

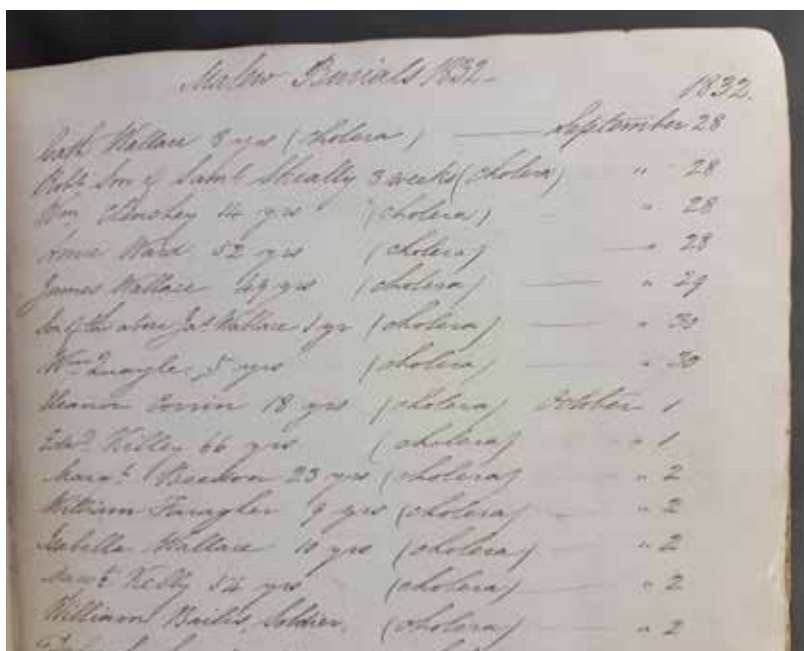
Library and Archives

Cholera and Nineteenth Century Health Issues

This factsheet of selected material is prepared for those interested in or researching the occurrence of outbreaks of infectious diseases on the Island. It draws on printed material in class B.464 (Public Health) and sources from our manuscript collection. Additional material may be found in classes B.468 (Hospitals and Hospices), D.126 (Benevolent Societies) and D.244 (Local Government) by searching our online catalogue <https://www.imuseum.im>. The Library turquoise tab (advanced search option) or pink archives tab enable you to narrow the search.

Cholera appeared in 1832/3 and again in 1866 with additional scares about its return; smallpox, typhus fever, dysentery and tuberculosis were other illnesses of concern. The reading material can help in the study of how the Island sought to prevent the spread of disease and why public health reforms emerged in the nineteenth century. Several factors played their part including increased government regulation, improvements to water supplies, public sanitation, housing, medical provision, preventative vaccinations, diet and general public knowledge. The effectiveness of these reforms is difficult to trace accurately given that mortality statistics reported by the Registrar-General are available from 1880 onward only.

Earlier resources help set the scene to show interventions. For instance, in 1759 an Order in Council established a quarantine of forty days on vessels arriving from the Mediterranean to prevent the spread of the plague (see Atholl Papers AP 60-18). A colourful 1883 tussle between Haviland and Talbot arguing about the relative merits of the Isle of Man as a potential health resort is noteworthy as is the emergence of nursing heroine Nellie Brennan (1792-1859) whose selfless efforts during the 1832/3 cholera outbreak have been lavishly praised in print.



Extract from Malew register showing some of the 1832 burials due to cholera.



Nellie Brennan.

Printed Sources

Bye Law Regulations

There is a series of such bye-laws at Library reference D.244. They are arranged as follows:

D.244/1/2	General
D.244/1/3	Parishes
D.244/1/4	Castletown
D.244/1/5	Douglas
D.244/1/6	Onchan
D.244/1/8	Port St Mary
D.244/1/7	Peel
D.244/1/9	Port Erin
D.244/1/10	Ramsey

Bye-Laws, Rules and Regulations framed and made by the Douglas Town Commissioners and confirmed by the Tynwald Court

Douglas: James Brown, Times Office, 1865
Library Ref: F.71/DOU

Bye-Laws with respect to new streets and buildings made by Douglas Town Commissioners

Douglas: 1893.
Made under powers conferred by the Local Government Act of 1886 and approved by Tynwald Court, 17 November 1893, these by-laws include stipulations for building drainage, ventilation, water closets, privies and cesspools.
Library Ref: F.71/DOU

Model Bye-laws for the regulation of Ashpit, New Street, Buildings, &c made under the Provisions of the Local Government Acts, 1900

Library Ref: D.151/16xf(38)

Statutory Provisions

The statutes are indexed. The following is not intended as a comprehensive summary of relevant Manx legislation.

Act for better supplying the town of Douglas with water, 1834

Public Health Acts, 1884 & 1884

Douglas Town Improvement Act, 1889

Local Government Act, 1889

Library Ref: D.200/1

For online access see legislation.gov.im

Cholera and Smallpox Prevention

Letter from Government Office to Commissioners of Town and Village Districts] noting the wishes of the Lieutenant Governor for contingency planning given the outbreak of cholera in Europe

31 August 1892
Library Ref: B.464/2xf

Church pamphlet- A Special Form of Prayer to Almighty God to be read...in all Churches and Chapels in the Isle of Man on Sunday 19th August 1866...for continued preservation from the cattle plague and for protection against the cholera

Library Ref: B.464/CHUq

Loch, H.- Directions and Regulations for the prevention of the spread of smallpox in the town of Douglas

Order issued by Lt-Governor Henry Loch, September/November 1877
Library Ref: B.464/2xf

Tynwald Court- Report of Committee of Tynwald Court, appointed on 14 April 1893 to enquire into the working of the Vaccination Acts, 30 May 1893

Douglas, 1893
Notes an unsatisfactory state of affairs concerning the registration of vaccinations and declares: '... it is manifest that the Vaccination Act [of 1878] is very inefficiently carried into effect'
Library Ref: D.151/14x(17) & B.464/2xf(2)

Brooke, F.J.- Vaccination Amendment Bill, Isle of Man: Reply of Dr Walter R Hadwen to the Medical Evidence and Arguments of Members of The Legislative Council presented in favour of the Continuance of Legal Compulsion

Anti-vaccination responses to evidence arguing for compulsory vaccination. Published by The British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection.
Library Ref: B.464/2xf



Simple cross marking the cholera pit, St George's churchyard, Douglas

Sanitation

Sanitary Matters in the Isle of Man: The Sanitary Record, 14 March 1879, p.p. 161-165 - Critical account of sanitary affairs on the Island, by Special Commissioner

Compares Manx with British legislation and gives a detailed eye witness account of sanitary conditions.
Library Ref: B.464/2xf(11)

Lancet - The Medical Notes in the Isle of Man by a Frequent Visitor

21 February 1891 p.p. 459-460

This reviews medical provision, climate and sanitary reforms on the Island.

Library Ref: B.464/2xf(12)

Medical Provision

Medical Aid and Poor Relief Commission (Isle of Man): Report and Evidence with Appendices presented to the Tynwald Court by Order of His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor

Douglas: James Brown and Son, 1879

Sets out the testimonies of numerous individuals and the commissioners' conclusions about existing provision of medical aid and hospital accommodation for the poor; also recommendations for improvements and the prevention of the spread of epidemic or contagious diseases.

Library Ref: B.464/5x

Nesbitt, Thomas H. - White Hoe Isolation Hospital, Braddan Report on Infectious Diseases and Isolation Hospital Administration for the ten years ending 31 March 1896 Douglas, 1896

This 56 page report contains useful tabulated statistics and notes on the response to infectious diseases as well as a history of the beginning of White Hoe.

Library Ref: F.71/NES

General Sources

Cringle, Terry and Forster R.E. - Here is the News: an illustrated Manx History: The Manx Experience, 1992

ISBN 1873120 07 9

See especially page 88 'A matter of life or death' on the cholera outbreak of 1832. Note also pages 124 and 132.

Library Ref: F.64/180 Reading Room

Davies, Charles - A Dissertation on the Causes of Consumption with special reference to its Prevalence in the Isle of Man

Douglas: Brown & Sons Ltd, 1899

Medical degree thesis submitted to the Victoria University, 1899.

Library Ref: B.464/3 (Bound pamphlets)

Haviland, Alfred - The essential requisites of a sea-side health resort and the requirements of a health seeker; with the physical geography and climate of the Isle of Man: A lecture

Douglas: Brown and Son, 1883

Delivered at the Masonic Hall, Douglas on 13 June 1883

this lecture compares the Island's climate favourably to Cos in the Mediterranean Sea. For a severe critique of the lecture see Talbot, below.

Library Ref B464/3(Bound pamphlets)

Index to Isle of Man newspapers (to 1855)

Contains plentiful references to cholera for the years 1826-1833 under the heading 'Health-General'.

Smallpox, dysentery and typhus fever are also reported upon in this section. Index available on request.

For typescript extracts from the Manx Sun for July - October 1832 on the cholera epidemic.

Archives Ref: MD 312 (MS 06417)

Newspapers are available to search on our iMuseum website:

<https://www.imuseum.im/newspapers>

Kermode, William - Short biography of Rev. William Kermode

During the cholera epidemic of 1853 he earned the respect and admiration of the people of the town to care for the sick and dying In Biography scrapbook volume 1 part 2.

Library Ref: G.88/1xf(184)

McHardy, Mary- The Cholera Epidemic in the Isle of Man

Journal of the IOMFHS, 10th Anniversary issue, May 1989, p.p. 29-34

Article tracing the spread of the disease to the British Isles, the 1832 epidemic on the island and the 1866 outbreak.

Library Ref: L.3/FAM



Isle of Man General Hospital and Dispensary
Minute book of Committee and AGM meetings,
1849-1886
Archives ref: MS 13225

Pantin, Guy - A study of Maternal Mortality and Midwifery on the Isle of Man, 1882 to 1961
Offprint from Medical History, 1996, 40: 141-172
Library Ref: B.464/PAN

Radcliffe, Constance - Life in Ramsey 1765-1865
Proceedings of Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society Vol IX, No 2 p.p. 183-196. See especially p.192
Library Ref: L.6

Radcliffe, Constance - Ninety Years Young: A short illustrated account of Ramsey District Cottage Hospital 1907-1997
Douglas: Nelson Press Co., 1997
Library Ref: B.468/RAD

Radcliffe, Constance - Shining by the Sea: A History of Ramsey 1800 - 1914
Douglas: Nelson Press Co. Ltd, 1989
p.p. 45-48 and 71-73 cover public health.
Library Ref: F.72/14 Reading Room

Statistics (official) - Annual Reports of the Registrar-General as to Births, Deaths and Marriages in the Isle of Man, 1880 onward
Summarise mortality rates, causes of death and the number of vaccinations carried out annually.
Library Ref: D.34/2/1-3 Reading Room

Talbot, T - Mr Haviland's Lecture Reviewed I-VI, 1883
Six newspaper articles of October-December 1883 criticizing the content and claims of an 1883 lecture on the 'Essential requisites of a health resort (at B.464/3) and querying the island's suitability as a health resort for those afflicted with rheumatism, nervous disorders and consumption given its actual climate of 'chilling fogs, excessive rain and boisterous winds'.
Library Ref: B.464/2xf

Nellie Brennan Sources (Eleanor Brennan: born 1792, died 1859)

Cowin - Hilda - A Manx Heroine
Douglas: Isle of Man Times reprint, 1932
The story of Nellie Brennan; episodes of the cholera outbreak 100 years ago
Scrapbook volume 1 p.p. 102-103.
Library Ref: G.88/1xf

Forrest, Katherine - Manx Recollections - Memorials of Eleanor Elliott
London: James Nisbet and Co, 1894 Douglas: James Brown and Son, 1894
Chapter 4, 'The Cholera', contains a considerable amount of reference to Nellie Brennan.
Library Ref: F.65/FOR

Johnson, Joseph - Noble Women of our Time
London: T Nelson and Sons, 1883
See chapter XI – 'Miss Brennan among the Manx Poor', p.p. 246-263.
Library Ref: G.88/B7/BRE

Miss Eleanor Brennan: a Manx Methodist Worthy
Douglas: 1895
Serialized in the Manx Wesleyan Methodist Church Record, Vol 3, p.p. 2, 11, 18, 28
Library Ref: L.6 MW/1/1xq

Stowe, Bellann - Labours of Love, A Manx Story, being a Memorial of Eleanor Brennan
Douglas: John Mylrea, 1859
For biographical details of the authoress see Manx Worthies, p 107 at G4. The reprint contains a commentary by Dr Guy Pantin.
Library Ref: G.88/BRE

Manuscript Sources

Atholl Papers
See Reading Room card index to the deposit under subheading 'Health'. Includes correspondence on smallpox and procedures for vaccination (1817-1824)

Cholera Deaths in Castletown, 1832
List of persons buried in Malew, with dates, in the cholera epidemic of 1832
Archives Ref: MD 287 (MS 06378)
See also: a published list of these names in IOMFHS Journal Vol XVII No 1 February 1995 p.p. 13-14

Clague, Bethany - Cholera in the Nineteenth Century: A Deadly Disease or the Key to Sanitation, 2002
Masters dissertation covering the nature of the disease, its spread, social conditions and hospitals in nineteenth century Isle of Man and the treatment and prevention of the disease during this century; details about notable people of the time - Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890); Nellie Brennan (1792-1859); Dr John Snow (1813-1858); Dr Robert Koch (1843-1910); and a comparison between the Isle of Man and Wallesey, Wirral Peninsula; The appendix lists addresses of wells in private homes in Douglas.
Archives Ref: MS 10529



Cure for cholera

'One teaspoonfull of salt - One teaspoonfull cayenne peppr - Half a pint of boiling water mixed and taken soon as possible'. Undated handwritten remedy, probably compiled prior to the 1866 outbreak.

Archives Ref: MS 01592 A

Fearon, Rebecca - A critical assessment of the success of smallpox eradication by way of comparison to the failure of the polio campaign, 2012

Dissertation analysing the smallpox campaign from Jenner's vaccinations to the World Health Organisation's 1980 announcement that smallpox had been eradicated, considering Manx smallpox history and the Manx perspective.

Archives Ref: MS 13149

Forbes, Jane Mrs - Typescript transcription of 1835 letter from Mrs Jane Forbes, Douglas to Mrs Margaret Corlett, Ballamona, Ballaugh

Discusses a recent cholera outbreak.

Archives Ref: MS 05173 C

Government Office Papers

Various references can be found, especially in folders GO 37 and GO 39. Some examples are given below. The reading room card index may be consulted for further examples.

Archives Ref: MS 09845

GO 9/5

Draft of letter from the Lt-Governor to the Secretary of State informing him of the outbreak of cholera symptoms in Peel, 1866

GO 37/2

Printed open letter from W Trench (Medical Officer, Liverpool), advising on the prevention of cholera, 1866

GO 37/9

Request to the High Bailiffs of various districts asking for information about suitably equipped houses in their areas to be used at short notice for cholera patients; also about the availability of people willing to nurse, 1866

GO 37/11-14

Responses to the above, 1866

GO 37/18

Proclamation of precautions against cholera, 1873

Heard, Andrea - A Most Dreadful Death. The Cholera Epidemic in the Isle of Man in 1832 and 1866,

2016 dissertation considering the causes of the first outbreak, how government and the parishes dealt with both, the impact of cholera in the island and notable individuals active in combatting the disease.

Archives Ref: MS 14655

House of Industry casebook. 1847 - 1857

Archives Ref: MS 00056 A

Manx Folk - Life Survey (FLS)

Several mentions in this resource. See the card index or search www.imuseum.im

Pantin, Guy - The Health of the Manx: Advances during 150 years

Photocopy of text of lecture delivered in 1974.

Previous attitudes of the Manx to health and medicine are explored and the causes and events of the 1832 cholera epidemic and smallpox outbreaks of the nineteenth century are well covered.

Archives Ref: MD 15123 (MS 08502)

Pantin, Guy - The Inquiry of Samuel Harris, 1878

Photocopy of text of 1986 lecture delivered by Dr Guy Pantin based on the conduct, findings and results of the Medical Aid and Poor Relief Commission chaired by Harris. Touches on the prevention of cholera in Douglas by supplying piped water from a protected source (page 4) and notes it was not so much the diseases which killed the people as the overcrowding and poor feeding that caused them to succumb to illnesses which better fed succeeding generations successfully withstood.

Archives Ref: MD 1036 (MS 08616)

Quayle Bridge House Papers

Letter from Charles Hope at Hopetown House to Mark H Quayle, 1849. Hope is sorry to hear about a cholera outbreak on the island.

Archives Ref: MS 04915/3 C

Wilson, Mrs N.M.- The Dorcas Society of Douglas

Text of address to the Methodist History Society in October 1971 with illustrative record appendices. Charts the history of the Society (formed on 1 December 1834, a day set aside by Wesleyan Methodists and others of Douglas for public thanksgiving for the exemption of the town from cholera during the past year). The object of the Society was to administer relief through the distribution of 'plain and necessary articles of clothing to needy men, women and children'.

Archives Ref: MD 551 (MS 06778)



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To give advance notice of a visit you are welcome to email the team at library@mnh.im

MNH website home page: <https://manxnationalheritage.im>



Laying foundation stone of Noble's Isle of Man Hospital, Douglas on 26 July 1886.

Title image: St George's Church, Douglas