

[Report 1898] / Medical Officer of Health, Cheadle R.D.C.

Contributors

Cheadle (England). Rural District Council.

Publication/Creation

1898

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Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health.

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL, CHEADLE.

SIR,—During the year ending December 31st, 1898, the number of deaths registered in this Rural Sanitary District is 415, 220 males and 195 females, giving a death-rate of 18·6 per 1,000 of the population. This rate of mortality is higher than that for 1897, and above the average of the five preceding years.

Of this total, 100 deaths or 24·9 per cent are of children under 1 year, and 130 or 31·3 of old people—60 and upwards. It will be seen that the infant mortality is nearly equal to one fourth the number of deaths at all ages.

Caverswall district again stands out conspicuously, for with a total of 104 deaths at all ages, 38 are of children under one year.

The number of births recorded during the year is 759, against 695 of the previous year. This number includes 394 males and 365 females, and gives a birth-rate of 34 per 1,000 of the population.

The percentage of deaths occurring under one year of age, measured in proportion to the recorded births, was 13·4.

Mortality from Certain Diseases.—The number of deaths from respiratory diseases, including Bronchitis and Pneumonia, is 77. This number exceeds by 17 that recorded for last year, and is above the average of the preceding five years, 59·6. The percentage of these deaths to the total is 18·5. The majority occurred in old people, and the mortality was the greatest in the second quarter of the year.

Phthisis.—The number of deaths from Pulmonary Tuberculosis is 22, against 25 of the preceding year. In making a comparison of the average yearly deaths for the five years 1884—1888 with that for 1894—1898, I find in the former period the number to be 28, and in the latter 25. This decline may in some measure be due to the greater sanitary improvements of recent years: as the avoidance of overcrowding, the better ventilation of premises, the building of houses on healthy and dry sites—together with good drainage—and a higher standard of living among the working classes.

Now that the infective nature of the disease is recognized it is most likely that other measures for its repression will in time be considered by Sanitary Authorities, such, for instance, as isolation and disinfection of houses, fomites, and sputa. Steps have already been taken to eradicate the disease from dairy farms, since it is well-known that tuberculosis is propagated by the drinking of milk from tuberculous cows, especially these in which the udder is affected.

Zymotic Disease.—From the principal Zymotic diseases 42 deaths have been registered, which is a higher total than has been recorded for a number of years. As will be seen, from the following figures, this is mainly due to the large number of deaths from Diphtheria and Measles.

One death occurred from Scarlet Fever, 18 from Diphtheria, 15 Measles, 1 Enteric Fever, and 7 Diarrhoea, giving a death-rate of 10·1 per cent of the total of deaths, and 1·8 per 1,000 of the population.

Of the 18 deaths of Diphtheria 12 were at The Meir, 5 at Adderley Green, and 1 at Kelson, near Dilhorne.

Of this number 5 were in the first quarter of the year, 5 in the second, 3 in the third, and 5 in the fourth.

All the deaths, with one exception, occurred in children, with an average age of about 5 years, and ranging from 14 months to 11 years. It will be seen later on that the disease was more prevalent in the first quarter of the year.

Measles.—The deaths from Measles occurred in young children, with an average age of 12 months, and in every case death was due to some complication, in 7 instances to Pneumonia.

From Influenza 8 deaths were registered, and from Croup 3.

The subjoined table gives the number of deaths from the following Zymotic diseases for the preceding 5 years.

	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898
Scarlet Fever	2	0	3	0	1
Diphtheria	6	1	0	27	18
Measles	10	0	3	1	15
Whooping Cough	0	8	0	4	0
Enteric Fever	0	0	3	1	1
Total	18	9	9	30	35
Rate per 1,000 ...	·8	·4	·4	1·3	1·5

Uncertified Deaths.—The number of uncertified deaths is 23, against 19 of last year. In 16 instances a Coroner's Inquiry was held, and the cause of death returned as Convulsions in the young, and Syncope from Heart Affection in the aged. Of the remaining 7 deaths it was not considered necessary to hold an enquiry.

The number of deaths from accidental causes was 12, a Coroner's Enquiry being held in 11 instances, but not in the twelfth, as death was due to shock from a broken thigh in an old man at Kingsley, 102 years of age.

Notification Certificates.—During the year, 154 Notification Certificates have been received against 214 of the previous year. There were 31 cases of Scarlet Fever, 17 of Enteric Fever, 94 of Diphtheria, 10 Erysipelas, and 2 Sapræmia.

Scarlet Fever appeared in a sporadic form in different parts of the district. Ten cases were reported in the first quarter of the year, and 13 in the fourth. In every instance disinfection was attended to, and so far as practicable, isolation.

Enteric Fever.—Of the 17 notified cases of Enteric Fever 1 death resulted. Like Scarlet Fever, it made its appearance in a sporadic form. Four cases were in the first quarter of the year, 3 in the second, 2 in the third, and 8 in the fourth. One case at Hulme was imported into our district from Fenton. Two cases (in Chedale) broke out in houses recently built, and as their Sanitary condition and surroundings appeared to be quite satisfactory, I could only attribute the cause of the outbreak to the dampness of the premises and foundations, which, in one case, was beyond dispute.

At Leek Brook a case broke out under similar conditions. On my visit I found the premises very damp, owing to the house being built directly up to the garden, the soil of which lay against the back wall for some two yards in depth. In three cases I found the drinking water polluted, and in the majority of the remaining cases an insanitary condition of things was present. For instance at Forsbrook a case of Enteric Fever was notified in a house (one of a row of six) although these premises had been recently built they were becoming delapidated, owing to the dampness of the foundations and to being badly constructed. The drains were found blocked, the privies, cesspools, and ashpits in a very bad and unhealthy condition. The Authority ordered the abatement of the nuisance, but as the owner failed to comply, a subsequent order was served for the closure of the premises. This matter has since received attention. In the other instances insanitary conditions have been removed by order of the Sanitary Authority.

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Diphtheria.—Ninety-four notification certificates of Diphtheria have been received. In the first quarter of the year there were 45 cases; in the second quarter 23; in the third 18; and in the fourth 8.

The disease assumed an epidemic form at the The Meir, Adderley Green, and to a less extent at Caverswall. Each district within a radius of two miles. The Authority will remember that I sent in a special report to them and to the Local Government Board with regard to this epidemic. At the Meir alone the number of cases amounted to 48; at Adderley Green 27; and at Caverswall 8. In each of the above-mentioned places the outbreak was at its height in the first quarter in which 42 cases were notified—and as the year advanced the number of cases progressively declined, until 5 cases only were notified in the last quarter. The schools of the respective districts were closed for a month or so at the beginning of the year, as the attendance of the children had fallen off very considerably.

On notification the cases were visited immediately, and the usual steps of home isolation and disinfection were attended to, but this routine procedure had but little effect in such populous districts as the The Meir and Adderley Green, when we consider that the members of an infected household not only intermix freely, but that outsiders are allowed to pay visits with an utter disregard both to catching and conveying the contagion.

This difficulty has had to be contended with all through the epidemic, and in my opinion has been the chief factor in keeping up the spread of the infection.

Until some measures are taken whereby early and complete isolation can be carried out I do not anticipate any better state of things.

Water Supplies.—I am pleased to say the Sanitary Authority have successfully negotiated with the Cheadle Water Works Company for a more constant water supply. This course has become necessary from the fact that since the sewerage of the town, many of the property owners have removed the old privy closets and built water closets. The danger and inconvenience of having no water supply on Thursdays for flushing purposes was very great, especially when no provision is made for water storage.

Kingsley Water Supply.—Kingsley Village is still without anything like an adequate water supply, and the inhabitants in consequence are frequently put to very great inconvenience. A state of things which has now existed for a number of years.

There seems now to be some probability of bringing an abundant supply of good water, for the Sanitary Authority have arranged with the Mill Owners and the North Stafford Railway Company to get water from springs in the Churnet Valley and the Railway Company have promised water from the Canal for the purpose of working a pair of rams to force the supply to a storage reservoir at the upper end of the Village. Considering the yield of these springs is about 25,000 gallons of water per day, and is of good quality, I feel sure that if the scheme were carried out, the general requirements of the Village would be met.

Apparently, the only difficulty now in the way, is with the landowners, which I hope before long will be removed, and this much-needed work commenced.

With the exception of a few private wells, the general supply for the Village has to be procured from two public wells, with a yield of very little over 500 gallons per day.

Sanitary Work.—The most important work carried out during the year was the sewerage of the town of Cheadle. Queen Street alone remaining to be sewerage. I have little doubt this work will have a beneficial effect upon the health of the town. Previous to this the old surface road drains were used as sewers, and at times the escape of sewer gas from them was not only very offensive, but dangerous. During the drought of last summer I feel sure that numerous cases of severe diarrhoea were due to this cause.

I would advise the Sanitary Authority to attend to the Sewerage of Queen Street before next summer.

In other districts, notably Kingsley Village, Tean and Forsbrook, the old open and offensive sewers which existed, have been replaced by properly constructed ones.

Overcrowding.—A few cases of overcrowding have been remedied, and in one or two other instances proceedings were taken for the closing of houses unfit for habitation.

Scavenging.—The scavenging of the town of Cheadle has been satisfactorily carried on, 845 loads of ashes and 294 loads of night-soil have been removed.

Amongst other Sanitary work done, I may mention the removal of pig-styes, and I hope the Authority will see fit to continue the abatement of this, when it becomes a nuisance, and also the keeping of garbage and offal on premises until it becomes putrid and offensive.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

H. LANGLEY WEBB,

Medical Officer of Health.

Cheadle,
April, 1899.

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