London's last great plague

[Wellcome Library, London]

Vanessa Harding, Birkbeck
Deaths by parish, grouped into:

‘the 97 parishes within the walls’

‘the 16 parishes without the walls, and the pesthouse’

‘the 12 out parishes in Middlesex and Surry’

‘the 5 parishes in the city and liberties of Westminster’
London and the Bills of Mortality

- A: the 97 parishes within the walls
- B: the 16 parishes outside the walls but partly or wholly within the City's jurisdiction
- C: the 10 (later 12) outparishes in Middlesex and Surrey
- D: the Westminster parishes
‘The Diseases and Casualties this Week’,

Together with the total Christenings and Burials by gender, the decrease in burials over the preceding week, the number of parishes infected with or clear of the plague, and the statutory weight of a penny and halfpenny loaf of bread.
[I] observed that most of them who constantly took in the weekly Bills of Mortality, made little other use of them, then to look at the foot, how the Burials increase, or decrease; And, among the Casualties, what had happened rare, and extraordinary in the week currant; so as they might take the same as a text to talk upon, in the next Company; and with all, in the Plague-time, how the Sickness increased, or decreased, that so the Rich might judge of the necessity of their removall, and Trades-men might conjecture what doings they were like to have in their respective dealings:

John Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations on the Bills of Mortality* (1662)
27 July. At home met the weekly Bill, where above 1000 increased in the Bill; and of them, in all, about 700 of the plague.

10 August. ... to the office, where we sat all the morning, in great trouble to see the Bill this week rise so high, to above 4000 in all, and of them, about 3000 of the plague.

14 August. Great fears we have that the plague will be a great Bill this week.

7 September. ... to the Tower; and there sent for the Weekly Bill and find 8252 dead in all, and of them, 6978 of the plague – which is a most dreadfull Number – and shows reason to fear the plague hath got that hold that it will yet continue among us.  

Samuel Pepys, Diary 1665
20 September.  ... the Duke [of Albemarle] showed us the number of the plague this week, brought in the last night from the Lord Mayor – that it is encreased about 600 more then the last, which is quite contrary to all or hopes and expectations from the coldenss of the late season; for the whole general number is 8297; and of them, the plague 7165 – which is more in the whole, by above 50, then the biggest Bill yet – which is very grievous to us all.

27 September.  Here I saw this week’s Bill of Mortality, wherein, blessed be God, there is above 1800 decrease, this being the frst considerable decrease we have had.

30 November.  Great joy we have in the weekly Bill, it being come to 544 in all, and but 333 of the plague so that we are encouraged to get to London as soon as we can.

Samuel Pepys, Diary 1665
The mourning-cross: or, England's Lord have mercy upon us

Containing the certain causes of pestilential diseases; with an accompt of several modern plagues or visitation in times past, as well in other countries as in the city of London; as also, the number of those that then died, not onely of the plague, but of all diseases, Continued down to this present day, August 29. 1665. To which is likewise added, a necessary prayer for this present time.

Yearly Bill for 1665

[Wellcome Library, London]
Natural and Political
OBservations
mentioned in a following Index,
and made upon the
Bills of Mortality.

By John Graunt,
Citizen of
London.

With reference to the Government, Religion, Trade,
Growth, Aye, Disease, and the several Changes of the
said City.

Non, me su miretur Turba, laboro,
Contentus paucis Letoribus —

London,
Printed by Tho. Roycroft, for John Martin, James Allestry,
and Tho. Docas, at the Sign of the Bell, in St. Paul's
Church-yard, MDCXII.

London's Dreadful Visitation: Or, a Collection of All the
Bills of Mortality
For this Present Year:
Beginning the 27th of December 1664, and
ending the 19th, of December following:
As also, The General or whole years BILL:
According to the Report made to the
King's Most Excellent Majesty,
by the Company of Parish-Clerks of London, etc.

London:
Printed and are to be sold by S. Coates living in Aldersgate-street.
Printer to the said Company 1665.
Burials and plague burials, 1603-70
Source: data from Graunt's Natural and Political Observations (1676)
Plague orders, 1665
[Wellcome Library, London]
3 September. Lord, to consider the madness of people of the town, who will (because they are forbid) come in Crowds along with the dead Corps to see them buried.

14 September ... there being now no observation of shutting up of houses infected, that to be sure we do converse and meet with people that have the plague upon them.

Samuel Pepys, Diary 1665
Orders concerning infected Houses, and Persons sick of the Plague.

- Notice to be given of the Sickness.
- Sequestration of the Sick.
- Airing the Stuff.
- Shutting up of the House.
- None to be removed out of Infected Houses, but, &c.
- Burial of the dead.
- No infected Stuff to be uttered.
- No person to be conveyed out of any infected House.
- Every visited house to be marked.
- Every visited House to be watched.

Plague Orders, 1665
Take Conserve of Wood-sorrel 2 ounces, of flower of Brimstone finely powdered 2 drams, Diascordium half an ounce, of the temperate cordial Species 4 scruples, of syrup of Wood-sorrel as much as will make it up into a moist Electuary.
The Plague is a most Malignant and Contagious Feaver, caused through Pestilential Miasms, insinuating into the humoral and consistent parts of the Body; first speedily putrefying, then corrupting the fluors, afterwards the solid parts ...

The said flaming Arsenical corpuscles floating in the air are attracted into the Body by inspiration through the Lungs and Nostrils; or otherwise they pierce through ones clothes, and so penetrate into the pores of the entire Body ...
George Thomson, *Loimologia* (1665)

... this present Pest hath principally derived its being from this Scorbutical Disease with whose nature it much symbolizes .... It is undoubted that they are both Malignant, Poisonous, and Contagious.

To conclude, my advice is, that those who desire to preserve themselves from this present Pest, do drinke every morning either Sulphurated Wine, Strong Beer, or what Liquor they please, wherein hath been steeped a large quantity of Horse-Radish-root, with five, six, seven, eight, nine or ten drops of good Spirit of Salt; and no doubt they will find a far better effect, then from a Galenical Electuary of London-Treacle and Wood-Sorrel
George Thomson, *AOOMOTOMIA, or the PEST Anatomized* (1666)
[Wellcome Library, London]
Plague sermon, 1665

The preachers precept of consideration, or, Englands chief lesson and duty in this sad time of visitation wherein is contained, 1. A catalogue and collection of all the particular capital sins mentioned in Scriptures ... 2. The author's opinion and judgment, for which and why it is, that this unparallel'd visitation is now laid upon us / delivered in the parish church of St. Katherine Coleman, London, upon the monthly fast-days set apart for humiliation, by His Majesties special command.

London : Printed by E. Cotes for the author, MDCLXV
...in all humility beseeching the Omnipotent, to conferr upon us, such an uniforme and cordial Repentance, that every one of us may search out the Plague of his own Heart and Brain, and Purge our selves, by His gratious assistance, from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit; that so he may in the riches of His tender Compassion, return in favour to this sinful City, and restore health to our Habitations.

Cotes, London’s Dreadfull Visitation (1665)
Plague bacilli; Inoculating against plague, Mandalay, 1906
[Wellcome Library, London]
Plague in old London
(R. Tennant Cooper, c. 1912)
[Wellcome Library, London]
The parishes of St Botolph Aldersgate and St Giles Cripplegate, London
St Giles Cripplegate, 18th century
Parish register, St Giles Cripplegate, 13 August 1665
[Wellcome Library, London]
16 Jan 1665/6: Whereas in this late visitation of the plague wherewith for the sins of this kingdom Almighty God hath been pleased to visit this City of London with the parishes adjacent [and other parts of this realme interlined] and in an especiall manner this our parish of St Giles Without Cripplegate, whereby such multitudes have dyed that our Churchyards and burying places are now almost so filled with dead corpses that not any more can scarcely be buried there, To thenent therefore that we may have more ground to add to our churchyard that is next the church ....
Orders for cleansing and keeping of the Streets sweet.

- The Streets to be kept clean.

- That Rakers take it from out the Houses.

- Laystalls to be made farre off from the City.

- Care to be had of unwholesome Fish or Flesh, and of musty Corn.

Orders concerning loose Persons and idle Assemblies.

- Beggers.

- Playes.

- Feasting Prohibited.

- Tipling-houses.

Plague Orders, 1665
Deaths per acre by parish in 1665
(Champion, London's Dreaded Visitation, 1995)
Deaths per household by parish in 1665
(Champion, London's Dreaded Visitation, 1995)