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**Contributors**

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# MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT.

Reprinted from the NORTH WILTS GUARDIAN, February 19th, 1909.

At the meeting of the Chippenham Rural District Council on Monday, Dr. W. T. Briscoe presented his annual report on the health of the district. He estimated the population of the district at 17,835, the number of inhabited houses, 4,337, with an average of 4.07 persons per house. The total number of births was 441, giving a rate of 22.98, against an average for the past 10 years of 24.6. The deaths totalled 223, equal to a rate of 12.4. Of these 26 cases were under one year of age, which gave an infantile rate of 1.4 per 1,000 births. The average for the past 10 years was, infant death rate, 1.9 general death rate 14.0 per 1,000. There were 25 deaths in public institutions, four non-residents registered in public institutions, and six of persons in public institutions beyond the district. In the Chippenham district 906 births were registered. There were 44 deaths, seven being under one year of age. In the Corsham district there were 137 births, 99 deaths, 11 being under one year; in the Castle Combe district there were 61 births, 47 deaths, six being under 12 months old, and in the Christian Malford district there were 57 births, 35 deaths, two being under one year of age. The net number of deaths in the district was 225, equal to a rate of 12.58 per 1,000 compared with the following years:—1901, 219 deaths, rate 12.2; 1902, 262 deaths, rate 14.9; 1903, 229 deaths, rate 12.8; 1904, 267 deaths, rate 14.7; 1905, 231 deaths, rate 12.8; 1906, 200 deaths, rate 11.1; 1907, 253 deaths, rate 14.14. The causes of death were measles, 6; whooping cough, 1; diphtheria (including membranous croup), 6; diarrhoea, 3; enteric 2; erysipelas 1; phthisis 9. Other tuberculous diseases 1; cancer 21; bronchitis 13; pneumonia 10; pleurisy 1. Other diseases of respiratory organs 5; alcoholism 1; premature birth 4; diseases and accidents of parturition 2; heart diseases 34; accidents 3; suicides 1. All other causes 103. The cases of infectious disease notified during the year were as follow:—Diphtheria (including membranous croup) 34; erysipelas 15; scarlet fever 20; typhoid fever 2; a total of 71.

Gentlemen,—The tables I have just read to you are issued by the Local Government Board, and they contain such accurate details of the vital statistics that little is left for me to dilate upon. I submit my report on rather different lines, according to instructions received from the Local Government Board.

1.—*Physical Features of District: General condition of population: Chief occupations, and their influence on the public health.*—The district is composed of small towns and populous villages. It is generally hilly, and in parts well wooded. There are some streams running through, including the River Avon, which supply drinking water for cattle. The surface soil is either loam or gravel, overlying cornbrash or Oxford clay. The occupation of the inhabitants is principally husbandry, the only manufactory being paper at Slaughtford, brushes at Corsham, and the great stone works at Box.

2.—*House accommodation: Sufficiency of open air spaces about houses and cleanliness of surroundings: What supervisions over erection of new houses: What action has the Council taken under the Housing Act.*—The house accommodation is sufficient for the inhabitants, indeed, in two parishes I know of several houses being vacant, but the rents are high near the towns, especially so at Chippenham and Corsham. Several new cottages have been erected on farms for the convenience of the labourers working at these farms.

3.—*Water Supply: Its source, nature, and sufficiency.*—Your district is not naturally well supplied with water suitable for drinking purposes. For many years past public and private supplies have been extended by you from their original areas to outlying districts where water was required. This policy was continued last year. A large reservoir, drawing its supplies from the well owned by the Chippenham Urban Council, has been constructed at Hardenhuish by the Chippenham Urban Council. By arrangement you have been

enabled to supply water from the reservoir to parts of Hardenhuish parish and Chippenham (Without). There is a demand for water in Kington St. Michael and Kington Langley, and both these districts could easily obtain their supply from this source. The works for the water supply at Biddestone are complete, and the water laid on. The main in Malmesbury road, Chippenham, has been extended to the new houses in the Langley Burrell parish. There are no common lodging houses nor offensive trades. I have inspected with the Inspector of Nuisances the slaughterhouses, retail dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops, also the bakehouses and the paper mill, the only factory.

4.—*Milk Supply: Its character and wholesomeness: condition of dairies and milk-shops: What is done in regard to tuberculous milk.*—There are 17 retailers of milk registered, the premises of all have been inspected by me. In all cases the whole of the milk sold was produced in England, and was good in quality and carefully treated before sale. The population of the districts only permit of a limited business being carried on. I found the dairies, cowsheds, and milkshops in good order and clean.

5.—*Other Foods: What action has been taken under the Sale of Foods and Drugs Act? What is the condition of the premises where food is stored? Condition of slaughter-houses.*—There are important butchers' shops in Corsham, Box, and Lacock, where an extensive business is carried on. There are also smaller establishments in the villages. All are inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, and were for the most part found to be well kept, clean, and in order. In one case a large heap of manure was found to have accumulated near dwellings, although away from the slaughter-houses. As it was causing a nuisance I drew the owner's attention to it. He promptly removed it and selected a different site for future use. No carcase has been condemned during the past year in consequence of tuberculous. In conjunction with the police your officers take all possible care to prevent the sale of unwholesome meat. I frequently examine the contents of carts hawking meat and fish in the outlying portions of your district.

6.—*Sewerage and Drainage: Conditions of sewers and house drains: Methods of sewage disposal.*—Chippenham Without, Corsham, Box, Lacock, Kington St. Michael, and Castle Combe, have systems of sewerage of importance. In the district of Chippenham Without the system is new, up-to-date, and giving a satisfactory effluent. In Corsham two systems are worked; one has been in use for some years, the town has increased, consequently the amount of sewerage to be dealt with has increased, last year it was feared that the system was not working satisfactorily, considerable works for its improvement are now in progress. The second is a smaller system; it is a recent construction, working well, and giving a good effluent. In Box the outfall is not in a satisfactory condition. I propose to visit it soon with Mr. Balchin, the newly-appointed Sanitary Inspector, with a view to improving the condition of things. In Lacock, Kington St. Michael, and Castle Combe, the village drains are in good working order.

7.—*Removal of house refuse, frequency and method.*—A portion of the houses adjacent to the Urban District have their house refuse removed under contract. In Corsham, also, 350 houses have their refuse removed.

8.—*Nuisances: What proceedings are taken for their abatement.*—In company with the Sanitary Inspector systematic inspections have been made over portions of the district; all the villages have been inspected. I also made four inspections alone, Mr. Westbrook being either ill or too busy to come with me. As a result of these inspections about 150 nuisances or unhealthy conditions were removed. The Inspector informs me no notices are now outstanding.

9.—*Schools: Their sanitary condition, water supply: action taken in regard to health of scholars.*—The Public Elementary Schools were inspected by me and found in good order, most of them having a sufficient water supply. If there has been any serious outbreak of infectious disease among the scholars of any school, the school buildings are thoroughly disinfected before the school re-opens.

10.—*Infectious Disease.*—In your district upon the receipt of a notification of a case of scarlatina, diphtheria, or typhoid fever, if the friends of the patient are willing the case is removed in an ambulance in charge of a nurse, to the Isolation Hospital for treatment; the house or room recently occupied by the patient is disinfected as soon as possible by your inspector. In common with many other authorities we have had a considerable number of cases of diphtheria to deal with. In most instances the patients contracted the malady by personal contact with persons suffering from the disease. It is impossible very often to find the first case when investigating the origin of an outbreak. There is, however, generally a history of sore throat among friends or relatives of the patient. There have been from time to time several cases of diphtheria among the children attending St. Paul's School, Chippenham, where several children from the Rural district attend. The possibility of the presence of a "carrier case" being present has suggested itself to me when endeavouring to trace the origin of the outbreak, but I have so far failed to discover one. By a "carrier case" is meant a person not ill, but bearing the germs of disease in his person. Last year an outbreak of typhoid fever was traced to such a source. The patient had, however, left my district before the diagnosis was made.

11.—*Tuberculosis.*—No case has been notified as yet. The matter has engaged my attention. A record will be kept of all cases notified.

12.—*Medical Inspection of School Children.*—In reference to the memorandum on medical inspection of children in elementary schools. I have been appointed to examine the children in one school in your district. I am also conversant with the details found by the examiners in five other schools, but I have not material enough this year before me to report upon. My relations with the Local and County Education Authority are cordial and intimate.

13.—*The Isolation Hospital.*—This hospital was in use most months of the year. During the time it was closed the interval was utilised for a general clean-up, thorough disinfection, and the carrying out of some necessary repairs. Last year I reported to the Joint Committee that the wards for the treatment of diphtheria were not at all times sufficiently large for the number of patients seeking admission, and steps are now being taken to improve and increase the accommodation. Fifty patients have been admitted during the year, and of these 21 came from the Urban district, viz., one case of scarlatina, 18 of diphtheria, and two of enteric, while 29 cases came from the Rural district, viz., seven of scarlatina, and 22 of diphtheria. Nurse Warren is still acting as matron. She continues to enjoy the entire confidence of those working for and with her. I wish to take this opportunity of thanking those who kindly sent toys, books, illustrated papers, and children's clothes to the hospital. All are much appreciated. Children's clothes are most useful, the Matron is often sadly perplexed to find warm garments for the little ones when they are about to leave this warm ward for their draughty cottage home.

14.—*Factories and Workshops.*—A copy of my report upon these to The Home Office is appended.

15.—*Inspector's Report.*—A copy of Mr. Edmund Balchin's report is appended, from which you will see he has enquired into 177 cases or nuisances.

I remain, your obedient servant,  
W. T. BRISCOE, M.D.

