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BOROUGH OF LOWESTOFT

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1943.

To His Worshipful the Mayor and to the Aldermen and Councillors of the Borough of Lowestoft.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report on the health of the Borough for the year 1943, which by direction of Circular 2604 is again an interim report.

The death rate, though lower than for 1942 (17.6), continues high relative to England and Wales. The birth rate of 21.3 is the highest recorded since 1923 but here allowance should be made for the absence of a proportion of adults from the civil population.

No cause of sickness or invalidity has been specially noteworthy during the year, and detailed comparison of statistical rates with previous years and with other areas is at present of little value owing to abnormal migration.

I would report that the reduced officers and staff of the department have continued to give willing service under sometimes difficult conditions.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

V. R. WALKER.

Medical Officer of Health.

June, 1944.

A. Extracts from Vital Statistics for the Year.

	<u>LOWESTOFT</u>	<u>Comparative figures for ENGLAND & WALES</u>
BIRTH RATE per 1,000 estimated resident population mid-1943 ...	21.3	16.5
STILL BIRTHS per 1,000 total (live & still) births ...	37	30
DEATH RATE per 1,000 estimated average population ...	15.0	12.1
DEATH RATE OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE :-		
All infants per 1,000 livebirths	59	49
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births ...	51	--
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births ...	140	--
DEATHS FROM PUERPERAL CAUSES :-	<u>Rate per 1,000 total (live & still) births</u>	
Puerperal Sepsis ...	1.77	0.39
Other Puerperal Causes ...	1.77	1.90
	<u>3.54</u>	<u>2.29</u>
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	60	
" " Measles (all ages)	2	
" " Whooping Cough (all ages) ..	-	
" " Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	3	

Comment on Vital Statistics

The continued higher death rate relative to England & Wales is explicable by the unfavourable age distribution of the present civilian

population of the borough. Similarly the exceptional birth rate has not the outstanding significance it would have in normal years.

For the first year since 1938 the infant mortality, particularly the rate for illegitimate infants, compares unfavourably with that for the country as a whole. Search of available records for any possible contributory cause is hampered by an abnormal proportion of transferable births and deaths. The unfavourable increases are about equally divided between neo-natal deaths (under 4 weeks) and of infants aged 1 to 12 months. Deaths of infants over one month were exceptionally high only in the first quarter of the year, when there was a considerable prevalence of measles and infantile infections. Deaths at ages under 4 weeks were fairly evenly distributed throughout the year and were accompanied by an unfavourable stillbirth rate. The year was remarkable for an unduly high proportion of first births, which carry an increased risk to infants of birth injury, malformation or maternal toxæmia. Stillbirth enquiries showed no evidence of excessive length of industrial employment during pregnancy among married mothers, though there was some evidence of such unfavourable factor operating in the case of unmarried mothers.

B. General Provision of Health Services for the Area.

The general framework continued unchanged and there has been no alteration in the professional staff since the last annual report.

Midwifery Service. The municipal midwifery scheme has continued to work smoothly and, despite the general shortage of midwives, the services of the Lowestoft Nursing Association have continued able to meet all demands for domiciliary midwifery, often involving heavy pressure on their reduced staff. The number of summonses for medical assistance was 124. In two domiciliary emergencies use was made of the E.M.S. blood plasma transfusion stocks for resuscitation, under the scheme for providing such assistance recently formulated by the local authority.

Maternity Services. Three complicated maternity cases were admitted to the Lowestoft Hospital under the standing agreement, while 132 mothers were evacuated under the Ministry of Health scheme for confinement in reception area maternity hostels.

One maternal death, from acute toxæmia of pregnancy, occurred in the area in a case admitted to hospital. Also one death from puerperal sepsis occurring in London to a Lowestoft resident was credited to the area as a transfer.

Maternity & Child Welfare

Heavy pressure continued throughout the year on the municipal antenatal clinics, where expectant mothers also obtain certificates for the Ministry of Food priority classes and the many other forms of certificates demanded by various service and civilian departments. Over eighty per cent of expectant mothers attended at some time during pregnancy, including many who were to be confined outside the borough. Shortage of staff and limitation of accommodation caused some occasional crowding, to avoid which efforts are being made. Routine examination and guidance continues to be carried out by the same midwives of the District Nursing Association who actually attend the great bulk of the domiciliary confinements in the borough, stress being thus laid upon the primarily physiological nature of the process of childbirth.

The three child welfare centres continued their work during the year. At every session of both these and the antenatal centres distribution continued under the Ministry of Food schemes of cod liver oil, fruit juices and vitamin oil capsules for expectant mothers. These facilities show a steady increase in popularity, while National Dried Milk has almost displaced other dried milk products in the artificial feeding of infants. The distribution counter has also become an information centre for many matters affecting maternity and child welfare in war time and for the sale of Ministry of Food publications on nutrition. On medical advice concentrated iron tablets were increasingly afforded, often with immediate and obvious benefit, to those recently delivered mothers showing signs of anaemia or debility following childbirth.

Health Visiting. The routine work has been continued as far as allowed by the greatly reduced staff on pre-war establishment. Regular visitation of children under 5 years is also hampered by abnormal movements of the child population.

In the course of house visitation health visitors have instructions (under Circular 2831) to give helpful advice to householders towards improving the general standard of cleanliness and habits and to combat infestation by head lice. Where head infestation comes to their notice as school nurses examination and advice is offered to the members of the household both under and over school age with a view to the stamping out of any family infestation, lethane hair oil applications being proffered for such purpose. Assistance has also been given to industrial welfare officers on request whenever the co-operation of individuals can be obtained for examination and any treatment indicated.

C. Sanitary Circumstances of the Area.

Only work of a nature necessary to avoid serious nuisance has been undertaken, the staff continuing on the reduced number of two inspectors. No particular difficulties were encountered during the year.

Water. The supply in all areas of the borough from the local water undertaking continues at all times sufficient in quantity and of a high standard of purity, checked by regular analyses. A very few wells still exist supplying individual houses but almost all dwellings are directly piped from the constant supply mains, apart from a few isolated caravans and hutment groups taking supply from a common tap. The water has no liability to plumbo-solvent action.

D. Housing.

No special problems have arisen; work carried out under Section 9 of the Housing Act has been restricted to those repairs of a very necessary and urgent character.

E. Inspection and Supervision of Food

(a) Milk Supply. Routine inspection under the Milk and Dairies Orders was continued throughout the year. Twenty-one samples were taken for bacterial count and twenty-four for phosphatase test. Of the latter eleven were reported to come in Group I, five in Group II and two in Group III. The attention of the vendors was drawn to the unsatisfactory reports.

Thirty-six samples of milk were taken for animal inoculation for the presence or otherwise of tubercle bacilli. In seven samples the bacteriologist reported that tubercle bacilli were found. In four of the samples the milk was found to have been from the same herd. The County Authorities were notified and action was subsequently taken under the Tuberculosis Order 1938. One animal was eventually found and slaughtered, when post mortem examination confirmed the findings.

(b) Meat.

Slaughterhouses. 1496 visits were paid to these premises by the inspectors during the year, and 5570 carcasses were inspected. This figure includes animals slaughtered outside the borough during six months of the year. The total amount of fresh meat and offal condemned as unsound and unfit for food amounted to 68,538 lbs, of which 53,971 lbs or 78.7% was tubercular.

Carcases Inspected and Condemned.

	Cattle, ex- cluding cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs
Number killed (if known)	1853		1658	1386	673
Number inspected	1853		1658	1386	673
All diseases except Tuberculosis -					
Whole carcases condemned ... 3	4	8	4	2	
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned ... 194	66	10	28	46	
Percentage of the number inspected infected with disease other than tuberculosis	14.4	1.1	2.3	7.1	
Tuberculosis only :-					
Whole carcases condemned .. 16	32	8	-	2	
Carcases of which some part or organ was condemned .. 196	198	9	-	121	
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	23.9	1.0	-	18.3	

Other Foods. Other articles found unfit for human consumption and accordingly condemned were as follows :-

Mixed Food 1,757 tins, fish 11,632 tins, pork luncheon meat and corned beef 3,073 lbs, flour 830 lbs, fish 392 lbs, bacon and ham 127 lbs, butter and margarine 212 lbs, sugar 437 lbs, eggs 428, cheese 304 lbs, milk 319 tins, biscuits 140 lbs, jam 80 lbs, anchovies (canned) 374 lbs, chocolates and sweets 67 lbs, dried fruit 105 lbs, tomato paste 498 tins, sausagemeat 25½ lbs, lard 33 lbs, tea 3 lbs, oxo cubes 125, mixed soups 36 packets, salt 17 packets, cereals 533 lbs, jellies 5.

(c) Adulteration. During the year 100 formal samples were taken. In four instances the Public Analyst reported samples to be non-genuine.

(1) Gelatine. Sulphur dioxide 3836 parts per 1,000,000, equal to 26-85 grains per lb. Proceedings taken. Vendor fined £10 and costs.

(2) Granulated Gravy. The Analyst reported that this sample should not have been described as Gravy but as Gravy Salt. The manufacturer's attention was drawn to the opinion of the Public Analyst. No proceedings were taken. (3) Egg Substitute. (2 samples). The Analyst reported that the samples had no "raising" power and suggested that it was due to the age of the samples. In one case acari were also found to be present. Enquiry at the vendors' premises proved this opinion to be correct and the stock was voluntarily withdrawn from sale. The vendors were warned as to future storage.

During the year ten informal samples of milk were tested for milk fat content. With the exception of one sample which showed a deficiency in milk fat content of 6-2/3%, all the samples proved genuine. Repeat samples from the same source as the one deficient proved genuine.

F. Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and Other Diseases.

The following table shows the incidence of notifiable diseases during the year 1943.

Disease	Total cases notified	Cases admitted to Isolation Hospital	Total Deaths
Smallpox	-	-	-
Cerebro-spinal fever	1	1	-
Scarlet Fever	40	9	-
Diphtheria	7	7	-
Typhoid	-	-	-
Paratyphoid	1	1	-
Puerperal pyrexia	9	2	-
Pneumonia	9	-	17
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	3	-	-
Erysipelas	2	-	-
Whooping Cough	8	-	-
Measles	63	-	2
Encephalitis Lethargica	1	-	-

It will be seen that the general incidence of infectious disease was again low during the whole of the year and at no time was there epidemic prevalence of any such. The moderate incidence of influenza in the last month of the year was not accompanied at the time by any marked rise in the general death rate.

Scarlet Fever. The total of forty cases for the year was again low. The quarterly incidence was 4, 6, 8 and 22. Only nine of these cases were admitted to the Isolation Hospital for treatment. The type of this disease now seen is extremely mild - often a moderate rash accompanied by little, if any, fever. Generally such illness is now of less severity than an attack of measles and only in selected cases is admission to hospital indicated.

Diphtheria. The quarterly incidence of the seven cases was 1, 2, 0 and 4. Four cases were moderate, three severe - all being reported by the Emergency Public Health Laboratory as due to the one ("inter-medius") strain of organism. No death occurred in the year and no case was notified in an immunised child.

Puerperal Pyrexia. Nine cases were notified during the year, the quarterly distribution being 3, 2, 2 and 2. The clinical picture was generally mild but two cases required admission to hospital for treatment. Both were of short stay. There was no evidence of any common source of infection among cases and no death occurred.

Measles. There was a moderate prevalence of such in the early spring months of the year, two deaths occurring in young children of one family. Many cases in children under 5 years were severe with considerable residual debility.

Diphtheria Prophylaxis. As part of the continued national campaign for the immunisation of children under 15 years an additional 441 children under 5 years, and 309 over 5 but under 15 years, completed the course of injections. Special efforts were made during the year by the canvassing of health visitors for the immediate protection of children aged 1-5 years, rather than the postponement of the measure till the time of school entry. Little active opposition or "conscientious objection" to such offer is encountered but a minority of parents tend to postpone indefinitely the presentation of children on two occasions for the necessary pin-pricks. Through movements of child population determination of the exact proportion immunised is difficult but it is estimated that at the end of the year well over 80 per cent of school children and about 75 per cent of children aged 1-5 years have been immunised. The present effort of the health service is to have young children protected by two injections as soon

as possible after their first birthday, while the aim at some future date will be to secure parental acceptance of one further injection in the first year of school attendance to build up immunity for the remaining school life.

Cases of diphtheria scattered in different areas of the borough occurred sporadically in the last few months of the year and the absence of any real spread strongly suggests that the fairly high proportion of children immunised was the limiting factor. No child died from the disease during the year and no immunised child was notified as suffering from diphtheria. Early in the year one case occurred in a child attending a private school who was the only young child there not protected by immunisation, and no spread occurred in the school.

Lowestoft has in recent years had a remarkable reduction in fatality from diphtheria, only one child having died in the last seven years as against thirty lives lost in the previous seven.

Owing to the smaller numbers of children recently affected a relatively increased proportion of adults contracting diphtheria, usually of a milder severity, has been noticeable locally in the last two or three years. The only adults immunised by public health effort are hospital nurses, among whom no local incidence has occurred since the installation of the measure of protection.

Borough Isolation Hospital.

The following table gives the number and nature of the admissions during the financial year ended 31st March, 1944, both for the borough and from other authorities.

<u>Disease</u>	<u>Admitted from area of Borough</u>	<u>Admitted from other authorities (including Services).</u>
Scarlet Fever	10	17
Diphtheria	7	11
Paratyphoid Fever	1	-
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	4
Suckling Infant	1	3
Chickenpox	-	11
Measles	2	88
Rubella	-	42
Mumps	-	16
Erysipelas	-	4
Jaundice	-	3
Whooping Cough	-	1
Observation Cases	5	24
	<u>27</u>	<u>224</u>

The annual number of cases admitted from the borough was again low. Certain cases from the contributing rural areas continued to be accommodated inland at the Stowmarket Isolation Hospital. During the financial year ended 31st March, 1944, fourteen cases of scarlet fever and one case of diphtheria were admitted there.

TUBERCULOSIS

New cases and mortality during 1943 are given for the area in the following table :-

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
5-	-	1	2	4	-	-	-	-
15-	1	2	1	4	-	2	-	-
25-	3	8	-	-	1	-	-	-
35-	4	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
45-	7	1	-	1	2	4	-	-
55-	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	-
65 and upwards	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	16	15	4	10	5	7	-	1
Registrar General's figures supplied after final transfers	4	6	1	1

The totals of both notifications and deaths show remarkably little variation in incidence from the year 1942. Three cases of death from tuberculous disease (two pulmonary and one meningeal) had not been previously notified.

V. R. WALKER.

Medical Officer of Health.

June, 1944.

