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Contributors

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ELEVENTH
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
BOURNE URBAN DISTRICT
For the Year 1909.

BOURNE, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1910.

To the Bourne Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

The Report for the year 1909 must be mainly a negative one, but the old adage that "no news is good news," in this case is not altogether true; for if I have no tale to tell of flood or fire, no history to chronicle of pestilence or famine, so far indeed no news is good, but if I can record no steps of sanitary progress in times when sanitary science is perhaps of all the most progressive, then indeed the adage falsifies itself.

As to the character of your district, it has of course undergone no change during the past year, no fresh sources of industry have arisen, and as in the past the inhabitants are dependent mainly upon agriculture, which has had a season of quite average prosperity, and there has been no evident distress or lack of employment.

The demand for labour in such a district as this is practically a constant quantity which the district, with its attenuated birth-rate, is barely able to supply, and since during the space of the last two or three decades the wage of workers in all other classes has risen out of proportion to that of the agricultural labourer, there is no pressure from competition from elsewhere.

You would therefore expect that the exodus from the district will comprise the youth, and of them the more energetic, leaving in the district an undue proportion of the more elderly, to whom, as I have previously pointed out, your charities offer an extra inducement to remain.

These facts have to be recorded, because they have their influence upon the Vital Statistics which of course show disadvantageously in a district where the proportion of old people is unduly high, and that such is the case, is proved by the fact that of an estimated population of 4379 there are 120 actual recipients of the old age pension, or a proportion of 1 to every 36 of your inhabitants.

Vital Statistics. But for the still falling Birth-rate, these might be described as satisfactory, and certainly they show a decided improvement as compared with last year.

The total number of deaths of inhabitants was 59, inclusive of 1 in Stamford Infirmary and 5 in the County Asylum, giving a Death-rate of 13·2, which compares very favourably with the rate of 16·3 for last year, and is, with the exception of the year 1906, the lowest for the last 10 years. The mortality amongst infants under one year of age shows a very satisfactory decrease, numbering 9 as against 17 for last year, and so reducing the rate per thousand births from 173·4 to 101·1, comparing favourably with 128·9, the average rate of the district for the last ten years, and when allowance is made for five of these deaths which occurred from difficulty or prematurity of birth, the result is very satis-

factory indeed, and although due allowance must be made for the facts that there have been no epidemics of infectious disease, and that, owing to the amount of moisture during the summer months, there was an absence of infantile diarrhoea, still it may be inferred that the diminished rate is in some degree due to improving knowledge and methods of rearing amongst the poorer classes. It is to be hoped that mothers, as they more fully recognise the great advantage of breast feeding, (for it has been proved that warm human milk has far greater resisting power to the entrance of putrifactive or other germs than any other substitute, however well sterilised it may be,) will try their utmost to do their natural duty to their offspring.

The total number of births registered in the district during 1909 was 89, and is the smallest number since its formation.

Infectious Diseases. There has been practically no epidemic of disease during the year and only eight cases were notified, five of Scarlatina, two of Diphtheria, and one of Erysipelas, resulting in one death from Diphtheria.

The Bourne Rural District Council, recognising the extreme importance of the prompt detection and treatment of the last-named disease, have made arrangements for expert microscopical examination in all doubtful cases, and for a supply of Anti-Diphtheritic serum at the disposal of their Medical Officer, and I would suggest your Council should take similar steps.

Under the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations of 1908, one case was notified during the year and this was watched, and proper steps taken, and after death the premises were thoroughly disinfected. Since the infectious nature of this complaint is now fully established, it would be advisable for the Council to add Pulmonary Tuberculosis to the list of notifiable diseases, as has already been done by the neighbouring Rural District Council.

I would once more express the opinion that Whooping Cough should also be included in the list of Notifiable Infectious Diseases.

The Vaccination Act of 1907 is, as I pointed out in my last Report, making Vaccination almost obsolete in this district; and probably has had far greater effect than its authors ever expected or intended. The irony of this result is that the very effectiveness of vaccination in the past has induced in the public mind of of to-day such a sense of remoteness of danger from Small-pox, that they are unwilling to undertake the slightest inconvenience to avoid it, and to this end they lightly make a solemn declaration, to which many a Magistrate as lightly subscribes his name. I cannot but think it should be the duty of the Magistrate as a man of educated and open mind, to point out to every applicant the scope and limits of the declaration.

Isolation of Infectious Cases. Under this heading there is nothing fresh to be said, so I quote from my report of last year. "Had necessity arisen during the past year, there would have been nowhere to send your cases except to the Isolation Buildings in Manor-lane, which you still pay the District Council for the right to use, and which Dr. Mivart in his recent Report found serious fault with. The erection and maintenance of an Isolation Hospital would be a serious charge on such a small district as this, and if it is impossible to re-open negotiations for a joint Hospital with the Rural Council, it may be feasible to buy of them the Manor Lane building and make the necessary alterations and provide water by a bore on the premises." That you have made overtures for the purchase of these buildings, and that they have been declined, I am aware, but surely the Rural District Council cannot be considering the interests of their ratepayers in allowing the value of the premises, for which they have no possible use, (for treatment of Small-pox there is out of question) to remain in idleness, and possibly a repetition of your overture might meet with success.

Housing Accommodation. During the year under review, there have been built only five new dwellings which could be classed as cottages, and these were roomy, well built and drained, and supplied with the water of the Bourne Waterworks Company.

There are in your district very many workers whose weekly wage is between 15/- and 20/- per week, and who therefore cannot afford to pay a rent of more than half-a-crown or three shillings per week, and this section of the community appears to be very inadequately provided for, their only resource at that rental being old and dilapidated mud and studd dwellings, and a few jerry-built brick hovels in different parts of the town, owned in many cases by small investors to whom of course the highest possible rental, with as little deduction as possible for repairs, is the essence of their speculation.

No doubt you are aware that under the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909, Part III. of the previous Act of 1890 comes into force for your District, and that Act contains the following important provision:—"In any contract for letting for habitation by persons of the working classes, a house, or part of a house, there shall be implied a condition that the house is at the commencement of the holding in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation."

The same Act also empowers your Council to acquire, by agreement or by compulsory purchase, land on which to erect dwellings suitable for the working classes, and to raise money for the purpose.

I would suggest that dwellings consisting of one good-sized living room and a kitchen-scellery with 3 bedrooms over, could be erected and would find a ready demand at about 2/6 per week without the Council being at much if any pecuniary loss, and would be quite as much benefit as a recreation ground to this semi-rural district.

Of the dwelling houses in the district, about one-fourth are provided with W.C.'s, the remainder having privies or in a

few cases earth closets, and in some none at all, these latter being a disgrace to such a district as this, where every house not having its own separate closet, should certainly be considered unfit for human habitation. It does not make the matter any the less scandalous that in two instances the property owners are members of your Council.

The work of providing the 68 cottages in Wood View with W.C.'s has been satisfactorily completed, and altogether 98 existing dwelling houses were during the year so provided.

Sewage Disposal. The fact that the bulk of the surface water of the town finds its way into the sewers, will explain that during the past abnormally wet year the Sewage Beds have been worked beyond their proper capacity, with the result that imperfectly purified effluent has found its way into the Weir Dyke, and so reduced its efficacy as a final source of purification for the effluent on its way to the outfall at Guthram. It will be remembered that in my last Report I urged the Council to increase the capacity of the beds, but up to the present, this has not been done.

Water Supply. The Water supplied by the Bourne Waterworks Company under natural pressure has, partly owing to improvements at the Company's bores, and partly no doubt on account of the extra rainfall, been more satisfactorily supplied, and there have been no more complaints of the shortage mentioned last year.

Dairies, Bakehouses and Slaughter-houses. There are seven Dairies on the register, and of these, five are quite small, the two large ones have both been thoroughly re-constructed, and are now quite satisfactory in every respect. The Bakehouses and Slaughterhouses have been systematically inspected during the year : the former were, on the whole clean, but there was some neglect as to limewashing, and after warning, this has been remedied.

All the Slaughterhouses were found to be well kept, clean, well drained, and with a good supply of water, except two minor ones which are very old established and where too strict an interpretation of the Bye-laws would seem an injustice.

Complaints were made to me of persons slaughtering and preparing meat for public sale on unregistered and unsuitable premises, the matter was reported to your Council, and the warning of the offenders by the Sanitary Inspector has put an end to the practice.

Nuisances. During the year 1909, according to the Report of your Inspector, 163 notices were served on owners or occupiers of property, viz. :—

- 62 for filthy and overflowing ashpits, &c.
- 58 for full and overflowing privies.
- 10 for faulty or improper drainage.
- 6 for filthy yards and premises.
- 15 for accumulations of rubbish, filth, &c.
- 11 for premises without any refuse accommodation whatever.

In addition to the above 74 letters were written as to nuisances which were remedied without final notice being served.

I would point out that your district as a whole is very deficient in properly constructed covered ash-bins, more particularly as to covering, for it is the wet which usually converts the refuse heap from a tolerable into an intolerable nuisance. In this respect I must remind you that the ash-pits of a row of cottages in Hereward Street, previously reported to you, still remain unremedied.

Workshops During the year one new workshop has been
and opened. The Workshops and Workplaces have been
Workplaces. systematically inspected, all were found clean, and
in every case except one the sanitary accommodation
was satisfactory, and in this case the matter was forthwith put
right.

One case of over-crowding was detected, and this, on notice
being given was at once remedied.

The usual Tables, dealing with Vital Statistics, Infant
Mortality, Infectious Disease, and Factories and Workshops, will
be found appended.

I am, Gentlemen,

Faithfully yours,

W. J. GILPIN.