

**Metropolitan sewers. Principal Office, 1 Greek Street, Soho Square, July 2nd, 1849. To the Works Committee.**

**Contributors**

Gotto, Edward.  
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Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

## Metropolitan Sewers.

PRINCIPAL OFFICE, 1 GREEK STREET, SOHO SQUARE,  
July 2nd, 1849.

### *To the Works Committee.*

In reference to the complaints (Book 3, Fol. 113: and Book 2, Vol. 2, Fol. 3, No. 1714) of the Speaker to the House of Commons, respecting very offensive smells in the neighbourhood of Westminster Abbey and St Margaret's Church, I have to report that having made a careful examination of the Public Sewers in the neighbourhood, I do not find their condition such as to lead me to suppose that the nuisance complained of arises from their *foulness*.

On passing through the New Sewers under the Westminster Palace I found them perfectly clean, so as on walking through them scarcely to soil the boots, and producing no offensive smell worth mentioning.

The Gullies to the Sewer in Margaret Street and Abingdon Street emitted very offensive effluvia, which I am of opinion proceeds from St Margaret's Grave-yard, being completely filled up with bodies in a state of decomposition, and having saturated the soil with gasses penetrating into the Sewers. From inquiries I have made it appears that particular Gullies are offensive at one time and not at another, which may be accounted for by the wind passing down one grating and forcing the gasses up others.

I beg to recommend that the whole of these Gullies be reconstructed with stoneware pipes, having water-traps at the surface and flaps at the sewer; in wet weather the rain would keep the upper traps perfect, and in dry weather the water-carts would effect the same end.

Although this work would remedy a very great evil, yet it by no means reaches the extent of the causes of the complaints.

The inconvenience spoken of is only occasionally experienced, and depends upon certain conditions of the atmosphere, which favour the production of emanations from the whole area of St Margaret's Grave-yard, and the numerous Factories, Bone-yards, and Dust-heaps which line the opposite bank of the River.

I am given to understand that there are so many as 100 nuisances of this kind, which at times affect the whole district, and that the most offensive parts of the manufactures are carried on during the night.

It is stated that on Friday week (and I believe on that night) the Members of the Houses of Parliament particularly complained of the smell as scarcely endurable.

With these complicated causes of offence and sanitary danger it is obvious the Metropolitan Sewers Act confers no competent powers on the Commissioners to



effectually deal (except that as regards that proceeding from the Gullies above-mentioned), they are nevertheless of sufficient magnitude to engage the attention of the Legislature.

It appears from the Report of the Select Committee on the St Margaret's Church, Westminster, (a copy of which is appended,) that the church in question is peculiarly the church of the House of Commons, and that the effectual and desirable means of remedying the nuisance arising from that quarter would be to forbid any future interments, and to lay down the whole surface with grass, from which the public should be excluded, leaving only the necessary paths.

The surface at present is strewed, where not covered with grave-stones, with human bones. The stones frequently sink when a coffin bursts, and the emanations from such a single instance are of sufficient volume to pervade the whole churchyard.

The sites of the St Stephen's Hall, and Courtyard adjoining, have been excavated to a depth several feet below the footings of the New Buildings, and are in consequence so many pools of water of great extent proceeding from various parts of the premises, such water being kept back by every tide, and is more or less offensive at times.

Part of this evaporating surface is periodically covered with Chloride of Lime, under the direction of Dr REID.

These places should be brought up to their intended level and surface, immediately, and properly drained. The water from the Urinals was dropping from a height of about 20 feet into this pool at the time of my first examination, but this has been since attended to by the Clerk of the Works under the Commissioners of Woods and Works.

When it is considered that as long as the causes of the evils complained of, and which have been here explained, are allowed to continue, not only will the skilful efforts of Dr REID in ventilating the Houses of Parliament, be very often of no effect, but these causes being co-extensive with a large and crowded district, comprising the public Offices, Penitentiary, and other Buildings, where the public health is endangered, the necessity of urging this matter upon the attention of the Government will be apparent.

I beg to recommend that the Gullies connected with the Sewers in the neighbourhood of the Palace be reconstructed at an estimated expence to the Commission of £188.

That the proper course would be to fill up to the intended level the basement of the St Stephen's Hall, and adjoining Courtyards, and to drain the same in the manner approved by the Commission.

That the state of the St Margaret's Burial-ground, and the offensive Factories, Bone-yards, and Dust-heaps which affect the atmosphere of this district, be brought under the notice of the House of Commons.

EDWARD GOTTO,

ASSISTANT SURVEYOR TO THE WESTMINSTER DISTRICT OF SEWERS.