

**[Report 1908] / Medical Officer of Health, Sheerness U.D.C.**

**Contributors**

Sheerness (England). Urban District Council.

**Publication/Creation**

1908

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/fqqkdqnm>

**License and attribution**

You have permission to make copies of this work under a Creative Commons, Attribution license.

This licence permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See the Legal Code for further information.

Image source should be attributed as specified in the full catalogue record. If no source is given the image should be attributed to Wellcome Collection.



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

SMEERNESS

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

---

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health,

AND

REPORT OF

INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES

FOR THE YEAR

1908.



# ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

## Medical Officer of Health

For the Year 1908.

---

To the CHAIRMAN and MEMBERS of  
**THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL, SHEERNESS-ON-SEA.**

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to present to you the Annual Report on the General Health and Sanitary Condition of Sheerness for the year 1908.

Owing to the regrettable and sudden death of your late Medical Officer occurring in the middle of the year, and a considerable time elapsing before my appointment, some difficulty has been experienced in collecting the necessary records. I have, however, endeavoured to take notice of the essential features of the sanitary condition of the town, so far as they have come under my notice, during the time I have been acting. I think we can consider the health of the town satisfactory, our death rate being one of the lowest in the country, and the mortality from infectious diseases also quite a low one.

The POPULATION of the District, estimated to the middle of the year 1908, is 19,063. Actual Population of SHEERNESS, 16,240; R.N. Depot, 2,351; Garrison, 472.

The AREA is 838 Acres.

The Density of Population (i.e., the number of persons per acre), 22.6.

The Number of Houses Inhabited, 3,248.

The Number of Houses Uninhabited, 40.

The Average Number of Persons per House is 5.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.—During the year 46 Infants died under the age of 1 Year, making a rate of 103.5 per 1,000 births registered. This rate, although much higher than we would wish, will compare favourably with the rate in other towns. There are many causes which contribute

to the high rate of Infant Mortality, to a few of which I should like to draw your attention.

(1) Density of Population (Overcrowded Dwellings).

(2) Large families with inadequate means, often aggravated by the intemperance of parents.

(3) Mothers expecting to be confined who have to perform work for which they are physically unfit.

(4) Inefficient and unsuitable clothing.

(5) Want of cleanliness and faulty methods of preparing the food, and here I would mention the necessity of a wholesome and pure milk supply.

(6) Epidemic Diarrhœa (in Summer).

(7) Respiratory Diseases (in Winter).

(8) Accidental causes (many of which might be avoided), such as scalds and burns. The use of fire-guards and the avoidance of the inflammable flannelette for underclothing, etc.

(9) Want of accommodation in houses, leading to the practice of infants of the poorer classes sleeping in the same bed as parents and the children being overlain. Each child should be provided with a cradle or some separate receptacle. A good sized wooden box, properly padded, I have sometimes seen used for the purpose, and it answers quite well.

**MORTALITY.**—The total number of Deaths in our District during the year was 209. 17 of these belonged to Sheerness, but died in the Work-house; 3 died in the Dockyard; 13 in the Harbour (on H.M. Ships and found drowned). There were no Deaths in the Garrison. By deducting the 17 who died out of the District, the actual death rate for Sheerness proper, including the Army and Navy, is 10.96.

**BIRTHS.**—Total for the year, 444—Males, 219; Females, 225. Natural increase, 398.

Number of Deaths from four principal Zymotic Diseases, 11—Measles, 2; Diphtheria, 1; Enteric, 5; Diarrhœa, 3. Deaths from other causes—Phthisis (Consumption), 11; other Tubercular Diseases, 7; Cancer, 13; Bronchitis, 22; Pneumonia, 8; Cirrhosis, 1; Heart Disease, 4; Premature Birth, 5; Accidents, 13; Suicides, 2; all other causes, 98.

During the year, 21 cases of Enteric Fever have been notified, this being a large increase on the preceding year. Five fatal cases have occurred.

In 7 houses the drains were found in a very defective condition, accounting for 13 of the cases. The drains at these houses, on having

the smoke-test applied, were found to be in a leaky condition, allowing of the free escape of sewer gas. In one case the sewage was actually running across the yard, and in another the basement floor was saturated with it. In one case only was there any proper flushing to the w.c.

In many cases the paving of the yards was defective, and the water storage is in most cases quite inefficient. Too often it is stored in wooden barrels, which are anything but clean and sometimes even uncovered.

In three other houses nothing definite was found to account for the outbreak. Two cases were imported, and in the other three remaining houses the drains were blocked, no flush; but no actual leakage of sewer gas. In reviewing these cases of enteric fever, one cannot but be struck with the fact that the large majority of cases occur where the drains are defective, and when these defects have been remedied no further outbreaks of the disease have occurred. My own opinion is that the above is the prime factor in the causation of the disease in our midst, other contributory causes being polluted shell-fish such as Mussels, Cockles, Oysters, etc. As you are doubtless aware, the neighbourhood of Sheerness in the Medway abounds in Creeks in which numerous Oyster Beds are laid; the Oysters become detached, and then attach themselves to the bed of the river in the neighbourhood of the Lapwell, and there crude sewage from the warships in the Harbour (some thousands of men) is discharged daily, coming in contact with the shell-fish deposited there.

I am sure there should be more discrimination displayed in the collecting and distributing of Oysters and other shell-fish from such a doubtful source. Defective drains, bad forms of water storage, contaminated shell-fish, are then the main causes of so much Enteric in our town, but as all these causes are removable, we can, I am sure, hope, by combined effort, to considerably lessen the amount of the disease in our midst at no distant date.

**DIPHTHERIA.**—Eight cases have been notified during the year. Three of these cases were in the Garrison, and of a mild type. One case was a very doubtful one, and it is in these cases that a bacteriological examination is so essential. Three other cases were of average severity, and recovered, and there was one death. I attribute the number of recoveries to the prompt use of the Anti-toxin, combined with local treatment and good nursing.

**SCARLET FEVER.**—Thirty-one cases were notified. No death. The number of cases of Scarlet Fever compare very favourably with last year, 58 cases having occurred in 1907. There would be still fewer cases of Scarlet Fever if the less severe ones were strictly isolated, but in so many mild cases the symptoms are so transient and in others almost absent that

parents do not realise that their children are suffering from an infectious disease, and in this way many mild cases pass unrecognised; the children continue to go to school, and thus the disease is spread. A rigid supervision of school children, with a view to the early detection and prompt exclusion of suspicious cases of those who come from infected houses, should be adopted.

If this were done, I am sure our return of Scarlet Fever cases would become less yearly.

Twenty-seven only out of the 86 houses where infectious diseases occurred had flush tanks to the water closets.

During the year your Isolation Hospital had to be opened for the reception of 6 Enteric cases, all members of the same family living in a house at 80, Clyde Street. This turned out rather an unique case, inasmuch as the house was overcrowded, there being 10 inmates. The drains were found to be in a chaotic condition, for on the smoke-test being applied there were leakages in many places, sewer-gas escaping in all directions, the water supply and storage most unsatisfactory. Added to this, the victims to the disease were all in a highly susceptible condition, being ill-nourished and weakly. Six of the family were attacked with the disease.

All were admitted into our little Hospital, two being in an extremely critical condition on admission. In one of the patients, Pneumonia supervened. I am glad to be able to report that all recovered. I can assure you it was an anxious time for Doctor and Nurses. I had the help of three of the most capable Nurses it has been my pleasure to meet in my professional career, and our good results I attribute largely to this fact. The Nurses were obtained from the London Hospital. Although we were able to give our patients all the attention they needed, of course the Hospital accommodation is totally inadequate to the needs of the town, and should an epidemic at any time arrive the sufferers would not have the advantage of the requisite nursing and isolation that is so necessary in disease of this kind. One wishes the town could secure a suitable site and erect a building to meet the necessary requirements, but, of course, the financial aspect of the question is a serious one for you to have to deal with. I cannot too forcibly impress upon you that a bacteriological investigation in all cases of infectious disease is also another very desirable thing, not only from a preventive but from a curative point of view. I should like to see Phthisis made a notifiable disease in our town, as this disease is responsible for about 2.5 per 1,000 deaths of the entire population of the country, it is incumbent upon us to do all in our power to stay the spread of such a terrible disease.

After infectious diseases all clothing and portable material should be disinfected, also the infected apartment. The method of disinfection we are using now is by the Formalin spray. The best mode of disinfecting is by the Steam Disinfector, and one of the portable ones, now obtainable, would, I think, answer our purpose quite well. The outlay would not be great, and the results of our disinfection would be much more thorough.

In October last, accompanied by the Sanitary Inspector, I visited all the Factories and Workshops in the town (38 in number). At 4 Workshops there was want of proper ventilation, but this defect, on its being pointed out to the occupiers, was at once remedied. All the others were satisfactory.

**SLAUGHTER HOUSES.**—On inspection these were found in as satisfactory and as sanitary condition as the surroundings would allow. Of course, the system of private slaughter-houses, however well kept, is not anything like as satisfactory as a public abattoir would be. The **BAKE-HOUSES** have been regularly inspected, and are on the whole satisfactory. The **COMMON-LODGING-HOUSE** was found clean and in other respects also satisfactory.

**SCAVENGING.**—It is most necessary that proper sanitary receptacles should be provided for the storage of house refuse. One would like to see the enforcement of proper iron bins with lids, and the custom of putting refuse into any old broken box or pail disallowed. The Scavenging of the town is generally well done, and the presence of so many back passages throughout the town greatly facilitates the removal of the refuse from the houses.

A commodious Urinal has been erected in the town during the year; this is a long-desired need supplied.

**BACK YARDS.**—The back yards throughout the town are improving, 44 having been paved during the year. Three **DILAPIDATED HOUSES** have been reported as unfit for habitation. The Owners have remedied the defects and made them habitable.

**SEWAGE TANKS.**—The results of the new covered tanks at Westminster, in place of the old dilapidated ones, have fully justified the expense and trouble taken.

**WATER SUPPLY.**—A constant supply has not yet been obtained, but efforts made in this direction, through the agency of the new boring, should result in a considerable improvement. The water coming from the deep springs direct to the mains is of good quality, and I beg to submit

a report of a recent analysis from the Clinical Research Association of London :—

Analysis of Drinking Water.	Grains per gallon.
Total Solids (dried at 120C) ... ..	42.70
Combined Chlorine ... ..	4.45
Expressed as Na Cl (Common Salt) ... ..	6.34
Nitrogen as Nitrates ... ..	0.01
Nitrites ... ..	Nil.
Saline Ammonia ... ..	0.062
Albuminoid Ammonia ... ..	0.002
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hours at 27C ... ..	0.022
Total Hardness ... ..	20.00
Lead or Copper ... ..	Nil.

This water contains much Saline Ammonia, otherwise it is satisfactory. As the water is from a deep well, the Saline Ammonia is more or less accounted for, although the proportion is rather high, even for a deep well water. Without further particulars of origin, it is impossible to give a more definite opinion on the water.—(Signed) R. BODMER, F.I.C.

The SEWERS still need a good deal of attention in the matter of efficient ventilation.

ROADS.—The side roads and channels need making up in some parts of the town, but this matter is, I understand, being taken in hand.

SCHOOLS.—The report of your late Medical Officer dealt with the insanitary state of some of your schools. This remains much as it was, no steps having been taken to remedy them. The Marine Town (Infants), Mile Town (Infants), and Blue Town Schools have still the Trough system of closet. It would be well if the pedestal pans were substituted at these Schools. The walls of the Schools are not limewashed often enough. I think this should be done several times during the year. The partition wall in the Urinal at the Boys' Mile Town School should be removed, as there is very inefficient ventilation here. There should also be provision for a much more efficient water supply here in the shape of more commodious tanks, etc.

SCHOOL INSPECTION.—This is a subject of National importance, which is receiving a great deal of attention at the present time, and the systematic inspection of every child should have a very excellent effect in improving the physical and mental state of the coming generation; of course, provided the good advice given to parents is carried out.

THE DISINFECTION OF ROOMS should, I think, in all cases be done by the Sanitary Staff, and the whole work left in their hands if it is to be properly carried out and efficacious.

I have tried to deal with the more important details that concern our Town from a public health point of view; many items have been touched

upon in a briefer manner than I should have desired. Much is being done in the world of Sanitary Science, and the whole subject of Public Health is being reformed, and we hope that by our united efforts we may, in the near future, be up-to-date in every particular. A great deal remains to be done to place our town in the position it should occupy as an important Government centre and a growing Seaside Resort.

The Report of your Sanitary Inspector is added.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen, your obedient Servant,

**GEORGE ALDRIDGE,**

Medical Officer of Health.

**VITAL STATISTICS OF WHOLE DISTRICT DURING 1908 AND PREVIOUS YEARS.**

Year.	Population estimated to middle of each year.	Births.		Total Deaths registered in			
		Number	Rate.	Under 1 year of age		At all Ages.	
				Number	Rate per 1000 Births registered	Number	Rate.
1898	14920	398	26.2	64	160.8	213	14.02
1899	14940	429	28.67	67	156.1	250	16.73
1900	15000	437	29.13	40	91.5	228	15.26
1901	17130	391	22.18	65	166.2	206	12.02
1902	18179	441	24.25	63	142.8	224	11.20
1903	19061	458	24.2	59	128.8	206	10.65
1904	20000	452	22.6	56	120.3	224	11.20
1905	20059	455	22.09	45	98.09	194	9.42
1906	18282	412	22.5	50	145.6	213	11.65
1907	17942	423	23.5	36	85.1	171	9.5
Averages for years 1898-1907.	17555	429	24.4	55	129.5	212	12.28
1908.	19063	444	23.3	53	119.3	209	10.96

Deaths of Residents registered in Public Institutions beyond the District in 1908	...	...	...	...	...	...	17
Nett Deaths at all Ages belonging to the District, 1908	...	...	...	...	...	...	226
Rate per 1000 of estimated population	...	...	...	...	...	...	11.8
Area of District in Acres (exclusive of area covered by water)	...	...	...	...	...	...	838
Total Population at all Ages (at Census of 1901)	...	...	...	...	...	...	19063
Number of inhabited houses	..	..	..	..	..	..	3248
Average No. of persons per house	..	..	..	..	..	..	5



Population (estimated to middle of 1908) .....	19063
Births in the year ... ..	444
Deaths in the year ... ..	46
Deaths from all Causes at all Ages ... ..	209

## Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1903, on the Administration of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901.

### 1.—INSPECTION.

Including Inspections made by Inspector of Nuisances.

Premises.	Inspections.
Factories (including Factory Laundries) ... ..	4
Workshops (including Workshop Laundries) ... ..	4
Workplaces ... ..	4
Total ... ..	12

### 2.—DEFECTS FOUND.

Particulars.	Found.	Remedied.
Want of Ventilation ... ..	4	4

### 3.—HOME WORK.

#### OUTWORKERS' LISTS.

Nature of Work.	Lists.	Workmen.	Inspections of Outworkers' Premises.
Wearing Apparel—making, etc. ... ..	3	15	2
Wearing Apparel—cleaning and washing. ... ..	1	1	0
Total ... ..	4	16	2

### 4.—REGISTERED WORKSHOPS.

Bakehouses ... ..	7
Other Workshops ... ..	31
Total number of Workshops on Register ... ..	38

### OTHER MATTERS.

Matters notified to H.M. Inspector of Factories :—

Failure to affix Abstract of the Factory and Workshop Act... 5

Underground Bakehouses :—

In use at the end of the year ... .. 2

# Report of Inspector of Nuisances for the Year 1908.

To the Urban District Council of SHEERNESS.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit for your consideration my Report for the year 1908, of the work of the Health Department, as follows:—

Complaints received and investigated	...	...	...	...	...	53
Houses inspected	...	...	...	...	...	133
Houses re-inspected	...	...	...	...	...	62
Houses reported unfit for habitation	...	...	...	...	...	3
Houses in which defects were found	...	...	...	...	...	65
Notices served (intimation and statutory)	...	...	...	...	...	273
Nuisances abated	...	...	...	...	...	262
Prosecutions, 3	Convictions, 3.					

The following is a Summary of Sanitary Amendments made and Nuisances abated:—

## DRAINS—

Constructed and tested (new houses)	...	...	...	...	...	29
Constructed (excluding new houses)	...	...	...	...	...	4
Re-laid	...	...	...	...	...	15
Repaired	...	...	...	...	...	26
Cleared	...	...	...	...	...	53
Intercepted and Ventilated	...	...	...	...	...	6
New yd. Gullies	...	...	...	...	...	15
Iron Traps removed	...	...	...	...	...	2

## WATER CLOSETS—

Repaired	...	...	...	...	...	8
Flushed	...	...	...	...	...	5
New Pans provided	...	...	...	...	...	14
Lime-washed	...	...	...	...	...	3
New built	...	...	...	...	...	5
Ventilated	...	...	...	...	...	8

## HOUSES—

Reported unfit for habitation	...	...	...	...	...	3
Repaired	...	...	...	...	...	12
Courtyards re-paved and repaired	...	...	...	...	...	44
Provided with eaves guttering	...	...	...	...	...	4

## MISCELLANEOUS—

Offensive accumulations removed	...	...	...	...	...	6
Overcrowding abated	...	...	...	...	...	3
Urinals (Closed 1, Flushed 1, Lime-washed 2)						
Other Nuisances abated	...	...	...	...	...	16

The following FOOD was condemned and destroyed:—2cwt. Mixed Fish; 150 Herrings; 28lb. Pork; 1½lb. Sausages; 1 barrel Apples; 1lb. Veal and Ham; 3 bottles Anchovy Paste; 3 bottles Mixed Pickles; 21 Oysters; Lungs of 2 Cows; 1 Beef Liver; 1 Skirt of Beef; 1 Ox-head and Tongue.

DRAINS TESTED by SMOKE MACHINE—

New Houses ... ..	37
After cases of infectious diseases ... ..	19
Before and after Tradesmen ... ..	14
From application ... ..	63
	—
Total number tested ... ..	133

INFECTIOUS DISEASES—

Cases notified in District ... ..	86
Number of Houses infected ... ..	75
Notices sent to Schools and Employers ... ..	37
Certificates issued after disinfection ... ..	68
Number of visits to infected Houses ... ..	186
Premises disinfected ... ..	36

A quantity of Bedding, including Mattresses, Sheets, Pillows, etc., was destroyed after cases of Enteric Fever, and compensation granted by the Health Committee to the Owners.

Slaughter-houses, Cowsheds and Milkshops, Meat, Fruit, and Fish Shops, Ice-cream Stores, Schools, the Common Lodging-house, Workshops, and Homeworkers' Premises, have been frequently inspected, and call for no special remark.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**A. F. G. SMITH, A.R. San. I.**

