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Contributors

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RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

OF

EAST KERRIER.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

1896.

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IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE

OF

THE STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE

OF

THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

1899

Annual Report for 1896.

To the Rural District Council of East Kerrier.

GENTLEMEN,

During the past year of 1896, 219 births have been registered, 105 of which were males and 114 females, giving an annual birth-rate of 25·73 per thousand inhabitants.

During the same period 122 deaths have been registered, 61 of which were males and 61 females, giving an annual death-rate of 14·33 per thousand inhabitants.

As usual I again append a list of the birth-rates and death-rates for each year of the past ten years; but it must be kept in mind that the rates for the years 1887 to 1892, inclusive, are calculated on a population of 9,527 (before the amalgamation of Penwerris with Falmouth,) whilst those for 1893, 1894, 1895 and 1896 are calculated on a population of 8,510—

“Birth-rates for past ten years.”

1887—27·2.
1888—?
1889—25·1.
1890—27·5.
1891—26·3.
1892—24·6.
1893—23·8.
1894—24·3.
1895—26·9.
1896—25·7.

“Death-rates for past ten years.”

1887—15·8.
1888—14·4.
1889—16·2.
1890—20·7.
1891—20·9.
1892—14·1.
1893—19·6.
1894—20·6.
1895—18·2.
1896—14·3.

The natural increase for 1896 was 97; for 1895, 74; for 1894, 31, for 1893, 36; for 1892, 98; and for 1891, 51.

From the above list of birth and death-rates it will easily be seen that whilst the birth-rate for 1896 was an average one, when compared with those of the nine previous years, the death-rate is a very satisfactory one, and is the lowest we have had for the past ten years, with the exception of that for 1892.

With this Report, I enclose Forms A and B duly filled in, according to the requirements of the Local Government Board. Table A gives the number of deaths for each parish, grouped according to ages and according to such causes of death as may at a glance give an idea of the sanitary history of the district during the year. On reference to this Table it will be seen that there was not a single death from diseases which are included amongst those that are compulsorily notified under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act; one death occurred from Measles, and that

was only "supposed," but this is not a notifiable disease; whilst three died from Diarrhœa, all being infants. Diarrhœa is for statistical purposes considered a Zymotic disease, and whilst in some of its forms, and at certain times of the year, it is often an index of the sanitary condition of the place in which it exists, it must not by any means be understood that all the cases of death registered as having died from Diarrhœa belong to that form of the complaint which is produced by bad sanitation. In the same way that some cases of Diarrhœa are an index of the sanitary condition of a place, there are, as a rule, a far greater number of cases during the year which are quite as much an index of the manner in which children are fed and reared. I link this complaint with children, because it is among those of tender years that we get by far the greatest number of cases of Diarrhœa in all its forms, and the greatest number of deaths directly and solely produced by this complaint. I do think that though the sanitary condition of a locality is undoubtedly a contributory cause to, and probably the chief factor in, Epidemic Diarrhœa, yet for most of the other cases of Diarrhœa noticed during the year a most important cause and factor exists in the way in which children-in-arms are fed. The ignorance that exists with regard to the proper feeding of babies is simply lamentable, and it is a well-known fact that through such ignorance thousands of little lives are sacrificed. None but medical men, and those who have especially to do with children, can appreciate the importance of this subject. In my own practice every year I come across instances where children's lives are lost solely through improper feeding, and many, many other instances of puny, unhealthy, and rickety children who, having survived the ill-effects of improper feeding whilst they were babies, yet carry about with them, as the direct results of such feeding, the germs of some constitutional weakness, which in after years, under slight exciting causes, come into activity and wreck lives which would under better circumstances in baby-life have been useful, healthy, and happy ones. I will grant that there are some people who will not be taught, and who, if you tell them the right thing, will always know better than you. Their obstinate ignorance almost amounts to criminal neglect, and no good can be done to such. But there are many others, I find, who, had they not been told what to do, would have taken a wrong course with their little ones, and who will gladly carry out all your directions when the thing is explained to them. Of course many of this latter class, those who would do right if they only knew how, cannot be got at by ordinary means, and so they go on in their ignorance, to the detriment of their little ones; but if they could only see, read or hear something of what they ought to do, they would do differently. I have but little doubt that if all mothers knew how to properly feed, dress, and bring up their infants, our rate of infantile, and even general, mortality would be considerably diminished; less children would die, and at the same time less subsequent ill-health would be produced. If what I have said has any grain of truth in it, then I think it behoves this Authority to do all it can

in its power to educate the people over whom they are set in authority, and who look to them to guard them from everything that may affect or deteriorate their general health from the day they are born to the day they die. I know we cannot stand by and see the children fed, but we can teach those who are willing to learn what they ought to do. I have spoken strongly on this matter before, and it is the tremendous importance of it which makes me speak again. If I see deaths resulting, and disease following from any cause whatever, whether from bad drainage, bad water, or bad infant feeding, and I think there is a remedy, it is my duty to try to point out that remedy as well as I can ; and attention to the subject under consideration is of quite as much importance as attention to drainage, water supply, &c., &c. ; and I hope this question will receive the same consideration from you that I have ever found you give to questions of drainage, water supply, and other things relating to the well-being of this district. I have before advised, and I again do so, that a pamphlet containing instructions as to how to feed, dress, and rear children should be given by the Registrar, along with the Vaccination form, when the parent comes to register the birth of a child. The parents can then take the pamphlet home and read it or not as they like ; if they do not, then it is no fault of this Authority ; this Authority will have done its duty at any rate. Of this I feel sure, whatever some may say to the contrary, that such a dissemination of knowledge upon a subject on which there is at present such widespread ignorance, must in the long run bear fruit. I can only say that I shall be glad to help this Authority in any way, in framing any rules they may like to lay down on this subject, and in drawing up such rules and instructions in pamphlet form. When once they are printed, their distribution through the channel I suggest, will mean only a very small annual expenditure.

From Table A it will also be seen that eighteen died from diseases of the respiratory system. In 1895, forty-five died from this class of complaint. The difference between these numbers is very great, that for 1895 being two and a half times as great as that for 1896. This difference is not only easily explained by the difference in the winter months of those years, those for 1895 being very severe, especially in February and March, whilst those for 1896 were very mild ; but it also demonstrates what an influence the weather has on the general death-rate, and that, therefore, a high death-rate in a certain year may not necessarily indicate a bad sanitary condition, but only bad weather. The one we can avoid, the other is beyond our control.

It will also be seen from the table that six deaths resulted from Heart Disease, one from Influenza, and five from injuries. In 1895 eight died from Cancer. In 1896 nine died from this disease.

Of infants under one year of age twenty died, six from Convulsions, three from Diarrhoea, two from Broncho-Pneumonia, two from Rickets, whilst three were prematurely born. In looking over these deaths among infants I am more than ever

convinced of the truth of my remarks on the manner in which babies are fed and reared, for Convulsions, Diarrhœa, Rickets, &c., are the results of improper feeding more than any other ailments. One or two of the above deaths were, to my personal knowledge, directly due to this cause, and I have no doubt that other doctors, who certified to the other deaths, would bear me out in my remarks.

Of the total number of deaths during the year, forty-nine, or more than a third, attained the age of 65 and upwards. Fourteen of these were above 80 years, three being over 90, one of these attaining the great age of 99 years.

In Table B., the population, according to the census in 1891, is given. In addition to this the population of each parish, estimated to the middle of 1896, is given. This estimation is made upon the manner of calculation adopted, and approved of, by the Registrar General. It will be seen that the population of the whole district, according to this estimate, is a declining one, the parish of Mylor being the only parish to show an increase.

This Table also shows the number of cases of infectious diseases which have arisen during the past year. Of notifiable diseases there were two cases of Scarlatina, one of Diphtheria, two of Typhoid Fever, and five of Erysipelas. 1896 compares very favourably with 1895, for in 1895 there were eight cases of Scarlatina, two of Diphtheria, and seven of Typhoid Fever. Both cases of Scarlatina were in the parish of Mabe, on neighbouring farms. In the first case I thought that the complaint was brought by a relation who came there to stay from a town in which the complaint was epidemic; but I found out that the case arose prior to her coming, and that not even by letter had there been any communication between her and the house before her arrival. Every precaution was adopted in each instance, and owing to those cases occurring in isolated farm houses, and to the instructions given being carried out, there was not another case afterwards for the whole year.

The case of Diphtheria was in the Parish of Perran; the drainage of the houses was complained of by the tenants, whilst there was a very offensive cess-pit in connection with the particular house in which the case lived.

Of the two cases of Typhoid Fever, one case was in the Parish of Budock, the other was in the Parish of Mylor. In the Budock case certain sanitary defects in and around the house were noted and attended to, but no positive cause could be given for the appearance of this case of Fever; nor was there any definite cause for the Mylor case. It is a matter for great congratulation that there were so few cases of Typhoid Fever in 1896, and especially when we remember recent years. I feel sure that in more than one place, where the fear of Typhoid Fever and allied diseases was at one time always before one's eyes, and where within the past year or two good sanitary work has been done, the chance of such diseases again making their appearance has been greatly lessened, if not altogether done away with.

The five cases of Erysipelas all occurred at or about the same time, and were co-incident with a great increase in the number of cases of this disease throughout the county generally. There were no other cases of notifiable diseases than those mentioned by me, and, as I have said, this list shows that we have had in the past year, as far as Zymotic Diseases of a notifiable nature are concerned, a fairly clean bill of health. But at one time we stood in danger of the reverse being the case. I refer to the outbreak of Small-pox in a neighbouring Authority. Fortunately this dreadful disease was practically confined to the place in which it first made its appearance, but only at great expense and after the adoption of very energetic measures. The danger of its appearance in our midst was great at one time, and had it come it would have found us almost entirely unprotected to resist its attack. In the opinion of those best capable of expressing an opinion on the subject, Vaccination and Re-vaccination will alone protect us against Small-pox. Attention to the sanitary condition of a locality is of the greatest use in meeting Small-pox, as in meeting the invasion of all other Zymotic Diseases; but in addition to the general protection afforded by good sanitation we are provided, for visitations of Small-pox, with a special protection, special against Small-pox and of no use against any of the other Zymotics, and this special protection is afforded by Vaccination. And yet Vaccination is practically a dead letter with us. It is true that when the scare came a great many were vaccinated and re-vaccinated; but scares do no good, and there would have been none at all had everyone felt that the Vaccination Act had been properly enforced. I hope this Authority will seriously entertain this question, and lay the necessity of putting the Vaccination Act in force before the Board of Guardians.

Of non-notifiable diseases there was an epidemic of Mumps in Mylor and of Chicken-pox in Perran in February, whilst in February and March there were a great many cases of Influenza throughout the district. Measles made their appearance in the latter month or six weeks of the year, beginning in the Parish of Budock, as a result of infection from a neighbouring town, and then in Perran, and then in other parts of this district. The complaint was most severe in Budock and Perran, in which parishes nearly every child who had not had it before contracted it, and many adults too. A good many cases took a serious turn, chiefly by reason of the complications, such as Pneumonia, etc., but I am glad to say that only two deaths occurred. In Budock the schools were closed.

It will be seen from what I have up to the present written that the year of 1896 compares favourably with its predecessors. We have had sickness and epidemics of infectious diseases, but of diseases which are considered to be strictly preventible we have had very few cases. Throughout the year Mr. Chubb, the Sanitary Inspector, and myself have made frequent visits to the several parishes of this Authority, and as a result of those visits and the recommendations made by us to this District Council, a good deal of general sanitary work has been done.

I.—DRAINAGE. With regard to drainage no very special work has been accomplished, the chief work having been the completion of the connections of the drainage of Budock with the main in the river. All the connections have now been made, and the main drain performs the duties expected of it well. The condition of this river now is a very different thing from what it always used to be before all this work had been carried out. This was all the more noticeable in the past summer months when but little or no water was flowing down the bed of the stream. Before this drain was laid and the connections made, the smells in summer were pestilential at times and the sights disgusting; but all last summer, even in the very height of the hot and dry weather, there was scarcely anything noticeably wrong in this neighbourhood, and then the little that was noticeable was due to the habits of the people living by the river, for it is their habit to throw refuse and garbage of all kinds into the stream, even though systematic provision is made on both sides of the river for the removal of all such matters. In the winter, when a heavy body of water is constantly pouring down the stream, it does not matter much what is thrown in, for it is at once carried away; but in the summer months, with no water running down, whatever is thrown in lodges in the bed of the river and then becomes an offence. Last summer, at one point, the river was almost blocked up by a heap of such matters. In my Annual Report for 1895 I called attention to this state of things, which appeared to become worse in 1896, and I then recommended the building of a sluice-gate to dam back the water which is constantly more or less coming down. When a sufficient quantity of water has been collected above the gate, on opening the gate such a body of water would be freed that not only could the main be flushed, but everything accumulated in the river-bed would be swept away. Of course, constant cleaning up of the river would meet the difficulty, but to wait until it is absolutely necessary to perform this operation means that an amount sufficient to cause a nuisance and to necessitate its removal had been allowed to accumulate. If my recommendations as to a sluice-gate are not entertained, I think that arrangements should be made during the summer months for very frequent scavenging of the bed of this river.

Whilst on the subject of drainage I must again draw the attention of this council to the drainage of Praze and the Truro Hill, situated in St. Gluvias. At present the drainage from this part of our district discharges into the Praze River, which is situated within the Urban Authority of Penryn. This river used also to receive a considerable amount of sewage and other matters from Penryn itself, and its condition used to be almost as bad as the Budock River. The Urban District Council of Penryn have, however, remedied all this by laying, at great expense, a main from the end of Praze reaching to the Town Quay, at the same time building a large and powerful flushing tank at the head of the main to flush the main thoroughly. Having done all this the Penryn Authority naturally objects to the Rural Authority continuing to

pollute a stream which not only belongs to them, but which they themselves have done their utmost to prevent being polluted. The only remedy that I can see is to connect our drainage with the Penryn Authority's main, permission to do which, under certain conditions, has been granted by the Penryn Council. I hope this matter will soon be settled, so that before the dry months set in the work will be completed.

II.—WATER SUPPLY. The water supply throughout the district is very good. Of course it needs constant attention, and this it is continually receiving, and when improvements in the existing supplies are deemed necessary they are carried out. At all those places in the district, which are in touch with the mains of the Falmouth Waterworks Company, every house is directly connected with the mains. The old supply at Bareppa, in Mawnan, which was very defective and open to dangerous pollution by cattle, has been, at some expense, greatly improved and increased in quantity, whilst its protection has been at the same time secured. At Weir and Restronguet, Mylor, the complaints of the inhabitants have been, at any rate to some extent, met, and the existing supplies improved. At Flushing, since the earthenware pipes have been replaced by iron pipes, the supply has been improved in quality and in quantity, and appears to be in ordinary seasons sufficient to meet the present requirements of the place.

I must lay before this Council the complaints which reach me in the summer months from those parts of our district which derive their water from the Falmouth Waterworks Company. These complaints are that, when the water gets low in the reservoirs, it becomes discoloured and has a heavy sediment, and is not agreeable as a drinking water. It has been said that this is due to insufficient filtration. If this is so, then I think it is the duty of this Council to draw the attention of the Water Works Company to this matter.

III.—EXCREMENT DISPOSAL. The system of excrement disposal generally in force throughout the district remains the same as heretofore, and in most places it works well, and is really the only suitable system. In Budock, that part of the Parish adjoining Penryn, the old system has been replaced by the pan-closet system, which is a great improvement on the old closet and cess-pit system, especially as this part of the parish is a low-lying and densely populated locality. Of course it is possible in this part of the district to work such a system, for every house is directly connected with the mains of the Falmouth Waterworks Company, and there is plenty of water for flushing purposes. In Constantine Church-town there are still some instances of defective privy accommodation, which I have already brought to your notice, and it would be well if in this important village a better systematic emptying of the pits were adopted. It is in Flushing, however, where the worst features of this system exist. Flushing is really a small town, and not an ordinary straggling country village; it is shut in on all sides by high hills, it is low-

lying, and the houses are built close together, without much open space intervening. The houses are many of them old-fashioned, and so is the privy accommodation. There are a few pan and water-closets in connection with some of the better class houses and these work well, but the privy and pit is the general rule. The present water supply is only now barely sufficient for ordinary domestic purposes, and is not at all adequate to the strain which would be put upon it by the adoption of a general pan or water-closet system. The great majority of the existing privies and pits are in a dilapidated state, the pits are far too large, badly built, and badly situated, often having the wall of a dwelling house for one of the pit walls, with bedroom windows overlooking the pits. Up to the present the emptying of the pits has been carried out in a most unsystematic manner, the work being done more to suit the convenience of the person or persons who come to take away the contents of the pits, than to suit the comfort and safety of the general public, with the result that not only have many complaints reached me of the disgusting sights and smells to be met with in the place at all hours of the day, but every now and then letters have appeared in the public press on this subject. All this tends to cast reflections on this Council that it is not doing its duty as a sanitary body, and at the same time is detrimental to the best interests of a place which might as a health resort, especially in the winter months, be second to none in the whole of England. I would strongly urge upon the Authority the necessity of devoting a good deal of attention to Flushing during 1897. If we cannot under the present circumstances adopt any other system of excrement disposal than that which now exists, let us try at any rate to do away with the most objectionable features of the system. I am convinced that great improvements can be effected in this direction if the matter be taken in hand in earnest.

IV.—SCAVENGING. The arrangements under this heading exist as formerly. In Budock a house-to-house collection works well, and I am sure that in Flushing the same thing could be carried out.

I must again call the attention of the Council to the absence of an Isolation Hospital. I will refer the Council to former reports for my views on this question. I will only say that had Small Pox come into our midst we should have been badly prepared to cope with it, in the first place with vaccination practically a dead letter, and in the second with no Isolation Hospital in which to place and isolate the first case or cases.

I have the honour, gentlemen, to remain,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES BLAMEY, M.O.H.

Penryn.
January 30th, 1897.

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