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Medical Officer's Report.



GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of presenting to you my Annual Report for 1913 as Medical Officer of the Coleford Urban District.

Coleford Urban District comprises the Town of Coleford, together with the outlying districts of Milkwall, Lane End, Berry Hill, Scowles and Whitecliffe.

The Town itself lies in a hollow, completely surrounded by these districts, which, with the exception of Whitecliffe, are all on higher levels. Berry Hill, lying on the North, has the highest altitude, being 751 feet above sea level. Whitecliffe, which is the lowest point, is 375 feet above sea level, while the Town of Coleford itself is 558 feet above sea-level.

The area of the District is 2,235 acres; the number of inhabited houses at the Census of 1911 was 566, and the number of population was 2,604. No material change is estimated to have taken place since the Census was taken. The population is divided between the different districts approximately as follows:—Milkwall 190, Coalway 206, Berry Hill 245, Scowles 255, Broadwell 360, Poolway 50, Whitecliffe 130, and the Town 1,168.

The outcrop of the coal measures divides the District into two almost equal parts, the western part lying above the iron and limestone measures, while the eastern part lies above the coal measures. The Town itself lies principally on a clay soil. Lane End lies above the blue sandstone, while the Scowles lies on the limestone.

The natural drainage of the District is provided by three streams running through small valleys, one valley running almost due east, another north-east and the other north-west from the Town. The streams which drain these valleys unite within the Town and form the brook, which, flowing in a south-westerly direction, passes through Whitecliffe and eventually empties itself into the Wye.

The various industries carried on in the District itself and in the surrounding localities are chiefly coal and iron-mining, quarrying and agriculture. There are Printing Works in the Town and the new Chemical Works at Cannop provide employment for a limited number.

There are no trades specially injurious to health carried on in the District.

VITAL STATISTICS OF THE DISTRICT.

TABLE I.

During the year 70 births were registered in the District, one birth, that of an illegitimate boy, being transferred from outside, and so bringing the total births belonging to the District to 71. The birth-rate per 1,000 head of population was 27.2, a slight increase on last year, when the rate was 25.9 and the number of births was 65.

Of the 71 births 35 were boys and 36 were girls, 5 of the former and 2 of the latter being illegitimate. The birth-rate this year is the highest since 1909, when the rate was 28.9 and the number of births was 75, the population being then estimated at 2,594.

35 deaths took place within the District during the year, the death rate per 1,000 head of population being 13.4. Seven deaths, however, of persons belonging to the District, have been transferred, so making the total number 42 and the rate 16.1. This is a slight increase on the rate for 1912, which was 14.2, the number of deaths being 37.

The number of deaths of infants under 1 year of age was 6, making a death rate of 84.5 per 1,000 births. This is a decrease of 69.5 per 1,000 births on last year, when the number of infantile deaths was 10 and the rate was 153.8 per 1,000 births. Of these 6 infants 2 died of pneumonia, 2 of premature birth, 1 of diarrhœa, and 1 of hepatic catarrh.

This infantile death rate is the lowest since 1909, when the number of infants who died was 6 and the rate 80.0 per 1,000 births.

Of the other deaths, 18 were of persons over 65, of whom 3 were over 80 years of age.

TABLE II.

This shows the number of cases of infectious disease in the District during the year, and the ages of the persons affected. The number of cases was 6, 2 being cases of diphtheria, one of scarlet fever, and two of tuberculosis—one of consumption of the lungs, the other a case of general tuberculosis,

TABLE III.

This Table shows the causes of death of all persons belonging to the District, whether occurring within or without the District, between certain ages, and the numbers certified and uncertified. The seven principal zymotic diseases, viz. :—Small-pox, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria (including membranous croup), whooping cough, fever (including typhus, enteric fever and simple continued fever), and diarrhœa, accounted for only one death, caused by diarrhœa. The zymotic death rate is 0.38 per 1,000 head of population. Congenital debility and malformations, with premature birth, caused 2 deaths, giving a rate of 0.76.

Cancer caused 7 deaths,	giving rate of	2.68.
Phthisis caused 2 deaths,	„ „	0.76.
Pneumonia caused 3 deaths,	„ „	1.15.
Bronchitis caused 3 deaths,	„ „	1.15.
Organic Heart Disease caused		
7 deaths	„ „	2.68.

There was one violent death, being a case of an old man of 93, who was injured in an accident.

There were two suicides, this being the first time within the last 9 years one has been recorded.

Of the other deaths, 1 was caused by rheumatism and 6 by apoplexy.

Four deaths of residents belonging to the District occurred in the Monmouth Union Infirmary.

TABLE IV.

This shows the causes of infantile mortality, together with the ages at which the deaths occurred, also showing how many are certified and how many uncertified. There were 6 deaths, all being certified. It also shows that 71 births took place, of which 7 were illegitimate; and that 4 legitimate infants died and 2 illegitimate.

HOUSING.

There are a great many old houses in the District, some considerably over a hundred years old, which are built of stone. Many of the newer houses are built of the same material, whilst a very few are built of brick. With the exception of a few houses in the Town all the houses have gardens, so that there is a fairly free circulation of air. The older houses have been inspected, and where defects in ventilation and lighting were found, these have been remedied, all the windows being made to open and

the window space increased sufficiently to give the proper proportion of lighting area to floor area. The housing accommodation is now under consideration by the Council, and it has been decided to call a meeting of the ratepayers to consider the question.

Plans have been approved by the Council for the building of 5 new houses, and 4 new houses have been built.

Four Water Certificates were granted under Section 6 of the Public Health (Water) Act, 1875.

Eight houses were made habitable, without closing orders being necessary. Three closing orders were made, and three houses made habitable after the service of the orders.

Four cases of overcrowding were reported, but were afterwards abated.

There are no hospitals in the District. The Workhouse is in Monmouth, to which District the parish is affiliated as regards Poor Law administration. The following institutions receive sick and infirm persons from the District, viz.:—Gloucester County Asylum, Gloucester Royal Infirmary, and Bristol Royal Infirmary.

SANITARY CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT.

There is a public water supply in the Town. During the summer months there is often a great deficiency, and as the supply is fed by gravity from a tank at the upper end of the Town, the pressure is never very great. Only the houses in the low-lying part of the Town have the water laid on, many of the inhabitants fetching their supplies from stand-pipes in the street. All the inhabitants of the District outside the Town itself depend upon private wells and reservoirs for their supplies.

A deputation of Councillors, by request of the Local Government Board went to London and interviewed the officials. They were then told to proceed to find more water, and for this purpose to incur expenditure not exceeding £200. This they have done at the Mill Pound Pit, and there seems every promise of a plentiful supply there to meet the requirements of the whole District. They are now waiting to be allowed to take up their promised grant, and are unable to proceed any further until this is allowed them. Further consideration will have to be taken in regard to the pumping of the water, and, if necessary, its storage at a higher level, so as to supply the whole locality.

Analyses have been made of the water from the Town Supply and the various wells, the number being ten in all.

One well has been closed.

SEWERAGE.

The sewerage in Coleford is in a very serious condition. It is a danger and a menace to the health of the Town. As soon as there is a sufficient supply of water to flush the sewers, a sewerage scheme should be planned and proceeded with systematically.

In those cases where a sewer has been laid the drains have been intercepted by traps between the house and the sewer, and inspection chambers provided. Ventilation of the sewer is carried out by soil pipes rising above the roofs.

The brook, which in earlier years was made to act as a sewer, performs the same duties still. In those places where it is enclosed it has been ventilated by large pipes as thoroughly as is possible. Unfortunately, where in some cases it runs under the houses for a considerable distance, it is impossible to ventilate it efficiently. This summer being a very dry season, the brook for a considerable length was quite dry for some weeks, and it was necessary to flush it with large quantities of disinfectants.

In the houses where the sewage is not passed into the brook, the bucket system is used, the refuse being cleared away by the Council's Scavenger twice weekly. In localities outlying for any distance use is made of privy middens, but these are gradually being superseded by septic tanks.

Nothing further has been done to the drain in Coalway Road.

House refuse is removed twice a week by the Council's Scavenger.

GENERAL WORK.

The Sanitary Inspector reported that:—Four cases of overcrowding were reported and have been abated.

Twelve houses have been cleansed on notice.

Nine improved privies have been constructed and five privy vaults abolished.

Twelve notices were served to empty privy vaults, and in such cases the work was done.

Twenty-six complaints were received and 73 nuisances reported to the Council.

221 nuisances of various kinds were abated.

The Sanitary Inspector states that all the houses in the District have been visited by him this year as he did last year.

To his report I may add that 127 preliminary notices were served, two statutory notices, and in two cases legal proceedings were necessary, these proceedings being successful in each case.

Under the Housing of the Working Classes Acts, 98 inspections have been made by myself and the Sanitary Inspector together, and the following defects noted:—

(1).	Arrangements for preventing the contamination of the water supply	9
(2).	Closet accommodation	14
(3).	Drainage	11
(4).	Condition of the dwelling house in regard to light, free circulation of air, dampness and cleanliness	12
(5).	Paving, drainage and sanitary conditions of any yard or out-houses belonging to or occupied with the dwelling house	16
(6).	Arrangements for deposit of ashes and refuse ...	8
(7).	The existence of any room which would, in pursuance of sub-section 7 of section 17 of the Act of 1909, be a dwelling house so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation	0
(8).	Any defects in other matter which may tend to render the dwelling house dangerous or injurious to the health of the inhabitant	22

Premises and Occupations which can be controlled by Bye-Laws or Regulations:—

The Slaughter-houses.

The Common Lodging House. This has changed hands during the year. The drainage and sanitary arrangements have been completely re-constructed and properly trapped and ventilated.

There are no offensive trades or cellar dwellings in the District.

SCHOOLS.

There are three Public Elementary Schools in the District. Neither has any water supply, the drinking water having to be fetched.

The names of all children absent from school, suffering from infectious diseases, are communicated to me by the Head-teachers each week. By personal knowledge or by enquiries made by the Sanitary Inspector. I satisfy myself that the children are absent for the reasons given. I sign the forms and forward them to the School Medical Officer. Each Head-teacher is provided with a chart, giving information as to the chief symptoms of infectious diseases and instructions as to what action should be taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

The School Medical Officer acts under the County Council. There has been no epidemic rendering it necessary to close the Schools at any time during the year.

LODGING HOUSE.

The Common Lodging House has been visited twice weekly by the Sanitary Inspector, and once monthly by myself.

FOODS.

(a) **Milk Supply**—No analyses of the milk produced in the District have been made, but it may be regarded as being wholesome. The cows are generally kept in a cleanly condition, but the milkers should take great care to have clean hands. Some of the milk sold comes from farms outside the District. One successful action was taken by the police in the case of milk from outside the District.

In regard to Tuberculous Milk no special preventative action has been taken, though in more than one instance cows are said to have died of Tuberculosis this year.

(b) **Other Foods**.—No seizures of unsound food have been made.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

These have been inspected at regular periods, and any matters requiring alteration have received attention.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

NOTIFIABLE.

In cases where persons have suffered from infectious diseases the houses are disinfected by the Sanitary Inspector. Printed instructions relating to isolation, etc., are given to householders, and disinfectants are supplied free of charge to persons who apply for them. There is no Isolation Hospital for infectious cases, nor any public disinfectory.

In cases of diphtheria, typhoid fever and tuberculosis bacteriological aids to diagnosis are utilised by the Medical Practitioners in the District. Examinations are made at the Public Health Laboratory, University of Bristol, but I cannot give the number.

Weekly returns of notifications of infectious diseases have been made to the Local Government Board and the County Medical Officer of Health.

Two cases of tuberculosis were notified, one being of pulmonary and the other of general tuberculosis. The houses were visited by the Sanitary Inspector and by myself. Printed leaflets, giving general information regarding the disease and simple instructions to the patient are supplied.

NON-NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

Chicken-pox, 13 cases.

Ring-worm, 7 cases.

Impetigo, 2 cases.

INVESTIGATION OF OTHER DISEASES.

The chief influences threatening the health of the District are in connection with the drainage and with the disposal of excretal refuse. Also the absence of a proper Water Supply.

In all infectious cases inquiries have been made into the causes, origin, and the distribution of the disease within the District, but other diseases have not been investigated.

There has been no outbreak of food poisoning.

Acute rheumatism and rickets are not prevalent, as neither are enteritis, diarrhœa, or pneumonia.

The Council passed a resolution in August last making all cases of ophthalmia neonatorum notifiable.

No special steps have been taken in regard to prevention of infantile mortality.

J. ROWLAND PAYNE,

M.O.H., Coleford.

ARTHUR T. BRIGHT,

PRINTER,

COLEFORD, GLOS.