



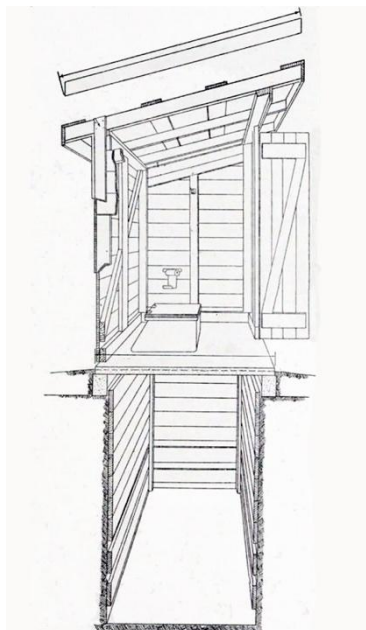
History:	
Topic:	Abatement of Nuisance – Horrible Stench at Knowles Green - 1888
Date of Record:	September 2026
Author:	Nicholas Newman
Notes:	Enforcement action taken by the Victorian Sanitary Inspector to ensure adequate provision for the disposal of domestic sewage.

Abatement of a Nuisance – Horrible Stench at Knowles Green - 1888

Introduction

To the modern generation the idea of visiting the lavatory in an external brick or wooden hut or privy with no water flush may seem unthinkable, but for many of our ancestors this was an everyday necessity. After all, individual internal WCs (water closets) for the masses only began to be provided in the 1930's, and the process only accelerated with the major slum clearance and rebuild programmes that started in the 1950's.

In rural areas where there was no proper sewerage provision it was commonplace to have an outside privy or earth outhouse, which was built over a hole that had a layer of soil, ash or sawdust at the bottom to aid waste decomposition. Or it could have a container for collection and disposal of the waste elsewhere. Another alternative where a privy was used by a large family would be to allow it to drain to a preformed cesspool, but this would require regular emptying to avoid it overflowing in to local waterways. It was only allowed to gradually leach out where soil and groundwater conditions allowed.



Design for Privy



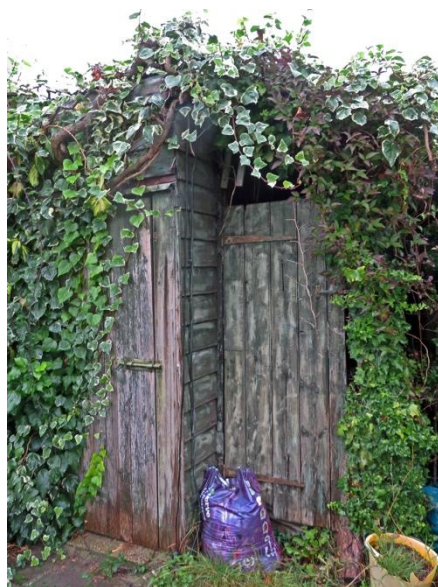
Typical Rural Privy

Typically the design had a sloping roof to drain the rain, the door was loosely fitting which aided ventilation, and there was a nail or string loop that held squares of old newspaper which was used as toilet paper.

The legal requirement for domestic properties to have access to a WC or at least a non-flushing ash-pit privy was introduced with the passing of the 1848 Public Health Act. Legislation requiring internal WCs in new build housing had to wait for the 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act. However post second world war, whilst slum clearance schemes removed the worst of the national housing stock, many more properties which remained and were worth saving still lacked basic amenities. Thus a major push to rectify this came with the introduction of the House Purchase and Housing Act 1959 which provided government funding to local councils to offer grants to homeowners and landlords to instal those essential amenities of sink, bath or shower and internal toilet with appropriate hot and cold water supply and drainage provision. This was followed up by the 1964 Housing Act which made such requirements binding on landlords.

So it may not come as a great surprise that several cottages in Hargrave survived well in to the 1960's with no bathroom and just an outside privy. Certainly this was the case with Rose Cottage next door to the village hall, where the writer's great grandmother lived, and which was only fully modernised by the new owners in the 1970's. What may raise an eyebrow is that the council houses known as School Cottages were built in the early 1950's with an internal bathroom, complete with bath and wash hand basin, but with the WC in some cases accessed outside via a step or two from the back door, and positioned adjacent to the coal store and wash-house. Certainly an interesting experience on a cold winter night, often shared with moths and spiders. Fortunately being part of the main brick structure an electric light was provided so an oil lamp or torch was not required.

It was not until the mid to late 1960's that inside toilets were installed in the bathrooms and the estate was completely connected to the main drainage system via new pipework running through the playground to the main road. The modernisation programme for the council houses also included new kitchen facilities, central heating systems, and updated electrical rewiring. The upheaval is well remembered by those living through the process at the time, including the author who was a boy living with his family at No.15 School Cottages.



Repurposed Rose Cottage Privy c.2020

This background information sets the scene for the main content of this article, which retells a tale of a public health statutory nuisance at Knowles Green in the late 19th century, and the actions taken by the local authority to abate that nuisance. Two properties owned by a landlord Mr Henry Sparrow of Stanningfield were found on inspection to have delapidated privies and poorly constructed and partially uncovered and overflowing cesspools. The result was to allow the release of a 'foul stench' that could be smelt when approaching the properties. The houses were also in a very poor state of repair, and there was serious concern as fever was present in the children using the privies.

The response of the local Thingoe District Council was to send two early advocates of the public health movement in the local authority area covering Hargrave; Ricard Deeks the Inspector of Nuisances and Dr Charles Scott Kilner the Medical Officer of Health. Mr Deeks served nearly thirty years in his post and Dr Kilner nearly fifty in his.

Made aware of the situation at Knowles Green, they visited and during their inspection they ascertained the nature of the nuisance, and served formal notice on the landlord Mr Sparrow requiring works in a set timeframe. The landlord's view was that because one of his tenants had sublet dwellings, he was not responsible. Subsequently he was summoned before the Magistrates Court in July 1888 and again in September 1888 for non-compliance with the terms of the notice. Ultimately his building contractor completed the remedial work to the privies, but not within the timeframe stipulated, and he received an appropriate fine of 10s. a day for six days for disobedience to the order, and costs of 8s. 6d.

This was just one of many thousand actions taken by the local authority in the late 19th century to improve the public health of residents in the local area, and which set the foundations for the standards of sanitation that we now expect living in the 21st century. Detailed law reports as printed in the local press are reproduced below for those who wish to explore this interesting case in more detail.

A. Local Press Reports on the Case

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 28th July 1888.

THINGOE PETTY SESSION, July 25th.

Before W. R. Bevan Esq. (chairman), Rev. Canon Turner, E. M. Dewing A. J. Young, Esqrs., and Col. Ibbetson.

A NUISANCE AT HARGRAVE —Henry Sparrow, of Stanningfield, was charged with neglecting to comply with a notice served on him on the 9th June, to abate a nuisance at Hargrave.—The summons was issued by Mr. Richard Deeks, the sanitary inspector; Mr. J. J. Sparke solicitor of Bury appeared to prosecute on behalf of the Thingoe Sanitary Authority.

—Mr. Deeks deposed that he served two notices upon the defendant on the 9th of June in respect of a cottage and a farm house. One notice was as to a cottage occupied by Lewis Quantrill to abate a nuisance, and remove the privy, attached to the cottage, to the far end of the garden, a distance of about 80 feet. The privy is in a very dilapidated state, and was dividing itself from the building. There was no slab to cover the deposit. The wall which divides the privy from the cottage is only 6 inch clay, lath and plaster, and the floor and seat are decayed from saturation, and the cesspool is not covered or ventilated. The water has lately been running into the place and flooded. The stench could be smelt before reaching the premises. The cottage is very dilapidated and has scarcely a pane of glass in the place. It is not habitable.

Since he gave notice two cases of fever had broken out in the cottage, and one of the cases was now convalescent, but the other an apparently hopeless case. There was no fever case in the cottage before he served the notice, Defendant has not complied with the notice.

—Cross-examined by defendant: The child has been ill a fortnight — Defendant said he could prove that the cases of fever were caught by people visiting another house on the Green where fever was prevalent.

—In answer to Mr. Young, Mr. Deeks said six children and a man and wife occupied the cottage. The place was more like a shed than a cottage. —Defendant said the people had lived there only a few months. He considered he had nothing to do with the case, his tenant letting the premises to an under-tenant. He did not receive the rent.

There was no smell there. Mr. Deeks: I am well acquainted with stench, and it is one of the most horrible stench that a man could smell of. I have seen Mrs. Pettitt who hires the place, and she said it was stated in the agreement that the landlord is to keep the in repair. Defendant: No it did not. Mr. Deeks has said the wrong party.

—Mr. Partridge read the Act of Parliament on the case, which states that the notice must be served on the owner.—Defendant said he had the privy removed twice in the last 10 or 12 years, and if it was removed the refuse would work in to the pond water.—Mr. Young (to defendant): Does your tenant drink this pond water now? — defendant Yes, Mr Deeks: It would remove it further.

—Continuing, his depositions Mr. Deeks said at the farm premises occupied by James Ashmond the privy is in a very dilapidated state, and the soil runs in to the farmyard. There is no proper cesspool. The drips from the piggeries and sheds also go in to it. The floors and seats are also in a dilapidated state, and the house is unfit for habitation in this condition.

The notice to remove the privy and repair the cottage had not been complied with. The privy was about 16 feet from the house. The drippings from the eaves of which is only a little more than a cottage, has washed the clay off the wall inside and out, so that the rain gets in to the dwelling places. This is a nuisance. The privy is between the pigsty and the farmhouse. He did not know how many persons inhabited the house. —Defendant said the tenants of the cottage kept rabbits in the house. —Mr. Deeks said the tenant at the farm told him on Saturday that defendant said the premises were good enough for him when he lived in them, and they would have to be good enough for them (the present tenants). Defendant denied saying this.

Dr. C. S. Kilner, Medical Officer of Health to the Thingoe Union, referring to the cottage occupied by Quantrill, said he had inspected the privy which adjoins the house, and the cesspool at the back was uncovered. The smell, even at the front door, was very offensive. He considered the place injurious to health and a nuisance. There is a family in the cottage suffering from fever. The windows and door are broken, mended with paper and canvas, and there was a piece of oil cloth nailed over the broken panel of the door. He could not say that the place was unfit for human habitation. The privy ought to be removed. The place mentioned by Deeks would be a more convenient place for the privy. It was a very bad case indeed.

At the farmhouse the privy was in a dilapidated state. The cesspool at the back is partially uncovered. It was full, overflowing, and offensive. Cross-examined by the defendant: I did not see any rabbits in the house. It would be better for the privy to be removed and the cesspool made watertight. Mr. Young: Do you consider it a case of over-crowding at the cottage where the offence is? —There are two rooms. It is not a case of overcrowding.

—The Bench fully considered the case, and ordered the defendant to pay the costs of the day (11s.) and to put the premises in repair to satisfy the Inspector by this day month.

—Defendant I shall decline to pay. Mr. Partridge reminded him that there would be extra expenses. Mr. Sparke would apply for an order under Section 98 of the Act for disobedience of this order and then he (defendant) would be ordered to pay 10s. a day for every day he neglected to pay it. If this was not paid a judgement summons would be issued for recovery at the County Court.

—The Bench pointed out that the law was very precise that the proceedings should be taken against the owner of the property. If the owner had any grievance against the tenant by breach of covenant he would recover in the County Court. The order they now made was for the defendant to remove the privy next the cottage and to reconstruct the one at the farmhouse to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health. —Defendant I shall not pay today. I shall see some other gentlemen before I do.

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard on the 4th September 1888.

THINGOE BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

An ordinary fortnightly meeting of the Board was held on Friday last, Mr. R. Burrell presiding.....

Sanitary Authority. —A communication was read from Mr. Kilner, M.O.H , stating that he had been informed that Chevington School had been re-opened, and that two days after the schoolmistress developed a sore throat of diphtherial character. He had examined the water from the well supplying Horringer Infant School. The water was still of doubtful purity.— The Inspector (Mr. Deeks) was questioned as to the state of sanitary matters both at Chevington and Horringer, and he pointed out what was necessary to be done, and the Board directed the work to be done.

— The INSPECTOR (Mr. Deeks) reported that Mr. Quantrill had not complied in a satisfactory manner with the Magistrates' order to abate certain nuisances at Knowles Green, Hargrave. It was decided to take proper steps to enforce the order.

(Paper wrongly states defendant as Mr Quantrill, when it should be Mr Sparrow. Mr Quantrill was the tenant.)

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post and Suffolk Standard on the 25th September 1888.

THINGOE & THEDWASTRE PETTY SESSIONS, Bury, Wednesday, September 19.

(Before Key. T. J. Steele (in the chair), Rev. Canon Turner, Rev. J. White, and Mr. E. M. Dewing)

A LONGSTANDING NUISANCE AT HARGRAVE

MR SPARROW BEFORE THE COURT AGAIN

—Henry Sparrow, farmer, of Stanningfield, was summoned for non-compliance with a magisterial order to abate a nuisance. — Mr. J. J. Sparke, clerk to the Thingoe Urban Sanitary Authority, appeared to prosecute, and Mr. Cross was for the defence.

— Mr. Sparke said that an order was obtained against Mr. Sparrow to abate a nuisance in the parish of Hargrave, with respect to a privy close to a dwelling in the occupation of James Ashman. The order was made to reconstruct the privy, with brick cesspool, covered up top and ventilation pipe, so that the

same should not be a nuisance and injurious to health. Mr. Sparrow had not complied with that order, which was served on 8th August, to abate the nuisance in a month.

— Mr. R. Deeks, Inspector of Nuisances for the Thingoe Union, said that last Wednesday, the 12th, he visited Ashman's premises at Hargrave, to see whether Mr. Sparrow had carried out this order dated 25th July 1888, and served on 8th August. The closet was to have been re-constructed, but not a particle of work had been done. He had not reconstructed the privy with brick cesspool or covered top or ventilation pipe. The closet was in a worse state now than before, and was a nuisance, and injurious to health. The Cess-pool that had been partially constructed drained the sewage water from the farmyard into the closet in such a manner that the closet could not be used. The privy had not been repaired at all — not a single nail had been touched.

— Mr. Chas. Scott Kilner, Medical Officer of Health to the Thingoe Union, said he went over with Mr. Deeks last Wednesday to Hargrave. He examined the premises occupied by James Ashman at Knowles Green. He found that the structural part of the privy had not been altered or repaired since he first saw it. There was a brick cesspool, but there was no top covering, and no ventilation pipe. He considered the privy as still a nuisance and injurious to health.

— By Mr. Gross: The fact of the privy not being repaired was injurious to health, as the soil got underneath the boards.

— For the defence, Mr. C. Parker, builder, said he received orders to do some repairs at Ashman's cottage and the other property. The first closet was completed on 23rd August. A fortnight ago. Mr. Sparrow asked him to build another one at Ashman's cottage. That was completed yesterday.

— Mr. Young: The question is what was the state of things this day last week.

— In answer to the Magistrates' Clerk, the witness said that that-day week these repairs had not been done.

— Mr. Gross said he had no defence; to offer except that the work was done now.

— The Chairman said this was a very bad time of the year, and the work ought to have been done when ordered. They knew what had occurred at other villages where fever had broken out.

— Mr. Deeks said this matter had been on hand about three months altogether.

— The Bench, retired to consider their verdict, and on returning into court, said the defendant would have to pay 10s. a day for six days for disobedience to the order, and costs of 8s. 6d.

— The Chairman: It is a very mild decision considering the danger this nuisance has caused.

— Mr. Deeks said he had been put to expense over the matter.

— The Bench said they could only allow justices' fees, but the Inspector's costs could be recovered in the County Court.

AND (Editors Comment in the same edition)

I am glad to see that at last the nuisance which has been so long existing at Knowles Green, Hargrave, has been abated. A week or two ago I called attention to the shocking state of things which existed in this locality. The worst feature was the fever stricken condition of the children in one of the cottages, and the representations of the Inspector of Nuisances, Mr. Richard Deeks, led the Thingoe Urban Sanitary Authority to take proceedings against Mr. Henry Sparrow, the owner of the property. Mr. Sparrow, however, chose to disregard the Magisterial order, in respect to one part of the nuisance, and was accordingly hauled before the Bench again on Wednesday last. Then it transpired that he had

thought better of the matter, and had done what was required of him, but only on the previous day. This being several days after the time in which the work should have been done, he had to pay 10s. a day for the six days after which the order had expired. In addition he also had to pay the costs, and I suppose he will have to pay his solicitor. This is a nice reward for obstinacy. Mr. Sparrow, very naturally, grumbled, but as the Chairman sententiously told him, "The law will prove too strong for you, my man." The Chairman very properly remarked that at this time of the year a nuisance of the kind which had existed, was especially dangerous, and the most careless must take warning by the visitations which have fallen on villages, not only in this county, but in others.

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post on the 2nd October 1888.

THINGOE GUARDIANS. – At the fortnightly meeting of the Guardians,.....

-The Sanitary Inspector reported that all was satisfactory in the district, and asked the Board to allow him his expenses for two journeys in consequence of the proceedings against Mr. Sparrow regarding the nuisance on his property, which had not been allowed him by the Magistrates, as their Clerk informed them that he (the Inspector) should recover his expenses in the County Court. -The matter was adjourned in order that the Clerk (Mr. J. J. Sparke), might communicate with the Magistrates Clerk.

B. Role of the Inspector of Nuisances

The Inspector of Nuisances was the Victorian equivalent of today's Environmental Health Officer (EHO). Established in the 1840's and reporting to the local borough Medical Officer of Health (MOH), he would be the man on the ground seeking out public health issues at a time when premature death through disease and epidemic was commonplace. The industrial revolution and in particular the rapid growth of towns and cities had seen poor housing and people living in squalor providing ideal conditions for the spread of infections.

By the 1850's the appointment of these inspectors was mandatory and their workload had grown to deal with poor overcrowded housing and sewage, rotten and adulterated food, and miasma (bad air) then believed to be a cause of disease. Their role was not only to identify problems, but also to resolve them by use of appropriate legislation if serious enough to do so. Today the role of the EHO has expanded to not only deal with unsatisfactory housing and food, but also pollution, health and safety at work, and port health.

If the Inspector were to identify a nuisance, he may think it necessary to abate the nuisance by instigating service of an Abatement Notice under the Act by the Local Authority. This notice would identify the nuisance, provide information on how to abate it (works to be carried out) and state a reasonable time period for completion of the requirement based on the seriousness of the nuisance.

C. Nuisance Legislation

Back to the Victorian era and rapid urbanisation saw the evolution of medieval common law to statutory regulations with the key legislation being the Nuisance Removal Acts of 1846, 1848, 1855 and 1866, with the latter moving local authority powers from being optional to compulsory. The 1855 Act is particularly relevant to this case as it explicitly identified overflowing cesspools as statutory nuisances. The Public Health Act of 1875 then consolidated all the previous relevant legislation. Today the Environmental Protection Act 1990 sets the framework to deal with statutory nuisances particularly in

an industrial setting, whilst in the domestic setting there is a raft of legislation which can cover the issue of satisfactory sewerage provision in rented property.

These include:

Public Health Act 1936 - ensuring effectual drainage,

Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 – landlords to maintain water supply and sanitation in working order,

Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 – require fitness for habitation at start of a tenancy including drainage and sanitary provision,

Housing Act 2010 – applying the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) to assess hazards in residential properties and which is commonly used by EHOs and other local authority officers enforcing compliance with the terms of the act.

Building Regulations 2010 – requires adequate drainage systems for foul water, and

Environmental Permitting Regulations 2014 – ensuring adequate provision to avoid pollution for rural dwellings not connected to main drainage

D. Those individuals and Families Involved in the 1888 Nuisance Case.

Richard Deeks (1835 – 1903)

Richard Deeks a builder and sanitary engineer by trade was the second eldest child of nine children born to George Deeks (1811 - 1884) a bricklayer and Ann Catling (1810 – 1893) both from Bury St Edmunds. He was twice married, first to Eliza Reynold (1836 – 1884) from Bury who he married in 1856, and with whom he had six children (five sons and one daughter), and then following her death, he married Minnie Violette Clark (1863 – 1933) from Nowton with whom he had a further two daughters. He left £264 (£40+k today) to his wife in his will. After his death Minnie moved from the family home at 7 Short Brackland Street, Bury to Gazely working as a Bakery and Mill Manageress.

His career as an Inspector of Nuisances began with his appointment to that post at Thingoe District Council in 1876 where he was to work alongside the Medical Officer of Health Dr Charles Scott Kilner. He applied for a similar role at Bury St Edmunds Town Council in 1878 and reached a shortlist of two. However the councillors seemed wary that his enthusiasm would result in raised expenditure from too many prosecutions, and therefore chose an alternative candidate despite it being pointed out that they had a dual role inspecting schools with the obvious risk of transferring infections. Ultimately Deeks served in his initial post for nearly thirty years until his death.

Richard Deeks in the Local Press

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 2nd December 1876.

INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES FOR THE THINGOE DISTRICT. – At their meeting, on Friday, the 17th ult., the Guardians, by the casting vote of the Chairman, elected Mr. Richard Deeks of Bury, to the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. Thos. Tooley.

The following item was printed in the Bury & Suffolk Standard on the 15th October 1878.

APPOINTMENT OF INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES.

THE Town Council of the Borough of Bury St. Edmund's (acting as the Urban Sanitary Authority of the said Borough) require the services of a competent person to discharge the duties of INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES for the said Borough.

Such Inspector will have to perform all the duties of the office without assistance, and also to assist the Medical Officer of the Borough.

No person will be appointed above the age of 50 years.

The appointment will be from its date, during the pleasure of the Urban Sanitary Authority, at the Yearly Salary of £50, which is to cover all expenses.

Application to be sent to me, the undersigned, on or before THURSDAY, the 31st day of October, 1878.

*Town Clerk's Office, By Order, Bury St. Edmund's, W. SALMON, 8th October, 1878.
Town Clerk.*

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post on the 12th November 1878.

BURY TOWN COUNCIL

The New Inspector of Nuisances. — The following persons had applied to the Finance Committee for the office of Inspector of Nuisances to the Borough, left vacant by the retirement of Mr. James Clarke:— T. R. Burdon, A. E. Tollady, W. Buglass, J. Page, Sergeant-Major Bosley, J. Robinson, jun., builder, R. Deeks, W. Rae, Henry Cobbe. Henry Tooley, and J. E. Morris. — Messrs. Tollady, Page, Rae, and Cobbe were struck out for the want of a proposer, and R. Deeks and J. E. Morris being the only persons proposed and seconded, the Committee decided, by 4 to 1, to recommend Mr. J. E. Morris for the vacant post at a salary of £50 a year.

— Mr. HOOPER said he rose to oppose the recommendation of the Committee, for which step, he had, he thought, sufficient reason. He had nothing to say against Mr. Morris, for he knew him to be a very able and efficient officer, and no one could be more attentive to his duties. There was, however, an insurmountable objection to his accepting this post. Mr. Morris would have to visit all the lowest places in the town, and come in contact with infectious disease in many forms, and he would then go straight into the house of a poor man in his capacity as officer to the School Attendance Committee, and carry infection with him. This must not be allowed, and therefore he proposed that Mr. Deeks, who already occupied the position of Inspector of Nuisances to the Western Division of the county, should be elected to the vacant office.

— Mr. FLOYD asked whether the Committee could not be trusted to come to a satisfactory decision, and Capt. RUSHBROOKE said that as he proposed Mr. Deeks at the Committee meeting, he should second Mr. Hooper's proposition.— Mr. THOMPSON expressed the pleasure with which he listened to the remarks made by Mr. Hooper as to Mr. Morris. They were encouraging to a young man starting in life, as well as satisfactory to those who selected him.— The TOWN CLERK said that Mr. Hooper's objection would apply with equal force to doctors. They wanted an earnest, quiet, and courteous young man, or instead of having five cases in the year, they would have a hundred. The intimate knowledge of the town possessed by Mr. Morris in his present official capacity, would be of the greatest possible use to him, and the Medical Officer of Health had promised to see that no infection was carried about by Mr. Morris.— Mr HOOPER did not know that the Council required the help of the Town Clerk. It was for the Council, he thought, to take the matter into consideration, and if any legal question arose, it was for them to ask the opinion of their Town Clerk.— The TOWN CLERK said that he spoke because he had a more intimate knowledge of the matter than anyone in the room. If they wanted to have a hundred

prosecutions instead of five, he should not complain, but perhaps they would complain when he sent in the bill for the prosecution expenses. —The recommendation of the Committee was then adopted by 20 to 2.

The following item was printed in the Bury and Norwich Post on the 18th January 1887.

DEEKS-CLARK. – 30 ult., at Holy Trinity Church , High Cross, Tottenham N., by the Rev. C. W. Howell. M.A., Richard Deeks, builder and Inspector of Nuisances (Thingoe Union) of this town, to Minnie Violette, eldest daughter of Mr. G. D. Clark, late of Nowton.

The following item was printed in the East Anglian Daily Times on the 16th December 1903.

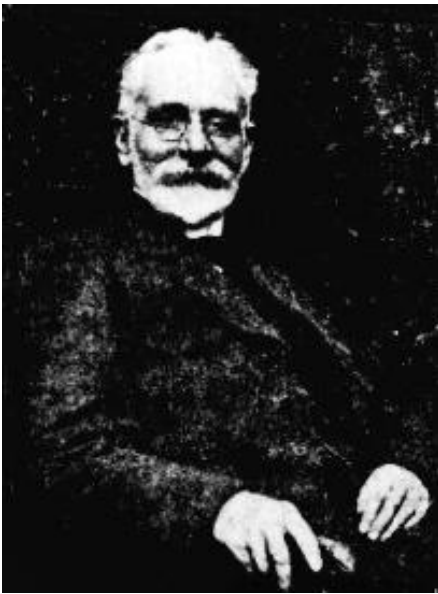
FUNERAL OF MR. R. DEEKS

On Tuesday the remains of the late Mr. Richard Deeks, who for nearly 30 years had occupied the position of Sanitary Inspector for the Thingoe Rural District, were interned in Bury St. Edmund's Cemetery, The Rev. A. Leech, curate of St. John's, conducted the obsequies. The chief mourners included Mrs. Deeks (widow), Messrs. Alec, Richard, Henry and Edward Deeks (sons); the Misses Nella and Nora Deeks (daughters),

Dr Charles Scott Kilner (1853 – 1930)

Charles Scott Kilner was the youngest of four children (one daughter and three sons) born to Dr. John Kilner (1820 – 1896) a Surgeon from Letheringham, Suffolk and wife Anna Maria Scott (1819 – 1900) from Shadingfield, Suffolk who married in 1845. Charles married Lucy Ussher Davis Goff (1856 – 1923) from Horetown, Wexford, Ireland in 1881. They were to have eight children (four sons and four daughters). The family lived at 4 Hatter Street and then 11 Mill Road, Bury St Edmunds. When all the children were growing up and Charles was active in practice they also had a live-in cook, maid and chauffeur.

Charles received his medical education at the University of Edinburgh graduating in 1876 and then went on to gain a Doctorate in Public Health at Cambridge in 1889. He joined his father in practice in 1878, and for more than 50 years he was medical officer of health and public vaccinator for two districts in the Bury St Edmunds Union. He was officially concerned with the first houses built in the county under the Housing of the Working Classes Act (1890), a consolidation act which allowed local authorities to design and implement the demolition and replacement of overcrowded and insanitary housing, or to force landlords to carry out necessary repairs to avoid closure.



In later life he held various prestigious roles, acted as a magistrate and was awarded the M.B.E.

Charles Scott Kilner in the Local Press

The following item was printed in the Bury Free Press on the 21st January 1928.

BURY DOCTOR'S RECORD.

Dr. C. S. Kilner's Fifty Years as Medical Officer.

Interesting Reminiscences.

Dr. Chas. Scott Kilner, M.B.- C.M. (Ed.), D.P.H. (Camb.), M-8.E., J.P., of Bury St. Edmund's, has established a praiseworthy record in connection with his profession, having completed 50 years' service before resigning office as Medical Officer and Public Vaccinator for the Second and Seventh Districts the Bury St. Edmund's Union. In tendering his resignation, said that he felt he could carry on—and the doctor is 74 years of age—but thought it was time a younger man took his place. He still retains his position as Medical Officer for the Thingoe District.

Dr. Kilner belongs to a distinguished medical family, and has, in no small measure, enhanced its reputation. He is a son of Dr. John Kilner, F.R.C.S., and has two sons in the medical profession— Dr. Goff Kilner, of Bury St. Edmund's, and Dr. S. D. Kilner, Llandudno.

RODE "PENNY-FARTHING" BICYCLE.

Interviewed by a "Free Press" representative, Dr- Kilner recalled a few interesting facts concerning his career, although we found him reluctant, as usual, to talk about himself. He was for time in Northamptonshire, and then went to Burton-on-Trent as Deputy Medical Officer. From then he came to Bury St. Edmund's, and used a "penny-farthing" bicycle to do his rounds, while he also travelled on horseback a good deal. The doctor has since ridden a more modern edition of the bicycle and also driven horse and cart, but of late years, and at the present time, he has covered and covers his rounds in motor-car; the recollection of the contrast with the primitive bicycle being rather amusing.

Dr. Kilner recalled a serious epidemic of influenza which swept the country some 30 or more years ago—as bad as the epidemic of 1918. One parish alone had 30 funerals in a week, while few houses in the parishes of which he had the oversight escaped visitation.

FORMER VILLAGE LIFE

One interesting point made by Dr. Kilner was that the village life changed materially. Parishes used to be very self-contained and several families bore the same name, but, when the means of locomotion improved, the people intermingled and the parishes lost much of their pronounced parochialism.

During the first year of the present century, Dr. Kilner was President of the East Anglian Branch of the British Medical Association.

During the war, Dr. Kilner did a splendid and devoted work at the West Suffolk Hospital, when medical aid was so much diverted among the troops at home and abroad, and he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire for his war services.

Our readers will wish the general doctor many more years of health to continue very valuable services to the community.

The Quantrill Family

The Quantrill Family occupied the Knowles Green cottage, and consisted of Lewis Quantrill (1854 – 1925) an Agricultural Labourer from Chedburgh, who had married Elizabeth Ann Boreham (1857 – 1936) from Brockley in 1876. They were to have eleven children, four daughters and seven sons. They moved home frequently during their marriage, from Wepstead, to Brockley, to Horringer, to Hargrave and then settling in 'Charity Cottage' near the Chapel in Chevington, with Lewis' last employment being a gardener at Ickworth House.

In 1888 when they were living in Depden they had six children under 11 years of age, and it is likely that these were the ones recorded as having fever. Fortunately they all survived and lived well in to the next century.

The Ashman Family

Unlike the Quantrills, the Ashman family were long standing residents of Knowles Green. The head was George Ashman (1813 – 1885) who married Grace Elizabeth Sparrow (1826 – 1924) in 1849. They were to have eight children, five daughters and three sons, but at the year of the nuisance case only the three sons aged 24, 21 and 18 years of age were living at home with their parents, and would have been regarded as adults working as farm labourers.

All their children lived in to the next century and mother Grace lived to be 98 years old. She is listed in the 1921 census living with eldest long widowed daughter Eliza (1850 – 1925) who was earning a living independently as a needleworker living at Church Row, Bury St Edmunds. Eliza had been married twice, with her second husband being William Crack (1834 – 1901), who had worked for the Church as 'Keeper of the Cemetery,' probably St John the Evangelist Church off St John's Street.

Footnote: Both the author and his brother trained, qualified and practised as Environmental Health Officers for many years.

Nicholas Newman – September 2026