

## **SANITARY CONDITIONS AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN BASINGSTOKE PARISHES, 1866**

***HRO, PL3/5/12 Minute Book for Basingstoke Union Apr 1865 to Jul 1869***

Minutes of 12 September 1866

### Districts Nos. 4 and 6

Comprising the following parishes, Basing, Newnham, Nateley Scures, Sherfield, Hartley Westpall, Stratfield Turgis, Bramley, Sherborne St. John and Eastrop.

Basing. The health of this parish is better at the present time than it has been for some months past; diarrhoea prevailed to a considerable extent during the early part of the summer, but during the last fortnight it has been steadily decreasing. Within the last five days only two cases have occurred, there has been no case of cholera. Typhoid fever has prevailed very much during the last six months, and there are still some cases in the village. Cases of diphtheria and other strenuous diseases are very numerous. Basing is naturally a very unhealthy place being situated in a low and swampy position and surrounded by water, the house accommodation in several parts of the villages is bad, there are not sufficient bedrooms for the size of the family, and the area of the rooms is too small, the ventilation is insufficient, and in an overcrowded state. Many of the houses have the privies close to the back door, others have no cesspools but open ditches into which everything runs, this in hot dry weather becomes very offensive. The well water is pretty good, many of the inhabitants drink the river water.

Newnham. During May and June diarrhoea prevailed to a considerable extent. This was chiefly confined to one part of the parish and was caused I believe entirely by the privies emptying into an open ditch just outside the doors of the cottages, from which an offensive smell arose in hot weather, and during the rainy season leakage must have taken place into the well which is very near, this evil is now remedied. The general health of this parish is always very good, the soil being gravelly and the situation high, at the present time there is no diarrhoea or very little illness of any kind. Water supply good.

Nateley Scures. This parish is entirely free from diarrhoea and is altogether in a very healthy state. The houses are scattered over a large area, therefore there is no overcrowding, the water supply is very good. There have been no cases of cholera.

Sherfield. This parish is large and the houses in some parts are very much crowded together. In many houses the bedrooms are insufficient for the number of the inhabitants, they are small in size and badly ventilated. The health of the parish at the present time is very good, there is very little diarrhoea, no cholera and no sort of epidemic disease. Diarrhoea however is very prevalent at times, also low fever which might be prevented in a great measure if the nuisances which exist were removed, some of these are very serious and require immediate attention. In one part of the parish a large open drain runs along in front of the houses in a perfectly stagnant condition. Several privies empty into it, also waste water of all sorts and the drainage of a pigsty. The smell from this is very bad and very injurious to health. Many of the privies are very near the houses and run into open ditches, the smell from which penetrates into the houses when the wind is that way. The water supply is chiefly from wells and is of good quality.

Hartley Westpall. This parish for the last year has been very unhealthy, typhoid fever having been very frequently present, confined however chiefly to one part of the parish, where the houses are small

and dirty and the rooms badly ventilated, the privies in bad condition too near the houses, and offensive smells from badly kept drains. At the present time there is no diarrhoea and the parish is much more healthy than in has been for many months past; the water supply is very fair.

Stratfield Turgis. This parish is small and generally very healthy. There is very little sickness at the present time, no diarrhoea or cholera, the chief defect is the condition of the houses, in many instances the bedroom accommodation is very insufficient, six or seven persons sleeping in one small badly ventilated room. Should any serious epidemic occur this state of things would be very serious.

Bramley. This parish is remarkably healthy just now, there are no cases of diarrhoea or cholera. During the winter typhoid fever prevailed to some extent in Bramley Street and its vicinity, also diarrhoea. The privies in this part of the parish are in a bad condition, being either very full or else running into open ditches. In one instance two privies run into a ditch that flows a considerable way through part of the village, tainting the atmosphere in its course, this during epidemics of fever or cholera would be very injurious. The houses are overcrowded and in bad repair in some parts of the village. The water is very fair.

Eastrop. The health of this parish is remarkably good. There is no diarrhoea or sickness of any sort. The water in one house is bad and unfit for drinking being tainted with sewage matter; the well requires looking to, and I have requested the inmates [sic] not to drink it.

Sherborne St John. Just now this parish is more healthy than it has been for many months past. There is no diarrhoea, cholera or epidemic of any sort, this however is not usually the case. During the last two years typhoid fever, scarlet fever, diarrhoea and one or two cases of diphtheria have prevailed more or less – scarlet fever has been in the village for the last six months, and has only just subsided. Part of the village lies low and there being a great number of springs very near the surface of the ground is consequently damp. There are a great many houses and some of them very crowded together. All these things would favor the spread of an epidemic. The general condition of the houses are very good, there being one or two bedrooms with good ventilation and in good repair. The chief existing evil is the condition of some of the privies which are near the houses with no cesspools but running into open drains or ditches; the matter accumulating there decomposes and causes an offensive smell especially in hot dry weather and when a large amount of rain falls, the ditches become flooded, the sewage matter is carried on to other houses saturating the ground in its course and perculating [sic] into the wells and springs. The water supply is in most instances very good.

In my report of the sanitary condition of the No.4 and 6 Districts I have given the health of each parish separately, which at the present time is remarkably good. I have also pointed out the nuisances which are most likely to affect the health of the inhabitants and to aggravate any sort of epidemic disease which may arise. I find that the Inspectors appointed by the Board of Guardians have made a careful house to house inspection, and have reported on the evils in the shape of nuisances visiting in the several parishes; in many instances these have been already remedied. In poor cottages where large families live in small houses and where the space outside is necessarily limited it is most important they should have the air as pure as possible and free from all smells etc., this can only be accomplished by removing all decomposing animal and vegetable matter, open ditches, etc., and not allowing accumulations to take place close to the houses. All privies ought to have some sort of cesspool properly covered in and never allowed to become full, the system of privies running into open drains or ditches is very bad, large quantities of decomposing matter is thus allowed to accumulate which gives forth an offensive effluvia during hot and dry weather, and when the ditches are flooded

the surrounding earth become saturated and in many instances the water in the wells becomes contaminated. All this is of course very injurious to health, and is the means of producing and aggravating all sorts of epidemic diseases. In all cases where the water supply is in the immediate vicinity of cesspools or bad drains it should be avoided as unfit for drinking for some of the contents are sure to percolate into the wells, and this is the worst of all evils during epidemics of cholera and fever.

Thos. Sweeting

August 14th 1866

District No. 6

Extract from letter dated August 22nd 1866 from Mr F Izad per Mr G H Davis

With regard to the sanitary condition of the parishes under Mr Izad I know of nothing to complain except the pigsty below Mr Macocks [?] house at Waltham [?]. Mr Macock and Mr Davis complain of them much. They should be attended to.

The like copy extract from letter dated August 27th 1866

I have been through the parishes in the absence of Mr Izad but have not met with any nuisance except the one mentioned in my letter last week.