

Typhoid outbreak

The most serious outbreak was in 1894, when Typhoid Fever struck the village. This bacterial disease is caused by the supply of drinking water being contaminated with sewage, and is invariably associated with poor sanitation and hygiene. In February, the headmaster reported that parents were afraid to send their children to school and on February 21st, 14 year old Francis George Brewer died. The following week there were seven cases in the village, three of which were schoolchildren. The medical authorities closed the school at once, not reopening until March 19th. On March 15th a second boy had died, 9 year old James William Leathlean. The epidemic carried on through April and May, with parents still afraid to send their children to school.

The *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of April 26th 1894 reported on a meeting of the Bodmin Rural Sanitary Authority. The medical officer, Dr Mudge, stated that analysis showed the well water was unfit for drinking purposes, and noted previous checks had condemned the water but the authority had not acted. The well was undoubtedly where the old pump in Middle Street – formerly Well Street - now stands. A proposal to site a temporary hospital in the village to provide better provision for the sick was positively refused by inhabitants and had to be abandoned.

With the clarity of hindsight it is all too easy to criticise such inaction or ignorance, but at the time the causes of disease were by no means universally acknowledged. In the *Royal Cornwall Gazette* of May 24th the chairman of the Sanitary Committee of Cornwall Council, Silvanus Trevail (*the architect who designed the old school*) reported ten cases of Typhoid in Port Isaac and backs up the medical officer's reports of 'bad and defective drainage and contaminated water supply' from his own experience when he inspected the village in May.

taken from *THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC*

The gravestone of James William Leathlean



Charles
son of
James William and
Mary Leathlean
who died 13th May 1884
Aged 7 months

Also of
Jane Pridaux
their Daughter
who died
27th Aug 1891
Aged 8 months

James William
their son
who died
15th March 1894
Aged 9 years

Asleep in Jesus

The gravestone of Francis George Brewer

In Loving Memory of
NATHANIEL BREWER
(Master Mariner) of
Port Isaac in this
Parish
who died at sea June
24th 1884,
aged 39 Years
*In the midst of life we
are in death*
also
FRANCIS GEORGE
Youngest Son
of the above
Died February 21st
1894,
aged 14 Years

