

The burial registers of the Lyncombe & Widcombe and St James Cemetery have many abodes of people who had lived in the Dolemeads. The addresses are sometimes given explicitly as being in the Dolemeads but not always so. There are mentions of some obscure addresses such as 'Plato's Buildings' which, it transpires, was a small group of buildings.



Part of the Thomas Thorpe map of 1742



Detail of the Barrett map of 1818



Detail of map of 1825

The area south of the river was outside the limits of the city and, as a consequence, Lyncombe & Widcombe, including Dolemeads, tends not to feature on maps and in directories until the end of the

19th century. Nonetheless there are some maps in the 18th and 19th centuries which show the outline of Dolemeads.

In 1731 Ralph Allen built a tramway from his quarries on Combe Down to the Avon at Dolemeads where the stones could be loaded onto carts and barges. In John Wood's *A Description of Bath* (1765) p433 he refers to "The Beach, or Claverton Street, is now the Hyde Park Corner of Bath for small Ornaments in Free Stone". The Thomas Thorpe map of 1742 shows 'Dowl Mead' without buildings and just a single road from Widcombe to Bathwick. The Charlton map of 1799 shows the 'Dole Mead Gardens' as a single block of 18 acres (7.2 ha) without buildings. The Kennet & Avon canal reached Bathwick from the north in 1805 finally joining the river Avon in 1810 with three locks at the southern end of Dolemeads. Still in 1818 there were no buildings at Dolemeads other the Caroline Buildings built circa 1799 on the eastern side. Around 1820 building started at Dolemeads. This was not to universal acclaim.

Captain Rowland Mainwaring in his *Annals of Bath, from the year 1800 to the passing of the New Municipal Act* has for the year 1821 (page 222): "At the termination of the year, public attention was particularly called to the unfortunate inhabitants of those miserable abodes recently built on that low, swampy spot of ground, called the Dolemeads, and its immediate vicinity. The erection of those cottages, continuing from year to year, became a nuisance to the neighbourhood; and, at length, a perfect colony of vice and dissipation. To thread the mazes of those wretched dwelling places, became really a work of danger, whether from the the difficulty of approach, or the doubtful characters that inhabited them. . . . The torrents of rain that had fallen for the last two weeks in December, had caused the river to overflow its banks full twelve feet above the customary level; and the Dolemeads presented one immense sheet of water. It was of that sudden nature, that the inhabitants were without much previous warning, driven to their upper apartments, and even to the house-tops, from whence they were rescued by boats." William Tyte in his *History of Lyncombe & Widcombe with personal recollections of the Parish in the Thirties*. (1898) says: "The Dolemeads were known as 'Mud Island' from the dirty condition on the slightest rainy provocation. Pig stys were not unknown there, and it was used as the dumping ground for the house refuse, which a man, with a donkey and cart, collected at his leisure".

As a result of periodic flooding a Flood Prevention Committee was established in 1824 with the appointment of a 'Civil Engineer of the first eminence'. The resulting proposal from Thomas Telford was to change the course of the River Avon to form a curve by Dolemeads rather than a sharp bend. It was costed at £50,000 but there were conflicting business interests amongst local landholders and no clear way of recouping the cost. The scheme was abandoned only to be revived in 1877 and again in 1882 and 1896 and then in the 1930s and 1950s. It wasn't until 1974 that a scheme based on river walls, dredging and weirs came into being (see *Bath Flood Protection Scheme* by Frank Greenhalgh, 1974).

In 1834 there was Proposal for a new bridge from the city to Bathwick and Widcombe. This was the North Parade Bridge, just north of Dolemeads, which opened as a toll bridge in 1836, the endeavour being undertaken by a private company with shareholders. Prior to this, going from Widcombe into town was either by the Old Bridge to Southgate Street or by a ferry from Ferry Lane to South Parade. "Indeed, as a local improvement, it cannot be regarded as in the highest degree beneficial, connection, as it will, one particular district (Widcombe) with the city, by a respectable, safe and ornamental approach, which is at present only attainable by a circuitous route over the Old Bridge (at all times ineligible for female pedestrians of respectability); or, by endeavouring to avoid Scylla, falling on Charbydis, and wading through that reproach to the neighbourhood - the filthy, odious, Dolemeads."

A Parliamentary Commissioners' visit in 1835 noted: "The parts of Lyncombe and Widcombe which are near the bridge are very densely inhabited, and a great number of small houses have been built there within a few years. Great inconvenience is stated to arise from the Bath police having no power to go beyond the bridge, and disturbances are said to arise on that side of the bridge in consequence of there being no regulation for lighting it."

By 1840 there was a major disruption to the lives of the people when the Great Western Railway built its long viaduct through the Dolemeads; this resulting in the demolition of several houses, although the general pattern of the terraces remained unchanged.

A major change occurred in 1900-1901 when the original layout was completely changed by the demolition of the area and the building of brick terraces of social housing. Originally intended as the provision of affordable housing, a last-minute increase in the rent put it outside the reach of many of what was described as 'the artisan class' (see Annex B).

In the late 1930s some of the terraces the northern part of the Dolemeads were replaced by larger terraced houses.

From the *Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald* of Sat 25 Feb 1939 p12:

DOLEMEADS HOUSING

The work of erecting the 44 houses in the Dolemeads, Bath, will begin, in about a month's time, a representative of the Housing Department, stated on Thursday. At present the work of levelling and smoothing the ground is in progress.

From the *Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald* of Sat 13 May 1939 p12:

Should "Dole" Be Taken Out of the "Dolemeads"?

LABOUR PLEA FOR RENAMING

WIDCOMBE'S RIVERSIDE

MR. W. J. SAY, one of the Bath city councillors for the Widcombe ward, wants to take the "Dole" out of Dolemeads. An ill flavour attaches to the word "dole." Labour leaders—and Mr. Say is one of the local leaders—greatly resent the use of the term.

Mr. Say expressed his desire for a new name for the Dolemeads at a meeting of the Housing Committee on Wednesday afternoon. He did not object to "Meads," but he did to "Dole."

The City Engineer (Mr. F. P. Sissons) stated that this was the second time Say had made this request to him, but he was not yet ready to suggest a new name.

From the *Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald* of 13 Jan 1940 p3:

A report was received from a sub-committee regarding the Widcombe Estate. The sub-committee recommended that those people living in Regent's Terrace, Princes Buildings and Albert Terrace, all of which had been scheduled for demolition, should be moved, where practicable, into the new houses in the Dolemeads. The three streets mentioned would not be demolished until after the war. It was further recommended that the vacant houses be inspected, and that people should temporarily go to live in them. The basements were not to be habited. This was agreed to.

From the *Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald* of 27 Jan 1940 p5:

Bath's Housing Problem

There is a great rush of applicants for the new houses in the Dolemeads – I beg pardon, Widcombe Estate. I should not like to be the official who has to allocate them. I am not surprised at the demand, since the new dwellings are really good houses, and are centrally situated. There is no doubt there is a bigger demand for houses than ever. Bath City Council should press the Government to allow building to go on, for otherwise the building trade will in as bad a plight as the motor industry.

From the *Bath Weekly Chronicle & Herald* of 27 Jul 1940 p5:

Look On This Picture— The Widcombe estate –formerly the Dolemeads –is practically now fully occupied. A number of families have come back to the place where they were born and have lived all their lives, except for the brief period during which their old flood-ridden homes were being demolished. Gardens have been planted, and the crops are thriving. It has been a good job well done, and all concerned can feel proud of the achievement. -

There were newspaper reports in April 1941 of people killed 'in a raid on a West town on Good Friday' (11 Apr 1941). The *Bath Weekly Chronicle and Herald* of 19 Apr 1941 p2 had a report headlined 'Bombs Damage Worker's Homes in West Town' which reported on a bombing raid on Bristol and its aftermath. 'A lone plane caused the damage to this West town shortly after the "Raiders passed" had been sounded. Many citizens, no doubt, will want to know why this signal was given when death and destruction followed so swiftly on its heels. The bombs—officially put at three, while others estimate four—fell on one of the town's oldest and first essays in Council house building.' The article, while being circumspect about which 'West town' was involved, mentions that the fatalities included 'Herbert Arthur Waterson, Harry Frapwell, Phoebe White (58), Elizabeth Gay (aged 40 to 50)' and 'Joseph Dimery Seeks, Georgina Lidgett (aged three), Robert Stanley Norris and Mrs. Derrick'. Later on in the report 'The bombs appeared to be jettisoned when the Nazi warplane was being attacked by a night fighter'.

Herbert Arthur Waterson of 11 Princes Buildings who died on 12 Apr 1941 was buried in Locksbrook St Swithin's; Georgina Lidgett who also died on 12 Apr 1941 was buried at Haycombe Cemetery; Robert Stanley Norris of 28 Excelsior Street who likewise died on 12 Apr 1941 was buried at Lyncombe & Widcombe and St James Cemetery; Phoebe White, aged 58, of 14 Broadway, Widcombe, who died on 12 Apr 1941 was buried at Lyncombe & Widcombe and St James Cemetery.

This was a year prior to the Bath Blitz of 25-27 Apr 1942 when over 400 people were killed.

Annex A Pre-1900 Streets

The Cotterell map of 1856 (images 39 and 40), shows the names of the streets in Dolemeads. This includes some handwritten annotations giving the names of some small groups of buildings.

Street	Location
Albert Terrace	A later name of Farmers Buildings (as a handwritten annotation on the map)
Ashman Place	A row of four houses on the southern side and at the western end of Middle Lane
Avon Cottages	Part of the original development on the road by the river, now Spring Gardens Road.
Caroline Terrace/Place	From the southern side of Queen's Terrace running west, accessible by a path rather than a road. South of Farmer's Buildings 1-4
Chandos Place	
Chapel Row	A terrace running by Ebenezer Chapel. Now known as Ebenezer Terrace, The eastern part had a public house which disappeared when the Baptist church replaced it by a school.
Charles Place	6 buildings along the eastern side of (now) Spring Gardens Road, south of Ferry Place
Cross Street	Ran from Ferry lane southwards to Middle Lane behind Summerlays Place.
Farmers Terrace	Part of the original development. Ran southwards from Ferry Lane parallel to Peterboro Terrace.
Farmers Buildings	A terrace of 16 buildings running westwards from Pulteney Road.
Ferry Buildings	A row of eight houses on the northern side and at the western end of Middle Lane.
Ferry Place	Part of the original development at the western end of the Ferry Lane
Foundry Place	An extension of Farmer's terrace and south of Ferry Lane
George's Place	3 buildings east of the railway line and 1 building north of Plato's Buildings
Greenfield Buildings	A small group of buildings on the southern side of Ferry Lane next to the railway.
Henry Place	A row of five houses on the southern side of Middle Lane.
Loyds Row	Part of the original development. Disappeared in the 19 th century with the rebuilding of Prince's Buildings.
Middle Lane	The main east-west road, now Broadway.
Moorfield Place	A row of five houses on the southern side of Middle Lane.
New Street	A group of 4 buildings running east-west with Avon Cottages/Spring Gardens Road at the west.
Peterboro Terrace	Part of the original development. Later called Peterburgh Place.
Peterburgh Place	A row of houses parallel to Farmer's Terrace running from Ferry lane southwards to the railway line. Sometimes referenced as Petersburg Place.
Plato's Buildings	A terrace of 4 buildings and 3 more just east of the railway line, north of Middle Lane
Poplar Terrace	A row of seven houses on the southern side of Middle Lane.
Princes Buildings	A terrace of 25 buildings from Pulteney road running westwards. Faces Albert Terrace/ Farmers Buildings.
Pulteney Place	A terrace of 7 buildings west of Farmers Buildings.
Queen's Terrace	On the eastern side of Dolemeads south of Summerlays Place.
Randall's Cottages	A terrace of 4 buildings west of Farmer's Buildings
Regents Terrace	On the southern extremity of Dolemeads, 34 buildings running east-west joining Pulteney Road opposite 1 Caroline Buildings at its eastern end.
Richmond Terrace	A terrace of 9 buildings, just west of the railway line, south of Ferry Buildings
Rock Cottages	
St David's Place	A row of eight houses along what became Spring Gardens Road.
St Georges Place	By the railway on the eastern side, south of Ferry Lane.

Street	Location
Summerlays Cottages	A terrace of 4 buildings abutting Randall Cottages 1-4 and a terrace of 3 buildings east of St George's Place
Summerlays Place	On the eastern side of Dolemeads as a continuation of Pulteney Road
Waterloo Buildings	Alongside the lower reach of the canal, Disappeared when Rossiter Road was built.
Woodbine Place	A row of four houses off Middle Lane
York Terrace	A terrace of 6 buildings running southwards from Ferry Lane, west of the railway line

A pre-1901 map of the area can be found at the National Library of Scotland website <https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=17.4&lat=51.37847&lon=-2.35290&layers=117746211&b=1&o=100> and this shows the names of the courts/terraces/buildings.



Annex B The 1901 Redevelopment

From the *Bath Chronicle* of Thu 6 Jun 1901 p3:

HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Housing of the Working Classes Committee was held at the Guildhall on Friday, the Mayor (Mr. T. B. Silcock) presiding. Members present were Councillors W.F. Gould, J. Howard, and G. F. Powell.

THE DOLEMEADS ARTISANS' DWELLINGS

In respect to the artisans' dwellings which have been erected in the Dolemeads, Mr. Gould said he found it stated that they were going to charge 5. and 6s. 6d. a week for the houses. He thought it was originally intended that they should be for poor labourers.—The Mayor said they had been advised that the houses were quite worth what they intended to charge. He had been informed that they had had a large number of applicants for them. There was no doubt that these houses were not suitable for the poorer class of labourers, and they would remember that at the last meeting of that Committee it was arranged with regard to the Lampard's-buildings scheme to reduce to size of the houses, and also the accommodation. In regard to the opening of the dwellings in the Dolemeads, the Mayor stated that the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth had kindly consented to perform the opening ceremony, and that Lord Tweedmouth would accompany her on that occasion. The date fixed was the 24th of June, the opening ceremony to commence at half-past twelve. The arrangements would be similar to those made on the occasion of the unveiling of the tablets.—Mr. Powell very kindly offered to provide some flags and bannerettes for the decoration of the place, and Mr. Howard offered to erect some poles.

From the *Bath Chronicle* of Thu 27 Jun 1901 p3 col a:

WORKMEN'S DWELLINGS IN THE DOLEMEADS. DETAILS OF THE SCHEME,

On Monday the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth, who was accompanied by Lord Tweedmouth, opened the new dwellings in the Dolemeads which have been erected under the aegis of the Working Classes Committee for artisans. The drawback to residence in the Dolemeads, it is no news to Bath people, is the recurrence of floods. But the City Surveyor (Mr. C. R.

Fortune) has raised the level of these buildings above the height of the highest flood yet experienced. As showing the task which Mr. Fortune has successfully accomplished, it may be mentioned that no less than 13,500 loads of material have been used, while the necessary concrete foundations for the houses and roads have been put in.

In briefly reviewing the history of the scheme for providing better accommodation in Bath for the working classes, it may be mentioned that shortly after the passing of the Act of 1890 the Medical Officer of Health made careful inspections into the district of Bath, with a view to enforcing the Provisions of the Act, and much useful work was done in dealing with the separate houses under the provisions of Part II of the Act. The committee who have had the matter in hand received many discouragements, but notwithstanding this, they have from time to time kept the question before the City Council. In February, 1896, they considered the question of building houses under the provisions of Part III of the Act and asked for a return of the number of houses (1) closed or taken down, (2) built, and (3) void houses rated at £12 per -annum and under. The committee did not meet again that year and in the following February Councillor Silcock (the present Mayor), to whom the city owes a debt of gratitude for having piloted the present scheme to a satisfactory conclusion was appointed chairman. In April the Surveyor was asked to present his report, which he did on May 6, when the committee decided to recommend the Council to take steps to secure sites for the, erection of artizans' dwellings. On 'June 15, 1897, this recommendation came before the Council, when it was not adopted, but no further action was taken by the committee in matter. In the year 1896 the Corporation obtained a Provisional Order for the purpose of enabling them to carry out street improvement in the Dolemeads. The scheme consisted of the removal of 20 houses which, stood on the south side of the River Avon, which were in a dilapidated condition, and the widening of the street adjacent to the houses and putting in a good retaining wall, thus providing a wide road upon the river bank and running along the whole of one side of a very crowded area. The carrying out of this improvement involved an expenditure

On work £6,180
 Purchase of properties £4,120
 Total £10,300

Of the houses taken down 16 were occupied by persons of the labouring class, and the Local Government Board, in accordance with the usual practice where 10 or more families of persons of the labouring class are displaced by an improvement, inserted a clause in the Provisional Order requiring the Corporation to provide other dwelling suitable for occupation by those who were to be displaced.

Considerable difficulty was experienced by the committee in selecting a suitable site, and it was until September 20, 1898, that a scheme was to, and approved by, the Council for this acquisition of nearly an acre of land in the centre of Dolemeads, raising it above flood level, and the erection of 40 houses upon it. The cost of the scheme was then estimated at £8,767, which included widening the existing approaches.

The scheme in draft and plans was sent to the Local Government Board on November 18, 1898, and in February 3 the following year an inquiry by an inspector sent down by the Board. The scheme was approved on May 12 following, subject to certain alterations, and on May 30 the committee decided to approach the Board with a view to obtaining certain modification of the alterations. The Board agreed to some of the requirements of the committee, and on August 2 the committee approved of the scheme and the plans as settled by the Board, the same receiving the sanction of the Council on September 12, 1899. In the following December the Local Government Board sanctioned the borrowing of £10,500 for the purpose of this scheme; £1,550 being required for the purchase of land and £8,950 for works. Additional properties were purchased to widen the approach roads to this site. The sum of £700 was provided out of the rates, and a further sum of £2,770 by loan, making a total of £3,470. On July 17, 1900, Mr. Toogood's tender was accepted for the erection of the houses, in three sections, comprising blocks of 7, 27, and 6, the total contract being £6,340. Sixteen of the houses are now completed and ready for occupation. It was first proposed 'to let the houses at weekly rentals of 3s. and 4s., but this has been increased to 5s. and 6s. 6d. per week, there being a considerable demand for them at these prices.

THE OPENING CEREMONY.

The ceremony of formally opening the first portion of the artisans' dwellings erected by the Corporation in the Dolemeads took place on Monday afternoon. Flags and brightly-coloured 'fabrics gave the buildings a bright appearance, and the motto "Forward with courage," have a keynote of the spirit with which their preparation had been carried out. The sun shone brightly as a large throng of neighbours, Councillors, and others, assembled, among those present being Alderman R. Q. Mainwaring, R. H. Moore, J. Rubie, A. Taylor, and W. F. Tuckett; Councillors R. Baggs, W. B. Bartrum, S.W. Bush, W. F. Gould, G. W. H. Greves, H. T. Hatt. J. E. Henshaw, J. Howard, J. W. Knight, S. G. Mitcheil, W. Roadhouse, H. J. Thomas, J. T. Waldron, and G. Woodiwiss; the Rev. B. Norton Thompson, the Rev. C. W. Shickle; Rev. J. E. Rogers, Miss English, Mr. Russell Duckworth, the Town Clerk (Mr. B. H. Watts), Head Constable (Mr. C. de Courcy Parry), Dr. Symons (Medical Officer of Health), Mr. R. A. Moger, (Acting Clerk to the Urban Sanitary Authority), Mr. C. R. Fortune (surveyor), Mr. L. H. Wilson (secretary to the Baths), Mr. J. Chirnside, Mr. Knight, junr., Mr. Roadhouse, junr., Mr. and Mrs. A. Hanham, the Rev. J. Huntley, Mr. O. Restarick, etc., etc. The Rev. J. Disbrowe represented the Vicar of Widcombe (the Rev. F. La Trobe Foster), who was unable to be present.

The Earl of Cork and Orrery, Lord Lieutenant of the County, was on the scene, and shortly after noon the Mayor (Mr. T. B. Silcock) and Mayoress drove up. The Dowager Lady Tweedmouth who had kindly consented to perform the formal opening of the houses, accompanied by Lord Tweedmouth, arrived a little later being presented by the Mayoress, on alighting from her carriage, with a handsome bouquet, given by the Widcombe Horticultural Club

The Mayor, in a few remarks, expressed his pleasure in asking the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth to open the first of those workmen's dwellings marking as it did the completion of the first portion of the scheme to which Council had put its hand. Most of them present would know that became the duty of the Council to erect some new workmen's dwellings, because a certain number of old houses were pulled down when the improvement, was made on the river

bank—the improvement known as The Spring Gardens' improvement. The City Surveyor and the other officials who had in do with the work had taken the matter in hand with the greatest interest, and should like to congratulate the Surveyor and the builder on the completion of that portion of the work (hear, hear). In going over the buildings he thought that while there was no adornment, the work had had been thoroughly well done, and although the houses were not big ones, he thought they would find they were very convenient for those whom they were intended. He has the greatest pleasure to ask the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth's acceptance of a gold key to unlock the door and declare the houses open (applause).

Lady Tweedmouth, before formally opening the door said :—

Mr. Mayor and gentlemen the Council, I am both flattered and gratified at being invited as a citizen of Bath— (hear, hear)—to associate myself with you initial definite effort to carry out the first duty of citizenship, which is to observe the golden rule and strive to secure to every member of the community such surroundings as may tend to induce that self-respect which is the basis of a law-abiding respect for our King and country, and ennobles the aims and aspirations of life (hear - hear). We must face the fact that this involves our living up to a high standard of Christian generosity— (hear, hear) but thus alone can hope to dwell in unity as brethren and serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear. I congratulate you, Mr. Mayor, on the beautiful dwelling-houses before us, and I hope that the good work already so successfully accomplished may be only the first step on a ladder of noble achievement that shall ever maintain our fair city of Bath in her supremacy as Queen of the West, and shall further entitle her to be recognised as Queen of our progressive cities (applause). I have now the privilege of declaring these new houses open, and am actually entrusted with the key of the premises, which all will allow to a sign of confidence (laughter and applause 1).

THE LUNCHEON.

After the opening ceremony his Worship the Mayor (Mr. T. B. Silcock) entertained members of the Housing of the Working Classes Committee and others to a luncheon, which was held in the old Council-chamber of the Guildhall. His Worship the Mayor presided, and

among those present were the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth. the Lord-Lieutenant of the County (the Earl of Cork and Orrery, K.P.), the Mayoress Mrs. T. B. Silcock), Mrs. La Trobe Foster, Mrs. Woodiwiss, Lord Tweedmouth, Mrs. W. H. Symons, Mrs. R. A. Moger, the Rev. J. Huntley. Messrs. A. J. King, W. F. Tuckett, G. F. Powell, R. A. Moger, W. F. Gould, C. Fortune, J. Howard, L. H. Wilson, B. H. Watts, P. Browning (Bath Trade* Council), Toogood, H. ,T. Thomas, W. H. Symons (Dr.), J. W. Knight, J. E. Henshaw, A. G. D. Moger, G. Woodiwiss, and R. H. Moore.

The Mayor, in giving the loyal toast, said the toast of "The King" came always appropriately on these occasions, but it came, he thought, with special appropriateness that day, when they remembered the occasion for which they were met, and the very great and lively interest which the King had always taken in the question of the proper housing of the people of this country. The King had always shown, as our late Queen had shown, the most lively interest whatever affected the welfare of the people, and the people returned their warm loyalty to him (applause).

His Worship again rose to give "Our guests," first of all the Dowager Lady Tweedmouth, who had been so good, and had to-day added to the many kind things she had done in this city. They were grateful to her ladyship for the part she had taken in the proceedings of that day (hear, hear). It was very kind alga, of Lord Tweedmouth to make time in a busy iife to come from long distance to with them and support Lady Tweedmouth (hear, hear). They remembered how, in addition to his lordship's other duties, he served on the London County Council as an Alderman, and he believed he also served on the Housing Committee of that Council. Anything they could do Bath must seem to him almost minute by the side of the gigantic schemes which had to undertaken by the London County Council, but though they seemed small to the schemes with which he was so intimately associated, still they were both engaged in the same good work (applause). They had also with them the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, who was ever ready to help them, and whose presence they were always glad to have on any civic occasions. And there was with them Mr. Browning, the representative of the Bath Trades Council. was most fitting that an occasion like this such an

institution should be represented (applause). He asked Lord Tweedmouth to respond.

Lord Tweedmouth, in replying to the toast, which was cordially received, assured the company present that his lordship esteemed it a very high honour in the first place to have been asked to be present at the interesting function which had recently taken place in the Dolemeads, and also in being asked to reply for the guests of that day. They who were guests were all pleased to be there, and to take part in the proceedings, but he thought it was a hard trial for a son to have to speak in sequence to so good a speech as they heard a little time ago. He congratulated them upon personal knowledge of Bath in having so successfully made a citizen of his mother. He was told that he was expected to say something about housing of the poor to them that day. That, at any rate, was an easy subject to talk about amongst a mixed audience, because with regard to it there was but one opinion. The better housing of the poor was to the interests of everyone, of every party, of every class. He did not care whether it was their Imperialist who apparently desired to establish a sort of pan-Anglican supremacy over the whole world, who still required strong men and healthy women to go out and fill the lands which he had acquired, or should it be the municipal reformer who desired to see his city beautified and healthy, and who desired to see its population happy, contented, and prosperous; or be it the philanthropist who desired to see the people for their own sake elevated and high-minded, and he (the speaker) held that that was impossible to men who lived in kennels instead of houses (hear, hear); or let it be even the mere selfish opportunist who came to the town to enjoy the amusements of the place and to live in a comfortable house, but who desired to see his poorer neighbours well and sanitarily housed, in order that he might escape from some of the dangers of that city (hear, hear). If they came to politicians, he might say, from Lord Salisbury to Mr. Keir Hardie, they would find a unanimity of opinion on the housing question, even though there might be a difference of opinion in the exact way which the solution of the problem was to be brought about. Well, how does this unanimity of opinion come about? He thought it was through the opinion in which all the great and incontrovertible facts with regard to their great cities. Take London itself.

In London they had 900,000 people or more living in direct contravention of the Public Health Acts. He thought they were divided something like the following. They had 215,000 people living in one-roomed houses; they had 330,250 people living in 53,000 two-roomed houses; they had 192,000 people living in 24,000 overcrowded three-roomed houses; and they had 92,300 living in overcrowded four-roomed houses. And they found in those miserable one-roomed tenements families and individuals sleeping on the same bed in mixed sexes except where they overflowed from that bed and had to take refuge under the bed in order to obtain the warmth of the people who were lying above them. And again, they had instances, and many instances in parts of London where rooms were occupied on what he would call the three-shifts system, where positively in the 24 hours they had three different occupants of the same room, each occupying for eight hours. Take their next great city—Glasgow. The figures there were even more startling than London. In Glasgow, a city of some 750,000 inhabitants, they had no fewer than 117,000 who occupied one-roomed tenements, and 322,000 who occupied two-roomed tenements. That was to say there were 750,000 inhabitants, and they had 439,000 occupying one and two-roomed tenements, or more than three-fifths of the whole population of that city. Now, what was the result of the public health of Glasgow? It was shown in one medical officer of health's report that the proportion of people who went into the hospital from the one-roomed tenements was no less than 86 per 10,000 per year, while those that came from the two-roomed tenements numbered 72 per 10,000 per annum, whilst the average for the whole of the city fell to 50 per 10,000. But, they might say to him (the speaker) that he was only referring to the great cities. It was perfectly true, and could not be contraverted, that it was in the slums of their great cities that the most horrid form of that overcrowding occurred. But still, it was to be found, he would not say in equal extent, in a very striking and horrible character in their other cities, and even their rural districts. He did not know what the result of the present census might be, but at any rate in the census of 1891 it was stated that no less than 11¼ per cent, of the whole population of England and Wales dwelt in overcrowded houses or tenements.

That was a very terrible thing. In their great cities, no doubt, that question of overcrowding was complicated and supplemented by the fact of great density of population on the spot. There were two forms of overcrowding; there was the density of population per acre, and there was the density of occupants in the several tenements or in the several rooms. Density of population per acre in a city need not necessarily bring with it either great scandals or danger to sanitation provided the rooms were sufficiently and well ventilated, and not overcrowded, but what increased the difficulty of the situation so far as cities were concerned was the providing of dwellings for the people who lived in the overcrowded districts and houses, because the price of land was forced up and expensive to deal with. That question led him to one of the great difficulties, because, even when they did clear away insanitary houses and built new ones, they did not find the people they had turned out occupy the new buildings, but they were occupied by a new class, which was in a better position than those who had been turned out, and they were being driven from pillar to post, and getting more and more crowded, and their condition was even made worse rather than improved. They heard people say that they were largely the criminal class, and they were people whom they could not expect be decent or civilised, and not interfere with them. That was a course they should not take, but to help them out of the conditions under which they were forced to live. He thought the most noble case of the provision being made for people in that class was what had been done in Liverpool. In Liverpool recently the authorities had managed to induce the Local Government Board to relax some the severity of their building conditions. The engineer of the Liverpool Town Council set up as his ideal the idea of building houses which were let at the rate of 1s. per room to the poorer classes. The Council acquired land which cost them 12s. a yard, and built the buildings to which he had referred. The stones had been got from the clinkers from their destructor, and for the joists the old rails of their tramways were used. The houses were let out for the most part in tenements or flats by two rooms and scullery and three rooms and a scullery, 2s. 6d. a week being charged for the former and 3s. 6d. for the latter. And yet it was calculated that on these buildings the Corporation would

make a profit of 4 per cent. per annum. Of course Liverpool was in a somewhat fortunate position—they got their land fairly cheap and worked things very economically. Of course they in Bath were in an exceptionally favourable position. At any rate there was not the difficulty of great density of population per acre. The natural movement of the population had helped them. The most thickly populated portions of their city had, by the natural movement of affairs, got less dense. It seemed to him that in this case they could do a great deal in giving point that very old adage, that prevention was better than cure. He did not doubt in many cases they had houses that were once very good houses, commanding considerable rents, and instead of being kept to one family, they became occupied by one, two, or three families. He would say watch these very carefully. See that each tenement had its proper sanitary accommodation, and its supply of water; that everything had been done to make these buildings comfortable and sanitary. He knew the Corporation of Bath had been extremely active and progressive in much, and should like to see them apply some of that energy and some of that liberality and generosity to this present question, which was now before them. As he had said, Parliament and all classes had agreed that this question must be dealt with. He must confess they had been a little shy of doing much to help it. The great Commission, to which their Chairman had referred, did much in drawing public attention towards the question, but after all, the Act that followed on that Commission did little more than consolidate and bring together the various Acts that had already been passed upon the subject. And Parliament, and he thought rightly, decided that it was on the local authorities that must fall the burden of dealing with this question, and he had no doubt the local authorities were the best people to deal with it, because they had the most intimate knowledge of the necessities of their own particular place and of the manner in which it was most likely the subject could be dealt with. But it did seem to him the local authorities at the present time were very much hampered by want of power. He thought probably reform of our rating system stood at the head the necessities of this point. He was very glad to see the recent report of the Local Taxation Commission, that the Chairman, Lord

Balfour of Burleigh, was inclined to agree with the views of rating which were adopted by those two very distinguished civil servants, Sir George Murray and Sir Edward Hamilton. After all the object at which they had to aim was better houses at lower rents, that seemed to the situation in four words. How were they to get them? In the first place he thought local authorities should have much greater facilities given to them of acquiring lands, acquiring properties, on which insanitary houses were to be found, and able to acquire them not at a fancy value, but at the value the land calculated for the purpose for which it was going to be acquired by the local authority, namely, the building of houses for the poor. The utmost the Government allowed was 60 years for repayment of loans for housing, and this to include repayment of the money expended for the purchase of the land on which the houses were built. Of course the Government was right to see they got full security for the public money, but he held they were not, for these purposes, entitled to take excessive security. If houses were going to be built last for 60, 80, 100, or 200 years, that ought to be taken into consideration, and the period for which the money was lent brought into harmony with the character of the building. Coming to the question of the loans for the lands, he did not consider, if the land were bought on fair and reasonable terms that that ought to go into the calculation of the repayment of the loan at all, but it ought be held as an estate against the purchase. There were then two points which should like to see the law amended—the extension of the period granted for the repayment of loans for the building of houses and the treatment of the land itself as an estate to be charged against and security for the loan given. The question of improved means of communication was inextricable from this question of better housing, but still would not get rid of the question housing in the centres of our great cities. He was afraid they there could not realise sufficiently the position of these poor people. Supposing one of them was a working man, how much would they care to return to such a home as he had hinted at? And after all the man and the children could get out, but the woman had to stay there. How could they expect a woman in such circumstances to be the mother of healthy children?

Lord Cork gave the toast of the “City and the Corporation of Bath,” and expressed the pleasure which it gave him to propose it. He referred to the works accomplished in the city by the Corporation, remarking that he thought there were no municipal buildings in England which would compare with those of the city Bath. They had taken a long time to build, they were very long discussed, but at last, owing to the energy of his old friend Sir Jerom March, those magnificent buildings were carried out. The present Mayor might congratulate himself on two matters with which he had been recently connected—the restoration and dedication of the west front of the Abbey Church and the opening of the workmen's houses. It was truly said cleanliness was next to Godliness, and his friend the Mayor was united in both good works. He had come to Bath to support a very old friend of his, Lady Tweedmouth, whose whole life had been given in doing good. When she spoke of herself as a citizen to-day, the other citizens of Bath might be proud to add her to their roll (hear, hear). The elevation of the working classes was the one all important subject of the day. Make their homos cleanly, and they made the inhabitants contented. and without a contented class of people they would find nothing else but misery.

In responding, the Mayor said he ventured to think that there was no subject to which the Council had turned attention which was more important than the subject of the better housing of the people of the city (hear, hear). He was glad that the Council had taken such a step towards the provision of some good houses for the working classes of the city. The Council intended to proceed in the matter with due caution. He thought they were fully alive to the fact that they should not trench upon the field of operations, which was properly private enterprise. But there were things that, whilst they could not be done by private enterprise, must be done the Corporations of this country. They had seen in their own city that a great deal could done by private enterprise within the last few years. They had seen a street like Grove-street transformed, and at the present time numbers the miserable little houses in Villa Fields were being pulled down and replaced by decent and comfortable dwellings. All that had been done by private enterprise. But there was a class which could not be housed satisfactorily unless

the housing was done by public bodies. It had not been found possible to make a financial success in the provision of houses for these people, and the only possible way of improving that need was for their Corporations to take the matter in hand. He hoped in the new century that they would be able to provide for the thousands of citizens who were now herded together in dirt and discomfort in their large cities.

The Town Clerk (Mr. B. H. Watts) also responded, and referring to the ways of the Local Government Board, said if his lordship and his colleagues on the London County Council could only persuade that mysterious entity known as the Local Government Board to believe that local authorities sometimes know a little bit about their own affairs, and give them a little more latitude of allowing them to follow their own devices more than they did, he and his colleagues would be conferring a lasting benefit upon the municipalities of this country. They wanted what had been talked about for a very long time, and rather boasted by various Ministries—an increase of local government without the Board (laughter). If it could be accomplished they would have very much greater facilities to carry out beneficent works such as they had the pleasure of congratulating the Mayor and his committee upon that day.

The luncheon was admirably served by Messrs. R. Fisher and Co.

From the *Bath Chronicle* of Thu 4 Jul 1901 p5 col e:

THE HOUSING OF THE POOR AND THE DOLEMEADS DWELLINGS.

For what class are the forty new houses now building in the Dolemeads by the Corporation at cost of £10,000 intended? From the whole tenor of the speeches at the ceremonial opening of the first completed portion on Monday of last week it would be supposed that they were intended for the poorest class, who now live in hovels, or, as Lord Tweedmouth described them, “kennels,” overcrowded and insanitary. The Mayor, too, said, “That though the houses were not big ones (why should they be?) they were convenient for those for whom they were intended; while at the Sanitary Committee he admitted that they were not fitted for the “poorer class of labourers.” For whom, then? The original idea was that the houses should be provided for this class. To

quote the words of the Medical Officer Health in his able and exhaustive report: “It is houses for the very poor that are wanted. The British artisan knows how to look after himself, but there are in Bath hundreds of families who cannot afford to pay more than 2s. 6d. per week”; and the majority of the deposed tenants of the Dolemeads pay only this sum, and cannot afford to pay more. Dr. Symons truly says “there is a great danger carrying out these schemes lest the class for whom these dwellings are intended should not get possession,” and past experience shows such to be the case.

The Crescent Gardens site was intended to be utilised for dwellings, whereas middle-class villas now occupy it. Villa Fields, too, has shared the same fate. The old cheaply-rented cottages have disappeared and been replaced by well-built houses with modern appliances, but at a double or threefold rental to the old ones. Doubtless in each of these cases the localities have been greatly improved; but while the classes who can look after themselves have monopolised the sites and the houses, the dispossessed poorer class have been left to shift for themselves, and thus increased the overcrowding in the slums which the new houses were intended to remedy. The crux of the movement is to provide decent dwelling for the poor at a rent within their means. If the original rents proposed, viz., 3s. or 3s. 6d. per week, had been adhered to this object would have been attained, but when fixed as it is present, viz., 5s. and 6s. 6d. per week, equal to £12 10s. and £17 6d. per annum, it is manifestly impossible.

The fact is the Corporation has begun at the wrong end. Instead of considering what kind of house could be erected to let 2s. 6d. to 3s. 6d. per week, they have first built the houses at such a cost to necessitate double that rental. Good comfortable houses have been built, the locality has been improved, and a better class accommodated, but the problem of “better housing of the poor” far from being thereby solved, has been rendered more difficult by driving them into overcrowding in other localities. On this point I may quote Lord Tweedmouth's testimony as a member of the Housing Committee of the London Town Council: “When they had cleared away insanitary houses and built new ones they did not find the people they had turned out occupy the new buildings, but they were occupied by

a new class, which were in a better position than those who had been turned out, and so they were driven from pillar to post, getting more crowded, and their condition was even made worse rather than improved. . . .

After all, the object at which they ought to aim was better houses at lower rents." The Corporation have built better houses, but at higher rents, and the result will be as Lord Tweedmouth has described.

A GUARDIAN OF THE POOR.
