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Contributors

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MELBOURN RURAL DISTRICT.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1925.

To the Chairman and Members of the Rural District Council.

This year's Annual Report is drawn up according to a scheme issued by the Ministry of Health, through which the Ministry can obtain an accurate idea of the conditions prevailing in the District as they affect the health of the inhabitants.

Natural and Social Conditions of the Area.

The area is 39,544 acres.

The population at the census was 8538, in 1925 it was estimated at 8014.

The District is nearly all agricultural and is level and fertile. It is well watered with the exception of the high land upon which Great Chishall is situated.

Number of inhabited houses (1921) 2,166

Number of families or separate occupiers (1921) 8,051.

Rateable Value £57,531

Sum represented by a penny rate £162.

The occupation of the inhabitants of the District is healthy and the surroundings of the Villages are healthy.

The Melbourn District is in the county of Cambridge. Great and Little Chishall and Heydon rest on boulder clay overlying the upper chalk well above the rest of the District. All the other villages are situated on the flat part of the

Cam Valley between the Essex and Bedfordshire hills, and, with the exception of the whole of Wendy and part of Barrington, are either on Tottenhoe Stone or Melbourn Rock. The Village of Whaddon rests on the extreme edge of the chalk close to the outcrop of the gault. The chalk thins out in the neighbourhood of all the villages and springs issue in many places from the base of the chalk and from the main tributaries of the river Cam.

At Meldreth and Shepreth the chalk marl is being worked for the manufacture of Portland cement.

Vital Statistics.

The figures for the district as compared with those of England and Wales are as follows

Melbourn R.D.	Rate for England & Wales
104 Births give a rate of 12.9 per 1000 pop.	18.3
103 Deaths give a rate of 12.8 " " "	12.2
6 Infant Deaths give a rate of 57.6 per 1000 children born	75

These figures show that the births almost equalled the deaths although the mortality among infants was not high. This is not a healthy state of affairs, but probably the state of housing in the villages is partly responsible.

There were 3 deaths from Influenza, 1 from Whooping Cough, 3 from Pneumonia, 6 from Tuberculosis, 5 from Pulmonary and 1 from Non-pulmonary disease, 11 from Bronchitis, 13 from Malignant disease, 6 from diseases of the Blood-vessels and 11 from Heart Disease. 5 of the infant deaths were from pre-natal causes and there were no deaths of illegitimate infants.

On analysis then there were probably few deaths which could have been prevented in the present state of our knowledge; though it is well to repeat that influenza, whooping-cough, pneumonia, tuberculosis, bronchitis, are all diseases which can be communicated from one person to another.

As regards the ordinary infectious diseases 10 cases of scarlet fever, 3 of diphtheria, 1 of enteric fever and 1 of erysipelas were notified, and all these cases recovered. These cases of scarlet fever and diphtheria are removed to the Joint Hospital Board's Isolation Hospital. The Royston

Hospital is available for other diseases such as enteric fever. There is no small-pox Hospital in the district, but cases can be removed to the Cambridge Hospital if they occur.

The Hospital accommodation of the district is adequate except in the event of an epidemic of scarlet fever and diphtheria occurring at the same time. In such an event, which happened a few years ago, the Council allowed the Clerk to come to an arrangement with the Cambridge Borough Isolation Hospital.

There is a horse ambulance belonging to the Fever Hospital, and the Royston General Hospital makes arrangements for the conveyance of other patients going there.

The arrangements for dealing with tuberculosis and venereal diseases are complete and made by the Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Local Authority does not finance any Nursing Schemes within the district.

The Medical Officer of Health holds a part-time appointment.

The Sanitary Inspector holds a whole-time appointment jointly under the Ashwell Rural Council and this Council, he also now acts as Food and Meat Inspector for both the above and the Royston Urban Council.

Legislation in force. There are Byelaws with respect to removal of Home Refuse, and the cleansing of Earth Closets, Privies, Ash-pits and Cess-pools, dated 26th May, 1877. The Infectious Diseases (Prevention) Act 1890, (August 1906)

I am much indebted to the Sanitary Inspector for helping me to draw up the remainder of this report.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES of the DISTRICT.

Water.

Abington Pigotts—Artesian wells. Good and adequate. Public supply—fountain.

Barrington—Artesian and other wells. Good and adequate. Public supply—2 pumps.

Bassingbourn—Artesian and other wells and piped supply from Royston Water Company. Good and adequate. Public supply—3 pumps.

Fowlmere—Surface wells. Fair and good. Public supply—1 pump.

Foxton—Artesian and other wells. Good and adequate. Public supply—2 pumps.

Great Chishall—Wells, rain water and ponds (filtered). Wells good but otherwise indifferent. Public supply—2 wells, filtered pond water and rain water storage tank from the Chapel.

Guilden Morden—Wells. Fairly good. Public supply—1 pump.
 Heydon—Spring. Good. Public supply—1 pump from spring.
 Kneesworth—Artesian wells. Good and adequate. Public supply—nil.
 Litlington—Surface wells. Fairly good and adequate. Public supply—
 2 pumps.
 Little Chishall—Wells. Good. Public supply—nil.
 Melbourn—Wells. Fair and adequate. Public supply—1 pump.
 Meldreth—Wells and springs. Good and fairly adequate. Public supply
 —1 pump and 2 fountains.
 Shepreth—Wells and stream. Fair and adequate. Public supply—2
 pumps.
 Shingay—Artesian wells. Good and abundant. Public supply—1
 fountain.
 Steeple Morden—Wells. Fairly good. Public supply—nil.
 Thriplow—Wells. Moderate and sufficient. Public supply—nil.
 Wendy—Artesian wells. Good and abundant. Public supply—1
 fountain.
 Whaddon—Artesian wells. Good and abundant. Public supply—3
 fountains.

There is a waste of water from some of the overflows of artesian bores.

Rivers and Streams.

The tributary of the Cam called the Rhee skirts the district on the West side, while the tributary called the Granta skirts the East side but belongs to another water shed. The Rhee is not free from pollution by drainage from Steeple Morden, Guilden Morden, Litlington, Bassingbourn, Melbourn, Barrington and sometimes Fowlmere.

Drainage and Sewerage.

There is no proper system of sewage disposal in the district. Only a small percentage of the houses have drains. Where there are drains the effluent is disposed of in cesspools and parish ditches. Generally speaking the drainage and sewerage in the district is very poor.

Closet Accommodation.

166
222
Other than in large houses there are no water closets in the district. Approximately 60 per cent. have pail closets and 30 per cent. privy pits. The conversion from privy pits to pail closets is steadily proceeding, with an ultimate view of having them all converted.

Scavenging.

The Local Authority has no system of removing and disposing of refuse. Generally speaking the refuse is either burnt, buried in the gardens or used for manure. Approximately 4 per cent. of the houses have fixed receptacles, 5 per cent. movable dustbins and the remainder pits dug in the garden.

ANNUAL REPORT OF SANITARY INSPECTOR FOR 1925.

Summary of Inspections.

Visits and Inspection of Cottages	...	...	...	...	1123
Visits to Infectious Diseases	...	...	...	...	108
„ Cases of Overcrowding	...	...	...	...	26
„ Water Supplies	...	...	...	...	74
„ Privies, &c.	...	...	...	...	127
„ Animals	...	...	...	...	7
„ Ditches, Drains, and Cesspools	...	...	...	...	79
„ Cowsheds and Dairies	...	...	...	...	109
„ Slaughter-houses	...	...	...	...	362
„ Meat Stores and Shops	...	...	...	...	110
„ Bakehouses, Outworkers, and Workshops	...	...	...	...	54
„ Petrol and Carbide Stores	...	...	...	...	15
„ Schools	...	...	...	...	19
					2213
Number of Nuisances discovered	...	...	...	...	326
„ Notices served	{ Preliminary Statutory		...	...	326
„ Nuisances Abated			...	...	5
Dairies and Cowsheds	No. on Register	44	Inspections	...	109
Bakehouses	...	20	„	...	46
Slaughter-houses	...	14	„	...	362

Factory and Workshops Act, 1910, etc.

Number on Register	...	...	...	...	45
Nuisances Discovered	14	Remedied	...	...	14
Number of Premises Disinfected	...	...	...	...	17
Number of Water Certificates issued	...	...	...	...	8
Samples of Water taken	...	...	...	...	14

Ten were found fit, and four unfit.

Meat Regulations.

Number of Registered Slaughterhouses	...	...	...	...	14
Number of visits	...	...	...	...	362
Number of carcasses inspected	{ Beasts		...	...	149
	{ Sheep		...	...	164
	{ Swine		...	...	440
Number condemned as unfit for human consumption	...	...	...	...	4
Number of carcasses in which part was condemned	...	...	...	...	27
Number of Meat Stores and Shops on Register	...	...	...	...	40
Number of visits	...	...	...	...	110

Housing.

NUMBER OF NEW HOUSES ERECTED DURING THE YEAR :—

(a) Total (including numbers given separately under b)	...	...	...	13
(b) With State assistance under the Housing Acts :—				
(i) By the Council	...	...	...	nil
(ii) By other bodies or persons	...	...	...	4

I. UNFIT DWELLING HOUSES.

Inspection—(1) Total number of Dwelling Houses inspected for Housing defects (under Public Health and Housing Acts)				245
(2) No. of Dwelling Houses inspected and recorded under Housing (Inspection of District) Regulations, 1910				170
(3) No. of Dwelling Houses found to be in a state so dangerous or injurious to health as to be unfit for human habitation ...				20
(4) No. of Dwelling Houses (exclusive of those under sub-heading (3) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for human habitation				115

I. REMEDY OF DEFECTS WITHOUT SERVICE OF FORMAL NOTICES.

No. of defective Dwelling Houses rendered fit in consequence of informal action by the Local Authority or their Officers.				92
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III. ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS.

(a) Proceedings under section 3 of the Housing Act, 1925,				
(1) No. of dwelling houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs				nil
(2) No. of dwelling houses which were rendered fit after service of formal notices :—				
(a) By owners.				
(b) By Local Authority in default of owners.				
(3) No of dwelling houses in respect of which Closing Orders became operative in pursuance of declarations by owners of intention to close.				nil
(b) Proceedings under Public Health Acts.				
(1) No. of Dwelling Houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied				4
(2) No. of Dwelling Houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :—				
(a) By Owners				4
(b) By Local Authority in default of Owners				nil
(c) Proceedings under Sections 11, 14 and 15 of the Housing Act, 1925.				
(1) No. of representations made with a view to the making of Closing Orders				3
(2) No. of Dwelling Houses in respect of which Closing Orders were made				3
(3) No. of Dwelling Houses in respect of which Closing Orders were determined, the Dwelling Houses having been rendered fit... ..				nil
(4) No. of Dwelling Houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made				nil
(5) No. of Dwelling Houses demolished in pursuance of Demolition Orders				nil

Schools.

- Abington Pigotts—Closet Accommodation—1 pail closet. Water supply—Public fountain 200 yards away.
- Bassingbourn—Closet accommodation—4 privy pits for girls, 2 for infants, 3 for boys and urinal. Water supply—School pump; water condemned as unfit. Public pump used a distance of 100 yards. The County Education Secretary has been asked to have Privy pits converted to Pail Closets.
- Barrington—Closet accommodation—2 pail closets for boys and urinal, 2 pail closets for girls. Water supply—Public Fountain 250 yards away.
- Foxton—Closet accommodation—5 pail closets for girls and infants, 2 pail closets for boys and urinal. Water supply—Public pump 300 yards away.
- Gt. Chishall—Closet accommodation—3 pail closets for boys and urinal, 3 pail closets for girls. Water supply—Rain water storage tank and public pump $\frac{3}{4}$ mile away.
- Guilden Morden—Closet accommodation—4 privy pits for girls, 2 privy pits for boys and urinal. Water supply—Obtained from private pump near by.
- Heydon—Closet accommodation—1 pail closet for girls, 2 pail closets for boys and urinal. Water supply—Public pump near by.
- Litlington—Closet accommodation—2 pail closets for boys and urinal, 2 pail closets for girls. Water supply—Public pump near school.
- Melbourn—Closet accommodation—4 pail closets for girls, 3 pail closets for boys and urinal. Water supply—Laid on to School.
- Meldreth—Closet accommodation—2 pails and urinal for boys, 3 pails for girls. Water supply—Water laid on to school from bored well.
- Shepreth—Closet accommodation—2 pail closets for boys and urinal, 2 pail closets for girls. Water supply—School pump.
- Steeple Morden—Closet accommodation—2 privy pits for boys and urinal, 2 privy pits for girls. Water supply—Pump.
- Thriplow—Closet accommodation—2 pail closets for boys and urinal, 2 pail closets for girls. Water supply—
- Wendy—Closet accommodation—1 pail closet for boys and urinal, 1 pail closet for girls. Water supply—Public fountain near school.
- Whaddon—Closet accommodation—2 privy pits for boys and urinal, 2 privy pits for girls. Water supply—Public fountain 60 yards away. The School Managers have been asked to have the privy pits converted to pail closets.
- Fowlmere—Closet accommodation—3 pail closets for boys and urinal, 3 pail closets for girls. Water supply—School pump.

Housing.

I. GENERAL HOUSING CONDITIONS IN THE AREA :—

- (1) General housing conditions; Generally speaking the housing conditions in the whole of the district are only fair, both as to number and construction.
- (2) (a) Extent of shortage or excess of houses; There is no excess of houses in any part of the district. The approximate shortage in the following parishes is :—

- Abington Pigotts—4 cottages to meet fresh demands and unfit houses.
- Barrington—6 houses to replace those which require condemning and fresh demands.
- 7

Bassingbourn—10 houses to replace those which require condemning, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Chishall—6 houses to replace those which require condemning and fresh demands.
 Foxton—4 houses to replace those which require condemning and fresh demands.
 Fowlmere—6 houses to replace those which require condemning and fresh demands.
 Heydon—4 houses to replace unfit houses and to meet fresh demands.
 Litlington—10 houses to replace those which require condemning, 5 cottages closed and demolished and have not yet been replaced, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Guilden Morden—10 houses to replace those which require condemning, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Steeple Morden—6 houses to replace those which are unfit, overcrowding, and fresh demands.
 Melbourn—16 houses to replace those which require condemning, 2 recently closed, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Meldreth—10 houses to replace those which are unfit, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Shepreth—10 houses to replace those which are unfit, overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Thriplow—4 to replace those which are unfit overcrowding and fresh demands.
 Whaddon—4 to replace those which are unfit and overcrowding.

(b) Measures taken or contemplated to meet any shortage :—

Abington Pigotts—2 new bungalows have recently been erected by a private person, otherwise no action has been taken.
 Barrington—The Council have already erected 6 houses and have a scheme in hand to erect 2 more.
 Bassingbourn—The Council have already erected 4 houses and have a scheme in hand to erect 2 more.
 Chishall—The Council have a scheme in hand to erect 2 houses.
 Foxton—No action taken.
 Fowlmere—The Council have already erected 6 houses and have a scheme in hand to erect 2 more.
 Heydon—No action taken.
 Litlington—The Council have a scheme in hand to erect 4 houses.
 Guilden Morden—The Council have a scheme in hand to erect 6 houses.
 Steeple Morden—The Council have already erected 6 houses and have a scheme in hand to erect 4 more.
 Melbourn—The Council have already erected 18 houses and have a scheme in hand to erect 8 more.
 Meldreth—The Council have already erected 12 houses.
 Shepreth—The Council have a scheme in hand to erect 4 houses.
 Thriplow—The Council have already erected 4 houses, but there is no further scheme in hand to meet the present requirements.
 Whaddon—No action taken or contemplated.

II. OVERCROWDING :—

- (1) Extent: From present records there are 26 cases of overcrowding in the district on the basis of cubic feet per person. There are also a large number of cases in which grown up sons and daughters occupy the same bedroom and also with their parents.

- (2) Causes: The chief cause of overcrowding is owing to the shortage of rooms. Quite a big percentage of the houses have only 1 room downstairs and 1 room upstairs and a still greater percentage with only 2 bedrooms.
- (3) Measures taken or contemplated for dealing with overcrowding; Notices have been served by the Council to abate overcrowding by adults going into lodgings, and by using living rooms as sleeping rooms. In addition to this it is contemplated building more houses.
- (4) Principal cases of overcrowding during the year 1925 and action taken; Melbourn—Family of 11 occupying house with 1 room downstairs and 1 room upstairs. Tenant asked to find a larger house. Family of 7 occupying house with 1 room downstairs and 1 room upstairs. Same action taken as above, Shepreth—Family of 12 occupying bungalow with only 4 rooms. 3 being used for sleeping purposes. Asked to move into a larger house, or adult sons to go into lodgings.

III. FITNESS OF HOUSES.

- (1) (a) General standard of housing in the area: Generally speaking the majority of the houses in the district are of a low standard. The construction is usually lath and plaster and thatch or tiles, and clay bats with thatched or tiled roofs. Only in a very small number of cases is there a damp-course and the houses are too old to allow a damp-course to be put in, with the result that at least 50% of the houses are damp. Not only are the houses poor as regards construction, they are poor as to the number of rooms. Approximately 40% of the working-class houses have only 2 bedrooms and 20% only 1 bedroom.
- (b) General character of the defects found to exist in unfit houses: The defects usually found are chronic dampness, dangerous structural defects and poor light and ventilation.
- (c) How far defects are due to the lack of proper management and supervision by owners, or to acts of waste or neglect by tenants:—Generally speaking the defects are due to the owner not keeping them properly repaired, combined with many instances of the tenant's neglect.

- (2) General action taken as regards unfit houses under:—

(a) The Public Health Acts.

(b) The Housing Acts.

Closing orders are served on the owners only where the houses are both dangerous and unfit. In other cases the owners are asked to carry out temporary repairs, until new houses are built to enable them to be closed.

- (3) Difficulties found in remedying unfitness, &c.—The owners of old property will usually only carry out those which are absolutely necessary, such as roofs and external walls. They will not as a rule have extensive works done, which would in several cases render the houses totally fit. In many cases, sooner than spend money on the house, owners prefer to have them closed. The

biggest evil in unfit houses, namely dampness, is very difficult to overcome, the construction of the houses being too old to allow damp courses to be put in. It is usually overcome temporarily, by cementing the walls inside.

- (4) Conditions so far as they affect housing, as regards water supply, closet accommodation and refuse disposal. Generally speaking the conditions under these headings can only be called fair. There are in existence in the district a large number of shallow wells, which are liable to become polluted, owing to the fact that there being no drains, slops, &c., are thrown in the gardens and refuse is also buried in the same. In some cases the tenants have a considerable distance to go for their water, whilst others have to rely on pond and river water. Where possible, owners have been asked to provide suitable drains, and the occupiers to take every precaution against polluting the water.

IV. Unhealthy areas, nil.

Inspection and Supervision of Food.

- (a) Milk Supply. There are 44 registered Cowkeepers and Wholesale and Retail Purveyors of Milk in the District. Amongst these are some very good cowsheds and dairies, while on the other hand, there are some rather bad ones. The general standard is, however, improving, and it is hoped that under the Milk and Dairies (Consolidation) Act, 1915, the existing unsatisfactory cowsheds will soon disappear. The chief trouble is amongst the men who only keep three or four cows. When approached with a view to having their cowsheds altered, they prefer to give up keeping cows, saying they cannot afford to spend money on improvements. Until some of these cowsheds are improved, it is impossible to produce clean milk.

(i.) Action taken as to tuberculous milk—dealt with by the County Council.

(ii.) Nil under this heading.

(iii.) Nil " " "

(iv.) Nil " " "

- (b) Meat.—(See also under Meat Regulations.)

- (i.) MEAT INSPECTION.—The Sanitary Inspector deals with these regulations. It is, however, impossible in a Rural District, where the slaughterhouses are so far apart, to inspect every carcase which is slaughtered. Generally speaking each slaughterhouse is visited once a week for the purpose of inspecting within 3 hours after slaughter. It has been found that the most common disease amongst beasts is tuberculosis. In sheep and pigs only trivial diseases have been found. It has been the practice when a whole carcase is condemned, to dispose of it for knacker purposes, care

being taken to see it was only used for that purpose. In exceptionally bad cases paraffin oil is thrown over the carcasses which is then buried in lime. Where parts only are condemned it is always buried in lime.

(ii.) STALLS, SHOPS, STORES AND VEHICLES.—Under this heading there is very little can be done in a Rural District. The vendors are told to take every precaution to guard against contaminating the meat. In several cases glass windows have been fitted to the shops, but it is very difficult to impress upon them that meat must not be hung outside the shop. Until better legislation is passed under this heading, matters will remain as they are.

(iii.) PUBLIC SLAUGHTERHOUSES—Nil.

(c) OTHER FOODS—Very little done under this heading, other than in bakehouses, where the owners are compelled to limewash at least twice a year.

Your obedient servant,

NORMAN MACFADYEN,

M.B., D.P.H.,

M.O.H.

