

The schoolmaster received a letter from Dr. Counsellor, the Clitheroe Union Medical Officer, in which he wrote:

*"Sir*

*In opening the schools on Monday the following restrictions must be observed.*

- 1. No children from any house that has been infected by diphtheria can be admitted.*
- 2. No children from the Old Hive can attend until further instructions are given by me."*

Dr. Counsellor's decision to restrict attendance to the schools seem to have been a wise one, as diphtheria again broke out at Old Hive in April, with further cases recorded in May. This again must have been a very worrying time for everyone.

By July the epidemic that had raged throughout the winter and spring finally appeared to have run its course.

Although Victorian Britain was no stranger to infant mortality, the large number of deaths in a small rural community must have been quite shocking. The minute books of the Clithere Poor Law Union and Board of Guardians illustrate their response to the diphtheria epidemic. The sanitary inspector visited on numerous occasions, whereas before it had been spasmodic. From the minutes and letter book we learn that the village was indeed an unhealthy place to live. Open cesspits, rows of overcrowded cottages often sharing one or two privies. They also show that absentee landlords, judging by the number of times the authorities had to write to them, were reluctant to put in adequate drains or water supplies. Four houses in Chipping belonging to Thomas Platt and occupied by James Seed and others were without sufficient covered cesspool or ash pit. Thomas Platt was given twenty-four days, in May 1880, to cover the cesspool between the privies. Other owners of cottages at Old Hive had similar improvement notices issued against them.

Another direct consequence of the epidemic was the closure of the Sally Well, situated in the church wall opposite the Sun Inn. The water was found to be contaminated and Dr. Counsellor considered the water to be so polluted as to be injurious to health.

By 1900 a resident Doctor had been appointed, funded by Chipping Oddfellows Society, and this, together with improved sanitary conditions, probably meant that the village was considered to be a healthier place to live.

*Jrena Preston*

#### References

St Bartholomew's Parish Church Registers. MF1/442 – 446. LRO  
Clitheroe Rural District Council Minute Books. SAA/1/3 – 4. LRO  
Brabin's Endowed School Log Book. SMCC 6157. LRO