling on me tomorrow to have some conversation about Eadsbush, in consequence of which I determined to ride over to Hexhamshire to examine the allotments attached to it at present and endeavour to ascertain what rent could be obtained for them separately as he does not wish to rent or purchase them. I called at Rawgreen and Turfhouse, took the tenants with me & walked over all the allotments. These are the two farms to which that description of Moor Land would be the most useful & to which also it is the nearest. The interior fences consisting of stone walls, like too many on these Estates, are entirely in ruins & to rebuild them, would be to imitate the folly that first projected the division of such miserable land into Fields of fifteen acres as if it would have grown wheat and Turnips. These tenants will take the pasture jointly, only requiring the Boundary Fence to be repaired where necessary, & it does not want much, having been better built at first & of necessity rebuilt by the occupiers when it fell. But they only offer £17 for the whole 147 acres or little more than 2s3 ½ d per acre. It is chiefly covered with poor heath & where it is not the grass is the coarsest possible. Having engaged Benson to follow me into that district we examined such buildings as want repair. At Slamon Field a regular square of new farm Offices had been set out, but only in part completed. We found that by a little pointing & thatching the old Houses might be made to last for a few years still, & these times offer no encouragement for spending money, merely that the buildings may be square and compact. At Rowleyhead the same thing occurs, but matters are worse, for the old part is so thoroughly bad that there is a doubt of some of it standing over another year. It must however I suppose take its chance as the tenant does not wish to have any trouble with building unless he gets a lease, and that I would not recommend at present, as it is almost certain that by next year Gairshield will be at liberty to be annexed to Rowleyhead, which would make a better farm and save some building. The rent we fixed on Rowleyhead for the ensuing year is £110 if approved by the Board.

19 Feb 1835

Thurs 19 Feb 1835, At noon Mr. Crawhall came as he had appointed but I found him inclined to give very little for Eadsbush on the score of accommodation. He offers to rent it without the Allotments at £25 a year, to purchase it at £700 or to leave the price to be determined by persons mutually appointed by the Commissioners and himself. It was let last year to Curry at £47, altogether & at that time I valued the infield land, No. 1 on the plan at £30 and the poor allotments, No. 2 at £17, the same as offered for them now by two of the Hospital's tenants, see my journal of yesterday. I am not sure that the plot No.1 will let this year for £30 because the small occupiers in that district depended much for their rents upon their earnings in carrying Ore on Ponies from Mines in the Moors to Mr. Beaumont's Mill at Dukesfield, which is about to be laid in & the Ore to be conveyed in a direction coming more in the line of the Railway, & entirely out of their reach. As it would be an accommodation to the poor farms of Rawgreen and Turfhouse to have those allotments and the tenants are willing to give the value of them though I fear their Farms will prove too dear, under the change of Ore carriage, it would be a pity that they should not have them.

21 May 1835

Thurs 21st May 1835

Set out at six o'clock and rode over several farms in the west part of Langley where there are some matters requiring my attention. It is unfortunate that any thing bringing in such revenue as the lead should be so injurious to the vicinity of its manufacture. The Smoke from the Mills alighting on the Fields has a most pernicious effect both upon the herbage and the health of the Cattle, which are frequently destroyed by it, and one drink of the water, on days when the Ore is being washed will cause the immediate death of the strongest animal. Now that the smelting there is increased by a part of the Mills being occupied by Mr Beaumont it is more than ever desirable that some means should be taken to obviate this evil, and I have been desirous of coming to some agreement with the Lessees for the purpose, by proposing that if they would construct a long horizontal duct to carry the smoke up the hill before allowing it to escape, its deleterious qualities would in a great measure be deposited in its course, which deposit would probably repay them the cost of erecting it, and the Board or their future Lessee would repay them the value of the Bricks, should they leave the Mills at the end of the present Lease. I have not yet however been able to effect any such arrangement. As to the water the only thing to be done is to use all vigilance in keeping it fenced from Cattle.

It happened a few days ago that some Oxen belonging to Mr. Peacock tenant of Esphill got into the Plantation by a gap in the Wall which had been taken down for the purpose of carrying out some trees that were cut and sold there. The gap had not been made up or secured, by which means the cattle get access to the Burn and one of them

worth ten or eleven pounds died stark mad in a few hours. Most fortunately the others had not drunk so much, and recovered.

To pay for all losses sustained or alledged to be caused by the smoke or water, would lead to abuse and imposition but in this case as no doubt can exist of the cause and consequence, & as it occurred by the neglect of the Woodman, Mr. Peacock seems to have a reasonable claim for compensation.

21 May 1835 Henry Peacock to John Grey

Esp Hills 26th May 1835

To the Commissioners of Greenwich Hospital

Gentlemen,

Having had a bullock killed in consequence of having drank the water from Langley Smelt Mill I am induced to apply to you for remuneration, which I am satisfied you will grant, when I state the particulars under which the accident happened and which are as follows.

The wall which separates my pasture from the Plantation near the lead <Birks> was broken down to lead out wood and my cattle got into the plantation and drank of the water which runs through it from the smelt mill, by which one of them died in a few days afterwards.

If any blame had attached to me I should not have applied to your honourable Board for remuneration, but as the matter stands, the fence belonging to the Hospital, you will see the justice of my demands of Eleven pounds, the value of the Bullock.

I am gentlemen,

Your obed Servant

Henry Peacock