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THE PLAGUE AT HAVERFORDWEST, 1651-2.

BY THE REV. J. PHILLIPS.

LOCAL tradition asserts that the plague was brought to Haverfordwest, on a market day, by sailors from a vessel lying in Milford Haven. The fatal Saturday must have been the 4th of October 1651, for the first death took place on the following Monday. The only extant record of the mortality is "A note of them that died in the town of all diseases, from the sixth of October last, 1651, untill the 5th of July 1652, in the iij parishes. The number that died from the foresaid day of October untill the 2 of March last, 1651, is the some of 46."

From the 2nd of March to the 5th of July the names and dates of death are given, and five deaths are added, bringing it down to July 7. The total number is 213. It may be assumed that the number of deaths for the five months (October to March) is about double the usual rate. As in the Tyneside epidemic of 1635-6, "the infection rested during the winter cold to begin again in the spring."

A rough draft of a paper of sanitary directions is so mutilated that it does not contain one complete sentence. It begins with an exhortation to repentance and reformation. The inhabitants are counselled to

“walk more closely with God hereafter, and to avoyd the occasion of all sins, especially swearing, Sabbath breaking, lyeing, drunkennesse, lasciviousnesse, mallice, envie, uncharitablenesse, which is rife in children as men.” They are urged to prayer “both at home in their families, and in publicke, in heareing the Word preached, that God would withdraw his present judgment from this towne, who will not deny to heare anie repentant sinner.” “Those infected in anie house, or hereafter shalbe infected, to be drawn to the pesthouse, to be placed there in the rooms provided.” The remainder defies even conjectural restoration, but some parts are clear.

It was, and is, popularly believed that cats and dogs spread infectious diseases, so one line begins, “All swyne, doggs, and cattts”, probably to be kept at home. In the chamber-reeve’s account for the year there are payments of 5s. to John Peyton, and, after his death of the plague, of 2s. to John Webbe, “for keeping the swyne off the streets”. Dungheaps and pools were to be attended to “forthwith”.

“Those whom it shall please God to visit” are to be prescribed for by Mr. Benjamin Price and surgeon, and “the poore sick” are to be supplied gratuitously both with medicines and with “drinkes of hearbes”. Strict guard is to be kept “at the pesthouse and at other houses”, and the constables are to be assisted by “able watchers”. The constables or watchers are “to go the rounds of a morninge”.

“Harry Folland” has apparently to do with the distribution of the “victalls” at certain houses. Supplies of provisions are to be received by the officials at the “redd gate”—the gate on the bridge over the Cleddau.

This document was drawn up when the pestilence revived in the early spring.

Among those who had died in the winter was Morgan Howells. His widow and children, with their servant, were shut up in the infected house. On Thursday, February 12, William Jones being commanded to

see the "back door of the said widdow Howell chained up, and going with the smith to that purpose, did espie in the garden, thrown out of the house of the said widdow Howell, a sheete or a shirte and a blankett", which she refused to take back, "for they were not put forth to be brought in againe". The next day Hugh Rice saw her throw out of her front window "two pieces of paper, one of white and the other of browne, beinge both wett". Remonstrance called forth a volley of abuse. "Her neighbours should have a share as well as herself", etc. Next Monday, "there being water to be put into the said widdow Howell's house, she caused the mayde to take forth 2 bucketts of wash, & to give it to the swyne". All which, with the poor woman's vigorous language, is recorded in the depositions taken by the mayor on the 16th of February.

On Wednesday, the 18th, the Council, who, for some reason, anticipated stringent precautionary measures on the part of the County Justices, addressed to them a memorial or "certificate". "Although we have watch upon three or four houses at present, we cannot learne of but one that is sicke." "The towne is very poor." "There appeares but slender provision in anie houses eyther of wealth or victualls, more than is provided from markt to markt; the assessment rate haveing now leavelled the better sort with the poorer; of which there was paid more than £400 within the last weake, most of which was gathered in a very sad and lamentable waie, & at least one hundred pounds borrowed by the Receavers to pay the same." They urge, therefore, that "if it please God to continue the visitation, a supplie of maintenance may be had and provided as in your wisdomes you shall think good, according as the law hath provided, there being neare 3000 soules".

This communication was delivered next day to Mr. Sampson Lort, an influential magistrate, that it might be laid before the fortnightly meeting of the Justices, to be held that day at Canaston. Nevertheless, on

Tuesday evening, the 24th, one of the constables of Prendergast brought to the mayor a warrant, directed to them by Bulton Ormond, a High Constable of Dungleddy Hundred, requiring them "not to permit anie to come into the house, or anie townsman to come thiere," and threatening "that if anie shall goe or traffique with the townsmen their houses shall be shutt up untill it please God to withdraw his scourge from you."

The mayor lost no time in protesting against this stringent measure. The letter of the 18th had been addressed to "Roger Lort, Sampson Lorte, Henry White, **Herbert Perrett**, Thomas Parry, Maurice Morgan and Thomas Jones, Esqrs." The second letter was addressed to Parry and Jones, "being tould that the original warrant, if anie, came from your selves". Presuming that they had not seen the former "certificate", a copy of it was enclosed. "The towne is as touching the sickness in as good, or rather better condition. There hath not fouer died this last weeke (? month), and I cannot learne of one that is sicke. This population of near 3000 souls must starve if food be kept from them."

This representation induced the Justices, at their next meeting, on March 4th, to rescind their previous order. The constables are, however, required to keep strict watch "on the houses of such persons as are infected within your lymitts". From "each parish where the sicknesse is, two sufficient men" are to appear before the Justices or any of them, within six days, of whom one will be "sworne overseer of the watch in each parish where the sickness is". Meanwhile the situation at Haverfordwest was already changing for the worse.

The steadily increasing amount of the Army Assessment had been the subject of frequent remonstrances. Cromwell, before he sailed from Milford Haven for Ireland, in 1649, had promised to do his best for a town which had been so staunchly loyal to the Parliament; but the Scottish war followed upon the conquest

of Ireland, and nothing had come of the Lord General's intercession. Harrison had once been a good friend to the town, but he had been estranged in consequence of a serious misunderstanding between a former mayor and Vavasor Powell. A rate of ten shillings in the pound had proved insufficient to meet the demands of the military authorities. With great difficulty £400 had been raised in the early part of February, and the mayor and his brethren were driven almost to despair. They determined to make one more appeal to the Republican Government. This difficult mission was entrusted to Mr. Thos. Cozen, a young lawyer, the son-in-law of the mayor, Mr. Thos. Davids, of Robleston. He was provided, in addition to the petition to the Parliament, with letters to Cromwell, Harrison, Speaker Lenthall, and to Col. Goffe, who was a native of Haverfordwest. Goffe was one of Cromwell's most trusted officers, and accompanied him to the siege of Pembroke in 1648, when he was enthusiastically welcomed at the home of his childhood. Since then he had added to his reputation by his brilliant services at Dunbar and Worcester. The letters to the Speaker and to Goffe are sufficiently deferential, and that to Harrison is almost abjectly apologetic; but the communication to the "Lord General" is worded in proper petition form, beginning with "The Humble Petition, &c.," and ending with "Your petitioners shall ever pray." It is signed by the mayor, the sheriff, Lewis Barron (mayor in 1658) and twenty-two others, including nearly all the Council. Cromwell was already recognised as the ruler of England.

The story of the Assessment, with the light it throws on the finance of the Commonwealth, must be reserved for a separate paper. In the extensive correspondence we get interesting glimpses of Cromwell, Harrison, Goffe, and others, but we have room here only for such brief extracts as illustrate the history of the epidemic.

The petition to the Parliament, after stating that "every person in the towne, according to his estate,

payes a hundred times more than they doe in other places," adds "And it hath pleased God to visit the town with the pestilence, soe that the most part of the remaininge inhabitants are in very much want and not able to relieve themselves." The slightness of the allusion was natural at the time, when there were only four houses shut up, and there was no known case of sickness in the town. But the pestilence was already waking out of its winter sleep. The letters are dated the 1st of March. The next day died "William Williams, of the pond", probably the keeper of the town pound, under the walls of the ruined castle. Letties, his wife, and three children followed him to the grave before the month was over. On the 3rd died "Jane, daughter of Thomas Meyler, glover." There were two deaths in St. Mary's parish on the 6th and 7th, and three, including a father and child, on the 9th, in St. Martin's. One died on the 12th, three on the 13th, one each on the 14th and 15th, two on the 16th, and three on the 17th, and on the 18th "James Price, gent.", his daughters Audrie and Marie, and two others. Next day, "the servant of Widdowe Howells," who, with her mistress, had figured in the depositions taken a month before, was one of three victims. 1652 opened gloomily. On New Year's Day (March 25th) there were three deaths; two of these were Parrotts. At the mayor's expense two shrouds were delivered to Walter Parrott, who had already lost a child on the 13th. There were three deaths on the 27th, and four on the 28th. On the 29th "Walter Parrott and Margrett his wife" followed their children to the tomb. One can understand the terror which the epidemic inspired.

The number of deaths for the month was 48, of which two had occurred in St. Thomas', 13 in St. Mary's, and 33 in St. Martin's.

In February the Council had rented two houses in St. Martin's of Alderman William Williams (mayor in 1641 and 1649). The larger of these, known as

“the great house”, and probably a warehouse of some kind, was used as the Pest-house. The other, described as “Edward Lloyd’s house”, was “had for the tarrcoats, or men that tended the sicke and buried the dead.”

At a later date some premises in Cokey Street, now City Road, were used as a convalescent home. In the sanitary regulations quoted above there is one provoking hiatus. Following the direction for the removal of the infected to the Pest House is a sentence of which we can only decipher—“the strange woman Lloyd’s house.” A sentence in a letter written by the mayor a few weeks later will explain this enigmatic fragment. The mayor left the town for Hereford, on municipal business, about the end of March or the beginning of April. He wrote from Hereford on the 18th of April, to say that he found it necessary to go on to London. A letter dated from “the Black Lyon on Fleete Bridge, the 27th of April”, announced his arrival in the capital, and begged the Council “not to conceive that he took the journey under a pretence to avoyde the sicknesse or trouble in the towne.” He asks that they will keep him well informed of affairs at home. In April the mortality was a little less heavy than in March, but there were 30 deaths—23 in St. Martin’s, and 7 in St. Mary’s, none in St. Thomas’.

The expenditure necessitated by the plague had exhausted the town’s stock—£100—and on the revival of the pestilence a weekly rate of £5 was imposed, which the inhabitants were too poor to pay. The mercers, shoemakers, and feltmakers were in sore straits. Their stock was “all in goodes lately come from St. Paule’s Fayre, and by reason of the sickness noebody will come to buy with them, neither can they be suffered to goe to any fayre or markett to make sale of their goodes.” The infected places in the county were Great Pill, Honiborough, Walterston, and Newton, on the northern shore of the harbour, and Crondale,

Illblocke, and Prendergast, in Dungleddy, adjoining the town on the east. These facts are stated in a memorial from the mayor, justices and aldermen, which was probably addressed to the county magistrates, at their fortnightly meeting at Canaston, on April 15th. Those gentlemen were less ready to help the town than to take precautions for the protection of their own districts. They "sent their warrentes all the countrie over that none of the people shall comerce with the towne". The markets, "hitherto plentiful", were stopped; May Fair, the principal Haverfordwest fair, held on May Day, was "proclaymed" and kept at Llawhaden. The Council "proclaymed it to be held in the west side of the Fursie Parcke", at a little distance from the town, but just within the municipal boundary. "Some people came from Roose, but very fewe."

The mayor, his son-in-law, and **Mr. Herbert Perrett**, of Haroldston, now in London, were doing their best for the distressed town. On Sunday, the 2nd of May, Haverfordwest was specially prayed for "in the Chappel of Whitehall and in St. Laurence in London, when Mr. Byne preached." On the 17th the mayor received a letter from the Council. They complained bitterly of the county authorities, "the Pembroke gents." "Wee have not as yet received any comfortt at all from the gents, but [they] have donne us all the spite and hindrances they could. The poore in the pest-houses doth increase dayly. How they will be maintayned wee knowe not, for the towne will nott be able." The mayor is desired "to petition Parlyement" for "an order to have releefe from the country according to statute, otherwise the poore is like to starve." He replied that same evening—Cromwell had that day promised his help. He has heard "that Mr. Synagon hath been lately very abusive towards Beniamyn. I praye you lett Beniamyn be righted therein; for you knowe he hath bene diligent and carefull from the beginning, and I praye you lett the visitor woman be

encouraged and not be abused by idle people, as I heare she is, for I am sure that Providence guided her hither and that shee under God hath bene an instrument of good." This was, evidently, the "strange woman" of the sanitary regulations. "Abuse" implies actual ill-treatment, not merely scurrilous language—a pathetic glimpse of Christian self-sacrifice, of which these few words are the only record on earth.

A day or two later the Commissioners of the Broad Seal wrote to the Pembrokeshire Justices "as touching the reliefe of the towne"; but the Justices had already taken action. At their meeting on May 13th they had before them "a certificate from the magistrates of Haverfordwest, being attested by Mr. Stephen Love, minister of the Gospel in the said towne, setting forth the sad, miserable, distressed condition of the said towne." "990 persons or so, are thereabouts, as we are credibly informed, are in want of the necessary foode to sustaine nature." The Justices, therefore, desired that the parish constables shall "repaire to the houses of the parishioners of their respective parishes and there to take and receive of the masters, mistresses, or dames of the said houses those provisions in money, corne, butter, cheese, and other victualls or provisions as they shall freely and voluntarily give and contribute." A careful return is to be made of "the names of every one that doth contribute and alsoe what, or to the vallee of how much they doe contribute, and alsoe what they are willinge monthly to contribute during the continuance of the plague." They are also to return the names of those who can give but will not. The High Constables of the Hundreds are to appoint in each division of their Hundreds some "able, honest man", who is to receive the contributed provisions and to arrange for their carriage to Haverfordwest, where, "at Porfield or some other place nere the town," they are to be handed over to the mayor or his deputy, and to be distributed by him "with the advice of Mr. Love." No time is to be lost, and a report is to be

made at the next meeting of the Justices, to be held at Pembroke on the 27th. The order is signed by Henry White and Sampson Lort. Appended is an order of the same date, that as Haverfordwest, "the usuall place for buying and waying of wool, is now infected with the plague," wool markets are to be held weekly, on Tuesday, at Steynton, and on Saturday, at Llawhaden.

Contributions soon began to arrive. At least £30 had been received before the end of May. The total amount of the Benevolence is returned as follows :—

Hundred.			£	s.	d.
Roose	...	...	..	13	9 2
Narberth	...	...	...	13	3 3½
Castlemartin	...	...	...	8	18 6
Kemes	...	...	...	6	6 0
Dewysland	...	...	...	2	16 10
Kilgerran	...	...	...	2	2 9
Dungleddy	...	...	...	1	17 1

£48 13 7½

Of this about £6 was sent in provisions. The Narberth contribution includes £4 from Sir Hugh Owen. It is probable that some private charity found its way through other channels. In 1650 Haverfordwest had contributed liberally towards the relief of "the sick and distressed in Tenby", and the little seaside town now sent some help to Haverfordwest. The amount is not stated, but Mr. Palmer, who brought it, was entertained with "wyne and his dinner", at the cost of 7s. A supply of provisions sent by boat from Carew, and which cost 2s. to carry from the marsh to the town, was surely more than the eleven loaves and twenty-two cheeses which are reported as coming from Carew and eight other parishes. Of the whole amount from Roose, Steynton sent £2 4s., and Llangwm £2 17s.—more than one-third.

At the July Quarter Sessions a monthly rate of £80 was assessed on the whole county, beginning from July 13th, to be paid as long as the distress lasted in Haverfordwest. Up to Michaelmas, when the mayor's

year of office ended, about £128 had been received, that is, the whole of one month's rate and half of the second.

The following table shows the number of deaths from all causes in the three parishes from March 2nd to July 7th :—

	St. Mary.		St. Martin.		St. Thomas.
March	... 13	...	33	...	2
April	... 7	...	23	...	0
May	... 4	...	24	...	5
June	... 13	...	29	...	3
July 1-7	... 3	...	7	...	1
	—		—		—
	40		116		11

The weeks ending March 30 and June 28 were the most fatal, the deaths being 14 and 15 respectively.

For the remainder of the year we have no return of deaths, except such as took place at the Pest-house or in Cokey Street ; but there are four documents which cover, more or less completely, the whole period from the third week of May to the end of the civic year. These are :—

1. A weekly return of the total number receiving relief.

2. A bi-weekly nominal list of persons in the Pest-house and in Cokey Street.

3. A bi-weekly account of provisions sent to them.

4. Weekly lists of the families supplied at their own houses with provisions, chiefly bread.

5. A statement of the disbursements of the deputy mayor.

i. Thursday was the day for "serving the poor and needy inhabitants in their several wards". On the 20th of May the number was 254, but the following week, when the county contributions had come in, it rose to 408. From that time to the end of September, when the return ends, it was rarely much above or much below 400. The highest number was on the 17th of June, when 450 were served. On the 30th of September, the date of the last entry, there were 414.

II. The nominal list of persons in the Pest-house and in Cokey Street was made on Tuesday and Saturday. Those in the Pest-house were divided into three classes :—(1) Sick on the Town's charge ; (2) Sick on other men's charge ; (3) On recovery at the Town's charge. The number, including those in Cokey Street, but not those "on other men's charge", rose from 31 on May 20 to 72 on August 18 ; and a fortnight later it stood at 70, but gradually decreased to 37 on October 2. From the provision account we learn that the number diminished rapidly until, on November 20, the Cokey Street quarters were empty, and there was one person left in the Pest-house "on recovery".

III. Provisions were sent to the Pest-house and to Cokey Street on Wednesday and Saturday. The usual weekly allowance per head was : "The sicke—butter, 1 lb. ; oatmeal, 1 quart. ; in money, 8*d.* On Recoverie—bread, two 4*d.* loaves ; cheese, 2 lbs. ; oatmeal, 1 quart. In Cokey Street : bread, two 3*d.* loaves ; cheese, 2 lbs. ; oatmeal, 1 quart. Occasionally a half-pint of girts per head was sent to the sick once, and very rarely twice, in the week. The 3*d.* loaves for Cokey Street appear first on the list about the end of July. Bread was not sent to the sick, except to a few of the children, or to some about to be placed on the "Recoverie" list. From August 7 to October 2, 1 lb. per head was sent for those "on Recoverie" every Saturday, and once on a Wednesday ; the total quantity being 257 lbs. Mutton is occasionally entered as sent to the sick. The amount entered is small, but the 8*d.* per head in money was sometimes sent "in mutton or money". It probably covered frequent purchases of mutton as well as other necessaries. There are also several entries of money spent in "necessaries for the sicke". It is to be feared that luxuries, or even comforts of the simplest kind, were rarely seen in the Pest-quarters.

IV. For the eighteen weeks from May 26th to Sep-

tember 23, of the lists prepared for the Thursday distribution there are twelve extant. For the purposes of municipal taxation the town was divided into eight wards. These, arranged according to the length of their relief lists, were St. Thomas, Ship Street (Quay Street), Dew Street, Bridge Street, Market Street, St. Mary's, St. Martin's, High Street. For St. Thomas Ward the average would be 90, and for High Street Ward, 20.

In the earlier lists there are three columns, for the number of the family, for the bread supplied (given in pence), and for herrings. According to the earliest list (May 26), in St. Thomas' Ward, 92 persons received 13s. 1*d.* in bread and money, and 188 herrings. After June 10 the herring column disappears. On July 22, in the same ward, 79 persons received in bread 8s. 4*d.*, and in Dew Street 63 received 7s. 4*d.* Oatmeal and cheese figure also in the earlier but not in the later lists.

v. The disbursements of the mayor (or deputy-mayor, Mr. Davids being absent for nearly the whole of the summer) amounted, from May 20 to October 2, to £200 19s. 2½*d.* For the first three weeks the statement is incomplete. From June 17 to October 2—fifteen weeks, it amounts to £183 12s.—about £12 per week. Of this, £5 14s. 1*d.* was spent in the purchase of 790 lbs. of beef, of which only 257 lbs. is accounted for at the Pest-house. Mutton was sent, in one or two cases, to infected houses. The purchases of cheese, oatmeal, etc., as well as of beef, show that the "bread lists" represent only a part of the stated distribution of food.

Private benevolence from both town and country must have supplemented the relief distributed by the authorities.

The rector of St. Thomas, Stephen Love, was very active in soliciting help from other parts of the country. The living of St. Mary's appears to have been vacant. Mr. Love, whose parish lay outside the walls, on the

south and west, probably lived at Haroldston, the seat of the staunch Puritan squire, **Herbert Perrett**.

On the 23rd of July, Mr. Arnold Thomas, ex-mayor, sent to the town a letter with a small sum he had obtained from Kemes. Doubtless others were similarly active.

The tarrcoats, "who tended the sick and buried the dead," were paid 15s. on Wednesday and Saturday.

The examination of the deputy-mayor's financial account must be reserved for another paper, with other topics connected with the epidemic.

VI. It remains to be seen what evidences we have of the death-rate subsequently to the 7th of July. In the lists of those in the Pest-house and in Cokey Street there are 11 deaths entered for July, 15 for August, and 15 for September.

The very high mortality in St. Martin's parish during the spring and early summer was largely augmented by the deaths in the Pest-house. If we assume that one-third of the total number of deaths from plague took place in the Pest-house—and the proportion could scarcely have been much greater—it would lead to the inference that the July-September death-roll in the Pest-house, amounting to 41, represented a mortality from the pestilence of at least 90, perhaps over 100.

The deaths in the house are frequently those of recent arrivals. In one week in August there are four entered as "newly added" on Wednesday, all of whom were dead before Saturday. The imagination is irresistibly fascinated by the grim tragedies that can be read between the lines of the official reports. One will suffice.

John Bayliffe lived in Quay Street, then Ship Street, in the part nearest to the High Street. He was probably a labourer. His daughter was brought to the Pest-house on Wednesday, September 1st. Before Saturday she was dead. Her father had been brought in by that day, with another child. Before Tuesday

he was dead. The child remained in the house. On the same day in which his death is recorded, his widow appears in the list first time, but as "on recovery". On Saturday, the 18th, she was added to the sick, while another daughter appears on the "recovery" list. On the next page the mother and both children are returned as dead. These are the last deaths recorded in the official lists.
