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Contributors

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Basingstoke

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT.

The Clerk read the annual report of the Medical Officer of Health, which was as follows: Gentlemen,

In presenting my 26th annual report, I beg to say that the delay in doing so has arisen from the absence of the census returns for 1901 of the population in the Rural District, without which it was impossible to compile accurate statistics.

The enumeration of the population now received from the Registrar General's office comes somewhat as a surprise, being only 11,358 against 11,659 at the census of 1891.

During the last decade there has been a steady annual increase of births over deaths, with a corresponding increase of population, but these yearly increments were apparently more than counterbalanced by continuous removals from rural to urban centres, and also by emigration abroad.

The general health of the rural district has been favourable during the last year, the death rate having been 13.0 per 1000 population against 14.2, the average of the last ten years, this being a lower rate than that of the rural districts of England and Wales generally.

These deaths have been nearly equally distributed amongst the Union districts, the largest number having as usual taken place in No. 4 district, which includes the Workhouse Infirmary with its many cases of senile decay. The mortality amongst infants under one year of age continues to be satisfactorily low, namely, 1.5 per 1000 of the population, or 79 per 1000 of births registered. The mortality under 1 year in rural England and Wales in 1901 was 125 per 1000 births, that is, double the rate of this district.

The birth rate is the lowest on record for the last ten years, being only 25.0 against the average of 31.1.

The mortality from infectious diseases was seven, being one from measles, four from whooping cough, one from diphtheria, and one from scarlet fever, all in children under 15 years of age, giving the very low rate of 0.5 per 1000 population. In rural England and Wales last year this rate was 1.35.

The only infectious disease prevailing to any extent in 1901 was scarlet fever. Of this disease 42 cases were notified, but none ended fatally.

The disease was chiefly amongst children, and the bulk of the cases fell on Union districts 2 and 4, there having been 16 cases in Streatham, North Waltham and Oakley, and 22 in Sharfield and Bramley.

This epidemic was a continuation of the one prevailing in the last months of 1900, which originated in the Allen district amongst the "hoppers." The disease spread from Tisbury into Romsey by intercommunal visits of families, and as occasionally slight cases pass unobserved and untreated they become the chief cause of extension to others.

Almost every case when notified was immediately removed into the Isolation Hospital, as they could not be properly treated in their own homes; but whenever this was possible it was done, with the view of saving the great expense of removal into and treatment in the Isolation Hospital.

Despite the necessary heavy outlay the existence and use of the new Isolation Hospital has been of the greatest service in restricting the increase of the epidemic.

Just only six cases of scarlet fever were notified in every month throughout the year, and in most of the Union districts. Many of these cases were sporadic, and in only two of the Union districts, 2 and 4, could the disease be said to be epidemic. In dealing with this and other febrile contagious diseases closure of the schools has been had recourse to, but only when other measures and careful exclusion of children from infected homes had proved insufficient.

No case of smallpox has occurred, but in the event of such an occurrence effective means of dealing with the disease have been considered and arranged with the Rural District Council.

Measles vaccination is being carried out amongst the officials and inmates of the Workhouse, and amongst the public generally.

Only two cases of diphtheria were notified, and both were successfully treated in the Isolation Hospital.

There were as usual many cases of whooping cough in some parts of the Rural District, four of these proving fatal.

This disease, in common with measles, is not notifiable here, and can be but imperfectly dealt with by the sanitary authorities.

In my opinion a modified system of notification might be adopted with advantage for measles and whooping cough. The medical men in the several Union districts might be asked to notify the first case in any household. This would place the Medical Officer of Health on the alert, the schoolmaster would be officially warned, and the school children inspected. It is the congregation of children in school that causes the rapid rise of an epidemic, and all children with "colds" or febrile symptoms would be at once sent home.

Six cases of erysipelas were notified, chiefly facial and of a mild type, one case only being of a serious nature.

One case of enteric fever was reported from No. 1 district, and one case of paratyphoid fever in No. 5 Union district.

Dysentery was less prevalent than usual amongst children or adults, there having been but one death from this cause; nor were any deaths returned under "enteritis."

The mortality from phthisis is the same as last year, namely 15, being less than one in every 1,000 of the population. This is a satisfactory feature in the returns, and shows that the improvement in the treatment of the poor is telling favourably against this great cause of mortality throughout England.

The deaths returned under heart disease are always numerous, but very few of these are acute cases, the great majority being instances of heart failure in aged and broken down constitutions.

Cancer was fatal in six instances. Last year sixteen deaths were returned from this cause. Five deaths from influenza, and two from accidents, complete the roll of mortality for 1901.

Systematic and special inspections of villages and schools have been made in the course of the year.

All dairies and milkshops have been kept sweet and clean.

The water supply has been sufficient and of good quality.

The cottage dwellings are improving year by year, and although there are occasional instances of overcrowding, the general housing of the poor in this Rural District has greatly changed for the better during the last decade.

The work of your Sanitary Inspector during the past year has as usual been important and extensive, and has been carried out with real efficiency.

Ten condemned cottages have been pulled down or shut up, and thirty repaired and improved. Forty-two milkshops have been licensed, and four structurally improved, whilst over two hundred other sanitary matters connected with villages, drains, etc., have been attended to and rectified.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
CHARLES HENRY JOHNSON.

The Chairman said it was a satisfactory report. He was glad the Medical Officer was taking notice of the Board in isolating fever cases, when possible, at the patients' expense.

He thought they must complement the Medical Officer on his report. Doubtless it would be published in the newspaper, and they would then be able to give it more time than they could today, and if the Council then thought fit they could carry out the Medical Officer's suggestions.

The Clerk: With regard to the notification of measles and whooping cough?

The Chairman: Yes.

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