

CHOLERA MORBUS
(BLUE CHOLERA)

1831-1832

Asiatic
Cholera.

As Limerick prepared for the dreaded Cholera epidemic, it looked like snow in June and in the surrounding districts. But it was the slack lime spread on the streets in preparation for the deadly epidemic Asiatic Cholera was sweeping through the country. Having ravaged the cities of Paris, London and Moscow smiting rich and poor alike, Paris was brought to a standstill where the dead were left unburied for many days, the city unable to cope with the speed of the epidemic.

Cholera was diagnosed by the rice watery diarrhoea. *India 1829* Initially some doctors believed that the plague was the old common Cholera, but the Asiatic cholera had fatal consequences in a matter of a few hours or a few days.

It was also known as the Blue Cholera because after great suffering the victims' extremities turned blue. The disease caused a total suspension of all secreting organs and cut off the flow of blood through the external vessels.

People who appeared well in the morning were often buried before sunset.

An eminent Limerick doctor Dr William Brook O'Shaughnessy, an Edinburgh graduate, became totally engrossed in the cause and cure for the Cholera. The first recognised cholera death was in Sunderland Oct 1831 England. *UK.*

He delivered his first paper on the epidemic before the Westminster Medical Society 1831 Dec, and also submitted his scientific findings to The Lancet, (medical journal). The most universal treatment was bloodletting, unlocking the secretions. Calomel was also used and other methods to rid the blood of poisons.

Dr O'Shaughnessy confined himself to his laboratory and his observations on the loss of fluid in the blood and his findings to the Lancet booklet cannot be faulted 150 years later. This resulted in the injection of aqueous fluid into the veins. Dr O'Shaughnessy's advice was tried and tested and hailed a wonderful success with immediate results by a Dr Thomas Latta May 1832 to the medical journal.

The disadvantages were that the treatment was often administered too late. Not repeated often enough and the fluid not always sterile.

Asiatic Cholera had appeared in Dublin and Belfast in January 1832. By April the disease was raging in Cork. By June it had appeared in Limerick.

Health committees were set up and District Hospitals prepared to accept the afflicted.

Quarantine was encouraged to prevent the disease's rapid spread and to quell public hysteria. People were not only afraid of the disease but of being afraid of it. The poet Gerald Griffin heard a medical announcement that fear was a predisposing factor. He wrote

that between the two fears a person is almost frightened to death.

2

Health committees advised to avoid crowded areas. The horses and carts could be heard on the deserted streets removing manure from the lanes and spreading the slack lime. The houses were also white washed. Sentries were placed at the entry to the towns and messengers were not allowed exchange their horses. Some people fled from the city bringing the disease with them, Flannels bedding and blankets were distributed to the poor as cold damp weather was rarely without Cholera, Ships were recalled and quarantined and became known as Plague ships, Hospitals prepared for the onslaught but were unable to cope District Hospitals advertised for Physicians with experience in Cholera. Magdalens were released from the Limerick asylum to assist in the hospitals, One of the supervisors a Ms Bridgeman later joined the mercy order and became a heroine in the Crimean war, The bishops gave permission to take the meat soup on Fridays

2

By the 12th June 1832 Cholera Morbus raged in the whole of Munster circuit, Ennis Tralee, Cork and Limerick. The poor classes were worst affected St Johns recorded 250 cases 74 deaths. In St Michaels 105 cases 46 deaths St Marys 263 cases 109 deaths Barringtons 152 cases 57 deaths St Munchins 18 cases 15 deaths there were 71 new sufferers in 24 hours, Dr Evans Rathkeale was taken ill and dead within a few hours He had visited a hospital the night before and had shown no symptoms.

By June the 16th 1832 48 deaths recorded 14 St Johns 4 St Marys 6 in Barringtons .3 Thomond gate There were 23 deaths in St Michaels The great excess in St Michaels was explained by the ravages at Boherbuoy Limerick district. The Christian Brothers placed their Monestry and school at the service of the board of health The school rooms were furnished with beds The school became known as St Michaels Hospital Sexton Street, The brothers had to step over 10 to 15 bodies every morning. A dispensary was also established at Boherbuoy

Asiatic Cholera caused widespread hysteria in areas where it raged, people fled into the bogs and under the ditches, Bodies were left not only unidentified but unburied and in some areas it was left to the priest to bury the dead Even then it was difficult to find suitable buriel areas as some areas did not allow internment in the graveyards The buriel sites consisted of pits for multiple buriel. The Roman Catholics were advised not to wake the dead or shoulder the bodies to the grave due to the danger to public health The want of straw was so great that the county courthouse was used for storage the poor had only the hard floors to lie on

Cholera was the main cause of death during the famine years
 In one workhouse. Of the 4,000 people who died there 3,000 of
 these were from Cholera
 The valuable fumigating powders used such as Sulfer ,Juniper
 berries and Myrr were already used during the plague in Moscow
 1772
 Other alternative remedies such as Homeopathy by the well known
 Hahnemann advocated the use of Camphor with success
 The infusion of water salt and albumin saved many from the jaws
 of death .
 Rich people were advised to be generous as poor conditions
 contributed to the Cholera
 ,Drs John and his son William Geary Limerick ,laboured in the
 midst of the epidemics and demanded better conditions for the
 poor and the homeless, who were also helpless,
 ,Poor sanitation was a major factor in contaminating overflowing
 rivers,

Many people fled to Canada to escape the dreaded disease but
 ended up in plague ships. The overcrowded ships became a breeding
 ground for disease and instead they found a watery grave on the
 sands where they landed
 ,They died in such numbers there The area became known as
 Cholera Bay, (A Summer of Sorrow)
 Those that survived took the disease with them due to poor
 quarantine conditions at that time
 Cholera Morbus 1831-1832 was Pandemic

Kay Naughton, .

Bibliography

Limerick Chronicle 1832 .Old Limerick Journal Old link
 Journal Barringtons edit
 Miranda Castro.s Homeopathic Guides,
 Photo Limerick Leader



As this contemporary painting shows, cholera became one of the most feared diseases of the 19th century, in Limerick and throughout the western hemisphere

Attacked
 by
 The

Cholera

Kay Naughton

6-9-05

95
For the Nationalist party

The enormous waste of public money

and the relief of the poor .was top of the agenda

It was reported that The cost of the relief of the poor in Ireland anually came to £850,000 and of that £300,000 went on salaries

That left approximatily £500,000 for the actual relief

It was suggested that the £300,000 with interest rates could build 40,000 cottages

The more cottages and land alotment provided The less pauper class would exist

The Landlords were driving the people to the poorhouse which were described as homes of humiliation.

The English Agricultural allotment Act proved that it enabled the people there to live and thrive by their own efforts .

It would improve the impoverished labourers of the country and prevent the fine young men and women having to emigrate .from hunger and misery.

The people were toiling from one end of the year to the other without a pound to call their own .

The electorate were asked to vote for true tried and trusted men that would better the social conditions of the people.by the proper and efficient working of the Local government Act.

It was also pointed out that Home Rule was still on the agenda.and it was suggested that the County Councils would prove that the Irish were worthy of Home Rule

After the voting ,

The people in the Rathkeale division were complimented on the orderly way in which they voted

Everything in connection with the election was carried out with harmony and without fear favour or affection to any candidate..

Good order prevailed in the town during the afternoon and not the slighest disturba

nce was created ,

Out of the 25 electoral divisions 12 of the sitting guardians were elected,