Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health

OF THE

Urban District Council of Madron,

1895.

It is gratifying that as the time comes round for presenting the usual Annual Report of the District, to be able again to speak favourably of its condition in its varying aspects, and first, as to its sanitary condition, to say that the general health has, on the whole, been good, with the exception of Whooping Cough which, although prevalent in the whole District, has been exceptionally mild, as compared with what has occurred in former years—no death has been registered as caused by it. Scarlatina cannot be said to have entirely disappeared, for occasionally, and at long intervals, a mild and apparently a sporadic case appears, not spreading and dying out without a second case occurring, and which, considering its former prevalence in the Hea and Tolcarne neighbourhoods, is almost what might have been expected.

This year 12 cases have been notified without a death, as compared with 21 in 1894, and 65 in 1893 with 10 deaths. No case of zymotic disease has been admitted to the Workhouse Infirmary as compared with 1893. There was a case brought from Plymouth, said to be Diphtheria, but if so it must have been very mild considering its rapid recovery. It was at Tolcarne.

Except in a single instance of a family at Jamaica Place, and more connected with school attendance than any other cause, we have not been called upon by either the Central or Local Authority to furnish any special interim Report. The usual Report read at the Board's Monthly Meeting has, of course, been sent regularly.

Very frequent inspection of the District has been carefully carried out. Instead of as formerly, at stated times, we have found it more satisfactory to make it somewhat irregularly and in detail; as more likely to arrive at the facts among that class where inspection is most required, and so see them in their every day life.

WHERRY-TOWN.—Following the route found convenient in the past, we again propose to notice Wherry-town first, which remains unaltered, and our remarks of last and previous years apply equally to this year also; the refuse storage and its disposal, drains and water supply, etc., are all as they were before, no new building having been erected there for the year, nor indeed for several years past. The houses and premises are fairly well looked after, and are much sought for by the respectable artizans, being a convenient distance from Penzance, and in good order structurally, and clean; nothing like over-crowding exists, and much less poultry is kept than formerly. The house and other refuse has always been moderate in quantity, and pretty regularly removed. The roads being immediately continuous with, and contiguous to, Penzance, are fairly scavenged and kept in fair repair, but perhaps not so much so this year as before, possibly from being very flat and without gratings to take off the surface water.

TOLCARNE.—Situate next quiet Wherry-town, has been again the active scene of building operations. Of the 30 new buildings erected during the year, mostly from plans deposited during the previous year, 20 of these are at Tolcarne, and extending toward Laregan ; most are fit for occupation or are occupied, and already preparation for others is in progress ; and a very substantial addition to the rateable value of the district thus created. The Inspector informs me that in the erection of all new houses strict observance of the Bye-laws is carefully insisted on, and thus a superior class of house, in a sanitary point of view, is believed to be secured. Although usually considered a fairly healthy place, yet Scarlatina lingers here longer than in any other part of the district. Twenty new houses have been built during the year, which added to the 94 spoken of before, make a total of considerably over a hundred.

The provision of Public Urinals has been discussed in our Yearly Reports and strongly advocated for several years past ; as so great a convenience almost amounts to an absolute necessity, both here and in the district generally. But although backed up by so great an authority as the Chairman of the Sanitary Committee, up to the present there has been no practical outcome of the suggestion. We venture, however, to again advert to it, and urge its adoption. There are difficulties as to site and capabilities for flushing so as to prevent its becoming a nuisance,—especially, no doubt, if near dwelling-houses, in country places. In towns, where water is at hand, the matter is very practicable, unless it could be placed under the supervision of the police, and made part of their routine duty to keep it clean.

The state of the river here, as well as of the public roads and back-yards of houses, are not now looked upon as they formerly were ; they are now regarded rather as subjects requiring close attention. In the driest season the bed of the river has now a less disreputable appearance, although filth of all kinds continue to be thrown into it, but it is not allowed to remain there festering in the sun, and poisoning both air and any water that may be there. Cleansing the river is still done jointly by the neighbouring Authorities of Paul and Madron.

" We would again advert to a subject we called the very serious attention of the Board " to for the first time in our last year's Report, it having only just then arisen," and only do so now for the purpose of mentioning the fact that the practice has been discontinued by the Paul Authority, and so a probable collision between the two Authorities happily averted, viz., " the very objectionable, and, as we believe, illegal practice of bringing, in a " specially constructed metallic folding nuisance-cart, the house refuse, liquid privy " contents, and street scavenging of Newlyn and Street-an-nowan through Tolcarne and " depositing it on the foreshore of the Madron district, to the great annoyance and danger " to the health of its inhabitants," after remonstrance had been addressed by this Board to that of Paul.

TOLCARNE PUMP.—After having undergone so much hostile criticism, credit has at last been given for what it really deserves, viz., an abundant supply of clear and attractive water. Of fairly good water it may be inferior to some, owing, it may be, to some mineral (iron) taint said to have been found in it, as well as in some other specimens in the neighbourhood ; nothing more than that was ever claimed for it. The more immediate surroundings ought, we think, to be improved and made more attractive, and the place generally kept in better order.

LARECAN—Which for the last year or two has claimed so much of our attention, on account of its delapidated condition, has at last been found too bad for continuous occupation and been quitted. Whether any adequate repair may now be attempted, or it is allowed to fall down, remains to be seen. Viewed from a sanitary point, we may, at least for the present, dismiss it, except as regarding it as another of the improvements in the district.

CHYANDOUR.—Of the part of Chyandour situate in this district we have little new to report beyond the completion and occupation of the whole of the houses, some of which were incomplete at the beginning of the year, the removal of the obstruction to the concrete footpath, and the paving of the road leading up to the newly-erected Police Station and Naval Drill premises. The water supply is abundant and good and from two sources, viz., Penzance Corporation and the ancient pump. The houses and the habits of the people are, as a rule, cleanly. There are now about 30 dwelling houses. The open grating in the road still exists, but is not at present complained of. I am told that it is now under the jurisdiction of the County Council, who are alone responsible for its proper keeping.

HEA.—We shall still have to speak of Hea as a distinct part of the district, the intended new street not having as yet been made, and so throwing it open with Heamoor below, and thus making it one. There is little or nothing new to notice, and we mention it now principally for the sake of uniformity and to avoid the risk of omitting any part previously reported on.

Matters here have remained quiescent in all respects. No new house has been built for some years past, and it has been generally regarded as one of the most desirable parts of this portion of the district as a residence by the more respectable and well-conducted people.

JAMAICA PLACE.—With lapse of time this place seeems to get worse instead of being improved, notwithstanding reiterated complaints and remonstrances. It is, unfortunately, both largely owned and occupied by an inferior class.

The front of the houses would mislead, the situation being higher than the surroundings, is favourable to vegetation, which flourishes in wild profusion. It is principally at the rear of the place where we meet with what we most condemn, namely, small yards, utterly neglected, either without any or only what can be regarded as an apology for pavement, and frequently made worse by poultry keeping; in pits, and during rain filled with muddy water, "lumber of all kinds piled against ruinous walls and in corners, the accumulation of years (if the families have lived in the houses so long), ruinous; disgustingly full and foul privies, some with some sort of door, others without any." All this has been said before of this place. Where the whole is in such a disreputable condition we do not individualise. The whole of the back-yards from end to end, with the roads, require to be put in thorough repair; at present it can hardly be in a worse condition.

HEA-MOOR.—Although almost continuous with Hea and Jamaica Place, it is yet distinct from both at present. It may be said that of late years it has become the most important place in the district, having, instead of its previous small way-side Post Office, a new and much more pretentious one. It has been constituted an independent postal district, with money and postal order, savings bank, and telegraph facilities, and so

become a convenient centre for the market gardening and agricultural industries of the neighbourhood, much enlarging the size of the place and bringing more residents there, and become the most populous in the parish, numbering now, it is calculated, 1,100 inhabitants, while it is said Madron itself does not number more than 500. With this largely augmented population the water supply and drainage has occupied the very serious attention of the Council, and the services of the Surveyor were engaged to select a site and prepare plans, specifications, and estimates to supply what they felt would, sooner or later, become imperative, and to take the drainage to the sea at Chyandour, which it was hoped might be accomplished without much delay.

Both the water supply and the sewage schemes have, however, been abandoned for the present for various reasons, but principally because the majority of the Council think that, although these improvements are very desirable and much needed, the place is not yet big enough, or the rateable value high enough, to bear the expense.

MADRON CHURCH-TOWN has, as usual, been very quiet, whilst other parts of the district have been correspondingly active in extending their boundaries. Nothing worth recording has occurred here for the year.

Friggins' Row, with its deceptive front and disreputable back premises, does not improve with time, where nothing more than a little white-washing is done by some of the more cleanly of the tenants.

Vingoe's Row has mostly become so delapidated as to be unfit for any one to occupy as almost now to have dropped out of notice; nothing has been done by way of repair, and nothing is apparently intended to be done. The high and inconvenient situation of Madron may have something to do with the present subordinate position it occupies in the district to which it gives its name, and as such, would have, in preference to any other part of the district, the summary of the official and permanent work done in the various parts of the district during the year, viz., 18 lots of plans were presented for consideration, comprising 9 new dwelling-houses, 4 additions to existing dwelling-houses, 1 art gallery, 1 school-room, 1 concrete factory, 7 stables, coach-houses, sheds, &c. Of the foregoing, 1 plan for a dwelling-house was disapproved of. Some other plans were passed subject to being amended; the remainder were approved of. About 30 new dwellings have been erected during the year, mostly from plans deposited from places during the previous year; of these, 20 are at Tolcarne and Laregan, and the remainder at Hea and Tregavara.

PUBLIC WELLS.—In reference to public wells and the water supply of the district generally we may say, without individualising them, that we have had no complaint of either quantity or quality. We have inspected them all personally, some of them more than once.

VACCINATION.—Of the vaccination of the district we have nothing favourable to report, the numbers instead of increasing have fallen below those of last year, although the births have exceeded any previous year of which we have any record, in the proportion of 101 this year to 94 in 1894, an increase of 7, yet the vaccinations have been 8 less, and those returned as dead 14 as against 9 in 1894, and the unaccounted for 51 as compared with 42 in 1894—the largest number on record except the year 1892, when the numbers were 52, so that for the last four years, out of a total of 359 children born, 114 are returned as vaccinated, 44 as dead, 8 removed, and 193 unaccounted for, a most unsatisfactory teste

of things, which ought to receive most serious attention of those in authority, the Board of Guardians.

Year.	Children Born.	Vaccinated.	Dead.	Removed.	Unvaccinated.
1895	101	32	14	4	51
1894	94	40	9	3	42
1893	84	23	12	1	48
1892	80	19	9	—	52
Totals	359	114	44	8	193

DEATHS.—By Table A we see that a total of 86 deaths occurred during the year, 48 males and 38 females, an increase of 28 over 1894, and a slight decrease of 2 on 1893. Of the 86 deaths 21 took place in the Workhouse, 10 males and 11 females, as compared with 15 in the Workhouse, viz., 10 males and 5 females, in 1894, and 22 deaths, viz., 15 males and 7 females in 1893. The total deaths for the year gives 30.6 per thousand. Deducting the 21 deaths in the Workhouse as 7.4 per thousand, our death-rate in the district at large is reduced to 23.2 per thousand. Of those dying in the Workhouse 3 only were natives of the parish of Madron, the remainder coming from the remaining nineteen parishes forming the Union. The Workhouse being almost necessarily the asylum of the very poor, infirm, aged, and imbecile, we find the deaths are principally of that class. The average of ages being highest in tne Workhouse.

On analysing the causes of death we find that 5 died, or 1.7 per thousand, the same as in 1894, and as compared with 2.4 per thousand in 1893, and 1.4 in 1892. Bronchitis, pneumonia, and pleurisy caused 6 deaths, or 2.4 per thousand, the same number as in 1894; 3.5 per thousand in 1893, and 4.2 in 1892. Heart disease caused 7 deaths, or 2.4 per thousand as compared with 1.4 per thousand last year. Cancer caused 5 deaths this year as compared with 4 in 1894 and 5 in 1893—about the average.

BIRTHS.—By Table B of the Local Government Board we find that 101 children were born in the district during the year, viz., 52 males and 49 females, a natural increase of 15 births over the deaths, equal to 5.3 per thousand. Of these 12, viz., 7 males and 5 females, were born in the Workhouse as compared with 11 in 1894 and 8 in 1893. Deducting the 12 from the total, we have 89 as belonging to the district at large. For several years past the number of births in the Workhouse has been, with narrow yearly variation, gradually diminishing. The birth-rate per thousand on the whole is 35 9, or deducting those born in the Workhouse as 4.2, we have 31.7 per thousand in the district at large as compared with 33.4 in 1894, 20.8 in 1893, 28.4 in 1892, and 24.5 in 1891. The sexes this year are about equal

The absence of privy accommodation in the district, on which we have commented in previous reports, and of which we gave such a formidable list, is, I am informed by the Sanitary Inspector, being gradually cured by the erection by the landlords of either corrugated zinc or wooden ones in the more remote and out of the way places of the district, where labourers cottages or small and poor farm houses exist, and seem most to require them, to bring the inhabitants into decent habits.

There cannot be said to be over-crowding in any part of the district; nor among those who wish to stand well with the public, the same almost promiscuous mingling of

the sexes, even if the ages widely differ, as formerly obtained, although in very poor and long families it would almost seem avoidable, but even then it is sought to be concealed. There seems no scarcity of cottages suitable for agricultural labourers and persons of that class, for on passing the lanes one often sees notices "to let" in the windows. Madron parish has an area of 5474 acres, with a population in 1891 of 2810, giving an average of 1.9 to each acre.

Signed,

JOHN Q. COUCH,

Medical Officer of Health.

March, 1896.

F. RODDA, STEAM PRINTER, PENZANCE.