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ANNUAL REPORT  
ON THE HEALTH  
OF THE  
COWES URBAN DISTRICT

BY

JOHN MILLS,

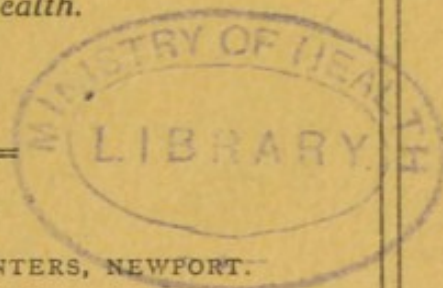
M.D., CH.B., M.R.C.S. (ENG.), L.R.C.P. (LOND.), D.P.H.

*Medical Officer of Health.*

ISLE OF WIGHT:

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1953.







COUNTY HALL,  
NEWPORT, I.W.

December, 1953.

*To the Members of the Cowes Urban District Council :—*

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit the Annual Report on the health of the District for the year 1952.

There was a rise in the birth rate from 13 to 15.1 and the death rate rose from 12.7 to 13.9.

The still birth rate fell from 39.3 to 11.7; but the infantile mortality rate rose from 18.2 to 23.62, the rate for England and Wales being 27.6.

Out of the 235 deaths which occurred during the year—87 were due to heart disease and 45 due to cancer, so that these two diseases alone accounted for 132 or 56.2 per cent. of the total deaths.

During the year there were no deaths from diphtheria, poliomyelitis, measles, whooping cough or enteritis.

It will be noticed that certain samples of raw milk taken for examination for tuberculous infection, while giving negative results in respect of this disease are reported upon as having *Brucella Abortus* present.

*Brucella Abortus* is a germ fairly widespread in cattle and from its presence in milk it finds its way into various dairy products.

In susceptible human beings the ingestion of this organism may produce a condition known as Undulant Fever, the symptoms of which vary in degree from being most mild to an insidious illness with irregular fever, profuse sweating, chills and pains in the joints and muscles.

The only certain preventive measure in this disease is the ceasing to use raw milk. Pasteurized milk and dairy products are safe. Raw milk if used should be boiled.

Owing to the mildness in form that the disease may take it may be assumed that the majority of cases are missed and never diagnosed; in consequence it is difficult to ascertain accurate information with regard to the actual number of cases which occur.

The plight of the aged in many cases calls for a great amount of sympathy. There is the case perhaps of the last survivor of a family, an old man or an old woman, who has lived in the same house all their lives.

A time inevitably comes when they are no longer properly able to take care of themselves. Because of physical disability the upper part of the house ceases to be used and of course ceases to be cleaned. Housework of necessity is reduced to a minimum, meals are frugal and it becomes an ordeal even to light the fire.

The majority, if not all of these cases, suffer from malnutrition and their plight is worsened by the consequential weakness. There is a danger of them falling into the fire or setting fire to the property.

Their personal habits become less nice; person, clothes and bedding remain unwashed. Inevitably vermin make their appearance and gradually the all too familiar picture of gross neglect is completed.



In many cases there are no relatives to help but in some, although they exist they are unwilling, to their great disgrace to raise a finger to help.

Frequently the old person is exceptionally proud and resents any suggestion that assistance is required. Persuasion is used with great patience in an attempt to remove such persons to a place where they may receive care and attention. Failing the success of this the Authority is reluctantly forced to take compulsory powers for the persons' welfare under Section 47 of the National Assistance Act, 1948, or to remove them to accommodation provided under Part III of the National Health Service Act, 1947.

At low water the beach at East Cowes presents a sorry spectacle. Large areas of decaying seaweed emitting a very foul, nauseating odour lie exposed. The sight of holiday-makers, adults and children wading through this stinking material in order to bathe raises some alarm. The stench from the beach when low water is combined with hot weather beggars description, and when the wind is from the east, West Cowes also suffers from the smell.

Unpleasant and revolting though the smell is there is no evidence that disease has been caused by it but one would expect serious consequences to ensue following the swallowing of the water from this beach while bathing.

A full scale bacteriological investigation of conditions on this beach has been undertaken and the findings will be incorporated in the next annual report.

While having no direct effect upon public health the dilapidated bombed sites have a depressing psychological effect and should be cleared forthwith. Besides being an eye-sore to local residents and visitors alike they constitute unnecessary rat harbourage and invite the unauthorised tipping of refuse.

Conditions during busy periods at both sides of the Floating Bridge are dangerous. Drivers of motor cars and especially of motor lorries are hard put to avoid running down pedestrians struggling to leave or board the bridge. There appears to be no attempt to control the pedestrian traffic and passengers wander in front of cars attempting to negotiate what is at low water a difficult approach to the bridge.

In my opinion the system of loading and unloading the bridge should be reviewed and if possible the narrow approach at the West Cowes side should be widened as a matter of urgency.

A site liable to produce injury to life and limb is the winding portion of Place Road. There is no pavement in this area, it is badly illuminated at night, prams are frequently used along this stretch and the hedges are so high as to impair the necessary visibility.

During Cowes Week the sanitary conveniences available to the public are inadequate and the long queues outside the premises on the Esplanade and the Green are a source of embarrassment. Some effective means of increasing the accommodation must be found even though the demand for it is limited to only a few weeks of the year.

The cleanliness of the harbour has greatly improved although when the harbour is full of yachts during Cowes Week there is a temporary worsening of conditions.

At Gurnard, additional life saving equipment should be available during the season and consideration should be given to extending, if possible, the sewer outfall to prevent the serious contamination of the bathing area at low water.

During the summer months there is visible evidence of sewage pollution in the stream draining Gurnard Marsh and in the small creek below the gates on the Marsh.



In my opinion it would be advantageous if notices were displayed on the Cowes and Gurnard beaches warning visitors of the possible danger from wake waves coming ashore, following the passage of large vessels, or small vessels at speed, up the Solent. On many occasions I have witnessed visitors' clothing washed into the sea and children severely frightened by the sudden tidal wave appearing from nowhere.

In spite of intensive Clean Food Campaigns the standard of food hygiene in many shops is very low.

In no case should food, especially if it is to be consumed uncooked, be handled by the shop assistant.

There are still to be found in the town, shops and cafes where the attendants are below standard; the white coat or overall that is no longer white, hands that are far from clean, dirty fingernails.

Cups and glasses are still laid with fingers inside them, cutlery is picked up by the blade and forks by the tine, spoons are set on the table by the wrong end.

Food handlers must be made to realise their grave responsibility. Their cleanliness and method of food practice is a matter of conscience. Carelessness can produce disease and even death in a large number of their customers.

The occurrence of present day outbreaks of typhoid fever is almost always an indication that a typhoid carrier has neglected the elementary rules of personal hygiene. The Aberystwyth icecream outbreak in 1946 with its 299 cases is an indication of the disastrous results which may follow such neglect.

As the great epidemic killing diseases, such as cholera, typhus and plague have disappeared from our midst, and smallpox and typhoid are now comparatively rare, the state of the public health may give rise to some satisfaction.



It is generally accepted that we owe our comparative freedom from smallpox to the past efforts of the vaccinationists and to our strict system of sea and air Port Health Supervision to prevent its importation from abroad.

Compulsory vaccination has now been abandoned and only a small proportion of new born babies are being vaccinated.

With the removal of compulsion however, it behoves us to educate parents on the continued desirability of vaccination, for we do not know to what extent major smallpox would spread in an unvaccinated community if it were re-introduced and control were lost of the early cases.

Prevention is still better than cure, for we have no specific cure for this disease; the comparatively small upset to young babies is a small price to pay for some guarantee against this still very serious disease.

The water at East Cowes is renowned for its unpalatability. Its taste is so objectionable that some of the residents are unable to drink it raw and rely to a great extent upon mineral waters bought from the shops. In some cases water has to be carried from better quality supplies outside the district.

Tea brewed from the East Cowes water is unpleasant and to many people undrinkable.

The residents of East Cowes bear a great burden in this water supply. Not only is the flavour unpleasant but the extreme hardness produces rapid furring of pipes and utensils, clogging of valves such as those in W.C's and corrosion and damage to certain metal containers. In addition to being subjected to a bad tasting water supply, the residents are also burdened with continuous expense caused by physical damage to these pipes, services and utensils.

It appears that the quality of the water is deteriorating. In 1931 an analysis of the water showed that it contained large amounts of total solids and of Chlorine 213.6 and 78.6 parts respectively per 100,000 and 3 per cent. of sea water. It was described as a very hard water containing  $66\frac{1}{2}$  degrees hardness per 100,000 of which 46 were permanent.

A recent analysis gives the following results.

Appearance—clear and bright.

Odour—nil. Taste—brackish.

Reaction—ph 7.32.

				Parts per Million
Total solid residue dried at 180° C	...	...	...	1940
Suspended Solids	...	...	...	nil
Ammoniacal Nitrogen	...	...	...	0.01
Albuminoid Nitrogen	...	...	...	0.04
Nitrate Nitrogen	...	...	...	1.2
Nitrite Nitrogen	...	...	...	nil
Chlorine present as chloride	...	...	...	880
Oxygen absorbed 4 hrs. at 27° C	...	...	...	0.35
Hardness	Carbonate (Temporary)			220
	Non-Carbonate (Permanent)			515
	Total	...	...	735
Metals—Lead, Copper, Zinc, Iron				...
				nil

## OBSERVATIONS.

Organically, this water is satisfactory and there is no evidence of excessive animal or vegetable pollution. The sample is free from metallic contamination. The taste is brackish and this water would be regarded as unpalatable by the majority of consumers. This is due to a very high content of soluble solids and approximately 4 per cent. of sea water. These soluble solids are also responsible for a high degree of



hardness, a large proportion being permanent hardness which cannot be removed by boiling. As a domestic supply this water would waste a considerable amount of soap.

(Signed) A. L. WILLIAMS,  
*Public Analyst.*

It is clear, therefore, that an improved supply is a matter for great priority to alleviate the long suffering residents of this town.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN MILLS,  
*Medical Officer of Health.*

## PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS, 1952.

Medical Officer of Health :—

JOHN MILLS, M.D., Ch.B., M.R.C.S. (Eng.), L.R.C.P.  
(Lond.), D.P.H.

Sanitary Inspector :—

J. W. BROMLEY, M.S.I.A.

### GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area in acres	...	...	...	...	...	5,542
No. of inhabited houses (end of 1952) per rate books						5,246
						(approx.)
Rateable value	...	...	...	...	...	£115,292
Sum represented by 1d. rate	...	...	...	...	...	£450

### SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

These are unchanged since the last report.

### EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS.

Population (Registrar General's Figures)	...	16,870
Live birth rate per 1,000 of estimated resident population	...	15.1
Comparative factor (births)	...	1.06
Comparative Birth Rate	...	16.0
Still birth rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births	...	11.7
Crude Death rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	13.9
Comparative factor (deaths)	...	0.82
Comparative death rate	...	11.4
Puerperal death rate per 1,000 total (live and still births)	...	Nil.
Infantile Mortality —		
All infants per 1,000 live births	...	23.62
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births	...	25.1
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births	...	Nil.
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	...	45
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	...	Nil.
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)	...	Nil.
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	...	Nil.

### BIRTHS.

The total number of live births was 254, giving a live birth rate per 1,000 living of 15.1, the corresponding rate for England and Wales being 15.3.



## DEATHS.

The number of deaths was 235 giving a death rate of 13.9 per 1000 of the estimated resident population. The corresponding rate for England and Wales was 11.3.

## CAUSES OF DEATH.

CAUSE	MALE	FEMALE
Tuberculosis, respiratory ... ..	2	1
Tuberculosis, other ... ..	1	—
Syphilitic disease ... ..	—	1
Diphtheria ... ..	—	—
Whooping Cough ... ..	—	—
Meningococcal infections ... ..	—	—
Acute Poliomyelitis ... ..	—	—
Measles ... ..	—	—
Other infective and parasitic diseases	—	1
Malignant neoplasm. stomach ...	6	6
Malignant neoplasm, lung, bronchus	7	1
Malignant neoplasm, breast ...	—	3
Malignant neoplasm, uterus ...	—	3
Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	11	8
Leukæmia, aleukæmia ... ..	—	—
Diabetes ... ..	—	1
Vascular lesions of nervous system	11	22
Coronary disease, angina ...	18	12
Hypertension with heart disease	5	3
Other heart disease ... ..	21	36
Other circulatory disease ...	1	2
Influenza ... ..	—	1
Pneumonia ... ..	3	—
Bronchitis ... ..	5	2
Other diseases of respiratory system	2	—
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum ...	2	—
Gastritis, enteritis and diarrhœa	—	—
Nephritis and nephrosis ... ..	1	—
Hyperplasia of prostate ... ..	5	—
Pregnancy, childbirth, abortion ...	—	—
Congenital malformations ...	2	2
Other defined and ill-defined diseases	12	7
Motor vehicle accidents ... ..	1	—
All other accidents ... ..	1	—
Suicide ... ..	4	2
Homicide and operations of war ...	—	—
ALL CAUSES ... ..	121	114

## INFANTILE MORTALITY.

The Infantile Mortality rate was 23.62 per 1000 registered live births, the rate for England and Wales being 27.6.

## PUBLIC CLEANSING.

### Refuse.

Refuse is collected daily from the town shopping area and weekly from the remainder of the District.

The amount collected per week varies slightly according to the season, but the total for the year remains fairly constant.

The following schedule, supplied by the Engineer and Surveyor, shows the operation of this service during the year :—



No. of Vehicles.	Approx. Tons per week	Number of vehicle loads	Mileage	Disposal
3	100	65-70 per week	180 per week	<i>West Cowes</i> Old Oyster beds <i>East Cowes</i> Old gravel pit Whippingham Church Road.

### RAT INFESTATION.

No. of Premises	...	...	...	...	6080
No. of Premises inspected	...	...	...	...	2333
No. of bodies (Rats) Recovered	...	...	...	...	170
No. of Premises treated	...	...	...	...	417
No. of Rats estimated killed	...	...	...	...	4400
No. of Treatments for Mice	...	...	...	...	89
No. of Sewer Treatments	...	...	...	...	2
No. of Army Camps inspected	...	...	...	...	1
No. of Ships inspected	...	...	...	...	54
No. of Schools inspected	...	...	...	...	5

**Council Refuse Tips and Sewage Beds** kept under supervision and treated when necessary.

**Sewers** treated regularly as per Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries instructions.

### SWIMMING POOL.

The swimming pool water at Gurnard Pines Holiday Camp was subjected to regular analysis and was found to be satisfactory.

### DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE.

Routine cleaning and maintenance of sewers has been carried out together with inspection and repair of outfalls at suitable tides.

## HOUSING.

Two hundred and twenty-nine houses were inspected under the Public Health and Housing Acts, 1936, and as a result various defects were found to exist.

Two Hundred and eighteen houses have been put into a fit state by formal and statutory notices leaving eleven houses where repairs had not been completed.

Four statutory notices under the Housing Act, 1936, were served during the year (Two notices served under Section 9 were complied with by the owner within the prescribed time, and two notices were served under Section 11, an undertaking being given by the owner that the premises would not be used for human habitation.) One statutory Housing Notice not having been complied with in 1951 owing to the default of the owner, steps were taken by the Local Authority to do this work and costs recovered from the owner.

Four hundred and eighty-three visits were made as continual inspections of Council houses and Council owned property.

During the year the number of houses built was made up as follows:—

Local Authority ...	...	60
Private Enterprise	...	10
War Damage Reinstatements		2
		<hr/>
	Total	72
		<hr/>



## ICE CREAM.

Continued supervision of the manufacturers and retailers of Ice Cream has been maintained and the products controlled by the weekly samples of Ice Cream. All samples of Ice Cream which did not come up to Grade 1 standard were followed up and the cause found and remedied.

There is only one manufacturer and seventy-six retailers of Ice Cream and with a few exceptions all Ice Cream is sold prepacked.

During the year 80 samples of Ice Cream were procured and submitted to the Pathologist, Royal I.W. County Hospital for examination and were graded as follows:—

Grade 1	...	37 .
„ 2	...	34
„ 3	...	7
„ 4	...	2

### FOOD AND DRUGS (MILK AND DAIRIES) ACTS 1944. URBAN DISTRICT OF COWES.

Samples of milk were taken during the year from herds whose milk is retailed raw without heat treatment. These samples were examined at the Public Health Laboratory, Winchester, for the presence of live Tubercle Bacilli.

Number of samples taken for T.B. during 1952	...	34
Number of samples found to be positive	... ..	nil
Number of samples in which Brucella Abortus was isolated	... ..	2

### PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER, INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

There were 101 notifications of infectious diseases. There were no cases of Diphtheria. Immunisation against Diphtheria continued throughout the year.

Non-notifiable Infectious Diseases among school children.

Mumps	...	...	132
Chicken Pox	...	...	9
Ringworm	...	...	—
Scabies	...	...	—
German Measles	...	...	49
Influenza	...	...	—
			—
			190
			—



## INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

All animals are slaughtered at Government controlled Slaughter Houses in Newport and Wroxall.

When carcasses and offal arrive at the Allocation Centre, weekly inspection is again carried out before being passed on to local butchers.

### UNSOUND FOOD 1952

					lbs.
Topside Beef	...	...	...	...	66
Sheep carcase	...	...	...	...	56
Ox and Lamb Livers		...	...	...	237
Sausages	...	...	...	...	92
Chicken	...	...	...	...	38
Smoked Cod Fillets	...	...	...	...	28
Cod Fillets	...	...	...	...	14
Nurse	...	...	...	...	14
Slip Soles	...	...	...	...	7
Pearl Barley	...	...	...	...	14
Flour	...	...	...	...	17
Figs	...	...	...	...	14
Sago	...	...	...	...	25
2 tins (35 lbs.) Imported Ham			...	...	35

In addition 973 tins containing fish, fruit, vegetables, milk, meat, and weighing 1076 lbs., were found to be unsound and unfit for human consumption.

All were disposed of in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Food.

## NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR

Disease.	Total Cases Notified.	Cases admitted to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Food Poisoning ...	—	—	—
Meningococcal Infec- tion ...	—	—	—
Smallpox ...	—	—	—
Scarlet Fever ...	4	2	—
Diphtheria ...	—	—	—
Enteric Fever (includ- ing Paratyphoid) ...	—	—	—
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	—	—	—
Pneumonia ...	1	—	—
Erysipelas ...	—	—	—
Encephalitis ...	—	—	—
Poliomyelitis ...	7	7	—
Ophthalmia Neonatorum ...	—	—	—
Measles ...	53	1	—
Whooping Cough ...	36	1	—
Malaria ...	—	—	—
Dysentery ...	—	—	—
Totals ...	101	11	—

## AGE AT DATE OF NOTIFICATION.

Age.	Scarlet Fever	Diphtheria	Enteric Fever	Puerperal Pyrexia	Pneumonia	Erysipelas	Whooping Cough	Measles	Meningococcal Infection	Ophthalmia Neonatorum	Acute Poliomyelitis	Food Poisoning
Under 1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
1 and under 2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3	—	—	1	—
2       "       3	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	1	—	—	—	—
3       "       4	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	1	—
4       "       5	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	—	—	1	—
5       "       10	3	—	—	—	—	—	23	41	—	—	2	—
10       "       15	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	1	—
15       "       20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
20       "       35	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35       "       45	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
45       "       65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	4	—	—	—	1	—	36	53	—	—	7	—

## TUBERCULOSIS.

AGE PERIODS.	Totals.	New Cases.				Totals.	Deaths.			
		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary			Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
		M	F	M	F		M	F	M	F
0 and under 1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1   "   "   5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5   "   "   10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
10   "   "   15	3	—	—	1	2	—	—	—	—	—
15   "   "   20	3	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
20   "   "   25	3	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
25   "   "   35	6	2	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	—
35   "   "   45	3	2	1	—	—	1	—	1	—	—
45   "   "   55	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55   "   "   65	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
65 and over	3	2	—	1	—	3	2	—	1	—
Total ...*	21	7	5	5	4	4	2	1	1	—

\*Included in this total are two transfers from the mainland.



**FACTORIES ACT, 1937.**

Particulars of the administration of the Factories Act, 1937,  
Parts I and VIII administered by the Council.

**PART I OF THE ACT.**

**1.—INSPECTIONS** for purposes of provisions as to health  
(including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors.)

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspections	Written notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	41	28	—	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	22	18	—	—
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is en- forced by the Local Authority (excluding out-workers' premises)	6	4	—	—
Total ...	69	50	—	—

## 2.—CASES IN WHICH DEFECTS WERE FOUND.

(If defects are discovered at the premises on two, three or more separate occasions they are reckoned as two, three or more "cases.")

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspector	By H.M. Inspector	
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	5	5	—	—	—
Overcrowding (S.2) ...	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable temperature (S.3) ...	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate ventilation (S.4) ...	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors (S.6) ...	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)					
(a) insufficient... ..	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective ... ..	3	3	—	1	—
(c) not separate for sexes	1	1	—	—	—
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork) ... ..	—	—	—	—	—
Total ...	9	9	—	1	—

## PART VIII OF THE ACT.

## OUTWORK. (Sections 110 and 111.)

Nature of Work	Section 110			Section 111		
	No. of outworkers in August list required by Sect. 110 (1) (c)	No. of cases of default in sending lists to the Council	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises	Notices served	Prosecutions
Wearing apparel } Making, etc.	—	—	—	—	—	—
} Cleaning	—	—	—	—	—	—
} and washing	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lampshades	89	—	—	—	—	—
Other classes of work	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total ...	89	—	—	—	—	—





