

**Dr. W.W.E. Fletcher's report to the Local Government Board upon the sanitary circumstances and administration of the East Stow Rural District.**

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD**  
ON  
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SUBJECTS.**

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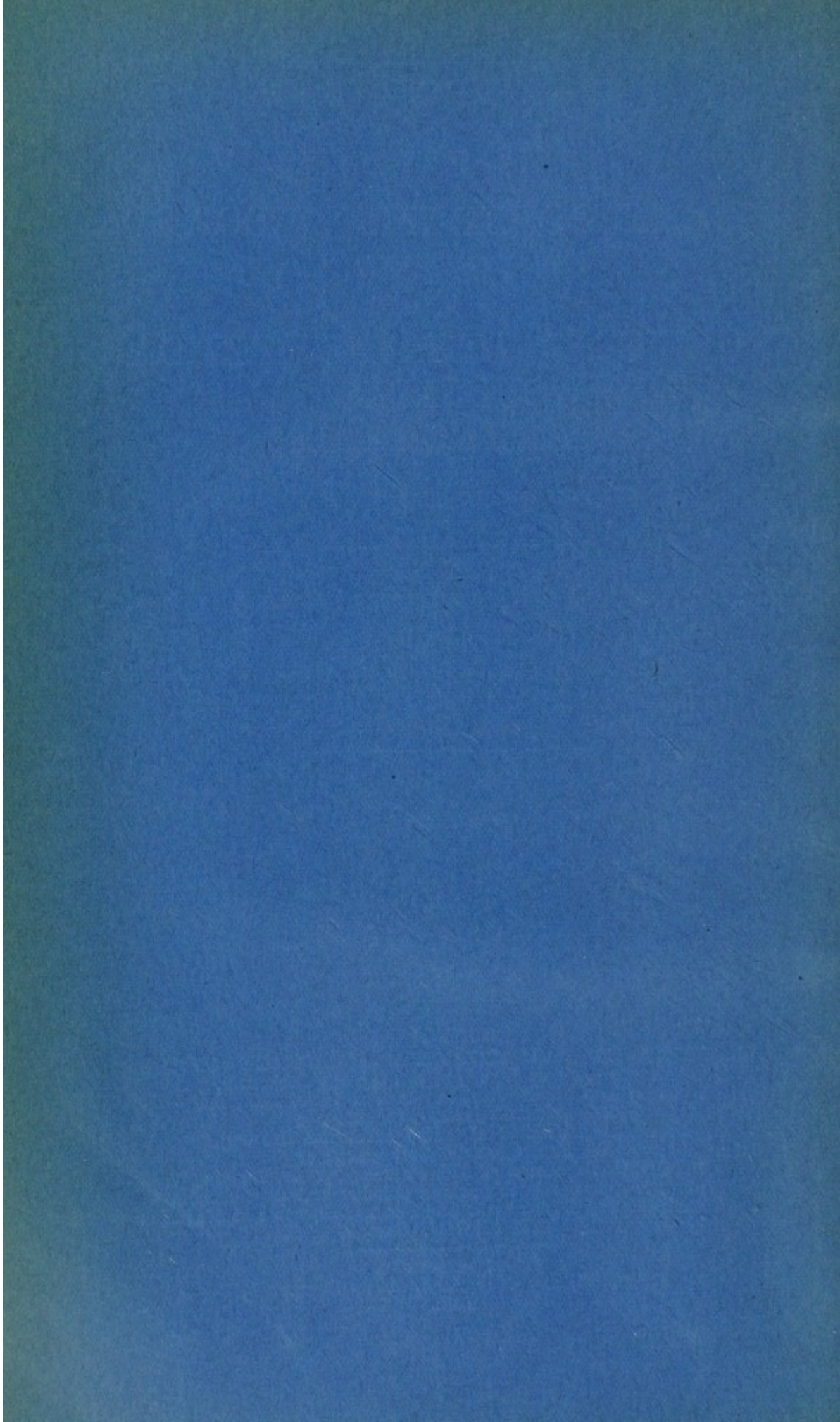


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# Dr. W. W. E. Fletcher's Report to the Local Government Board upon the Sanitary Circumstances and Administration of the East Stow Rural District.

ARTHUR NEWSHOLME,  
Medical Officer,  
9th December, 1912.

The Board decided on inspection of this rural district principally in consequence of doubt as to the sufficiency of the arrangements made for the discharge of the duties of inspector of nuisances, and on account of the receipt of a petition signed by a number of ratepayers who alleged that the recently appointed officer would not have time to perform all his duties. The following is an account of the principal sanitary circumstances written after an inspection made in May last.

## EAST STOW RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	...	...	...	...	...	21,647 acres.
Population (Census, 1901)	...	...	...	...	...	5,930
„ ( „ 1911)	...	...	...	...	...	6,223
						<hr/>
						Increase ... 293
						<hr/>

						£	s.	d.
Annual Rateable Value, April 1st, 1912	...	...	...	...	...	31,705	0	0
„ Assessable „ „ „	...	...	...	...	...	26,877	0	0
Outstanding Debts, March 31st, 1912	...	...	...	...	...	3,906	5	4
for water-supplies for Old Newton and Creting St. Peter, and for sewerage and sewage disposal for Combs, in part, and for Stow Upland, also in part.								

Rates in the £ for the current year amount to 4s. 6½d., of which rather less than 2d. is for sanitary purposes, and 1s. 9½d. for poor-rate. There are also certain additional rates for special purposes,\* and the county rate.

*Industries.*—There are gun-cotton and cordite works, a tannery employing about 80 hands, and several chemical works. Apart from these the district is entirely agricultural.

*Topography and Geology.*—The surface is undulating, and varies in altitude from 107 feet to 255 feet above Ordnance Datum.

The area is drained by the River Gipping, which discharges into the River Orwell, and its tributaries. The district rests upon the chalk formation. The soil is loam and clay, on a subsoil

\* For the year ended March, 1912, the rates in the £ for special expenses amounted to: Combs, 7d.; Creting St. Peter, 9d.; Haughley, ½d.; Old Newton, 1½d.; and Stow Upland, 1s. 1d.

composed of heavy clay excepting at Haughley and Wetherden and the urban part of Stow Upland, where the subsoil is chiefly gravel.

#### A.—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

*Water Supplies.*—At Creeting St. Peter there is a deep well bored 220 feet into the chalk. The water is pumped up, by means of a windmill, to tanks which serve for the deposit of iron contained in the water as well as for storage. From the tanks it is carried by hand, there being no piped service. These works were provided by means of a loan, sanctioned by the Board on October 28th, 1899.

At Haughley there is a public well bored to a depth of 184 feet. It is furnished with a hand-pump, but there is no piped service.

Old Newton is provided with supplies from four ponds, and from a deep well bored 278 feet into the chalk.

Stow Upland in its rural part derives water from eight ponds; but the urban portion of the parish, which is practically continuous with Stowmarket, is mainly, but not entirely, supplied by a piped service, the property of Messrs. Greene, King, and Company, the owners of a private water company which supplies Stowmarket. The water is derived from a well at Stowmarket.

Combs is supplied by two ponds provided by the district council about fifteen years ago.

At Wetherden there is one pond.

All of the supplies hitherto referred to may be regarded as public supplies, that is, as supplies for which the district council is responsible, excepting that from Stowmarket. The ponds which have been mentioned are fairly deep excavations, situated sometimes on commons, as at Stow Upland, sometimes in a field near the roadside, as at Combs. They are all on sites belonging to, or leased by, the council. Under the advice of the late inspector they were, with possibly one or two exceptions, enclosed by corrugated iron fences with a gateway and steps leading down to the water, but pumps are provided in some instances by which the water can be drawn at some distance from the ponds, *e.g.*, at Stow Upland. The ponds are not covered in. The water in them may to some extent be furnished by springs, but it is essentially subsoil water—indeed land drains have been laid to feed some of them—and is liable to subsoil pollution as well as to risk from dirty vessels used for drawing water by careless people.

It must not be supposed, however, that the above mentioned places are fully served by the supplies referred to, for private wells, private ponds, &c., are also in use. Some of these sources are not free from suspicion, being in situations where pollution is more than probable. Thus, in the urban portion of Stow Upland some twenty or more houses are dependent upon local surface wells sunk in a porous gravel subsoil, and usually in back yards and gardens where objectionable pollution may occur. Thus, in one instance a distance of only a few feet separates a well of this kind from a strawberry bed heavily dressed with horse-manure. At Wetherden a well was observed four yards from a

privy cesspit, and eight yards from the churchyard, which is on a higher level. At Haughley there is a private well, said to be only 12 feet deep, two yards from a double privy cesspit, three yards from two pail-closets (formerly privies with cesspit), and ten yards from a cesspool for house slops; the water is used for drinking purposes.

With respect to places in the district which have not been dealt with above, and which are without any supplies provided by the district council, the inhabitants are dependent upon open ponds—some by the roadside, some in fields, and some in gardens—and upon wells. Few of these sources appear to be likely to supply water of good quality. The pond water is merely subsoil drainage, and the same may be said of that in most of the shallow surface wells, which are dry-steined. One of these wells, at Buxhall, is fed by a pipe bringing water from a pond in an adjacent orchard; another well, at Shelland Common, intended for the supply of a new dwelling, has been sunk two or three yards from a pond with the idea of collecting water infiltrating through the intermediate subsoil. This water has been condemned. Near this spot is a row of dwellings supplied by a well dug to a great depth and lined by brickwork, which has been well constructed, but has been laid without cement or even mortar, so that percolation of surface and subsoil water may take place. This well is fitted with a windlass. There may be other deep wells in the district which draw water from a considerable depth, but little information could be obtained on this point. Some of the ponds observed were greatly in need of cleansing from deposits, and of freeing from vegetation. Much of the water in the district contains a considerable amount of iron, and some of it possesses such a strong odour, connected with the presence of sulphide of iron, that people refrain from its use. The water supplied by Messrs. Greene, King, and Co. is of a yellowish colour, and is very hard.

Apart from the doubtful quality of much of the water used in this district for domestic purposes, the question of sufficiency is one of serious import; at times there is great scarcity in many places. A petition was received by the Board in January last from certain inhabitants who alleged that the district council had made default in failing to supply water for the parishes of Haughley, Combs, and the non-urban part of Stow Upland. The council is now in correspondence with a firm of water-engineers with a view to obtaining expert advice as to the provision of a water-supply in Combs; and, at the time of my visit, a recommendation was about to be laid before the council at the next meeting by the housing committee for Stow Upland to engage the same firm to advise the council as to that parish also. The surveyor, also, was about to report to the council as to the water-supply of Haughley. Steps should also be taken for the provision of a satisfactory water supply in other parishes.

*Sewerage and Sewage Disposal.*—The urban portion of Stow Upland which adjoins Stowmarket, and that part of Combs which is known as Combs Ford, are sewered to two collecting tanks from which the sewage is pumped, by means of

gas engines in the case of Stow Upland, and electricity in the case of Combs Ford, to sewage disposal works situated in the rural district, and owned jointly by the Stowmarket Urban and the East Stow Rural Districts. The sewers for the parts of these two parishes which have been designated are of modern construction, and the work was effected by means of loans sanctioned by the Board. In Stow Upland there are three ventilation shafts of a height of 30 feet, and 9 inches in diameter. At the sewage disposal works, which are under the supervision of Mr. Lingwood, the surveyor of Stowmarket Urban District, the sewage, after being pumped up both from the rural district and from Stowmarket, passes through a screening chamber to one or other of two filters, where it is dealt with by upward filtration, thence to a broad irrigation area on the sewage farm, which comprises some 30 acres, and is used mainly for growing beets for feeding stock, and withies for basket and hamper-makers. The sludge from the filters is from time to time drawn off and run into trenches, dug out on the farm, in which it is left exposed for a time to dry, and is afterwards covered up. The contour of the land surface is such that sewage can be distributed over the upper part of the farm and the effluent subsequently distributed over a lower portion. The final effluent from the land passes into watercourses which discharge into the River Gipping. At the time of my visit the farm was in good order, the final effluent was bright and clear, and the streams into which it was being discharged afforded no ground for complaint. There appears, however, to be some doubt as to whether the whole of the dry-weather flow is, or is not, always pumped to the sewage-works.\*

There is not any other systematic sewerage in the district, but there are attempts at such provision at Haughley and, to some extent, at Buxhall. At the former village the drains from dwellings on both sides of the street discharge house-slops into open street channels, of which some complaint is occasionally made. The channels finally discharge the sewage into an open ditch running at right angles to the line of the houses and passing beyond them to the fields. This ditch was in a filthy condition, and contained a considerable deposit of black sludge, the deposit extending for some length along the ditch, and undoubtedly causing a nuisance at no great distance from dwellings.

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\* Recently an application for a loan has been made to the Local Government Board by the Stowmarket Urban District Council for the purpose of relaying the sewers, constructed of butt-pipes, in certain streets of Stowmarket. The loan has been refused, I understand, on the grounds that, (1) the scheme does not embrace all the streets in the town in which the sewers are faulty; (2) the receiving tank, into which the sewage of Stowmarket passes before it is pumped up to the farm, does not afford sufficient storage capacity, and sometimes overflows, causing pollution of the River Gipping; and (3) the Board's Engineering Inspector, who held the inquiry, was not satisfied with the filters at the sewage farm. He considered that they required improvement and enlargement so as to deal with the whole of the sewage, and not merely with the portion pumped up to the sewage works, the remainder being allowed to flow into the River Gipping untreated. He described the land and effluent from the farm as being "in good order," and the effluent itself as "satisfactory."

At Buxhall some dwellings are provided with water-closets, and the drainage from these houses—not including surface water, which is removed separately—passes by a sewer across the adjoining road to a cesspool situated, at a considerable distance from the houses, by the side of a pond in a meadow. The cesspool overflows into the pond, and the latter has, in course of time, become converted into a fair-sized lagoon of black sludge.

In other places in the district, here and there, drainage pipes for house-slops have been connected with road-drains, but there is no public sewerage in the proper sense of the term.

*House-drainage.*—In the urban part of Stow Upland most of the houses are provided with drains for house-slops which are connected with the public sewer; but there are a few dwellings situated beyond the limit of the sewer and at a level too low to admit of connection with the sewer. There are two such houses on the Newton Road, and the drains of these discharge into a cesspool, in the garden, which was overflowing and a nuisance, at the time of my visit.

At Combs Ford some of the dwellings have drainage for slop-refuse which is discharged into the sewer. The drainage of houses at Haughley and Buxhall has already been referred to above. House drains communicating with the sewers are usually provided with vent pipes, and many of them with inspection chambers. Elsewhere, throughout the district, drains for house-slops are either altogether absent, or communicate when provided with cesspools, ditches, or ordinary road drains. In the former case—and there are very many houses entirely without drains—"bumby-holes" in gardens are in use in some places, while in other places slops are thrown on the surface or into adjacent ditches. Nuisances arising from this cause are, nevertheless, less frequent than would be expected, and few such nuisances were observed at the time of my inspection. At Buxhall nuisance was noted in one instance from absence of drainage, slop-water being thrown into a channel near a back door and conveyed to an adjacent ditch; and at Old Newton fouling of a ditch through the discharge from a cottage drain was observed, but in this case the ditch had been cleaned out, and the owner had the matter in hand.

As a rule houses of the working class have outside drains only; occasionally they have sinks in the dwelling which discharge over traps in the open air. Gulley traps are in use, but there are also many iron dip-traps which are not usually regarded as of a satisfactory character.

*Excrement Disposal.*—In the urban portion of Stow Upland all the houses are provided with water-closets of the short hopper type. Many of these are hand-flushed, and of these some were observed to be in a dirty state through insufficient attention. To the occupiers of dwellings to which water is laid on there is, I am informed, no extra charge for supply to a single water-closet; but an extra charge is made for each additional closet. In these circumstances there can be no sufficient excuse for failing to supply flushing cisterns.

At Combs Ford some of the houses are provided with water-closets which are hand-flushed, while others are dependent upon pail-closets and some few privy-middens.

At Buxhall a few cottages, the sewerage of which has been already referred to, are provided with hand-flushed closets.

Apart from the places named above, excrement disposal throughout the district is generally effected by pail-closets or by privy-middens. Of the latter many have been condemned recently and converted into pail-closets; also many new pail-closets have been provided with a view to securing a separate closet for every dwelling. Thus, from October, 1910, to May, 1912, 9 privy-middens have been repaired, 26 privy-middens have been converted to pail-closets, and 42 new additional pail-closets have been provided.

*Excrement Removal.*—There is not any public scavenging of night-soil in the district. In the most populous part, the urban portion of Stow Upland, it is not required, as a water-carriage system has been adopted universally. The condition of some of the pail-closets suggested the desirability of public scavenging at Combs Ford, but generally, although neglect was here and there observed, removal of night-soil appears, on the whole, to be fairly well attended to by the occupiers throughout the district. Generally there is ample garden ground available for its disposal.

*House Refuse.*—In the urban portion of Stow Upland house refuse is removed weekly under contract with the district council. Elsewhere it is disposed of by occupiers. Sometimes holes are dug in the gardens, and in these "bumby-holes" all refuse is thrown, liquid and solid, and manure scraped from the roads, or otherwise procured, is sometimes added. These deposits give rise to some amount of nuisance, and may, on occasion, be a source of danger to water supplies from wells; but the occupiers tolerate these conditions for the sake of the material which from time to time they remove and dig into their gardens. Apart from the "bumby-holes," disposal of house-refuse gives little cause for complaint, as there is usually ample space for its disposal without creating nuisance.

*House Accommodation.*—In Stow Upland, in the portion bordering on Stowmarket, the houses for people of the working class are very fair of their kind, and some of those recently built may be described as decidedly good; but the rentals are beyond those which can be paid by the agricultural labourers, and the houses are inhabited mainly by people of the artisan class, and others, who find work in and about Stowmarket. They are brick-built, with tiled or slated roofs, and many of them have good cemented backyards.

Throughout the remainder of the district the quality of working-class house accommodation varies very considerably. The dwellings may be divided into two classes, namely, brick-built cottages with tiled or slated roofs, and thatched cottages with clay-built walls.

Of the former class of houses some are damp, owing to porosity of the bricks, absence or dilapidation of eaves-spouting, lack of efficient damp-courses, or, it may be, a combination of these defects. An example of extreme dampness of walls, apparently

due to absence of a damp-course, was observed by me at Great Finborough. Occasionally the roofs become defective as a result of slates or tiles being blown off, or falling off in consequence of insecure fastenings.

Of the latter class, some of the thatched cottages are in good condition, and comfortable for the occupiers, having the advantage that they are in summer cooler, and in winter warmer, than the average brick-built slated or tiled cottage; but, on the other hand, very many of them have been neglected and allowed to fall into varying stages of dilapidation. Not a few are unfit for human habitation in their present state, and some are beyond repair at any reasonable expense. Cottages thus more or less dilapidated may be seen in almost any part of the district, both in villages, as at Combs Ford, Stow Upland, Creting St. Peter, Old Newton, Great and Little Finborough, and Wetherden, and in isolated places; in some instances the roofs being in urgent need of repair or complete rethatching, in some the walls requiring the filling of holes and the replastering of portions where the old clay has fallen away. In some cases corrugated iron roofs have been fixed in place of new thatching. If the old thatch be in fairly good condition, and allowed to remain under the iron, this measure provides a good roof, which is not unsightly when painted a dull red colour like that of old tiles. Such a roof will keep the house cool in summer and warm in winter. When, however, the thatch has been first removed, as is the case sometimes, a corrugated iron roof alone affords little protection from winter cold or summer heat. An effort to overcome dampness of the walls of thatched cottages has been made at several places by the provision of spouting, or rather troughing, but the thickness of the thatch necessitates a clumsy-looking contrivance. An impervious causeway around the cottage, together with an impervious external "dado" of a height of two feet or so to receive splashed-up drippings from the roof would be equally effective and less unsightly.

The house accommodation for the families of labourers residing in this district is admittedly deficient in quantity, and much of it has been shown above to be very inferior in quality. The district council is fully aware of both defects, and lately has taken some steps to remedy them. Thus, they are on the one hand negotiating for the purchase of land on which to erect houses in the parishes of Combs\*, Stow Upland, Buxhall, Old Newton, and Wetherden; and on the other hand they are securing the repair and the remedying of defects of a number of dilapidated and insanitary dwellings in various parts of the district. An obstacle to the provision of cottages by private enterprise is the fact that the ordinary agricultural labourer's wages amount in this district, according to my information, to only about 12*s.* a week, so that these men cannot afford to pay a rent which would bring in a reasonable rate of interest on the capital cost of building cottages for their occupation.

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\* The Council has now contracted to make a purchase of land in Combs.

*Slaughter Houses.*—No register is kept of slaughter houses. Mr. Harrison believes that there are only two in the district. One of these, at Haughley, was visited by me. It is an old building adjoining the shop, but it is lofty, well-lighted, well ventilated, and was clean and well kept at the time of my visit, as also was the shop. There is a separate fasting pen.

*Bakehouses.*—There is no register of bakehouses, and the number existing in the district is not known by any of the officers. In the course of my inspection three bakehouses were visited. One was untidy and certainly not clean.

*Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops.*—The register of cowkeepers and purveyors of milk shows only 19 persons as on the register during 1911, and it is probable that there are dairy farmers in the district who have neglected to apply for registration. Nine dairy-farms were visited by me during my inspection. One of these is a model dairy-farm at Combs. The only criticism which I have to make has reference to the channelling behind the stalls, which is merely a very shallow groove instead of a deeper channel to receive the cows' droppings. The premises were very clean throughout. The number of cows kept varies from 35 to 40. The eight other farms visited by me are provided with sheds which appear to be, generally, well kept; but it must be remembered that at this period of the year the cows are brought in only for milking, and they do not remain long on the premises.

Some of the sheds are well constructed, but several are old-fashioned and faulty. Cement floors have been laid down in most of those inspected by me.

At one of the sheds visited good channelling was in course of construction.

Water is provided for sheds when necessary, and for dairy purposes from private wells mostly; I know nothing of its quality.

All the dairies visited were clean and satisfactory.

It is unfortunate that cowkeepers when constructing cement floors for their sheds were, apparently, left without guidance as to the best method of laying the floors and forming the channelling. Thus, the cement surface has been left quite smooth, and must be, when wet and fouled with dung, very slippery; also, where channels have been provided and intersect one another, corners have been left sharp and pointed instead of rounded off, and these sharp points might seriously injure an animal falling on them. It was stated, however, that the cows soon got used to the floors and seldom slipped afterwards, and that they quickly learned to step over the channels. It would be well to supply to cowkeepers, who are likely to make alterations to the sheds in future, copies of the leaflets on this subject which have been issued by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

*Offensive Trades.*—There is in the district only one business which comes under this heading, viz., a tannery at Combs. About eighty "hands" are employed at these works. The manager kindly conducted me through them, and I found no ground for complaint of the manner in which the work was being carried out.

## B.—SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

*The Medical Officer of Health*, Dr. Sidney Hillier, M.D., C.M.Ed., has held the office for a short time only, having been appointed in August, 1911. He receives a salary at the rate of £60 a year, half of which is repaid by the East Suffolk county council. He also holds office as medical officer of health of the Stowmarket urban and Thedwastre rural districts, as medical officer of the workhouse, and as a district medical officer and public vaccinator in the Stow Union, and he is engaged in private practice. He resides at Stowmarket.

*Inspector of Nuisances.*—The acting inspector of nuisances for the time being is Mr. Gordon Harrison. He receives remuneration at the rate of £50 a year, half of which has been repaid hitherto out of county funds. He also holds office as surveyor of highways (91½ miles) and as surveyor under the Public Health Act, 1875, and for the performance of the duties of those offices he receives a combined salary of £155 a year. He does not hold any certificate from the Royal Sanitary Institute, or from any similar body. Mr. Harrison was in the habit of acting as inspector of nuisances during frequent absences from duty, on account of illness, of the late inspector, who died in August, 1911, and he has practically had sole charge of the district in this capacity during the past fifteen months; so that he has had considerable experience of the duties he is required to perform, and he has an intimate knowledge of the whole district. Under the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1909, a large amount of work has been done, and up to the end of last year a preliminary inspection of the following villages had been completed, viz., Buxhall, Combs, Creeting St. Peter, Finborough, Gipping, Harleston, Haughley, Shelling, and Wetherden.

I found Mr. Harrison active and intelligent, and he appeared to me to have a good general knowledge of the duties which he is called upon to perform; he has already been the means of securing the execution of a large amount of useful work, and much more work of a similar character is now in hand.

*The Public Health Acts Amendment Act, 1890, Part III.*, is in force in the district.

*Regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Orders* have been adopted, and came into force in the district on October 1st, 1907.

(It may be well to state in this place that the district council's duties with respect to cowsheds are not limited to those cowsheds which are in the occupation of cowkeepers and purveyors of milk who are registered, but extend to those occupied by "any person following the trade of cowkeeper or dairyman," and therefore, to such as carry on the trade of cowkeeper for the manufacture of cheese or butter, or for other purposes. This fact is by no means generally recognised. See *Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Order, 1885, Article 8.*)

No veterinary surgeon has been appointed to examine suspected cows, nor has the medical officer of health been authorised to call in advice in doubtful cases. There has been no bacteriological examination of milk.

*Byelaws.*—There are no byelaws in force in the district.

*Food inspection, &c.*—No action is taken by the district council under the Sale of Food and Drugs Acts in supplement of that taken by the county council. No inspection of meat, fish, or vegetables is made.

*The Public Health (Water) Act, 1878.*—Under Section 6 of this Act water certificates are granted to owners of newly-erected houses if the supplies are found to be satisfactory; but, nevertheless, it appears that houses become occupied when such certificates have been refused, *e.g.*, a new house at Shelland Common.

*Housing, Town Planning, &c., Act, 1909.*—Under this Act 738 dwellings have been inspected. Notices served numbered 274, nearly all of which have been complied with.

*Isolation Hospital Accommodation.*—There is no ordinary isolation hospital; but for small-pox purposes there is stored a small portable building in sections. There is no disinfecting apparatus.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

The general impression which I formed from inspection of this district is that a long period of inactivity, or comparative inactivity, on the part of the council has been succeeded by a real effort to secure improvements in the sanitary circumstances of the district.

Examples in regard to housing, abolition of insanitary privies, and other matters have been given above. At the same time much remains to be done to place the sanitary circumstances and administration of the district on a satisfactory basis. The following appear to be the principal points:—

1. Expert advice should be obtained as to the best method of securing adequate and wholesome water-supplies throughout the district; attention should not be confined to those parishes as to which representations, complaining of default on the part of the council, have been made to the Board.

2. The powers of food inspection under the Public Health Acts should be duly applied in the district.

3. The district council should continue and develop the action already taken to secure the repair or reconstruction of all dilapidated houses and cottages, a good habitable condition of every dwelling in the district, and a sufficient supply of cottages for the working classes.

4. The district council should secure the abatement of all nuisances due to dilapidated, badly constructed, and defective privy-middens, or other forms of closets, by the substitution of closets of approved type and proper construction. With a view to the avoidance of possible risk of pollution of water-supplies it is

not sufficient merely to discontinue the use of old privy-middens after other accommodation has been provided, but the old receptacle should be emptied, the polluted earth around should be removed, and the hole should be filled in with fresh clean earth.

5. The district council should, either by themselves, or in combination with some adjoining district or districts, take steps to secure suitable and sufficient provision for the isolation in hospital of patients belonging to their district who are suffering from infectious disease. The equipment of the hospital should include a steam disinfecter.

WILFRED W. E. FLETCHER.

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and the first step is to determine the nature of the problem. This is done by a careful study of the facts and circumstances of the case. The next step is to identify the legal issues involved. This is done by a careful study of the relevant law. The third step is to apply the law to the facts of the case. This is done by a careful study of the relevant law and the facts of the case. The fourth step is to reach a conclusion. This is done by a careful study of the relevant law and the facts of the case.

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