

TEWKESBURY LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH 1848 - 1855

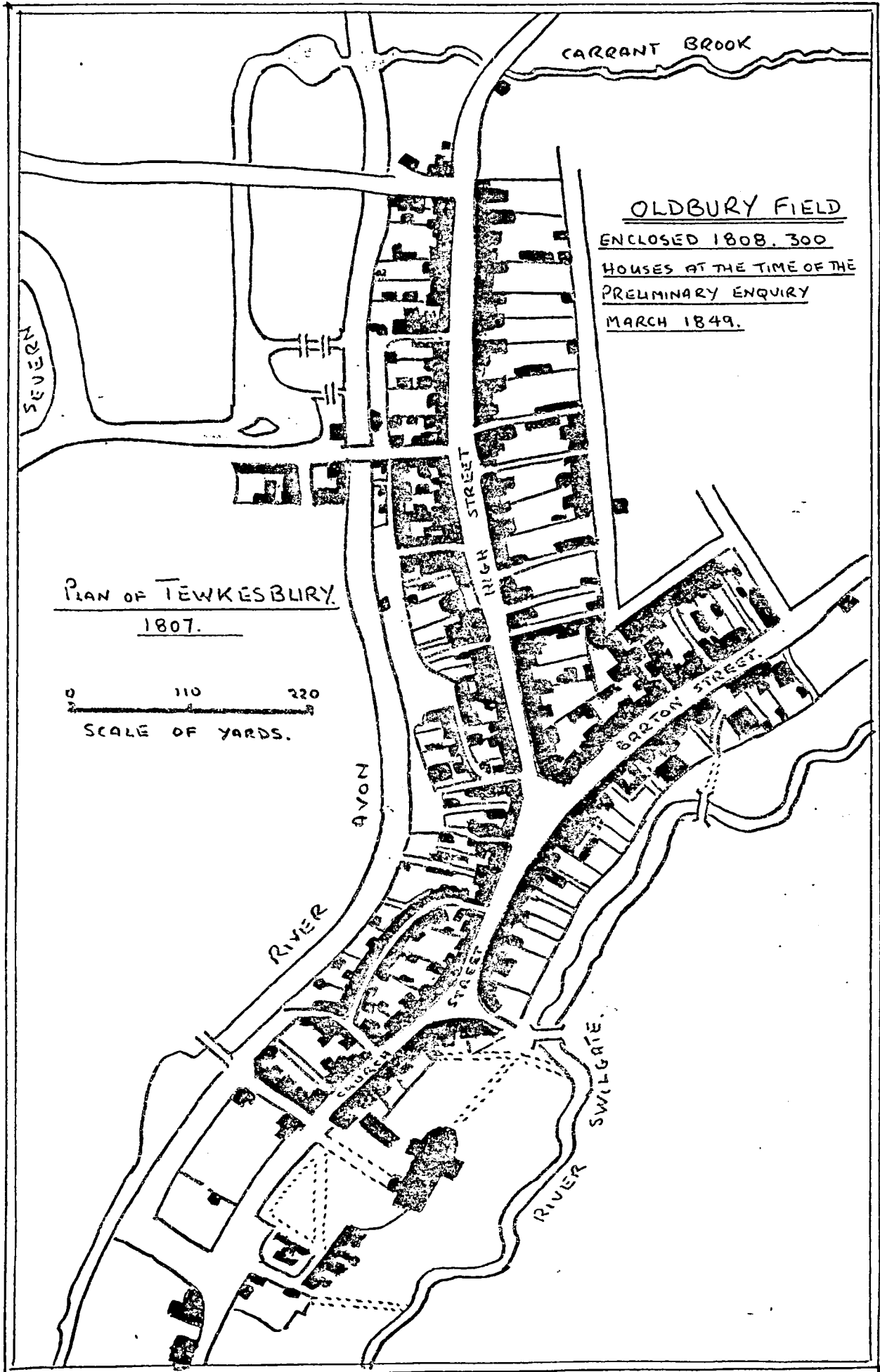
by R.J. Lyon-Smith

The Enclosure Acts, at their height from 1760 - 1820, did much to create effective improvements in agriculture. Gone were the old medieval practices of narrow cultivated strips and common grazing, and in their place the compact farms, neatly hedged and ditched. The age of the agricultural entrepreneur had arrived, but the social consequences of such changes were undeniably harsh. The smallholder, unable to bear the cost of enclosure, the agricultural labourers and perhaps the most unfortunate of all, the squatters who had enjoyed in practise some of the privileges of the old medieval system, were one way or another driven from the land. They in turn, with their families, drifted towards the towns in search of work. Some succeeded in creating new enterprises, but the majority became little more than town labourers. It was therefore fortunate that in Britain industry expanded at the same time as the population; both increased and changed from being predominately rural, to being almost equally divided between town and country. In 1800 over seven million people lived in the country and only three million in the towns and cities. By 1850 the numbers had changed dramatically. Eleven million were now living in the towns and cities and ten million in the country.

There were of course marked social changes as a result of such increases and redistribution of the population. Many of the new towns that grew directly as a result of the Industrial Revolution, in an effort to absorb a growing work force, carried on apace the late 18th century practice of building houses back to back, constructing what were quickly to become "urban slums". Others like Tewkesbury had to accommodate its rising population within its existing natural boundaries. It was this change from a largely rural population to an urban one that placed an intolerable burden upon the existing totally inadequate water supply and drainage systems. This decline of even elementary sanitary conditions, the increased housing density and the ever present threat of cholera, prompted Lord Russell on behalf of the government of 1839 to ask the then secretary of the Poor Law Commission, Edwin Chadwick to enquire into the living conditions of the labouring classes.

It was three years later in the summer of 1842 that Edwin Chadwick presented his report to the House of Lords entitled "The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain". It was the result of an energetic and searching enquiry and although its presentation came at a time of high unemployment, social protest and stirring public conscience, it was not until six years later in 1848 that the Public Health Act came into being, a direct if somewhat belated result of the report submitted by Edwin Chadwick.

For the very first time the British government charged itself with a measure of responsibility for public health. A central Board of Health set up by the Act, was to have three members, Edwin Chadwick, Dr. Southwood-Smith and Lord Shaftesbury. The board soon earned great unpopularity through its interference with local authorities, for both Chadwick and Lord Shaftesbury were not noted for their tactful dealings and by 1854 opposition had rendered the board almost totally ineffectual. Public health then became the responsibility of a newly formed committee of the Privy Council. Although the collapse of the central Board of Health would at first seem a retrograde step, the now motivated local authorities accepted their responsibilities and pursued, albeit often slowly, the social reforms so clearly directed by the Act of 1848.



PLAN OF TEWKESBURY.
1807.

0 110 220
SCALE OF YARDS.

OLDBURY FIELD
ENCLOSED 1808. 300
HOUSES AT THE TIME OF THE
PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY
MARCH 1849.

Tewkesbury, unable to benefit from the Industrial Revolution, suffered as much social distress from decline as other towns did from expansion. Situated in the northernmost part of Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury has from its earliest times had its outward growth severely restricted. Sited just eastwards of the confluence of the Rivers Severn and Avon, and having the Carrant Brook to the north and the River Swilgate to the south, and with low lying land to the east, the town is at the time of flood almost completely insulated. These two navigable rivers, the Severn and Avon, which did so much to stimulate Tewkesbury's early growth, were now the main obstacles to further urban development.

The town consists of three main streets, High Street, Church Street and Barton Street. Branching out from these streets are numerous alleys and courts, so closely built together that the houses of many of them stand back to back. Most of the dwellings are of 18th and early 19th century origin, being made of local brick. But there still remain however, many examples of earlier timber framed buildings, forming altogether a conglomeration of four centuries of development. This unique urban plan had evolved from both the need to house an increasing population and by the limits imposed by its position.

During the early part of the 19th century, the town saw prosperity; industry and trade easily absorbed the increasing population (4,199 in 1801, reaching a peak for the 19th century of 5,878 by 1851). The bypassing of the town in 1840 by the main Gloucester to Birmingham railway hastened the decline of local industries. The collapse of the hosiery industry in particular caused great distress as this report by Felkin, a government statistician, from an 1844 enquiry into the hosiery industry so clearly illustrates:

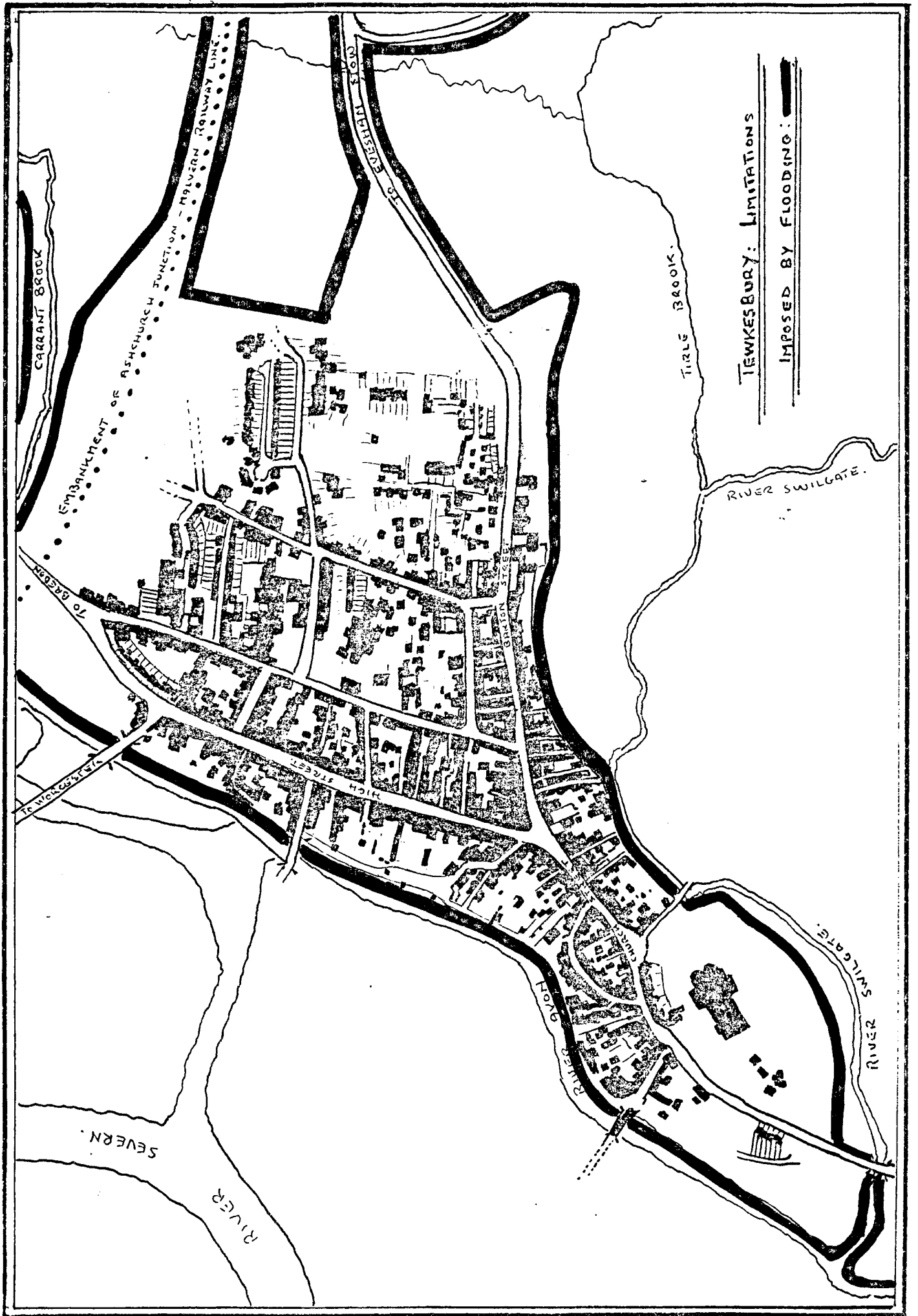
"At this seat of excellent cotton hose fabrication, more than half of the frames are standing idle. Wages are exceedingly depressed. Distress amongst the framework knitters of this town is greater than supposed. Such scenes of wretchedness as those I have witnessed this day, I never saw before, and hope never to see again".

Thus Tewkesbury had by 1848 a large under-employed working class population, crowded into the narrow alleys and courts, many of which were without water or sanitation. It was these extremely unsanitary conditions that led a general remark about the "filthy state of the town" to become a subject for discussion by the town council.

In the Autumn of 1848 the attention of the more influential members of the community became focused on the recently passed Public Health Act:

Whereas further and more effectual provision ought to be made for improving the sanitary conditions of the towns and populous places in England and Wales, and it is expedient that the supply of water to such towns and places, and the sewerage, draining, cleansing and paving thereof, should as far as practicable be placed under one and the same local management and control, subject to such general supervision as is herein after provided.

This would in effect make the local board of health an integral part



of any town or borough council. Any local board of health so formed was to have its own seal, which would legalise all documents signed by two or more members and would be prima facie evidence in court.

A major clause of the act was that a preliminary enquiry into the sanitary state of a town or borough by an inspector of the central Board of Health could be carried out:

Upon the petition of not less than one tenth of the inhabitants rated for the relief of the poor, not being less than thirty in number, or where the average number of deaths over the past seven years was greater than 23 per 1000 of the population, notice of such enquiry to be affixed to churches, chapels, public buildings and places where public notices are fixed, and in newspapers circulating within the area of the authority.

Those rated for relief of the poor were by no means the majority. Their numbers probably represented somewhere between 20 - 25% of the total inhabitants. It is interesting to note that should an election be needed to form a local board of health, there was laid down by the Act a sliding scale of votes directly linked to the valuation of property.

Rateable value less than £50	1 vote
Rateable value between £50 - £99	2 votes
Rateable value between £100 - £149	3 votes
Rateable value between £150 - £199	4 votes
Rateable value between £200 - £249	5 votes
Rateable value exceeding £249	6 votes

An owner/occupier was able to vote in respect of both ownership and occupation. It is therefore important to note that it was the signatures of more than 10% of those rated and not the value of their franchise that could bring about an enquiry by the central Board of Health. Those whose property had a rateable value of less than fifty pounds would be living in circumstances vastly different from those whose property was valued in excess of two hundred pounds. It would therefore be the owners and occupiers of those properties in the lower order of valuation who would gain most from sanitary reforms and their signature would be of equal value as those rated in the higher orders, even if their voting rights were not.

On October 24th 1848, the Mayor of Tewkesbury, Henry Eustatius Strickland, convened a meeting of the borough council for the prime purpose of discussing the recently passed Public Health Act. After lengthy debate it was proposed by Mr. Richards and seconded by Mr. Hanford and resolved,

"That in the opinion of this meeting the Act 11 and 12 Victoria Cap. 63 for the promotion of public health ought to be brought into operation within the borough and that for this purpose the council recommend that pursuant to the provisions of the Act a petition of the rated inhabitants of the borough should be presented to the General Board of Health praying that the preliminary enquiry directed by the Act may be made"

There was however within the town considerable opposition to the borough council's recommendation. Interference, as it was considered then, by Central government in local matters often aroused anger and suspicion, and Tewkesbury was no exception. A month later on November 24th a public meeting of the ratepayers was called by the churchwardens and overseers, and such were the numbers attending that it was necessary to transfer the venue to the National School Room for want of sufficient space in the vestry. After many heated exchanges of opinion, the majority were clearly against the petition. In spite of this opposition, on December 19th, 1848 a fully attended council meeting decided unanimously to forward the petition of 163 signatures to the central Board of Health.

The preliminary enquiry, conducted by Thomas Webster Rammell Esq., inspector of the central Board of Health, took place at the Town Hall, Tewkesbury on March 26th 1849. In attendance were the Mayor, Henry Eustatius Strickland, members of the town council, influential ratepayers and members of the general public. On the following two days, the 27th and 28th, the Inspector personally examined the town under the guidance of the Surveyor, members of the council, and representatives of the street commissioners.

In his report submitted to the central Board of Health, Mr. Rammell commenced with an examination of the returns of the registrar. It was evident that Tewkesbury had a death rate:

"Being in excess beyond the average rates presented by even the most crowded districts of large manufacturing towns and denoting most unequivocally the existance of local circumstances strongly unfavourable to health"

The average death rate being nearly 28 persons per 1000 of the population if taken over the seven years till the end of 1848. Tewkesbury had in fact fulfilled both requirements of the Public Health Act for the setting up of a preliminary enquiry, having submitted a petition of more than 10% of the ratepayers and having a death rate exceeding 25 persons per 1000 of the inhabitants.

YEAR	BIRTHS	DEATHS	DEATHS UNDER 1 YEAR	DEATHS UNDER 5 YEARS	DEATHS FROM EPIDEMIC & CONTAGIOUS DISEASES
1842	217	210	45	100	51
1843	173	149	22	43	15
1844	157	127	31	45	2
1845	174	157	29	45	7
1846	208	162	53	64	18
1847	189	182	57	64	13
1848	177	157	20	42	23
Totals	1294	1144	215	403	129

Population 1841 = 5,862

Population 1851 = 5,878

Mr. Rammell was in no doubt about the causes and states that

"The filthy state of the alleys in which the poorer classes dwell and the bad ventilation consequent upon the manner in which they are crowded together, is in no doubt in great measure the cause of the high rate of mortality, and the general bad sanitary conditions which so strikingly marks the social history of Tewkesbury"

To remedy these unsanitary conditions was of course the prime purpose of the enquiry, and there emerged two directly linked major areas of concern. The first was the lack of adequate drainage, the second the absence of an unpolluted water supply.

Prior to 1824 there had been no drainage, that is to say no system of covered drains. There was of course a series of open gutters and ditches which hitherto served the town as drains, flushed all too infrequently by heavy rains, which were in reality little more than open sewers. In 1824 Mr. Abel Pointon of Worcester was contracted to build a system of covered drains (between 12 inches and 21 inches in diameter) along the lines of the three main streets. On completion of the contract in 1831 the major part of the town still remained undrained. Subsequent improvements carried out spasmodically until 1843 followed the same principles, neglecting those areas most in need, namely the alleys and courts occupied by the poorer classes. Those living in the better class properties adjacent to the main streets did have access to these drains and there were those enterprising enough to construct their own private culverts leading to the river, but the bulk of the properties in the alleys and courts were without even these basic amenities, and at the time over two hundred properties lacked even a privy and those that had one allowed them to overflow, or even emptied them into the alleys and courts, hoping that the "scavenger", whose duty it was to remove any night soil deposited in the street between the hours of midnight and 4 a.m., would at least keep the problem within manageable bounds. Strangely the opinion of Mr. William Brydges, Relieving Officer for the poor was that:

"The privies of the houses of the poorer classes are in many cases a nuisance. I do not see what advantage it would be to the town for the poorer houses to be provided with privies. The filth in the alleys is a nuisance to those persons living in the alleys, but not to the town in general."

But Mr. Rammell stated that:

"It will be seen from earlier evidence in regards to privy accommodation that from the almost destitute conditions of the poorer inhabitants in this important particular, the streets and alleys are much loaded with offensive filth, that the labours of the scavenger if he performed his duty would be of no light kind"

What was objectionable about the drainage system was that the outlets of these drains passed directly into the Avon, (five outlets) and into the Swilgate (three outlets) polluting what had become for many their primary source of a water supply.

The more prosperous parts of town were served by an adequate number of

wells, giving a good continuous amount of clear hard water. The poorer more densely populated areas had to rely on the public pumps. These pumps were frequently out of order, the one in Post Office Alley and Merretts Yard had remained useless for 3 years and that in Townsend Alley for 7 years. This delay in repairing them forced these unfortunate people to resort to the rivers or beg even the most meagre quantities of water from their neighbours.

The Avon having a sufficient level of water even in summer was nevertheless heavily polluted by sewage and more than one witness at the enquiry complained of privy filth floating in the pail or jug. Mary Hawkins of Smiths Lane said:

"I get water for washing from the river and very often find lumps of nastiness in the pail. I went down once to get some water to boil peas and found a lump of this stuff as I was putting it in the pot".

In summer the River Swilgate is reduced to "a slow and stinking stream diminished to the narrowest of limits". The cost of water obtained from this polluted source is by no means inexpensive. Mr. Turner said that:

"The rate for fetching water in our neighbourhood is one penny for 3 buckets, about 10 gallons, sometimes it is 2 buckets for a penny. The average family pays about 6 pence a week. Laundresses sometimes pay a shilling but most have water butts to catch the rain. There is plenty of water to be obtained by sinking wells, but the present number is insufficient. I have not the slightest doubt a good supply of water could be obtained at 2 pence per week. It would be considered a great benefit to the poorer classes".

These two main problems of drainage and water supply were of course aggravated by the problem of overcrowding. The limiting factors described earlier led to this maze of alleys, lanes and courts that made up the habitation of the poorer classes. This following description, again by Mary Hawkins, vividly portrays the magnitude of the problem which was general throughout these destitute areas of the town:

"There are eighteen houses in the lane. No house has a privy. I keep a lodging house, but we are a heavy family ourselves, nine in all. We have got four rooms, the kitchen and three above. Sometimes I have six or seven lodgers, at others more. I have only two beds and have two regular lodgers who work in the town. My eldest boy is eighteen, my eldest daughter sixteen and the next fourteen. All the little ones sleep together in one room, the eldest girl along with me in our bed. We have sometimes four in a bed".

On completion of his enquiry Mr. Rammell recommended that the following improvements would greatly assist the comfort and health of the inhabitants:

- a) A thorough system of surface and refuse drainage.
- b) Adequate privy accommodation.
- c) A plentiful supply of water of purer quality.
- d) Improved ventilation of the dwellings of the poor.
- e) Increased burial accommodation at a greater distance from the habitations.

One final piece of evidence from a surprising source might suggest that the problems were not necessarily confined to sanitation. Dr. Frederick J. Prior, Surgeon:

"More frequent cases of fever in Wilkes Alley I attribute this to inferior diet and that the measures for improving drainage and water supply will not much alter the character of the diseases of the town. I have an impression that the Public Health Act is not calculated to produce any great benefit here and I have opposed the introduction of it".

Ironically before any of the recommendations of the central Board of Health could be acted upon the town was threatened by a second epidemic of cholera. (The first being in 1831 with 76 deaths). Cholera spread rapidly, it was extremely contagious and amongst the poor often fatal. Being a waterborne disease it was also a direct threat to the more wealthy classes who had more liberal access to a water supply and in consequence led these more prosperous ruling members of the community to embark on a vigorous campaign of action.

In June 1849, cholera was already prevalent in Worcester and Gloucester. With the disease in such close proximity precautionary measures were taken in Tewkesbury in an attempt to arrest its progress. Hastily formed committees from the town council, street commissioners and guardians of the poor were grouped together to form a temporary local Board of Health, their immediate action was to embark on a programme of cleansing the streets, lanes and alleys, white-washing (a suspension of lime in water) the cottages of the poor, often at public expense, repairing and scouring the drains and removing all nuisances that were a danger to health. But these efforts were in vain. The first death from cholera taking place on August 1st. The outbreak lasted just over two months during which fifty-one people died, the majority of them from the more destitute parts of the town. With the passing of the epidemic, the temporary local Board of Health became redundant and it was not until the late summer of 1850 that any further moves were taken in respect of a more permanent local Board of Health.

On August 26th 1850, exactly eighteen months after the preliminary enquiry, the Tewkesbury Borough Council met to consider the powers, duties and authorities imposed upon them by the Public Health Act of 1848, and for the council to act as a local Board of Health.

A week later on September 2nd a committee of five headed by the Mayor, Nathaniel Chandler, was elected to interpret that part of the Act which related to the improvement of private properties and which in future ought to be enforced. They were also to carry out a general survey of the town with a view to recommending such action that required the Board's more immediate attention, and to clearly define the exact duties of the Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances. (The Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances was responsible for ensuring that both public and private works complied with the regulations imposed by the local Board of Health, and to examine all reported nuisances and recommend appropriate action and to ensure the adequate performance of those contracted by the board).

A fortnight later this sub-committee submitted its recommendations to the local Board of Health. They were:

- 1) A general survey of the public works of the town and prepare a report of the state of flagging, paving and pitching of the public streets.
- 2) A contract for keeping in repair all flagging, paving and pitching.
- 3) In any future works which might be undertaken by the local Board, regard should be had to the ultimate prevention of the discharge of sewage and drainage of the town into the Avon and Swilgate.
- 4) That a floodgate or gates be constructed in the stancheon of the Swilgate in Mr. John Martin's property in order to effect the scouring and cleansing of the stream by the action of its own waters.
- 5) A contract to clean the bed of the Swilgate.
- 6) Surveyor to inspect the several localities mentioned in the report of Mr. Rammell as being destitute of privy accommodation and that the owners be instructed under the powers of the Act to erect privies so far as may be practicable and consistent with future works to be undertaken by the Board.
- 7) That the Surveyor be instructed to intimate to the public scavenger that the Board will henceforth require the exact performance of the existing contract with him and that he do report from time to time to the Board all violations and omissions on the part of the contractor with a view to enforcing the penalties by such contract imposed. (The scavenger was reprimanded in January 1851 for using the water cart for other than public purposes suggesting that perhaps he may have been acting as a water carrier for personal gain).

The state of the River Swilgate was without doubt of major concern to the Board. Notices were affixed near to both the Avon and Swilgate cautioning people against throwing rubbish into them and thus making the task of clearing them even more burdening than it already was. An ambitious plan was proposed to build a culvert linking Carrant Brook with the River Swilgate for the dual purpose of increasing the water level of the Swilgate in summer and draining the Oldbury. But by far the most practical and feasible proposition was that suggested by the sub-committee to erect floodgates across the river, and that by allowing the water level to rise upstream to a controllable height and then by opening the gates and releasing this extra volume of water it would effectively scour both the banks and the bed of the river. (The idea was not new for the same principal had been used for carrying boats over shallows by introducing a sudden rush of water controlled by a crude form of lock gate sited upstream). These floodgates were situated at the bottom of Gander Lane adjacent to the bridge and on the 1st July 1857 a report in the local Board of Health minute asks that the surveyor cause the floodgates at Swilgate Bridge to be opened as often as may be necessary to clear off the impurities of the River Swilgate, but it is recorded on August 1st 1859 that the floodgates be repaired and locked, the key with the surveyor and one with the owner of the land.

Although the newly-formed local Board of Health was not inactive, they were concerned mainly with enforcement of the building and improvement regulations, it was in the late autumn of 1851 that they became more purposeful in their interpretation of the Act.

A period of greater activity commenced with the acceptance of the

bye-laws by the local Board on December 11th, 1851. These were then submitted to the central government for ratification and were duly returned by the Secretary of State, in their original form on April 5th, 1852. Some of these bye-laws would not be out of place today, but there were some that were wholly indicative of that part of the 19th century and that in whole or part best illustrate the determination of the Local Board to remedy the evils so clearly indicated by the preliminary enquiry.

"All occupiers of any premises within the district shall whitewash, wash or otherwise clean and keep cleansed the interior of all premises occupied by them so that no offensive smell shall be caused by or proceed from the same"

This next bye-law covered the widest range of nuisances and was referred to as the second bye-law.

"No person shall deposit, throw or allow to run to lodge or accumulate upon the surface of any street, alley, court, highway or place, or on any waste ground or any uncovered drain or ditch, watercourse, sink, pond, or other collection of water, or expose or cause to be exposed in any other manner whatever within the district any animal, fish, offal, blood, bones, manure, shells, broken glass, china or earthenware, dust ashes, house refuse, runnings from any manufactory or any other offensive or noxious matter".

There were circumstances especially in winter when the surface of footpaths and the courses of water pipes were effected by frost and this particular circumstance was covered by the following:-

"Provided always that no person shall be liable to penalty for throwing or depositing any sand or ashes at the time of frost upon any footway to prevent accidents or any manure or other material in the time of frost upon the courses of water pipes in order to prevent the water therein from being frozen of any clean litter or other material in order to prevent noise in cases of sickness"

"Provided also that nothing in the second bye-law contained shall be taken to the limit in any manner the power conferred by the 59th section of the Public Health Act upon the Inspector of Nuisances to order the occupier of any premises whatever whereon there shall be accumulations of manure, dung, soil, filth or any other offensive or noxious matter to remove the same within 24 hours after notice duly sent to such occupier requiring such removal".

Some of the services with regard to refuse collection would be the envy of many a present day householder and would have no doubt required the greatest of organising abilities on the part of the Local Board of Health.

"That a cart shall at least once in every 24 hours pass through every street in the district with the words "scavenger's refuse cart" painted thereon in legible characters, the driver of which shall ring a bell before each house, into which the scavenger shall place all refuse that shall have accumulated since the last passage of the cart".

"That when any house in the district shall be without a dust bin accessible to the scavenger the local Board of Health shall provide one. The occupiers of such house shall every day bring or cause to be brought such dust box to the outside door of the said house or to such other place the Inspector of Nuisances shall direct at the hour appointed by the Local Board of Health which shall be notified to the occupier or occupiers by notice in writing left at the house."

Should any dust box contain any offensive or noxious matter the dust box was not permitted to stand in the street for more than fifteen minutes prior to collection by the scavenger. No night soil, sewage, contents of any cesspool or in fact any noxious or offensive matter could be transported through the streets between five in the morning and midnight, except in properly covered carts secured against any accidental spillage.

"In case any privy water closet or cesspool shall be in a foul or offensive state, notice under the hand of the Inspector of Nuisances shall be given requiring such occupier to cleanse or empty the same within the time to be therein mentioned" (Not being less than three clear days)

Any person offending any of the bye-laws shall forfeit and pay for every such offence, a penalty not exceeding five pounds and for continuation of the offence a further penalty of forty shillings a day after written notice of the offence from the Local Board.

There were similar bye-laws relating to the cleanliness and management of slaughter houses, the penalties being similar, five pounds for the offence and ten shillings per day for continuation of the nuisances. The bye-laws relating to lodging houses were in principle for the control of the number of occupants, to ensure that no rooms below ground level were used for sleeping quarters and that there was an adequate and accessible water supply; the use of a water closet or privy and that the premises were kept clean and orderly. The need for the free circulation of the air was perhaps imperative in these insanitary times:

"The keeper of such lodging houses shall cause the windows of every sleeping room in such lodging house to be kept open to the full width thereof from nine to eleven in the morning, and from two till four in the afternoon unless prevented by tempestuous weather and during the time the windows are open as aforesaid he shall cause the bed clothes of every bed in such room to be turned down and exposed to the air."

"And shall cause the walls and ceilings of every room to be thoroughly cleansed and well

and sufficiently lime washed twice (at least) in every year during the months of April to October, and the blankets, rugs, covers used in such lodging house shall be thoroughly cleansed at least four times a year, that is to say at least once sometime during the first week of several months of March, June, September and December"

In January 1852 the Surveyor, having no doubt read the bye-laws, handed in a letter alleging that his salary was inadequate for the work involved. But the board was of the opinion that until some time had elapsed from the introduction of the bye-laws it would be impossible to evaluate the exact amount of labour involved and accordingly postponed further discussion of the matter. The salary of the Surveyor was fixed on October 1st 1852. It was proposed at a meeting of the local Board that £30 per annum would be agreeable, but an amendment suggesting that £25 (£10 as Surveyor and £15 as Inspector of Nuisances) would be a more satisfactory rate was carried.

On January 1st 1852 the Surveyor reported that thirteen properties in Bank Alley were without privy or water closets and in consequence notice was served upon the owners that they construct privies of suitable water closets without delay to conform to the new regulations regarding drainage improvement schemes. On April 5th of that year the Clerk to the Board reported that those owners of property in Bank Alley had completely disregarded the notices served upon them. The street committee had in the meantime enquired of several of the owners at what price would they be prepared to sell a cottage with a view to the Board pulling it down and constructing privies for the use of the inhabitants of the alley. Only three replied, a Mr. Jelf prepared to sell at £60, a Mr. William Freeman at £20 and Mr. George Freeman at £19. The Surveyor on examination of the three sites, provided an estimate of the probable cost of erecting privies on the site of the two cottages, the property of George and William Freeman. The Board ordered,

"That notices should be given to the owners of several houses stating the estimated expense of the purchase of the site and the erecting of privies amounting to about five pounds per house and unless they would adopt a plan to provide themselves with privies to the satisfaction of the Surveyor within 21 days from this date the Board will proceed to erect privies at the owners' expense"

In spite of this directive to the owners they continued to ignore all efforts by the Board to enforce them to carry out the work and on October 8th 1852 the Board ordered the construction of the privies to be commenced and the costs defrayed by a private improvement rate. The completion of this contract and the costs were recorded in the local Board of Health minute book on the 26th June 1854, two and a half years after the Surveyor had first reported the deficiency, and after repeated notices had been served upon the owners. The Board had now provided these privies on the site of the two cottages of George and William Freeman purchased for £19 and £20 respectively. (They did not receive payment until 9th November 1857) and at the following costs:

Purchase of site	£39	0	0
Conveyance	2	15	0
Plans and Specification	1	5	0
Building Contract	30	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£75	0	0
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Progress by the Local Board of Health in implementing the directions of the Health Act were slow and laborious, nuisances were reported and acted upon, street cleaning had barely shown any improvement, work was being carried out on new drainage schemes, but overall there had been disappointingly little progress.

A select committee of the Local Board disturbed by this lack of progress undertook a survey of the town on Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th September 1853 with a view to determine the seriousness of the problem.

"That in the course of such survey they had found a great number of heaps of manure, soil and filth, which they directed the Inspector of Nuisances to remove by notice under the 59th section of the Act, and that a large number of houses were still without privies or water closets or the right to use them and many were without any supply of water, that the lodging houses and slaughter houses required more efficient inspection, the bye-laws respecting them not being observed, that many pigs were kept in the town which ought to be removed and that a great number of houses in the town required cleansing and white-washing"

Following this survey and report there emerged a period of more determined endeavour. A second Inspector of Nuisances was to be employed and a new post, that of Officer of Health, was to be created whose duty it was to recommend to the Board those properties that would benefit from white-washing and cleansing. Edwin Mutlow, surgeon, was duly appointed Officer of Health for an initial period of six months commencing on the 29th September 1853. The salary was to be 10 Guineas. (This initial period of six months was followed by a further period of six months, 17th April 1854, and then for a further period of twelve months from 9th November 1854). He was instrumental in producing a pamphlet entitled "Plain Advice During The Visitation of Cholera", of which 500 copies were circulated within the district. The Surveyor at this time presented his report of the number of houses without a privy, 171 in number, and those without a supply of water, 63 in number.

During the period between the 29th September and the 3rd November 1853, the Officer of Health presented a certificate that white-washing, cleansing and purifying the following houses (91 in number) would tend to prevent and check the spread of infectious and contagious diseases, and ordered that they be cleansed within 3 days. The Inspector of Nuisances also reported 30 persons for keeping pigs so as to be a nuisance and ordered that they be removed within 24 hours.

This activity continued throughout 1854 and in November of that year it was resolved that all members of the Board were to be a committee to superintend the repair of the streets and roads, the removal of nuisances and the general purposes of the Public Health Act. This committee was to be called the Street Committee and was to meet every Wednesday at 7 p.m. without notice and hopefully, by such regular meeting perpetuate this period of activity.

Although the local Board's primary and most pressing problem was that of sanitation, one of its functions was to ensure adequate lighting of the streets. Good relationship with the local gas company was essential, but in practice this was not always so.

In February 1853, the gas company offered to light the streets from 1st January 1854 for the cost of £340 - less than 5/- per 1000 cubic feet. But the local Board of Health gave instruction to a sub-committee, formed to negotiate favourable terms, that the amount of the cost of gas under any new contract must not exceed the present cost. The gas company on hearing of the Board's attitude immediately withdrew the offer. Several meetings took place between the Board's representatives and those of the gas company. But no agreement was reached. An offer to supply 20% more gas at no extra charge was deemed "not sufficiently advantageous to the public". On the 2nd January, 1854, at a local Board of Health meeting the Mayor stated that he had personally guaranteed the gas company the payment of thirty shillings, the cost of lighting the lamps on the night of the 1st, the contract having expired the previous day. A contract proposed by the Board was submitted to the gas company, but once again it proved unacceptable to them. Eventually agreement was reached on the 6th February for a one year contract.

This uneasy relationship between the Board and the gas company deteriorated even further in 1855. It was the duration of the contract which proved to be the major issue. The gas company refused to enter into any contract of a duration of less than three years, although every other part of the contract was acceptable to both parties. The Board in its reply to the gas company considered such duration "incompatible with the interests of the town", and therefore declined the offer.

A committee was formed to superintend the temporary lighting of the town by naphtha (inflammable oil produced by distillation from coal tar). Twenty lamps were purchased and the total cost of this temporary lighting was £141. 9s. 9d. Agreement was reached with the gas company on the 30th September, 1855.

The following extracts from local publications might in conclusion sum up the progress that the Local Board of Health had made in these difficult first few years, in a town unique in its structure, generous in its charity and conscious of its weakness.

September 6th 1854, Tewkesbury Monthly Record.

"And it is not to be denied that our streets and indeed the whole town generally presents a far more cleanly appearance than it used to be, nevertheless to any person who will take the trouble to walk through the principal thoroughfares in the evening of the present hot weather it will be soon apparent from the frequent puffs of disagreeable odour which will meet him at many of the alley entrances that a frequent swilling down of the water courses and thorough lime washing of the cottages inside and out would be both salutary and economical. We commend the swilling to the housewives and white washing to the Board of Health".

Letter to the Editor of the Tewkesbury Weekly Record, dated 18th August 1855:

"Sir,

We have an Inspector of Nuisances, whose duty it is to cause to be removed all obnoxious smells within the Borough. I don't know whether that individual ever takes a morning or evening walk along the Gloucester Road on a warm day. If he does not, I would suggest that he at once walks about a quarter

of a mile beyond the turnpike, and from a field on the right hand side of the road, he will have his nasal organ opened by one of the most abominable stenches and nuisances that is possible to imagine, on a view of the nuisance complained of he will find an immense manure heap which either belongs to the Board of Health or else their Surveyor, Let Mr. Inspector do his duty honestly and order its removal forthwith.

I am Sir, yours obediently,
One who has smelt it.

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