

The Sanitary State of Malton 1854

Introduction

It is perhaps difficult to imagine Malton without a system of sewage disposal, without drains and without a water supply other than pumps around

the town. Add in overcrowding of housing – but that is exactly how it was

The Inspector Calls

Early in March 1854, Mr Robert Rawlinson, one of the Inspectors for the purposes of the Public Health Act, 1848, came to a meeting in the Malton Town-Hall. The intent was to instigate an inquiry into the condition of the sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, the state of the burial grounds, the number and sanitary condition of the inhabitants; the natural drainage areas, the local boundaries, and generally as regards sanitary matters, in compliance with a petition which had for its object the application of the Public Health Act to the borough. The main interest among the public was among the people of Norton who wanted to be considered independently and have a board of their own. This was supported but not resolved.

which is in a very bad state, particularly as regards the comparatively recent construction of water-closets. He mentioned some particular cases in which great nuisances at present exist. There is little surface water runs into the main drain, but there is no means of dredging or flooding it. The people of Malton are supplied with water chiefly from pumps and wells. There are seven public pumps, the average annual cost of which is £26. The river water is good but not much used’.

Dr. Wright informed the meeting of recent mortality rates. Mr Wise explained that the increase in mortality rates over the last 7 years was due to the influx of labourers to construct the local railway lines.

Mr Copperthwaite gave a report ‘that there was no complete system of sewerage and drainage within the borough. About ten years ago, in consequence of the prevalence of typhus fever, attention was drawn to the want of sewers in Malton, and a large main drain, about 300 yards in length, was then made, at a cost of £350, which was raised by subscription. This sewer will now be made useful as an outlet. It had not been extended to the river. There is no complete system of house drainage,

The Rev. W. Carter gave evidence of the state of the burial grounds. There had been of late years only one in New Malton for both parishes, and that was closed about a year ago, by the consent of a public meeting. The funerals all take place now at Old Malton, the burial ground there being situated in the centre of the town. It is a mile or more from Malton and is a source of great inconvenience and expense to the poor [1].

The Official Report

The Inspector delivered his report in July 1854. It focused on the then 'Sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, and the sanitary conditions of the inhabitants of the parliamentary borough of Malton'. He arrived at the following conclusions: 'That New Malton is a place having a known and defined boundary; that the present rate of mortality is excessive, that there is no local act of parliament

in force for the purposes contemplated by the Public Health Act; that the government of the borough is imperfectly carried on under the general acts of the country; that here is neither efficient sewage nor drainage; that there are many nuisances dangerous to health; that there is no public water supply; that there are covered cesspools attached to dwelling houses and that there are many

nuisances arising from open cesspools, exposed middens, and from foul pigsties; that there are nuisances arising from slaughter-houses; that roads and lanes are unpaved; that many yards and courts are constructed so as to block out sunshine and fresh air; that many houses and rooms are most imperfectly ventilated so as to induce disease in excess; that preventable disease (fever) is common, and that the mortality from such disease is excessive and costly.'

The report outlines the works which may be accomplished to mitigate these evils. A proper system of sewage and drainage may be laid out, and may, in use, be made economical by the direct and

Local Board of Health

Local boards of health assumed responsibility for street cleansing, paving, sewers and the slaughter-house. They appointed a treasurer, clerk, officer of health, surveyor and inspector of nuisances. The legal creation of the Malton Local Board of Health is documented in issue 6437 of the Edinburgh Gazette, page 955 'The first election of said Local Board of Health should take place on the first day of

indirect reduction of disease and pauperism, and by a proper application of sewerage refuse to the purposes of agriculture. A public supply of water may be made self-supporting.

Taking into consideration the wishes of the ratepayers and the deficient means for local government, it was recommended that the Public Health Act 1848, be applied to the parliamentary borough of New Malton; that the local Board of Health consist of 18 members, viz., for New Malton, 9; Old Malton, 3; Norton, 6. That for qualification of members shall be an estate of not less than £500, or being resident and rated to the relief of the poor at not less than £20 [2]

November, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and fifty-four. At the first election, William Charles Copperthwaite, of The Lodge, Malton, was granted powers to perform all duties to ensure completion of the first elections. The Malton Local Board of Health was abolished by the Local Government Act 1894 and became Malton Urban District Council.

Some Notices From the Newspapers

BOROUGH OF MALTON LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH

Notice is hereby Given THAT ALL PERSONS Found Wheeling Barrows, Trucks, or other Wheeled Carriages, on any of the Flagged Ways or Footpaths within the Town of NEW-MALTON, NORTON, or OLD-MALTON, or for any other manner Obstructing the Free Passage of the Public thereon, will, after this Notice be PROSECUTED; and that, any Person laying any Night-soil, Privy manure, or other noxious or offensive matter on the Public Streets or Thoroughfares within such last-mentioned Towns, or conveying the same through such Streets or Thoroughfares, contrary, to the 11th Bye-Law for regulating Street Cleansing and removal of Refuse, will also be proceeded against as the Law directs.

By order of the Local Board SAMUEL WALKER, Clerk
Malton, 1st Nov 1856
Malton & Norton Gazette, 8 November 1856

BOROUGH OF MALTON LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH AS TO STREET CLEANSING, &c.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that in pursuance of the 2nd BYE LAW of the Local Board, (as approved by the Secretary of State, for the home department) with reference to Street Cleansing and Removal of Refuse, the Occupier of every House, Building, Yard, Garden, or Premises adjoining any of the Public Streets within the District, is hereby required by the said Local Board of Health, to properly cleanse, sweep, and remove from the footpath or flagging and channel in front of his or her House, Building, Yard, Garden, or Premises as aforesaid, all mud, dust, dirt, or other obstructions, before 9 of the clock in the forenoon of each day (Sundays excepted) under the penalty of not exceeding five pounds for each offence or neglect herein, as provided by the said Bye Laws.

By order of the Local Board SAMUEL WALKER, Clerk
20th November, 1856
Malton & Norton Gazette, 22 November 1856

The Full Report

Transcribed from the York Herald, 15 July 1854

SANITARY CONDITION OF MALTON

REPORT OF THE GENERAL BOARD OF HEALTH

The following is an abstract of the report to the General Board of Health on a preliminary inquiry into the sewerage, drainage, and supply of water, and the sanitary condition of the inhabitants of the parliamentary borough of Malton, in the county of York, by Robert Rawlinson, Esq., civil engineer, superintendent inspector:-

The Town of Malton is pleasantly situated in the North-Riding of the county of York. The population of the borough in 1851 was 7,661, residing in 1,545 houses, or nearly a population of five persons to each house. The average annual mortality has been at a rate of 25.8 per thousand, about one-fourth of the deaths having occurred from symotic diseases.

There was cholera in 1848 and 1849. Fever is common. The medical gentlemen consider that much of the fever is due to stagnant refuse, near and within houses, and to the general filthy state of the streets, lanes, courts, and yards, which are without proper sewers and drains. The water supply is from pumps and wells; it is hard, and some of the water obtained in Norton is highly tainted by surface refuse and cesspool matter. It is difficult to give a money value to the sickness endured and to the life lost by preventable diseases; and it is even more difficult to obtain a just recognition of the fact that much of the disease suffered is brought on by gross neglect of the most simple laws of nature.

The larger portion of the population in Malton live in small houses, having no drainage, and imperfect means of ventilation. The water obtained from pumps and wells is hard, and as each person must incur the labour of pumping or fetching a supply, a limited volume is used, and this is frequently stored on open vessels placed within living rooms, so that it becomes tainted by absorbing gases of decomposition. Much disease may, no doubt, be traced to the use of water so poisoned. If a moderate estimate is made of the number of cases of sickness, and the number of deaths which take place annually, in excess, it will serve to show to the inhabitants some of the results of past and present neglect. Taking the population at 7,600 in round

numbers, and considering that ten deaths annually to each thousand are in excess, this will give 76 in each year; or no less than 532 deaths in excess (of fifteen per thousand), for the last seven years, and taking ten cases of preventable sickness to each preventable death, there will have been 5,320 such cases of sickness in the same time. The average of deaths in the union is 17 per thousand*, and fever is common throughout the whole district. Each working man who loses one week's labour by sickness, or who pays the amount directly, or indirectly, for the sickness of himself or any of his family, expends more than will be sufficient to have a full supply of water and proper serage and drainage, with a soil-pan apparatus to his cottage.

The evidence of Dr. Wright is very distinct as to the existing causes of much of the disease in Malton. He says – "I am perfectly satisfied that the general prevalence of fever is owing to defective sanitary regulations. The diffusion of fever is tolerably general throughout the town; this may be accounted for by nuisances being as general." Mr. William Colby, surgeon, also adds – "Wherever there is much neglect and filth externally, there is also neglect and filth within the houses. The poor, at present, have no chance of being cleanly."

As in other places, there will, no doubt, be an outcry in Malton against the cost of works of serwage and water supply; but the whole question is comprised in the evidence above quoted. Fever is common, because nuisances are general throughout the district – the poor are negligent as to cleanliness within their houses, because they cannot get rid of or avoid the filth that surrounds them. Poor relief and dispensary relief are necessary in excess, because there is disease in excess. Remove those nuisances and influences which tend to disease, and a premature loss of life; and it is only reasonable to infer that the poor's rates will be reduced in a corresponding degree. Years of excessive sickness are necessarily followed by excessive rates. This is proved by the union returns; indeed, it is a fact so self-evident as not to need formal proof.

It is very important to learn that fever is frequently more dependent upon a local atmosphere, than upon any general epidemic influences. Dr. John

James Wright states – “Fever is not an occasional visitor, but has its permanent abode in dark, damp, and offensive places, and is ever ready to avail itself of these local circumstances. The disease frequently assumes an epidemic form when favoured by local causes, and not always in consequence of any peculiarity in the seasons or general temperature.”

Fever was fatal at Old Malton in 1845, at Norton in 1847, and at New Malton in 1851. Dr. Wright infers that, had the disease been dependent on general atmospheric influences, it would have prevailed over the whole borough at the same period.

Dr. Thomas Laycock, in his report on Sheriff Hutton, states relative to the outbreak of fever in 1853, “Entire families suffered from the epidemic. The fever became pestilential in its character. The population was about 700. The usual average of deaths annually had been 14. From the 31st of December to the 28th January following, 14 deaths occurred, or a year’s mortality in 28 days.” This is about the rate of excess I have found in other places from fever and cholera. Dr. Laycock further states:- “The causes of this great mortality are most apparent. Defective house accommodation, overcrowding, the decomposition of animal evacuations, and vapours from ill-drained ground. These not only cause fevers but largely increase the malignancy and fatality of fevers arising from other causes.” The state of things which lead to disease is not always apparent; covered cesspools, a sewage saturated subsoil, and wells poisoned by refuse infiltration, engender disease when the greatest care is taken to preserve a clean surface. Large houses, inhabited by persons possessing wealth, are too frequently in a miserably defective sanitary state; and many families surrounded by abundance and luxury are made desolate by the taint of some foul sewer, covered cesspool, or poisoned well. Sewerage works have recently been carried out in Alnwick. Cholera had occurred in certain parts of the town, which it was thought ought to have been free from the disease, as the houses were of a better class, and the street and yards tolerably clean. On opening out the ground it was found, however, that the subsoil was excessively damp, and that, for a depth of six feet, the whole mass of earth was saturated with refuse, the ground being black and fetid. It has also come to my knowledge that fever has broken out in large houses standing detached,

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and surrounded with park and gardens. Attention has been directed to the sewers and drains; these have been found leading into a “dumb-well,” or covered cesspool, the whole being full. Houses in the country, possessing water-closet accommodation, have, in general, this dangerous arrangement of drain and cesspool, not unfrequently combined with a local well from which water is pumped.

The only opposition at my enquiry was from certain rate-payers owning property in Norton, and it is in this district, according to the analysis made by Dr. Smith, that the waters in use are most tainted. Malt-kiln-lane pump water is 34 degrees of hardness, and is contaminated by chlorides, “indicating impure drainage.” The water from the pump in Lovell’s-yard is 78.3 degrees of hardness, and is contaminated by sulphates, chlorides, and nitrates, in great abundance. Dr. Smith remarks, “The taint must be from sewage or a cesspool.” The pump water in Wall-gate is 31½ degrees of hardness, having also a refuse taint. The geological formation of Norton renders it highly dangerous to sink wells and cesspools in the subsoil, and renders it more necessary than in Malton that proper sanitary works should be carried out. Population is increasing on this side of the river, and if the health of the inhabitants is to be cared for, power should be granted to initiate the necessary works, and these should be granted to initiate the necessary works, and these should at once be completed.

GEOLOGY. – New Malton stands on oolite, the valley of the Derwent, on the Norton side, being covered with alluvium, - gravel, sand, clay, marl, and various combinations of these. North and west of the site occupied by the Castle, in Pye-pits and Browse-quarry, rock has been got for building purposes, as also for burning into lime.

Water is obtained, in abundance, from surface springs and from shallow wells on either side of the river, and by deeper wells and pumps on the higher lands to the north. West of the town, and north of the river, there is a chalybeate spring and Spa gardens. There are brick and tile yards south of the river in the parish of Norton, clay being found immediately below the sand and gravel. This explains the highly tainted state of water used in Norton. Privies and cesspools are formed in the

superficial formation (sand and gravel), which is porous; the underlying clay prevents any further filtration; consequently, the wells contain a mixture of surface and cesspool drainage, to be pumped up for use.

The subsoil of the district is most favourable to the economical formation of sanitary works, sewerage, drainage, &c. The ground will be easily excavated; it will, for the most part, be sound and firm; and the natural gradients afford sufficient fall to enable an engineer to use sewers of earthenware pipes, which will be, in action, self-cleaning.

METEOROLOGY.- The climate of Malton is dryer than the average of England. This is the case with the eastern coast generally. The average fall of rain is about twenty-five inches annually, and much of this occurs in excessive thunder showers. The contour of the Wolds, and the porous character of the subsoil, tend to preserve the atmosphere dry, warm, and wholesome.

EARLY HISTORY – The modern town of Malton stands on the site of an ancient Brigantian fortress. The Romans made a station of the same place. During the Norman period, Malton was surrounded by walls, having four gates, Yorkers-gate, Old Malton-gate, Wheel-gate, and Green-gate. These names are retained by street which formerly led to them. The line of wall and moat is traced on the Ordnance map, the present town conforming, in a great degree, to these ancient limits; hence much of the over-crowding. The baronial family of Vesce built a castle and a priory. Henry II demolished the castle. Scotch troops having obtained possession of the town, Archbishop Thurstam laid siege to it; and to dislodge them burned it down. Leland Passed through the district and thus described the ruins:- “The castle of Malton hath been larg, as it epperith by the ruine. There is at this tyme no habitation yu it but a mene house for a farmer.” Remains of Roman camps have been traced on both sides of the river, on the low ground east of the old town walls. Numerous silver and copper coins, pottery, urns fibu ae, rings and other personal ornaments, as also human bones, have from time to time been dug up. Malton† was one of the burgage tenure boroughs, and returned members to Parliament, 23d and 26th Edward I. It was also a corporate borough, governed by two bailiffs. In the reign of Charles II, the

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burgesses were deprived of their corporate privileges. The Right Honourable the Earl Fitzwilliam, lord of the manor, now appoints a bailiff, who is sworn in at a courts leet and courts baron of Malton. The burgesses have, from time to time, received gifts of property, subsequently confirmed by charter, for making roads and for constructing a bridge over the Derwent. In the twelfth century, there is known to have been a bridge; the present one was built in 1700, and was widened in 1760.

NEW MALTON .- A parliamentary borough, in the North-Riding of the county of York. The town stands on the north bank of the river Derwent; and in conjunction with its suburb of Norton, which is on the south bank of the Derwent, and is in the East-Riding, sends two members to parliament.

The present members are J.E. Denison, Esq., and the Honourable C.W.W. Fitzwilliam. The borough is a policing place for the county.

TRADE, &c. – The York and Scarborough Railway passes through Malton, and branch lines lead off to Drifffield, communicating with Hull, Thirsk, the West-Riding, and the North. On the banks of the Derwent there are corn-mills, granaries, malt-kilns, breweries, coal-yards, bark-mills, tanneries, fellmongers, saw-mills, gas-works, &c. A considerable portion of the population is also employed in agriculture. Porter, malt, corn, and bacon are largely exported. There are in the place all the elements of prosperity, and no doubt good local government will very much aid progress. There is little of either regularity or of order in building, and all parties suffer from the inconveniences.

TOPGRAPHY.- New Malton‡ stands on the north of the navigable river Derwent, the land having a gradual rise to the north and west from the water-level up to two hundred feet, within the limits of the borough. Norton is comparatively low and flat, stands on the south side of the river, on a portion of the valley of the Derwent, which is of considerable breadth.

The high land at Middle-cave, above Mr. Slater’s nursey-ground, commands the whole of the town. A service reservoir at this point would supply water to every house within the borough. From this site,

the red-tile roofs of New Malton may be seen, the towers of St. Michael's and St. Leonard's rising above the general level. South-east is Langton Wold, the smooth rounded forms revealing the character of the oolite and chalk formations of the district. The valley of the Derwent is beautiful, the river winding through it, making bends round Old and New Malton. A site more favourable for health could not well be chosen. This, in a great measure, is sufficient to explain the antiquity of the town. The first inhabitants of a country generally fixed upon a site possessing certain natural advantages. High lands and open downs were inhabited by the Celtic tribes, capable of defending their rudely-formed encampments; the open lands though bleak, serving to graze their flocks and expose their enemies. The Ordnance map of England shows that mountain-sides and moors, now waste and barren, were inhabited and cultivated during a time when the valleys and plains were dense forests or impassable morasses; on every change of ownership, the dislodged tribes retreated to the unhealthy forest and marsh, the conquerors settling on the better and more wholesome sites. Malton, many times contended for and several times destroyed, has been a place of residence for the Celtic British tribes, the Roman, the Norman, and their descendants, down to the present day. There is a navigable river, fed principally by spring from the oolite and chalk. A dry subsoil, with beautiful scenery in wold, meadow, wood, and water. Few places possess more natural advantages, if they are duly improved. Until recently, weirs in the Derwent dammed the water to a level, preventing land drainage. These have been removed, thereby conferring advantages on the farmer and the town resident. Mill-dams, on rivers flowing through alluvial valleys, are great impediments to agriculture. If near a town, they are in a much greater degree injurious to civilisation.

The town of New Malton is irregular on plan; and in parts, is overcrowded, as most ancient towns in England. There are courts of cottages, entered by covered passages, in which privies, cesspools, and pigsties have been improperly placed. Some old houses are thatched; the greatest number are covered with red tiles; a few of the newer houses are slated. Most of the old houses are built of wall-stone limewashed externally. The living rooms are small and low; the bedrooms are very low, the roofs

spring from the side walls some three feet above the floor. Many rooms are let off in separate tenements. The streets are partially formed of broken stone, with paved channels; some are boulder-paved, refuse and slop-water drainage from the courts and houses flowing on to the streets, and over the surface. Large ash-middens, privies, and cesspools are crowded amidst dwelling-houses, beneath room windows, and even underneath sleeping-rooms. Rent for houses of two rooms range from £3 to £4 and 2s 3d a quarter rates.

NIORTON.- The highway or turnpike-road betwixt York and Scarborough forms the principal street through Norton (Church-street, and Commercial-street). It is made with broken stone and gravel, producing mud in wet weather and dust in dry weather. There is more building in Norton than in Malton, and the houses are not so crowded. There is neither adequate sewerage nor drainage, and consequently there are many nuisances; privies with open cesspools, pigsties, &c.

St. JOHN'S-SQUARE consists of new houses, having four rooms and a small garden. Rent £5 10s per annum. Rates about 2s 6d in the pound. These houses are comfortable and in good order, so far as they can be without sewers or drains. Water is obtained from a pump.

New houses in Norton are built of bricks made in the parish, and many of them are covered with Bangor slates. There are many nuisances in Norton, the well and pump water being tainted by cesspool and other refuse.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS.-

- That New Malton is a place having a known and defined boundary.
- That the present rate of mortality is excessive.
- That there is no local act of parliament in force for the purposes contemplated by the Public Health Act.
- That the government of the borough is imperfectly carried on under the general acts of the country.

- That there is neither efficient sewerage nor drainage.
- That there are many nuisances dangerous to health.
- That there is no public water supply.
- That there are covered cesspools attached to dwelling-houses, and that here are many nuisances arising from open cesspools, exposed middens, and from foul pigsties.
- That there are nuisances arising from slaughter-houses.
- That roads and lanes are unpaved.
- That many yards and courts are constructed so as to block out sunshine and fresh air.
- That many houses and rooms are most imperfectly ventilated, so as to induce disease in excess.
- That preventable disease (fever) is common, and that the mortality from such disease is excessive and costly.

WORKS WHICH MAY BE ACCOMPLISHED.- That a proper system of sewerage and drainage may be laid out, and may, in use, be made economical by the direct and indirect reduction of disease and pauperism, and by a proper application of sewerage refuse to the purpose of agriculture. That a public supply of water may be made self-supporting.

RECOMMENDATIONS.- Taking into consideration the wishes of the ratepayers, and the deficient means of local government, as set forth in this report and summary of conclusions, I beg respectfully to recommend that your honourable board will grant the prayer of the petitioners, and will allow the Public Health Act, 1848, (except the section 50 in the copies of that act as printed by Her Majesty's printers) to be applied to the parliamentary borough of New Malton, in the county of York.

That the local Board of Health, to be elected under the said Public Health Act, may consist of eighteen persons elected as under:-

References

- [1] Yorkshire Gazette, 4 March 1854
 [2] Yorkshire Gazette, 15 July 1854

New Malton	9
Old Malton	3
Norton	6
Total	<u>18</u>

That every person shall, at the time of his election as member of the said Local Board, and so long as he shall continue in office by virtue of such election, be resident, as in the said Public Health Act, 1848, is required, and be seised and possessed of real or personal estate, or both, to the value or amount of not less than £500; or shall be so resident, and rated to the relief of the poor of the township upon an annual value of not less than £20.

That the first election take place within one month after an order in Council shall have been obtained for the application of the act to the borough; and that the annual election, to replace the retiring members, take place on the first Monday, after the 25th day of March in each year.

I have the honour to be,
 My Lord and Gentlemen,
 Your most obedient servant
 ROBERT RAWLINSON
 Superintending Inspector

*In some of the metropolitan lodging houses, the annual mortality is much below 17 per 1,000
 †New was added to the name of Malton on rebuilding the town after Archbishop had burned out the Scots.

‡New and Old Malton are to the north of the Derwent, New Malton forming the principal portion of the borough. Old Malton is to the east, and distant from New Malton about one mile. It is a straggling village. Norton is on the south side of the river, and east of New Malton, situate on the York and Scarborough turnpike-road, and is only separated from Malton by the river, over which there is a stone bridge.