

[Report 1908] / Medical Officer of Health, Diss U.D.C.

Contributors

Diss (England). Urban District Council.

Publication/Creation

1908

Persistent URL

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Annual Report

AS TO THE

SANITARY CONDITION

OF THE

URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS

For the Year 1908.

BY



H. M. SPEIRS, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

DISS :

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN OF THE

DISS URBAN COUNCIL.

I herewith have the honour to present my **FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT** as your Medical Officer of Health.

1.—District.

(a) PHYSICAL FEATURES.

The parish of Diss is, roughly speaking, shaped like a pear, with its broadest part to the south, bounded by the River Waveney and Suffolk. On the west lie the parishes of Roydon, Shelfanger and Winfarthing; north, Tibenham; and on the east, Tivetshall, Gissing, Burston, Shimpling, Thelveton, Frenze and Scole. All of which are in the Depwade Sanitary Area.

These numerous boundaries form what I might call the stalk of the pear which runs north nearly five miles from the town proper, is a very narrow strip of land indeed. In size, it is 3,625 acres, of which about 10 are under water.

The town of Diss stands on ground sloping upwards from the river in the south to a ridge running due east and west about three-quarters of a mile from the river Waveney. The ground from this ridge sloping down again to the north. There are very few houses to the north of this ridge, nearly all standing to the south on the land sloping down to, and around the Mere.

This Mere forms the lowest part of the town (with the exception of the river) and is an important feature, both from a picturesque and a sanitary point of view; in as much as the sewerage of the town had for generations past been discharged there, in fact till the present system of sewerage was founded in 1878.

Further, in spite of careful supervision, there is more finds its way into it, than is proper, to this day.

The water which keeps the Mere at a constant level is supplied from five springs in the centre, and runs into the river by an overflow pipe at the south-east corner.

(b) GEOLOGICAL FEATURES.

The town virtually stands on two strata:—

(1) What is known as Boulder Clay, which is an impermeable mass of clay with stones and shells, etc., embedded in it.

(2) The Gravel and Sand beneath, but which comes to the surface round the Mere and in a broadening band running along the river to the eastern boundry.

Both these lie on the Chalk which has a thickness of not less than 400 feet.

2.—Chief Occupation of your Inhabitants.

One might say that there was no predominance to any particular form of trade, but that the people were occupied in such small business as is to be found in most small country towns.

There are two mat and brush factories which employ several hundred hands, both male and female (the one is situate just in the bounds of Roydon), also a stay factory which employs from

thirty to one hundred girls according to the state of trade. An iron foundry for the manufacture and repairs of agricultural implements, and one or two large maltings.

3.—House Accommodation.

For the 3,800 of your population, there are some 947 houses of which you might call 621 cottages whose rent is below £8 per annum. There has been a small influx of families to the town this year owing to the closure of a mat factory at Glemsford in Suffolk, which has caused a demand for new houses, and I understand that four new cottages are in course of construction on Mount Street Road. At the same time the average of four persons per house does not mean much overcrowding.

Most, in fact I might say all the houses in the town have gardens or yards of some sort.

The plans of all new buildings are submitted to your Council for inspection before being passed.

4.—Sewerage.

You are in possession of a most excellent system of water borne sewerage which connects up the whole of the town with the exception of the east end, and the country to the north. With reference to the former of these, I think this might be attended to later when you have your new water scheme working.

The sewage is treated at a farm of five acres (across the river in Suffolk) of 16 beds to which it is lifted by a centrifugal pump driven by a gas engine. I understand that there has been a duplicate pump laid down this year, so it is unlikely that there will be a stoppage due to any mechanical defects.

I visited the farm on one of the hottest days in July last, and was present during at least one hour of the pumping, I failed to detect the slightest odour of any kind, further after having all the sewage pumped during this time on to one bed, I took a sample of the effluent as it filtered back into the river, and from my analysis made then, I think we can safely say we do not pollute the water of the river.

I might here explain that the beds of the farm are of various depths from three feet or so of light soil and sand, and that the pipes at the bottom for draining the water into the river are surrounded with sawdust to prevent the sand, &c. from leaking into them, and this seems to act very well.

Further the custodian plants the beds with vegetables, etc., from time to time and so gives them a complete rest.

5.—Rainfall.

Your council kindly gave me permission to purchase a rain gauge, and I might say that owing to some error the seven guineas voted was not required, but that only twenty-one shillings was spent.

As it has only been working since November, I am not able to give the total fall for the year, but in future I intend to follow your suggestion and publish it monthly in the local press.

TABLE I.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1908 and Previous Years.

URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS.

YEAR.	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Total Deaths in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Non-residents registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents registered in Public Institutions beyond the District.	NETT DEATHS AT ALL AGES BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.	
		Number.	Rate.*	Under 1 Year of Age.		At all Ages.					Number.	Rate.*
				Number.	Rate per 1,000 Births registered.	Number.	Rate.*					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1904	3,760	75	19.9	14	186	42	11.1	4	4	...	46	12.1
1905	3,770	57	16.1	10	175	37	9.8	4	2	1	42	11.1
1906	3,800	78	20.5	4	51.2	43	11.3	3	2	...	41	10.7
1907	3,800	56	14.7	2	36.7	44	8.1	5	1	...	43	11.3
Averages for years 1904-1907	...	66.5	17.5	7.5	111.9	41.5	10	4	2.7	2	43	11.3
1908	3,800	82	21.5	3	36.5	42.	11	3	1	..	41	10.7

* Rates in Columns 4, 8 and 13 calculated per 1,000 of estimated population.

Total population at all ages, 3,800.

Number of inhabited houses, 947. Average number of persons per house, 4.

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water), 3,625.

There is one institution within the District receiving sick and infirm persons from outside the District, viz., the Hospital, Diss.

6.—Zymotic Diseases.

Under this heading, with the exception of the epidemic of Typhoid mentioned before, I am able to report satisfactorily. I don't think I can do better than tabulate as follows :—

Disease.	1908.	1907.	1906.	1905.	1904.	
Scarlet Fever	1	4	48	12	26	} Average 36.
Diphtheria	1	...	14	5	16	
Erysipelas	1	2	5	3	2	
Enteric or Typhoid Fever...	9	4	...	2	...	
Totals	12	10	67	22	44	

This total of 12 cases is well below the average of 36 for the past four years. Further, the one case each of Diphtheria and Erysipelas occurred in the Hospital, where they were imported, and were not due to any sanitary defect in your town. The one case of Scarlet Fever was also in a child, home on holiday from an infected school.

There has been a goodly number of cases of Whooping Cough, the epidemic which started in 1906, reaching its height this year and necessitating the closing of the schools some time before Christmas. Measles and Mumps have also been with us, but not in such numbers, and with few exceptions not so severe.

Looking back on the figures just mentioned, I need hardly say that I feel some satisfaction in that you have followed my recommendation on my appointment in 1905, and that was in closing, or rather, reserving your fever hospital for its original use as a suspect house for any case of Small-pox which may occur. I might qualify the above statement by saying that the buildings, such as they are, without drainage or water, are wholly incapable of coping with any epidemic, such as we have had in the past, nor can I see that you would gain anything by spending the large sum of money which would be required to make them so.

TABLE III.

Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1908.

URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.				
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.			
		1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.
Diphtheria (including Membranous croup)	1	...	..	...	1
Erysipelas	1	...	...	..	1
Scarlet Fever	1	...	1	...	...
Enteric fever	9	1	3	2	3
Totals	12	1	4	2	5

7.—Zymotic Mortality.

There are two deaths under this heading viz., the case of Whooping Cough mentioned above, and one from Typhoid, which I mentioned in my special report of last year. This gives us a rate of '007, a very small rate, but two more than last year.

TABLE IV.

Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1908.

URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Deaths at the subjoined ages of "Residents" whether occurring in or beyond the District.						
	All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards
Whooping-cough	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Enteric Fever	1	...	...	...	..	1	...
Diarrhœa	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Enteritis	1	1	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis)	5	...	..	1	...	4	...
Other tuberculous diseases	1	...	1	...	...	...	...
Cancer, malignant disease	2	...	...	...	1	1	..
Bronchitis	2	...	1	...	...	1	...
Pneumonia	2	...	...	...	...	2	...
Other diseases of respiratory organs	1	...	...	..	..	1	...
Alcoholism }	1	...	...	...	...	1	...
Cirrhosis of liver }							
Heart diseases	5	...	...	...	1	4	...
Accidents	1	..	...	1	...	...	...
Suicides	1	...	...	...	..	1	...
Old age	14	...	...	...	...	...	14
Teething	1	...	1	...	...	...	..
Epiphysitis	1	...	...	1	...	...	...
Anæmia	1	...	...	...	...	1	...
All causes	42	3	3	3	2	17	14

8.—Deaths. (See TABLE IV).

Last year, though I regretted a low birth rate, I said my deaths were few. I am glad to be able to repeat this statement as there were only 42, or corrected 41, as compared with 44 in 1907. This is equivalent to a rate of 10·7 per 1,000. Of these 42, 27 were males and 15 females, the exact opposite of last year, where the preponderance were female.

TABLE V.

Infantile Mortality during the Year 1908.

DEATHS FROM STATED CAUSES IN WEEKS AND MONTHS
UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE.

URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	2-3 Weeks.	Total under 1 Month.	1-2 Months.	5-6 Months.	Total Deaths under One Year.
(i) <i>Common Infectious Diseases</i> :					
Whooping Cough ...	...	...	...	1	1
(ii) <i>Diarrhœal Diseases</i> :					
Enteritis, Muco-enteritis } Gastro-enteritis }	...	...	1	...	1
Gastritis, Gastro-intestinal Catarrh	1	1	...	...	1
	1	1	1	1	3

Urban District of Diss. Population estimated to middle of 1908, 3,800.

Births in the year—legitimate, 77 ; illegitimate, 5.

Deaths in the year—legitimate infants, 3.

Deaths from **all Causes at all Ages, 42.****9.—Infantile Mortality.**

Meaning the deaths from all causes under the age of 12 months. The total number is three as compared with two of last year, when you remember I made a point of the very low mortality ; by the larger number of births, it is curious to note that the rate is the same, namely 36·5. Of these, one died at the age of two weeks from Gastritis, another from Enteritis, aged five weeks, and the third, a premature and delicate child, died as the result of an attack of Whooping Cough.

On the whole a very good return.

10.—Births.

This is the highest rate I have had the pleasure of publishing so far, it reaches the total of 82 for the year, being made up of 45 boys and 37 girls, and of these 5 were illegitimate. This number is 16 above your average for the past four years, and represents a rate of 21·5 per 1,000 of your population.

11.—Excrement Disposal.

Your council pays a retaining fee of £10 per annum to one of the contractors in the town, who is then called in by the householder who wishes his privy cleaned out, and who has to pay a small fee himself, this night soil is removed into the country and is, I understand, mixed with the farm manure.

As few of the houses have their W.C.'s connected to the town drains (from the lack of water), this night cart is more in evidence than is pleasant, but as things are at present, it is the best arrangement you can make.

House refuse is also disposed of in the same manner and by the same contractor.

12.—Water Supply.

I need not trouble you with further details of the various schemes you have had before you during the past year for the supply of water to the town.

I congratulate you on so promptly taking the hint given by the epidemic of Typhoid we had in the beginning of the year, which was undoubtedly due to a polluted well.

13.—Supervised Premises.

Your Inspector and I have made in all some 64 visits of inspection, but have nothing of note to report further than is seen on table 572.

14.—Schools.

There are two public Schools in the town:—

(1) The Council Schools for boys and girls, which is supplied with a well of water and with privies, which latter are not in a very excellent condition, and would be the better for being changed to water closets when there is water to be had.

(2) The Church Schools, also mixed, are a little better off in their sanitary arrangements, but as the water for flushing the closets has to be pumped, it is left with the caretaker as to how often this is done.

15.—Dairies.

The milk supply of the town remains in the same excellent condition. I am glad to note that the suggestions which I made in last year's report have been carried out.

16.—Method of dealing with Infectious Diseases.

Your Medical Officer on being notified of an infectious disease at once communicates with the Inspector who visits the house. He in turn writes the Schoolmaster if there are any children, and attends to the isolation and disinfection of the room and clothes after the case is better. The disinfectants, etc., being supplied by your Council to all who ask for them.

In conclusion, I have to thank my colleague, Mr. Cooper, for his valuable assistance, and you once more for your unvarying courtesy to me in the past year.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

H. M. SPEIRS, M.D.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR THE YEAR 1908

FOR THE URBAN DISTRICT OF DISS,

on the administration of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901, in
connection with

FACTORIES, WORKSHOPS, WORKPLACES AND HOMEWORK.

1.—Inspection of Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of
Nuisances.

Premises.	Number of	
	Inspections.	Written Notices.
Factories (including Factory Laundries)...	2	...
Workshops (including Workshop Laundries)	21	7
Total	23	7

2.—Defects found in Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.

Particulars.	Number of Defects.	
	Found.	Remedied.
<i>Nuisances under the Public Health Acts :—</i>		
Want of cleanliness	6	6
Overcrowding	1	1
Want of drainage of floors	1	1
Other Nuisances	1	1
Total	9	9

4.—Registered Workshops.

Workshops on the Register (s. 131) at the end of the year.	Number.
	39
Total number of Workshops on Register	39

5.—Other Matters.

Class.	Number.
Underground Bakehouses (s. 101) :— In use at the end of the year (with Council's permission)	1

