

[Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Wembley].

Contributors

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Wembley Urban District Council.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

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A.K.C.,**

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR 1900.**

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Medical Officer's Report.

*To the Chairman and Members of the Wembley Urban District
Council.*

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report of the Health and Sanitary condition of the Wembley Urban District for the year 1900.

POPULATION.

It is with some hesitation that I give you an estimate of the population of the district, so near to the taking of the Census. Last year I gave the average population for 1899 at 4,350—for 1900 I estimate it at 4,500—and in stating this number I believe I have rather under-estimated than exceeded the exact number of the inhabitants.

AREA.

The area of the District is 5,400 acres.

NEW HOUSES.

In 1898 50 New Houses were erected.

„ 1899 145 „ „ „ „

„ 1900 85 „ „ „ „

At the close of 1900 there were 60 houses in the district ready for occupation and still untenanted.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The Registrar has forwarded to me a list of 43 deaths as having occurred in the Wembley District during 1900.

Of these 15 occurred in the first quarter.

„	14	„	„	second	„
„	9	„	„	third	„
„	5	„	„	fourth	„

Now three of them were of persons not really belonging to our district, and should not be included. On the other hand, five of our number died away from home, and should be included. The number of deaths, therefore, must be stated at 45.

If we accept the population at 4,500, our death-rate is exactly 10 per 1,000, a marked improvement on the previous year, when it was 13·1, and may be considered satisfactory. For the five years the death-rate in Wembley has been as follows:—1896, 8·9, 1897, 10, 1898, 10·2, 1899, 13·1, 1900, 10, the average for the whole period being 10·4.

Of the 45 deaths, 8 were of children under 12 months of age, 3 under 2 years, and 1 under 3 years. If we deduct these 12 infants, and take the death-rate of the remainder, we find it 7·3 per 1,000.

Of the 45 deaths, 8 were attributed to some form of Heart Disease—a much more common complaint than is generally supposed, due in many instances to neglected rheumatic symptoms in early life. For example, some cases of so-called “growing pains,” with unnoticed rise of temperature, are often mild attacks of rheumatic fever, affecting the lining membrane of the heart, valvular mischief ensuing. In adult life chronic overstrain and excess are frequent causes, as well as acute rheumatism.

Nine cases were due to pulmonary complaints such as Pneumonia, Bronchitis, Pleurisy, and Whooping-cough.

Five to Convulsions and Brain Disease of some kind.

Four were due to Cancer, and here let it be remarked that this disease is not considered by the best authorities to be so much on the increase ; that is, it is not more common now than would be accounted for by the larger number of young people who reach maturity and adult life, that is by a diminishing infantile mortality.

Two of these Cancer Cases could undoubtedly have been cured had advice been earlier sought, in both were the growths easily within reach. It is an extraordinary fact that whilst in research laboratories all over the world great efforts are now being made to fix the cause and find a remedy for this fearful disease, this country is almost alone in its eagerness to poison the minds of the ignorant by mendacious anti-vivisection literature against all legitimate properly conducted investigations for the elucidation of this and other problems of disease.

It is gratifying to notice that only one death was attributed to phthisis pulmonalis—consumption—a man only a short time resident here. An important Congress is to be held shortly by eminent Sanitarians for the special purpose of laying down rules by which it is hoped that tuberculosis generally, and phthisis in particular, may be gradually banished from this country in a few years. At any rate it will be shown that tubercular disease is entirely preventable.

One death occurred from Measles, 1 from Whooping Cough, 1 from Typhoid, 3 from epidemic Summer Diarrhœa.

BIRTH-RATE.

There were 111 births registered in the district last year.

{ 54 Boys.
{ 57 Girls.

Of these 29 occurred in the 1st quarter.

31 „ „ 2nd „

25 „ „ 3rd „

26 „ „ 4th „

The Birth-rate of the district, therefore, was 24·6 per 1,000—practically the same as in 1899.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

There were 18 cases of notifiable disease in Wembley during 1900.

10 cases of Typhoid (enteric).

5 „ Diphtheria.

2 „ Scarlatina.

1 „ Puerperal Fever.

Three of the Typhoid cases occurred in March last—two of them in the same house in Turton Road—the cause was not well ascertained, but probably was associated in some way with the back premises in Turton Road—overcrowded with fowls and rabbits. You will remember that the Isolation Hospital at Willesden was unable to admit the patients, and you were good enough to supply a trained nurse, whilst the Guardians supplied the milk and beef tea. I much regret the Local Government Board do not now approve of your finding a nurse for these cases—as it may make our task in isolating in the future more difficult, especially as we have no Fever Hospital of our own.

At the end of August a young child on Wembley Hill had pneumonia complicated with obscure symptoms. As the case was suspicious the usual precautions were taken, but isolation in a large family was impossible. In a short time, however, three other members of the family were seized, as well as a neighbour. One of these (the mother) was sent to the Willesden Isolation Hospital—but died there shortly after—two were admitted to St. Bartholomew's Hospital and returned well—one remained at home, but could not be induced to be under proper treatment, though several symptoms of the disease were present. It was in this case that friction occurred from the interference of the Relieving-Officer. Dr. Churchill, who was acting for me during my absence, had charge of four of these cases, and his prompt action in removing them is to be commended, as it no doubt prevented further spread of the disease.

We are really to be congratulated on having had only two cases of *Scarlatina* in 1900—the same number as in 1899, and five cases of *Diphtheria*—only one being of a severe type—none fatal.

In the early part of 1900—the disease known as *Measles* was very prevalent in the district. It was very interesting to notice how it started in Greenford in December, 1899, passed up the Greenford Road in January, 1900, arrived at Harrow and Sudbury in February, and then spread to Wembley and East Lane. It is a matter for regret that no one regards measles seriously. It is supposed to be almost necessary for children, and therefore few precautions are taken. Let us hope that some day the complaint will become universally notifiable, epidemics lessened, and the disease eventually banished. When complicated with pulmonary troubles, the disease is especially dangerous, and is nearly always responsible for one or more deaths annually.

Quite an epidemic of *Whooping Cough* prevailed in Sudbury last summer, but did not extend much elsewhere in the district.

GENERAL NOTES.

I suppose the summer and the latter half of 1900 was one of the healthiest periods known for years. There was very little serious illness, especially among the poor of the district.

I am glad to note that your Sanitary Inspector has prepared plans for closing all the sewer manholes and their replacement by ventilating shafts.

I am still hoping that you will soon see your way to building a *mortuary*. We have no place to deposit dead bodies and no convenience for conducting *post mortem* examinations. I understand that there are only two other districts in the whole county without a mortuary.

When arranging for your new Cemetery, you will perhaps see your way to purchase a site large enough to include an Isolation Hospital—one will certainly be required when the population is double.

There is now little or no overcrowding in Wembley—at any rate none has been brought to our notice. The question of providing better accommodation for the poor does not appear to be quite so pressing a matter as it was, especially as much small property is being built in the district. I imagine that at no distant date the open fields between the Willesden Sewage Farm and Alperton will be covered with smaller dwellings and possibly factories.

The cow sheds, dairies, and bakehouses are being kept clean and in good order—though one would like to see the limewashing done more frequently.

I am much concerned about the *piggeries* in our district, which have been for many years a source of nuisance to the inhabitants, and I fear will continue to be so unless we are very vigilant. As you doubtless are aware, it is hardly part of my duty to be continually inspecting these premises, but I feel by doing so that I am strengthening the hand of the Sanitary Inspector, and, undoubtedly, assist him in the necessary proceedings at the police-court. Indeed, I am determined, with your assistance, to do my utmost to have all these badly-kept piggeries closed—we cannot live comfortably with pigs. What with the flies they attract and breed, the rats that swarm about our dwellings, and the stench (from the feeding and the filth) that pervades the vicinity of the styes—life in summer is far from pleasant—especially in Alperton. Besides, we know that these nuisances produce many slight ailments.

Many of the farmers, I am glad to notice, are covering their large heaps of strong smelling manure with straw or mould, and this will do much to lessen the nuisance from the plague of flies.

The continued importation and deposit of thousands of tons of house refuse, called "rough dust," is becoming a serious nuisance, and will certainly be a menace to the health of the district. I am glad you are determined to put a stop to the conveyance of other people's filth into our neighbourhood.

Your Sanitary Officers will be glad to know of the existence of any closets of old pattern or without proper supply of water, so that they may be altered as soon as possible.

Your Engineer and Surveyor reports that the biological filter beds at the Sewage Farm are acting exceedingly well. We all hope that the problem of the Sewage disposal is settled for many years to come.

I am looking forward to the time when you will see your way to separate the offices of Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances. The sanitary needs of the place will certainly demand this alteration in a year or two.

The Sanitary Inspector has been good enough to forward to me a list of attendances during the past year. You will find them arranged in the special forms supplied by the Local Government Board. One important item in this list is that which refers to the supply of ash bins to 168 houses—the house refuse being removed by the Council's own staff every fortnight, approximately from 900 premises.

I have to thank you for the appointment (without salary) of a deputy in Dr. Churchill as Assistant Medical Officer of Health, and though his services will be chiefly required during my temporary absence, I feel I can rely upon him at any time.

My thanks are again due to my genial and efficient colleague, Mr. Cecil Chapman, whose cordial co-operation at all times has rendered my work much easier and more pleasant.

In conclusion, gentlemen, I desire to place on record my indebtedness to you for the confidence which you continue to place in me for my efforts in the sanitary work of the district.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully and obediently,

CHARLES E. GODDARD,

Medical Officer of Health.

