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BOROUGH OF RUTHIN



ANNUAL REPORT

of the

Medical Officer of Health

for the

Year 1946

Medical Officer of Health:

ENID HUGHES, M.D., Lond.,
B.S., Lond., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H.

THE MANOR HOUSE,

RUTHIN,

9th October, 1947.

*The Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses
of the Ruthin Town Council.*

I have the honour to present to you my Annual Report for the year 1946, prepared according to Circular 13/47 Wales, issued by the Welsh Board of Health.

Compared with 1945, when the birth-rate was unusually low for the area, the birth-rate is raised; the actual number is 42, against 35 last year, and an average for many years of 40. The birth-rate, however, compared with that for England and Wales, is 11·71 against 19·1 and is very low. The deaths have also increased, and the death-rate is 13 compared with that of England and Wales, 11·5. The average age at death however, was 68·79 years, an average obtained from all deaths, including those of two infants of under one month. It is obvious, therefore, that the statistics, without the comparability factor not at present furnished by the Ministry, must be accepted with a knowledge that the average age of the population in the area is high. This is usual in a town like this, with a healthy mild climate, comparatively little industrialism, and consequently a high proportion of retired persons, and a low proportion of young married persons.

The town was quite remarkably free from infectious disease, and even the influenza epidemic in the early spring caused only one death. Again there were no notifications of diphtheria in children under fourteen, in fact no diphtheria was notified at all. There remains a high percentage of children immunised against diphtheria.

There was slightly less tuberculosis notified, and only one death occurred, compared with 4 in 1945.

The quality of the water supply was never better ; all the bacteriological reports were satisfactory. The quantity obtainable from the town supply is still inadequate, owing to insufficient storage capacity at the reservoirs. The consumers do not suffer, as the Council buys from the Birkenhead Corporation Supply. The Council hoped to put in an Artesian Well to save the expense, which is considerable, of buying water, but the water which would be obtained from the well has a hardness of over 17, the permanence of the supply from it is more than doubtful, and I hope other means will be found to augment the town supply.

Ruthin was well forward in the completion of the pre-fabricated houses, all fifty allotted to the town being occupied before the end of 1946.

During 1946, the Council at last had the services of a full-time Sanitary Inspector and Surveyor, Mr. K. C. T. Jacks, and I would like to acknowledge his excellent work in all branches, particularly the sewage.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

ENID HUGHES,

Medical Officer of Health.

SECTION. A.

Vital Statistics of the Area.

Population : 3595.

Number of inhabited houses: 987.

Product of a penny rate: £79.

BIRTHS.

	1946	1945	England & Wales
Total	... 42	... 35	
Rate per 1000 population	11·71	... 10	... 19·1
Total illegitimate births	... 2	... 6	
Still-births, total	... 0	... 0	

DEATHS.

All causes, total	... 47	... 39	
Rate per 1000 population	13·0	... 11·6	... 11·5
From infectious diseases :			
(a) Influenza	... 1	... 0	
(b) From Tuberculosis	... 1	... 4	
(c) From Cancer	... 5	... 11	
(d) Infantile mortality per 1000 live births	47·6	... 28·6	... 43
(e) Deaths from diarrhoea and enteritis in in- fants under 2 years, per 1000 live births	0	... 0	... 4·4

SECTION B.

Infectious Diseases.

TABLE OF NOTIFICATIONS.

DISEASE—	Notified in 1946			Notified in 1945			Deaths.
Typhoid Fever	nil	...	...	nil	...	...	
Paratyphoid	nil	...	...	nil	...	...	
Cerebrospinal fever ...	nil	...	...	1	...	...	
Scarlet fever	6	...	...	1	...	...	0
Whooping Cough ...	3	...	...	nil	...	...	0
Diphtheria	nil	...	...	3	...	...	
Erysipelas	nil	..	...	nil	...	...	
Small-pox	nil	...	...	nil	...	...	
Measles	1	...	...	57	...	...	0
Pneumonia	19	...	...	6	..	...	4
Influenza	not notifiable			not notifiable			1
Sonne dysentery ...	6	...	...	1	...	...	0

There was exceptionally little notifiable infectious disease in 1946. There was a sharp and fairly severe epidemic of influenza in late January and in February, with one fatality. There was a general prevalence of other severe respiratory disease at this time, with with an unusual number of cases of pneumonia, four of them fatal. All the deaths occurred in persons after middle age, the average age of the 4 persons being 68 years.

No cases of diphtheria were notified.

IMMUNISATION AGAINST DIPHTHERIA.

During the year 1946, 44 children in the 1—4 inclusive age group completed courses of immunisation against diphtheria. This produced a figure of 96% in the children under school age. This is certainly a low estimate, as there are always children immunised by the parents' private doctor, whose names are not in the lists furnished to me by the County Council officials, who do the free immunisation.

During the year, 13 school children received primary immunisation doses against diphtheria. This produces a percentage of 96·5% known to be immunised, again a conservative estimate, as it takes no account of the children attending private schools, who are not immunised by the County officials, but are probably 100% immunised.

This is a most satisfactory position, as we can again show a year with no notifications of diphtheria in school children, in fact, this year, none at all.

TUBERCULOSIS.

NOTIFICATIONS—	1946	1945	1944
Pulmonary ...	4	8	4
Non-pulmonary ...	2	0	0
Deaths ...	1	4	1

Three of the cases of pulmonary tuberculosis were of young women. There were none occurring in men serving or recently discharged from H.M. Forces. Help has been given by the County tuberculosis authorities in nursing cases unlikely to benefit from Sanatorium treatment; as the policy of the authorities is naturally to use the limited beds at their disposal for those cases likely to derive benefit from Sanatorium treatment, it remains for the severe and hopeless cases to be nursed at home. Whilst the Council does all it possibly can to provide houses for tuberculosis persons, it is much hindered by the shortage of houses.

CANCER.

The death-rate from cancer was the lowest for some years, less than half that for 1945.

Monthly clinics by the staff of the Manchester Radium Institute are held at Wrexham. Other patients attend the Liverpool Radium Institute, the staff of which will call at Ruthin, by arrangement with private doctors, to see out-patients.

MATERNAL MORTALITY.

There was one maternal death.

Fortnightly clinics under the County Council are still held at Ruthin. There is still dearth of maternity beds, which are urgently needed, not only because of the shortage of houses and of domestic help, but because of the totally inadequate amount of household linen allowed to newly married couples by the Board of Trade and the high coupon rate for sheets and towels. This is a point which I have not seen sufficiently stressed, and would appear to be more easily remedied than the shortage of houses and domestic help.

SECTION C.

Water.

- (i) The supply, obtained from the Ruthin Borough Water Supply, is an upland surface water, filtered and chlorinated, because there are many farms on the gathering ground.

There is not quite sufficient water from the supply to to fulfill all the needs of the town, owing, not to the insufficient gathering ground, but to the insufficient storage capacity. The consumers, however, never suffer shortage of quantity, as the Council buys from the Birkenhead Corporation if the reservoirs are empty. During 1946, there was some trouble in the filters, owing to minute algae which clogged them. One of the banks of the small reservoir also needed repair. During this time, in the months of July and August, the water supply was augmented from the Birkenhead supply.

Though there is ample water in the large mains for the town's requirements, there is considerable trouble of short supply owing to poor pressure in the higher parts of the town. The County Grammar School in particular has, on occasion, had to be closed, owing to the lavatories not flushing. This matter of poor pressure is the constant care of the Council, who have reduced wastage by 66%, by supervision of cracks and bursts not repaired by tenants and occupiers; the Council have also laid new mains in the main streets of the town, and to the

new housing estate at Parc-y-Dre. An Artesian well, on which I reported in my report for 1945, was still under consideration by the Council in 1946. I was not in favour of it, as I then reported the water was too hard.

The QUALITY of the water remains good. All bacteriological examinations were very satisfactory.

- (ii) No bacteriological examination is made of the water before treatment. It is known always to be contaminated heavily with b. coli, and bacteriological examinations are made of the water in the service taps.
- (iii) The water is no markedly plumbo-solvent.
- (iv) There has been no suspected contamination.
- (v) 2946 of the population live in 814 houses with a piped supply, and 527 live in 175 houses with stand-pipes.

Drainage and Sewerage.

At the beginning of the year, the sewage farm was in a very bad condition, as it was clogged. Cutting new channels and subsidiary channels has made a considerable difference, and the sewage has worked better, with all the new houses which have been built, than I had anticipated. Considerable work has also had to be done in cleaning and scraping sewers, and in dealing with sewers laid with insufficient fall, but the conditions are gradually improving.

SANITARY INSPECTION.

- (i) **BAKEHOUSES:** These have been regularly inspected and in good order, after notices were served on three owners to remedy certain sanitary defects.
- (ii) **DAIRIES, COW-SHEDS and MILK-SHOPS:** Monthly visits of inspection were paid to these and were found to be generally well kept.
- (iii) **MILK SUPPLY:** There are twelve wholesale and retail producers in the Borough. Three produce T.T. Milk, two accredited, one pasteurised and six plain milk.
- (iv) **SHOPS:** These are regularly inspected and are satisfactory.
- (v) **SMOKE ABATEMENT:** No complaints of nuisance from smoke have been received during the year.
- (vi) **HOUSING:**
 - 1. (a) Total number of houses inspected under the Acts 198
 - (b) Number of visits paid before defects were remedied 396
 - 2. Number of houses found to be in a state injurious to health and unfit for inhabitation 3
 - 3. Number of houses found to be defective but not in all respects unfit for human habitation 2

Remedy of defects during the year by letter or informal notice	88
Remedy of defects during the year by Statutory notice	4
Legal action taken by statutory powers during the year	nil
Proceedings under the Housing Acts 1936, Sec. II :	
(a) Number of separate tenements or underground rooms in respect of which closing orders were made	2
Housing Act 1936, Part IV (Overcrowding) :	
(1) Number of houses overcrowded during the year	1
(2) Number of families dwelling therein ...	4
(3) Number of persons dwelling therein ...	8

Housing Acts 1930—1936 :

Although there are many houses in the borough which are unfit, this work has had to be temporarily suspended until the acute housing shortage has been reduced.

New Houses :

During 1946, 50 prefabricated houses were built on the new housing estate at Parc-y-dre, and plans passed for 84 permanent houses on the same estate. This, it was estimated, would solve the housing problem for the area, and begin the replacement of the houses condemned so long ago as 1937.

FACTORIES.

These were regularly inspected, and were found to be kept in a good state. The only factories in the area are two mineral water factories, and one brush-works, and one engineering factory, not in production in 1946.

BAKE-HOUSES.

These have been regularly inspected, and three owners were served with notices to remedy sanitary defects, and complied with the requirements of the Sanitary Inspector.

Arthur Williams,
Printer,
Ruthin