

Metropolitan sewers. A report to the General Board of Health on open ditches in Lower Tooting : 6th January, 1849.

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Metropolitan Sewers.

A Report to the General Board of Health on Open Ditches in Lower Tooting.

6th January, 1849.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

In pursuance of your directions, I beg to report that I have inspected a portion of Lower Tooting, with reference to the condition of open ditches in the vicinity of Mr. Drouet's Pauper Establishment.

In order to present a connected view of the drainage as bearing upon the subject of inquiry, I examined a large portion of the main sewerage of Lower Tooting from its commencement to its outlet, clear of the village.

It appears that the sewerage of nearly the whole of Lower Tooting is subserved by an open ditch, commencing near the Church and expanding there and at the backs of the houses on the east-side of the Mitcham road into a series of moats, varying from twenty to twenty-five feet in width, presenting an evaporative surface estimated at between 40,000 and 50,000 square feet, they are nearly filled with a foul black deposit emitting upon the slightest agitation offensive emanations.

Near the northern extremity they have an overflow drain discharging into an open ditch running parallel to them, and skirting the gardens attached to the houses; this, after receiving the drainage of the southern portion of the village, runs through a Mr. Norris's premises partly covered with loose planks, thence in a covered drain across the main road to the fields at the back of the houses on the north-side; thence, after receiving a ditch parallel to the houses on this side and taking their drainage, it continues a like course to Mr. Drouet's garden, of which it forms the boundary, varying in width from about six to nine feet, running for a considerable distance nearly parallel to Mr. Drouet's grounds and the dormitories of the pauper children, from the centre of the principal dormitory being about 350 feet distant. Nearly opposite this dormitory, and discharging by a small cut into this ditch, is a long stagnant piece of water from twelve to fifteen feet in width, containing upwards of two feet six inches depth of foul stinking

deposit. By the end of the out-houses attached to the dormitories, the ditch expands to about twelve feet in width, and runs for a short distance by the side of Garrett Lane. At this point, it receives a considerable stream of water, from Artesian Wells, and the drainage of Mr. Drouet's premises, through a covered drain running on the east of Garrett Lane; this, which in a properly constructed conduit would answer a most useful purpose, tends now, by stirring up the deposit with which to a depth of between two and three feet this portion of the ditch is filled, to increase the offensiveness of the emanations continually and intensely in emission.

The most northerly of the dormitories is about eighty-seven feet from this portion of the ditch, and about sixty feet from that portion in the rear running nearly parallel to it.

It appears that that portion of the ditch skirting Mr. Drouet's premises, in the Parish of Tooting, was cleansed about a fortnight since, the foul matter taken out was cast upon the sides, part in the field, part in Mr. Drouet's garden, in which a large quantity now remains.

The lower or expanded portion of the ditch by Garrett Lane is in Streatham Parish, and has not been cleansed, it is now in a most foul and pestilential condition; and from its contiguity to the dormitories, must prove extremely prejudicial to the health of its inmates.

The cleansing of the ditch, where this has been effected, appears not to have been efficiently performed, as in many parts there are accumulations of foul deposit, in places to a depth of fourteen inches, emitting effluvia of a very offensive character.

During the prevalence of north-east winds, these emanations must be wafted direct upon the whole of the dormitories, and must to a serious extent at times affect the health of the inmates.

From Garrett Lane this ditch continues at right angles to its previous course by the side of Mr. Rawlinson's nursery-ground; at the end of a plantation, after receiving the waste waters from a large moat in some private grounds at a short distance on the east, it discharges into a large reservoir running in a northerly direction in the rear of the Surrey Lunatic Asylum.

This reservoir contains a large accumulation of exceedingly foul deposit, emitting emanations of a most nauseous and sickly character distinctly perceptible at a considerable distance; these, during the prevalence of south-west winds, would be driven unobstructed direct to the Lunatic Asylum, with northerly winds to Mr. Drouet's establishment and over a populous part of Lower Tooting.

The reservoir is about 682 feet in length, averaging in width nineteen feet, and presenting an evaporative surface of about 13,000 square feet. The depth of deposit varies from two to three feet, the estimated cubical quantity being 32,400 feet.

This reservoir, from the damming up of its waters, has had the effect of retarding the flow of water in the upper part by Mr Drouet's, causing the large accumulation of deposit which now exists. It appears to have been formed, and I understand is at present used, for the irrigation of the land by flooding and allowing the sewage to remain on the lands for a considerable period, increasing the already large evaporative surface of the reservoir, and proportionably the danger to the health of the locality, at the same time that it is a mode at once extremely crude and imperfect, and fitted only for the grossest culture.

At the extreme north end there are two penstocks for regulating the height of water in the reservoir, and diverting it into either of two channels, one apparently solely for the purpose of irrigation, running circuitously through the fields at the rear of the Asylum; the other taking a more direct course in the same general direction.

In a field (Springfield's) it receives the overflow from a large cesspool, the reservoir of the Asylum drainage, seventy-one feet in length, seventeen feet in width, and containing from three to five feet in depth of deposit of a most offensive and nauseous character: the surface being in a constant state of ebullition from the evolution of the noxious gases. It thence, throughout its whole length being obstructed by dams for the permanent heading up of the water, discharges into an open ditch, the outlet also of the irrigating ditch, on the east side of Garrett Lane, within twenty or thirty yards of St. Clement Danes Almshouses, now in course of erection, and which are exposed to all the noxious influences arising from their vicinity to the concentrated exposed discharge of the drainage of the greater part of Tooting.

With the prevalence of *most* winds the noxious and offensive exhalations, from this ditch, and the moats and reservoirs with which it is connected, *must* be wafted to some portion of the village or of the public buildings in the vicinity, and cannot but prove most seriously prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants,

Without entering into a consideration of the measures requisite for the efficient drainage of this locality in substitution of the present exceedingly defective arrangements, and which would necessarily have to be taken in connection with the drainage of an extended area, I would beg to observe, that much may be effected in the way of temporary improvement.

FIRST—By the cleansing of the whole of the ditches, moats, and reservoirs, a measure of essential importance for the preservation of the health of the locality, and which should, without the least delay, be done.

SECONDLY—By the removal of all obstructions as dams and filling up the moats and reservoirs; reducing the width of and levelling the ditch, so as to ensure a better and more uniform current, and (pending permanent measures of relief) temporary tubular

drainage might be laid in the channel of the ditch, when thus re-formed. This district not being within the rated jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Commissioners of Sewers, has not been under their control, and an objection has been raised against their taking active measures to cleanse these places on the ground of their being private property.

I have the honor to be,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

(Signed)

THOMAS LOVICK.

6th January, 1849.