

HEALTH AND SANITATION IN VICTORIAN WINCHESTER

or: The Triumph of the Muckabites

By W H BOORMAN

This paper is dedicated to the memory of Mrs Margaret Boorman.

ABSTRACT

Residents of Winchester in the 1990s, observing the city's popularity as a residential, tourist, and commuter centre, and conscious of its ancient royal associations, and the antiquity of its regional, ecclesiastical and educational importance, may be forgiven for assuming that the city has always been an attractive and desirable place to live. That, however, is far from the case. This paper explores the fierce debate which took place in the decades either side of 1850 about whether or not to provide adequate drainage for the city. There are some strong currents apparent within this watery saga: ratepayers (largely against drains) versus powerful institutions exempt from rates (largely for drains) is one. Another is within the realms of medical history itself, the struggle of the 'miasmatisers' against the 'contagionists', with the learned Dr Moberly, clearly on the side of the miasmatisers. In a sense the outcome of the muckabite saga went against the miasmatisers, as the victors were prepared to risk the stench which hung over the city, and so to save their pockets.

FROM EARLY DAYS TO THE PAVEMENT COMMISSIONERS

Some three and a half centuries ago, at the time of the Civil War, Winchester already had a reputation sufficiently notorious for visitors that 'att their first coming they are enter-tayned with a sharp but short fever' (Atkinson 1963, 218). Trussell further noted the purgative effect of the fever which 'thoroughly clenseth them from all peccant humours' and bowel complaints remained omnipresent in Winchester thereafter.

From a modern perspective, it is evident that the prime cause of this undesirable reputation was the inadequacy of the sewage arrangements in Winchester. These arrangements were described in a nineteenth-

century investigation as being, in essence, little different from those obtaining in Roman or even earlier Winchester:

Winchester is one of the oldest cities in the British Empire. In the day of the Ancient Briton it was Caer Gwent or 'White City' and the Chalk or White Subsoil has wonderfully preserved the Inhabitants through the ages of continued sanitary neglect. Winchester remains to this day a City of Cesspools, a City the subsoil of which has received the refuse accumulation of some two thousands of years (Robert Rawlinson, see below p 172).

Despite the prevalence of bowel complaints, this system seems to have served Winchester fairly well until the early nineteenth century, though it is perhaps no coincidence that, whatever the processional requirements of the plans, the Carolean palace was to be sited well away from the low lying ground towards the centre of the city. Certainly there seems to have been no significant demand for any amendment before the 1840s. In the 1770s, in common with many British cities, Winchester adopted a Paving Act, appointing Commissioners of the Pavement, with general powers over paving, lighting and cleansing the streets (11 George III Cap 9, 1771). The Commissioners raised some £7,000 to spend on such duties. Their powers were strengthened by an amending act of 1808 which also allowed them to pay back the remainder of this loan still outstanding by raising a further sum of £9,000 (48 George III Cap 2). But this expenditure was not all devoted to actual works: by 1837, about half the rate raised was required to

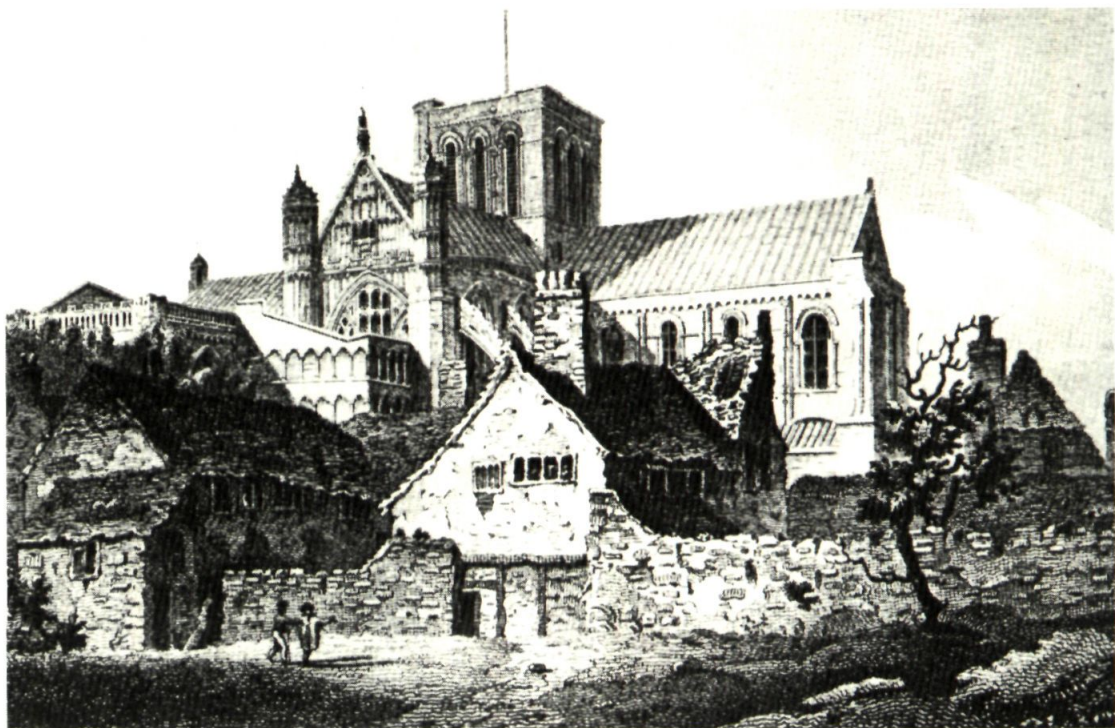


Fig 1. Engraving of Winchester Cathedral, with the first hospital in Colebrook Street, in the foreground, 1812. (Photo: Winchester Museums Service PWCM 6934)

service the loan and all attempts to increase it were to be frustrated by that spirit of reform which demanded no taxation without representation.

BEYOND THE PAVEMENT COMMISSIONERS

Whatever the success of the Commissioners' efforts, it is clear from the 1830s onwards, that the scale of the problem had passed beyond their capacity to control. The root cause of this problem is simply stated: the growth of Winchester's population. The latest estimates available suggest that, in the critical years between 1821 and 1861, the population of the city virtually doubled (James 1988, Table 1). It is conventional to ascribe this growth to the coming of the railways, but the first signs of it

were discernible in the early 1830s, and reflect rural depopulation, possibly consequent on the introduction of more efficient agricultural machinery, rather than on the railway's arrival. Thus, in the aftermath of the Swing riots, a contemporary observer noted 'In rural parishes about the neighbourhood the number of small tenements was continually diminishing, those which fell into decay not being restored, and the consequence was that people were driven into Winchester' ('Philopolis', HC 10.9.1838). This was the goad which first brought about an increase in the population of Winchester, which seems from contemporary accounts to have concentrated in the parish of St Maurice and the poorer housing in the Brooks area. Thus, William Arrowsmith stated that the population of this parish had increased by 3,300 to 3,400 who were living in newly erected small tenements (HC

28.12.1835, 1 col 2). He pointed out that they were mainly day labourers working in the country and returning to the city at night.

To this substantial influx, the railway did add its own contribution. This is not the place to repeat the complex history of the arrival of the railway, or the dispute about the route which it should follow in its approach to the city. Two aspects of the story are relevant to the history of the city's sanitation: one concerned the destruction of its pest house, the other the availability of land for housing development which would bring further population to strain the already taxed sanitary resources of the city.

The railway between London and Southampton was first mooted in 1825, but little was heard of it until at a meeting in Southampton, on 26 February 1831, an investigation committee was formed (Fay 1973, 3ff). Later that year the *Hampshire Chronicle*, reported that the railway would be routed through the city along the ditch on the *east* front of the King's House (i.e. cutting through within the medieval walls, or a misprint for west, where the railway did eventually cut through the western ditches of the city), cross the High Street near the Westgate and would come out near the newly-erected round tower of the north city walls (HC 14.11.1831, 1 col 1). The building of the gas works, in 1832, in Staple Gardens was obviously related to this proposed route for the railway and the ready access to coal supplies it would afford (Milner 1839, 268). In 1834, the bill was passed and on 15 September 1834 Messrs Mant were offering for sale two freehold properties, 'Contiguous to the intended railroad from Southampton to the Metropolis for which an Act of Parliament has been approved' (HC 15.9.1834, 3 col 5). One of these properties was described as a 'genteel Residence immediately adjoining Westgate' and so it is apparent that the railway was intended to cross the city within 400 yards of the cathedral! This is not the place to discuss the reasons for it, but the route had been clearly changed by 1836 (Fay 1973, 19). On 10 May 1836, the newly formed Finance Committee of Winchester agreed to sell the city's

pest house, one and a quarter acres of pasture land and other property to the railway for £1,175. It is perhaps relevant to note that negotiations took place about the purchase of land at the south west corner of Oram's Arbour for the rebuilding of the pest house, but nothing seems to have come of them (unpaginated FFCB 1836-52: 31.7., 3., 19.9.1839; 4.6.1840; 29.10.1841; 22.9.1843. Austin Whitaker, *pers comm*).

Two years later in 1838, the Ordnance department was surveying land surrounding the barracks. This land, to the west of the railway (i.e. on its present-day route) would 'provide a salubrious and extensive ground as a desirable substitute for that part of Oram's Arbour sold for the S.W. railway' (HC 20.8.1838, 1 col 1). On 27 August 1838, the *Hampshire Chronicle* reported that Mr John Young, (freeman, councillor for St Thomas Ward at the first Municipal Elections, mayor 1834-37, d. June 1839) had met Captain Dundas and another officer about the sale of the 'Airing-Ground', which the Board of Ordnance was anxious to sell. The land in question was an area of the western hill used during the Seven Years' War and in 1780 for exercising prisoners. However, the railway cutting west of the King's House (barracks) cut off the 'Airing Ground' from the barracks. It was Young's opinion that the town council should purchase this ground with the money they had received from the railway for the part of Oram's Arbour which it had sold. The ground would make additional room for the sheep fair and make it possible to provide a cemetery outside the city. The matter of cemetery provision was supported in the columns of the *Hampshire Chronicle* by 'Philopolis' who argued that the proposed cemetery on the west hill would do away with interring within the city 'a practice prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants' (HC 10.9.1838). Meanwhile, in 1838, John Young was anxious that the land in question should not be sold to speculators as, 'they would probably see erections formed calculated not only to do injury to the city, but in a great measure to pauperise it'. In the event at a meeting of the inhabitants

of the city, held in February 1839, the citizens resolved, 'that purchasing the Airing-Ground from Corporation funds at £1,500 would be injurious to the ratepayers of the city and borough'. Inevitably the town council dropped the proposal following the ratepayers vote and some eight acres of prime development land was now 'up for grabs' (HC 11.2.1839, 1 col 2). Later in 1839 a Cemetery Company proposal to purchase the land appeared in the *Chronicle* (HC 2.9.1839, 1).

The new line of the railway having been established by 1837 it was not long before speculators moved in, increasing the population of St Thomas's from 1,665 in 1831 to 3,071 in 1841 and 4,223 in 1851 (VCH vol 5, 449; Fay 1973, 26). Many of the houses erected were small tenements and by 1841 the *Hampshire Chronicle* contains letting advertisements for cottages outside the Westgate (HC 5.4.1841, 4 col 5). These cottages were similar in character to those built and building in St Maurice where there was a water supply available in the brooks in case of fire. At the Westgate and on the western hill where this significant development was taking place there was no such natural source of water and the corporation was anxious to provide water for the area. The city surveyor estimated the cost of laying down pipes and fire plugs for the purpose at £1,220 (HC 25.1.1841, 1 col 5). The borough claimed that it could not legally fund such a scheme and the Pavement Commissioners had no money. A Mr Robbins, proprietor of the steam engine in St James's Field, came to the rescue with a most handsome offer, 'to provide a gratuitous supply of water in case of fire on condition that he be allowed to use mains to convey water to the houses of individuals for domestic purposes'. At their April meeting the Pavement Commissioners gave permission for 'Mr Robbin' to lay down main and service pipes to any part of the city and suburbs for supplying water to the inhabitants for public and domestic purposes, from his waterworks in St James's Field', with a condition that the Pavement Commissioners had a right to insert fire plugs for public service (HC 19.4.1841, 1 col 1).

The increased population brought with it an appreciable increase in trade and incidentally, a concomitant increase in human and animal excreta, which overloaded the disposal facilities in the care of the Pavement Commissioners. Rural depopulation, the coming of the railway and the provision of a piped water supply, had conspired to increase the population of the city to the point where its sanitary provisions, never truly adequate, were to be stretched to breaking point.

STRAINS OF INCREASED POPULATION

On 22 October 1838, the first hint of trouble arose in St Maurice with the report of the deaths of the hospital's apothecary and porter. Both young men had died of a malignant fever. The same issue of the newspaper was, however, able to reassure its readers that there was no fever in the County Prison and Bridewell which were described as being free from disease (HC 22.10.1838 1 cols 5-6). Only with hindsight can a possible connection between the overcrowding in St Maurice's and the malignant fever in the hospital be seen.

At the May 1840 meeting of the Pavement Commissioners a letter was read from the Bishop of Winchester, Charles Sumner, complaining of the sewerage of Colebrook Place, 'which was allowed to pass into the ground of Wolvesey, creating a great nuisance, detrimental to the health of all who lived in its vicinity' (HC 18.5.1850, 4 col 2). At that time, the palace was occupied by the Diocesan Training College for schoolmasters and a remedy was found, but not immediately by any means. After some twenty years at Wolvesey, the College fled the city in 1861-2 to splendid new accommodation designed by John Colson. Thus the Training College joined the County Prison, the New Work House and the Cemetery on the Western Hill, where the speculators had been busy erecting 'pretty and well arranged villas, and neat terraces' (Milner 1839, 271; Pevsner and Lloyd 1967, 706; Carpenter Turner 1980, 176).

The impact of the increased population on

the West Hill, and the provision of a piped water supply to it was manifesting its own effects by 1844, long before the Training College arrived. As the dirty water drained away from the new developments on the western hill the inhabitants of the lower parts of the city began to experience new problems (HC 3.2.1844, 1 col 2).

There had been relatively minor complaints about the failures of the scavenger appointed under the Pavement Act, as for example, when a correspondent wrote to the local newspaper complaining about the state of the roads in the city, drains choked with the collected mass of dirt and rubbish and the unevenness of the pavements in the lower part of the town which gave the pedestrian there 'a partial pediluvium' (HC 30.12.1839, 1 col 2). At a town council meeting in 1844, Mr William Wickham FRCS (d.1864), whose monument in the Cathedral records the termination of his 'Forty Years [as] Surgeon to the Hants County Hospital', directed the attention of the council to the unhealthy state of the lower part of the city and suggested that representations be made to the Commissioners of Pavement, with a view, if possible, to removing 'so grievous an evil' (HC 3.2.1844 1 col 2). The evil referred to was the condition of the drains and sewers and Wickham hoped that individuals would feel it incumbent on them to preserve a free outlet for the refuse of their houses and that the inhabitants, as a body, would be bound to secure the means by which the filth of the town might be removed. Wickham was clearly aware of the agitation following Chadwick's 1842 report and his comments on Winchester received an immediate response from the Mayor, who made contact with the barrack master (Longmate 1966, 149-150). Mr Coles, city surveyor, was preparing a plan for a 'sewer starting from Westgate, down the High Street, branching to the right through the gardens of Wolvesey emptying into the Old Barge river' (HC 4.5.1844 1 col 2. See also FFCB 13.5.1844).

This was the first plan for a common sewer and with the contacts the Mayor had made at the barracks, where major developments were taking place, he had every hope of getting the

sewer with a considerable share paid by the Board of Ordnance. Unfortunately, the Mayor had to report in August of 1844 that the best he could obtain from that source was the promise of an annual sum in the event of a scheme being adopted (HC 3.8.1844, 1 col 1). In the following September, almost as though nature wished to remind the inhabitants of the danger they were in, a violent storm of rain flooded the High Street from the Market house down to the police station (HC 7.8.1844, 1 col 2). The city was now, without pest house and sewer, seriously exposed if cholera returned. The barracks eventually made their own arrangements with Mr. Simonds for a drain which ran through his meadow from the barracks into the river. However, this arrangement was not entirely to the satisfaction of the city, whose Cesspool Committee reported in February 1846 that the cesspool on the Ordnance Ground in Southgate Street was a threat to local wells. They recommended that the cesspool be moved further westward (Simonds pen Darby, 126-127; FFCM 2.2.1846, Austin Whitaker, *pers. comm.*). The county prison and police station decided to join the exodus to the western hill and work started on the present prison in 1846. Completed in 1849 it had its own large cesspool dug into the solid chalk. Although apparently dangerously close to the water works it did not, thankfully, pollute the deep well there.

Thus, a significant opportunity was lost: institutions which might have stayed within the city and contributed to a new scheme for all moved up on to the western hill, and allowed their effluent to drain down into the unfortunate city below where the situation deteriorated. Literary evidence about the disgraceful state of Winchester at this time comes from the works of Charlotte Mary Yonge, a much neglected Victorian best seller (Mare et al 1947). In her novel, *The Trial*, we find that Stoneborough, with its ancient minster and college, had been visited by an outbreak of scarlet fever caused by the 'Stoneborough stinks' (Yonge 1887, 11), that is, according to Dr Spencer, but his friend Dr May (Yonge, 1888) thought: 'The place was fairly healthy',

and his 'town councillor's conservatism' and hatred of change, as well as the amusement in skirmishing, had always made him the champion of things as they were; and in the present emergency the battle whether the enemy had travelled by infection or was the product of the Pond Building's miasma, was the frequent enlivenment of the disagreeing doctors (Yonge 1887 loc cit; Frazer 1950, 67-70).

NATIONAL ATTITUDES AND LOCAL RESPONSES: THE FACTIONS EMERGE

Fictional as well as real doctors might disagree about the origins of disease but meanwhile, national attention was turning to the issues relating to sanitation. In March 1847, Viscount Morpeth, a member of the Health of Towns Association, introduced the first reading of the Public Health Bill which received a favourable reception but the opposition grew and eventually the 'dirty party' triumphed and the government withdrew the Bill. In February 1848, Lord Morpeth introduced a 'Bill for the improvement of Public Health' this time the government had the support of Chadwick and before the third reading of the Bill the government spokesman was warning 'that appalling pest the cholera was making steady, systematic progress towards the shores of England' 50 (Longmate 1966, 152-6). The threat silenced the opposition and on 31 August 1848 the Bill received royal assent (Cartwright 1977, 105). To some modern eyes, the so-called Chadwick Act, might appear as ill-considered and panic legislation, but as is already apparent conditions in a modestly sized town like Winchester were very far from satisfactory.

In Winchester there were signs of the growing panic from 14 February when the Sanitary Reform Committee of the Health of Towns Association was circulating explanatory papers (HC 14.2.1848, 4 col 3). A correspondent, 'Viator', wrote to the *Hampshire Chronicle* complaining of rubbish in Southgate Street (26.2.1848, 1 col 4), while another complained about the scandalous state of the pavements

and the Commissioners partiality to the High Street (;8.4.1848, 1 col 2), a third complained about the high tax and his concern for the springs of carriages owing to the sinking of crossings in the High Street (22.4.1848, 1 col 3). These correspondents exhibit a dichotomy of interests among Wintonians which was to develop into two distinct factions, one for sanitary reform, whose members were known as 'Drainists' or 'Sewerites'. The others who were opposed to expenditure on sewers because they considered that Winchester was a healthy place which did not need such innovations. Members of this faction were to receive the sobriquet 'Muckabites' or 'Anti-Drainists' (HA 19.10.1861 Supplem, 3 col 4; HC 14.12.1861, 7 col 5). Throughout this period and for many years the town council was controlled by the anti-drainists and following the passing of the Chadwick Act and a second Act for the more speedy removal of nuisances and the prevention of contagious and epidemic diseases (11 & 12 Victoria Cap 123. ?1848-9), it met to consider *inter alia* a memorial signed by all but one of the city's medical practitioners (WQR vol 1848-5, 5).

The memorial, submitted to the council on 19 October 1848, describes the defective state of the sewerage and drainage of the town, 'and the consequent dangerous state of malaria which existed at that time in many parts of it, tending to the rise of fevers and other diseases'. It repeats the threatening report of the re-appearance of Asiatic Cholera which arose in 'filthy and ill-ventilated quarters', but does not designate any specific area of the city. This silence may have been due to delicacy on the part of the practitioners who were anxious not to offend their colleague, Mr James Forder. Close relatives of Forder's had been responsible for the building of the Forder and Poulsome Buildings, both notorious 'plague spots' at the time (HC 21.10.1848, 1 col 2). Forder had declined to sign the memorial because it was 'inconsistent as a Town Councillor' for him to do so, but he must have been seriously embarrassed by the affair (WQR 1848-50; HC 19.10.1848, 5). Whatever his motives for not signing, it appears that the memorial con-

cluded with recommendations for the creation of a comprehensive sewerage scheme in the city, and urged the adoption of powers under the 1848 Act.

Introducing the Council's discussion of the memorial, Charles Seagrim, mayor and a solicitor, was of the opinion that it was 'not necessary to burden the inhabitants with the enormous expenditure which such a step would entail' and he had no wish to supersede the Pavement Commissioners by adopting the powers offered by the act, under which a corporate body could take over these powers, as it would then be placed under the General Health Board. In the ensuing debate Mr Filer, describing himself as a practical man was critical of the Pavement Commissioners' work as 'in the Square the water and filth were stagnant and offensive in consequence of want of attention to a proper fall in the gutters'.

THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE

The council decided to appoint a new committee to meet fortnightly, the *Special Committee appointed by the Commissioners of Winchester Pavement* 'for the purpose of considering the best means of performing the scavenging after the expiration of the present contract', and also the propriety of transferring the powers now vested in the Pavement Commissioners to the town council (HC 25.11.1848, 1 col 2; Wooldridge 16.10.1848). Coincidentally, such a committee would delay any decision until after the elections! Procrastination and committee formation by council and inhabitants seems to have been a way of life for Wintonians for the next forty years and it is no surprise to learn that when the new mayor called a public meeting to consider the *Report* of the Special Committee there was much criticism of the Pavement Commissioners who were accused of wasting £700 on laying down 'ashphalte' which had proved 'a total failure' (HC 2.12.1848 3 cols 4 & 5). It was alleged that it was an unnecessary expense to call Lord Morpeth's bill into operation and to call in civil engineers or surveyors not resident in the

town. G W Johnson said the Commissioners were guilty of a gross dereliction of duty as large sums were paid out in interest although the surveyor only received £25 per annum (DNB).

Others defended the Commissioners by pointing out that their limited income made it impossible to sewer and Mr Todd added that the interest rate had been reduced from 5% to 4% on the total debt of £8,450. The meeting decided that the streets required cleaning and draining but that it was not expedient to transfer the power of the Commissioners to the Town Council (HC 25.11.1848).

In January 1849 the Pavement Commissioners elected new members to make up the losses due to death (WQR 8.1.1849). Some strengthening of the Commissioners seemed desirable with the approach of cholera and they recommended at their June meeting the cleaning of streams and the building of slaughter houses out of town (HC 30.6.1849, 4 col 2). The *Hampshire Chronicle* quoted *Report No 4 from the General Health Board* on cholera and the localities where the disease occurred, being the same as those of other epidemics, - 'the seats of typhus and other zymotic diseases' and - 'the existence of filth, bad ventilation, overcrowding and other local causes of atmospheric impurities' (HC 30.6.1849, 5 col 1). In July the Commissioners had before them eleven reports from local medical practitioners which stated that there was no particular disease, apart from bowel complaints (HC 28 July 1849, 4 col 1).

DR MOBERLY JOINS THE FRAY

At this meeting it was decided to appoint another committee, this time under the chairmanship of the Rev Dr Moberly, to take into consideration the question of the sewerage and drainage of the city and suburbs (Jacob and Johnson 1849). The Commissioners also undertook to publish hand bills requiring people to remove nuisances and, at the same time, agreed to alter the nuisance in Barnes Lane caused by the Barracks' privies (HC

14.7.1849, 4 cols 2 & 3). They had been successful in preventing the annual flooding at the lower end of the High Street, but their improvements did not stop cholera. 'A constant reader' wrote to the *Hampshire Chronicle*, 'At a time when disease is so prevalent' on the subject of 'the accumulation of dung-heaps and other pestiferous matter' which rendered the 'air impure and dangerous (HC 25.8.1849, 4 col 2) and a spate of summonses under the Removal of Nuisances Act indicates the area affected; Tanner Street, Middle Brooks and Kingsgate Street. The Bishop called for a 'day of prayer and humiliation for the removal of the pestilence' on 28 September and the Mayor requested that all business should be suspended on that day (HC 1.9.1849, 4 col 4; 2.9.1849, 4 cols 1 & 2).

The operation of the Removal of Nuisances Act had already upset many of the inhabitants as it stopped them allowing their washing water to flow into 'the same channel since time out of mind' (HC 25 Aug 1849, 4 col 2). The Tory *Hampshire Advertiser*, published in Southampton entered the debate (Rogers 1977, 169). A correspondent of that newspaper accused 'the perpetual Chairman of the Pavement Commissioners' of being 'not judge only, but leading counsel for the prosecution'. This was hotly denied by W Wilcocks, the surveyor to the Commissioners, who, in a long letter to the *Hampshire Chronicle*, denied the suggestion that the 'self-elected and irresponsible Commissioners' were guilty of 'reckless expenditure' describing these remarks as 'threadbare twaddle' (HC 29.9.1849, 6 col 4). The present expenditure of the Commissioners would not make a rate increase necessary except for the purpose of a general system of sewerage, which was being actively studied by Moberly's committee, and Wilcocks was against calling in the Sanitary Commission.

Moberly's report, entitled '*The Report of the Committee Appointed by the Pavement Commissioners to Consider Drainage*', was completed in time for a general meeting of the Pavement Commissioners held on Monday 22 October 1849 which ordered its publication for the information of the inhabitants. The Surveyor was

requested to have the Plan and Specification conveniently placed in his office together with Mr Billing's Report for inspection by the ratepayers. This meeting was adjourned to Monday 12 November next, to be held at the White Hart Inn at 11 am (The Moberly Report). As one might expect from the headmaster of the College, Moberly produced an excellent report which first describes the situation in the city where 'nuisances of all kinds abound in every part'. He continued;

In some localities, for instance, there are open and offensive ditches, drains, gutters, gratings, and other outlets, constantly emitting noxious effluvia, and contaminating both the air and water which the inhabitants are under the necessity of using. Of the open gutters running from private premises into the streets, some proceed from the slaughter-houses, stables, pigsties, sculleries, and other out-buildings, the liquid refuse of which must of necessity be of an offensive nature'.

The report adds to this horrifying catalogue of nuisances, 'innumerable privies and dead wells', 'one privy amongst two or three families', other houses 'without any privy or outlet of any description, dead wells and cesspools' with 'unrestrained communication with the atmosphere' and 'places where there are no means of obtaining water upon the premises, while in the Brooks and elsewhere it is not an uncommon thing for the same stream to be the receptacle of all kinds of filth and the only supply of water for domestic purposes'. Nearer home, he condemned the sewer, 'extending from Kingsgate to the corner of the Rev Mr Sissmore's house, in College Street. This short sewer is small, and quite inadequate to carry off the run of houses, together with the occasional mass of storm water which pours into it. It is now completely choked, so that the gratings in the upper part of College Street, and as far as Kingsgate, communicate with so many open cesspools discharging all their foul air into the street' (Battiscombe, 1943). Moberly concluded that no 'partial or local amend-

ment, is consistent with a due regard to the health or the morals of the community' that a plan 'should be adopted for sewerage of the whole City on a combined and scientific basis.'

LOCAL REMEDY OR THE BOARD OF HEALTH?

The committee had two courses open to it, the first of which was to place the city under the operation of the Board of Health. This was rejected, since it would have 'put their local funds under the absolute control of strangers' and because 'the rates might be raised to a height very burdensome and oppressive to the town'. The option proposed by the committee was a specific plan for the drainage of the city by a system of sewers wholly unconnected with the present streams and watercourses, to be executed by the Commissioners in stages. The first sewer was intended 'to drain the quarter of the town where the necessity is most urgent; the Hospital, the flat part of the High Street, Upper Colebrook Street and Colebrook Place'. The estimate for this portion of the work was only £800 and of this sum those institutions in the City which did not pay rates, 'such as the County Hospital, the Dean and Chapter, and the College' might contribute. The committee recommended the raising of a *single* rate of sixpence in the pound to meet the expenditure on the first part of the scheme.

Under the circumstances, it was a modest demand on the ratepayers, but cholera had left the city and by 6 October it was reported that £20 had been sent to the Hospital as a 'thank-offering for the excellent arrangements for prompt relief to all during the late prevailing sickness, to which we are indebted, under Divine Mercy, for the comparative freedom this city has been permitted to enjoy from the grievous effects of the pestilences which have fallen upon other places' (HC 6.10.1849, 4 col 1; 27.10.1849 4 cols 3 & 4). As the fear receded, the complaints about a rate of sixpence grew. A £20 thankoffering was all very well, but £800 for a scheme which would benefit non-ratepayers more than those who

would have to find that rate was a different matter. At its October meeting, Dr Moberly gave notice to the Pavement Commissioners that he would move that his committee's proposal should be adopted and that tenders be invited to carry out the first part. Mr W W Bulpett, the Chairman, was opposed to the proposal and pointed out that the completion of the plan would probably involve the expenditure of £6,000 and although he was 'opposed to inviting a mob' he felt a public meeting was necessary (Lewis 1980, 46).

The Mayor called a public meeting on Wednesday 7 November to take into consideration the Report of the Sewerage Committee and in his opening remarks hoped that those present who might address them 'should have a full, fair and impartial hearing' (HC 10.11.1849, 7 cols 2-4). Mr Kellow moved, 'That the proposed plan of sewerage is altogether unnecessary and ruinously expensive, and that the Pavement Commissioners be earnestly requested to take no further steps in the business'. Mr Moody seconded the motion and said 'he gave the learned divine 'credit for honesty' but in addressing the Pavement Commissioners as 'representatives of the citizens of Winchester' he was mistaken as 'they were no more so than the members for Gatton and Old Sarum'. Moody was of the opinion that it would be cheaper to be brought under 'the sewerage regulation introduced by the Earl of Carlisle'. Mr Wiltshire (HO 1890, 120) said he was 'opposed to the sewerage plan and would not subject his property to a heavy tax for the advantage of other people'. Dr Crawford spoke at length in favour of the plan and argued on pecuniary grounds alone, 'it might not be difficult to shew that by saving pence on sewerage at present, they might be obliged to spend pounds upon rates and scavenging ultimately'. Mr W. Johnson said he thought all towns needed to be seweraged but thought this should be 'carried out under a body of Commissioners for whom they could vote' (DNB).

Mr Bulpett, as a Pavement Commissioner, wanted to know, 'What had induced the Committee to come to the conclusion that it was necessary for the health of the inhabitants to

carry this plan into effect, which would entail a very serious expense on the ratepayers?" 'Was Winchester unhealthy?' 'When cholera raged in other towns, was not the reverse the fact as regards the city?' Dr Moberly replied, defending his plan and expressed surprise at Bulpett's change of mind. 'Meanwhile', he said, 'they had had the cholera in the city; though, happily, the number of those attacked was not large. If this panic were to return, a plan of drainage for the city would be impracticable, for the present drains were formed on no system'. He denied that the scheme was for the benefit of the College and pointed out that 'by making the issue in the Elizabeth meadows, the whole filth of the town would be brought very near the College'. An amendment proposed by Mr Seagrim that the city be brought under the Sanitary Act was not seconded and the original resolution was carried. The Mayor received a standing ovation for the way he had conducted this meeting, which had been subjected to occasional rude interruption from the body of the hall!

Moberly's plan had been rejected and there was stalemate in Winchester, but in fictional Stoneborough, 'The one element wanting to accomplish the town improvements, had been supplied by a headmaster on the side of progress, and Dr Spencer's victory had been won at last' (Yonge 1887, 337). Poor Dr Moberly was not to 'snuff the deodorized air' as the fictional Dr Spencer did in Stoneborough and when Miss Yonge came to write this novel she was not going to forgive his opponents. *The Trial* starts with this aphorism, '*Quand on veut dessecher un marais, on ne fait pas voter les grenouilles*'. Miss Yonge's dear Dr Moberly had lost this fight but the next he was to win.

LIMITED ACTION

The Pavement Commissioners had agreed to lay a drain to take surface water from St George's Street down to the open stream in Colebrook Street. Whilst it was being laid their surveyor Wilcocks had allowed owners of properties in the street to connect their water-

closets to the drain and this had been done apparently in the presence of Mr Bulpett. The result of this action was inevitable and on 7 January 1850 the Pavement Commissioners meeting was a lively one. 'Offensive and noxious gases were constantly issuing from several open gratings 'to the prejudice and injury of persons living in St George's Street'. The occupiers of small tenements in Colebrook Street, 'who had been in the habit of obtaining their water for domestic purposes from the open stream had been compelled to desist from doing so, in consequence of the filth issuing from the recently constructed drain'. The Commissioners eventually decided by seven votes to four to stop all communications between their drain and the water-closet and cesspool outlets. In the next issue of the *Hampshire Chronicle* (HC 19.1.1850, 4 col 1) 'a reader' drew attention to the numerous drains emptying themselves into the open water courses in various parts of the city and urged that the practice should be stopped.

On 4 March 1850 the Pavement Commissioners held a well attended meeting at the White Hart. Mr Bulpett was unanimously elected to the chair and he went on to say that he considered retiring, 'rather than subject himself to those stormy and unpleasant meetings and entreated his fellow commissioners to discuss that difference in a mild, temperate, gentlemanly, and christian spirit.' (HC 9.3.1850, 4 col 3). Mr Wooldridge said that he appeared for Mr T Godwin, Mr W P Flight and Mr Joseph Goodwin who had received notice from the Surveyor to cut off communication of their water closet drains with, what he called, 'the main sewer in St George's Street' (CDH 1857, 21). He went on to describe by means of a plan the various water-courses which flowed into the city from the meadows to the north and he then enumerated the different drains, cesspools and privies which drained into the brooks which, independent of the 'new sewer', emptied into the three brooks. He claimed that the water-closets emptying into this 'sewer' made little difference. The result was a resolution, calling a special meeting for 25 March to revoke the

previous order. Mr W Arrowsmith, a solicitor and councillor for St Maurice Ward then said he had a charge to make against Mr Wilcocks, the Surveyor, but Mr Wilcocks forestalled Arrowsmith's move to dismiss him by offering his resignation (HC 4.1.1836, 1 col 1).

Thirty-two Commissioners of the Pavement out of thirty-five attended the meeting and proceeded to elect Mr Bulpett as Chairman by 12 votes to 6 for Mr G Forder (HC 30.3.1850 4 col 2). Mr Lampard appeared on behalf of the Dean and Chapter to protest against the order being rescinded, after some quibbling about the form of words and procedure. A letter was then read from Mr Ralfe on behalf of the Warden and Fellows of the College. Then Dr Moberly went into action. The question was not connected with a general sewerage. He looked upon it simply as a question 'affecting those people living at the lower end of the town. The proposition was so monstrous that he could not conceive how men with their eyes and noses open could sanction it'. He described the scene in College Street and alleged that a servant of Rev Mr Sissmore, who had gone to inspect the 'dreadful stench' from the nearly dried up stream there, had died shortly afterwards. He countered Mr Wooldridge's remarks at the last meeting about all the outlets going into the brooks by claiming that previous Commissioners had failed in their duty by not getting rid of these nuisances. Mr Wooldrige defended his clients and claimed they had been invited by Mr Wilcocks to connect their water closets and to stop them up would be a hardship. 'The trifling addition of the night soil from the closets, would be as nothing compared with the number already communicating with the Middle Brooks'. Mr Theobald said 'that the water-closets in the Middle Brooks had existed from time immemorial'. He felt 'that Mr Godwin had only himself to blame and he could not understand whether two or three persons should or should not be permitted to perpetuate a nuisance to the injury of their neighbours, for whom they could have no regard, but perhaps they thought that

'Of all my father's children I love myself the best,
And now that I'm provided for, the drain
may kill the rest'.

he added, 'that although the course in St George's Street might have been called a sewer, it was, by the resolution of the previous 7 January, limited to surface drainage and, therefore, could not be used to carry off any night soil'. The motion for rescinding the order, which would have required a four-fifths majority, was lost by 18 votes to 13. Moberly had achieved a minor victory by ensuring that, if he was not to have a main sewer, surface drainage was to be safe from contamination with night soil.

The ever increasing demand for water and the growing number of water closets were responsible for the above problem and when the Mayor accounced the imminent formation of a new Water Company with capital of £15,000 by reporting that a third of houses were being supplied by the works and upwards of six miles of water main had been laid one realises that the Company formed only nine years earlier had been successful (HC 16.2.1850, 4 col 1). Too successful, perhaps, for those in the lower part of the city who received its product, as refuse water. The new Company's prospectus was issued on 16 March 1850 to purchase the present works and – 'the promotion of cleanliness, health, and comfort – the safeguard provided against the ravages of fire – the convenience of having water at hand in every chamber – its readiness of application to Baths and Washhouses – to say nothing of its uses for ornamental and garden purposes' (HC 16.3.1850, 4 col 1). It does seem, however, that the occupiers of the lower parts of the city were, with the exception of College and Chapter, unaware of the dangers being introduced by piped water.

Dr White, in a lecture on 'Public Health and Sanitary Measures' given at the Mechanics Institute 27 March 1850 did draw attention to the fact that of the 35 deaths from cholera in Winchester, the year before, not a single death had occurred above the Upper Brooks (VAC;

Times 27.2.1899). Cholera, he said, 'was a health inspector, which speaks in a language which nobody can misunderstand. Let us profit from the lesson it had taught us'. In his opinion preventative medicine would reduce mortality 'more than all the drugs ever discovered'. 'It was controvertible', he said, 'that defective drainage and sewerage was the great preventable cause of zymotic diseases (cholera, fevers etc) and that defective ventilation was the great preventable cause of consumption and scrofula'. He continued by claiming that, 'A salubrious city in an epidemic is like a city built of stone in a conflagration'. Dr White concluded his lecture by comparing the weekly cost of a pint of mild porter per house, with the annual cost to the city of Winchester of the 67 funerals and 2,000 illnesses which he had estimated were preventable. His audience dispersed after the usual vote of thanks to do nothing but argue. Most were not going to give up their porter for the city's health. Dr White had Doctors Snow (Snow 1849) and Shapter (Shapter 1849) on his side but after all, to Wintonians, he was only a medical theorist and statistician.

MIASMA VERSUS TAXATION

In the city the disgusting state of stinks continued. In August 1851 Mr Kellow, a former opponent of Dr Moberly, drew the Corporation's attention to the 'necessity for a more strict observance of sanitary measures'. Mr Charles Mayo FRCS (1788–1876), Surgeon to the County Hospital (1811–1869), and Consulting Surgeon 1869, added that 'he had experienced the serious nuisance caused by the junction of the County Hospital cesspool with the Upper Brooks water course. By accident a man had broken into the drain running from the Hospital the awful stench had almost knocked him down'. In his opinion the water in the Brooks must be seriously contaminated (HC 9.8.1851 4 col 3). By October 1851, a 'rate-payer' (HC 25.10.1851, 5 col 3) writing to the *Hampshire Chronicle* described

Our streets as at all times the picture of filth; our ladies will all be compelled, *ex necessitate*, to adopt the Bloomer costume (WQR 24.11.1851, 99), unless some more efficient plan be adopted for governing our streets and roads. Now that Kossuth had been amongst us we may fairly ask for a little more liberty to be granted to the rate payers on deciding how their pavement rate shall be disposed of' (HC 25.10.1850, 4 col 2; 11. 3 cols 1–4, 7 cols 2 & 3; 8.11. 3 cols 1–3, 7 cols 2–3).

But it was not liberty the inhabitants wanted. No taxation, or as little as possible, was their real aim and in December we find James Forder presenting a memorial signed by 130 inhabitants of St Maurice against a proposed increase in rate whilst the town council's latest committee was considering applying the Health of Towns Act and the new plans for the drainage of the city. Mr Giles, Civil Engineer, had, at the request of the Dean and Chapter, drawn up an exclusive plan for the Close which the College was anxious to join, subject to the approval of the Town Council (HC 13.12.1851 4 col 2).

Mr William Coles, surveyor, Winchester, had prepared plans for a main sewer with laterals for the city. Estimated cost £10,000 plus £2,000 for the Close and College. If the Town Council took over from the Pavement Commissioners it would have to redeem the Commissioners' debt of £9,000. Kingsgate Street. To apply the Act, was as Moberly said, too expensive as all these plans came to nought.

The appointment by the corporation of a sanitary inspector Henry Newman, albeit employed on a part-time basis only, did, however, bring about some improvement. His lecture on 'Sanitary Reform' given at the Mechanics' Institution, soon after his appointment under the *Nuisances Removal and Disease Prevention Act* of 1855 was something of a *tour de force* (Newman 1857). He, too, mentioned the hospital's cesspool and pointed out that the 'gentlemen connected with the County Hospital' had alleged that the 'bad air

arising from the pigsties close by' had caused a fever in part of that institution. He then explained to his audience that the real cause of the annoyance was 'the overflow pipe from the Hospital cesspool emptying itself into the Upper Brook Stream'. He admitted that no 'soil' was discharged from this, but the 'offensive smell' in the neighbourhood was due to this liquid. Close by was the only remaining 'dipping place' and to cover that would have cut off water supply to the inhabitants. Newman became a prolific writer and propagandist for the introduction of a proper system of sewerage for the city, but he must have been disappointed by the attitude of his council which resolved:

That the report of the Nuisances Removal Committee receive the confirmation of this council and that the question as to the Drainage of the City mentioned in the Report be again submitted to the committee for further consideration (WCM, PB 9.11.1857).

and the following year the council, on 6 May 1858, decided

that a Special Meeting of the Council be convened for the purpose of considering the ills now before Parliament for the amendment to the Health of Towns Act and a Bill for the Local Government of Boroughs with a view to discuss the propriety of petitioning Parliament's support of the Bills or otherwise (WCM 6.5.1858).

For ten years this Corporation had done nothing except avoid the compulsory powers vested in the General Board of Health under Chadwick's Act. The *Hampshire Independent* (Rogers 1977, 169) commented on these Bills, 'the machinery of the Health of Towns Act, which has hitherto been the horror of tender pockets and hard hearts, will undergo some rearrangement, and leave localities free to cleanse for themselves without censorship' (WQR 29.4.1858). In Winchester's case, free to do nothing, one presumes. The newspaper

was, however, optimistic and as soon as the Bills became law hoped 'to see renewed efforts made for a general thorough drainage of Winchester'. The *Independent* then went on to discuss the limitations imposed on the *Nuisance Removal Committee* and the *Pavement Commissioners* and ended its article;

We have a good water works, an ample supply, but no proper means of carrying off the water when used. Winchester might be as free from all impurity arising from human habitation as any town in existence. It is not now so, because right-thinking men have given way too readily to an unreasoning clamour and selfish cry about expense.

Newman's report (May 1858 219–220) is too long to repeat here in full. It paints a horrifying picture of the ancient city. 'Each spot we visited revealed new abominations' and mentions in particular 'those blocks of houses situate in the Square, Kingsgate, the Brooks, and several parts of the High Street, where the privies are either contiguous to, or in the cellars of houses'. It goes on to tell us of 'the filth of 13,000 inhabitants which has been accumulating for years at the thresholds of our houses'. The committee thought that, 'the partial removal of soil by night carts was offensive, expensive, and ineffectual'. The only objection to a proper system of drainage was one of expense and the Committee suggested 'that great expenditure is entailed by disease, destitution, and death, the constant attendants of a polluted atmosphere and impure water'. The committee's members felt they would be 'neglecting their duty if they did not urge on the Council the necessity of at once remedying this fearful and preventable evil'. To have a sewerage system or run the risk of another outbreak of cholera was now the question before the inhabitants.

'Shall the city have a sewerage?' was still the issue before the local electorate in 1859. Henry Newman, in his letter 30 September 1859, clearly stated the issue, 'The question of drainage is a question of comfort or discomfort to thousands in this city, of health or sickness

to many, and, it is to be feared, of life or death to not a few' (HC 1.10.1859 7 cols 3 & 4). He hoped, 'that the advocates for hoarding up dirt in and about our dwellings – snuff up stench, and tell us that privies and cesspools always did smell – I say we may fairly hope that such advocates of primitive cesspool system will soon find themselves in a hopeless minority'. . . He was not prepared 'to fawn and truckle to the opponents of sanitary reform, which must ultimately triumph over every vestige of ignorance, selfishness or prejudice that may oppose it'. He went on to claim that the councillors had never said 'there is no cause of complaint where open privies are close to living and sleeping rooms, or that there is no grievance in having our beautiful watercourses defiled by those who have an opportunity to do so, by pouring their filth into them, and sending it to the lower parts of the town, there to emit its ill savour, and do its legitimate work in propagating fevers'.

THE POLITICS OF THE SEWER

At a pre-election meeting held at the Market Inn it was apparent that Newman had underestimated the opposition to sewerage as the majority of those present 'was decidedly averse to any such under-taking at the expense of the ratepayers, or the return of men favourable to the sewerage system' (HC 15.10.1859 4 cols 4–5). Mr La Croix, one of only two speakers reported in favour of sewerage, gave his experiences as a parish doctor, and amongst the poor, 'he had seen an amazing amount of preventable disease' for 'where there was most dirt there was most disease'. Mr Wyeth, an opponent, thought, 'the only filth a sewage bill would remove was the filthy lucre from their pockets'. Mr C Wooldridge who spoke in favour of sewerage, but did not go forward for election, said, 'it was a duty incumbent upon them to look to the lower parts of the town, where the poor suffered so much from malaria'. According to Mr Wickham, he said, 'Canon Street was in a frightful state – several persons under his care were suffering from

malaria, caused by the bad cesspools' (CDH, 15).

Election day, 1 November 1859, brought a clean sweep for the anti-sewerage party, and a jubilant Mr Wyeth said, 'if St Maurice (as the ward in which the introduction of drainage was, as it was said, most required) would not adopt the system, should the proposers of it thrust a sewer down the throats of the other burgesses?' (HC 5.11.1859 5 cols 2–3). This was greeted with shouts of 'No'. In his moment of triumph his rhetoric was unconfined, 'he had jumped into the slough of despond as their cause had been termed, and if he went in rather dirty, at any rate he had come out pretty clean that day', which was received with cries of 'Hear, Hear'.

Thus, Winchester was again denied sanitary amendment. If Winchester was, historically, a 'city of cesspools', it was in reality, by 1861, rapidly becoming one giant cesspool covering the lower part of the city from Parchment Street down to the river, embracing if that is the right word, cathedral, college and bishop's palace in its filthy stench. Before the decade closed, Arthur Angell, a local draper, described these lower parts succinctly, but somewhat more crudely, as 'a gigantic pot' (HC 20.2.1869, 5 col 1). To cover the hospital's huge cesspit with charcoal was only a temporary expedient and in Robert Rawlinson's view (see below) the hospital had no alternative but to leave a city which had ignored Chadwick's three primary principles (Chadwick 1842). Firstly, there was no regular system of drainage. Secondly, the removal of all refuse from habitations, streets and roads was not being done and thirdly, although there had been some improvement in the number of houses having a piped water supply, many householders were still drawing water from the brooks, the river and contaminated wells.

ROBERT RAWLINSON AND THE PARCHMENT STREET HOSPITAL: A DRAINITE

It was into this atmosphere, effluvium, or stench, that another reformer arrived some

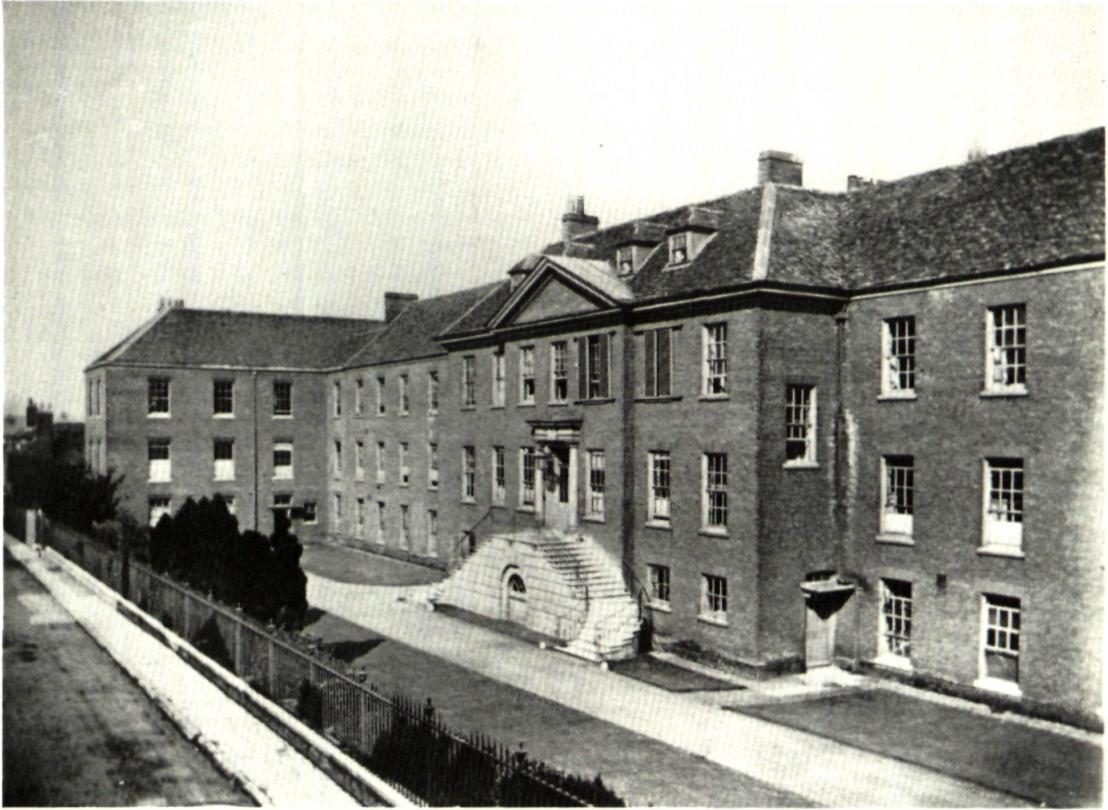


Fig. 2. The Parchment Street hospital, Winchester, about 1865 (Photo: Winchester Museums Service PWCM 3625)

fourteen months later. This was Robert Rawlinson, civil engineer (DNB), who had been invited to Winchester by the Warden of the College.

According to Rawlinson, a hospital should have 'A naturally pure and dry subsoil and a wholesome climate. The buildings should stand on a space of ground open on all sides. There should be means for perfect sewerage. The wards should not contain less than 2,000 cubic feet of space per bed. Proximity to the city will be an advantage', but he considered that this latter point was a secondary consideration as 'hospitals are for the cure of the sick'. He repeated his findings about the condition of the site which, he said, 'cannot be

sewered and drained independently. Legal and pecuniary difficulties will prevent any such work from being accomplished'. Even the proposed enlargement of the hospital would not increase the cubic capacity of the wards to the desirable 2,000 feet per bed. The average was only 948 cubic feet per bed and the proposed increase would have brought this up only to 1,559.

Rawlinson's recommendations were:

that for present purposes the existing Sewers, Drains and Cesspools be cleaned and disinfected, that they be permanently ventilated externally and that all Sewer and Cesspool Gases be passed through Charcoal

and that a new site be selected and that Hospital Buildings be erected in such a situation as to secure a pure Subsoil, pure air, sunlight and a pleasant and open prospect.

In an appendix to his report Rawlinson quotes biblical authority for his advice that the hospital should leave its polluted site. 'And he shall break down the house the stones in it and the timber thereof and all the mortar of the house and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place' (Leviticus chs 14 & 15). In support of the law of Moses, Rawlinson quoted an unnamed 'most eminent Metropolitan Physician' that in special cases these precautions were necessary. 'Certain streets and particular houses in these Streets in the Metropolis regularly sent incurable types of disease to the Metropolitan Hospitals and this form of the disease was only stayed by a total destruction of the houses from which such diseased patients regularly came'. Another good reason why hospitals were not popular with the poor.

According to Sir John Simon (Frazer 1950, 42-44), a healthy hospital was one which does not, by 'any fault of its own, aggravate ever so little the sickness' and he defined two types of faults, 'inherent', i.e. due to site or construction or a 'fault of keeping' such as dirtiness, overcrowding or neglect of ventilation 7 (Frazer 1950, 94-95). According to Rawlinson, the fault with the county hospital was an inherent one.

Rawlinson was convinced that

The City of Winchester ought to be sewered and drained. Existing subsoil water might then be lowered, all Cesspools might be abolished so as to free the Atmosphere from fogs and foul smells. The Cesspool evil is cumulative and it is only a Question of time and natural concurrencies as to when a devastating epidemic shall prevail 15 (CHMB appendix).

Rawlinson's report was received by the hospital committee and it agreed that the report should be copied into its fair minute book. The

committee also agreed that Dr Moberly and the Treasurer should prepare an abstract for publication (CHMB 1859-1865, 5M63/19 6 & 13.3.1861). A letter from 'A Governor of the County Hospital' was published in the *Hampshire Chronicle* which contained a summary of Rawlinson's report and information about the cost of sewerage schemes and rates applied in ten towns similar in size to Winchester, and it attempted to counter the objections of the citizens (HC 7.4.1861, 3 col 4; 27.4.1861 3 col 5). These it said were first, ignorance of or unbelief in the evils which wait upon a system of cesspools. Second, doubts of the advantages which attend a system of drainage and sewerage, and third and chiefly, fear of the expense of the substitution of the one for the other system. The hospital committee did, wisely, reject Miss Nightingale's suggestion that it should publicise the prevalence of erysipelas in the hospital in urging the construction of a new hospital and chose to make a strong bid for sewerage so that the hospital could remain in the town.

THE POLITICS OF THE SEWER. THE TRIUMPH OF THE MUCKABITES

With the approach of the November municipal elections, H Newman returned, to raise 'the drainage question again' (HC 28.9.1861 3 col 5). He pointed out that 'All palliatives in respect to the drainage of the County Hospital seem to fail, so that the Governors contemplate turning their backs upon such palpable filth and corruption'. He repeated the horrors of the Brooks where 'the drainage of about 400 houses, several pigsties, stables, five slaughter houses, and as many breweries', unite to enter the Close. 'After leaving the Close, it makes its appearance at the Rev Harry Lee's door (Warden of the College), in College Street, where it receives considerable additions to its filthiness from the numerous properties in Canon Street, St Swithin Street etc and then proceeds through the College.' His letter ends with a reference to the barracks, 'The Barrack authorities for instance are ill at ease with

their present arrangements, and what the effects may yet be at St Cross from what comparatively little drainage they get rid of from the Barrack premises may be difficult to conjecture'. The *Hampshire Advertiser* joined in the pre-election fever, called the supporters of a sewerage system for Winchester *drainists* (HA 19.10.1861, suppl 3 col 4) and suggested that the Barracks could be drained into the farm occupied by Mr Bevan at St Cross (HA 26.10.1861, suppl 3 col 40). The *Advertiser* put out hand-bills making comparisons between Salisbury and Winchester designed to alarm the Wintonians about the cost of the drainage scheme introduced in Salisbury. Salisbury was built on a marsh, so it needed drainage, whereas Winchester was built on a hill and was healthy. This opinion was refuted by Newman (HC 26.10.1861, 3 cols 4-5).

On election day the drainists suffered another defeat, losing William Tanner, editor and publisher of the *Winchester Quarterly Record*, who had represented St John's Ward for four years. He claimed he was at the head of the poll by one o'clock, 'at which time a wholesale tampering with the poorer Voters commenced, under the active superintendence of Councillor Fielder and a man nick-named 'black' (WQR 1.11.1861, 139). This year the debate about sewerage did not die down after the election and rather increased in fury during November and into December. Dr Andrew Crawford joined Newman and produced statistics to demonstrate the unhealthy parts of Winchester. Unfortunately the figures, although useful, are not entirely convincing to modern scholars because they have not been standardised by age of the inhabitants. The *Advertiser* and the *Independent*, in spite of the lack of solid evidence were fighting furiously on opposite sides of the issue.

More handbills appeared, for example, one addressed to the Winchester ratepayers (Stopher):

We stand aloof – no Rates we
pay –
Who dares our privilege
gainsay

Is wrong depend on't.
But we'll be drained and YOU
SHALL PAY
Whatever you may think or
say –
So there's an end on't.

Signed	Close	
	College	
		all exempt from Rates
	Hospital	
	Barracks	

Winchester 9 December 1861

A week later on Thursday 12 December 1861, there took place a meeting, which the Mayor (Pepper et al) had called in response to a requisition signed by 164 residents, for the purpose of 'discussing the propriety and learning the cost of Sewering and Draining the city' (HC 14.12.1861, 6 cols 4-5). The Mayor was called to the chair and on the platform at St John's, the scene of so many memorable gatherings, were Archdeacon Jacob, the Warden of the College, Dr Crawford, Mr Bulpett, Rev C Bowen, Mr C Wooldridge (ex Mayor), Mr Rawlinson, the Town Clerk and the whole body of the Town Council.

The Mayor opened the proceedings by saying that he had called the meeting because the requisition had been 'so largely and respectably signed' he could only comply and it, therefore, 'gave him pleasure to see the meeting so well attended', but as he turned to the matter before the meeting it was apparent that the body of the hall was hostile. He went on to say that the time had now come for the people of Winchester to give the question of sewerage 'a fair discussion and a permanent solution'. He ended his opening words with 'he strongly hoped no angry feelings would be displayed; but that a resolve to agree to differ, and a desire for peaceful inquiry, would actuate both sides'. Mr Budden, a leading 'Muckabite' in 1861, and mayor four times thereafter, then rose to say he wished to propose the adjournment of the meeting to 7 o'clock, as members of the working class could

not afford two or three hours in the middle of the day. Mr Wyeth seconded the motion and said he looked upon the meeting as a biased one because of the time and 'all classes could be more fairly represented in the evening'. This was greeted with cheers and uproar. The Mayor pointed out that this was the usual hour for meetings of this kind and 'the gentlemen who had got up that meeting had taken the trouble to induce a gentleman to come down from London to give them information on which they could rely and might depend and ...'. At this a tremendous uproar broke out with cries of 'Adjourn' – 'We don't want him' and 'We can do for ourselves'. Amidst 'a most disgraceful and disorderly row' Mr Budden tried again, hoping that his proposition might be heard. The Mayor tried again, pointing out that the gentleman from London could not attend at any other time. This was greeted with, 'Send him home! Let those who paid him to come, send him back'. The Mayor went on to say that 'business of a municipal kind was transacted in the light of the sun' and if the matter was important they could 'give an hour or two for its discussion'. At this, there was greater uproar. Dr Crawford, the great champion of the drainists, then joined the fray, 'amidst great clamour and interruption'. He wanted to oppose the motion for adjournment and with considerable difficulty he continued to 'appeal for fairness from those causing the noise'. He was not to be heard, and his audience exclaimed 'We do not want to hear'. The gallant medical gentleman, still undaunted, went on, 'The gentlemen who seconded the motion for adjournment said that [it] was a 'biased meeting'. He now found that it was indeed a 'biased meeting', for a large portion of it was determined not to hear anything that was opposed to their own views. Those who wished to hear Mr Rawlinson's statement respecting the drainage would hold a meeting by themselves for that purpose'. At this point the *Chronicle* reported, 'the clamour became so great that Dr Crawford gave up his attempt to speak and retired'.

The Mayor, with considerable courage, then

advanced and said, 'Are you afraid of the truth?' The answer sent back, according to the reporter, 'from scores of mouths was in the shape of low and vulgar abuse, and it was evidently quite impossible for anyone to restrain the immense excitement and rage that existed in the crowd'. There then took place, 'an obscene riot', which the newspaper described, but the description here is by another eye witness, 'Vox tetrum dira inter odorem', in a letter to the editor of the *Hampshire Chronicle* (HC 14.12.1861, 7 col 5).

Sir, – I have this day witnessed a spectacle worthy of the inhabitants of this venerable city – a triumphant exhibition of the reasoning powers and tolerant disposition of our un-enfranchised fellow-citizens. A meeting summoned by the Mayor, on the requisition of a large number of most respectable householders, (who ought really to have known better,) was dissolved in consequence of the energetic opposition of certain honest citizens, who rebutted every argument in good old English style, by virtually (in one case actually) knocking down the man who advocated it. The manner in which the fight was conducted, and its successful issue, reflected the greatest credit on the patriotic leaders. One hero – the Mucius Scavola of the day – gallantly advanced, and shook his fist in the Mayor's face. The argument was unanswerable. Such a deed of valour should not be unrewarded. As there might be a foolish prejudice against awarding the Victoria Cross, and the Star of India is only a local distinction, let us institute a Winchester Corporation Order – badge, a scavenger's cart, surmounted by one of the great unwashed: motto, non puto sed puteo. Or the battle might be made the subject of an immortal epic – Where are our local poets? – under the attractive title of 'Cesspool and Sewer, or The Triumph of the Muckabites'.

Unfortunately, the battle of St John's house fought on 12 December 1861 was never immortalized in an epic poem. That famous victory, the Triumph of the Muckabites was commemorated only by a silly ditty,

THE MUCKABITE'S TRIUMPH

Air – The Strand

Good health to all the Muckabites,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 Who love to have their Dirty nights,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 Our Cesspools shall not be Drained,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 Our Slush-holes shall be retained,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 As for Fevers, we don't fear,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 So long as we can get strong beer,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 Nor yet for Cholera do we care,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!

So its good-bye to all ye Sewerites,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!
 We mean to die firm Muckabites,
 Heigh ho! Stink O!

The debate – not to say the outcome – has a curiously modern ring to it; expenditure for the common good set against the costs to the local people required to foot the bill. The muckabites could not hold on for ever, as the effective drainage system of the city today testifies. That is not to say that Winchester does not still suffer when, in hot weather, there is a wind off St Catherine's Hill, from the stench of the sewage works there, an institution remarkable for its resistance to modernisation in the most trenchant tradition of the muckabites of 1861.

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Abbreviations

CDH Commercial Directory of Hampshire Craven & Co.
 CHMB County Hospital Management Committee Minute Book.
 DNB Dictionary of National Biography.
 FFCB Winchester Town First Finance Committee Book 1836–1852.
 HA Hampshire Advertiser.
 HC Hampshire Chronicle.
 HO Hants Observer.
 HRO Hampshire Record Office.
 VAC Venn Alumni Cantabr.
 VCH Victoria County History for Hampshire.
 WCM Winchester Town Council Minutes.
 WCMPB Winchester Town Council Minutes, Proposal Book.
 WQR Winchester Quarterly Record.

Manuscript Sources

Hampshire Record Office
 HRO 5M63/19 County Hospital Management Committee Minute Book 1859–1865.
 HRO First Finance Committee Book 1836–52 (not paginated).
 HRO Winchester Town Council Minutes.
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