

The Rookery and the Dorking Water Company

From the prospectus for the sale of the Rookery Estate in 1894

“The water is not only highly ornamental and pleasurable from a sporting point of view but possesses solid and intrinsic value in its motive power, which is now applied to the purposes of a Saw Mill, Water Corn Mill, and for raising spring water to a Reservoir on an elevated Site, supplying the Estate generally; after doing this, a very considerable surplus of power remains, available for the installation of electric light, or other purposes.

Nearly all the Houses, cottages and Farm Buildings on the Estate, as well as some in the Village, are supplied by the private Waterworks above alluded to. The water supply may probably shortly be undertaken by the Dorking Water Company under their powers, but in the meantime Lot 1 is sold subject to, and with the benefit of, all existing arrangements.

The Dorking Water Company have the power under a lease granted by the late owner of the Estate, of taking a limited amount of water, by gravitation only, from that lot. The rental payable by the Company will be included in Lot One, and the easements defined by the lease, through and over other lots in this sale, will be reserved to the purchaser of that lot.

The Water Supply from the Private works on the Estate is ample and of the finest quality, having been tested and found equal to distilled water, and a recently granted Certificate states that the Premises “*are in first rate Sanitary Condition.*”

The Dorking Water Company, incorporated by Act of Parliament, hold by an Agreement in perpetuity (except that it may be terminated by mutual consent in the year 1902, and by the Company giving one year's notice expiring at any time) the right of taking a water supply limited to 72,000 gallons in the 24 hours.

The Company is a prosperous one, and its rental is based on a sliding scale in accordance with its increase of dividend. The last annual payment, the Company then paying a dividend of £8 cent., was the maximum of £40, which may be safely calculated on in the future. The whole beneficial interest of the above lease will be included in this lot (Lot One). It should be remarked that surplus water only is taken, and that by gravitation; no water power or machinery of any kind is used by the Company.

In the Conditions of Sale there is a note that:

“The private waterworks supply water to nearly all the houses, cottage, and farm buildings on the property, and to some houses in the village of Westcott, and Lot One is sold subject to the obligation of continuing such supply of water and with the benefit of all contracts and agreements which have been made and entered into in reference thereto.”

In March 1867 the Rt Hon George Cubitt brought an action in the High Court to recover the sum of £86 3s from the Dorking Company. This sum had been awarded by an umpire in arbitration for damage sustained by the deterioration of the value of Parsonage Mill as a result of the abstraction of water from the Pipp Brook. The outcome attracted considerable interest a successful action would lead to claims for compensation from other mill owners down stream.

It was explained that the Dorking Water Company were authorised (by Act of Parliament) to lay water mains immediately below the wheelhouse on the Rookery Estate and to intercept and abstract the overflow of the spring about the wheelhouse, and the spring immediately to the south of the Dorking to Guildford Road, both of which were located on the Rookery Estate.

It was further explained that the wheelhouse pumped springwater to The Rookery and the overflow drained away into the Brook, as did the water from the second spring about 30 or 40 feet downstream.

2 May 1896 The village of Westcott is well situated for drainage, and presents few difficulties to the engineer; it is simply a question of cost. The population in 1891 is given as 1433 and the rateable value at £9000 before deducting the value of the land, which can only be rated at one fourth for sanitary purposes. It will thus be seen that there is not much margin for heavy expenditure.