

Some diseases struck fear into people's hearts through generations of record keeping. Small pox was one, described as the most infectious disease known, and seemingly increasing in virulence from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. In the later part of the next century, inoculation began to be administered to the affluent and educated but it took time for this to achieve wide acceptance. The archives here capture all aspects of the people's experience of smallpox in Cumbria.

Date of Death	Name	Age	To what Parish belonging	References to Surgeon's Book			
				When	Where	By what, or at whose Expense	
1785 Aug 20	George Sanderson	33	Kendal	Consumption	1785 Aug 20	Kendal Church	Kendal
1785 Aug 28	William Bragg	21	Strickland, Kendal	Cholera	1785 Aug 28	Kendal Church	Strickland, Kendal
1786 Sept 10	William Miltons	1	Mansingh	Smallpox	1786 Sept 10	Kendal Church	Mansingh
1786 Oct 25	James Pegg	7	Coarthwaite, Lyth	Smallpox	1786 Oct 27	Kendal Church	Coarthwaite, Lyth
1786 Nov 8	James MacKillop	9	Greenmoss	Smallpox	1786 Nov 7	Kendal Church	Greenmoss
1786 Nov 8	Robert Baxter	10	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 7	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	Sarah Shepherd	4	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	Matthew Barnwell	1	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	Sarah Atkinson	1	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	Thomas Tompkins	3	Kendal	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Kendal
1786 Nov 10	George Grandidge	4	Strickland, Kendal	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Strickland, Kendal
1786 Nov 10	Thomas Atkinson	9	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	James Haselthorn	2	St. James	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	St. James
1786 Nov 10	John Gibson	2	Kendal	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Kendal
1786 Nov 10	Martha Pilkington	4	Kendal	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Kendal
1786 Nov 10	Sarah Pegg	4	Coarthwaite, Lyth	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Coarthwaite, Lyth
1786 Nov 10	David Pegg	6 Mos	Coarthwaite, Lyth	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Coarthwaite, Lyth
1786 Nov 10	Thomas Coarleton	5 Mos	Kendal	Smallpox	1786 Nov 10	Kendal Church	Kendal

Smallpox deaths, 1836, in Kendal Workhouse register of deaths  
Ref. WCW 30

Letter (below) to Gibson family of Stainton near Kendal referring to differing experiences of smallpox. One member of family from Surrey being blinded for five days, left with a weakness in the eyes and 'was tolerably well peppered with it having (what the workmen sometimes jocularly term it) got a stamped receipt for it' whilst a member of the Stainton branch of the family was congratulated on having had it so slightly and it was hoped that 'you will feel all the better for having had it'.

*being blinded for five days and left a weakness in my eyes for a long time and was tolerably well peppered with it having (what the workmen sometimes jocularly term it) got a stamped receipt for it up to the present time; - but I hope that you will feel all the better for having had it; Margaret informs us*

JUNO 1776		Burials		Age	Disease
				yr	mo
1	John son of John Wood Collier	3	Small Pox		
1	Ann D. of Edward Hudson Sailor	2	Small Pox		
3	Mary D. of William Findlater	2	Small Pox		
3	William son of Francis Leard Baker	1	Small Pox		
5	Ruth D. of Jonathan Dixon Sailor	2	Small Pox		
6	John son of Hugh Murphy Sailor	2	Small Pox		
8	John son of John Moor Sailor	7	Small Pox		
9	Betty D. of Walter White Sailor	1	Small Pox		
9	William Thompson Officer	45			
11	James Kimington from Rhode Island America Sailor	30	Small Pox		
12	Mary D. of Sarah Lovin Widow	1	Small Pox		
12	Sarah D. of James Crookson Shoe maker	5	Small Pox		
13	James son of William Brown Colier	3	Small Pox		
13	Jane D. of James Whalley Sailor	3	Small Pox		
15	Frances wife of William Pofs of Harrington	50	Decline		
15	Hannah D. of Charles Holloway	1	Small Pox		
17	John son of Isaac Shelton Sailor	1	Small Pox		
20	Mary D. of William Brown	2	Small Pox		
21	William son of Elizabeth Mawson widow	2	Small Pox		
21	Mary D. of Hilda 4th son widow	3	Small Pox		
22	Daniel son of Daniel Davis Colier	3	Small Pox		
23	William son of William Young Shoemaker	1	Small Pox		
24	Betty D. of William Bratch Sailor	3	Small Pox		
24	Rebecca D. of James Whalley Sailor	10	Small Pox		
25	Mary D. of M Deart a Bastard	1	Small Pox		
26	Peter son of James Wood Colier	2	Small Pox		
27	George son of Alexander Angus Mariner	3	Small Pox		
28	James son of James Dawson Sailor	1	Small Pox		
29	Bridget D. of Mary Birket Widow	4	Small Pox		
29	Robert son of Joseph Leithwaite Carpenter	1	Small Pox		
30	Ann D. of William George Sailor	2	Small Pox		
30	Mary son's D. of Jacob Wilson Shoemaker Boston	6	Small Pox		

Deaths recorded in Whitehaven Holy Trinity Church records (right). Inoculation was available: local diarist John Bragg recorded that, on 7 July 1780, 'our grandsons George & John Bragg were Enoculated for the small Pox....by John Hamilton Surgeon'.

One of the deadliest diseases known, it is also the only disease to have been eradicated by vaccination. It was spread by person-to-person contact, with an incubation period of 10 to 14 days. In 1853 compulsory smallpox vaccination was introduced in England, and health authorities fought hard to isolate sufferers and halt its spread. By 1914, the incidence in most industrialised countries had decreased to comparatively low levels until the last known cases in 1978.

Annual report 1902 telling of the first cases of new outbreak of smallpox in Westmorland, one of which was the driver of the ambulance which took the first case to hospital.

Ref. WDCDMOH Report of Dec 1902

SMALLPOX.—The total number notified was eight. The first one was in February, a workman from London, employed at the construction of the Electricity Works of the Corporation. He left London (Stepney) on the 31st January, and sickened of smallpox on the 8th of February. On the 11th of February he was removed to the Temporary Smallpox Hospital at Woodside, the same having been fitted up during the previous three days. The next case was the driver of the ambulance which took the first case to hospital, on the 11th of February; he sickened on the 13rd of February, of course, and was removed to hospital on the 18th, the case being notified on that date. He had refused to be re-vaccinated a fortnight previously, or doubtless he would have escaped the disease. The next notified case may

In an attempt to contain the smallpox outbreak, representatives of Kendal Corporation, RDC and Board of Guardians held an emergency conference on 8 February 1902.

Their minute book (below) records the decision to set up a temporary isolation hospital at Woodside Farm House and buildings, New Hutton 'in consequence of a case of smallpox having been imported'. All patients to be received free of charge including medical attendance and medicine.

[1st minute book 1902 -1 1911]

Ref. WSMBK Box 60



Woodside Farm, New Hutton



From a minute record of 1924 (probably Kendal Corporation minute) pasted into Smallpox Hospital minute book, we learn of plans to convert a horse drawn ambulance to motor ambulance (using a Ford ton chassis).

This was to be used primarily for removing smallpox cases but also other infectious cases where appropriate.

Ref. WSMBK (A417)

That subject to suitable terms being arranged Woodside Farm house & building be rented & converted into a temporary isolation hospital, furnished forthwith, & the patient now in Kendal be removed thither as soon as possible.

That all patients be received free of charge including medical attendance and medicine and that the person who is to be appointed to be a medical officer be

**Ambulance.**  
The Smallpox Joint Hospital Committee having found the need of a motor ambulance, offered to provide a Ford ton chassis & to bear the expense of fitting thereto the body of the horse ambulance belonging to the Corporation upon the following conditions:-

- (1) The Corporation to give the ambulance body free of charge.
- (2) The Corporation to maintain & garage the ambulance and to have the use of it for the removal of infectious cases when not required for smallpox.
- (3) The Smallpox Joint Hospital Committee to have the first call on the ambulance for removal of cases of smallpox.

Resolved that the offer of the Smallpox Joint Hospital Committee be accepted.

All sources:  
Kendal Record Office