bodies died from diseases attributed to their poor feeding (such as diarrhoea, atrophy and debility) than from any other causes. Nonetheless, local statistics recorded that death rates among illegitimate children could be more than three times higher.

**Nurture not Nature?**

Other factors which influenced infant mortality rates were the domestic and municipal sanitation of a given area and general living conditions. In Nottingham, there was an established link between poor housing — including overcrowding, cramped conditions and poor sanitation — and infant mortality. The highest rates of infant mortality occurred in densely populated wards such as St Mary’s, Byron, St Ann’s and Exchange, which were also the ones that continued to use pail closets. In Leicester Kilik & Milward suggested that the poorer areas of Leicestershire — such as Greville’s area and St Nicholas area — were in the thickly-populated areas of old and poorer-class properties. Wards such as Newton Park, Wigston, St Margaret’s and The Abbey had the highest infant deaths.

Excrement removal procedures in the two towns was also an important factor behind the incident of infant deaths. Nottingham had an abysmal record in this respect, retaining the pail system until forced into changing to water closets in 1920. Leicester, on the other hand, began to adopt the water closet as early as the 1850s. Nottingham continued to have an excessive incidence of diarrhoea, whereas Leicester showed a reduction in diarrhoeal deaths.

The management of sewage removal was far superior than the one in Nottingham. It was disproporionately affecting areas lacking in sanitary facilities regardless of socio-economic status and, secondly, in affecting infants who were the most vulnerable to diarrhoeal disease. Added to seasonal effects were climatic ones. The prevalence of diarrhoea was more noticeable during the summer and early autumn when it was hot and dry. Piles of rotting waste and animal manure were all breeding grounds for flies. There was a clear positive correlation between the number of hot days and the number of infant deaths from diarrhoea in Nottingham, during the period 1905-1910, when pail closets were still used. However, by 1920, when the conversion to water closets had been made, there was no such correlation. The summers of 1893, 1895, 1897 and 1901 were all hot dry summers and the death rate from diarrhoea rose considerably, whereas in 1902 the cooler, wetter summer saw a decline in the number of deaths.

This brief examination of the situation in Nottingham and Leicester reveals how specific factors had significant bearing on infant mortality rates. For example, by 1901, Leicester had introduced health visitors, but there had already been a reduction in infant mortality before this date largely due to the substitution of pail closets with water closets. Nottingham was slower in getting to grips with the problem of infant mortality — the introduction of baby clinics did not begin until 1908, while the removal of pail closets only began in 1920.

By the end of the nineteenth century, contemporaries began to recognize the problem of infant mortality but their understanding of this anomaly was focused principally on the role of the mother and how she raised her infant. This thinking fitted into the period, where many problems were assumed to lie with the individual rather than the physical environment. However, this distinction between factors relating to the physical environment and those involving the mother was arbitrary, as both sets of influences had some bearing on the problem. The growth of social intervention — in terms of better sanitary conditions, improved milk supply, legislation such as the Notification of Births Act (1905) and Midwives Act (1902) and the introduction of health departments — all assisted the MoH to better understand and suggest solutions for improving the lives of infants.


Denise Amos
Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway

---

NOTTINGHAM LACE WORKERS, COURTESY OF NOTT’M LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY.

NOTTINGHAM LACE WORKERS, COURTESY OF NOTT’M LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY.
Lutterworth, Market Harborough (a second meeting), Melton Mowbray, Ashby Magna, Barrow upon Sear, Claybrooke, Great Bowden, Great Dalby, Kegworth, Kibworth, Mountsorrel, Peeling Parva and Wigston Magna. Some included the inhabitants of neighbouring villages for example, the people of Castle Donington joined the Kegworth meeting. The second meeting at Market Harborough was attended by the inhabitants of at least 17 villages in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire, and a meeting in Melton Mowbray included residents from at least 13 villages.

The published resolutions were similar in tone, they varied widely in breadth and wording. The chairman, generally magistrates, and prominent members of the local clergy or gentry, were clearly determined to achieve unanimity, and compromises presumably had to be made. Each set of resolutions could refer not only to a broader reflection of the views of those present, but perhaps also as a reluctance of some to become personally involved. Some, including the meeting at Mountsorrel, saw the licensed trade as their first line of defence, and indicated a determination to apply “prosecutions arising from these resolutions.” Not all took this hard line. Despite their chosen lengthy title, after expressing their abhorrence of recent pamphlets, the “Kegworth and Castle Donington Association Promoting His Majesty’s late Proclamation, and for Defending the Constitution against All Innovations Whatsoever” failed to resolve to suppress seditious literature, but did agree to raise a subscription to purchase “proper books” to be distributed to counter the effects of seditious writings. Similarly, although a strong line in respect of seditious literature was suggested in the advertisement for a meeting at Wolton Mowbray, those present only resolved to “publicly point out to our fellow citizens, what is everybody’s duty.”

An association was formed whose members would ensure that those publishing or distributing seditious literature or uttering seditious words would be punished. Protests were held against the government’s needs. The meetings and burnings ceased in mid-February, as suddenly as they had begun. Loyalty had been proclaimed across the county, and the nuances of the resolutions neatly recorded for later historians to unpick.

The meetings were held on weekday mornings. Those present would have been largely business and property owners, and here a determination to resist magistrates in preventing riots was almost universal. Meetings at Ashby de la Zouch, Great Bowden, Great Dalby, Lutterworth and Wigston Magna resolved to adopt magistrates in suppressing seditious publications, and at Barrow upon Soar those present also agreed to take before the magistrates anyone “speaking maliciously discourse” against the government. The strongest resolutions were passed at Loughborough, under the chairmanship of William Herrick of Beaumancer, at a meeting which included inhabitants of neighbouring villages. An association was formed whose members would ensure that those publishing or distributing seditious literature or uttering seditious words would be punished. Two people suffered personally in this more febrile atmosphere by accusations levelled against them. A claim that baker William Mitchell of Kilnworth uttered seditious words was publicly contradicted by three others, but not before he had lost business as local opinion turned against him. In Castle Donington, the words “Sorge the praise o’er war not more menu” allegedly uttered by clockmaker Thomas Erpe on 17th November 1792, led to his trial at the assizes in 1794. He was found “guilty of speaking the word, but not with a seditious meaning.”

Other burnings of Thomas Paine in effigy took place in many other villages in the county, three of which were reported in detail. In Kilnworth, the effigy “underwent almost an incessant flagellation” when being drawn through the streets in a cart, while a parade of music played “God save the King.” It was then consigned to the flames. In Lutterworth, an effigy of Paine inscribed with the words “Believe the villain that destroyed the King, Adams the Goliath, and well become the string!” was drawn round the streets in a cart before being hanged in the market place on a gallows 10 feet high. Here it was frightened and “attended with repeated buzzes.” A fire was then lit, and the effigy turned to ashes. In the evening, a paramilitary procession was chained around the town, attended with lighted torches and a band of music, in the manner of an election celebration, while the bull ran and people sang and played “God save the King.”

They recommended that publics not allow their premises to be used for the circulation of seditious literature or meetings of unlawful combinations (a far wider scope than sedition), or those seeking constitutional change. They threatened to apply to the magistrates to remove the licence of any publican disregarding that recommendation. They also promised to take action against anyone caught posting handbills or graffiti which could disturb the peace, adding that the association would defray the cost of any proceedings arising from these resolutions.

The mayor called and chaired the meeting at Melton Mowbray. An association was formed whose members would ensure that those publishing or distributing seditious literature or uttering seditious words would be punished. The strongest resolutions were passed at Loughborough, under the chairmanship of William Herrick of Beaumancer, at a meeting which included inhabitants of neighbouring villages. An association was formed whose members would ensure that those publishing or distributing seditious literature or uttering seditious words would be punished.