

THE EARLSDON 'NUISANCE'

One of the inconveniences of living on the Earlsdon estate during the first 50 years of its existence was its poor sewage system. System? well if you can call the little shed at the bottom of the garden and the weekly collection by the scavengers of the euphemistically named 'night soil' a system, then that was what it was.

The residents of Chapelfields (developed 3 years before Earlsdon in 1849) had the luxury of flush toilets from the start, but then their homes were nearer to the river Sherbourne into which the sewage flowed and - they paid City rates. The water supply to Earlsdon, although from the same source as Chapelfields (the Artesian well at Spon End) had much further to travel and up hill into the bargain. The pressure needed for the meagre tap supply was apt to fail at times; it could never have coped with flush toilets.

Earlsdon did have a drainage system which took away the waste water from the sinks and road surfaces after heavy rain and this was directed down an open ditch to the Butts area and ultimately into the River Sherbourne. Running by the side of the only footpath down to the City, this ditch became notorious as the 'Earlsdon Nuisance'. Residents and visitors from the City using the path complained bitterly again and again about the stench and unsightliness. No mention was made of a possible health hazard - the objections seem to have been made purely on aesthetic grounds.

In the height of the summer, 1874, things came to a head. The stench became unbearable. Two of the leading lights of the Earlsdon community, Mr Walker and Mr Betts attended a meeting of the Rural Sanitary Authority to ask their help in solving the problem. They were told in no uncertain terms that as the residents didn't pay City rates, no way could they expect any assistance from them.

The two gentlemen returned to

