

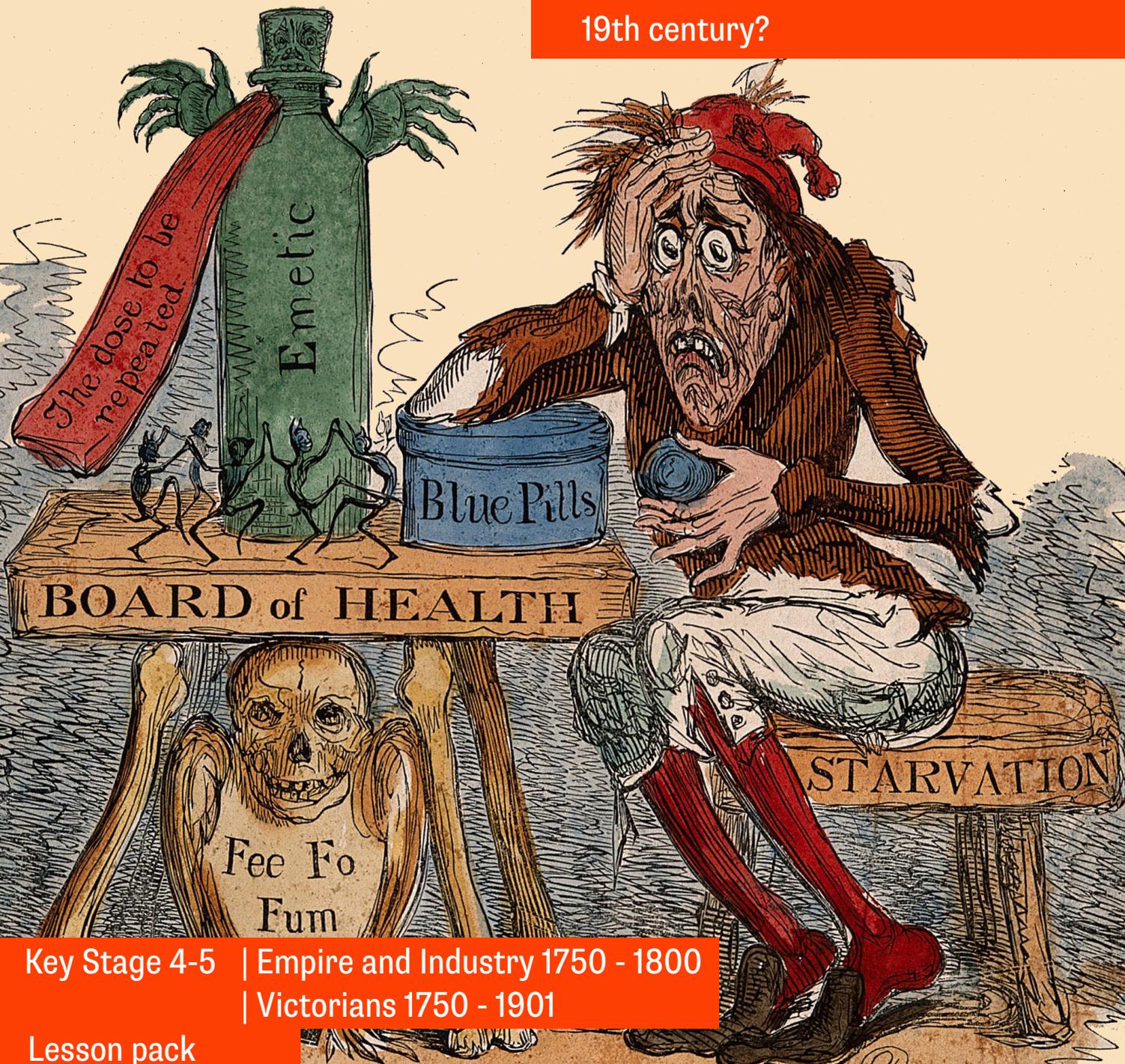
THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

Coping with Cholera

How did the authorities react in 19th century?



Key Stage 4-5 | Empire and Industry 1750 - 1800
| Victorians 1750 - 1901

Lesson pack

Robt. Crankshank

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to explore sources which reveal something about the contemporary medical understanding of the disease, public attitudes and the role of the General Board of Health over a time frame of series of cholera epidemics in Victorian England. For some, the best advice against the disease was to improve ventilation, cleanliness and purge the body, keep it warm or change the diet. For others it required prayer and forgiveness from God. Again, it is interesting to consider why many of these ideas persisted after the breakthrough provided by Dr John Snow in 1854 that linked the presence of contaminated water to the spread of cholera at a time when the authorities and medical profession believed that the disease was spread by miasma, or bad air caused by pollution.

Suitable for:

KS 4 - 5

Time period:

Empire and Industry
1750 - 1850

Victorians
1850 - 1901

Connections to the Curriculum:

AQA GCSE:
Improvements in public health: public health problems in industrial Britain; cholera epidemics; the role of public health reformers; local and national government involvement in public health improvement, including the 1848 and 1875 Public Health Act.

Edexcel GCSE
C1700–1900: Medicine in 18th & 19th century Britain: fighting cholera in London, attempts to prevent its spread; the significance of Snow.

OCR GCSE
The Peoples' Health: Industrial Britain C1750-1900: Responses to cholera epidemics.

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Teacher's Notes

Many teachers will be familiar with the cartoon the 'Court for King Cholera' by John Leech which was published in Punch Magazine in 1852. The cartoon reveals, with its punning caption, a poor area of the city demonstrating a range of health hazards. Whilst the cartoon can be regarded as an attack on the Board of Health for its failure to address these problems, it provides unwitting testimony to the lack of understanding of the root cause of cholera in the 1850s, a contaminated water supply following two earlier cholera epidemics.

Please note that this lesson contains a larger number of sources with linked questions. You may want to split the lesson for students working individually or use the sources in paired/group work. Students should be encouraged to think about the limitations of looking at this evidence to evaluate any understanding of health.

All sources are transcribed and difficult language defined in square brackets. We have also provided an optional lesson 'starter' and suggestions for a plenary below which you may also wish to use.

Background

Cholera in Victorian Britain represented fear of the unknown. It originated from Asia and many doctors were unfamiliar with its cause or treatment. It reached Europe in 1830 and Britain experienced its first epidemic in 1832 when 52,000 died. A second outbreak followed in 1848-9 and caused the death of 53,293 people. This, and pressure from the Health of Towns Association caused the government to introduce the Public Health Act of 1848. The new law set up the General Board of Health in London to give advice on disease prevention and set up local health boards to look into sanitary conditions across the country and appoint medical officers. Yet there was often little or no co-operation between the authorities, and many of the urban poor mistrusted the medical profession. The General Board of Health had no power to force the local boards to act. Nevertheless, the new law marked the beginning of the government taking responsibility for public health despite resistance from many ratepayers. The Public Health Act of 1875 later helped to eliminate this problem as local authorities replaced the local boards which became responsible for the provision of clean water, proper drainage and sewage systems.

Contemporary medical opinion was that cholera was caused by bad air or 'miasma' from dung heaps or 'nuisances', sewers, damp and dirt. Other doctors argued it was caused from contact with people who had the disease through overcrowding. Their treatments reflected these ideas. For example, isolation hospitals were set up, homes washed with lime and streets cleaned.

The disease seemed to spread most rapidly amongst the poor and they were often instructed to avoid alcohol and eat moderately. People were encouraged to purge the body (empty their bowels) to stop the persistent vomiting and diarrhoea that were the main symptoms of the disease. Patients were often bled with leeches. Overall, these treatments just weakened the bodies of those suffering from cholera and caused them to become even more dehydrated, hastening death in many cases.

Other measures included the wearing of flannel cloth "girdles", as seen in one of the sources here, or woollen stockings to keep warm. Patients were frequently medicated with camphor and mercury. There were also petitions from across the country requesting, with Queen's permission, a national 'Day of Humiliation' for fasting and prayer in order to ask God to deliver the country from cholera.

Background

Unsurprisingly, there were a host of other “cures” for the disease, for example a surgeon from Chudleigh in Devon suggested gunpowder should be used to blast through the ‘miasma’ that supposedly caused cholera. Another gentleman wrote about the value of drinking brandy in cases of cholera. He suggested that the government should make it readily available for the ‘lower orders’ free of duty ‘until the cholera shall have ceased’.

However, the major breakthrough in understanding the cause of the disease came with the third cholera epidemic of 1854. Dr John Snow, having seen earlier outbreaks of the disease was convinced that it was caused by water contaminated by sewage. He had written a medical paper on this theory in 1849. In 1854 he proved it by mapping cases of the illness to the location of a particular water pump in Broad Street, Soho. The outbreak killed 127 people in three days and 616 within a month. On his suggestion, the Broad Street water pump was shut off and the epidemic receded.

Snow found that houses and public pumps supplied with water used by water companies taking water from where many of London’s sewers emptied downstream into Thames experienced much higher death rates from cholera. Those people whose water had been supplied upstream from Thames Ditton did not become ill. Dr John Snow was a significant pioneer in epidemiology, a branch of medicine which deals with the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases.

Britain faced a final cholera epidemic in 1866 in east London. Fewer people died, possibly as there was more acceptance of Dr John Snow’s suggestion of ‘the living organisms’ which contaminated drinking water. For example by Dr John Farr who was a supporter of ‘miasma theory’ and worked at the General Register Office, the government’s department for recording births, deaths and marriages. In subsequent advice, during this epidemic, people were advised to drink boiled water to reduce the risk of infection. However, it was not until 1883 a German doctor, Robert Koch, building on the important earlier work of Louis Pasteur, identified the bacterial causes of cholera (*Vibrio cholera*) with a microscope and theories about ‘miasma’ were replaced in medical thinking by ‘germ theory’. This provided the crucial evidence that better sanitation and improved water supply were essential to prevent future cholera epidemics.

Tasks

Optional lesson starter:

'Cholera patient experimenting with remedies'

'A cholera patient experimenting with remedies', coloured etching by Isaac Robert Cruikshank, c.1832 © Wellcome Collection. Isaac Robert Cruikshank (1789-1856), known as Robert Cruikshank was the older brother of caricaturist and illustrator, George Cruikshank.

- How does the artist suggest the patient's fear of the illness?
- What cholera treatments can be seen in this cartoon?
- Do you know why they were used?
- What does this reveal about the scientific understanding of the causes of the disease?
- Describe the starvation stool, can you explain why it is shown in the cartoon?
- What points is the artist making in this cartoon, in the image and title about:
 - Treatments for cholera
 - The Board of Health

Plenary

Teachers could hold a discussion after students have worked through the sources using the following questions:

- Which sources were the most useful, interesting, or surprising?
- What factors do you think ultimately meant that the work of Dr John Snow was accepted?
- What light do these sources throw on the role of the Board of Health?
- Can you think of other sources that could be used to research public health?
- Are there any similarities or differences in the government response to cholera and Covid-19 today?

Tasks

Source 1:

Extract from a letter from Charles Pearson, Chairman of the City of London Board of Health to Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord President of the Privy Council [group of advisors to the sovereign] concerning the need for separate burial grounds for those who had died from cholera, 16 July 1832, Catalogue ref: PC 1/114.

The Privy Council had set up the first Board of Health in 1805 to deal with the spread of fever. This letter is included in the correspondence and papers of the Central Board of Health, which was re-called to deal with a cholera epidemic in 1831.

- Why has the chairman of the City of London Board of Health written this letter?
- What does it suggest about:
 - Understanding of the cause of the disease?
 - How it spread among the population?
 - How people regarded it according to language and tone of the letter?
- What does the letter infer about the purpose of the Central Board and City of London Board of Health?

Source 2:

A letter sent to the Central Board of Health, during the first cholera outbreak from a surgeon in Devon, 17 February 1832, Catalogue ref: HO 44/25.

This is an example of many proposed cures for a disease that few in the medical profession understood and reveals the predominance of miasma theory.

- How does this writer suggest that the air over London could be improved to reduce cholera?
- Why do you think he makes this suggestion?
- The writer also argues that infected households should be given a small amount of gunpowder to light in their homes. What was the purpose of this?
- What are the dangers linked to these ideas to prevent cholera?
- Does the tone or language used in the letter reveal anything about how the disease was viewed at the time?

Tasks

Source 3:

This information table is included in the correspondence and papers of the Central Board of Health, which was re-called to deal with a cholera epidemic in 1831. Catalogue ref: PC 1/114.

Note: Calomel is a type of mercury chloride, used as drug to empty the bowels.

- What information is recorded in this table?
- Why do you think the Central Board of Health collected this information?
- Does the source tell us anything about the role of the Central Board of Health?
- What are the limitations of this source for providing us with information about treatments for cholera?
- Does this table show any understanding about the cause of the disease in 1830s?
- Is the evidence provided by this document more or less valuable than the cartoon which is used at the top of the web page for this lesson?

Source 4:

Extracts from a printed copy of 'Precautionary Hints on Cholera' issued by the Central Board of Health, 9 May 1832. This describes different stages of the disease and other suggested treatments in addition to medication, Catalogue ref: PC 1/113

- What other treatments for cholera patients are suggested here?
- Are there any suggestions that could be considered poor advice for a cholera patient in particular?

Source 5:

Extract of a letter from Central Board of Health concerning advice to be circulated to civil hospitals on the disappearance of cholera, 16 November, 1832, Catalogue ref: PC 1/114

- What does this letter reveal about the basic understanding of the cause of cholera and the spread of the disease?
- How does the Central Board think cholera should be treated?
- Can you suggest why cholera has not spread among hospital patients?

Tasks

Source 6:

Letter from the Mayor of Plymouth, dated 21 August 1849, written to the Secretary of State at the Home Office. This was at the time of the second major cholera epidemic which prompted the first Public Health Act 1848, Catalogue reference: HO 45/2755.

- What does the language used in the document infer about attitudes towards the disease?
- Does the document reveal anything about treatment for cholera?
- Does this letter suggest any change in the understanding of the causes of the disease as shown by the earlier sources from the 1830s?

Source 7:

A petition from members of Clitheroe town council in Lancaster on behalf of local ratepayers saying that they do not want the Public Health Act of 1848 to be applied to their borough, December 1851, Catalogue ref: MH 13/53.

The government took responsibility for health for the first time, with the 1848 Public Health Act which set up a permanent General Board of Health in the light of the second cholera epidemic. The Board of Health did not have the power to force local boards to follow its recommendations. Again, local boards could only be established when more than one-tenth of the ratepayers agreed to it or if the death-rate was higher than 23 per 1000.

- Why did the members of Clitheroe council send this petition to the Board of Health?
- What does the petition suggest about the effectiveness of the Public Health Act in terms of combating cholera?
- Can you explain why some rate payers might object to a local board of health for their area?

Tasks

Source 8:

Letter from a citizen of Ipswich to the General Board of Health, 21 September 1853, Catalogue ref: MH 13/100.

This is an example of a 'nuisance letter', many of these were written to the Board of Health in London at the outbreak of cholera, others outside the capital wrote too as fear of the disease spread. The authorities did fine offenders for not clearing away rubbish and waste, however not that harshly as they were unwilling to interfere with trade and business.

- What is the writer of the letter complaining about?
- What does this letter reveal common understanding about the cause of cholera in 1853?
- What does this letter reveal about overcrowding in towns?
- How does the writer expect the General Board of Health to deal with the problem?
- What links can you see between this letter and Source 7?

Source 9:

Extracts from a newspaper, the Chatham News, dated 10 November 1866, about an inquest held into a death caused by cholera near the Brook, (the renamed Old River Bourne), close to the River Medway in the Kent town of Chatham. Catalogue ref: MH13/47.

[Mr. Ely was the Medical Officer for the Medway Union who gave evidence at the inquest and Henry Hadlow was Assistant Surgeon at Chatham Dockyard whose letter to Mr. Ely was read to the jury at the inquest and is included here].

- Why has this inquest been held?
- What were the conclusions of the inquest?
- Does this article suggest any difference in understanding about the origins of cholera from the first outbreak in 1831-2? Give your reasons.
- What does the article infer about the relationship between the Chatham authorities and the General Board of Health?
- Why is Henry Hadlow's letter important evidence for understanding the spread of cholera?

Tasks

Source 10:

A design for a "cholera belt", 1882, Catalogue ref.: BT 45/30 (6563)

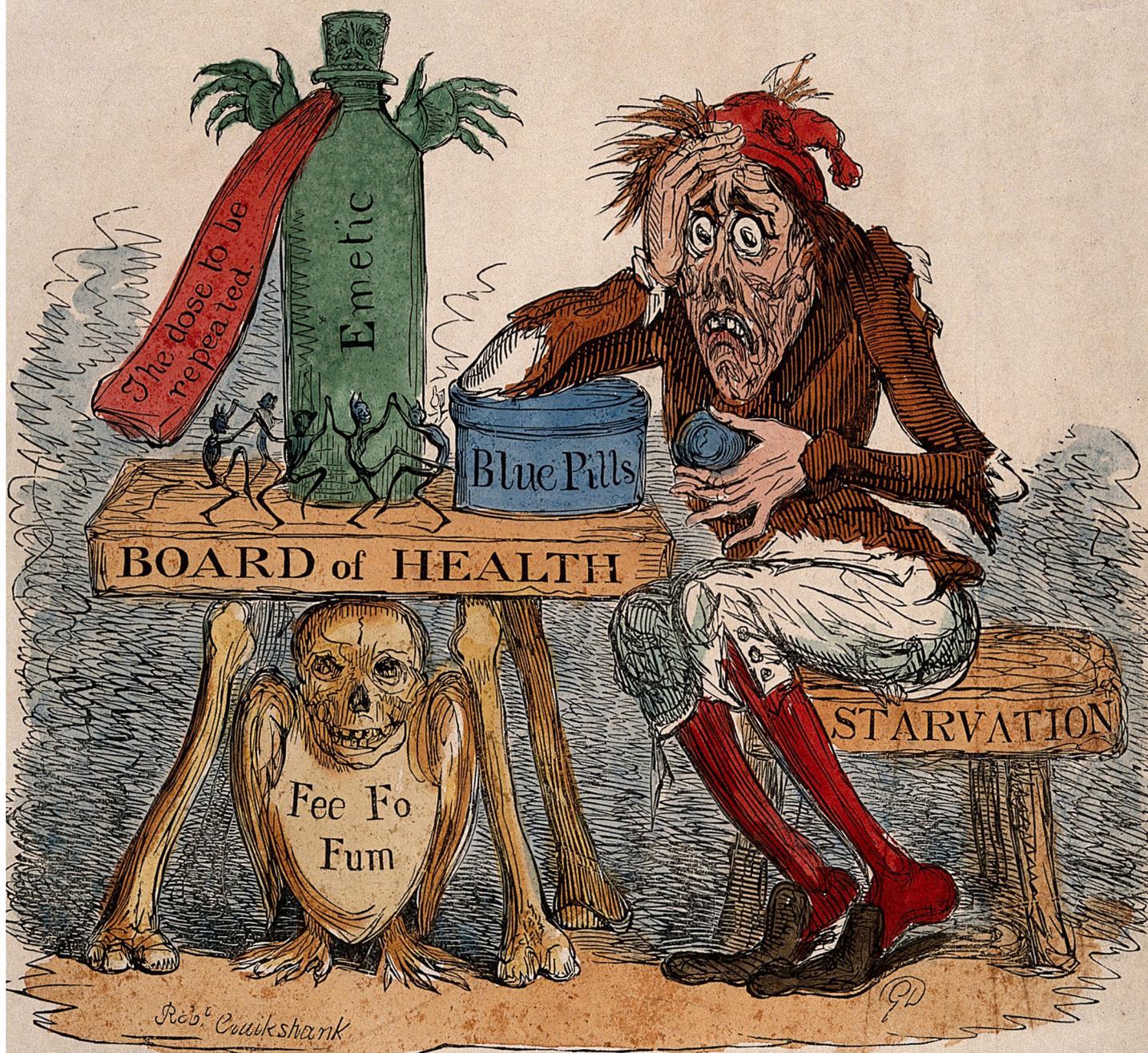
A 'cholera belt' was a wide cloth waistband made of flannel or wool worn around the stomach. The 'belt' was supposed to protect the person from the cold and damp, as it was thought that a cold abdomen would lead to cholera or diarrhea, and other stomach ailments.

- Can you explain how this design for a 'cholera belt' was worn?
- How different is this from the ordinary belt described in the caption?
- What advantages are claimed for this design?
- What does it reveal about the understanding of the causes of cholera in 1882 despite the discoveries of Dr John Snow?

'A cholera patient experimenting with remedies', coloured etching by Isaac Robert Cruikshank c.1832 © Wellcome Collection. Isaac Robert Cruikshank

ROBERT CRUIKSHANK'S

RANDOM SHOTS.—(N^o 2.)



Published by TOMLINSON,

24, Great Newport Street.

A CHOLERA PATIENT.

Source 1: Extract from a letter from Charles Pearson

Catalogue Ref: PC 1/114

frequently to render it necessary to violate public decency by removing the half consumed remains of the dead to make room for other tenants. I have known instances not even within the last six months where heaps of humane boxes with remnants of Coffins and other grave furniture have been removed from the vaults under the Churches during the night and thrown upon pieces of waste ground within the City and Suburbs disgusting to the eye of the passer-by and loading the atmosphere with the most offensive and dangerous effluvia.

If the victims of the Cholera be permitted to be interred within the confines of this densely populated City I feel the greatest apprehension that the seeds for its certain reproduction will be sown amongst its Suburbs and that long after it may be supposed that the Calamity has passed over our heads posterity may have to censure our negligence and impudence in thus neglecting them this dreadful malady.

The knowledge that the remains of Cholera patients have been interred in vaults under one or two of the City Churches has already caused the most painful consequences - some of the Suburbs of these parishes declaring that they will entirely abstain from going to the Church in apprehension of the dangerous tendency of the practice. The
City

By the direction of the City of London Board of Health, I this day visited upon the Central Board, but learn that His Majesty's Government have not been yet able to succeed in their endeavours to procure a suitable piece of ground so as to afford accommodation to the Citizens.

The disease has now unfortunately established itself in this City in a form of increased malignity and fatality, and the Board over which I have the honor to preside feel that they will no longer discharge their duty to their fellow Citizens unless they take prompt and decisive measures themselves, to provide in the Suburbs of the City the accommodation rendered absolutely indispensable by the now unquestionable communicable character of this formidable complaint, and by the acknowledged fact that emanations from bodies of persons who have died of infectious diseases are calculated to spread contagion even for years after the decease of the subject.

Within the jurisdiction of the City Board there are 97 Parishes, all of them having places of interment under their respective Churches, and some few of them having also small Church Yards attached, which are already so crowded as to frequently

Transcript: Letter from Charles Pearson

By the direction of the City of London Board of Health, I this day waited upon the Central Board, but learn that His Majesty's Government have not been yet able to succeed in their endeavours to procure a suitable piece of ground so as to afford accommodation to the Citizens.

The disease has now unfortunately established itself in this city in a form of increased malignity [harm] and brutality and the Board over which I have the honour to preside feel that they will no longer discharge their duty [do their job] to their fellow citizens unless they take prompt and decisive measures themselves, to provide in the suburbs of the City the accommodation [space to bury the dead] rendered absolutely indispensable [necessary] by the now unquestioned communicable character of this formidable complaint, and by the acknowledged fact that emanations [discharges] from bodies of persons who have died of infectious diseases are calculated [believed] to spread contagion even for years after the decease the subject.

Within the jurisdiction of the City Board there are 97 parishes, all of them having places of internment [burial] under their respective churches, and some few of them having also small church yards attached, which are already so crowded as frequently to render it necessary to violate public decency by removing the half consumed remains of the dead to make room for the other tenants.

I have known instances, one even within the last six months where heaps of human bones with remnants of coffins and other grave furniture [grave stones] have been removed from the vaults under the churches during the night and thrown upon pieces of waste ground within the city and suburbs, disgusting to the eye of the passer by and loading the atmosphere with dangerous effluvia [harmful odour].

If the victims of cholera be permitted to be interred within the confines of this densely populated city, I feel the greatest apprehension that the seeds for its certain reproduction will be sown amongst its inhabitants and that long after it may be supposed that the Calamity [disaster] has passed over our heads posterity [future generations] may have to censure [disapprove] or negligence and imprudence in thus bequeathing [passing on] them this dreadful malady.

The knowledge that remains of cholera patients have been interred [buried] in vaults under one or two of the city churches has already caused the most painful consequences- some of the inhabitants of those parishes declaring that they will entirely abstain [avoid] from going to the church in apprehension of the dangerous tendency of the practice.

Source 2: A letter sent to the Central Board of Health

Catalogue Ref: HO 44/25

6 Middlesex 17 Feb 1832
 My Lord
 Seeing by the daily papers that the Chinese Merchant has made its appearance in London I am induced to offer with submission what appears to me a ready and easy means of preventing the dreadful destruction which inevitably ensues when the spreading of that disease in its progress a place in London I am persuaded that nothing would destroy Malacca except the combustion of gunpowder from large pieces of ordnance in the principal that it would produce a general vaccination of the atmosphere
 17

and fill the element with vital air
 The plan I would recommend would be to have a certain quantity of gunpowder enclosed in packages of some coarse substance or canvas bags first saturated with steam water to prevent any accident of fire the package to be thrown from a mortar to ignite in the air the experiment can be easily tried at Greenwich, the Tower, Temple garden, Chelsea &c the experiment will be very trifling and I have no doubt the result would be satisfactory
 I would further recommend gunpowder moistened with water and formed into pellets of small size which may be fired daily in houses of infected neighbourhood where every window may be

fumigated every man knows who has been in the habit of shooting that not only his clothes are impregnated with the gas but it passes through every channel of his body and my opinion is that it opens a good preventative against contagion as my theory is known an epidemic may arise it I have taken the liberty of throwing out some hints at the suggestion of the moment but I have no doubt for the benefit of mankind that the effect of it will be put to the trial as it is impossible to reflect in what degree the inhabitants of London must suffer from the consequences and I believe must I have the honor to remain
 My Lord Your Obedt Servant
 James Callaghan

18

Transcript: Letter to the Central Board of Health

17th February 1832

My Lord,

Seeing by the daily papers that the Cholera Morbus [disease] has made its appearance in London I am induced to offer with submission what appears to me a ready a ready and easy means of preventing this dreadful destruction which inevitably follow the spreading of that disease in so populous a place as London. I am persuaded that nothing would destroy malaria equal to the combustion [setting fire] of gunpowder from large pieces of ordnance [weapons] on the principal that it would produce a general rarefaction of the atmosphere [make the air less dense] and fill the element with vital air.

The plan I would recommend would be to have a certain quantity of gunpowder enclosed in packages of some animal substance or canvas bags first saturated with alum water [water containing salts to make the fabric fireproof] to prevent any accident of fire. The package to be thrown from a mortar to ignite in the air. The experiment can easily be tried at Greenwich, the Tower, Temple Garden, Chelsea. The expense will be very trifling and I have no doubt the result would be satisfactory.

I would further recommend gunpowder moistened with water and formed into pastils [pellets] of small size which may be ignited daily in houses of infected neighbourhoods where every inmate maybe fumigated [disinfected/made pure with chemicals]. Every man knows who has been in the habit of shooting that not only his clothes are impregnated with the gas but it passes through every channel of his body and my opinion is that it offers as good as prevention against contagion as anything yet known. An infant may inhale it.

I have taken the liberty of throwing out these hints at the suggestion of the moment, trusting however for the benefit of mankind that the effects of it will be put to the trial as it is deplorable to reflect in what degree the inhabitants of London must suffer from the consequences such a disease must produce should it increase.

I have the honour to remain, my Lord, your obedient, humble servant, Thomas Calley,
Surgeon

Source 3: Information table from the Central Board of Health

Catalogue Ref: PC 1/114

	Cases	Deaths	Recovers	Deaths per Cent	Recovers per Cent
Calomel and Opium	196	112	04	57.14	42.86
Opium	01	47	34	50.	42
Calomel	75	35	40	46.66	53.34
Stimulants	63	42	21	66.66+	33.33+
Combination of Salts proposed by Dr. Stevens	25	22	3	00	12
Combination of Salts used at Geville St. Hospital	26	0	10	30.77	69.23
Vinous Injection	20	10	2	50	10
Miscellaneous	17	0	9	47.06	52.94

Transcript: Information table

	Cases	Deaths	Recoveries	Deaths per cent	Recoveries per cent
Calomel and Opium	196	112	84	57.4	42.86
Opium	81	47	34	58	42
Calomel	75	35	40	46.66	53.34
Stimulants	63	42	21	66.66+	33.33+
Combination of Salts proposed by Dr Stevens	25	22	3	88	12
Combination of Salts used at Greville Street Hospital	26	8	18	30.77	69.23
Venous Injection	20	18	2	90	10
Miscellaneous	17	8	9	47.06	52.94

[Note: Calomel is a type of mercury chloride, used as drug to empty the bowels.]

Source 4: Extracts from a printed copy of 'Precautionary Hints on Cholera' Catalogue Ref: PC 1/113

Treatment of the Premonitory Symptoms of Cholera.

4. In a very large Majority of Cases, the Attack of Cholera is preceded by a Looseness of Bowels of longer or shorter Duration, say Twenty-four Hours. It is in this Stage that remedial Assistance is most efficient, and that Life may be saved with the most Certainty, by checking the Disease in its Commencement. When, therefore, the Bowels become relaxed without an obvious Cause, where Cholera is prevailing at the Time, the following Measures should be adopted without Loss of Time :

5. In the Case of Adults, previously healthy, let Blood be taken from the Arm to Eight or Ten Ounces, or by Ten or Twelve Leeches to the Pit of the Stomach, or by Cupping.

Should the loose Motions be of a darker Colour than natural, give Two Pills of Form No. 2, and Four Hours after a Table-spoonfull of Castor Oil, floating on Half a Wine-glass-full of Gin and Water, Brandy and Water, or cold Coffee, with Ten Drops of Laudanum if there be griping Pains. Confine the Patient strictly to Bed, and give the following Draught at Night : —

Cinnamon or Peppermint Water, Half an Ounce; * Laudanum, Twenty-five Drops.

Brandy or Whisky and Water ; cold if preferred. Let the Patient drink cold Water or iced Water if it can be had, allowing no more than Two or Three Table-spoonfuls at a Time, or Bits of Ice the Size of a Nut may be given to be swallowed whole, to allay the burning Sensation at the Pit of the Stomach. Let Bags or Stockings filled with heated Bran or Sand be placed along the Patient's Spine or Sides, and Feet Warmers applied to his Feet. Let him be kept still, if possible, wrapt in warm Blankets, but not oppressed with Heat or Coverings, particularly over the Chest and Neck.

Transcript: Precautionary Hints on Cholera

Treatment of the Premonitory [warning] Symptoms of Cholera

...

4. In a very large Majority of Cases, the Attack of Cholera is preceded by a Looseness of Bowels of longer or shorter Duration, say Twenty-four Hours. It is in this stage that remedial Assistance is most efficient, and that Life may be saved with the most Certainty, by checking the Disease in its Commencement. When, therefore, the Bowels become relaxed without an obvious Cause, where Cholera is prevailing at the Time, the following Measures should be adopted without Loss of Time:

5. In the Case of Adults, previously healthy, let Blood be taken from the Arm to Eight or Ten ounces, or by Ten or Twelve Leeches to the Pit of the stomach, or by Cupping.

Should the loose Motions of a darker Colour than natural, give Two Pills of Form No.2., and Four Hours after a Table-spoonful of Caster Oil, floating on Half a Wine-glass-full of Gin and Water, Brandy and Water, or cold Coffee, with Ten Drops of Laudanum [opium used as a pain killer and sleeping aid] if there be griping Pains. Confine the Patient strictly to Bed, and give the following Draught at Night:- Cinnamon or Peppermint Water, Half an Ounce; Laudanum, Twenty-five Drops

...

Let the patient drink cold water or iced water if it can be had, allowing no more than two or three table-spoonfuls at a time, or bits of ice the size of a nut may be given to be swallowed whole, to allay the burning sensation at the pit of the stomach. Let bags or stockings filled with heated bran or sand be placed along the patient's spine or sides, and feet warmers applied to his feet. Let him be kept still, wrapped in warm blankets, but not oppressed with heat or coverings, particularly over the chest and neck.

Source 5: A letter sent from the Central Board of Health

Catalogue Ref: PC 1/114

"Individual Houses unless in crowded
 filthy badly-ventilated habitations &
 other contingencies which involve the
 "Health and safety of all"
 That it has been proved that Cholera
 was not found to spread amongst
 the other Patients in the Public Hospitals
 in which some Cases of that Disease
 were treated during the late Epidemic

On the 14th day of November last
 the Central Board published a
 Circular of which the following is an
 Extract
 "It is with much satisfaction that
 the Board feel themselves authorized to
 declare that it will no doubt be highly
 consolatory to the public to learn that
 under proper observance of Cleanliness &
 Ventilation this Disease seldom spreads
 in Families & rarely passes to those absent
 the sick - unless they happen to be
 particularly predisposed."
 "I will not therefore be necessary
 when there is space & in the situation
 is paid to Cleanliness & Fresh Air to
 separate Members of Families actually
 affected by the said Disease nor to isolate
 Individual

Transcript: Letter from the Central Board of Health

...

On the 14th day of November last year the Central Board published a circular of which the following is an extract-

“It is with much satisfaction that the Board feel themselves authorised to declare and it will be no doubt be highly [consolatory] to the public to learn that under proper observance of cleanliness & ventilation this Disease seldom spreads in families & rarely passes to those about the sick-unless they happen to be particularly predisposed.”

“It will not therefore be necessary where there is space & where due attention is paid to cleanliness & purification to separate members of families actually affected by the said Disease nor to isolate individual houses unless in crowded filthy badly ventilated habitations & other contingencies which involve the Health and Safety of all.”

That it has been proved that cholera was not found to spread amongst the other patients in the public Hospitals in which some cases of that Disease were treated during the late epidemic.

Source 6: Letter from the Mayor of Plymouth

Catalogue Ref: HO 45/2755

hope I shall be excused if I venture to
inquire if the Paragraph in question has
any foundation in fact or otherwise -

I would only add, if I may be
permitted to do so, that such a measure
on the part of Her Majesty's Government
would, I am assured, be most grateful to
the feelings of a very large Number of the
Inhabitants of this Town, and would
doubtless be, so generally regarded in the
Numerous Towns and places which are
suffering from the same distressing
Calamity -

I have the honor to be
Sir

Your most Obedt Servt

Wm Bummer Mayor

Quilchall, Plymouth
August 21st 1849

Sir

I take the liberty of addressing you in
consequence of my having received two Memorials
expressive of a strong desire entertained on the
part of a numerous and highly respectable
portion of the Inhabitants of this place, including
several of the Clergy, that a day should be
appointed for General Humiliation and Prayer
for the removal of the calamitous sickness under
which this Town has been for some time suffering.

My attention has also been directed to a
Paragraph in a London paper announcing
that it is the Contemplation of Her Majesty's
Government to appoint on early day for a
General Fast, Prayer and Humiliation, in refer-
ence to the same afflictive visitation and as such a
circumstance will necessarily determine the
nature of my reply to the parties who have
addressed me, by the Memorials referred to, I

To the Right Honble

Sir George Grey Bart MP

His Secretary of State for the
Home Department
Whitehall



Transcript: Letter from the Mayor of Plymouth

August 21st 1849

Sir

I take the liberty of addressing you in consequence of my having received two memorials [petitions] expressive of a strong desire entertained on the part of a numerous and highly respectable portion of the Inhabitants of this place, including several of the Clergy, that a day should be appointed for General Humiliation and prayer [day of fasting & prayer as cholera was a signal God's judgement] for the removal of the calamitous [disastrous] sickness under which this Town has been for some time suffering.

My attention has also been directed to a paragraph in a London paper announcing that it is in the Contemplation [thought] of Her Majesty's Government to appoint an early day for a General Fast, Prayer and Humiliation in reference to the same afflictive [painful] visitation and as such a circumstance will necessarily determine the nature of my reply to the parties who have addressed me by the memorials referred to, I hope I shall be excused if I venture to inquire if the Paragraph in question has any foundation in fact or otherwise.

I would only add, if I may be permitted to do so, that such a measure on the part of Her Majesty's Government would, I am assured, be most grateful to the feelings of a very large number of the Inhabitants of this Town and would doubtless be so generally regarded in the numerous Towns and places which are suffering from the same distressing calamity [disaster].

...

I have the honour to be Sir Your most Obedt Servt [Obedient Servant]

To the Right [Honourable]

Sir George Grey Bart MP

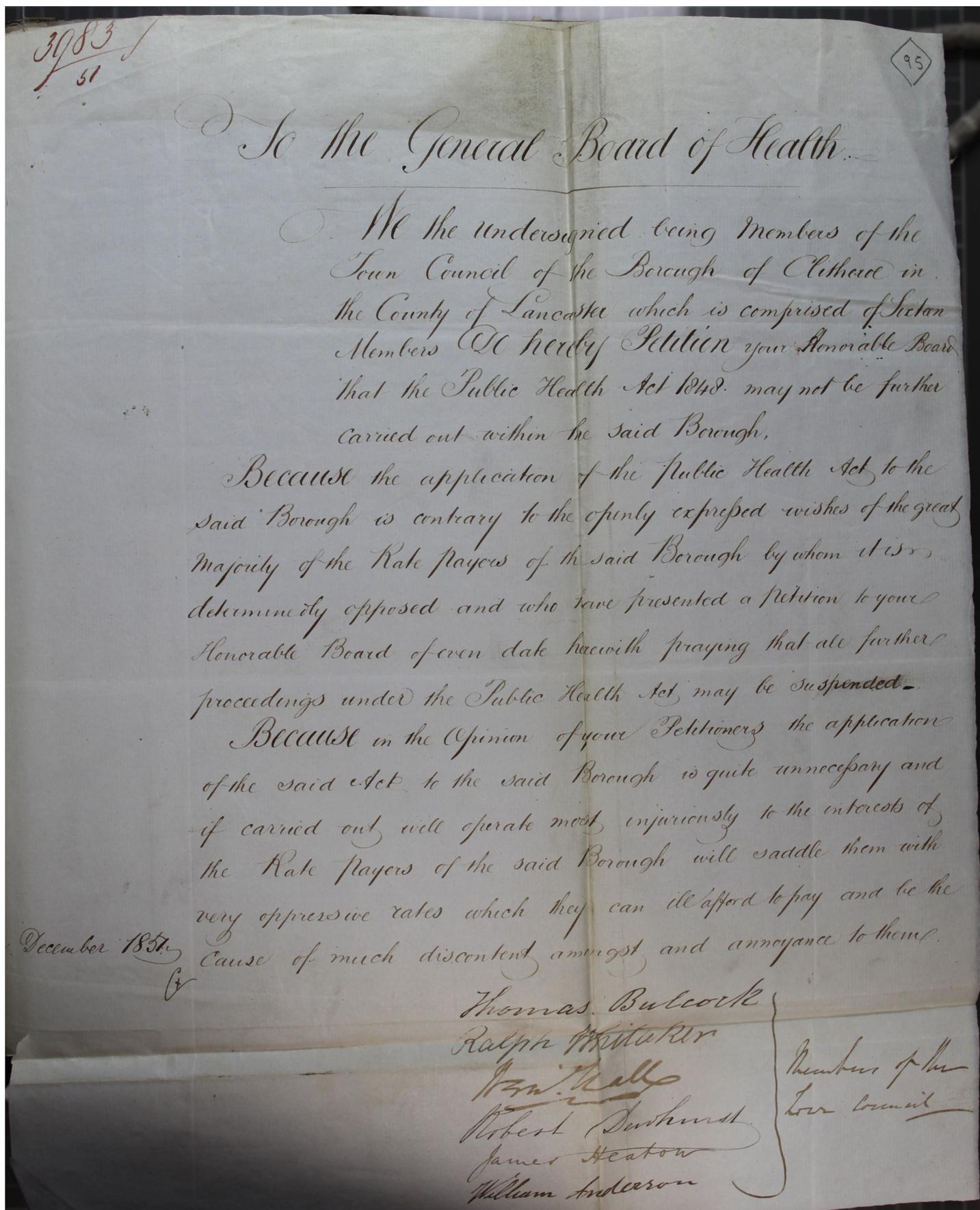
HM Secretary of State for the

Home Department

Whitehall

Source 7: Petition from members of Clitheroe town council

Catalogue Ref: MH 13/53



Transcript: Petition from members of Clitheroe town council

To the General Board of Health

We the undersigned being members of the Town Council of the Borough of Clitheroe in the County of Lancaster which is comprised of Sixteen Members Do hereby Petition your Honourable Board that the Public Health Act 1848 may not be further carried out within the said Borough.

Because the application of the Public Health Act to the said Borough is contrary to the openly expressed wishes of the great majority of the Rate Payers of the said Borough by whom it is determinedly opposed and who have presented a Petition to your Honourable Board of even date herewith praying that all further proceedings under the Public Health Act may be suspended.

Because in the opinion of your Petitioners the application of the said Act to the said Borough is quite unnecessary and if carried out will operate most injuriously to the interests of the Rate payers of the said Borough will saddle them with very oppressive rates which they can ill afford to pay and be the cause of much discontent amongst and annoyance to them.

Members of Town Council

(Signed)

Thomas Bulcock

Ralph Whitaker

...

Robert Denhurst

James Heaton

William Anderson

Source 8: Letter from a citizen of Ipswich

Catalogue Ref: MH 13/100

the Cholera be permitted to visit us
there is reason to fear that such
a nuisance would play a heavy
part in intensifying its malignity
and in widening its sphere.

Will the Board of Health,
therefore cause such enquiries to
be made as shall either remove
the offensive factory, or show
that its operations are not dele-
terious to public health

I am, Hon^{ble} Sir,
Your most obed^t Servant
John Teasdale

To C. Austin Esq:
Sep^r 21st 1853

2831
53

185

Ipswich
Trinity Terrace

Hon^{ble} Sir
I deem it important to
call the attention of the Board
of Health to the existence of a
manure factory, in a poor and
populous district, of the parish of
St. Clements, Ipswich; carried on
by the firm of E. Packard & Co;
and that there arise from the
said factory, such unwholesome
effluvia as render it almost
uninhabitable living in the vicinity;
and further that, in the opinion
of medical men practising in
the neighbourhood, its tendency is
to generate disease.
Should that fearful scourge

Transcript: Letter from a citizen of Ipswich

Ipswich, Trinity Terrace

[Honourable] Sir,

I deem it important to call the attention of the Board of Health to the existence of a manure factory in the poor and populous district of the Parish of St. Clements, Ipswich; carried on by the firm of E. Packard & [Company] and that there arise from the said factory such an unwholesome effluvia [unpleasant or harmful odour] as to render it almost insufferable living in the vicinity and further that in the opinion of medical men practising in the neighbourhood its tendency is to generate disease.

Should that fearful scourge the cholera be permitted to visit us, there is reason to fear that such a nuisance would play a heavy part in intensifying its malignity [evil] and in widening its sphere [spread of disease].

Will the Board of Health, therefore cause such enquiries to be made as shall either remove the offensive factory or show that its operations are not deleterious [harmful] to public health.

I am, [Honourable] Sir,

Your most [Obedient] Servant

John Peachey

To C. Austin Esquire

September 21st, 1853

Source 9a: Extracts from the Chatham News

Catalogue Ref: MH 13/47

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER**DEATH IN THE WELL!**

A Coroner's Jury, after a careful investigation, have pronounced that one victim of cholera has perished from the use of bad water on the Brook. Though not in the verdict, it logically follows that the opinion of the jury, as of the Union medical officer, was that the victim's little brother also perished from the same exciting cause, and that the other persons who have recently died on the Brook from cholera became susceptible to the choleraic poison which exists in this country from having drunk impure water. A consideration of Mr. Ely's evidence, on which the jury gave their verdict, leads to this conclusion. That gentleman, who has been most unjustly assailed for merely doing his duty, said the children were not attacked till the family, from an accidental circumstance, had to drink water from the north side of the Brook—till they were attacked, he had had no cholera cases on the side of the Brook where they lived. On the north side of the Brook there had been a number of fatal cases of cholera—when Mr. Nye's family were compelled to drink of the water from the north side, two children died from cholera, and a third was attacked with choleraic diarrhoea: the conclusion was obvious—that bad water was the exciting cause of the fatal outbreak. That Mr. Nye's children died from cholera, was the unanimous opinion of a number of surgeons—military, naval, and civil—who were at the inquest; also that the exciting cause was the consumption of impure water. The verdict of the jury—men of independent spirit, who judged only from the sworn testimony before them, not from fluctuating gossip—was sufficiently emphatic,—“Death from cholera, arising from the use of impure water.” Nothing could be more distinct and positive than that.

Now that the necessity for closing polluted sources of water has at length been tardily recognised by the authorities of Chatham, we trust that the action that has been inaugurated by an order of the Board of Health for the closure of the wells on the Brook, will not cease until the whole of the foul surface wells of these towns are filled in, covered, and their mission of mischief ended. It is a penalty we must be con-

Transcript: Extracts from the Chatham News

A Coroner's Jury, after a careful investigation have pronounced that one victim of cholera has perished from the use of bad water on the Brook. Though not in the verdict, it logically follows that the opinion of the jury, was that the victim's little brother also perished from the same exciting cause, and that the other persons who have recently died on the Brook from cholera became susceptible to the choleraic poison which exists in this country from having drank impure water. A consideration of Mr. Ely's evidence, on which the jury gave their verdict, leads to this conclusion. That gentlemen, who has been most unjustly assailed for merely doing his duty, said the children were not attacked till the family, from an accidental circumstance, had to drink water from the north side of the Brook—till they were attacked, he had no cholera cases on the side of the Brook where they lived. On the north side of the Brook there have been a number of fatal cases of cholera—when Mr. Nye's family were compelled to drink water from the north side, two children died from cholera, and a third was attacked with choleric diarrhoea: the conclusion was obvious—that bad water was the exciting cause of the fatal outbreak. That Mr. Nye's children died from cholera, was the unanimous opinion of a number of surgeons—military, naval, and civil—who were at the inquest, also that the exciting cause was the consumption of impure water. The verdict of the jury—men of independent spirit, who judged only from the sworn testimony before them, not from fluctuating gossip—was sufficiently empathic—"Death from cholera, arising from the use of impure water". Nothing could be more distinct than that.

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...

Source 9b: Extracts from the Chatham News

Catalogue Ref: MH 13/47

Chatham Dockyard, 2nd November, 1866.

My dear Mr. Ely—With Redman's assistance I have made a partial analysis of the water of a well from the Brook near that shut up; I send you the result. You see it has many of the characteristics of the other surface wells about here—large amount of total solid impurity and of chlorides, excess of organic and volatile matter, and the nitrates and nitrites that indicate the animal nature of the latter contamination and its partial and imperfect oxidation; the water, however, shows an unusual amount of permanent hardness and magnesia salts, and in addition to the ordinary impurities shows traces of ammonia. Does the graveyard on the slope of the hill contribute anything to these?

None of these shallow wells drawing their supply of water from a surface soil that is honeycombed in all directions with cesspools are to be used with safety; they differ in degrees of foulness, but their closure entirely would be a wholesome sanitary regulation, especially in a crowded neighbourhood where a single infected cess-pool draining into a well might convey typhoid fever, or cholera, or any other of the diseases connected with depraved water supply to the whole community.

Yours very truly,

HENRY HADLOW.

Mr. Ely.

Transcript: Extracts from the Chatham News

Chatham Dockyard, 2nd November, 1866

My Dear Mr Ely [Medical Officer]

With Redman's assistance I have made a partial analysis of the water of a well from the Brook near that shut up; I send you result. You see it has many of the characteristics of the other surface wells about here—large amount of solid impurity and of chlorides, excess of organic and volatile matter, and the latter contamination and its partial and imperfect oxidation; the water, however, show an unusual amount of the ordinary impurities shows traces of ammonia. Does the graveyard on the slope of the hill contribute anything to these?

None of these shallow wells drawing their supply of water from a surface soil that is honeycombed in all directions with cesspools are to be used with safety; they differ in degrees of foulness, but their closure entirely would be a wholesome sanitary regulation, especially in a crowded neighbourhood where a single infected cesspool draining into a well might convey typhoid fever, or cholera, or any other of the diseases connected with depraved water supply to the whole community.

Yours very truly,

HENRY HADLOW

Source 10: A design for a 'cholera belt', 1882

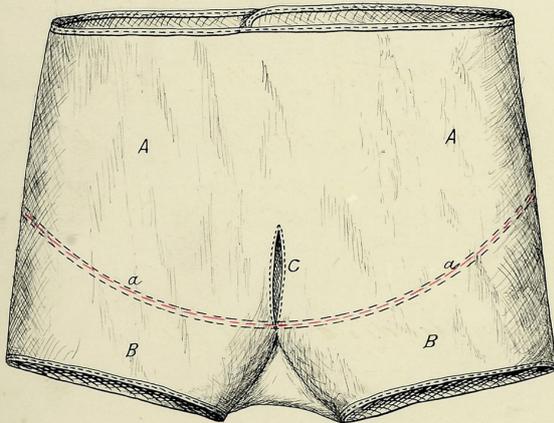
Catalogue Ref: BT 45/30 (6563)

Design for Cholera-Belt

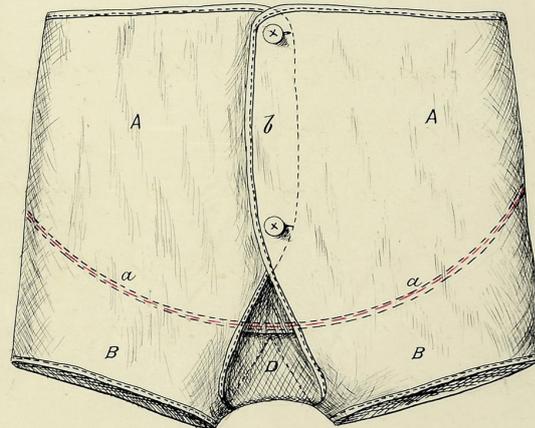
Registered for Messrs Dodd & Monk, of Albert Mill, Canal St
Congleton, Cheshire.



Front



Back



The purpose of Utility to which the Shape or Configuration of this Design has reference is to ensure that the belt shall always retain its position and not be liable to work up and become uncomfortable as does the ordinary cholera-belt now worn.

The body part AA is lined with flannel, as far as the curved dotted line a, a colored red, and forms the cholera-belt proper, this body-part being provided with trunk extensions B, B through which the legs are passed.

The body-part is opened down the back at b, for the purpose of putting on the belt and is formed with a slit C at front and with a larger opening D at back, to enable the ordinary functions of the body to be performed without removing the belt.

The whole of this Design is new in so far as regards the shape or Configuration thereof.

Transcript: A design for a 'cholera belt', 1882

Design for Cholera Belt

Registered for Messrs Dodd & Monk, of Albert Mill, Canal St

Congleton, Chesire.

Front [Illustration]

Back [Illustration]

The purpose of utility to which the shape or configuration of this design has reference is to ensure that the belt shall always retain its position and not be liable to work up and become uncomfortable as does the ordinary cholera belt now worn.

The body part AA is lined with flannel, as far as the curved dotted line a, a colored red, and forms the cholera belt proper, this body-part being provided with trunk extensions B, B through which the legs are passed. The body-part is opened down the back at b, for the purpose of putting on the belt and is formed with a slit C at front and with a larger opening D at back, to enable the ordinary functions of the body – to be performed without removing the belt. The whole of this design is new in so far as regards the shape or configuration thereof.



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