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Contributors

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MARSHLAND RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for 1905.

To the Chairman and Members of the Rural District Council of Marshland.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit to you my first Annual Report on the health and sanitary condition of your District.

THE DISTRICT consists of twelve parishes, in the County of Norfolk, lying to the North and North-East of Wisbech, and has an area of 51969 acres. It is divided into the four Sub-Districts of Terrington, Walpole, Emneth, and Upwell. The configuration of the District is flat—no part being many feet above sea level—and the soil is peat and silt on sand and gravel, which in turn rests on boulder clay. It is essentially rural in character, having a population of one person to every $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres. The chief occupation is agriculture.

POPULATION.—The population, estimated on the basis that the rate of increase or decrease which obtained during the last decennial period still continues, was 11290, made up as follows:—Terrington, 4846; Walpole, 2550; Emneth, 976; and Upwell, 2918.

BIRTHS.—303 births were registered, as compared with 299 in 1904. The birth-rate was 26·8 per 1000, and the excess of births over deaths, 170.

DEATHS.—133 deaths were registered, as compared with 155 in 1904. The death-rate was 11·8 per 1000, being 2·4 per 1000 below the average for the last ten years.

INFANT DEATH-RATE.—25 infants under one year of age died, giving a death-rate of 82·5 per 1000 births, as compared with 103·6 per 1000 in 1904.

AGE MORTALITY.—36 children under 5 years of age died, and 56 old people over 65 years. The corresponding figures in 1904 were 48 and 59.

THE DISEASES NOTIFIED in the District are:—Small Pox, Cholera, Diphtheria, Membranous Croup, Erysipelas, Scarlet Fever, Typhus Fever, Enteric Fever, Relapsing Fever, Continued Fever, Puerperal Fever, Plague, and Chicken Pox. The number of cases notified during the year was 166.

SCARLET FEVER.—The epidemic of this disease, which prevailed during 1904, continued during 1905, chiefly in the Terrington and Walpole Sub-Districts. 117 cases were notified, distributed as follows:—Terrington, 23; Walpole, 72; Emneth, 15; Upwell, 7. There were no fatal cases, and the prevalence of the disease was in great measure due to its mild character, and consequent non-recognition by parents. In several cases the first intimation of its existence in a district was received from the school-teachers, who noticed the children desquamating. Walpole Highway School, in the neighbourhood of which a large number of the cases occurred, was closed and thoroughly disinfected. 88 of the cases occurred in children of school age, 5—15 years.

DIPHTHERIA.—4 cases were notified—2 in Terrington and 2 in Walpole Sub-Districts. All recovered.

ENTERIC FEVER.—7 cases were notified—4 in Upwell, 2 in Terrington, and 1 in Walpole. 2 cases proved fatal—1 in Walpole and 1 in Upwell.

ERYSIPELAS.—11 cases were notified—1 in Terrington, 6 in Walpole, and 4 in Upwell. 1 case in Upwell was fatal.

CHICKEN POX.—27 cases were notified, chiefly in Terrington Sub-District. All recovered.

MEASLES.—This disease prevailed to a slight extent. No fatal cases occurred.

WHOOPIING COUGH.—This was very prevalent, chiefly in Terrington Sub-District, and two Schools were closed on account of it. Four deaths occurred.

DIARRHŒA AND ENTERITIS.—3 fatal cases occurred.

CANCER.—9 deaths took place from this disease, as compared with 8 in 1904 and 11 in 1903.

PHTHISIS or CONSUMPTION caused 6 deaths, as compared with 9 in 1904.

ISOLATION.—No cases were removed to the Isolation Hospital.

DISINFECTION.—The houses of all notified cases were visited by the Inspectors, disinfectants were distributed, and instructions given to prevent the spread of disease. After recovery, or death, the houses were disinfected under the direction of the Inspectors.

WATER SUPPLY.—A minority of the inhabitants derive their supply from the Wisbech mains, the water of which is derived from the chalk formation; it is of good quality, and is supplied on the constant system. The majority of the people depend on rain-water, collected from the roofs, in water-tight underground cisterns, protected from contamination.

SEWERAGE.—There is no system of sewage disposal, the houses being drained to cesspools. The excrement disposal is by means of deep privies, which are frequent sources of nuisance. There is no public scavenging.

THE DISTRICT has been systematically inspected by the Inspectors and myself; and where any nuisance was reported, or infectious disease notified, special visits were made. As a result of this inspection, many nuisances were abated without formal notice being served.

CERTIFICATES were granted for the occupation of 39 new houses.

ORDERS were made for the construction of 14 new water cisterns, 11 new privies, and 2 new cesspools.

One case of overcrowding was successfully dealt with.

THE DAIRIES AND COW SHEDS, SLAUGHTER HOUSES, and KNACKERS' YARDS in the District have been inspected and found in a satisfactory condition.

THE FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT, 1901.—This Act requires me to report on the administration of the Act in "Workshops" and "Workplaces," and send a copy of this Report to the Secretary of State. In the Marshland District the chief industry is agriculture, and in the adjacent towns it is chiefly connected with the wholesale timber trade and agricultural implement making. These industries do not put out home work. The only Workshops and Workplaces are the village bakehouses, carpenters' and blacksmiths' shops, all of which have been visited and found in fairly good sanitary condition.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

J. L. FORREST,

Medical Officer of Health.