

[Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Bethnal Green Borough].

Contributors

Bethnal Green (London, England). Metropolitan Borough.

Publication/Creation

[1945]

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AC4366

Report for 1944

BET 49

Public Health Department,
Town Hall,
Bethnal Green, E.2.

July, 1945.

To the Mayor, Aldermen & Councillors
of the Metropolitan Borough of Bethnal Green.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I submit herewith the last of my brief interim wartime reports on the health of the Borough and the work of the Public Health Department in respect of 1944. The Ministry of Health will no doubt request in due course a full report on the health of the Borough during the war years but meantime to enable the Council to note some of the changes which have taken place comparative figures for recent years are included.

VITAL STATISTICS

As I have indicated in earlier reports, the considerable alteration in the age and sex composition of the population, as well as its reduction in number, render the calculation and interpretation of vital statistics somewhat difficult. It should be borne in mind that the following wartime figures relate solely to the civilian population of the borough.

	1936-8 average	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Death rate	12.2	11.5	20.1	20.5	14.8	20.2	17.9
Infant death rate	70	51	50	62	46	70.3	72.1
Birth rate	13.7	12.8	15.1	17.0	19.3	18.7	17.8
Maternal mortality rate	1.9	1.7	Nil	1.5	1.0	2.2	1.1

The Registrar-General has given 48,280 as his estimate of the civilian population in 1944.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE

It will be noted that the volume of work in this important branch of the Council's activities has been much reduced. War circumstances are chiefly responsible for this but it has also to be remembered that owing to the absence of recruitment the age level of the Health Visiting staff is much higher than before the war and that our Welfare Centre accommodation is of a very inadequate and unattractive character. The return of more mothers and children from evacuation makes it very urgent to bring this service at least up to its pre-war standard, while plans are being made for the more substantial improvements which are hoped for as a part of post-war reconstruction.

Attendances at Welfare Centres.

	1936-8 average	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Babies (0-1)	10,332	9851	5745	3599	5542	6372	4118
Children (1-5)	7,427	6832	3551	883	785	758	599
Mothers Ante-natal	1,337	1247	813	687	1172	1734	1458
" Post-natal	345	185	7	-	8	16	5

Visits of Health Visitors.

Babies (0-1)	12,577	8,993	9,757	4,109	4764	7646	6912
Children (1-5)	13,880	10,014	13,317	7,580	4826	6730	6428
Mothers Ante-natal	1,374	1,157	674	256	317	830	802
" Post-natal	367	128	75	37	49	98	36

Total visits and
revisits: 31,242 21,476 23,356 13,841 11,415 17,042 15,323

D I S E A S E

The following figures show the general trend throughout the war, but it will be borne in mind that the years 1939-41, were considerably affected by the evacuation of a large part of the child population:

	<u>1936-38</u> average	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>
Measles	{ 254 } + { 1143 }	23	187	489	786	357	172
Whooping Cough	{ 410 } + { 250 }	312	10	345	160	193	184
Tuberculosis	134	101	82	96	116	101	124
Other notifiable infectious disease	951	566	272	309	288	478	112

+ In view of the biennial incidence of these diseases, separate figures for 1937 and 1938 are given instead of the triennial average.

There was a reduction in the incidence of practically every disease except Pulmonary Tuberculosis which showed a slight increase from 85 to 110 cases.

F O O D

	<u>1936-38</u> average	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>
Unsound Food							
Seizures	2	-	1	3	-	-	1
Surrenders	19	16	41	45	176	204	252
Samples of Food taken	724	690	559	557	578	520	500
% of adulteration (all samples)	3.9	3.9	3.2	6.5	3.9	3.1	6.4
% of adulteration (milk samples)	2.6	2.7	3.8	3.3	0.7	Nil	2.4

As explained last year, the increase in the number of unsound food surrenders does not represent any deterioration in the conduct of the food trades but is mostly due to the facts that retailers have to surrender any unfit food, however small the quantity, in order to recover the points value under the rationing orders and that so much more canned food, which has often to be stored for long periods, is now being consumed.

S A N I T A T I O N

The heavy incidence of war damage in the borough has not only substantially reduced the number of houses under inspection but has inevitably lowered the enforceable standard of sanitary fitness.

	<u>1936-38</u> average	<u>1939</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1942</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>
Infectious disease and food poisoning	2074	865	404	663	930	1221	694
Complaints	4756	4293	3625	3305	4226	3947	3401
House-to-house inspection	672	451	-	4	-	-	41
Total Visits	44,608	44,954	32,527	31,277	36,368	33,092	30,723
Premises where nuisances abated	5657	4658	3592	3172	3585	3184	2814
Preliminary notices	5575	6234	4312	3585	4280	3675	2837
Nuisance notices	2474	3109	1878	1647	1623	1355	1042

DISINFECTION

The disinfecting staff sprayed 536 rooms and disinfected 22,827 articles.

The Personal Cleansing Station continues to be very well used for the treatment of cases of Scabies, as many as 141 men, 459 women, and 270 children attending for this purpose and having a total of 1888 treatments.

WAR-TIME NURSERIES

Two of the 4 nurseries in operation in the borough were seriously damaged by flying bombs during the year and had to be temporarily closed. Difficulty continues to be experienced in obtaining adequate and suitable staff but despite this and other adverse circumstances, the nurseries are now in good working order and are performing a useful function in child care and nurture.

I hope that high among the priorities for reconstruction building in the borough will be the provision of an adequate number of modern Health Centres properly equipped and staffed for the maintenance and improvement of the health of the residents.

VYNNE BORLAND,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

