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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

OF HEALTH

OF

COLEFORD

(COUNTY OF GLOUCESTER)

FOR THE YEAR 1921.

ARTHUR T. BRIGHT, CROWN PRINTER, "GUARDIAN" OFFICE,
COLEFORD.



Medical Officer's Report.

—♦♦—
TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
COLEFORD URBAN DISTRICT.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to present to you my Annual Report for 1921.

The health of the District was good generally throughout the year, with little sickness and nothing of an epidemic nature. Indeed, all through the year only 10 cases of infectious disease were notified, and this in spite of the prolonged drought we experienced lasting over three months, drying up several springs and wells, making the brook through the town to be little more than a trickle of water, and giving much anxiety as to the possibility of supplying Coleford with a bare necessity of water. Outlying districts fared very badly, the resources of any district with a larger supply than its neighbour being drawn upon to their utmost capacity.

There was no necessity to close either of the schools through sickness.

Forty houses are being built under the municipal scheme. They are nearly completed and will doubtless relieve us of much distress in regard to overcrowding, difficulty in making insanitary cottages more hygienic, etc.

WATER SUPPLY.

Nothing has been possible to augment the water supply of Coleford. We are still mainly dependant upon the precarious resources of a scanty supply of water which, issuing from the coal measures, runs through three valleys in easternly, north-easternly and north-westernly directions respectively, unite, and are passed through a sand bed and some of it collected into a receiver. From there the water runs by gravity through pipes to the lower parts of the town, and so supplies the inhabitants.

The pipes are old and half obliterated by the deposit of mineral salts, so that the supply becomes most scanty and inadequate in times of drought, and is quite insufficient for the needs of the town. In such times as I mention, it has been found that the amount gathered was only one gallon per half minute, and this fact entirely forbids its use in sanitation, and compels people living in the higher parts of the town to carry their water in buckets during the few hours the taps are on, unless they possess some other supply in the shape of rain water reservoirs or wells.

The scanty supply last year during the dry weather was most carefully husbanded, the main taps being turned off systematically every night, and so the water was made to suffice, but these conditions were very distressing and injurious to the inhabitants. It was out of the question to attempt to water the streets, although shop-keepers complained very much of the dust and unwholesome debris settling on their provisions and goods.

For the same reason we were also unable to flush the brook or the sewers.

Yet during the wet season there is an abundance of water, sufficient to supply adequately the needs of the whole of Coleford. For instance, Mr. Radford reported on the water supply of Coleford in this manner in April, 1912: — "The quantity varies very much, but it was gauged during a dry season in March, 1906, at 15,500 gallons a day; in July at 11,000 gallons; on July 30th, 1911, at the very low rate of 3,800 gallons a day. On February 23rd, 1912, it was found to amount to the large quantity of 454,000 gallons a day, most of which was running to waste at the Receiver Chamber." The total population of Coleford is 2,768, and a full supply for the whole town at 10 gallons per head daily would be under 28,000 gallons daily, and would be easily available if this winter supply could be stored for summer use.

Three samples from wells were submitted for examination, and were analysed and found wholesome.

The Local Government Board were approached over five years ago with a request to augment their loan of £250 by a further loan, but were unable to grant it.

There have been no new connections with the public supply.

No wells have been sunk, nor improved sources of supply provided.

No well was closed.

The new supply under the direction of the West Dean scheme is still in abeyance, and probably will not mature for years, if it ever does so.

HOUSING.

There are 626 inhabited houses in the district, occupied according to the census by 663 families.

No new houses were erected during the year.

The condition of the houses in the district is for the most part good; some of them, however, are very old and built against banks of earth, and many are built without due regard to ventilation, etc.

Under the Public Health or Housing Acts, 37 were inspected under the Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910; 25 were inspected and recorded.

9 houses found to be in a state so dangerous to health as to be unfit for human habitation.

38 other dwelling houses were found not to be fit in all respects for human habitation.

REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT FORMAL NOTICE:—

5 defective houses were rendered fit for habitation informally by the Sanitary Inspector.

REMEDY OF DEFECTS UNDER STATUTORY POWERS:—

(a) Proceedings under the Housing, Town Planning Act, 1919, Section 28:—

Dwelling houses served with notices requiring repairs—2.

Dwelling houses rendered fit by the owners—3.

Dwelling houses rendered fit by the Local Authority in default of owner—1.

(b) Proceedings under Public Health Acts:—

Number of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied—1.

Number of houses in which defects were remedied:—

By Owners—3.

By Local Authority—1.

(c) Proceedings under Sections 17 and 18 of the Housing, Town Planning, etc., Act, 1909:—

(1) No representations were necessary with a view to making a closing order.

(2) In no dwelling house was a closing order made.

(3) Dwelling houses in respect of which closing orders were determined, houses having been made fit—3.

(4) 1 demolition order was made.

(5) No dwelling house was demolished in pursuance of demolition order.

There were five cases of overcrowding.

There are no specially unhealthy areas, but unhealthy cottages here and there.

There are 570 cottages for the working classes, with a rental not higher than £16 per annum, exclusive of 40 being now finished under the municipal building scheme, but not yet available for occupance.

The (1) Common Lodging House was inspected 33 times.

The (3) Slaughter Houses were inspected 61 times.

The (6) Bakehouses were inspected 42 times.

The (19) Dairies, Cow Sheds and Milk Shops, 35 times.

The (17) Workshops, 34 times.

SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE.

The brook passing through the lower portion of the town directly ~~over~~ ^{under} many of the most important shops and buildings, imperfectly arched over, still acts as the main sewer for the town as it passes on its way to empty into the Wye. It is always a source of danger, with its rugged and uneven bed, and the old

stone drains that empty into it. More especially is this the case in a dry summer such as was last year, and as this one promises to be this year. So long as we have no proper water supply and no sewerage, so long will our mortality be higher than it should be. There has been no improvement in any sewer in the town.

The open surface drains that carry off the rain water overflow still act as closet sewers in the same manner as they were made to do over 20 years ago.

No W.C.'s have been newly supplied with flushing cisterns; indeed, in most cases the water supply of the town is insufficient to attain the necessary height for this purpose.

One pail closet has been constructed, but no earth or privy closet.

No privy vault has been abolished.

No application for a loan has been made.

Refuse is disposed of weekly by the Scavenger, as before. In some cases the people use it in their gardens.

There are no fixed ashpits, either in combination with privies or alone.

In the town and some other parts of the district the bucket system is used, being emptied once a week by the Scavenger.

Privies with fixed receptacles—227.

Bucket Closets—191.

Fresh Water Closets—95.

Waste water and hand flushed—53.

No privy closet has been abolished.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The population of the district is now 2,768, according to the census of 1921.

The Registrar-General's returns for births during 1921 showed that 66 children were born in the district, making a birth rate of 23.8 per 1,000. The boys numbered 35 and the girls 31. There were four illegitimate boys and one illegitimate girl. The birth rate for England and Wales per 1,000 is 22.4. The births in 1920 were 81.

The total deaths numbered 34. The death rate was 12.3 per 1,000. The death rate for England and Wales was 12.1. One child died the day it was born, being prematurely born. With this exception, no child died under one year of age. The average deaths of children under one year old per 1,000 births is therefore .3.

The most frequent cause of death was heart disease, 5 dying of this disease, giving an average of 1.8 per 1,000. Next to that came cerebral hemorrhage and arterial sclerosis diseases coming from allied causes, viz., defective blood vessels, 3 people dying of each separate disease, making an average of 1.06 respectively. Two people died of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, making an average of .7. One man who died of Tuberculosis was a stone mason. One died of Pneumonia, making an average .3. Two people died of Cancer, giving an average of .7. Three people died in institutions outside the district, making an average of 1.06. Of these 34 deaths, 17 reached the age of 70 and over, 11 lived to over 75. Six reached the age of 80 and upwards. One died at 96.

MATERNITY AND CHILDREN'S WELFARE.

The general Maternity Welfare is undertaken by the District Nurse, under the direction of a Voluntary Contribution Committee. The care of the children is under the direction of a Voluntary Child Welfare Committee.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There were 10 cases of infectious diseases notified this past year. Six of these cases were due to Scarlet Fever and were isolated cases occurring at various periods throughout the 12 months.

One case notified was that of Measles.

One was due to Erysipelas.

One was that of Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

We have no Fever Hospital pertaining to this district, nor Tuberculosis Institution.

Nor have we a Maternity Institution.

Nor Children's Institution.

We have no Small Pox Isolation Hospital and no beds specially retained in any Institution for these purposes for the Coleford Urban District, but there is a Fever Hospital available by arrangement with the East Dean authorities, at Joys Bottom.

Bacteriological and clinical examinations are arranged by the County Council authorities, with the sanction of the County Medical Officer of Health.

Ten houses were disinfected by means of Formalin Spraying and Sulphur Fumigation.

SCHOOLS.

The Schools were not closed in 1921.

The water supply is meagre and quite insufficient for their needs.

BYE-LAWS.

The Bye-laws are the following:—

Public Health Act Amendment Act, 1890, Part 3.

Private and Works Act, 1892.

Dairy, Cow Sheds and Milk Shops Acts.

Infectious Diseases Protection Act, 1919.

PROSECUTIONS.

No person was prosecuted.

No summons was issued.

GENERAL NEEDS.

The roads on the Land Society at Lane End, and those belonging to the Urban Council at Milkwall, are very bad and dangerous for vehicles.

The urgent requirements are:—

A good Water Supply.

An efficient Sewerage Scheme.

Improvement in Surface Drains.

J. ROWLAND PAYNE,

Medical Officer of Health, Coleford Urban District.