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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

TO THE

CHAILEY RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

FOR THE YEAR 1904.



# ANNUAL REPORT.

Gentlemen,—I am glad to be able to give a good report upon the sanitary work accomplished in your district during the year 1904.

To begin with drainage: The comprehensive scheme granted for Ringmer has been nearly completed, and if in practice it is found to work as well as the other recent installations in the district, it, together with the extended water supply from Mr. Langham Christie's reservoir, should go far to raise Ringmer from the very low position it has previously held from a sanitary point of view, for in nearly every annual report of the Medical Officer of Health since your district was formed, and in that of Dr. Myvart's in 1899, Ringmer has been pointed out as requiring proper drainage. It is to be hoped that, when the sewers are in working order and the houses connected up with them, the owners will pay more attention to many of the dwellings themselves, especially in the Broyle-lane part of the parish, and if this is not done I fear it will be necessary to condemn several cottages as "unfit for human habitation."

The extensive scheme for the re-drainage of Ditchling at a cost of £5,606, which has received the sanction of the Local Government Board, should be a great benefit to this locality, as the general fall is much better than that which is now available in part of the existing arrangements, and the proposed outfall I consider almost ideal.

The extension of the sewer at the north end of Newick village, which also received the sanction of the Local Government Board, will work in with an extended provision for the sewerage of the Rough and Western-road parts of the village, which I hope may some day be carried out, though I fear this cannot be accomplished before a better water supply is provided there.

Improvements have been made in the drainage arrangements of several private houses and cottages during the year, and in the case of new houses attention has been given to this important detail, under your building by-laws. Thirty new houses have received certificates for occupation, of which 19 are supplied with water from wells, 10 from waterworks and one from rain water tank.

The weakest spots now remaining in your district, as far as public drainage is concerned, are, I think, the Asylum Corner, Wivelsfield (which I am glad to say is again having your attention), the west side of Barcombe village and the outfall of both sewers there, together with the row of cottages near the station at Cooksbridge.

The water supply generally remains one of the most difficult problems in the district for solution, and during the coming year must, I fear, give rise to great anxiety, especially from the continued shortage of rainfall. Miss Heale has again kindly sent me her record for the rainfall in Newick during 1904, which is:

	Inches.		Inches.
January.....	4.72	August .....	1.57
February .....	3.45	September .....	1.80
March.....	1.34	October .....	2.42
April .....	0.94	November.....	1.45
May .....	2.78	December.....	3.28
June .....	1.56		
July.....	0.99	Total .....	26.30

Unfortunately, some parts of the district suffer from their geographical positions. First, those being in that geologically interesting, but, as far as water is concerned, most disappointing area known as "The Weald of Sussex," where it would seem that the very subsoil lays claim to the alleged Sussex character, and the wells even "wun't be druve" with any advantage; second, portions of the district in proximity to the South Downs, where, although large volumes of water are situated in the chalk, the extensive pumpings at Brighton, Hove and Burgess Hill have so reduced the earth pressure that some surface streams which used to flow northwards through the district from the "hill" springs have obviously lessened, and there is no doubt that the same thing has taken place in the underground streams which supply some of the wells already dug and will effect the prospect of new ones.

Mr. Weller reports that the slaughter-houses have been kept in fairly good condition, and it is obvious that the chief gainer in having good premises must be the butcher himself, when the health of his family and employes and the "keeping" of his meat is considered, to say nothing of the question of public health. Mr. Weller also reports that there are 49 dairies registered in the district, and that better efforts have been made to keep these premises in good order by lime-washing, &c., but there are still many that are very far from perfect and several that require structural alterations. It is unfortunate, from a sanitary point of view, that the cow is an animal that can be housed in a very small space, and doubtless there is not half enough care taken, generally, with the cleansing of the cows' udders and teats before milking. This is a difficult thing to do at the best of times, but when it has to be done in a crowded cowstall, and, I suppose, more often than not by the light of a lantern, the difficulty must be very great. Another fault existing in some places is the improper arrangement made for cooling the milk, which is generally done by allowing it to run over pipes, through which cold water is circulating. This should always be done in quite a separate building, so that the milk should not be exposed to the air of the cowstalls, or that from fermenting food stuffs, or, perhaps, from a pigsty or from pig wash tubs. It cannot be too well known how very complex and unstaple the character of milk is, and how carefully it should be treated at the times of milking, conveying and storing to keep it wholesome for human use. Where milk certified as of "fair average quality" may contain certain growing micro-organisms to the number of 260,000 in one cubic centimetre (about 16 drops) at a temperature of 22 degrees centigrade, it can well be understood how rapid their growth may be when germs of certain diseases are introduced into such a congenial medium for them, as milk unfortunately is, and this is especially the case with the bacillus of typhoid fever. It is evident from recent legislature and discussions that, at no very distant date, the public voice will be demanding milk of much higher standards than are now, at times, allowed to pass in some parts of England. It is much to be hoped that all those who keep cows for the sale of their milk will make greater efforts to gradually improve the sanitary condition of their premises and animals, for



their own advantage and the good of the public health, perhaps taking the aseptic looking cows and milkmaids of picture book fame as an ideal to be aimed at!!

Your Isolation Hospital at Chailey was opened on 11th June, and has already proved of great use to the district. Nineteen cases (fifteen scarlet fever and four diphtheria) were admitted during the year; four of them had severe complications and I feel sure that two of the scarlet fever patients would have died if they had not been moved to hospital. Whatever doubt there may be as to the usefulness of these hospitals in urban and town districts in stopping the spread of infectious diseases, I am certain that in rural districts they are of the highest value, both for treatment and for the protection of the public. Miss Nicoll (the matron) has managed the nursing and domestic arrangements admirably, and the hospital has been run upon very economical lines, and I believe it will compare favourably with any other institution of its kind.

Nearly all the school premises in the district have been thoroughly overhauled and greatly improved, especially those of Ringmer, Ditchling and Newick. This should greatly benefit the children and teachers. The chief troubles remaining on some of the school premises are the water supplies and the difficulty of providing satisfactory outfalls for the drainage. It was necessary to close Newick and Plumpton Schools and the infant department at Barcombe for a time during the year. I am very strongly of opinion that the age of five years for compulsory school attendance is much too young, especially in rural districts, where of necessity the majority of the children must have a long way to travel, and must be away from home many hours a day. In towns this may be of less consequence, as the children have not so far to go, and probably the air of the school room is at least as good as it would be in a crowded town dwelling. I consider that if the age of seven years were given instead of five the children would grow up physically stronger and have greater learning powers.

Systematic inspection has been carried out in the district during the year, and Mr. Weller has generally accompanied me, and I am glad to say we have nearly always been well received. Mr. Weller also reports that nuisances have been abated in the parishes of Firle, Plumpton, East Chiltington, Wivelsfield, Beddingham and Barcombe; he has taken 68 samples of water during the year, which I have tested and reported upon.

Now that rural by-laws are so much to the fore, I beg to point out the necessity for the sanitary authorities having more power given them over *old* houses, especially with regard to water supply, prevention of damp and ventilation. And with regard to dairies, it seems rather an anomaly that the sale of milk may be prohibited when affected by disease or pollution, but the Sanitary Authority has no power to stop the sale of butter made from the cream taken from this milk, and I cannot understand that the process of making butter gives a guarantee

that infection, such as that of typhoid fever, might not be carried by it.

Tables I., II., III., IV. are annexed. By Table I. it will be seen that the population of the district is estimated to be 12,219; the number of houses being now 2,250, with the average number of persons per house of 5.04. The nett death rate is slightly higher than that of the previous year, being 10.97 per 1,000 of the estimated population, against 9.9, the number of deaths under one year of age being 22, against 24, and 23 in the previous two years. The birth rate works out at 21.03 per 1,000 of the estimated population. There is nothing calling for any special mention on Table II. Table III. shows that 47 cases of infectious diseases were notified in the district in 1904, beginning with one case of small-pox, which occurred in a man who undoubtedly contracted the disease in London, and I consider that great credit is due to all those who had anything to do with this case, as no spread of the disease took place from him. Fourteen cases of diphtheria were notified, all being situated in the Chailey sub-rural district; five of these were sent to hospital and the rest treated at home. Twenty-six cases of scarlet fever were notified, three from Lewes sub-rural, eight from Chailey sub-rural and 15 from Ditchling sub-rural; 19 of these were sent to hospital. It will be remembered that I made a special report about scarlet fever at Plumpton during the summer. One case of enteric fever was brought into the district from Brighton.

Table IV., "Causes of, and ages at, death during year 1904," shows that one death from small-pox took place in the district. This was a case of an old woman of 80, who had not been vaccinated. She was taken to the small-pox hospital at Sedgebrook. This case is another example of the fact that age is no protection against this disease, as was well borne out at the last epidemic at the Chailey Workhouse, where it will be remembered several old people contracted it and where re-vaccination of old people (some over 90), as well as of the young, proved its efficacy in stopping the disease; and I feel sure that many of the public, who now look upon vaccination with disfavour, would very much alter their opinions were they brought face to face with this disease, and able to watch the effect of vaccination and re-vaccination in stopping it, as some of us were able to do at the Workhouse in 1901. One death occurred from scarlet fever in a child who had not been treated by a doctor until shortly before she died. Sixteen deaths occurred from phthisis, eighteen from cancer. One death from a very rare disease is recorded, viz., from a thyroid tumour of the hip, which started from a goitre, and was carried into the system by absorption of the sternum bone. Seventy-six deaths took place in public institutions in the district.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

FRANK GRAVELY,  
Medical Officer of Health.

