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URBAN DISTRICT OF
SIDMOUTH
S. DEVON.


Annual Report
OF THE
Medical Officer of Health
W. H. PEILE, M.A., M.D., D.P.H.

1915

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TABLE I.

Vital Statistics of whole District during 1915 and previous Years.

YEAR.	Popula- tion estimated to middle of each Year.	BIRTHS.			TOTAL DEATHS REGISTERED IN THE DISTRICT.		TRANSFERABLE DEATHS.		NETT DEATHS BELONGING TO THE DISTRICT.			
		Uncor- rected Number.	Nett.		Number.	Rate.	Of Non- Residents registered in the District.	Of Resi- dents not registered in the District.	Under 1 Yr. of age.		At all ages.*	
			Number.	Rate.					Number.	Rate per 1000 nett Births.	Number.	Rate.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1910	5100	74		14.5	80	15.6			7	95.	66	12.9
1911	5569	76	78	14.	58	10.4	4	3	5	64.	57	10.2
1912	5728	71	73	12.7	69	10.2	7	7	5	68.	69	12.
1913	5875	73	73	12.4	61	10.3	7	3	3	41.	57	9.7
1914	6053	74	74	12.3	56	9.2	4	9	4	55.	61	10.07
1915	6221	81	82	13.1	56	9.	4	4	4	49.	56	9.

At Census, 1911—Total Population of all ages, 5,612.*

Number of Inhabited Houses, 1,268.

Average number of Persons per house, 4.4.

Area of District in acres (land and inland water), 1,606.

* Including 78 crew of H.M.S. Speedwell.

Estimated Population, 1915, 6,221.

Number of Inhabited Houses, 1,343.

Average Number of Persons per house, 4.6.

NOTE.—The death-rate (9) is the actual or crude death-rate. The standardised death-rate is 7.7, i.e., the death-rate which would have been recorded if the age and sex constitution of the population of the district had been identical with that of England and Wales as enumerated in 1901.

TABLE II.
Cases of Infectious Diseases notified during the Year 1915.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE.	NUMBER OF CASES NOTIFIED.								Total cases removed to Hospital.
	At Ages—Years.								
	At all Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5 years.	5 and under 15 years.	15 and under 25 years.	25 and under 45 years.	45 and under 65 years.	65 and upwards.	
Diphtheria (including Membraneous Croup)	72†	—	4	50	9	5	4	—	44*
Erysipelas ...	3	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	0
Scarlet Fever ...	12	—	2	6	—	3	—	1	6
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ...	8	—	1	1	3	3	—	—	0
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1
Totals ...	96		7	57	12	13	4	3	51

Cases are sent to the Exeter City Council's Fever Hospital, Whipton (14 miles), by arrangement; to Ivybank Tuberculosis Dispensary, Exeter; and to the Urban District Council's Isolation Hospital at Woolbrook.

† Including 24 Carriers. * Including 12 Carriers.

TABLE III.

Deaths Registered during the Calendar Year 1915 classified by age and cause.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	NETT DEATHS AT THE SURJOINED AGES OF "RESIDENTS" WHETHER OCCURRING WITHIN OR WITHOUT THE DISTRICT.									Total Deaths whether of "Residents" or "Non- residents", in Institutions in the District.
	ALL AGES.	Under 1 yr.	1 and under 2 yrs.	2 and under 5 yrs.	5 and under 15 yrs.	15 and under 25 yrs.	25 and under 45 yrs.	45 and under 65 yrs.	65 and up- wards.	
1	2	2	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
All causes { Certified ... Uncertified ...	56 0									
Scarlet Fever ...	1		1	1			1			
Whooping Cough ...	1								1	1
Diphtheria and Croup ...	2						1	1	2	1
Influenza ...	1						1			
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis) ...	3		2				2			
Other Tuberculous Diseases ...	3						1			
Cancer, malignant disease ...	4						1			
Meningitis ...	2		1							
Organic Heart Disease ...	3									
Bronchitis ...	7									
Pneumonia (all forms) ...	3			1				1	2	
Cirrhosis of Liver ...	1							2	5	
Other accidents and diseases of Preg- nancy and Parturition ...	2							1	1	
Congenital Debility and Malformation, including Premature Birth ...	3	3								
Other Defined Diseases ...	18	1					1	5	11	2
Diseases ill-defined or unknown ...	2								2	
Totals ...	56	4	4	2	1	0	9	12	24	4
Sub-Entry (included in above figures): Cerebro-spinal Meningitis ...	1						1			1

TABLE IV.

INFANT MORTALITY.

1915. Nett Deaths from stated causes at various ages under 1 Year of Age.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Under 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total under 4 weeks.	4 weeks and under 3 months.	3 months and under 6 months.	6 months and under 9 months.	9 months and under 12 months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
All { Certified 4 causes { Uncertified 0										
Congenital Malformation							1			1
Whooping-Cough ...										
Premature Birth ...	1				1					1
Other Causes ...	1				1	1				2
Totals	2				2	1	1			4

Nett Births in the year { legitimate ... 75.
 illegitimate ... 6.

Nett Deaths in the year of { legitimate infants ... 3.
 illegitimate infants ... 1.

Remarks on the Tables of Vital Statistics I.—IV.

TABLE I.—The birth-rate was '8 higher than that of last year. The death-rate and infant death-rate were lower, and the former is the lowest on record for the District.

TABLE II.—It will be seen that infectious diseases, especially diphtheria, were prevalent during the year and called for special means of prevention. Early in January an epidemic seemed probable. On January 7th, in company with Mr. Hastings, and at his suggestion, I inspected Higher Woolbrook Farmhouse to see if it could be used as an isolation hospital, but its state of disrepair and the absence of drainage and Company's water made us abandon the idea temporarily. The epidemic continuing, I urged the Council to consider Col. Balfour's offer of the Farmhouse, and on March 31st a Sanitary Committee meeting was held there. The water supply was inspected and a sample taken for analysis. (*Vide* Appendix II.)

In April it was decided to take over the Farmhouse and do the necessary work; and on April 19th the County Medical Officer inspected the house with me and made various suggestions, of which some were carried out.

The work was executed with some difficulty owing to shortage of labour and material, and the hospital was opened on July 10th for cases of diphtheria only. It remained in constant use for the rest of the year and 24 cases and 12 carriers were treated. At one time there were 17 cases under treatment.

The provision of a local isolation hospital is the most necessary and important sanitary

measure which has been effected in the District since the Drainage scheme of 1897. For years I have been pointing out the inadequacy and inconvenience of our arrangement with the Exeter City Council, and I need not repeat my remarks here. (*Vide* Annual Reports 1911-12-13-14).

CARRIERS. Twenty-four Diphtheria carriers were notified, and 12 were isolated in Woolbrook hospital. Opinions differ as to whether carriers should be notified and isolated with the same strictness as are clinical cases of the disease. But it is obviously futile to try to cope with an epidemic while carriers are at large and allowed to spread the infection.

There is no doubt that the hospital, though only a makeshift, has been of the greatest service to the community and has saved money for the ratepayers, whose thanks are due to Col. Balfour for giving the Farmhouse rent free for two years, and to Mr. Hastings for his suggestions and help.

In Appendix I., p. 17, is a rough statement of the cost of the hospital for the period July 10th—December 31st, 1915.

Of other diseases notified, there were twelve cases of Scarlet Fever, six of which were removed to Whipton, it being impossible to isolate more than one disease at Woolbrook Farmhouse, which I hope will in due course be replaced by a well-designed modern isolation hospital.

The case of cerebro-spinal Meningitis (Spotted Fever) was of obscure origin and proved rapidly fatal.

TABLE III.—This Table shows the causes of death at the several age periods, and is a very good index of the health of a District. It will be seen that there is no marked excess of deaths from

any one disease; that the deaths of infants under one year amount to four only; that there are no deaths of persons of age period 15—25, and only three deaths in the age period 2—25; and that nearly half the deaths registered are those of persons of 65 years of age and upwards. All this is satisfactory except that seven deaths were due to infectious diseases. The deaths of two children from diphtheria are lamentable, as early diagnosis and the prompt use of antitoxin rarely fail to cure this disease. I am glad to report that the death-rate from tuberculosis is declining.

TABLE IV. shows a very low infant mortality. Nevertheless, with an increasing population and birth-rate, a Maternity and Infant Welfare Centre would be a highly desirable and useful innovation.

Housing.

The Urban District Council's Housing Scheme was fully dealt with in my Report for 1914, pp. 14—16. In spite of adverse war conditions the work has proceeded fairly well during the year, and by December six houses were fit for occupation. The cottages are healthy and comfortable, and their appearance especially from the riverside is admirable. Forty-eight in number, they are arranged on garden-city lines and with regard to air and space leave nothing to be desired except perhaps a children's playground (other than the roadway) which the high price of site (£1,800) precluded.

Probably the rents will not pay the full interest on the capital sum expended (£11,055), but the deficit may be regarded by the ratepayers as a sound insurance against the losses from disease and death which insanitary housing conditions inevitably entail.

It is to be hoped that some of the old insanitary dwellings (including seventeen back-to-back houses) will now fall in value and ultimately be closed or demolished.

Chemical and Bacteriological Work.

Analyses of Drinking Water	...	...	1
Swabs taken from the throats of suspected cases of Diphtheria and Diphtheria carriers:—	...	...	..
Swabs found to be positive	...	...	171
" " negative	...	...	561
" " sterile	...	...	16
Total	...	...	748

NOTE.—A Diphtheria carrier is a person who appears to be in good health but is carrying the germs of the disease in his throat or nose. He can infect others by kissing or by the use of common drinking vessels, pencils, books, etc. The recent epidemic was largely spread by unrecognised carriers, and declined when carriers were treated and isolated.

Antitoxin was supplied gratis by the Council to those who could not afford it, for treatment and preventive inoculation.

Local and Adoptive Acts in force in the District.

Sidmouth Water Act, 1886.

Public Health Acts (Amendment) Act, 1890, parts 1 and 3.

Public Health Acts (Amendment) Act, 1907, secs. 34—42 and 44—51.

Housing and Town Planning Act, 1909.

On January 5th, 1915, the Council adopted the Notification of Births Act, 1907, thus anticipating the general enforcement of the Act.

The compulsory notification of Ophthalmia Neonatorum also came into force during the year. This disease affects the eyes of the newly-born, and was formerly a frequent cause of blindness.

Synopsis of Work of the Sanitary Inspector and his Assistant.

1. Preliminary Notices served	...	259
2. Bell Traps and other defective gullies removed	... ..	48
3. New House Drains constructed	..	14
4. Defective Drains repaired and reconstructed	... ..	50
5. Extra W.C.'s built and fitted with flushing Cisterns	... ..	15
6. New W.C.'s with flushing Cisterns provided	... ..	34
7. Automatic flushing Cisterns connected to W.C.'s	... ..	18
8. Defective W.C. Pans replaced	...	37
9. Flushing Cisterns repaired	...	11
10. Defective and insufficiently ventilated Soil Pipes replaced	... ..	29
11. Offensive accumulations removed	...	64
12. Nuisances from improper keeping of Animals abated	... ..	11

13.	Cases of overcrowding noted	...	7
14.	Premises cleansed	...	8
15.	Defective Guttering and Down Pipes replaced or repaired	...	21
16.	New Sinks provided	...	18
17.	Defective Paving to Back Yards renewed	...	27
18.	Choked Drains cleared	...	42
<hr/>			
	The total number of recorded inspections made was	...	1144
<hr/>			

Drain tests performed during the year :—

Smoke Tests	...	436
Water Tests	...	241
<hr/>		
Total	...	677
<hr/>		

Miscellaneous nuisances discovered and
abated ... 259

MANURE PITS AND THE PREVENTION OF NUISANCE FROM HOUSE FLIES.

During the Summer months a weekly inspection of manure pits in stable yards was carried out, and weekly removal of dung insisted upon as far as possible. Large tins with perforated lids and containing powdered borax were supplied gratis with directions for use.

This approved method for preventing the development of the eggs and larvæ of the house fly proved very successful.

Infectious Disease.

The following is a summary of work carried out during the year :—

Rooms disinfected	...	...	...	119
Schools disinfected	...	...	...	8
Houses disinfected	...	...	...	3
Steam disinfection of bedding, clothing, etc. for all cases.	...	...	Loads	78
Bedding and clothing destroyed...	...	...	...	3
Formaline spray used for rubber goods, etc.	...	...	...	25
Ambulance used for conveying patients to Exeter	...	...	...	20
Ambulance used for conveying patients to Woolbrook	...	...	...	31
Ambulance used for conveying patients Locally	...	...	...	3

Sale of Food and Drugs Act.

Samples of lard, coffee, cheese, mustard and Demerara sugar were taken in accordance with the Act. All were found to be pure except the mustard which was adulterated with flour but to such a slight extent that the Analyst did not advise a prosecution.

A barrel of unsound fish (mackerel) was seized and buried with the owner's consent.

The carcase of a sheep was condemned as unfit for human food owing to the disease known as *strongylus rufescens*.

Factory & Workshop Act.

Factories on Register	18
Workshops on Register	56
Visits and inspections exclusive of inspections of Bakehouses	33
Nuisances under the Public Health Acts found and remedied :—	
Sanitary Accommodation	
Insufficient or defective	3
Not separate for sexes	2

Sanitary Work in the Surveyor's Department during 1915.

New self-supporting vent shafts were erected at the top of Alexandria Road (opposite Station), in Broadway, and Brewery Lane. The Cotmaton sewer was connected to an existing shaft on the Glen Road sewer.

Flushing tanks at All Saints Corner, opposite Manor Hall, in Bedford Square, opposite Victoria Hotel (in Peak Hill) and Veale's corner were inspected and repaired where necessary.

Several gullies at the four cross ways near the Knowle Hotel higher gates were found to be untrapped and connected to foul water sewer. A pipe was laid taking all the storm water to the roadside gutter in Station Road, and later the storm water sewer was extended by about 340 yards of 12in. pipe to receive all this water.

Many gullies in the town were found to be badly trapped or otherwise defective, and have been repaired or rebuilt.

Observations were made at the overflow manhole near the Gasworks, but no sewage was observed to go over it, and a cork float which was placed on the weir still remains.

At this manhole the 30in. sewer discharges into two 2ft. pipes which extend under the weighbridge, and then discharge into a 30in. sewer again. Owing to an 18in. pipe which discharges into the overflow manhole the sewage is diverted across the mouth of one of the 2ft. pipes and it has become almost totally choked. As soon as the flow of sewage decreases sufficiently a curved concrete slab will be placed in the invert to guide the sewage from the 18in. pipe into the choked 2ft. pipe, which will be previously scraped. It is probable that this will considerably relieve any flooding in the lower levels.

Schools.

Apart from Diphtheria, the health of the school children was fairly good. In March, several cases having occurred in one class at Woolbrook School, I swabbed the throats of the whole class of some 40 scholars. The percentage of carriers found was so high (20%), and fresh cases occurring, including three teachers, I advised the County Medical Officer to close the school on March 24th. This was done and the school disinfected and a number of extremely old and dirty books (used in common by the scholars) destroyed. The Education Authority sent in a claim for compensation for these books but I believe failed to recover. Warning notices were sent to the parents calling attention to the early symptoms of Diphtheria and the urgent need of early medical attendance.

Vaccination.

The proportion of successful vaccinations to the number of children born was 63 to 81 or 77·7 per cent., an improvement on preceding years when the percentages were 51 and 56.

Public Lavatories.

By arrangement with the Managers of the Girls' Club, a public lavatory and cloak room (with attendant) for women was opened at the Market Hall on July 1st, and has been a great convenience to visitors. It is to be hoped in time we shall have adequate public lavatories for both sexes, as the existing lavatories leave much to be desired as regards structure and position.

In conclusion it may be fairly claimed that the Sanitary work of the District has been efficiently performed in spite of adverse conditions.

After the war the following matters should receive careful consideration and be brought to a practical issue:—

- (1.) The dust nuisance in the main streets.
- (2.) Scavenging and disposal of refuse, *i.e.*, compulsory sanitary dust-bins, and a refuse destructor.
- (3.) A public slaughterhouse.
- (4.) Adequate public lavatories.
- (5.) Completion of the Eastern end of the Esplanade, and the laying out of the Ham Field.

W. H. PEILE.

Sidmouth,
May, 1916.

APPENDIX I.

**Approximate Cost of the Woolbrook
Isolation Hospital (1915).**

	£	s.	d.
Capital Expenditure on Repairs, Drainage, Water and Furnishing	250	7	6
Maintenance, Food, Nurses' Fees, Medi- cines, etc.	223	18	2
	474	5	8
Less Fees from Patients ...	75	17	6
Total nett cost	£398	8	2

Patients and Carriers admitted ...	36
Mothers of Patients admitted ...	3
Staff	4
Total ...	43

Average time in Hospital per Patient ...	6 weeks.
Average cost per head per week ...	17/8

N.B.—Patients sent to Whipton cost the Ratepayers
25/- per week, and 30/- for removal.

APPENDIX II.

**ANALYSIS of Water from Well at Higher
Woolbrook Farm (Isolation Hospital),
taken April 2nd, 1915.**

(STATED AS PARTS PER HUNDRED THOUSAND).

Total Solid Constituents	...	...	30.0
Behaviour of Solid Constituents on ignition, shows trace of organic matter	...	...	0
Loss of Solid Constituents on ignition	...	...	4.0
Chlorine present as Chlorides	...	...	4.7
Nitrogen present as Nitrites	...	...	0
Nitrogen present as Nitrates	...	...	0.25
Phosphates trace	...	...	0
Total Hardness (in terms equivalent to Calcium Carbonate)	...	...	15.4
Temporary Hardness (diminished by boiling)	...	...	12.4
Permanent Hardness (after boiling)	...	...	3.0
Saline Ammonia	...	...	0
Albuminoid Ammonia	...	...	0.0142
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hours at 80° F.	...	...	0.16
Oxygen absorbed immediately	...	...	0
Lead	...	...	0
Copper	...	...	0
Zinc	...	...	0
Iron	...	...	0

PHYSICAL CHARACTERS.

Colour—Green and brown colour components.

Turbidity—Slight.

Taste—Natural.

Odour—None.

Suspended matter—Few infusoria.

BACTERIOLOGY.

Micro-organisms per cc.—600.

Liquefying ditto do. 150.

THOMAS TICKLE, F.I.C.,

Public Analyst.





