

THE GREAT PLAGUE IN IPSWICH

1665 — 1666

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The Great Plague, according to Defoe, reached Holland in 1663 from the Mediterranean. Towards the end of November 1664 it was reported that a vessel from Rotterdam had brought the infection to Yarmouth, and there had been several deaths. When a further search was made it was said that only one person had died of it. This latter news proved to be false, for on 30 November the sickness was found to be spreading. At the end of November or the beginning of December there were two such deaths in London.¹

The infection was kept in check in most places by the arrival of a severe winter.² Early in February 1665 the weather became warmer, and plague returned to Yarmouth. In March there was a death in Cambridge. Two or three houses had been shut up in London, where there was great fear.³

There seem to have been no fears of plague—or at least no official fears—in Ipswich. The infection had not visited the town since 1647-8 when there had been but few deaths. Ipswich was occupied with other matters, the new charter, the visit of the Duke of York, volunteers for the navy, the sick and the wounded, the Dutch prisoners, and provisions for the fleet. On 6th May Robert Clarke, the Town Clerk of Ipswich, wrote to John Sicklemore (one of the Members for Ipswich) about Samuel Jacob 'who brought the book taken at Woodbridge from Holland'. He had come from the Netherlands five weeks earlier and had been sent to prison for saying that the Dutch had 170 well-manned ships, and so many volunteers that they could pick and choose. The Town Clerk asked the Earl of Suffolk, Lord Lieutenant for the county, and governor of Landguard Fort, whether he should be kept in prison or released on bail.⁴

¹ Defoe, Daniel, *History of the Plague in London*, 1721 (London, 1903 Edition), p. 1. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1664-5*, pp. 78, 84-5, 90, 92, 95. *Addenda 1660-85*, p. 107.

² The infection is spread mainly by the bacillus carried by the flea which is carried by the black rat. When the temperature falls below 50°F the flea dies before it can pass the bacillus to other animals and human beings. The best temperature for the propagation of the disease is 70°F.

³ Evelyn, John, *Diary*, 22.12.1664, 4.1.1665. Pepys, Samuel, *Diary*, 2.1.1665, 30.4.1665. *The Diary of the Rev. Ralph Josselin*, 1616-83 (Royal Historical Society, 1908), p. 146. *C.S.P.D., 1664-5*, pp. 196, 247.

⁴ *The Intelligencer*, 15.5.1665, 22.5.1665. *The Newes*, 22.5.1665, 1.6.1665 (in British Museum). *C.S.P.D., 1664-5*, pp. 353-4.

The plague must have been growing in Ipswich at this time, but it attracted little notice. By the early part of June it had become so bad in Yarmouth that the navy avoided using the town. Early in July a 'form of Common Prayer' was prescribed to be read on every Wednesday during the visitation, and a fast was ordered for the first Wednesday in every month. Pigs, dogs, cats and tame pigeons were not to be allowed to pass up and down the streets in infected places.⁵

The exact date of the arrival of the plague in Ipswich is not known. The first likely entry is in the register of the parish of St. Mary Key on 21 April—'a sick man died from Master Goodman's'. In the register of the parish of St. Nicholas⁶ deaths were growing more frequent, but there was no mention of infection. All that can safely be said is that in nine⁷ of the twelve parishes in the town burials rose from nine in February to twenty-three in May.

Nor is the source of the infection certain. It may have been brought by the Dutch privateers captured off the east coast. It may have come from London as there was a constant trade by sea in corn, butter and cheese between Ipswich and Bear Key; and Ipswich vessels were employed in the coal trade between Newcastle and London. It is more likely, however, to have been brought directly from Holland (despite the quarantine imposed upon people and goods by the Privy Council) as at that time—and long afterwards—there was a regular service of packets to Rotterdam. This view is strengthened by the fact that the epidemic first appeared in the parish of St. Mary Key where stood the Common Key and many private quays and warehouses.⁸

As the weather grew warmer the number of burials mounted. In the nine parishes deaths averaged five a week in May, seven a week in June and ten a week in July as compared with the normal two per week. The infection seems to have reached St. Clement's parish in May and St. Nicholas in June, though the word 'plague' did not appear in the register of the latter parish until the middle of September. In St. Mary Key parish a plague victim was buried on 1 June. On the 6th there was buried '— Fauset, a sick man from Tho. Fauset's' and there was another plague burial on 20 June.

⁵ *C.S.P.D.*, 1664-5, pp. 415, 466: 1665-6, p. xv.

⁶ The only parish in Ipswich to distinguish between 'plague' and 'clear' deaths. The classification was made by the searchers, whose ignorance was proverbial.

⁷ The parishes of St. Clement, St. Nicholas, St. Mary Tower, St. Mary Key, St. Mary Stoke, St. Margaret, St. Stephen, St. Mary Elm and St. Lawrence—the only registers to give dates against the burials.

⁸ Defoe, pp. 178-9. Public Record Office, Privy Council Registers, 1665-7, P.C. 2/57, ff. 127, 199. Port Books, E 190/607. *C.S.P.D.*, 1639-40, pp. 241-2.

The town authorities refused to recognize that plague had arrived. On 27 June an Ipswich correspondent of Roger L'Estrange's *Newes and Intelligencer* said, 'We are not only free from any dangerous Fever, but no man alive remembers this Town in a better disposition of Health than it is at present'. On 11 July it was said, 'This town (God be thanked) is in very good health, and there is great care and Industry used to keep it so, no Stranger being permitted to enter without due examination and good Certificates'.⁹ Their 'care and industry' lay in the orders made by the Assembly on 10 July that there should be watching and warding by two householders where the Bailiffs appointed, that persons from suspected places should be kept out until allowed in by a Bailiff or Headborough, and that the Headboroughs should take it in turns to supervise the warding. Headboroughs who were out of town were ordered to appoint a deputy or forfeit the sum of five shillings, and constables were likewise to be fined for not relieving the ward. Innkeepers and other inhabitants were not to take lodgers from suspected places without informing the Justices, the Bailiffs or the Town Clerk beforehand. Coaches, wagons and hoys were no longer allowed to travel to London and suspected places.¹⁰

On 15 July it was reported, 'This town (God be thanked) continues healthy and free from any infection insomuch as here was yesterday at our Quarter Sessions a greater appearance of Gentry and Persons of Quality upon the Bench than has been known for a long time upon such an occasion'. On the 20th John Knights, Serjeant Chirurgion to His Majesty, wrote from Ipswich to Henry Muddiman, 'There is yet, no appearance of pestilence'.¹¹ The explanation may perhaps lie in the rivalry between Ipswich and Harwich. The plague was not officially recorded in Harwich until the end of August or the beginning of September,¹² and while Harwich was free it was to the benefit of Ipswich to appear likewise free. However that may be, the Assembly on 31 July decided to enforce the orders. They ordered Mr. Sicklemore and Mr. Ridnell to go to Landguard Fort to arrange with Col. Farr for the stopping of ships that came from London. Mr. Gosnold, Mr. Ridnell, Mr. Griggs, Mr. Keene,¹³ Mr. Feast and Mr. Sawyer were asked to take charge of the watches and wards, and the

⁹ *Newes*, 8.6.1665, 15.6.1665, 29.6.1665, 11.7.1665.

¹⁰ Ipswich Corporation Archives, Assemblies Book, fo. 334.

¹¹ *Newes*, 20.7.1665. *C.S.P.D.*, 1664-5, p. 484.

¹² *C.S.P.D.*, 1664-5, p. 546.

¹³ John Sicklemore was one of the two Members for Ipswich. Francis Ridnell was a freeman of the town. Col. Henry Farr was governor of Landguard Fort. Mr. Keene was High Collector for the King for the Ipswich and Woodbridge divisions of Suffolk.

Serjeants were to present lists on the following afternoon of the persons who would do that work. Mr. Hunwick's charity¹⁴ was due for distribution in August; because of the spread of the infection the Assembly decided not to entertain the Colchester men at the Moot Hall, and a week later they told the Mayor of Colchester that the meeting would be dangerous. They did, however, agree to distribute the money among the infected poor.¹⁵

Burials in the nine parishes reached twenty in the week ending 5 August and then cooler weather held the plague in check for three weeks. The authorities, however, continued with their arrangements and solved two problems at once by appointing Samuel Jacob as Searcher for the Town at a salary of 40/- per week to find and assist infected persons. Maria Hawkins was made searcher at 12/- per week, and Abram Quintin, Thomas Gregorie, Thomas Robinson and (—) Graves, bearers and buriers of the dead, were to be given 5/- a week each with 4/- for every burial.

The Bailiffs¹⁶ were instructed to tell the Ministers of the churches in the town that the Corporation did not wish for public burials, and that the bells should toll for only a quarter of an hour before burials. Dogs and cats found wandering were to be killed by the Beadles. Hogs within the walls of the town were to be removed, and any found wandering were to be impounded and their owners to be punished. And finally the Assembly agreed to levy a rate for the relief of the infected poor.¹⁷

The Corporation was still complacent at the beginning of August. On the 3rd it was said, 'This Town, God be thanked, continues free from any sort of Infection . . .' 'There have been formerly several reports raised of this town being infected which quickly vanished though spitefully enough promoted . . .' On the 7th a correspondent in Ipswich wrote, 'Upon the first apprehension of this place being visited our Magistrates were very careful for the shutting up of suspected houses; but God be thanked here has not any person died or fallen sick of any infectious distemper for these fourteen days and fewer have died this week of other diseases than have many weeks before'.¹⁸

¹⁴ John Hunwick of Colchester died in 1593. He left £300 for the poor, lame and impotent persons of Colchester and a smaller sum for the poor of Ipswich. The Bailiffs and Commonalty of Colchester were bound to give an account every fifth year to the Bailiffs and Portmen of Ipswich and were due to present their accounts on 20 August.

¹⁵ Assemblies Book, ff. 335-6, 338, 340.

¹⁶ Sir Manuel Sorrell and Gilbert Lindfield.

¹⁷ Assemblies Book, f. 337.

¹⁸ *Newes*, 3.8.1665, 10.8.1665, 21.8.1665.

John Knights wrote to Joseph Williamson on the same day of the terrible alarm in Ipswich over a report of the plague. Colonel John Legge's and Captain Darell's foot companies of the Admiral's regiment were quartered in the town. One of the soldiers died and another in the same room was sick. William Huggard, surgeon and comptroller of customs, 'positively and peremptorily (wthout acquainting the magistrates w^h it) declared both to be the plague'. Knights was asked by the Bailiffs to see if it was true. He sent 'two antient surgeons of great experience' to examine the men. One was well acquainted with plague as he had had it himself. They declared there was not 'a least colour in the world to credit the story'. 'The party died of the fever w^h is in all these ports epidemically having those spots ordinarily accompanying it . . . as for the sick companion he had ended a swelling in the groine but none other than a venereall bubo . . .' He put this report down to the jealousy of Huggard who had 'one of the most extravagant & exorbitant passion against this Corporation . . .'.¹⁹

At the end of August the weather grew warmer and the weekly plague deaths in the nine parishes rose from 17 to 53 in a fortnight. The weather then cooled a little and the sickness spread less rapidly. In the second, third and fourth weeks of September there were 62, 67 and 68 burials. The Corporation could no longer deny the existence of the disease in Ipswich, and on 8 September the General Court ordered that the fair due to be held on the 14th should be cancelled. In the middle of October the Commissioners of the Sick and Wounded stated that the town could not be used because of plague. After a respite given by cooler and windy weather the plague grew again. Burials numbered 83 in the week ending 7 October. At this time the infection was worst in St. Margaret's parish and was bad in St. Clement's. But the temperature was now falling. The Rev. Ralph Josselin of Earls Colne, twenty-five miles away, wrote in his diary on 22 October, 'A wond^rful sweet season, dry cold and frosts; God gave a great abatem^t to the plague . . .'.²⁰

A General Court on 30 October ordered that the Lecture by the ministers of the churches of St. Mary Tower, St. Nicholas and St. Lawrence should be given on Wednesdays only and not on Fridays.²⁰

The few facts that we have enable us to present a picture of life in Ipswich at this time. 'It is scarce possible for People that

¹⁹ Public Record Office, State Papers 29/128/50. *Newes*, 10.8.1665.

²⁰ Ipswich Reference Library, Extracts from Corporation Records, V. B. Redstone, (E.C.R.), Vol. xx, fo. m, 35. *C.S.P.D.*, 1665-6, pp. 546, 10. Josselin, p. 149.

live in a time of Health and Security, to apprehend the dreadfulness of that Pestilence: How fearful People were, thirty or forty, if not an hundred Miles from London, of anything that they bought from any Mercer's, or Draper's Shop; or of any Goods that were brought to them; or of any Person that came to their Houses. How they would shut their Doors against their Friends; and if a Man passed over the Fields, how one would avoid another, as we did in the time of Wars; and how every Man was a Terror to another'.²¹ The number of marriages and baptisms suggests that almost a third of the inhabitants left the town. The small number of burials in the parish of St. Lawrence makes it plain that many of the richer citizens had left. Against many names in the Chamberlains' Accounts were the words, 'Out of town'. There was some difficulty in carrying on the government of Ipswich. In May 1663 the Great Court was attended by 67 men; in October 1665 there were only the two Bailiffs and 39 others.

Some indication of the state of trade may be obtained from the number of deeds enrolled with the Corporation; they fell from 23 in 1664 to 11 in 1665 and 7 in 1666. The Port Books show no outward shipments for the first half of 1666 and only a few shipments in the second half of the year. (The Port Books for 1665 are missing). Those for 1666-7 show ships coming in at regular intervals, but in smaller numbers. The regular trade with Rotterdam was reduced in 1666 to the monthly visit of the 'Frigate that came from the coast of Holland, Xpher Skidmore ind.' The regular trade in corn, cheese and butter to London was continued.²² The Meters' Accounts show that their receipts (which depended very largely on the amount of coal arriving in the port) fell from £14. 15. 8½ in 1663-4 (Michaelmas to Michaelmas) to £11. 14. 0 in 1664-5 and £4. 18. 7½ in 1665-6. This trade did not return to its normal level until the end of the decade. In short, activity ceased in all trades except those which provided the bare necessities.

Many of the poor could not find employment; the town was obliged to borrow £300 for a year from Robert Sparrowe, John Wright, John Gosnold and Robert Clarke, for their support.²³ giving the Handford Hall lands as security. The county justices were asked to assess the inhabitants within five miles of the town for a rate. Payments for carriage made by the Treasurer show that the gentry in the country sent help in kind. Corn was sent by Sir Henry Felton of Playford, Sir Samuel Barnardiston of Brightwell, Sir Nicholas Bacon of Brook Hall, Sir Philip Parker and

²¹ Silvester, Matthew, *Relequiae Baxterianae* (London 1696), Part III, p. 2.

²² E 190/607, ff. 2, 7. Defoe, p. 178.

²³ Further information about the persons who remained in Ipswich during the plague is to be found in the *East Anglian Miscellany*, 1954.

Mr. Horth of Claydon. The Treasurer's Accounts show a payment of £10. 6. 7 to Mr. Burrough (minister of St. Mary Tower) and Mr. Goly, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Keene and Henry Gosnold, the Treasurer, to visit the Bishop of Norwich asking for help. The latter could give no direct assistance because of the severity of the infection at Norwich and because he had already been ordered by the King to do his utmost to relieve the poor of Yarmouth, and to promote collections for the sick on fast days.²⁴ All he could do was to grant the deaneries of Bosmere and Claydon. It seems that contributions were received from Woodbridge, Stowmarket, Bury St. Edmunds and Coddendam.

At the end of October and the beginning of November there was a slight increase in the number of burials, but from the middle of November there was a steady decline because the weather had become frosty and windy again. On 14 November Mary Knight, in the absence of her husband, sent a list of burials to Joseph Williamson for the week 6-13 November, the only example of a bill of mortality for Ipswich:

	<i>Burials</i>	<i>Plague</i>
St. Clement	13	08
St. Margaret	16	07
St. Helen	03	02
St. Lawrence	01	00
St. Mary Tower	04	02
St. Mary Elms	02	01
St. Matthew	02	02
St. Peter	08	06
St. Nicholas	04	01
St. Stephen	00	00
St. Mary Key	05	03
St. Mary Stoak	00	00
Pest House	02	02
	—	—
	60	34

She reported a decrease of 15 in all burials and of 6 in plague deaths.²⁵

The last plague burial for the year on the registers of St. Nicholas' parish was recorded on 11 November. On 4 December the decrease of these deaths was again noted. Eight days later after a few days of open and warm weather there was an increase in deaths, but

²⁴ *C.S.P.D.*, 1664-5, p. 527.

²⁵ Josselin, p. 150. State Papers, 29/136/139.

'we have hopes of a very favourable accompt by the next'. The frosty weather began again on 14 December and continued until the end of the month. By the last week of the year there were only eleven burials in the nine parishes. The weather in the New Year was encouraging. At the end of January, and the end of February and March, Josselin recorded cold dry weather. 'But', wrote Boghurst, 'the Plague hath a long Taile, but yet it will be going backwards and forwards in little increases and decreases till it be quite gone'. When the town could have expected a respite the infection continued. The first plague burial in 1666 in the parish of St. Nicholas was on 7 January. In the middle of February, eleven of the sixteen burials were due to the plague and at the beginning of March it accounted for seven of the sixteen deaths.²⁶

The work of the authorities is now made clearer by the preservation of the Pest Accounts of Robert Copping the Accountant from 23 April to 5 August. Between May and August the twelve parishes of Ipswich, and Ufford and Brooks Hamlets contributed £233 . 11 . 1, evidently the proceeds of a special rate. He also received £10 . 13 . 11½ from fast day collections. The parish officers paid him various small sums for his help to those who were infected. The Town Clerk paid him £138 . 6 . 0. The same accounts also record his disbursements in detail. Samuel Jacob as master of the Pest House was paid 30/- per week. Two or three nurses were paid 3/- or 5/- a week each. There were many payments for 'carrying up' the victims to the Pest House, for taking them home and burying the dead.

The town had long kept a lazar house at St. Leonard's Hospital and it was still in existence in 1662. Its dead seem to have been buried on St. Austin's Green. In times of sickness the town had made use of temporary buildings but in 1664 the boarded house was sold. At the time of the Great Plague the pest house was at Maidens Grove or Maidens Grave,²⁷ land which the Corporation had bought for £50 in 1657. It had ample space for a burial pit which in the end received at least a hundred dead.²⁸ The house was probably a timber and thatch building with a few

²⁶ Josselin, pp. 150-2. *Newes*, 23.11.1665, 7.12.1665. *Intelligencer*, 18.12.1665. Boghurst, William, *Loimographia* (London, 1666) (1894 Edition), p. 94. *C.S.P.D.*, 1665-6, p. 252. State Papers, 29/150/4 and 29/151/23.

²⁷ The Pest House evidently stood where the Felixstowe railway runs behind Ascot Drive.

²⁸ Each parish buried its own plague victims. Mr. G. Maynard tells me that many years ago a pit filled with several layers of skeletons was found on the north side of the churchyard of St. Lawrence. Apparently, as the plague grew, it was dug in land that had been part of the old vicarage or church house. The worst afflicted parishes were St. Margaret's and St. Clement's, both churches had enough land to bury all their plague victims.

courses of brick as a foundation. The number of persons in the pest house is not clear; the quantity of bread bought between April and November 1666 and the number of pans, dishes and trenchers suggests an average of twenty-five. During these months seventy-five persons were carried up to the pest house (probably in tumbrils) and fifty-two walked up. Of these, sixty-three were buried and thirty-five were taken home.²⁹

Though medical opinion was divided on the value of meat for those with plague, a wide variety was bought for the sick, a hind quarter of mutton, a rask of mutton, veal, 'beef and small meat for Thursday & Saturday',³⁰ neats' cheek, lamb, pork and chickens. There were many payments like dozens of bread (mainly from Goodman Michael Farrington), malt, oatmeal, and salt, wheat (which was cheaper in 1666 than in the previous year when a fear of scarcity had raised prices), and wheat meal. There were purchases of fish, mackerel, scale fish and plaice, fresh fish, salt fish and herrings, although some doctors believed that the sick should 'Abstain from all moist victuals such as fish and moist fruits'. The foods bought locally included cheese, butter, milk, eggs, bacon, apples, 'green pease', beans, roots, sugar, salt and 'white wyne'.³¹ The payment of 4/6 for 'claye to mend the brew house' and the purchase of hops, a 'fatt' and the 'cooping of tubbs' shows that the pest house brewed its own beer. 'Drink a draught of rum or eight shillings Beer, hot as Broth, and if you please, a piece of loaf sugar in it', said Humphrey Brooke, 'and keeping warm you need not fear'.³²

The household purchases included soap, vinegar (which may have been used as a disinfectant), starch, several loads of broom,³³ candles, and 'bluin' (believed to be a balsam) at 4/- an ounce. There were mops and brooms, 12 pans and dishes, platters, two dozen trenchers, and baskets. Robert Copping also bought ink and paper and two 'wrighting books'. Mr. Reeve was paid 1/6 for a bell and 2d. for fitting it. Four shillings was paid for 'carrying

²⁹ Bacon, Nathaniel, *Annals of Ipswich, 1654*, (Ipswich 1884), pp. 334, 429-30. Clarke, G. R., *History of Ipswich* (Ipswich, 1830), p. 261. E.C.R. xx. xi. 3., xx. iii. 15-17, xx. xi. 5., xxi. xii. 7.

³⁰ In this particular week Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays were Rogation Days, and Friday was the usual fast day.

³¹ In 1666 most fruits, especially cherries and grapes, were so plentiful and cheap that the common people were surfeited with them. Hodges, Nathaniel, *Loimologia*, p. 20.

³² Boghurst, p. 75. Harvey, Gideon, *A discourse of the Plague* (London, 1665), pp. 7. 12. Rogers, J. E. Thorold, *A History of Agriculture and Prices in England*, (Oxford, 1887), Vol. v, pp. 216-7. Brooke, Humphrey, *Cautionary Rules for Preventing the Sickness* (London, 1665), p. 5.

³³ The young buds of broom were sometimes pickled. Broom was also made into a beer to promote sweating.

up the town beds from foundation'.³⁴ And there was a strange payment of £10. 14. 8 to 'Goodman Blayne for fitting up my house to converse with Mr. Jacob'. There were a number of payments for coal and cartage, but the total quantity was not great bearing in mind that medical opinion was in favour of coal fires and hot rooms for plague victims. The Treasurer's accounts for 1664-6 contain two entries:—

'To Christ. Skidmore ³⁵ for 6 Chaldron of Coale for the pore in the Lady Lane	6 15 0	
to carters and porters	11 0	
	—————	7 6 0
'To Skidmore for 6 chaldron of coals for the poor in Lady Lane.		
(No person in it being all dead of the Plague.		0 0 0'

These unfortunate people were the poor of St. Matthew's parish in Edmund Daundy's Almshouses; the coal was presumably to supplement the 'One Hundred of Wood against Winter' to which they were entitled.³⁶

The medicines were a strange choice. There were 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ pints of Angelica water for 3/11. When mixed with Extract Pilarum Ruffi in Marigold it was considered to be a valuable purgative. There were 31 pints of distilled water. There was 'Sirrop of dragon' to raise a 'breathing Sweat'. The Accountant paid for two ounces of Dyalthea or Pulvis Dialthaea. Gum tragacanth may have been dissolved in rose water to make a pomander with spirit of roses, to be worn round the neck in an ivory box. There was an electuary (a paste made with honey, preserves or treacle and other ingredients) believed to be effective against both plague and scurvy. A pint of treacle water was bought for a shilling; this was Venice treacle (the turpentine of the stone pine of Italy), 'the only antidote against all Plagues' according to Garancières. When mixed with rose water it made 'Our Cordial and miraculous water'. Lemons were included in a payment of 3/- for mops and brooms in August. Harvey considered oranges and lemons very good against infection. And lastly there was 'June 25. Paid Mr. Jacob for linen and plaisters' or 'blister-plaisters' as Dr.

³⁴ Henry Tooley's Foundation at Christ's Hospital.

³⁵ Christopher Skidmore, fl. 1638-73, was one of the few merchants to remain in the town.

³⁶ *Gifts and Legacies*, (Ipswich, 1819), pp. 121, 169.

Hodges called them.³⁷ Besides these purchase Goodman Stebbing was paid £44 . 6 . 0 for physic and there was a payment of £1 . 10 . 5 'pd. Mr. Cooke Apothecary for Physic as p. Bill'.

A rise in plague burials could have been expected at the end of April 1666 because of the hot weather, but the infection had exhausted itself. The parish of St. Clement had 13 deaths in the month and St. Margarets' parish had ten. No other parish had any appreciable number. In the nine parishes there were only 31 burials. In May there were no more than 33 burials and in June there were but eighteen. The parishes of St. Clement and St. Margaret were still the chief sufferers.

The King issued his orders from Oxford on 11 May to prevent the spreading of the plague. They dealt with strangers' certificates of health, public fires to cleanse the air, pest houses and searchers and the prohibition of public meetings. The Corporation of Ipswich was already carrying out these measures. Its only step was to propose that until the end of the plague the Lecture should be given once a week only. On 12 June Sir William Batten wrote to the Navy Commissioners from Harwich that 'it spreads much in Woodbridge and Ipswich'. In fact there was only one burial in the nine parishes in that week, a state of affairs that had not been known for over a year. Perhaps trade rivalry lay behind Batten's statement. In the week ending 21 July, thirteen of the eighteen deaths were due to plague, and George Gosnell wrote on the same day that there had been 16 plague deaths, two of which had occurred at the pest house.³⁸

Ipswich was feeling the effects of the previous year's visitation. The Accountants asked to be discharged of Headboroughs' Estreats which they could not collect. For this year 1665-6, the arrears were £5 . 8 . 0 compared with 18/3 in the previous year. Against many names were the words 'empty' 'out of towne', 'removed', 'dead', 'shut up', and 'poor'. In 1664-5 the Chamberlains' Accounts had shown a surplus of £47 . 1 . 4. This year there was a deficit of £33 . 15 . 1½. The Assembly therefore on 15 August instructed John Burrough and the Town Clerk to ride to the Bishop of Norwich and ask him what Deaneries there would be for the relief of the town. His answer is not recorded but the Assembly met again on 30 August to give instructions for a reply to the Bishop.³⁹

³⁷ *A Collection of Very Valuable and Scarce Pieces relating to the Last Plague in the Year 1665 . . .* (London, 1721), p. 42. Hodges, Nathaniel, *Loimologia or an Historical Account of the Plague in London*, (London, 1720), pp. 108, 167, 188. Harvey, p. 7. Garancières, Theophilus, *A Mite cast into the Treasury of the Famous City of London*, (London, 1665), p. 8.

³⁸ *C.S.P.D.*, 1665-6, pp. xiv, 391, 437. Assemblies Book, f. 346. State Papers, 29/164/5-6.

³⁹ *E.C.R.*, xx. vi. 24. Assemblies Book, f. 348.

Despite a 'very hot season' in the middle of July the disease was not severe. In the month there were only 29 burials from all causes in the nine parishes, and St. Clement's parish alone had an appreciable number of deaths. On 27 July a news letter from Whitehall said that in the week 19 had died in Ipswich, 15 of them from plague. But all sources agreed that the disease was not bad. And so it continued through August with the number of burials falling. At the end of August, Muddiman said that in the previous week only eight had died in Ipswich of plague, and three of other diseases. September passed without any happening of note; the registers showed no more than 24 burials in the month. The authorities had not lost their fear and decided that the Lecture sermons should still be given but once a week. The town despite its misfortunes made a house to house collection at the end of September for 'the reliefe of the poore of the Cittie of London' after the fire. And some time during 1666 the Town Clerk gave £5 to Colchester where plague was severe.⁴⁰

Towards the end of October Muddiman reported one or two plague deaths in the week; the parish registers showed fifteen burials for the month. On 1 November Muddiman said that Ipswich was free from plague. The Corporation thought it safe to dispose of the pest house, and the General Court leased Maiden Grove Farm to Samuel Jacob for seven years at £12 per annum, the first year to be given to him for his services; the Corporation reserved the right to use the houses in case of infection. In January 1667-8 the Assembly ordered the burial place at Maiden's Grove to be fenced in at the cost of the town. Jacob did not settle for long, for in 1669 Maiden's Grove was sold.⁴¹ The winter of 1666-7 was hard, as Samuel Pepys noted; the cold weather brought the plague to an end in Ipswich.⁴²

The town was still left with its financial troubles. The Chamberlains' accounts for 1666-7 showed an even higher deficit of £42.15.1. At the end of the decade the surplus of receipts over payments was still small. The Headboroughs' Estreats which could not be collected rose to £5.7.2 in 1666-7 and £6.13.11 in 1667-8. Trade by sea improved slightly in 1666-7, but it was not until 1669-70 that it regained its old importance.

⁴⁰ Josselin, p. 154. *C.S.P.D.*, 1665-6, p. 581. *C.S.P.D.*, 1666-7, p. 79. Ipswich Corporation Archives, Great Court Book, f. 177. Assemblies Book, f. 351. Morant, Philip, *The History and Antiquities of Colchester* (London, 1748), p. 70n.

⁴¹ The Accountant was promised a gratuity by the Assembly for his 'trouble, pains, and hazard of his life in the Pest Time.' There is no record of a payment to him.

⁴² *C.S.P.D.*, 1666-7, pp. 222, 232. Great Court Book, f. 184. E.C.R., xx. vi. 24, xx. x. 13.8. Ipswich Corporation Archives, Box 'Miscellaneous'. Pepys, 2.1.1667, 9.1.1667.

Before the plague the price of coal had been 18/- a chaldron. In 1666-7 it rose to 28/- and was still as high as 24/- in 1667-8. The number of deeds enrolled did not return to its former level for many years.⁴³

In ordinary times the relief of the poor was the responsibility of the parish officers, but in extraordinary times the town came to the help of the parishes. The pest accounts of four parishes have survived. The spring quarter of 1666 in the parish of St. Matthew showed a deficit of £1. 18. 0: the summer quarter showed a deficit of £12. 3. 9. In the first quarter of 1666 a specially levied rate produced £29. 8. 4 and £23. 10. 0 was spent by the church-wardens and the overseer on watching, coffins and burials. In the parish of St. Mary Key the poor rate for the 14 weeks up to 30 September 1665 produced £19. 12. 3. Because of the distress in the parish the rate for the ten weeks ending 24 June 1666 was £32. 0. 5. In the parish of St. Stephen there was a six-fold rate in the spring of 1666, but in the summer quarter the disappearance of the plague allowed it to be reduced to a five-fold rate. From the money received from the Town Clerk and partly from his own funds the Accountant made frequent payments to the officers of the different parishes for the relief and nursing of the sick families. He also paid Samuel Jacob, the nurses, bearers, wardsmen and buriers, and paid for supplies, necessaries and medicines. Between July 1666 and August 1667 he received £138. 5. 7½ in eleven payments. To this total were added the collections (less abatements) made by the parishes in accordance with the King's proclamation of 6 July 1665,⁴⁴ several small amounts received from the parish officers for help given to parishioners, and two amounts collected on fast days at St. Mary Tower. In all, the Accountant received £401. 18. 4¾ on his Pest Account. Payments and abatements amounted to £432. 3. 5⁴⁵ and £29. 17. 1 respectively, leaving 'Rest due to the Accountant 60. 2. 1¼'. Henry Gosnold, the Treasurer for 1666-7, also made payments of £178. 15. 1½, sometimes through the Town Clerk and in some cases direct.

Help to the sick was also given by the two almshouses in the town. The increased expenditure by William Smarts' Foundation in 1666-7 led to a deficit. The income of Henry Tooley's Foundation fell during the plague years and for a couple of years afterwards. But expenditure fell considerably because deaths reduced the number of weekly payments.

⁴³ Ipswich Corporation Archives, Chamberlains' Accounts, 1660-70. Meters' Accounts, 1660-70. Accounts of Smart's Foundation, 1661-8. E.C.R., Vol. XXI *passim*.

⁴⁴ C.S.P.D., 1664-5, p. 466.

⁴⁵ The total at the foot of the pages was only £353. 1. 5.

The total number of plague deaths cannot be given with any certainty, because there are deficiencies in the parish records. There is no register of burials for St. Helen's parish for the plague years; the registers of St. Mary Stoke and St. Peter appear to be incomplete. The some cases the entries are confused and unsatisfactory; the register of St. Nicholas alone distinguished plague burials; and there are no records for the Quakers and Nonconformists. The reports of the town authorities may have minimized the plague deaths; the classification of deaths into 'plague' and 'clear' lay with the searchers, the poorest of people who took on the task merely because of necessity and who were famed for their ignorance. 'The bleare-eyed Searchers' as L'Estrange called them, were also open to bribery. Furthermore in some cases death occurred before the 'tokens' appeared, and in others it was difficult to distinguish between plague, venereal diseases and some fevers.⁴⁶

However, an approximation can be made by comparison with earlier and later years, and by using the Hearth Tax returns and the old maps of Ipswich. The number of plague deaths seems to have been as follows:—

St. Clement	250
St. Helen	20
St. Lawrence	13
St. Margaret	440
St. Mary Elms	11
St. Mary Key	47
St. Mary Stoke	25
St. Mary Tower	49
St. Matthew	24
St. Nicholas	62
St. Peter	50
St. Stephen	10
Pest House	70
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The population of Ipswich was about 8,000 at that time. It is evident therefore that Ipswich suffered less severely than London, Woodbridge and Norwich.

⁴⁶ Defoe, p. 75. Graunt, John, *Natural and Political Observations* (London, 1676), pp. 1, 46. Brett-James, B. G., *The Growth of Stuart London* (London, 1935), p. 147. *C.S.P.D.*, 1664-5, p. 95.

As in London, the lowest death rates were in the more prosperous and less densely populated parishes in the heart of the town—St. Stephen, St. Lawrence, St. Mary Elms, St. Nicholas and St. Mary Key. The parish of St. Helen had about the same death rate as the closely built parish of St. Mary le Tower. The parishes of St. Mary Stoke, St. Peter and St. Clement, all connected with the sea, had rather higher death rates. The highest death rate was in the parish of St. Margaret, the most densely populated of all twelve parishes. In the first fortnight in September 1665 there was not a day without burials. When the plague was at its height, in two days, on 30 September and 1 October there were thirty burials.

One feature of the epidemic is the way in which whole families were stricken because of the practice of shutting up of houses where the disease appeared instead of isolating the sick. The records of Smart's and Tooley's Foundations suggest that the death rate there was higher than in any other parish except St. Margaret's. 'It became by some to be known as the Poor's Plague' wrote Dr. Hodges.⁴⁷ In May 1665 'John Vincent Clarke minister of ye⁴⁸ late of Christ Church in Oxford' died in St. Clement's parish. All nine ministers who can be identified (and who presumably stayed in the town) survived the plague. Very few of the opulent citizens were among the plague victims. Those who cared for the sick were in greater danger, but few died. Edward Brame, the sexton of St. Clement's, with two of his men and a nurse, was buried in October 1665, a month after his son and daughter. In April 1666 the clerk and sexton of the parish of St. Lawrence died. Will Tomson, chirurgion, was buried in St. Mary le Tower in June 1665. Nathaniel Pickis, a master mariner trading from the port, died in St. Clement's parish in May 1665. But Goodman Michael Farrington who provided the bread for the pest house survived the plague and died in 1671 or 1672.

⁴⁷ Hodges, p. 15.

⁴⁸ Blank in original.