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ATHERSTONE
RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

T W E L F T H

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health.

1896.

Report of Medical Officer of Health—continued.

Hand and Bottle Yard and Wood's Yard.—Are both much improved.

Blue Bell Yard.—Is improved, but the cottages at the top of the yard are in a very dilapidated and dirty condition. The owners have given instructions to have the houses thoroughly repaired and cleaned, and intend to provide Duckett's closets and covered ashpits.

Nelson Yard.—In this yard, Duckett's closets have been provided in place of privy-middens, covered ashpits put in, and the yard paved.

Baxter's Cottages.—The old privy-middens have been replaced by water-closets and covered ashpits.

A report on the sanitary defects at the Town Hall was made by your Sanitary Inspector and myself, and I am glad to say all the required improvements are being carried out.

Water Supply.—I am glad to be able to report that the supply of water is distinctly improving.

POLESWORTH.

Of Polesworth, I have again on the whole to speak favourably.

There have been only 45 deaths, which gives a death-rate of 11.1. The zymotic death-rate is 1.2. Three deaths were due to Diphtheria, and one to Typhoid Fever.

Seventeen cases of Scarlet Fever were reported. Seven were removed to the Infectious Hospital, and no further case occurred in the neighbourhood from which the cases were removed.

In January, a death occurred from Glanders at Dordon. The clothing and bedding were destroyed, and the house fumigated. In February, a mild case of Diphtheria occurred at Dordon. Two cases occurred at Stonydelph, at the extreme end of Polesworth parish, adjoining Wilnecote, in the Tamworth district. I made arrangements for their removal to the Infectious Hospital, but the medical man in attendance considered them to be in too critical a condition to be moved. Both cases terminated fatally. Mr. Chipperfield and myself inspected the houses, and found that the cases reported were in some thatched cottages, in one of which there was overcrowding, two families occupying one small bedroom. All the houses were very damp, the rain coming through the thatched roof. An order was made to remedy the overcrowding, and I condemned the houses as unfit for human habitation.

Improvements were made in the houses to the satisfaction of the Authority. Another fatal case of Diphtheria occurred in Polesworth village. Certain structural alterations were recommended and carried out.

HARTSHILL.

The Scarlet Fever epidemic has been prevalent in Hartshill, and one death occurred. I am sorry that, through the want of co-operation on the part of the medical men attending the cases, very few cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital.

The Hartshill Committee have during the year been most energetic in endeavouring to provide a proper system of drainage for Hartshill village—no less than four schemes having been prepared—but up to the present time they have not been able to obtain land for sewage irrigation, owing to the prohibitory demands of the various owners.

The natural outlet for the drainage of Chapel End is into the Nuneaton District; but if a suitable scheme for irrigation could be provided for Hartshill proper, the sewage of Chapel End might be pumped up, and the whole district properly drained.

In Chapel End, sanitary improvements have been made by re-constructing privies and unblocking drains.

The pump on Hartshill Green has been a great boon to the neighbourhood during the past summer.

ANSLEY.

Two cases of Typhoid Fever occurred here, one terminating fatally. As far as I could ascertain, both were imported cases.

A great improvement has been made in this village by laying a new drain from the Boot Inn to the Nelson Inn, and connecting the several properties with it; fixing intercepting traps, and ventilating the house drains. The sewage is treated by irrigation over land.

At Ansley New Buildings, permission has been kindly given by Mr. Astley to extend the drainage from the cottages here over his land, after the sewage has been previously treated in a Dortmund Tank.

I understand that the Ansley Hall Colliery Company are desirous of erecting a large number of houses in this neighbourhood, but are prevented from doing so owing to the insufficient water supply.

MANCETTER.

Arbour Houses.—The sanitary arrangements have been much improved; the sewage has been diverted from the ditch by the side of the Watling Street Road; and privy-middens and covered ashpits provided.

In *Harper's Lane* the sanitary arrangements have been greatly improved.

Ridge Lane.—The property near the White Hart is now drained into the middle of a field 100 yards away from the well which was condemned last year, and improvements have also been made in the sanitary arrangements in the adjoining houses.

Twenty-three cases of Scarlet Fever occurred in this parish. Eighteen were removed to the Infectious Hospital, and there was no death.

BADDESLEY.

There is nothing special to report with regard to this parish. One death was due to Diarrhoea.

Several notices have been served upon Mr. Eadie to provide proper closets and ashpits to his property here, but they have not yet been constructed.

GRENDON.

Mr. Eadie has carried out the works according to the notice served upon him, on his property near the White Hart, in the parish of Atherstone.

BAXTERLEY.

Improvements have been made in the drainage and sanitary condition at a farm-house occupied by Mr. Jeffcote.

The sewers have been periodically flushed and disinfected in the parishes of Baddesley, Birchmoor, Dordon, Hartshill, and Ansley.

In conclusion, I am sorry that up to the present time no progress has been made in utilising the abundant supply of water at Bentley for the parishes of Baddesley, Baxterley, Merevale, and Bentley.


I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

ROBT. MEARS.

Atherstone,

February 2nd, 1897.



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Report of the Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE YEAR 1896.

To the Atherstone Rural District Council.

GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to submit to you my Annual Report on the Sickness and Mortality in your District for the year 1896.

During the year, 241 deaths and 510 births were registered. This is equivalent (estimating the population of the district to the middle of 1896 at 14,785) to a death-rate of 16.3, and a birth-rate of 34.4. In the previous year the death-rate was 16.63, and the birth-rate 36.3. The number of cases reported to me under the Infectious Diseases Notification Act was the large number of 282. This is, of course, due to the extensive epidemic of Scarlet Fever—no less than 261 cases of that disease having occurred during the year.

Seven cases of Diphtheria, six of Typhoid Fever, and eight of Erysipelas were reported. 120 cases of Scarlet Fever were removed to the Isolation Hospital at Mancetter; one case of Typhoid Fever was removed to the Infectious Ward at the Workhouse, and another case of Typhoid Fever was removed from Ansley to the Nuneaton Cottage Hospital.

During the month of August the epidemic of Scarlet Fever assumed such proportions that it was found to be necessary to enlarge the Hospital at Mancetter. Unfortunately, during its construction a large number of cases (especially in Atherstone) could not be removed, and the disease spread rapidly; indeed, at the present time it is still in existence.

I deemed it advisable to close for a time the Atherstone, Hartshill, and Mancetter Schools.

It is highly satisfactory to report that of the 120 cases removed to the Infectious Hospital all recovered, although some of the cases were of a very serious character.

Only four deaths were due to Scarlet Fever; four were due to Diphtheria; two to Typhoid Fever; nine to Measles; five to Whooping-cough; and three to Diarrhoea. This gives a total of 27 deaths due to zymotic diseases, and it is equivalent to a zymotic death-rate of 1.8. The deaths under one year of age were 92, which gives an infant mortality of 180; the infant mortality in the previous year was 145.

The increase is due principally, as will be explained subsequently, to the large number of deaths of infants in Atherstone.

It will be noticed, also, that nine deaths were due to Measles—six of these being in Atherstone, and three in Ansley.

Measles is a disease which I am afraid is often treated too lightly, most of the deaths being due to chest complications, which are often very fatal unless the child is kept in bed until convalescent.

A considerable number of cases of overcrowding have been reported during the year, and orders made to remedy this sanitary defect.

I am requested by the Local Government Board to embody in my Report an account of the actions taken by the Inspector of Nuisances for the removal of nuisances during the year. This will considerably lengthen my Report, but will, I should say, not necessitate a separate Report from the Inspector of Nuisances.

I will now take the parishes in detail.

ATHERSTONE.

In Atherstone, 89 deaths and 168 births were registered. This is equivalent to a death-rate of 17.2, and a birth-rate of 32.5.

The deaths from zymotic diseases were 14—three being due to Scarlet Fever, six to Measles, three to Whooping-cough, and two to Diarrhoea. This gives a zymotic death-rate of 2.7.

One hundred and fifty-eight cases of Scarlet Fever were notified in Atherstone, and 82 of these were removed to the Infectious Hospital.

Scarlet Fever has been prevalent in Warwickshire throughout the year, but I regret the epidemic seems to have taken such a firm hold in Atherstone. This I regard as being due to several reasons. Firstly, as before stated, to the insufficient room at the Isolation Hospital in August

last; secondly, to the concealment of mild cases by parents, partly from ignorance; and, thirdly, to a co-existing epidemic of Measles, for which disease I have no doubt many cases were mistaken. One case in my own practice I was called to see I found the child dying from malignant Scarlet Fever, the parents thinking the child was suffering from Measles.

But the most serious feature of the deaths in Atherstone is that of the infant mortality. Forty-two deaths out of a total of eighty-nine occurred in children under one year old. This is equivalent to the large infant mortality of 250.

I find that of these 42 deaths, 12 were due to so-called "Wasting" Diseases, 8 to Chest Diseases, 6 to Premature Birth, 3 to Measles, 5 to Diseases of the Alimentary Canal, 1 to Scarlet Fever, 1 to Whooping-cough, 2 to Dentition, 1 to Convulsions, 2 to Brain Diseases, and 1 to Spinal Disease.

No doubt, a large number of deaths of children under one year old are due to improper feeding. I know there is a widespread custom in this district of feeding children under six months old with bread and arrow-root, than which nothing can be more disastrous in its results, as the infant's stomach at that early age is incapable of digesting it. But allowing for this, if we add the number of deaths occurring between the ages of one and five, the total number of deaths under five years of age reaches the large total of 57 out of 89.

It has been well said by a high authority on sanitary matters—viz., Dr. Wilson, Medical Officer of Health for Mid-Warwickshire—that the death-rate of children under five years of age is in many localities a far more reliable criterion of the sanitary conditions affecting the health of communities than the total annual death-rate, even although every allowance is made for neglect, deficiency of food, mal-nutrition, and exposure; at the same time, we must not forget the effects on the death-rate of intemperance, immorality, and early or injudicious marriages, especially among the lower classes.

During the year, a Local Government Board enquiry has been held with regard to the question of Public Scavenging at Atherstone.

A considerable number of improvements in the sanitary condition of Atherstone have been carried out during the year.

Phoenix Yard (top part).—A portion has been paved. Duckett's closets have replaced old privies. *Bottom part.*—Old privies done away with, and Adams's Latrines put in.

Old House Yard.—A number of old houses have been pulled down, and the sanitary arrangements very much improved.

Avins's Yard.—On Mr. George Fox's property in this yard the sanitary arrangements are defective. The existing privy-middens and ashpit ought to be converted into slop closets, water closets, or Adams's Latrines, and the open ashpit roofed in. In the same yard, I understand Mr. Fielders has given orders to have the sanitary defects on his property remedied at once.

Wheat Sheaf Yard.—Has been very much improved.

Cordingley's Yard.—Has also been much improved, but the privy-middens ought to be abolished.

Bingham's Row.—All the privy-middens have been abolished, and Adams's Latrines fixed in their places; but the yard is very badly paved.

Swan-with-two-Necks' Yard.—Duckett's closets and covered ashpits have in this yard replaced the old privy-middens, and a portion of the yard paved.

Spencer's Yard.—Is also much improved.

Druids' Arms Yard.—Has also been much improved by Duckett's closets in place of privy-middens, and the yard paved.

King's Arms Yard.—This yard is in a very unsatisfactory state. The Hopper closets are quite inadequate for the needs of the yard, and Duckett's closets ought to be substituted.