

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

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Fletcher, Wilfred W. E.
Great Britain. Local Government Board.

Publication/Creation

London : H.M.S.O., 1912 ([London] : Darling and Son)

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REPORTS

TO THE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD

ON

PUBLIC HEALTH AND MEDICAL SUBJECTS.

(NEW SERIES No. 72.)

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



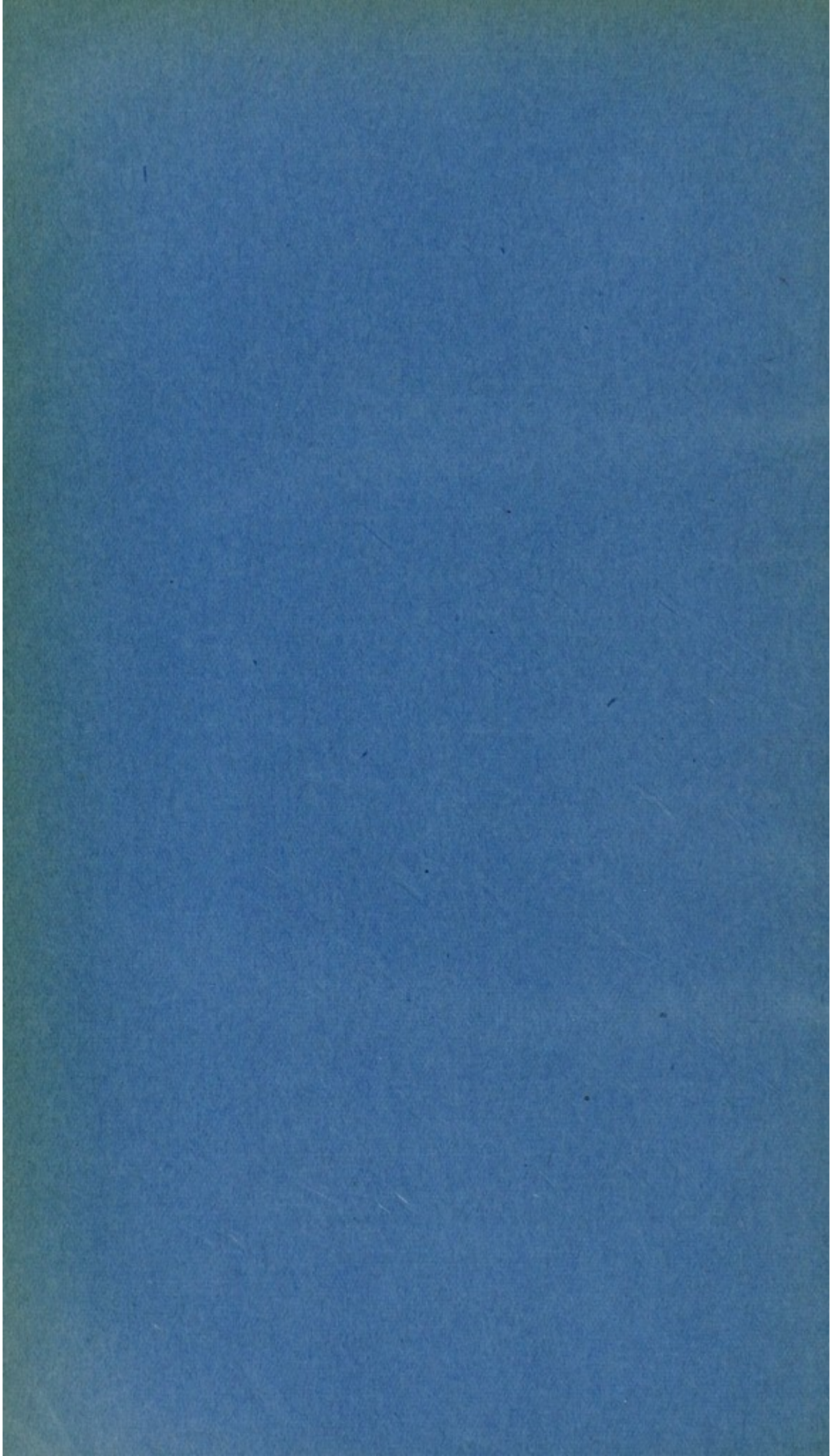
LONDON :

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PRINTED BY
DARLING AND SON, LTD., BACON STREET, E.
1912.

Price Fourpence.



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

ARTHUR NEWSHOLME,

Medical Officer,

26th September, 1912.

For some time past the Board have not been satisfied with the action of the council of this rural district. The district is without any accommodation for isolation of patients suffering from ordinary infectious disease, although there is provision for small-pox in a joint hospital situated in the parish of Woughton-on-the-Green in this district; for years the council refused to adopt any regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Orders, and it was not until April 1st, 1911, that such regulations came into force, although the duty of supervising dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops had been imposed upon the council by the Order of 1885; also, there was some doubt as to whether two inspectors of nuisances were, or were not, sufficient to supervise efficiently a district of nearly 70,000 acres, seeing that they also held office as building surveyors, as supervisors of scavenging and street cleansing in certain parishes, and had also to perform duties under the Housing Regulations, besides acting as secretaries to several parochial committees. One of them also acted as inspector of canal boats. The district was inspected in 1909, and again in 1910, by Mr. C. J. Huddart, an Assistant Inspector of the Board, with a view to determining "the sufficiency of the arrangements for the discharge of the duties of inspector of nuisances." As a result of his two reports, dated July 3rd, 1909, and January 6th, 1911, the Board decided that the district should be inspected by one of their Medical Inspectors, and the duty was allotted to me. I visited the district on February 19th last and on subsequent dates.

NEWPORT PAGNELL RURAL DISTRICT.

The following figures have been obtained from the "Preliminary Report" of the Census of 1911:—

<i>Area (Land and Inland Water)</i>	...	...	67,060	acres.
<i>Families or Separate Occupiers</i>	...	...	4,656	
<i>Population 1901</i>	...	...	19,173	persons.
" 1911	...	...	19,026	"
<i>Decrease</i>	...	...	147	"

Locally the following information was supplied:—

				£
<i>Annual Rateable Value, March, 1912</i>	...	...	141,526	
" <i>Assessable Value</i>	"	"	117,463	
<i>Outstanding Debts</i>	"	"	19,432	

(24897—21.) Wt. 9383—48. 500. 10/12. D & S.

Rates in the £ for General Expenses for the year to March, 1912, 8½*d.*, plus calls for special expenses for various purposes in 26 of the 45 parishes in the district. The special calls vary in the different parishes.

Topography, Geology, &c.—The following description is taken from the Annual Report of the medical officer of health, Dr. Digby White, for the year 1904:—

“*Physical Features and General Character of the District.*
—The district . . . forms part of the valley of the River Ouse and its tributary the Lovatt, and parts of the higher ground on either side of the valley. The elevation varies from 150 feet to 550 feet above sea level. The Newport Pagnell Urban District and the *Fenny Stratford Urban District, both formerly part of the rural district, are bounded on all sides by the Newport Pagnell Rural District.

“The rivers are sluggish, and having low banks frequently cause inundation of the low-lying lands.

“In the southern and most elevated part of the district the geological formation is generally lower green sand on a thick bed of Oxford clay. In the middle of the district Oxford clay comes nearer the surface with a superimposed stratum of alluvium and gravel near the rivers. In the northern part of the district the formation is upper Lias clay with Great Oolite limestone, boulder clay, and gravel above it in places.”

Chief Industries.—The inhabitants are mainly of the working-class, both agricultural and artisan. The chief industries are agriculture, dairy-farming, brick-making, and boot-making. Some of the inhabitants work at a motor-car factory in Newport Pagnell Urban District, and a great many work at the carriage works of the London and North-Western Railway Company at Wolverton. Others work at breweries. At Olney there are a large boot and shoe factory and a tannery. Scattered about the district are a number of good-class country residences.

A. SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Water Supplies.—Public water supplies have been provided recently for the villages of Woburn Sands† and Hanslope‡ by means of loans sanctioned by the Board, and in both places the work of making connections with the mains is in hand and is progressing satisfactorily.

Arrangements have been made with the Bletchley Urban District Council for a supply of water, limited to 20 gallons per day per head of the populations, for the villages of Great Brickhill, Little Brickhill, Walton, and Woughton-on-the-Green.

Stoke Goldington, Willen, and Little Linford are supplied in part by water gathered on higher ground and distributed by pipes.

* Now the Bletchley Urban District.

† Loan of £4,810 sanctioned on May 3rd, 1909.

‡ Loans of £310, £93, £650 and £3,760 sanctioned respectively on Sept. 25th, 1908, Aug. 14th, 1909, July 11th, 1911, and July 11th, 1911. Total = £4,813.

Great Linford and Weston Underwood are supplied with water pumped by windmills from wells to reservoirs, and subsequently distributed by mains.

Lathbury is supplied from the mains of the Newport Pagnell Urban District Council.

New Bradwell, better known as Stantonbury, although it is in Bradwell, not Stantonbury parish, is partly supplied by mains belonging to the London and North-Western Railway Company, the water being derived from two wells in the Wolverton and Stony Stratford Rural District.

Bow Brickhill is supplied with water from three springs which have an abundant outflow. The water flowing from these springs was, in 1782, awarded to the churchwardens and their successors, and is now vested in the rural district council. The village is built on the slope of a steep hill, and the springs are situated above the bulk of the houses in the village. A considerable part of the lower end of the village belongs to one owner who has laid a one-inch main to supply his houses. It has been estimated that if this main could be brought into the scheme an expenditure of about £300 would secure an unlimited piped supply for the whole village, and the medical officer of health hopes to see this scheme carried out by means of a loan. There has, however, been some dispute locally about the ownership of the water of these springs.

In some of the parishes which have been named occupiers of dwellings for which water supplies by public service are not available obtain water from wells, or other sources; and, generally, throughout the district, excepting the parishes mentioned as having public supplies, water is obtained from wells, or on occasion from a pond, a spring, or a stream.

The wells are of varying depth, some as much as 60 feet deep; and the distances from the ground surface to the water levels vary greatly according to the sites of the wells. Almost universally, if not invariably, these wells are merely surface wells in the sense that they form reservoirs for the collection of subsoil water; and, so far as was observed, all of them are dry-stained with local stone or brick. In some instances subsoil water was visible, freely percolating into the wells a few feet below the ground level, and running down their sides. Usually the tops of the wells are insufficiently protected, and instances were seen where ineffectual steps had been taken to remedy this defect. Sometimes pumps are fitted to the wells, sometimes windlasses; and sometimes buckets attached to a dipping pole, or rope, are used. Very many of these wells are so situated that escape from contamination, if not from gross pollution, is almost impossible, and the medical officer of health regards them, generally, as supplying water of doubtful quality, basing his opinion not only on local surroundings, but on the results of many analyses. Two samples were obtained on my suggestion, and were submitted to analysis; one from a well behind an unoccupied cottage at Cold Brayfield, which supplied the occupiers of neighbouring cottages, and one from a well at Ravenstone. Both samples were condemned. The large

village of Olney is supplied entirely from wells of the kind described. At Emberton there is a public pump by the roadside furnishing water which has been condemned, but the council has not taken steps to prevent the use of water drawn from the well beyond affixing a cautionary notice; in such cases the water should be rendered inaccessible by chaining the pump-handle, by removing the pump, or by some other effectual measure. Astwood also is in greatly in need of a better supply; for, although there are private wells, and others, including one recently constructed, to which the public have access, the village is very largely dependent upon a small pond, in a field, which is said to be fed by springs and to afford a supply even in very droughty weather. At Moulsoe there are two public wells, one is seven yards distant from the churchyard, which is on a higher level (about 5 feet higher), and the other is close to the wall of an unpaved stock-yard, which was in a filthy condition at the time when it was visited, about ten yards intervening between the margin of the dirty enclosure and the site of the well. Loughton has an ample supply of water, it is said, from a public well, but it involves carriage by hand over a distance of, in some instances, 200 yards each way to the well and back. At Wavendon there are two public water supplies, one a well and the other a spring.

Sewerage and House Drainage.—Most of the villages have some sort of drainage provision, whether culvert or properly constructed piped sewers, or, occasionally, drains or sewers constructed of field pipes; but most frequently the outfalls discharge into rivers, brooks, watercourses, or ditches. Woburn Sands* and New Bradwell† have properly constructed sewers and sewage disposal works provided by means of loans sanctioned by the Board. Old Bradwell has a main sewer which discharges into a brook. Bow Brickhill is drained partly to a roadside ditch, and partly to a tank, or pond, in a field. Little Brickhill has a sewer outfall to an open tank, the sewage being treated professedly, though not actually, by alumino-ferric. Great Brickhill is drained to ditches, largely by means of drains constructed of field drainage pipes. The Wavendon sewer discharges into a cesspool, the cleansing of which is undertaken by the rural district council. At Newton Blossomville a well constructed sewerage system has been provided recently, but the outfall sewer discharges directly into the River Ouse. Loughton, Shenley, Woughton-on-the-Green, Stoke Goldington, Hanslope, North Crawley, Willen, Walton, and Ravenstone are drained to rivers, brooks, or watercourses. Gayhurst is drained to a number of ventilated cesspools. The main sewer of Emberton discharges into a roadside ditch, which borders the road from Emberton to Olney, and causes a serious nuisance for a considerable distance along the road. Olney sewers discharge directly into the River Ouse, and cause considerable pollution. Sherington sewage passes into a brook. For the two last named places, however, sewerage schemes are under consideration. As regards Olney inquiry has

* Loan of £4,774 sanctioned on April 27th, 1909.

† Loans of £700 and £5,400, both sanctioned on June 5th, 1900, and of £165 and £2,235, both sanctioned on Oct. 24th, 1902. Total = £8,500.

already been held by the Board with a view to sanctioning a loan to cover the necessary expense, but the plans were not considered satisfactory by the Board. Amended plans have been made, and the council is now awaiting the Board's decision.* As regards the Sherington main drainage, a scheme has been prepared, and plans and specifications are now being considered.†

Dr. White, writing in his Annual Report for 1910 of some of the places named above and of other villages also, stated:—

“Many of these sewers and drains are still defective and the outfalls too near habitations. Sewerage is particularly unsatisfactory at Bow Brickhill, Great Brickhill, Great Linford, Newton Longville, Loughton, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes, Water Eaton, Emberton, Haversham, Lavendon, Olney, Sherington, Stoke Goldington, Ravenstone, North Crawley, and Hanslope.”

He again cited these places in his report for 1911, but added:—

“I am glad to be able to report that this year new sewers, extensions, or branches have been laid in Newton Longville, Bow Brickhill, Wavendon, Lavendon, Stoke Goldington, North Crawley, and Hanslope.”

With respect to house drainage, improvements are being made continually, and, generally new work of this kind is well executed. Thus, during 1910 drainage was provided for 93 houses in 16 parishes, and during 1911 for 252 houses in 15 parishes. Of this latter total of 252, 188 were houses at Woburn Sands, the large number being due to connections made with the recently constructed sewers. In all new constructive work of this character disconnection and ventilation of drains are points to which careful attention is paid, and a water test is always applied before the drains are covered in.

Excepting houses of the better class for which drainage is generally provided by drains passing from the interiors and properly disconnected and trapped, dwellings are usually provided with drains, for house slops, situated outside the dwellings in back yards or gardens. Generally the district is fairly well provided in this respect; good gully traps are in use mostly, but here and there defective traps of one or another form are to be found. Nuisances arising from absence of drainage for house slops appear to be rare in the district.

Excrement and House-Refuse Disposal and Removal.—Dr. White came into office in July, 1902. Writing in his Annual Report for 1911 on the subject of excrement disposal he states:—

“In 1902 privy middens were in general use throughout the district; many of them were of the vault type, holding solid sewage for long periods, allowing liquid sewage to escape into the subsoil. Many of the smaller middens were in very bad condition, and scavenging was very defective in many places. About 1,000 middens have been replaced by water closets, and 2,000 by pail closets. Few of the old vault privies remain.

* Loan of £12,250 sanctioned March 19th, 1912.

† Loan of £2,846 sanctioned Sept. 23rd, 1911.

“The approximate number of each type is:—large middens, 486; small middens, 936; pail closets, 2,025; water closets, 1,549.

“These figures are accurate for parishes scavenged by public service, approximate for the rest of the district.

“Ninety-one pits have been altered to pail closets, and 106 to water closets during the year.”

This quotation will serve to indicate the manner of excrement disposal which prevails at the present time. Some of the old privy middens continue to be a source of nuisance, but these are being dealt with as opportunity occurs. Where sewers are available efforts are made to secure the provision of water closets in preference to pail closets. Closets with flushing cisterns are to hand-flushed closets in the proportion of about 1 to 1.5.

In some places which are scavenged house refuse is disposed of temporarily in boxes, bins, or in heaps. In other places it is disposed of, as it collects, on garden ground, or is accumulated in heaps until removed to gardens or allotments, or is otherwise disposed of. At Woburn Sands many good galvanised iron bins have been provided, but not a few of these are utilised as rain butts by the occupiers of cottage property who desire to preserve soft water for washing purposes.

As to removal of excrement and house refuse, this work is effected by public scavenging in twelve parishes. In Olney and Bradwell this removal is undertaken by the district council; in ten other parishes the district council secure removal by contracts. In the remainder of the district it is carried out by occupiers. Whichever method is in vogue, ultimately the material is disposed of on farm land, gardens, or allotments. Below is given a tabular statement taken from Dr. White's Annual Report for 1911:—

“Public scavenging is performed by your servants and carts in:—

	Population	
	Census 1911.	Houses.
Olney	2,871	692
Bradwell	3,938	975

By public contract under local sanitary committees in:—

	Population	
	Census 1911.	Houses.
Castlethorpe	514	131
Emberton	458	125
Hanslope	1,398	365
Lavendon	687	171
Bow Brickhill	432	109
Little Brickhill	241	61
Great Brickhill	430	125
Wavendon	514	155
Woburn Sands	1,086	352
North Crawley	546	148

“The inspectors have been appointed to supervise in each parish.

“One-third of the inhabitants of the district receive the services of a public scavenger. It was an undesired boon in every case established since my appointment, except at Castlethorpe, where the Railway Company makes a large contribution to the cost.

“In the village of Old Bradwell (Bradwell Parish) house refuse is not collected. The people wish to keep it as manure, and there are few receptacles for it, consequently cleanliness is not enhanced.

“In Woburn Sands the contractor no longer scavenges middens and pail closets. House refuse is still collected.”

The removal of excrement appears to be fairly well attended to, both where public scavenging is, and where it is not, in force. Few instances of neglect came under observation, and these mostly where there was no public scavenging.

Where public scavenging is in force pail-closets are emptied once in seven days, and privy middens at varying intervals, sometimes only “when full”; cesspools “when full”; ash-bins and small ash-pits at intervals varying from one to three weeks, and large ash-pits “when full.”

House Accommodation.—The medical officer of health states in his annual report for 1911:—

“House accommodation is generally sufficient. There is some demand for increased working class accommodation in Olney, and for better accommodation in some agricultural villages.

“In parishes near Wolverton the agricultural labourer is crowded out by the more highly paid railway employee, who is attracted by the comparatively low rents.”

The houses in the district are mainly constructed of local stone, limestone, or brick and timber, or plain brick in the case of the more modern dwellings, with the roofs tiled, slated, or thatched. The old stone houses and cottages are very substantially built, the walls being occasionally as much as two feet in thickness. Such dwellings, erected without damp-courses, and not infrequently against banks of earth, have a much greater resistance against damp than might be expected, but often they are unprovided with back windows so that they have the same fault as back-to-back houses, being without means of through ventilation. The same defect is sometimes observable in the case of the old brick-built cottages. In a number of the villages thatched roofs were observed very much neglected, and in urgent need of repair. In some instances dwellings are rendered damp through the defective condition or the absence of eaves-spouting; and dampness is also caused by lack of good damp-courses. A few deserted cottages were seen falling into ruins, and some occupied houses appeared to be hardly fit for human habitation; indeed, one looked as if it might fall in on the inmates at any time. On the whole, however, the district cannot be regarded as badly supplied with habitable houses and cottages for people of the working classes,

though, unquestionably, much is required in the way of renovation and repair. The most striking defect is, perhaps, the disrepair of the roofs of thatched cottages already mentioned.

A noteworthy feature of the housing accommodation is the remarkably low rent charged for quite habitable cottages in certain parts of the district. Probably the most notable instances are to be found at Willen and at Ravenstone.

Willen, it is stated, is owned by one of the colleges of Oxford University. Good brick-built cottages of modern design, comprising on the ground floor two rooms and a scullery, and on the first floor three bedrooms, are let at rentals of 1s. a week; while good cottages having two rooms downstairs, and two bedrooms upstairs, are rented at only 6d. a week.

Ravenstone belongs to one private owner. Nearly all the old houses are constructed of limestone, and are very substantially built. Some of the houses are believed to be 300 years old. It was stated that the highest rent for a cottage is 45s. a year, while some are let for 6d. and even 5d. a week, payable half-yearly, the latter rent being equivalent to approximately 22s. a year.

Certain of these cottages are without through ventilation, and others are damp, but many are habitable, and probably much more comfortable than some modern jerry-built cottages with 9-inch walls of porous bricks, and slated roofs, the old houses being warmer in winter and cooler in summer. These cheap rents are a great boon to labourers whose wages amount to a sum varying from 14s. to 17s. a week, since higher rents must of necessity diminish the amount of money, out of a given wage, available for food. On this point Dr. White, in his annual report for 1911, makes the following comment:—

“It is a debatable question if the agricultural labourer's family would be benefited by transference of one-seventh of the income from the food account to the rent, provided the house he has now is dry, and free from nuisances. This, at least, I have great hopes of obtaining in Ravenstone.”

From the low figures which have been mentioned rentals for working-class houses vary up to 4s. 6d. a week, paid weekly, in some parts of the district.

During the year 1911, 1,269 inspections and re-inspections of houses and other premises were made in the Olney division of the district, and 609 in the Bradwell division; and, in the district generally, 4 cases of overcrowding were abated, 6 houses were closed, 30 were placed in habitable repair, 140 defects were remedied without closing orders, and 97 dirty houses were cleansed. It is evident, therefore, that a considerable amount of good work with respect to housing accommodation and conditions is being done in a general way, and much of this work is accomplished through informal representations made to owners of property by the inspectors of nuisances. On the other hand the council appear to have been somewhat reluctant to take action under the Housing, Town Planning, &c. Act, 1909, and the energy in making house-to-

house inspections displayed by the inspectors has been discouraged, and action upon their reports deferred. As a consequence of this, and of the late Mr. Thomas's illness, the work of making house-to-house inspections village by village, which had been commenced, has been considerably relaxed.

Slaughter-houses.—There are on the register 20 slaughter-houses, 11 in the Olney and 9 in the Bradwell division of the district. Of the 20 slaughter-houses eight are licensed. The slaughter-houses are well supervised by the inspectors of nuisances, the 11 in the Olney division having received 117 and the 9 in the Bradwell division 127 visits of inspection during 1911.

Fourteen slaughter-houses came under my observation during the inspection of the district, viz., at New Bradwell, Hanslope, Lavendon and Sherington, two in each instance, and Astwood, Great Brickhill, Loughton, North Crawley, Wavendon and Woburn Sands, one in each instance. Generally these were in a cleanly condition, and of good or fair construction. Occasionally, however, a fasting pen formed, practically, a part of the slaughter-house. Floors are usually well constructed, and drainage properly arranged. On the whole the slaughter-houses may be regarded as fairly satisfactory, but connected with two of them were sausage-making rooms, both of which were in a very dirty condition. The yard surroundings of one slaughter-house, with a piggery and midden, were bad.

Bakehouses.—There are 29 bakehouses in the district, 18 in the Olney and 11 in the Bradwell division, which received respectively 74 and 52 visits by the inspectors of nuisances during 1911.

Eleven of these were visited by me during my inspection of the district, viz., at New Bradwell, Hanslope and Lavendon, two in each instance, and Astwood, Bow Brickhill, North Crawley, Olney, and Stoke Goldington, one in each instance. They were found to be clean generally. Several are well constructed, but in others improvements are desirable, especially in connection with floor construction. One is an underground bakehouse, but is well constructed. Two or three of the bakehouses are very small.

Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops.—According to the Annual Report of the medical officer of health for 1911, there are on the register 157 cowkeepers, dairymen and purveyors of milk, 81 in the Olney division and 76 in the Bradwell division, which received respectively 85 and 57 visits of inspection by the inspectors of nuisances during 1911. Comparison of these figures with the corresponding figures relating to slaughter-houses and bakehouses clearly indicates that observation of premises used in connection with the milk trade has not been nearly so efficient as has been the supervision of slaughter-houses and bakehouses; nor can it be said that the year 1911 shows much improvement generally over the year 1910, when only 11 visits were made in the Olney division and 186 in the Bradwell division, for, although the Olney visits increased from 11 to 85, the Bradwell visits decreased from 186 to 57. Before 1910 very little appears to have been done in connection with the supervision of dairies, cowsheds and milkshops; for, although this duty was imposed on sanitary authorities

by the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order of 1885, the sanitary authority of this district persistently neglected their duty in this respect, and discouraged action on the part of their officers; and they did this in spite of the fact that there was (and still is) a very large milk export trade from their district to London. Indeed, it is only quite recently that they appear to have realised their responsibility, for they refrained from adopting any regulations until last year. Regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Orders came into force on April 1st of last year, as stated at the commencement of this report.

Twenty dairy-farms were visited by me in 17 different parishes, most of them during the latter part of February. At that time the yards were generally in a state of disgusting filthiness, and cows might be seen wading across yards to their stalls, and sinking occasionally hock-deep in semi-liquid manure. Avoidance of fouling udders is impossible in such circumstances, and no precautions seem to be taken to keep them clean. The practice of washing the udders before the cows are milked is not followed. Very few of the sheds could be considered satisfactory, and even the better sheds were not always well kept. Some were fair, and a number unsatisfactory. Many require improvement in one or more of the following respects:—lighting, ventilation, air-space, improved flooring and channelling, and drainage. Commonly, there is gross neglect of cleanliness both in the sheds and yards, but especially in the latter. If the 20 places visited by me may be taken as a fair sample of the total premises occupied by the 157 registered cowkeepers, dairymen and purveyors of milk, there is a vast amount of work required by the council and their officers in order to secure a satisfactory state of affairs.

Nuisances.—There are still many nuisances in the district due to old privy-middens, which have not yet been converted into pail-closets or water-closets. Practically every privy-midden or privy-cesspit is, owing to the character of its construction, certain to become a source of recurring nuisance; and when recurring nuisances are due to faulty design or construction the only permanent remedy is reconstruction on a better plan; removal of accumulated filth only effects a partial and temporary abatement. Some privies are too close to dwellings, *e.g.*, at Woburn Sands and at Wavendon. Again, there are instances in which new closet accommodation has been made, but an old privy has been allowed to remain standing, with the result that it has continued in use, and the new erection has been utilised for other purposes than those intended, the original nuisance thus remaining unabated, although the owner has performed his part in making satisfactory provision. Other nuisances observed were due to neglectful pig-keeping, as at Newton Longville and elsewhere; to dampness of houses or cottages, defective spouting, dilapidated thatch, &c., as at Great Linford, North Crawley, Lavendon, Newton Longville, &c.; to untrapped drains, as at Cold Brayfield, Wavendon, &c.; to foul deposits at sewer outfalls, as by the roadside at Emberton, and at the Hanslope sewer outfall, which is, however, well removed from the road and from houses; to deposits,

in yards or gardens, of house refuse, occasionally mixed with night-soil, pending removal or its being dug into the gardens. Cases of overcrowding arise occasionally, and these are said to be difficult to deal with on account of the poverty of the people, and the lack of available accommodation at rentals which they can afford to pay, or even of any accommodation other than that which they occupy. Instances came under my observation in which the council refrained from taking action against owners of property who were too poor to execute needful repairs or improvements to dwellings occupied by themselves or let to others, their action being postponed sometimes in view of the ages of these people and of their prospective decease at dates not anticipated to be far distant. In such instances it is contended that it is difficult to see what else can be done in view of the fact that the rents sometimes are the only means which these people possess, and definite action would result in closure of dwellings, and probably in forcing the owners into the workhouse or on to the poor rates. I doubt if such delay can be, as a rule, justified.

B. SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

The Medical Officer of Health is Dr. Digby Cooke White, M.D., B.Ch., B.A.O., Dublin, who resides in the town of Newport Pagnell, which is situated almost in the centre of the rural district. He has held office for about 10 years, from July 24th, 1902, onwards. He also holds office as medical officer of health for Newport Pagnell Urban District, and is in private practice. For his services as medical officer of health for the rural district he receives a salary of £120 a year, half of this amount being repaid by the Buckinghamshire County Council.

Dr. White is active and energetic; and, being a rider of a motor-bicycle, he can speedily reach any part of his district. He takes a great interest in his work, and has been the means of effecting many improvements throughout the district. During his earlier years of service he found the rural district council very apathetic, and it was difficult to induce them to take necessary and prompt action, even when it was urgently required. Of recent years, however, there has been some improvement in respect of the composition of the council, who now take greater interest in sanitary matters, and show more inclination to listen to, and to act upon, the advice of their officers. Thus it has come about that great improvements have been made with respect to water supplies, sewerage and house drainage, excrement and house refuse disposal and removal, in consequence of the advice of Dr. White and the other officers.

Dr. White does not always attend the meetings of the council or of the sanitary committee, both of which are held every fortnight on the same days—alternate Wednesdays—but he does so on occasions when he considers his presence is specially desirable.

If due regard be had to the area and population of the district, and to the numerous duties now cast on a medical officer of health,

Dr. White's remuneration does not appear to be adequate. Inasmuch as the county council refund one-half of the £120 which he receives, a sum of only £60 a year is paid to him out of the local rates, and this represents less than one-eighth of a penny in the £ of annual assessable value. In these circumstances, and in view of the amount of work entailed on this officer, and of the manner in which Dr. White discharges his duties, the remuneration which he receives for his services might well be increased.

The Inspectors of Nuisances.—From March 25th, 1903, until the end of last year the district was divided between two inspectors of nuisances, Mr. James Charles Nicholls, who took the Olney portion, and resided at Olney, and the late Mr. Henry James Thomas, who took the Bradwell portion, and resided at Bradwell. Mr. Thomas died on January 20th of this year, and the Board sanctioned the appointment temporarily in his place of Mr. J. T. Richards, pending decision as to future arrangements for the performance of the duties of inspectors of nuisances in the district as a whole. Mr. Thomas held, and Mr. Nicholls and Mr. Richards hold the certificate of the Royal Sanitary Institute. Each officer received as inspector of nuisances £140 a year, half in each case being repaid by the county council; but, in addition, each held a number of other appointments, as set out in the following statement:—

Surveyor under the Public Health Act, 1875, each per annum £20; inspector of canal boats, Mr. Thomas, per annum £5; supervisor of scavenging, Mr. Nicholls, five parishes, Mr. Thomas, seven parishes, at fees varying from £2 2s. to £5 per annum for each parish scavenged; inspector of petroleum, each £1 per annum; clerk or secretary to parochial committees, 10s. 6d. each attendance—Mr. Nicholls, six committees, one meeting monthly, and five on special occasions, about three times annually; Mr. Thomas, six committees, one meeting monthly, and five on special occasions, about three times annually; also, Mr. Nicholls, supervisor of Hanslope Waterworks at £5 5s. per annum.

This arrangement still holds good in the case of Mr. Nicholls; but, in the case of Mr. Richards, holding office temporarily, payment as inspector of nuisances and as inspector of canal boats is made jointly at the rate of £2 a week, and as building surveyor and as inspector of petroleum jointly at the rate of 10s. a week, with fees as already set out for the performance of the remaining duties.

The Olney division comprises 23 parishes in the northern part of the district, having an area of 39,624 acres and a population of 9,031 persons at the Census of 1911. The Bradwell division forms the southern portion of the district, and comprises 22 parishes, covering an area of 27,436 acres, and had a population of 9,995 persons at the Census of 1911.

Mr. Nicholls, supervising the Olney division, still resides at Olney. Previously to entering upon his work in this district he had held office as a district inspector of nuisances in the County Borough of Blackburn. He is now about 38 years of age. He is well acquainted with his district and his duties, takes a great interest in his work, and appears to be wishful to do all he can to improve

the general sanitary circumstances. Work performed under his supervision seems to have been thoroughly executed so far as general design and structure are concerned; but the provision of sewer and drain outfalls which discharge directly into brooks, water-courses and rivers is not to be commended, being in contravention of the Public Health Act, 1875, Section 17, and also of the Rivers Pollution Prevention Act, 1876, Section 3. For this breach of the law, however, the council, rather than Mr. Nicholls, appears to be responsible, for the same offence is committed in the Bradwell division. Mr. Nicholls keeps his books well and fully, and is industrious and hard working, and secures the execution of a very considerable amount of good and useful work by private representations to owners of property, without bringing complaints formally before the council.

Mr. Thomas died before my inspection of the district was commenced, and I never met him; but I am informed that he was an energetic and capable officer.

Mr. Richards had held office for only a few months at the time when I commenced my inspection and, consequently, his tenure of office was too short to justify expression of any definite and final opinion as to his capabilities.

ADOPTIVE ACT IN FORCE IN THE DISTRICT.

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

Many Orders have been issued by the Board bringing into force in various parishes in the district certain sections of the Public Health Act, 1875, which are not otherwise applicable to rural districts; and Orders have also been issued declaring the cost of scavenging in 13 parishes to be "special expenses."

Byelaws are in force with respect to the following matters:—

Common lodging houses, whole district, approved, 1876.

Removal of house refuse, &c., whole district, approved, 1885.

Slaughter-houses, 18 parishes, approved, 1900.

Nuisances, whole district, approved, 1907.

New streets and buildings, &c., whole district, approved, 1907.

Regulations under the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Orders were adopted, and came into force on April 1st, 1911.

Isolation Hospital Accommodation.—There is not any isolation hospital accommodation for the district for cases of ordinary infectious disease.

Small-pox Hospital Accommodation.—At Woughton-on-the-Green, situated in the Bradwell or southern division of the district, there is a hospital for small-pox patients. This is owned jointly by Newport Pagnell Rural, Newport Pagnell Urban, Bletchley Urban, and Stratford and Wolverton Rural Districts. Potterspury Rural District Council pays £12 10s. per annum, and a share of the cost of hospital maintenance, for the right to send patients, and would also pay for the treatment, lodging, and maintenance of patients belonging to their district. The hospital is under the management of a joint committee. The hospital

building itself is constructed of corrugated iron, on brick foundations, and is match-boarded internally. It is intended for 12 patients. There are also three tents, and three old railway carriages, the compartment divisions having been removed. Altogether the hospital is regarded as capable of accommodating 30 patients, the population of the combined area which it is intended to serve having been returned at the Census of 1911 as 44,052 persons. There is, in addition, a caretaker's cottage. Excepting the iron building the hospital is of a make-shift character, and it is not properly enclosed. It was erected about the time of the last prevalence of small-pox in London, 1902 or 1903.

CONCLUSION.

Mr. Huddart, after his first inspection of the district, concluded that the services of a third inspector were required, this officer to act also as building surveyor for his division of the district. To meet this arrangement the district would have to be sub-divided into three instead of two divisions. Alternatively he suggested that the two inspectors should remain holding their present districts, but that they should be relieved of the duties of building surveyor by the appointment of an additional man to hold this office for the whole district. These two suggestions were placed by the Board before the district council in a letter, dated July 20th, 1909. Correspondence ensued; and, ultimately, in a letter, dated February 13th, 1912, the council submitted to the Board a proposal for three officers, viz., Mr. Nicholls to be chief officer for the whole district at a salary, from all sources, of £250 per annum; and two new subordinate officers to take charge of the Olney and Bradwell divisions of the district, each at a salary, from all sources, of £105 per annum. There seemed to me to be objections to this proposal, and mainly on the grounds that, firstly, after inspection of the district I formed the opinion that two men could very well perform all the duties providing that they had increased facilities for travelling; and secondly, the disparity of remuneration as between the chief officer and his assistants would be apt to cause discontent on the part of the latter. Accordingly I attended a meeting of the rural district council and discussed the question. The matter was further considered by the council at a subsequent meeting when it was resolved:—

That the district remain divided at at present; that Mr. Nicholls should continue to reside at Olney and to act as inspector of nuisances, &c., for the Olney division of the district at an annual salary, from all sources, of £240; that a new man be appointed to reside at Bradwell, and to act similarly for the Bradwell division, at a salary, from all sources, of £200 a year, rising by annual increments of £5 to £240; that it be understood that in consideration of these salaries each inspector will be expected to provide and to maintain a motor-cycle; and that telephonic communication be installed between the residence of the medical officer of health and the residences of the two inspectors.

The Board have sanctioned this proposal as an experiment.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. The district council, having regard to the population and the large area of the district, and to the important, responsible and continually increasing duties of the medical officer of health, should consider the question of increasing his salary to a sum more commensurate with the value of his services than that of £120 per annum, at present received by him.

2. The district council should provide, either by themselves, or in combination with one or more neighbouring authorities, a properly-equipped hospital for the isolation of residents in their district suffering from infectious disease.

3. The district council should pay greater attention to water supplies in those parts of the district where the supplies are known to be inadequate, or of doubtful quality, or even actually polluted. When wells are condemned as supplying water unfit for domestic use, such wells, whether private or public, should be permanently closed and rendered unavailable to everybody; they should not be left accessible as is the condemned public well at Emberton.

4. The district council should carry out the duties imposed upon them by the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Orders. They should enforce registration of all cowkeepers and purveyors of milk, and should insist on the observance of the "Regulations" which they have recently adopted.

5. The district council should refrain from constructing their sewer outfalls in such a manner as to discharge crude sewage into rivers and water-courses.

6. The district council should maintain their efforts to secure the abolition of the remaining privy-cesspits and privy-middens, and the substitution therefor of water-closets, pail-closets, or other satisfactory closets.

7. The district council should take such steps as may be necessary to secure and maintain proper housing accommodation in the district; in particular, all existing houses should be put into good habitable repair.

WILFRED W. E. FLETCHER.

