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Contributors

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BOROUGH OF BEWDLEY.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

Medical Officer of Health

FOR

✻ **1919.** ✻

BEWDLEY :

W. E. TOLLEY, PRINTER, 29, LOAD STREET.



TO THE *Town Council of Bewdley.*

GENTLEMEN,

**Physical Features
of the District.**

The Borough of Bewdley is situated on the west bank of the river Severn, and the steeply rising ground above it.

Population.

The population at the census of 1911 was 2,745, and has probably not altered much since that time.

**Chief Occupations
of the
Inhabitants.**

The chief occupations of the inhabitants are Agriculture, including a great deal of Fruit growing, the Timber trade, and, in the Borough itself, there are a small Tanyard, and two small Metal Works. A large number, probably over 400, of the people, of all sexes and ages, go daily to work in the Carpet and Wool Spinning Factories of Kidderminster, and a good many men and lads work in the Coal Pits of the Highley Mining Company. There are therefore, no definitely unhealthy occupations, and some of them are distinctly favourable to longevity.

Death Rate.

Thirty deaths were notified in the District during the year, giving a rate of 10·82 per 1,000 of the population.

Of these there were:

	Under 1 year	5
	Between 1 year and 5 years	None
"	5 years "	15 "
"	15 "	25 "
"	25 "	65 "
	Over 65 "	14
		—
		30
		—

Eight persons belonging to the district died outside it, and one person, not belonging to the district, died in it, making the total number of deaths of persons belonging to the district for the year 37, giving a nett death rate of 13·93 per 1,000 of the population.

Infant Mortality.

Five deaths of children under one year of age were registered, giving a rate of 104 per 1,000 children born.

Birth Rate.

There were 48 births registered during the year, giving a rate of 17·36 per 1,000 of the population. This very low birth rate is, no doubt, accounted for by the number of young men who were absent on military service. In the first quarter of the year the deaths actually exceeded the births in number.

Water Supply.

The water supply is from a deep well and bore hole in the new red sandstone, situated in the Parish of Wribbenhall, on the east bank of the Severn. It is pumped into two reservoirs, one for the higher part of the town, the other for the lower part, from which there is a constant supply, and no possible source of contamination.

From the lower, larger, reservoir the Urban District of Stourport, and the Parish of Wribbenhall, also receive their water supply.

The supply is practically unlimited in quantity and of first rate quality, as has been proved by periodical analysis.

**Drainage and
Sewage.**

**River
Contamination.**

The main sewers of the district are, in most cases, in the course of natural streams, and consequently, though in rather dilapidated condition in parts, kept very well flushed, except in very dry weather, and the sewage is discharged, in a crude state, into the river Severn.

The volume of sewage, however, is so small, compared with the volume of water into which it flows, the current of the river so swift, and the nature of the river bed such, that no ill effect of the contamination are apparent.

**Closet
Accommodation.**

There are 348 Water Closets in the district, 85 Pail Closets, and 132 Middens.

There is a steady improvement in the number of Water Closets, there being now 30 more than in 1915.

Scavenging.

The Scavenging is done by the Corporation Workmen, the house refuse being deposited on a piece of waste ground in the vicinity of the town, and the night soil removed to a distant farm where it is put on the land.

**Sanitary
Inspection.**

During the year 221 visits of inspection were made by the Sanitary Inspector, either alone or in my company, and 71 notices of Sanitary defects, including 9 statutory notices, were served by him.

Owing to the great shortage of labour in the building trades it has been difficult for owners of property to comply with the notices, but, in most cases, the necessary work has been done.

Schools.

The Public Elementary Schools are in a satisfactory Sanitary condition, and their water supply is good.

Milk Supply.

The Milk Supply is in the hands of several small farmers, who, in most cases, are also the distributors, so there is no chance of contamination in storage, but the condition of some of the cow-houses is by no means satisfactory.

Slaughter Houses

There are now only two Slaughter Houses in the district, which are fairly satisfactory.

One old registered Slaughter House, which had fallen into disuse, was refused a license to re-open owing to its unsuitable position, and the impossibility of making the premises comply with the Bye-laws.

There were six cases in which unsound meat or carcasses were condemned and destroyed during the year.

Infectious Diseases.

There was a very severe epidemic of Influenza in the early part of the year, but, fortunately, only one person died of the disease.

There was also an outbreak of Measles in July and August, 38 families being affected, and the Schools being closed from August 18th, to September 6th, but no deaths were caused by it.

Two cases of Diphtheria were notified, both in the same family, one of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, two of other forms of Tuberculosis, one of Pneumonia, which was fatal, two of Erysipelas, and two of Malaria in discharged soldiers. Two cases died of Tuberculosis during the year.

Vaccination.

The majority of parents do not now have their children vaccinated, only 10 babies, out of 48 born, being vaccinated by the Public Vaccinator during the year.

This state of affairs is growing worse from year to year, those who do have their children vaccinated being mostly of the better educated class, who, in the event of an outbreak of Small-pox, would be least in need of protection.

Hospital Accommodation.

Severe cases of Sickness or Accident, and cases in need of operation, generally go to the Kidderminster Infirmary, and the infirm poor, who cannot be properly cared for at home, to the Kidderminster Union Infirmary.

There is a standing agreement with the Kidderminster Corporation that cases of Scarlet Fever and Small Pox may be sent to their Isolation Hospital.

Workshops.

There are 19 Workshops on the register, and four Bakehouses. 27 Inspections have been made during the year, and four notices served, which have been complied with.

Housing.

There are 702 inhabited houses in the district, 459 of which are working class dwellings.

During the year no new houses have been built.

A survey of the district was made by the Sanitary Inspector and myself in October 1919, in the course of which we visited 212 houses, and a report was made by the Council to the Housing Commissioner.

We estimated there was a deficit of 92 houses for the working classes.

There is a very considerable amount of overcrowding, largely due to the fact that young married couples are unable to find houses for themselves, and have to continue to live with their parents.

It is impossible to deal with these cases, as no alternative accommodation can be found.

The Council has prepared a preliminary scheme for building 30 new houses, and contemplates the eventual building of 60 more.

A site has been approved by the Government Inspector, and negotiations, with a view to fixing the price of the land, are in the hands of the Government Valuer.

The general standard of the housing in the district is very low. The houses are nearly all very old, and, of recent years, partly, no doubt, owing to shortage of labour, the repairs, which are continually necessary in this class of houses, have not been properly carried out.

The general character of the defects are (1) dampness, due to defective roofs and spouting, and, in many instances, to the soil being against the back or side walls; (2) lack of proper ventilation, owing to windows being small or unable to be opened; (3) lack of proper sanitary conveniences; and (4) defective paving.

No closing orders can be made, for the same reason that overcrowding cannot be dealt with, namely, that no alternative accommodation can be found for the present inhabitants.

It is to be hoped that the Council will press forward its Building Scheme, with more vigour than it has hitherto done, as, until new houses are erected very little can be done to remedy the truly appalling condition of the housing of the Borough.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

U. W. N. MILES,

Medical Officer of Health.





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