

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

District No. 1

Gentlemen, In accordance with your directions I have made due enquiry into the sanitary conditions of the District under my charge, the result of which I am happy to inform you enable me to report to you the non-existence of cholera and the absence of any undue amount of Diarrhoea. Indeed the state of the public health is remarkably good; no epidemic of any kind exists. This fact however should not create in [?] any undue feeling of security, as it has been frequently observed that during the prevalence of any wide spread epidemic, the usual forms of disease are, as it were, in a certain extent in abeyance. I consider that the comparative absence of Diarrhoea may be attributed in a great measure to the cool state of the atmosphere and the prevalence of high west winds; nevertheless as this favourable condition may at any time change it is of course adviseable to continue every precaution.

I have not considered it necessary to attempt a house to house visitation in the parishes of Pamber, West Sherborne, Wootton St Lawrence and Worting because of your appointment of Inspector of Nuisances to these parishes - as Basingstoke is that part of my District by far the most likely to suffer in case of a visitation of cholera I proposed submitting to you a detailed report of its defective sanitary arrangements, but the Town Council having appointed a Committee of Enquiry on this subject I have deferred completing my investigation and report until receiving further directions from you. I shall be glad to be favoured with your wishes on this point, as should you wish it I shall endeavour to send in my report by the next meeting of your Board.

I have the honour to remain, Gentlemen, your obdt. servant, J P Lewis, L R C [?]

Basingstoke, August 14th 1866

Minutes of 21 November 1866

.....The following further report received from Mr Davis Medical Officer of the No.1 District was ordered to be recorded on the Minutes of this Board.

Copy

To the Chairman and Guardians of the Sanitary Committee, Basingstoke Union

Gentlemen,

In accordance with your directions I have made a thorough investigation into the sanitary conditions of the parishes of Wootton St Lawrence, West Sherborne, Pamber and Worting and beg to lay before you the result thereof.

As regards the sanitary arrangements generally I am led to believe that imminent improvements have resulted from the visits of your Inspectors of Nuisances; large quantities of decomposing vegetable and animal refuse have been removed, drains and privies attended to, which had previously been neglected for years, and many pigsties made so clean as circumstances would permit. But on perusing my report you will perceive that much still remains to be done.

Monk Sherborne and Pamber. The general health of these parishes is at present good, if I except an epidemic of measles which is prevailing now throughout all my district. I shall proceed to draw your attention to those special cases where I have observed defective arrangements in the matter of water supply, privies, pigsties, ventilation, etc..

Near Joseph Monger's house is a foul and stagnant drain in close proximity (within one foot) to a well which supplies the inhabitants of six neighbouring cottages. On examination the water naturally bore evidence of organic impurity. This defect should be remedied as soon as possible, as to say the least, depressed vitality can scarcely fail to ensue from its consumption. The pigsty and yard belonging to Mr. Bonney are particularly offensive. The families of William Clark, Charles Cowdray and Richard Painter draw their water from a well which is out of repair, and admits like many others surface drainage from the garden. The privies attached to their houses are without pit of any kind and the decomposing soil drains into a stagnant ditch. The foregoing remarks apply to the privy accommodation and the water supply at the cottages occupied by the following, H Gosling, Wm Fryer, John Bradby, John Bennett, John Gosling, Joseph Gosling, George Wild and Isaac Gregor. Thomas Hall and George Blunden possess good water supply but their privies are open and in an offensive state.

The well supplying the houses occupied by Joseph Hunt and George Frankhouse is situated close to a drain and the mouth being low the water is frequently polluted.

George Hunt and Richard Stacey occupy one house the privy of which is open and very offensive.

Stephen Saunders. The mouth of the well is on a level with the garden, the privy is also bad.

John Dicker. Privy arrangements are defective and the water supply is not good.

Henry Gregory, George Inglefield and George Bowman. The water supply for the cottages occupied by the above named, as well as for all the houses on Pamber Green, is particularly subject to impurities, the mouths of the wells in all cases being too low, the privies of the above dwellings are for the most part open and offensive, in one case (Henry Gregor's) opening into a ditch by the road side. The pigsties generally are bad. On the higher ground of Pamber Common the water supply is on the whole good and the hygienic conditions fairly satisfactory.

Little London. George Dicker, William Dicker. The sanitary state of the houses occupied by these people is very neglected, there is a stagnant and offensive drain immediately in front of the houses; though previously admonished by your Inspector of Nuisances the inhabitants seemed indisposed to take the necessary steps for purification.

At Daniel Holloway's there is a stagnant pond onto which the fluid from the privy drains, this is calculated to be a fertile cause of foul nuisance. The well supplying the cottages in the occupation of Charles Woods, Charles Davis and Jesse Lockley becomes dry every summer; the mouth also from its low level admits snails etc. with surface drainage.

Charter Alley. The privy accommodation here is generally defective, the privies are open and in the majority of instances drain into a ditch. There is much complaint of the water supply being rendered impure by the frequent presence of dead toads, snails, etc.: this results from the wells being frequently out of repair and the mouths of the wells not being raised above the level of the gardens. The ventilation of the cottages generally is insufficient, few of them being supplied with back doors.

The houses inhabited by George Dawkins, Charles Pigdon, David Harmsworth (and Widow Harmsworth), situated near Wootton Church, have all open privies which as well as the pigsties are much neglected.

White Down. There are here five cottages immediately behind which are several pigsties, whose further removal is highly desirable.

Free School, Monk Sherborne. I wish here specially to bring under your notice the very defective ventilation of this building. The room is well built lofty and amply large, but the only provision for the admission of pure air (besides the door) consists of five diamond shaped openings about eight inches in diameter, and this I do not consider by any means sufficient where the number of children attending averages seventy. It is almost unnecessary to remark of what vital importance it is that where a large number of children are congregated together for several hours at a time there should be an adequate and constant influx of pure air; this might easily be attained in the present case by some alterations in the windows.

Concerning the mortality of Monk Sherborne it is highly satisfactory to note that taking the average since the Census of 1861 the death rate is only 14 per 1000. In Pamber however the mortality stands at 17 per 1000.

Wootton St Lawrence. My report on the general health of this parish is not so favourable as on that of the parishes of Monk Sherborne and Pamber and the objections I have to make to its sanitary arrangements are more numerous. I shall now mention those cases which are most objectionable.

Lower Wootton. The three houses occupied by Mrs. Smith, William Tarrant and another possess only one open privy which is in bad condition and offensive.

Near the houses of Charles Smith and Robert Doulton is a large open cess-pool the effluvia exhaled from which is extremely unhealthful. The privies pertaining to the houses in the occupation of Thomas Smith, William Casper, James Kemp, William Elwick, Andrew [?], George Tanner and George Downham are open and in bad condition; near the house of James Kemp is an open cesspool, and the pigsty belonging to William Elwick is in too close proximity to his house. The same bad privy arrangements have to be objected to in connection with the houses occupied by the following: George Collins [?], George Kemp, William Pigdon, Henry Kemp, Charles Tent and Joseph Clark.

Upper Wootton. The privy belonging to Thomas Bulpit is close to his house; it is overflowing and the fluid from it finds its way under the flooring of the rooms.

John Hughes, Richard Wareham, William Burton and Charles Delehay [?] have all bad open privies for the most part full and requiring immediate attention. The mouths of nearly all the wells are too low, admitting surface drainage etc.

Pit Hall. John Broskin's pigsty requires cleaning. The well attached to Sarah Lovell's house is out of repair.

Ramsdell. Henry Mear's privy should be removed further from the house, that belonging to Ephraim Ireland is open and offensively full. There are four houses at Magpit the privies attached to which are open and very full requiring immediate attention. The water supply is bad and the pigsties are objectionably near the dwellings.

There are open cesspools at the front and rear of the cottage occupied by Sarah Loscock [?], there is no privy accommodation.

John Mears' yard is in a most offensive state, and the privy ought to be removed further from his house.

A large open cesspool is situated directly behind George Hale's cottage, the pigsties here and at Charles Owen's are too near the houses.

David Smith, John Murrell, George Butler, William Mears, James Kent, Francis Mears, Anne Hale and David Buckle. The privies attached to the houses occupied by the above mentioned open into a ditch where the soil stagnates. This is a state of things which must be prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants. The two wells supplying these eight cottages are both out of repair.

The cottages occupied by Charles Gardiner and Henry Mears are without privies, and immediately in front of the former is a stagnant and foul ditch.

Mrs Brown Senior, David Brown and John Butler, the privies in use by the foregoing are objectionably full, and should be emptied with as little delay as possible; their pigsties, like so many others are too near the houses.

John King, Henry Gardiner and John Hampton. The wells supplying the families of the above mentioned and other cottages in the immediate vicinity are all out of repair, the first being without covering and the water of the last it is complained is rendered impure by the constant presence of large quantities of dead snails, toads, etc..

East Oakley. At the back of the houses occupied by James Ballard, William Ballard, William Tigwell and Mrs Maypath [?] is an offensive open drain; the ventilation of some of these cottages is defective as they are unprovided with back doors.

Near David Kemp's dwelling is an open cesspool which is offensively full, the house is without drain or back door.

The same observations apply to William Marlow's.

The pigsties of William Lanedale, Daniel Goddard, Daniel [?], Thomas Porter, Harmsworth and William Hunt, are all very offensive and too near their cottages. The wells supplying the families of Wills and others require new board work.

Newfound The privies attached to the cottages occupied by William Prior, Thomas Binfield and Thomas Digweed are immediately adjoining their dwellings, it is highly desirable they should be removed.

The houses inhabited by James Chandler, John Hughes, John Prior, James Rose and James Blunden are all in bad condition. The ventilation is defective as the windows cannot be opened, and there are no back doors, the privies are bad and in all cases the pigsties are too near the houses, that at James Blunden's being absolutely under the same roof.

The same remarks respecting ventilation to apply to the cottages of James Exall, Stephen Godard and Willdon Eccott.

The privies at Mrs Martin's and Mrs Cooper's are in a very objectionable state, the latter especially requiring immediate attention. The ventilation of John Crook's cottage is deficient, there being no back door, it is also unprovided with privy accommodation.

The mortality of this parish for the last five years averages 18.1/2 per 1000. This is certainly higher than we might fairly accept in an agricultural district, and I am strongly of the opinion that this death rate might be considerably lowered by more attention to general cleanliness, and by removing to a greater distance from the dwellings the many sources of noisome effluvia which I have pointed out in the course of my report.

Worting. The National School situated in this parish I consider to be inadequate in point both of size and ventilation to the requirements of the number of children attending, which I am informed averages seventy. On measurement I find that the cubic space in the schools and class rooms together, amounts to a little over 15,000 feet, thus giving to each child only 216 cubic feet of space, which is clearly insufficient with the present ventilation. This is provided for by two small size ventilators at each gable end, and there are five windows of which however only one pane in each (14 x 26 inches) can be opened. The position of the privy is also open to objection, it is within eight feet of the passages leading to the class room, and on the occasion of my first visit I found the atmosphere of the school severely tainted by the effluvia arising from this course.

The well supplying the school and several cottages in its immediate vicinity contains water which on examination I find to be strongly impregnated with organic impurity. This I attribute to the presence of an immense quantity of dead snails of which I found to be no less than eighteen in one bucketful which was drawn up for me. Though the well is apparently in good repair the snails find their way under the curb into the water.

The average mortality of this parish for the five years ending June 25th 1866 is nearly twenty-three per thousand. This is a very high death rate for a village population.

In concluding my report of the health of the parishes in No.1 District there are some suggestions which I am anxious to submit for your consideration and approval as I think if carried out the results would prove satisfactory.

In the first place I have observed throughout my investigation that there exists one almost universal defect in the wells of the District, it is that the mouths are too low, being generally on a level with the gardens thus facilitating the ingress of snails, toads, etc.; during rains the surface water frequently pours into the wells carrying with it numberless impurities. This might be remedied at a trifling expense by raising the mouth of the well somewhat above the garden level, say one or two feet (by means of a brick or flint wall would I believe be as good and inexpensive a plan as any) and closing it with a well fitting cover.

The next suggestion I would offer to you is respecting the privies. They are in very many instances especially when open very offensive and constant sources of noxious effluvia, these injurious effects might be completely neutralized and the soil converted into a valuable and perfectly innocuous manure by the constant use of simple dried earth the deodorizing and disinfecting properties of which are now so fully recognised.

Lastly I would suggest the permanent appointment of your Inspectors of Nuisances as a measure likely to be productive of the most beneficial results, as the constant supervision of such officers would induce among the poor, a greater degree of attention to general cleanliness and they would enforce the carrying out of those sanitary improvements which have been suggested, a strict observance of which would I doubt not have a marked effect in the general health.

I am desirous of bearing testimony to the almost universal courtesy I have met with in conducting my inspection especially from the sub-registrars, and your Inspectors who gave me every alleviances in their power. To Mr. Powning also my acknowledgements are particularly due.

I am, Gentlemen

Your obedt. svt.

J P Lewis L.B. [?]

Basingstoke, October 22nd 1866