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URBAN DISTRICT OF LEIGH.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

For the Year ended December 31st, 1898.

JAMES KING, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health for the
Urban District of Leigh.

Town Hall, Leigh,

March 6th, 1899.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Health Committee.

Gentlemen,

I beg to submit to you my annual report on the mortality and sanitary condition of your District for the year ended December 31st, 1898.

During the year 646 deaths (males 314, females 332) were registered, giving a death-rate on the estimated population (37000) of 17·4 as against 19·16 for the preceding year.

In addition to the above, 32 deaths occurred in the Workhouse, 10 at the Sanatorium and 3 in the Manchester hospitals, belonging to your District, giving a total corrected death-rate of 18·6 as against 20·08 for the previous year.

Twenty-two deaths were uncertified, and 23 inquests held certifying 11 deaths to natural causes, 9 to injuries, 2 to suicide and 1 to starvation.

The death-rate from the principal zymotic diseases is equal to 3·5 per 1000.

The number of births registered was 1288 (670 males and 618 females), giving a birth-rate of 34·8 per 1000 as against 35·6 for the preceding year.

The excess of births over deaths for the year being 642. Of the 1288 children born 257 died during their first year, being at the rate of 199 deaths per 1000 births, as against 195 for the previous year. Nineteen of these were prematurely born, and 17 died from congenital debility.

For the 32 large provincial towns the rates were as follows :—Birth-rate 30·9, death-rate 19·3, zymotic rate 2·87. Deaths of children under one year to 1000 births 185.

The estimated population of the respective Wards, together with the number of deaths and the death-rate per 1000, was as follows :—

WARD.	Number of Deaths.	Deathrate.	Estimated Population.
St. Mary's ...	154	20·2	7600
St Paul's ...	95	19·7	4800
St. Peter's ...	59	16·6	3550
West ...	65	17·5	3700
St. Thomas's ...	78	15·0	5200
St. Joseph's ...	86	18·3	4700
South ...	38	17·6	2150
Central ...	71	13·4	5300
Total ...	646		37000

The following table gives the mortality in each Ward at various ages :—

WARD.	At all Ages.	Under 1 Year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upw'rds
St. Mary's ...	154	64	28	1	13	34	14
St. Paul's ...	95	44	21	0	3	15	12
St. Peter's ...	59	29	7	2	4	13	4
West ...	65	26	8	4	1	16	10
St. Thomas's...	78	26	12	1	1	24	14
St. Joseph's ...	86	25	14	5	4	27	11
South ...	38	20	5	1	2	8	2
Central ...	71	23	7	2	4	23	12
Total ...	646	257	102	16	32	160	79

SMALL-POX

One case was notified on the 11th of March, and the patient at once removed to the Bolton Rural Fever Hospital, and all the usual precautions taken to prevent the spread of the infection. The patient, a young man lodger, had up to the previous week lodged in Abram, but on inquiry no suspicious case of illness was found to exist there or in the immediate neighbourhood.

SCARLET FEVER

Was the cause of 3 deaths, 1 occurring in the Central Ward and 2 at the Sanatorium belonging to St. Mary's Ward. During the year 57 cases were notified, and of these 27 were removed to the Sanatorium.

They were distributed as follows :—

WARD.			Cases Notified.	Deaths.
St. Mary's	...		14	2 at Sanatorium.
St. Paul's	...		3	0
St. Peter's	...		1	0
West	...	...	14	0
St. Thomas's	...		6	0
St. Joseph's	...		4	0
South	...	...	6	0
Central	...	...	9	1
Total	...	...	57	3

The rate per cent. of deaths to cases being 5·2.

DIPHTHERIA

Was the cause of 3 deaths, 2 belonging to St. Mary's Ward and 1 to St. Paul's Ward. During the year 11 cases were notified, and were distributed as follows :—

WARD.	Cases.	Deaths.
St. Mary's ..	4	2
St. Paul's ...	3	1
St. Thomas's ...	2	0
Central	2	0
Total	11	3

During the preceding year 4 cases were notified and 1 death.

MEMBRANOUS CROUP

Was the cause of 9 deaths, 10 cases being notified.

TYPHOID FEVER.

This disease was very prevalent in the Autumn, and during the year 132 cases were notified as against 32 for the preceding year. During the first quarter of the year 17 cases were reported, second quarter 6, third quarter 34 and fourth quarter 75. Of the 34 cases reported during the third quarter 25 were notified in September, and of the 75 during the fourth quarter 40 were notified during October. It will thus be seen that of the 132 cases 65, or practically half the number, were reported during the months of September and October. During the last week in August 8 cases were notified and the outbreak assumed serious proportions in September and October, as shewn above, when climatic conditions were favourable to the spread of this disease.

No one definite cause could be assigned for the outbreak. The various sources of the milk supply were investigated, and at no farm or dairy was any suspicious case of sickness discovered.

The quantity and quality of the water supply was also found to be satisfactory except in one case, where well water was used and, after analysis, was condemned as unfit for food purposes and orders given to discontinue its use.

In a number of cases insanitary conditions were found to exist, such as faulty house drains, deep wet ashpits, unpaved yards and defective sink pipes. In one house, where there were four cases, the water-closet was found to be untrapped and of faulty construction ; there was no flushing cistern, and the connection with the sewer was also found defective and the soil pipe unventilated.

In another house, where three cases occurred, the existing insanitary conditions were such as to readily explain the outbreak.

It is also suspected that the disease was contracted in several instances through the removal of nightsoil taking place from an infected house during the illness of a patient and before the disease was notified as typhoid.

In some cases there is reason to believe that the escape of sewer gas was the cause, there having been practically no provision made for a considerable period for the ventilation of the sewers. It is of the utmost importance that all sewers, particularly in a flat district like Leigh, should be thoroughly ventilated, otherwise there is great danger of sewer gas escaping into the houses and thus causing many cases of ill-defined sickness for which there is no apparent cause. The flushing of the sewers is of equal importance, and was efficiently carried out during the Summer and Autumn.

In 15 cases there was reason to suspect that the disease was contracted through indiscriminate association with infected patients.

Three cases were said to have contracted the disease out of the town : 1 at Lancaster, 1 at Blackpool and 1 at Farnworth.

Of the 74 males notified 44 were over the age of 20 years, and of these 34 were colliers.

The cases and deaths were distributed as follows :—

WARDS.	Cases.	Deaths.
St. Mary's ...	56	5
St. Thomas's ...	8	0
St. Joseph's ...	13	3
St. Peter's ...	23	3
St. Paul's ...	8	0
West ...	12	1
Central ...	10	2
South ...	2	1
Total ...	132	15

Of the above 74 were males and 58 females.

The Sanatorium at Astley was ready to receive typhoid patients during the last quarter of the year, when 26 cases were admitted and of these 8 died.

They were taken from the following Wards :—

WARD.	Cases.	Deaths.
St. Mary's ...	7	2
St. Thomas's ..	1	0
St. Joseph's ...	2	0
St Peter's ...	3	0
St. Paul's ...	4	2
West ...	3	2
Central ...	6	2
Total ...	26	8

Altogether there were 23 deaths, the rate per cent. of deaths to cases being 17·4.

PUERPERAL FEVER

Caused 1 death, 4 cases being notified ; and Erysipelas 3 deaths, 48 cases being notified.

MEASLES

Was the cause of 20 deaths, all being of children under 5 years of age. During the year, when cases have come under notice, the school children living in the infected street or immediate locality, have been kept from school for a month with apparently satisfactory results.

There were 37 deaths from this cause during the preceding year.

WHOOPING COUGH

Was the cause of 3 deaths as against 7 for the previous year.

DIARRHŒA

Was the cause of 88 deaths, 86 of these being of children under 5 years of age.

During the previous year there were 65 deaths from this cause, 61 of these being children under 5 years of age. All cases of Gastro-enteritis, Enteric Catarrh, &c., have been included under the heading of diarrhœa. A very large proportion of these were of children under the age of 1 year, and the mortality, as usual, was influenced by improper feeding, climatic conditions and insanitary surroundings.

PHTHISIS OR CONSUMPTION

Caused 54 deaths, and compares unfavourably with the preceding year when 41 deaths were registered. The death-rate from phthisis being at the rate of 1.4 per 1000.

Diseases of the respiratory organs, such as Bronchitis and Pneumonia, caused 123 deaths as against 174 for the previous year.

INFLUENZA

Was more or less prevalent throughout the year, causing 5 deaths as against 3 for the preceding year.

HEART DISEASE

Was the cause of 22 deaths as against 32 for 1897.

Twelve deaths were due to Injuries, and 285 were referred to Other Diseases.

During the year 16 houses were condemned as unfit for habitation, 12 of these being demolished and 4 closed. Sixteen other houses were reported upon and pulled down for the improvement of adjoining property.

The paving of streets—front and back—has been carried out in a most satisfactory manner during the year, and will, in due course, amply repay the outlay by the improvement of the general health of the inhabitants.

Considerable attention has been paid to the quality of the well water in the District, and, after analysis, the water in 7 cases was found unfit for consumption and the wells closed.

The removal of nightsoil is still unsatisfactory, and there have again been numerous complaints concerning it.

I would suggest to your Committee that water-closets be substituted for the present privy accommodation in all those houses from which at the present time the contents have to be wheeled along passages and deposited in front streets before removal ; and would especially mention all those narrow and closely-packed streets approaching the Railway Station.

At the present time all this filth is removed by the contractors in any kind of open cart or lurry, thereby causing this nuisance to be accentuated. For the removal of nightsoil and other refuse I would strongly recommend the adoption of covered carts.

During the year 1888 ash-pits were emptied, and it is satisfactory to know that your Council have under consideration the erection of a Destructor for dealing with this—the providing of which is highly necessary for a rapidly-growing district such as Leigh.

The bake-houses have been inspected with satisfactory results.

Two lodging-house keepers were prosecuted for over-crowding, and fined one shilling and costs and ten shillings and costs respectively.

The slaughter-houses have been regularly inspected, but, owing to their number and situation, thorough meat inspection by your Officials is practically impossible, and quantities of diseased meat can thus be disposed of without detection.

The utility of Public Abattoirs is at once apparent, where all the meat could be readily kept under the supervision of your Officials and, if necessary, at once dealt with.

One hundred and eighteen Canal Boats were inspected, and, generally, found in a satisfactory condition.

One case of scarlet fever was discovered, the patient removed to the Sanatorium and the boat detained and disinfected.

Many complaints were made during the year of the nuisance arising from sewage from a portion of Abram and Hindley passing untreated into and polluting streams flowing through this District. A special report was made upon this in October last, and since then the above District Councils have undertaken to deal with the nuisance.

I would again call your attention to the necessity of having a local Disinfecting Apparatus, the provision of which has been under your consideration for a lengthened period.

I beg to thank your Committee, on behalf of the Sanitary Officials, for the help and support given to them during the year in carrying on the work of their department.

Your Sanitary Inspector, Mr. Jackson, has supplied me with the following summary of nuisances and insanitary conditions dealt with during the year :—

Nuisances reported to Committee.....	400
Nuisances abated.....	345
Nuisances still under notice, of which 33 are for the converting privies into water-closets.....	55
Notices served on owners and occupiers	608
Letters written.....	337
Notices served on Contractors for removal of nightsoil	1059
Number of ashpits emptied by Contractors during year.....	15588
Canal boats inspected.....	118
Number dealt with for infringing Acts and Regulations.....	8
Smoke observations taken.....	24
Notices served.....	24
Houses disinfected after typhoid fever	109
,, ,, scarlet fever	45
,, ,, diphtheria	12
,, ,, small-pox	1
Number of houses from which soiled bedding, &c., was removed and destroyed after typhoid fever	13

The following insanitary conditions have been dealt with :—

Defective house drains	196
,, gullies	87
,, sink pipes	107
,, water-closets and waste water-closets stopped up ...	93
,, privies	50

Privies pulled down	58
New privies erected.....	67
Privies converted into water-closets.....	105
Foul ashpits made dry	111
Defective spouting	109
„ roofs.....	73
Houses repaired	112
Filthy houses	71
Damp houses	23
Insanitary yards	129
Wells closed.....	7

Houses condemned as unfit for habitation :—

Nos. 7, 9, 11, 8 and 10 Diamond Street pulled down.
 „ 1 and 2 Reddish Court „
 „ 2, 4, 8 and 10 Hill Street „
 „ 4 Ridyard Court „
 „ 5, 9, 13 and 19 Smithy Street (cellar dwellings) closed.
 „ 4, 5, 6 and 7 St. Ann's Square, Leigh Road, pulled down.
 „ 2, 4 and 5 St. Mary's Square, „ „
 „ 1 Hargreaves Square, „ „
 „ 2 and 3 Acker's Court, Firs Lane „
 „ 372 Warrington Road „
 „ 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Westleigh Mill „

I enclose Tables A and B required by the Local Government Board and County Council.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES KING,

Medical Officer of Health.