

[Report 1907] / Medical Officer of Health, Hatfield R.D.C.

Contributors

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. . . THE . . .
Hatfield Rural District Council.

R E P O R T

OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR
1907.

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1900

THE
HATFIELD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1907.

HATFIELD,

January 20th, 1908.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present my annual report for the year 1907.

The schedules relative to vital statistics are appended and provide ample food for reflection.

The general death-rate is satisfactory and requires no special comment. Very special comments, however, are required on the figures connected with the death-rate of infants under one year, and on the birth rate.

In the year 1886, with a much smaller population, there were 220 births registered; in 1907 only 162 births were registered. Although this is a matter of serious moment, it is not of so much import as the fact that the infantile deaths amount to 21, the average of the previous ten years being 18. As a result, the infantile death-rate amounts to 129 per 1,000 births.

Schedule Table V. reveals the fact that no less than 8 out of the 21 infantile deaths were registered under the headings: Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus, and premature birth, and under one month in age, ⁷no less than 10 were registered under these headings as occurring in the first year of life. To state the matter concisely, there has been an unduly small production of children, and of those children born there has been an undue number born without sufficient vitality to cope with the risk inseparable from life.

So far as my knowledge helps me, the factors which underlie the problem are:—

- (1) The increasing number of mothers who are married comparatively late in life.
- (2) The increasing resort to medicines with the view of terminating pregnancy.

It is scarcely possible to take up periodical literature without finding advertisements of abortifacient medicines, and chemists, I fear, are too often in the habit of selling medicines which may produce miscarriage or abortion.

Now no amount of legal enactments or provision for inspection will cope with the evil. So long as the desire to prevent the duties of motherhood becoming operative exists so long will it be found that fewer children will be born, and of these children more will be found suffering from deficient vitality.

The only remedy, which I know of, is such a condition of public opinion as is consistent with the pride in parentage of a healthy stock. Such a condition requires stimulation.

Obstructive measures to prevent the wholesale sale of drugs by chemists which, if not lethal, are at all events distinctly injurious to health, and measures to prevent the wholesale advertisement of such things in periodical literature may be of some utility, but so long as public opinion rather encourages than discourages the very easy means of obtaining drugs, (the physiological effects of which are in many cases slow to manifest themselves) and the restriction of the natural increase in the population, I doubt very much whether much progress will be made.

The various matters connected with midwives' legislation have been considered by you, as well as those relative to the adoption of the Notification of Births Act. The following resolutions were passed:—

- (1) That the Clerk be instructed to reply that the Rural District Council is not prepared to adopt the Notification of Births Act, 1907, at present, being of the opinion that it is neither necessary nor advisable, and they protest against the suggestion that the County Council should adopt it at the expense of the ratepayers of the Hatfield district.
- (2) That the District Council protests against the resolution passed at the meeting of the County Council on October 25th, 1907, instructing the Clerk to write to the Secretary of the Local Government Board, urging general legislation for the training of midwives out of the Imperial Exchequer funds. The District Council is of opinion that there is absolutely nothing to justify the training of midwives at the public expense, which does not apply equally to the whole medical profession, and to many others.

In view of my opinion as to the causes operating to produce a diminution in the supply of healthy infants, I do not believe that the Notification of the Births Act can result in producing any

serious diminution in the infantile death-rate in this district. In my opinion, no Act of Parliament will be really helpful, and it is difficult to foresee what results of any practical utility can be obtained by so early a notification of birth as three days. A much more practical suggestion would be to make registration more easy. At the present time parents may be compelled to walk many miles, and to wait for the Registrar's return home before registration can be effected.

With reference to the supply of midwives, a glance at Schedule II, will shew the elements of the problem.

In Hatfield there were 56 births registered in 1907.

„ North Mimms	„	39	„	„	„
„ Northaw	„	7	„	„	„
„ Essendon	„	13	„	„	„

When the area covered by these parishes is considered, the difficulties of supplying sufficient work for the number of women required, and the expense involved will be obvious.

Now the Midwives Act has introduced for the first time a system of compulsion in connection with obstetric practice. The Act forbids the work of any woman who is not on the roll of midwives after 1910, *i.e.*, a pregnant woman is compelled to employ a woman who is State licensed, and over whom legislation provides authority for supervision and inspection. A lying-in woman may, therefore, be the object of domiciliary visitation during her lying-in by an inspector.

In consequence of the hard fact that many lying-in women are unable to provide a sufficient fee for a trained midwife, and that the conditions of many localities are such that a midwife is unable to support herself, a movement is in progress to provide by State means the funds for training women to act as midwives, and for providing for the services of doctors in those cases where midwives are compelled by rules to summon one to their assistance. It is even contemplated by some that the State will also provide funds to support midwives, and logically, this must be the next step. A system for the provision and supervision of midwives exists in Continental countries, and it will be well to consider the resulting conditions.

A reference to the returns on still births in England and other countries, House of Commons, July 21, 1903, will provide the fact that in a country like Germany, the death-rates from puerperal fever, and accidents and diseases in child-bed are higher than those which obtain here.

In a paper on "Midwives in Germany," *The British Medical Journal* 1891, p.p. 33-4, Dr. Norman Walker sums up as follows:—

"The system results in a sort of partnership arrangement between the worst class of medical men and midwives, for

the midwives have practically the direction of medical midwifery practice."

The same writer, on p. 894 of the same volume, writing on "Midwifery in Austria-Hungary," writes:—

"The mortality in midwives practice is very much higher than in maternity hospitals. Regarding the public attitude to the system, Dr. Walker's informant states that he thought the sex generally preferred to be attended by women, but he admitted that in the richer classes a physician was almost always in attendance although the midwife conducted the labour, and also that year by year the proportion of those who were adopting the English custom of being attended by a physician, was becoming larger. With regard to man midwifery in the lower classes the report is that a man who had time to attend to that class of patient was very hard up for work and was much to be pitied. English ladies are reported to be without exception dead against the system and complain bitterly of the extraordinary difficulty they have in obtaining the services of a physician."

I think that sufficient has been advanced to cause some suspension of judgment as to the wisdom of developing the Continental system of practice in this country. Human nature is very much the same wherever it is found, and it appears to me that if the system is no unqualified success in such a country as Germany, it will be no more successful here.

Now, taking the years 1906-1896 I find three notifications of puerperal fever, and in those years there were, roughly speaking, 2,200 births. It does not appear to me, therefore, that there are any conditions which render any steps necessary, so far as your district is concerned. The argument which I find generally used in furtherance of midwives legislation, are that the death rates and the incident rates from puerperal fever are higher outside maternity charities and hospitals. It appears to me that if this were not the case these institutions, which have the command of very large funds, must be very badly conducted. The conditions connected with them and those connected with the general practice of midwifery throughout the country, are so different that no fair comparison is possible. For many years past, at all events, the death-rate from puerperal fever, and accidents and diseases occurring in child-bed throughout the country have (roughly) amounted to 4.5 per 1,000 births—a rate which can certainly not be considered unduly high if all the different circumstances connected with localities and occupation and variations in the anatomical conditions connected with women are taken into consideration. It is certainly no matter of certainty in my mind that the introduction

of the Continental system in its entirety will influence the death-rate and incident rates of puerperal fever for the better. I am, therefore, quite unable to support the introduction of State aided midwives.

There can be no doubt that the lessened birth-rate in this district and the stationary rate of infantile mortality are matters of serious import. I have already alluded to my views on the matter, and it appears to me that steps such as are proposed, which must place the lying-in woman and her off-spring under the control of imperfectly educated women cannot be wise. If the great underlying troubles connected with a very large annual diminution in the increase of healthy citizens are to be dealt with satisfactorily, they can only be dealt with by those who are in touch with the lying-in and parturient women. Speaking with full knowledge of these matters, I cannot sufficiently impress upon you the fact that no one who is unable to speak with authority, and who is influenced in any shape or way by the question of remuneration or advancement, is in any position to grapple with the problem satisfactorily. It is a matter of general experience amongst members of the medical profession, that inadequate support is given to those who do, with full knowledge of the subject, try to grapple with the problem, by persons who are in positions to give such support. As a rule, such persons fall back upon Acts of Parliament and new departures, which are, in my opinion, futile. The elements of the problem are not so much medical as ethical; and how many have taken the trouble to grasp the rudiments of ethics?

A reference to Schedule III. shows that there were a considerable number of cases of scarlet fever during the year in the district of Northaw. The epidemic was of a mild character. Five cases were removed to the Hospital, and the remainder were treated at home. It may be noted that no cases were the results of infection by persons who suffered and were nursed at home.

Drainage.—The main drainage of Hatfield has been under your consideration, and a valuable report has been made on the subject, by Mr. Kershaw.

Negotiations for the purchase of land upon which to treat the sewage of Little Heath are in progress, and it is much to be desired that an early settlement of the matter will be obtained.

There has been no change in the methods of removal and disposal of house refuse, and the contractors have carried out their duties satisfactorily.

There has been one instance of pollution of the river Lea, owing to the defective condition of a filter at Lemsford Mills.

Considerable care has been taken to provide efficient filtration for the small amount of slop water passing through the filter.

No change has taken place in the water supply of the district.

There has been efficient inspection by your officers, of lodging-houses, slaughter-houses, dairies, cow-sheds, milk-shops, bakeries, factories and work-shops, and there are no offensive trades carried on in the district.

The general routine work of the district has been carried out efficiently, and the general conditions are good.

The condition of the housing of the population is, on the whole satisfactory.

In conclusion, I have to thank you for the courtesy with which you have invariably treated me, and

I remain,

Your obedient Servant,

LOVELL DRAGE, M.D. (OXON),

Medical Officer of Health.

THE HATFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL.



Factories, Workshops, Laundries, Workplaces and Homework.

1.—INSPECTION.

Including Inspections made by Inspector of Nuisances.

PREMISES.	Number of		
	Inspections.	Written Notices.	Prosecutions.
Factories (Including Factory Laundries)	2	2	...
Workshops (Including Workshop Laundries)	2	...	...
Workplaces	2	...	...
Homeworkers' Premises ... ..	—	...	...
TOTAL	6	2	...

2.—DEFECTS FOUND.

PARTICULARS.	Number of Defects.			Number of Prosecutions.
	Found.	Remedied.	Referred to H.M. Inspector.	
Nuisances under the Public Health Acts :—				
Want of Cleanliness ... ..	...	...	...	...
Want of Ventilation ... ..	...	...	...	...
Overcrowding ... ..	...	...	...	...
Want of Drainage of Floors...	...	...	...	...
Other Nuisances ... ..	...	...	...	...
Sanitary Accommodation				
insufficient	1	1	...	...
unsuitable or defective	...	...	...	...
not separate for sexes	...	...	...	...
Total	1	1	...	...

Workshops on the Register ... 22.

Action taken in matters notified by H.M. Inspector of Factories ... 1.

Table I.

Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1907 and Previous Years.

Name of District - - - HATFIELD RURAL.

YEAR	Popu- lation estimated to middle of each year.	BIRTHS.		TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.				Total Deaths in Public In- stitutions in the District.	Deaths of Non-Residents registered in Public In- stitutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents regis- tered in Public Institu- tions beyond the District.	NETT DEATHS AT ALL AGES BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.	
		Num- ber.	Rate.*	Under 1 year of age.		At all ages.					Num- ber.	Rate*
				Num- ber.	Rate per 1,000 Births Regis- tered.	Num- ber.	Rate*					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1897	6963	209	30	18	85·7	89	12·7	10	...	...	89	12·7
1898	„	185	26·5	16	86·5	100	14·3	13	...	...	100	14·3
1899	„	205	29·5	15	72·7	90	12·9	13	...	...	90	12·9
1900	„	199	28·5	22	110·5	89	12·5	11	2	...	87	12·3
1901	7551	197	26	21	106·5	79	10·4	12	...	...	79	10·4
1902	„	188	24·8	20	106·3	100	13·2	12	...	1	101	13·2
1903	„	208	27·5	15	72·1	97	12·8	9	...	5	102	13·5
1904	„	193	25·5	25	129	100	13·6	13	...	4	104	13·3
1905	„	182	24·1	8	43·9	86	11·3	11	1	4	89	11·9
1906	„	200	26·4	21	105	87	11·5	9	...	3	90	11·9
Aver- ages for years 1897- 1906		196·6	26·8	18·1	90·8	91·7	12·5	11·3			93	12·6
1907		162	21·4	21	129	86	11·3	12	3	7	90	12·3

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

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water), 23,386.

Total population at all ages at Census of 1901, 7,551.

Number of inhabited houses at ditto, 1,582.

Average number of persons per house at ditto, 4·7.

Institutions outside the District receiving sick and infirm persons from the District: Hertford and Ware Infectious Hospital, Potter's Bar Cottage Hospital, and Herts County Lunatic Asylum, Hill End.

The Union Workhouse is within the District.

Table 11.
Vital Statistics of Separate Localities in 1907 and Previous Years.

NAMES OF LOCALITIES	1. HATFIELD.				2. NORTH MIMMS.				3. NORTHAW.				4. ESSENDON.			
	Population esti- mated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year	Population esti- mated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year	Population esti- mated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year	Population esti- mated to middle of each year.	Births registered.	Deaths at all ages.	Deaths under 1 year
YEAR.																
1897 ...	4330	132	60	14	1511	44	15	2	582	16	6	...	540	Returns not available.	8	2
1898 ...	"	123	72	11	"	44	16	4	"	12	7	1	"	10	5	...
1899 ...	"	125	57	9	"	42	22	4	"	14	5	...	"	7	6	2
1900 ...	"	128	54	17	1568	56	19	5	"	8	6	1	"	18	10	...
1901 ...	4754	129	62	17	"	45	7	2	664	5	5	1	565	13	5	1
1902 ...	"	114	63	12	"	43	21	4	"	12	9	3	"	15	7	1
1903 ...	"	129	67	11	"	43	22	3	"	13	6	1	"	...	7	...
1904 ...	"	129	68	15	"	43	21	8	"	13	3	...	"	...	9	2
1905 ...	"	129	57	5	"	43	19	2	"	13	5	...	"	...	5	1
1906 ...	"	129	60	17	"	43	16	2	"	13	8	2	"	...	6	...
Averages of 1897-1906	...	...	62	12.8	...	...	17	3	...	...	6	0.9	...	...	6	0.9
1907 ...	4754	103	56	9	1568	39	19	8	664	7	8	2	565	13	4	2

Table III.

Cases of Infectious Diseases notified during the Year 1907.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	CASES NOTIFIED IN WHOLE DISTRICT.						TOTAL CASES NOTIFIED IN EACH LOCALITY.				NO. OF CASES REMOVED TO HOSPITAL FROM EACH LOCALITY.			
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.					Hatfield.	North Mims.	Northaw.	Essendon.	Hatfield.	North Mims.	Northaw.	Essendon.
		Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25 to 65.								
Erysipelas.....	7	...	...	...	...	7	3	4	...	...	...	...	...	...
Scarlet Fever	17	...	3	9	5	...	2	1	14	...	...	...	5	...
Totals.....	24	...	3	9	5	7	5	5	14	...	...	...	5	...

Isolation Hospital . . HERTFORD AND WARE INFECTIOUS HOSPITAL.

Table IV.

Causes of and Ages at Death during the Year 1907.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	Deaths at the Subjoined Ages of Residents whether occurring in or beyond the District.							Deaths at all ages of Residents belonging to Localities whether occurring in or beyond the District.				Total Deaths in Public Institutions in 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.	Hatfield.	North Mims.	Northaw.	Essendon.	
Whooping-Cough	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Epidemic influenza	2	1	...	...	...	...	1	2	...	...	...	...
Diarrhœa.....	1	...	...	...	...	2	...	...	1	...	...	...
Erysipelas	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis.)	11	...	1	2	2	6	...	6	2	3	...	2
Other tubercular diseases ...	3	2	1	...	...	...	...	1	1	...	1	...
Cancer, malignant disease ...	6	...	...	...	...	3	3	5	1	...	...	...
Bronchitis	7	2	...	...	...	2	3	5	1	...	1	1
Pneumonia	5	4	...	...	...	1	...	3	1	1	...	...
Premature birth.....	3	3	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	2	...	...
Heart diseases	1	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	1
Accidents	4	...	...	...	1	2	1	4	...	...	...	2
Suicides	2	...	—	...	1	1	...	2	...	...	...	...
All other causes	38	9	...	1	1	9	18	26	8	2	2	6
All causes	86	21	3	4	5	27	26	57	17	8	4	12

Table V.
Infantile Mortality during the Year 1907.

Deaths from Stated Causes in Weeks and Months under One Year of Age.																		
CAUSE OF DEATH.		Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 1 month.	1-2 months.	2-3 months.	3-4 months.	4-5 months.	5-6 months.	6-7 months.	7-8 months.	8-9 months.	9-10 months.	10-11 months.	11-12 months.	Total Deaths under One Year.
Diarrhoeal Diseases.	{ Diarrhoea, all forms Gastritis, Gastro-intestinal Catarrh }	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
		...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Wasting Diseases.	{ Premature Birth... Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus }	1	...	2	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
		2	...	1	1	4	1	...	...	...	2	...	...	...	...	...	...	7
Other Causes.	{ Meningitis (not Tuberculous) Bronchitis Pneumonia }	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	1	...	3
		...	...	...	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	2
		...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	4
	
		3	...	3	2	8	2	...	...	5	...	...	...	3	1	1	1	21

Births in the year: Legitimate, 19; illegitimate, 2.

Deaths from all Causes, at all Ages, 86.

160

Summary of work done through the Sanitary Inspector in the Rural Sanitary District of Hatfield during the year ending Dec. 31, 1907.

	Total number for Year.	Result of Inspection, &c.
1. Complaints received ...	68	
2. Nuisances detected without complaint ...	53	
3. Nuisances abated ...	80	
4. Notices served ...	3	
5. Summonses taken out ...	...
6. Convictions ...	...
7. Cottages inspected ...	108	Hatfield, North Mimms, Essendon, Northaw.
8. Lodging - houses inspected ...	2	Kept in good order.
9. Slaughter-houses inspected ...	3	" "
10. Bakehouses inspected ...	8	" "
11. Dairies and Milk Shops inspected ...	16	" "
12. Cowsheds inspected ...	14	" "
13. Workshops inspected...	21	Two improved.
14. Filthy houses cleansed, sec. 46 Public Health Act, 1875 ...	30	
15. Houses disinfected ...	11	Where infection had been.
16. Overcrowding abated ...	2	
17. Houses placed in habitable repair ...	11	Several altered.
18. Houses closed...	...	
19. Houses erected or rebuilt for which "Certificates" were applied ...	21	
20. "Certificates" granted ...	21	
21. " " deferred ...	...
22. Wells sunk or improved supplies of water afforded ...	1	
23. Wells cleansed or repaired ...	5	Cleansed and got better supply.
24. Wells closed ...	...
25. Houses connected with sewers ...	4	
26. Houses connected with water mains ...	21	
27. Earth, pail, or improved Privies constructed or existing Privies altered ...	9	
28. Privies and w.c.'s repaired; w.c.'s supplied with water ...	3	
29. Cisterns cleansed, repaired, or covered ...	Several	
30. Animals improperly kept, removed ...	1	
31. Samples of water taken for analysis ...	2	
32. Compensation paid for destruction of infected bedding...	6s. 11d.	
33. Seizure of unsound meat, &c. ...	...

H. T. SIDWELL, F.I.S.E., F.S.S., Mem. C.M.E.S.,
District Surveyor and Inspector of Nuisances.

HATFIELD:

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