

Notes on the Kildwick Typhoid Epidemic – 6

How the epidemic ran its course (mid-January 1899 – mid-March 1899)

A previous note described how typhoid was brought to Kildwick in the early part of December 1898 and took the story on from there, forward up to the point at which the outbreak became an epidemic on January 16th 1899.

This note continues the story, recounting what happened in Kildwick, Farnhill and the surrounding area through the period of the epidemic, from mid-January to mid-March. It was a time that saw the local hospital services stretched almost to breaking point; and the fear of infection and sympathy for the victims, turn to anger directed against the authorities.

Epidemic Diary

The following pages describe the progress of the epidemic in diary form. It is a litany of sickness and death.

Note: Whereas it is fairly easy to be sure of the increasing number of cases and when the deaths occurred, it is more difficult to be certain of the number of households affected at any one time. For these, the numbers included here represent a best-guess.

January 16th

The epidemic started on January 16th 1899, when to the single case that had resulted in the death of Stanley Baldwin on the 15th, was added three further cases. These were:

- Mary Ann Tillotson (aged 40) and Marjorie her daughter (aged 12) – Both were living in the same house as Stanley Baldwin, in Church Terrace, Kildwick. Mary Ann was Stanley's sister; he lived with the Tillotson family.
- Martha Petty (aged 76) – The landlady of the White Lion Hotel, opposite the Tillotson house.

All three cases were transferred to the isolation hospital at Morton Banks.

Number of cases:	4
Households affected:	2
Number of deaths	1

January 20th

Two further cases reported, in two further households in Kildwick. Although reports do not name these, it is likely that one of these cases was at Holme Bank, Kildwick, the home of the Sugden family. Three members of the family would eventually fall ill: Margaret Sugden (aged 49), the sister of William Sugden, the local coal merchant, with whom she lived; John Sugden (aged 21), the second son; and Thomas Sugden (aged 12), the youngest son.

Number of cases:	6
Households affected:	4
Number of deaths	1

January 21st

Two cases reported. These are Leonard (aged 8) and Norah Tillotson (aged 6), bringing the number of cases in the Tillotson household to five.

Number of cases:	8
Households affected:	4
Number of deaths	1

January 24th

Death of Mary Ann Tillotson. This appears not to have been reported in the press. In fact even the date given here is a bit of a guess.

Seven new cases:

- It is likely that four of these were in the home of John Barritt, Church Terrace, Kildwick.
- Two were in other homes already affected.
- One in a home, in Kildwick, not previously affected.

Number of cases:	15
Households affected:	6
Number of deaths	2

January 25th

Two new cases in the Barritt household, bringing the total to six.

Number of cases:	17
Households affected:	6
Number of deaths	2

January 26th

One new case, in a new household in Kildwick.

Number of cases:	18
Households affected:	7
Number of deaths	2

January 29th

Three new cases:

- Two children from Farnhill who had attended Kildwick School.
- Another case in a new house in Kildwick.

Number of cases:	21
Households affected:	9
Number of deaths	2

January 30th

Death of Mary Barritt (aged 19), at home. This was reported in the Craven Herald on February 3rd:

Kildwick – Serious Typhoid Outbreak – ... on Monday there was a third victim in Miss Mary Barritt, aged 19 years, the daughter of Mr. John Barritt, builder, whose family appear to have caught the full brunt of the infection, and who on Monday had still five children down with the disease.

There were also two new cases reported:

- Another child from Farnhill who had attended Kildwick School.
- A further case in a previously infected household in Kildwick.

Number of cases:	23
Households affected:	11
Number of deaths	3

January 31st

Burial of Mary Barritt and death of John Barritt, at home. Continuing the report from the Craven Herald:

While the remains of Mr Barritt's daughter were being interred in the churchyard on Tuesday amid a most impressive scene, another member of the same family, viz., John, aged 27, was found, on the return home of the mourners, to have succumbed.

There was also a new case reported. This was Louise Petty (aged 13) of the White Lion.

Number of cases:	24
Households affected:	11
Number of deaths	4

February 1st

Death of Martha Petty, in Morton Banks hospital.

On Wednesday, the death roll was increased to five, three deaths having occurred on successive days. The victim was Mrs. Petty, aged 76, the landlady of the White Lion, who was in a feeble state when attacked.

Five new cases.

- Two in Kildwick: one in a previously affected house; one in a new house.
- Three schoolchildren living on Silsden Moor, who had been attending Kildwick School.

Number of cases:	29
Households affected:	13
Number of deaths	5

Note: February 1st was also the date of the Special Meeting of Skipton Rural District Council convened to discuss the epidemic. See separate Note for details.

At this meeting, Mr Barritt's legal adviser called for a public inquiry into the epidemic; this call was rejected by the council. Under the circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that Mr. Barritt did not attend the meeting in person.

February 2nd

Burial of John Barritt.

Three new cases.

- A married woman living in Kildwick, belonging to a household not previously affected. Admitted to Morton Banks isolation hospital.
- A further schoolchild from Farnhill, attending Kildwick School.
- Mr. Hill from Bradley. He had attended a dinner at the White Lion on January 2nd. As a teetotaler he had drunk only water that evening.

Number of cases:	32
Households affected:	16
Number of deaths	5

February 4th

Burial of Martha Petty.

One new case; that of a schoolchild from Junction who had attended Kildwick School.

Number of cases:	33
Households affected:	17
Number of deaths	5

February 5th

Leonard Tillotson, who had been hospitalised since January 21st, was discharged from Morton Banks hospital.

February 6th

Four new cases.

- Two from Kildwick, in separate households previously affected.
- Two further cases in Farnhill, both children from Kildwick School.

Number of cases:	37
Households affected:	19
Number of deaths	5

February 8th

Death of Sarah Barritt (aged 23), the third member of the Barritt family to die in 10 days. This report from the Keighley News of February 11th.

***The Kildwick Typhoid Epidemic** – The situation in Kildwick during the past week has certainly undergone no material improvement as, although very few new cases have come to light, the death toll has been still further augmented. Miss Sarah Barritt, aged twenty-three years, the eldest daughter of Mr. John Barritt, builder, died on Wednesday morning, about half-past six o'clock.*

Number of cases:	37
Households affected:	19
Number of deaths	6

February 9th

Burial of Sarah Barritt. Continuing the Keighley News report:

The body was removed to the Church Institute to await the interment, which took place on Thursday afternoon, in the churchyard... A good many sympathising friends were present at the obsequies. This was the third member of Mr. Barritt's family buried within a period of ten days.

Two females and one male belonging to the family are still under treatment, and, according to the latest accounts, are doing nicely. A special degree of solicitude is felt for Mr. and Mrs. Barritt in the severe trials through which they are passing.

Also on this date, the death of Margaret Sugden (aged 49).

The seventh death since the outbreak of the epidemic occurred on Thursday morning, when Miss Margaret Sugden, aged forty-nine years, died at Holme Bank, the residence of her brother, Mr. W. Sugden, coal merchant, with whom she had resided. Miss Sugden had suffered from the disease about three weeks, and on Tuesday and Wednesday morning she seemed fairly well, but this, unfortunately, proved the preliminary to a grave change. Dr. Campbell, of Bradford, was called in for consultation on Thursday morning, but he found that the patient was fast fading, and the end came about eleven o'clock.

Number of cases:	37
Households affected:	19
Number of deaths	7

February 10th

At the Special Meeting of Skipton Rural District Council on February 1st, Dr. Atkinson the Medical Officer, suggested that the last cases in the epidemic should have presented themselves around February 10th. Perhaps this accounts for the sanguine tone of the Craven Herald report:

Notice has been given that no further cases can be received at the Hospital [Morton Banks Isolation Hospital] from outside the Keighley Union at present ... Under other circumstances [this] would have placed the rural council's officers in a dilemma; but in view of the fact that today completes the period of incubation, no further outbreak, so far as the village is concerned, is expected.

This proved to be rather optimistic and cannot have made comforting reading for the residents of Kildwick as the deaths and burials continued.

February 11th

Burial of Margaret Sugden.

The report on the epidemic in the February 11th edition of the Keighley News provides the following summary of affairs:

Kildwick:	26 (7 deaths)
Farnhill:	7 (plus 1 suspected)
Silsden Moor:	3
Junction:	1
Bradley:	1
Total:	38

Note: The difference between the total number in this report and our running total at this time is accounted for by an extra case in Farnhill, which cannot be identified from the newspaper reports. It may be significant that later the Keighley News tally comes back into line with other reports.

February 12th

Death of John Sugden (aged 21). From the Craven Herald, February 17th:

***Kildwick – Typhoid Epidemic** – In the early hours of Sunday morning another death occurred from typhoid in the village, the victim being John Sugden, aged twenty-one years, second son of Mr William Sugden, coal merchant, Holme Bank. He took to his bed rather over a fortnight ago, and he had been attacked with a severe form to the disease. The number of deaths is thus raised to eight. The young man's aunt – Miss Margaret Sugden – who had resided in the same household, was buried on Saturday, her death also being due to the epidemic. Mr Sugden's younger son is suffering from the disease.*

Number of cases:	37
Households affected:	19
Number of deaths	8

February 14th

A case was reported at Cononley of a man who had been working in Kildwick up until January 11th, as a stone-breaker, and had drunk the water there.

Number of cases:	38
Households affected:	20
Number of deaths	8

February 16th

Three new cases.

- Abe Petty (aged 38) of the White Lion, the third case from that household.
- A fresh case in Farnhill of a child attending Kildwick School.
- The first of two secondary infections: the mother of an infected child in Farnhill.

Number of cases:	41
Households affected:	21
Number of deaths	8

February 17th

Two further cases of children, from the same house in Farnhill, who had attended Kildwick School.

Number of cases:	43
Households affected:	22
Number of deaths	8

February 18th

A further secondary infection in Farnhill, in the same house as the one reported on the 16th.

Number of cases:	44
Households affected:	22
Number of deaths	8

February 19th

Three new cases.

- Another child from Farnhill who had attended Kildwick School
- A young man from Farnhill who was known to have drunk water in Kildwick while visiting there.
- Another case from the same home in Junction where the case had been reported on the 4th.

Number of cases:	47
Households affected:	24
Number of deaths	8

February 25th

A further case from a house in Kildwick that had suffered previously.

Number of cases:	48
Households affected:	24
Number of deaths	8

February 26th

A further case in Kildwick. From the Keighley News, March 4th:

On Sunday last a new case was discovered in Kildwick, the patient being the son of the blacksmith. The young man had been under observation for upwards of a week, and just at the time when he was about to be taken off typhoid diet his temperature rose, and the doctor notified the case as one of fever.

This was Charles Law (aged 22).

Number of cases:	49
Households affected:	24
Number of deaths	8

March 3rd

Death of Marjorie Tillotson (aged 12), at Morton Banks Hospital. From the Keighley News of March 4th:

The most serious incident of the epidemic at Kildwick this week occurred yesterday, when Margery [sic] Tillotson, aged twelve, the eldest of the orphans of the late Mrs. T Tillotson [Mary Ann], died at the isolation hospital, Morton Banks, about 2:30am. The disease has thus carried away three members of this ill-fated family, and has been responsible for nine deaths in all. The unfortunate girl had suffered most acutely, and on Saturday had a return attack of the fever after becoming almost convalescent.

Also from the Keighley News of March 4th:

Yesterday afternoon six boys – two from Kildwick and four from Farnhill – returned cured to their homes from the Isolation Hospital.

Number of cases:	49
Households affected:	24
Number of deaths	9

March 13th

Another case of a Kildwick schoolchild from Junction. This from the Keighley News, March 18th:

The only new case found during this week is that of a boy about ten years of age, the son of William Wilkinson, of Junction. The boy had been ill about a fortnight, and as he had attended the Kildwick Sunday schools just prior to their being closed, his case is regarded as traceable to the epidemic.

Number of cases:	50
Households affected:	25
Number of deaths	9

March 15th

Miriam Green of Farnhill was an opera-singer, well known in the local area. On March 15th her sister, Christie, sent the following letter to the Craven Herald; it was published in the March 17th issue:

Sir – Owing to a desire on the behalf of many people to know how my sister, Miss Miriam Green, has contracted the disease of typhoid fever, I should like to give an explanation ... The disease has, without doubt, emanated from Kildwick, for we find that my sister drank of the polluted water early in January ...

Number of cases:	51
Households affected:	26
Number of deaths	9

March 17th

Death of Abraham Petty (aged 38). This from the Keighley News, March 18th:

The Kildwick Epidemic – Another Death – *Another of the typhoid cases at Kildwick terminated fatally yesterday, the latest victim being Mr. Abe Petty, farmer, of the White Lion Inn. The deceased, who was about thirty-eight years of age, passed about the district with the disease upon him for a fortnight in the belief that he could throw it off. He was stricken down about a month ago, and from the first grave doubts were felt as to his recovery. Up to this week however, he seemed to be doing fairly well, but last Sunday and Monday an unfavourable change became noticeable, and death ensued about half-past six yesterday morning. His death raises the roll to ten.*

Number of cases:	51
Households affected:	26
Number of deaths	10

March 18th

This was the date of the regular monthly meeting of Skipton Rural District Council. At this meeting the Medical Officer, Dr. Atkinson, presented a special report on the epidemic. His summary is described below.

Note: Dr. Atkinson's full report covers the period up to February 25th, when the number of cases stood at 48. However, he does report the number of deaths as being nine (Marjorie Tillotson died on March 3rd). Quite why the report stops so early is not clear, although members of the committee do seem to have had time to read it thoroughly before the meeting took place.

Of the total 48 cases it will be seen that 28 were those of inmates of houses in Kildwick to which water was laid on, and 15 other occurred amongst children living outside the area supplied by this water, but attending the Kildwick school which was so supplied. Of the remainder, one was the young man living at Bradley, who had attended the dinner at Kildwick on January 2nd and then drank the water; another was an old man living at Cononley, who was a stonebreaker and was working in Kildwick up to the 11th of January; the third was a young man living in Farnhill who had drunk the Kildwick water; and the other two were secondary cases – mother and child who contracted the disease through careless nursing of a previous case at home in Farnhill, the previous case being a scholar at Kildwick.

Of the total 48 cases, 28 were males and 20 females.

The fourteen houses [presumably centred around Church Terrace and the White Lion, in Kildwick] had a population of 67 persons, of whom 28 were attacked and 39 escaped. The inmates of four houses escaped altogether.

A full summary of the epidemic

Using the information presented by Dr. Atkinson, and extending the time-frame forward to the final event of the epidemic, the death of Abe Petty on March 17th, the following full summary of the epidemic can be assembled.

	Kildwick	Farnhill	Elsewhere	Total
Number of cases:	29 including at least 5 children	11 children 2 adult females 1 adult male Total: 14	3 – Silsden Moor (children) 3 – Junction (children) 1 – Bradley (adult male) 1 – Cononley (adult male) Total: 8	51 30 male / 21 female including at least 21 children
Households affected:	14 (or 15)	11 ?	2 – Junction 1 – Silsden Moor 1 – Bradley (adult male) 1 – Cononley (adult male) Total: 5	30 (or 31) ?
Number of deaths:	1 child 5 adult females 4 adult males Total: 10	–	–	10

What next – can you help ?

Do you or your family have any additional information on the Kildwick typhoid epidemic ? If so, the Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group would like to hear from you. Please email admin@farnhill.co.uk.

References

All the information described in this note has been derived from newspaper reports of the period February 3rd to March 25th printed in the Craven Herald and the Keighley News.