

Life in Victorian Worcester

Excerpts from Report to the General Board of Health... Into the Sewerage... and Sanitary Condition... of the City of Worcester (1849)

89. The Cross, the central and best part of the city, has no sewer at all, and this is true also of a part of the Foregate and the chief part of the Tything and High-street. The continuation of this main thoroughfare is even worse provided, for the sewer is laid considerably above the level of the kitchen floors of the houses, from some of which, as will be pointed out in its place, the sewage has to be pumped up by the servants each morning, early, on account of the smell.

90. In one of the most respectable shops in High-street, the water-closet discharges into a covered pit in the floor of the cellar; this is from time to time opened, the bricks removed, and the contents bucketted out through the front windows into the street. Something of this sort is the case with many of those handsome well-fitted shops that line this part of the city.

109. Most of the Worcester poor live in courts. These contain from 5 to 20 houses, are entered by a covered passage, and have no thoroughfare. Most of the houses have a first, and many a second floor. The court is generally narrow, ill paved, and without any efficient drainage. It contains a pump, the water of which is too hard for washing, and sometimes tainted; and near it are one, and sometimes two privies, the contents of which are received into a large open cesspool. In no case is any distinction of sex or age observed, and the nuisance in one court is often materially augmented by the influx of strangers from others even worse provided.

110. The cesspool is the grand nuisance, though stables and pig-sties, when present, are nearly as bad. It is an open tank or receptacle lined with bricks, over one end of which the privy is placed, and into which is thrown the whole refuse of the house, of every description whatsoever, including the refuse of slaughter-houses, piggeries, and stables, when present. This tank, in some form or other, is the almost invariable appendage to a Worcester house.