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Contributors

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ASHFORD URBAN DISTRICT.

Medical Officer's Annual Report for 1905.

MR. CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of laying before you my Report for the year 1905, dealing with the health of our town.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The estimated population of the whole district in the middle of the year is 13,809. For the part north of the railway line, the estimated population is 9,060, and that for the southern district is 4,744.

The total number of deaths registered in the district during the year numbered 142, but 10 of these were those of non-residents, occurring in public institutions, and must therefore be subtracted. An addition must be made of 8 residents, who died outside the district, so that the corrected figure stands at 140, which is equivalent to a death-rate of 10.13, which I need hardly point out is very low indeed.

The rate for North Ashford is 9.93, and that for South Ashford 10.32. The average age at death, excluding the deaths of infants under one year, is north Ashford 57, and South Ashford 53.

The causes of the deaths are classified in Table I. at the end of my report. Cancer still shows a slight increase on former years, but most of the other diseases show a decrease.

The Infant Mortality, or deaths of children under one year, calculated as a rate per thousand births registered is 62.57. This figure is extremely low, less than half of that for the whole country and is due to the absence of those diseases that are specially fatal to infant life such as Epidemic Diarrhœa, Measles, Whooping Cough, Croup and Diphtheria.

The Zymotic Death-Rate, or death-rate from the seven principal zymotic diseases, namely—Small Pox, Measles, Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Fever and Diarrhœa is .43, which also is very low.

The Birth-Rate.—During the year 307 births have been registered in the district, giving a birth-rate of 22.08. This is slightly higher than last year.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

Except for an extensive outbreak of Scarlet Fever during the first quarter of the year, there has been very little infectious disease notified.

During this first quarter the number of notifications amounted to 45, whilst those in the last three quarters only totalled 15.

In the latter part of January a number of cases of Scarlet Fever were notified amongst children attending the South-Eastern and Chatham Railway Company's Schools, and during February, the number rapidly increased, so that it became necessary to close these schools for three weeks in order to check the spread of the disease. This had an almost immediate effect in lessening the number of cases notified, but later a number of cases occurred amongst children attending the Infants' section of the National School, so that this also had to be closed.

The disease at the commencement of the epidemic was of an extremely mild type, so that in a number of cases it was undetected until the peeling stage had begun. This, no doubt, accounted for the rapid spread of the complaint, as children in an infectious state were attending school and communicating it to others. Some of the later cases were of a much more severe type, and I regret to say that one death occurred in the Isolation Hospital from this Cause.

Table II. at the end of my Report gives particulars of the complaints notified and also of the localities in which they occurred.

The non-notifiable infectious diseases do not appear to have been prevalent to any great extent, and it has not been necessary to close any of the schools for this cause.

THE ISOLATION HOSPITALS.

The number of cases of Infectious Disease treated in our Isolation Hospitals during the year number

44, and whilst the outbreak of Scarlet Fever above mentioned was in progress, our accommodation was strained to the utmost, both blocks being used.

During the coming year, it is proposed to again move our Hospitals from the present site at Burton Farm to one adjoining Warren Lane. This is the site which it was intended originally to use, and besides being in our own District, which the present one is not, is more removed from public highways and inhabited dwellings. The Hospitals are now connected by telephone with the Surveyor's office, which is a great convenience, and a valuable means of quick communication with the town in case of any sudden emergency.

The Warren Lane Hospital was used on two occasions on emergency. Once for a case of Enteric Fever, and once for a case of Diphtheria.

MIDWIVES ACT.

During the year the Midwives Committee have met on two occasions to inspect the Registers and Bags of the Midwives, and to see that the various Regulations are being properly observed.

WATER SUPPLY.

As will be seen by referring to the latest analysis, a copy of which is given below, our water continues to be of very constant chemical composition. The supply continues to be ample, and its hardness is its only defect.

During the early part of the year the question of softening the water and removing as much as possible of this hardness was considered by the Council. After going very thoroughly into the whole matter and collecting evidence as of the various methods, their cost and the experiences of others, it was finally decided not to take any further steps in the matter at present.

During the coming year it is intended to lay down a new rising main from the pumping station at Henwood to the reservoir at the top of New Street. It is also intended to renew the mains in several parts of the town where the present ones are defective or inadequate.

ANALYSIS BY THE CLINICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION.

	Grains per gallon.			
Total Solids	33.32
Combined Chlorine	2 25
Expressed as Na. Cl.	3.71
Nitrogen as Nitrates	0.03
Nitrites	nil
Saline Ammonia	nil
Albuminoid Ammonia	0.0034
Oxygen absorbed	0.036
Total Hardness	23°.1
Lead or Copper	nil

During the past year I have visited and inquired into all the cases of infectious disease notified to me.

I have also made special reports on the closing of the New Town and National Schools, and forwarded them to the Local Government Board.

I have made, as usual, monthly reports to the Sanitary Committee and quarterly reports to the Council.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

CLAUDE M. VERNON,

Medical Officer of Health.

I.—TABLE SHOWING CAUSES OF DEATH.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	NORTH ASHFORD.	SOUTH ASHFORD.	TOTAL.	RATE PER 1,000 POPULATION.
Scarlet Fever . . .	1	—	1	·072
Whooping Cough . . .	1	—	1	·072
Croup	1	1	2	·14
Epidemic Influenza . . .	2	—	2	·14
Diarrhœa	2	1	3	·21
Enteritis	1	1	2	·14
Other Septic Diseases . . .	1	—	1	·072
Phthisis	4	1	5	·36
Other Tubercular Diseases }	3	1	4	·28
Cancer	9	3	12	·86
Bronchitis	7	3	10	·72
Pneumonia	2	3	5	·36
Other Respiratory Diseases }	1	—	1	·072
Alcoholism	1	2	3	·21
Premature Birth	4	4	8	·57
Diseases and Accidents of Parturition . . .	1	—	1	·072
Heart Disease	14	12	26	1·86
Accidents	4	2	6	·42
Suicides	—	1	1	·072
All other Causes	32	14	46	2·31

II.—TABLE COMPARING BIRTHS AND DEATHS WITH FORMER YEARS.

YEAR.	POPULATION.	BIRTHS.	RATE.	DEATHS.	RATE.
1898	11,593	254	21·91	144	12·42
1899	11,710	294	25·10	172	14·18
1900	11,850	317	26·32	164	13·83
1901	12,808	296	23·11	163	12·80
1902	13,094	318	24·27	152	11·60
1903	13,328	334	25·06	134	10·05
1904	13,567	281	20·70	166	12·23
1905	13,809	307	22·08	140	10·13

III.—CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED DURING 1905 AND PRECEDING YEARS.

Disease.	1905 Total.	North Ashford.	South Ashford.	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898
Small Pox	—	—	—	—	-	-	-	-	-	-
Diphtheria	4	1	3	36	10	10	2	1	16	6
Erysipelas	3	1	2	7	10	2	3	5	4	3
Scarlet Fever	46	23	23	48	1	8	17	13	25	22
Enteric Fever	7	3	4	18	4	-	7	1	19	15
Puerperal Fever	—	—	—	1	-	-	-	1	1	-
Chicken Pox	—	—	—	—	11	11	-	-	-	-
Total	60	28	32	110	36	31	29	24	65	46