With the Medical Officer of Health's Compliments.

Borough of Lewes.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health,

1894.

TO THE CORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH OF LEWES.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to produce my Report for the year 1894. During the year 155 deaths have taken place, the first quarter producing

	53	or an average of		18·8	per 1000.
second quarter	37	"	"	13·2	"
third "	33	"	"	11·6	"
fourth "	32	"	"	11·2	"

this gives an annual average of 13·7 per 1000.

I may mention this is the lowest death rate since the Incorporation of the Town. It is difficult to ascribe any definite reason for such a low rate; but it must not be forgotten that considerable improvements have been, and are being, made in the drainage of the Town, and no doubt the mild climatic season has had no little to do with the lowness of the rate.

To show the considerable decrease that has taken place, I give the death rate for the last ten years :—

In 1884	it was	15·9	per 1000.
1885	"	19·6	"
1886	"	14·7	"
1887	"	16·6	"
1888	"	14·5	"
1889	"	15·8	"
1890	"	17·1	"
1891	"	15·1	"
1892	"	17·7	"
1893	"	15·5	"
1894	"	13·7	"

It will be noticed that in the years 1890, 91, 92 the rate is exceptionally high, no doubt due to the severe epidemics of influenza, from which most parts suffered during those years.

Of the various Parishes,—

In St. John's	there were	34	deaths,	9	being over 65.
St. Anne's	"	21	"	10	"
All Saints'	"	34	"	12	"
St. Michael's	"	7	"	2	"
Cliffe	"	18	"	5	"
Malling	"	5	"	2	"
Southover	"	18	"	4	"
Castle Precincts	"	1	"	1	"
Workhouse	"	11	"	8	"
Infirmary	"	6	"	1	"

Taking the total number of deaths, including the Workhouse and Infirmary, there were

26	deaths	under 1 year.
12	"	1 year and under 5.
10	"	at 5 and under 15.
8	"	at 15 " 25.
45	"	at 25 " 65.
54	"	at 65 and upwards.

Phthisis caused	18	deaths
Whooping Cough	6	"
Bronchitis and Pleurisy	28	"
All other Diseases	85	"
Diphtheria	2	"
Injuries	2	"
Heart Disease	13	"
Diarrhœa and Dysentery	1	"

Here I would take the opportunity of apologising for an error which has occurred in the cases of diphtheria. I think the matter may be satisfactorily explained, when I mention that one case occurred at the end of the year 1893, and was duly reported to the Sanitary Committee, but the registration of the death did not take place until early in January, consequently it appeared in the Registrar's report for that week. Through an oversight on my part, I did not think of looking, when making my Report, at this certificate, consequently I have had to include it in this year. I trust that this explanation will be satisfactory.

Of Zymotic Diseases, 9 cases were reported :—

Erysipelas	6.	
Diphtheria	1,	excluding the case above referred to, and
Scarlet Fever	1.	which was reported last year.
Puerperal Fever	1.	

Of these cases, one only proved fatal, the Diphtheria. The Scarlet Fever, Erysipelas, and Puerperal were all of a mild character.

It will be noticed that no case of Typhoid Fever has occurred throughout the year ; this I think is a matter for congratulation.

In the cases of Phthisis, St. John's has the largest number ; but, although the influences of drainage may not be noticeable for some time, I am in hopes that good results may be shown in years to come.

Of Bronchitis and Pleurisy, the 28 deaths are below the average.

Of Births, there have been 268 :—

Females	139
Males	129

giving an average of 23·9 per 1,000.

In reference to the cases of Diphtheria, a careful examination was made of both houses in which the cases occurred. In one I could not trace any cause, but in the other there was marked evidence of defective drainage, evidently the trap leading to the cesspool was destroyed.

Again I would draw attention to the flushing of the House Drains. It appears to be the opinion of some, that the greater the quantity of water allowed to run into the drain, the more successful the cleansing. There can be no greater mistake, as by allowing a tap to continually run, the cesspool becomes filled with water, and there is a backward flow, with the result that siphonage is produced, and the trap destroyed. A can-full of water, with some disinfectant, thrown forcibly down a sink, is quite sufficient, and will be found to be effectual.

I have pleasure in reporting the commencement of the Paddock Valley Drainage Works, also the drainage of a part of South Street. The drainage of Southover will shortly be commenced. I hope, on the completion of this latter work, the importance of draining the Cliffe will be recognised.

Our water supply still maintains its good qualities, and the supply is unlimited. I am informed that thirty gallons per head is the average quantity used during the year. Four samples of water from wells have been submitted for analysis, and one of them I had no hesitation in condemning. The well situated in South Street, and which supplied eight houses, from the quantity of its saline constituents, was evidently fed by the river. I drew the owner's attention to the matter, and I am pleased to say he recognised its importance by at once having the Town supply laid on, not only to the houses in question, but to others besides.

During the year an inspection of the bakehouses revealed that the owners were unacquainted with the requirements of the Act. I drew the attention of the Sanitary Committee to this matter, and they readily consented to circulars being printed and distributed to all bakehouses. I have no reason for any further complaint in the matter.

The lodging-houses have also been inspected and found satisfactory, as also the slaughter-houses. It is a question which may at some future date be brought before your notice, as to the advisability of having a public slaughter-house or abattoir outside the town. I am not at present prepared to advise you on the subject, but you are doubtless aware the experiment is being tried in a neighbouring town, and time will show whether the scheme is a success or not.

On several visits to the Baths I found the water in a very satisfactory condition. I had to draw attention to the closet in the attendant's house. It was on the dry earth system, no ventilation, and the door opened into the house. This matter was at once rectified by shifting the door to the outside, and placing a window for ventilation.

I would again bring before your notice the flushing of the sewers ; the motion has been before your Sanitary Committee, and I hope some arrangement may be come to, before the summer months, so that all may be thoroughly cleansed.

The Infectious Diseases Hospital has undergone thorough repair, the inside walls and ceilings have been distempered, windows painted, and the roof and chimneys attended to. On each of my visits I have found the wards thoroughly clean and well looked after. One case only, Diphtheria, has been admitted during the year, and this, I am happy to say, was attended with satisfactory results.

There is one matter I would like to mention, and of which several complaints have been made, and that is the smoke emitted from several places of business in the town. My personal experience has been such as to prove that such a condition of affairs exists, and as there is a remedy, I can only appeal to the good feelings and good nature of the owners of such establishments, to take the necessary steps to alleviate a condition which is not only disagreeable, but objectionable to their neighbours.

Your Inspector of Nuisances reports :—

Drains opened and cleaned to 51 houses, new drains to 27 houses.

Company's water laid on to 30 houses.

Inspected all bakehouses and distributed notices.

Cesspools emptied to 14 houses.

Have inspected and seen to smoke at factories and breweries.

All slaughter-houses have been inspected ; also pig pounds monthly ; also all cow stalls and the market.

The fried fish shop in Westgate Street, of which complaint was made, has been closed.
Davey's and Tan Yard ditches have been cleared, and all flushing and disinfecting done as required.

The lodging houses have been regularly visited, and found satisfactory.

My journal will show the number of inspections.

In concluding this report, I would again tender my thanks to my medical brethren for their promptness in advising me of any Infectious or Contagious Disease, and also the Officials of the Corporation with whom I have been brought in contact, for their willingness to always render me every assistance.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

JOHN P. PEARCE,

Medical Officer of Health.