

General report of the Sanitary Committee of their proceedings under the orders of the Privy Council of the 21st July last, and the resolution of the Board of the 24th July last, on the outbreak of the cholera in the district.

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THE BOARD OF WORKS

FOR THE

Saint Giles's District.

GENERAL REPORT of the Sanitary Committee of their proceedings under the Orders of the Privy Council of the 21st July last, and the Resolution of the Board of the 24th July last, on the outbreak of the Cholera in the District.

Cholera appeared in London in its epidemic form at the beginning of July. It affected the Eastern Districts first, and with greatest violence. The deaths from it registered each week in the Metropolis are given in an appended Table (I) side by side with the mortality of corresponding weeks in the two preceding epidemics.

On July 15th, an Order of Council declared the Diseases Prevention Act to be in force throughout the kingdom, and on July 21st a further order gave instructions as to the measures to be adopted in places where epidemic Cholera or Diarrhœa prevailed.

On July 24th, the Board of Works instructed the Sanitary Committee to consider and carry into effect the Orders of Council, and gave the Committee power to incur such expense as might be necessary in carrying out the same.

PRECAUTIONARY ACTION.—Next day the Committee met, and adopted means for detecting every case of Cholera and Diarrhœa at its earliest stages, for affording the promptest medical assistance to all

persons attacked, and for keeping the District in the most wholesome condition practicable. These measures were carried into effect under the daily supervision of the Committee. (Order of Council, II. 1-2.)

Each morning a Return was compiled of all ascertained cases of Cholera, Choleraic Diarrhœa, and Diarrhœa occurring during the previous day. Information for this return was supplied by the Officers of the Workhouse and Bloomsbury Dispensary, and by many private practitioners, as well as by the officers whom the Committee proceeded to appoint; and there is evidence that nearly every case of Cholera or Diarrhœa came at once to the knowledge of the Committee. (O. of C. I & II. 21.)

For the purpose of house visitation, the Committee divided the District into six parts, one comprising the greater part of the Parish of Bloomsbury, while the other five parts comprised St. Giles's Parish, and contained from six to nine thousand people in each. (O. of C. II. 4.)

To each subdivision a Medical Staff was assigned, consisting of one Medical Visitor and two assistants. The Medical Visitor was in all cases a highly qualified practitioner, who gave all his time to the duties assigned him. His assistants were usually Medical students who had had much Hospital experience. (O. of C. II. 4.)

The Medical Visitor was charged to visit from house to house and from room to room, by himself or his assistants (for all of which work he was held responsible), in search of cases of Cholera and Diarrhœa, to treat all such cases immediately, and to take charge of every such case to a termination. He had to report every morning the number of houses and of families visited, the number of new cases of Cholera and Diarrhœa met with on the previous day, and the result of his treatment of cases already reported. The enormous amount of work done by this Medical Staff may be judged of by the fact that they commonly visited 1,700 houses, and 5,200 families daily, and on one day these numbers amounted to 1,898 and 5,945 respectively. (O. of C. II. 4-5.)

Medicines were provided at any hour of the day or night at each of four dispensaries which were established by the Committee. Although relief was never delayed to any applicant suffering under Cholera or Diarrhœa, the Committee did not consider it sufficient merely to give medicines, but the name and address of every applicant at the dispensaries were taken and the case followed up and treated by the Medical Visitors. In this way two or three hundred Diarrhœa patients were often on the lists of the Medical Visitors in a single day, while each day added a large number of new patients (frequently nearly two hundred) suffering from the complaint. Happily the Diarrhœa proved very amenable to the skilful treatment of the Visitors, and although from first to last they had about ten thousand cases of it under treatment, their work did not accumulate to an unmanageable extent. (O. of C. II. 7-8.)

The Committee early regarded the provision of a Hospital for Cholera as one of the most important portions of the duty imposed on them by the Order of Council. A disease which demands the most skilful nursing to give a chance of recovery, and which is known to

extend itself indefinitely in the presence of dirt and carelessness, could not be managed with advantage to the patient, or with safety to his neighbours, in the close and crowded houses of the poor of Saint Giles. The Committee succeeded in substituting a well arranged Hospital for the crowded room, and the best of medical care and nursing for the chance attendance of ignorant friends. (O. of C. II. 10.)

The Rector of Saint Giles kindly put at the disposal of the Committee the Shelton School rooms by St. Giles's Church. The Clewer Sisters undertook the entire management, under the Medical Officers, of the Hospital thus obtained. The building having been adapted to its purpose by some few alterations, the first Cholera patient was admitted into it on August 14th. (O. of C. II. 9-10.)

The steps taken by the Committee to keep the District in the most wholesome practicable condition were in some sense a continuation of those which had been taken by the Board since the very beginning of the year. In anticipation of coming Cholera, the Board had made provision for maintaining the sewers in a state of special efficiency, and for flushing them with disinfectants throughout the summer; they had arranged for more frequent street cleaning and removal of manure, had shut up the dangerous surface wells, had sought to obtain from the New River Company a better supply of water, and had engaged the services of a second Sanitary Inspector. The Committee carried out and extended this course of action, and with the extra light that was thrown on unwholesome conditions about the district by daily reports from the Medical Visitors, they were able promptly to apply sanitary remedies to those streets and houses that stood in most need of improvement. The Inspectors, acting on the reports of the visitors, called on the owners of 375 houses to make improvements; and where delay or neglect was allowing a state of things to exist grossly prejudicial to health, the officers of the Committee were instructed to employ workmen to carry out needful means of cleansing. Moreover, a quite unparalleled amount of personal and domestic cleanliness was obtained, for a time, through the exhortations and influence of the Medical Visitors. (O. of C. II. 5.)

The New River Company furnished a gratuitous supply of water to eighteen stand-pipes, which were erected by the Committee in the poorer streets and courts. From these, good water could be drawn by any person on Sundays as well as week days, and over a thousand persons have been frequently supplied from them in the course of a couple of hours. (O. of C. II. 14.)

The Committee endeavoured to convey to every one information as to the way of avoiding Cholera, and of preventing the disease from extending. They issued handbills to owners and occupiers of houses inhabited by the poor, urging on all the duty of seeing that drains and other necessities were acting efficiently, and that water supply was pure; insisting on the importance of attending early to all Diarrhoea; and giving information about the medical and sanitary arrangements. Between twenty and thirty thousand handbills and placards were distributed. (O. of C. II. 20.)

APPEARANCE AND COURSE OF EPIDEMIC.—The measures that have been here enumerated, were taken with great promptitude, and were on a scale commensurate with the actual and prospective wants of the District. In the first week (that ending August 11th) for which the Committee have complete returns, no less than 2,700 cases of Diarrhœa were ascertained to have occurred. At this time, Cholera itself had only appeared in a few houses, and was directly traceable to communication with some infected locality. At the beginning of September, however, when ordinary summer diarrhœa was declining, the cases of Cholera became more numerous, and throughout September and the first half of October, one or two fresh outbreaks were reported almost every day, and it became in the majority of instances impossible to trace the disease to previous infection of person or locality. After the middle of October, only two or three fresh families were attacked, and the last was on November 8th.

In an appended table (II.), are shown the weekly number of new cases of Diarrhœa, Choleraic Diarrhœa, and Cholera with the deaths each week. (O. of C. II. 19)

From first to last, 83 persons were attacked with Cholera, reckoning those who were removed from St. Giles to the hospitals of neighbouring districts, as well as those who died within the district. Out of this number, 53 died, and 30 recovered, giving almost two deaths out of every three attacks. But there can be no doubt that in reality the disease was not quite so fatal as this, inasmuch as many of the cases returned as Choleraic Diarrhœa, hardly any of which died, were really examples of true Cholera in its earlier stages. Only one death is recorded as from Choleraic Diarrhœa out of 70 cases returned by medical visitors under that head. Three other cases of death from "Choleraic Diarrhœa" were also registered, of which nothing but the fatal event was known. If only half these cases were really slight cases of Cholera, and should therefore be reckoned with Cholera, the proportion of deaths from Cholera to the attacks, would be barely fifty per cent.

Each case of Cholera did not represent a separate outbreak of the disease; the 83 cases having occurred in 70 families living in 69 houses. The culminating period of the epidemic was in the week ending October 6th, when 13 cases and 9 deaths were recorded.

Comparing the virulence of Cholera this year with that of former epidemics in St. Giles's, the Committee observe with satisfaction a very much smaller mortality. In 1832, the deaths from Cholera exceeded 300; in 1849 they were 285; and in 1854, they were 113.* The Committee venture to assert, that the satisfactory result

* These figures represent the *registered* deaths of former epidemics. The *registered* deaths from Cholera and Choleraic Diarrhœa in 1866, were 48, and this is the number which ought to be compared with those of former years. The difference between the registered and actual deaths (53), results from including in the latter, deaths of persons removed to outlying hospitals, and from other means that have been employed to ensure accurate and complete returns.

in the present year was largely brought about through the operation of the measures which they were charged to carry into effect. For they have evidence—

1.—That the excessive mortality from Diarrhœa, which existed up to the time of their appointment, disappeared immediately that their work began.* 2.—That the Cholera affected most those localities which from their previous condition were the least amenable to precautionary measures, particularly the neighbourhood of New Compton Street, (whose sewerage the Board had not succeeded in completing before they found that Cholera was in London—they knew that typhoid fever had been particularly rife in that quarter)—suffered more from Cholera than even worse looking streets.† 3.—With the precautions that the Committee enforced, scarcely any instance occurred of a second family being attacked in the same house, and no instance of persons suffering in two contiguous houses. 4.—Attacks of Cholera were in the great majority of cases confined to single individuals, and did not spread even to others of the family; and the exceptional cases where whole families were attacked, occurred almost exclusively among those who would not or did not adopt the course prescribed by the Committee.

SANITARY AND REMEDIAL MEASURES.—Upon the occurrence of any case of Cholera, the action of the Committee was, 1stly, to procure the removal of the patient whenever possible to the Shelton Hospital. 2ndly.—To remove his family, if they were not properly lodged, into another and detached portion of the Hospital; here they were kept under observation and in wholesome conditions until their own room could be made safe for their return. (O. of C. II. 11.) 3rdly.—To disinfect and limewash the room thoroughly, to disinfect the privy and drains, and to clean out the waterbutt of the house. (O. of C. II. 7-12.) 4thly.—To destroy or in some cases disinfect

* The following are the numbers of Registered Deaths from Diarrhœa before and after house visitation began; it commenced in St. Giles North on July 30th.

In Sub-District, Week ending.	BEFORE HOUSE VISITATION.				AFTER HOUSE VISITATION.			
	July 7.	July 14.	July 21.	July 28.	Aug. 4.	Aug. 11.	Aug. 18.	Aug. 25.
Bloomsbury .....	..	2	3	4	1	2	..	..
St. Giles South	1	5	4	3	3	4	2	..
St. Giles North	2	2	3	4	..	1	1	..
Whole District	3	9	10	11	4	7	3	..

† In the Report of Saint Giles Cholera Committee for 1854, a list is given of 18 houses which were affected by Cholera, both in that year and in 1849. It is curious that not one of these houses was affected in 1866.

every article of clothing and bedding that had been soiled by any discharges. (O. of C. II. 12.) The Committee are confident that in proportion as these measures were carried out early and efficiently, they succeeded in preventing the extension of Cholera.

Into the Hospital, 75 persons were admitted suffering from Cholera, Choleraic Diarrhœa, or some severe form of Diarrhœa. 57 cases of unequivocal Cholera were admitted, out of the total 83 cases that occurred in the district, and of these 37 proved fatal, being at the rate of 65 per cent. That the mortality was not higher, among cases that were all severe, the Committee regard as due partly to the circumstance of the Hospital being so near the infected localities; for they observe that of six persons taken beyond the District to various General Hospitals more or less distant, every one died. And partly they regard the recovery of their patients as having been assisted in a most material degree by the unwearied devotion of the Clewer Sisters. Of the manner in which these ladies have discharged the complicated and laborious duties which they undertook the Committee would wish to speak in the warmest terms of gratitude;—without the wisdom and skill and self sacrifice, of which every hour witnessed some fresh proof, the Committee could not satisfactorily have carried out the part of their functions which they believe to have been, of all others, the most efficacious in arresting the spread of the epidemic.*

Into the rooms which were set apart as a refuge and place of observation for persons belonging to infected families, 67 persons were admitted.

The disinfection of rooms and privies, and the destruction of articles contaminated by discharges from the sick was regarded as a matter of primary importance, inasmuch as the infective quality of Cholera has been shown to be developed during a certain stage of decomposition of its discharges, and to be capable of communication by the discharges to water or masses of night soil. The chemical agent used for disinfection was Chloride of Lime, a substance chosen as being the most generally useful, and in all probability the most efficient. This was given with a paper of instructions for its use to very many families attacked by Diarrhœa, and always when there was Cholera. In the Hospital and in particular instances elsewhere, Carbolic acid was employed, and Condy's fluid was used in rinsing out water butts. Where actual Cholera appeared, the needful processes of cleansing and disinfecting were not left to landlords and relatives, but were performed by careful competent persons in the employ of the Committee, and in no case were these processes omitted.

In certain cases where the want of sufficient wholesome food appeared to be actually keeping up Diarrhœa, and in other cases during convalescence after Diarrhœa or Cholera had ceased, the Committee caused

* It is with great regret that the Committee record the death from Cholera of Jean Messer, one of the Volunteer Nurses who assisted the Sisters in their work at the hospital.

the necessary nourishment and comforts to be supplied. (O. of C. II. 8.) All bedding and clothing destroyed by their orders were immediately replaced, or their value paid in money. And in obedience to the order of Council, cases of destitution observed by the Medical Visitors were reported to the parochial authorities. (O. of C. II. 6.)

The Committee entered into an engagement with the Necropolis Company to remove and inter the body of any poor person who had died of Cholera. Such bodies were taken within a few hours to the mortuary of the Company in the Westminster Road, and were speedily interred at the Cemetery at Woking. (O. of C. II. 15-17.)

The Committee were assisted towards the end of the epidemic in closing their Dispensaries and the Hospital by the Medical Officers of the Workhouse and the Bloomsbury Dispensary.

In rendering this account of the action taken under the order of Council and the instructions of the Board, the Committee are pleased to record that the poorer inhabitants of the District, upon whom the danger of the epidemic almost entirely fell, showed themselves throughout grateful for the care that was taken by the Committee. They were very accessible to the visitors, and generally attentive to their advice; in a larger proportion of cases than might have been expected they allowed the removal of their friends to the Hospital, in spite of their natural preference for attending them at home; and they offered no obstruction to the Committee in the action which it was thought right to take respecting disinfection, destruction of clothing and speedy interment of the dead.

RICHARD CULL, F.S.A.,
Chairman.

12th February, 1867.

APPENDIX I.

Mortality in London from Cholera during each week of Three Epidemics.

No. of Week.	1849.	1854.	1866.	In 1866, Week ending
21st	5	..	2	May 26
22nd	9	2	2	June 2
23rd	22	1	3	June 9
24th	42	1	3	June 16
25th	49	1	1	June 23
26th	124	..	6	June 30
27th	152	1	14	July 7
28th	339	5	32	July 14
29th	678	26	346	July 21
30th	783	133	904	July 28
31st	926	399	1053	Aug. 4
32nd	823	644	781	Aug. 11
33rd	1230	729	455	Aug. 18
34th	1272	847	265	Aug. 25
35th	1663	1287	198	Sept. 1
36th	2026	2050	157	Sept. 8
37th	1652	1549	182	Sept. 15
38th	839	1284	150	Sept. 22
39th	434	754	177	Sept. 29
40th	288	411	182	Oct. 6
41st	110	249	207	Oct. 13
42nd	41	163	144	Oct. 20
43rd	25	66	112	Oct. 27
44th	11	31	73	Nov. 3
45th	6	23	67	Nov. 10
46th	8	12	32	Nov. 17
47th	2	8	8	Nov. 24

APPENDIX II.

New Cases of Cholera, Choleraic Diarrhœa and Diarrhœa, occurring in St. Giles's District, reported each week to the Sanitary Committee, and by them to the Privy Council; with the deaths from each form of disease.

1866. Week Ending.	CHOLERA.		CHOLERAIC DIARRHŒA.		DIARRHŒA.	
	New Cases.	Deaths.	New Cases.	Deaths.	New Cases.	Deaths.
Aug. 4	1	..	5	..	1629	4
" 11	3	3	9	1	2700	6
" 18	2	1	10	..	2147	4
" 25	1	..	13	1	1600	..
Sept. 1	8	3	14	..	1365	1
" 8	4	4	7	..	982	..
" 15	9	5	4	..	569	2
" 22	7	3	3	..	473	3
" 29	11	8	1	1	360	2
Oct. 6	13	9	3	..	525	2
" 13	10	6	3	1	379	..
" 20	4	5	2	..	90	..
" 27	4	1	1	..	91	..
Nov. 3	4	3	..	..	67	..
" 10	2	2	..	..	43	..
" 17	..	..	..	..	35	..
" 24	..	..	..	..	30	..
TOTAL	83	53	75	4	13,085	24

APPENDIX III.

THE BOARD OF WORKS FOR THE ST. GILES'S DISTRICT.

Account shewing the sums expended in carrying out the Order of the Privy Council of the 21st July last, and the Resolution of the Board of the 26th July last.

	£	s.	d.
Salaries to Medical Visitors, &c.	923	9	6
Chemists' Bills	270	0	7
Hospital Expenses	135	19	11
Furniture	85	18	3
Incidentals	122	2	8
Interments	59	3	8
Altering and adapting the Shelton Schools for the purpose of a Hospital, erecting and maintaining Stand-pipes throughout the District, making good after the same, and restoring Schools on disusing the premises as a Hospital	370	13	0
Wages to Men watching Stand-pipes, removing patients, destroying bedding, &c.	136	15	2
Payments to Officers for extra services	178	10	0
Donation to Bloomsbury Dispensary	10	10	0
	<u>£2293</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9</u>

ANNUAL REPORT

THE BOARD OF WORKS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1887-8

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