

[Report 1902] / Medical Officer of Health, Stevenage U.D.C.

Contributors

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To the Members of the STEVENAGE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN.—

"The health of the district has, except in the first three months of the year, been good.

"In accordance with the wishes of the County Medical Officer of Health I have this year tabulated facts more, and commented on those which require explanation:—

	1901	1902	1903
Population by census	33,000	33,000	44,750
Area (exclusive of water)	4,545	4,545	4,545
Number of 1-habited houses	730	800	910
Average density of population per house	45	41	49
Birth rate for corrected population	28.83	27.50	26.52
Total deaths registered in the district	54	48	52
Corrections	5	5	2
Corrected death rate	15.8	13.25	13.25
Zymotic death rate	31	13.0	7.9
Death rate from phthisis	1.56	1.25	0.8
Death rate from cancer	3.2	7.5	3.8
Infant mortality per 1,000 births	90.19	81.8	144.23
Total death over 45 years	18	21	16

(a) Clerical error. (b) Estimated.

"The points worth your attention in this table are,—(1) The decrease in the birth rate. This taken in itself for one year may not be serious, but there has been a steady tendency to decrease at all events since 1891. The number of children born during the year were 51 males and 53 females. (2) Of the total deaths 52 were registered in the district and 2 were sent in from outside one inhabitant dying in the Hitchin Infirmary and the other in the Workhouse Infirmary of our Union. Of the whole 54 deaths, 15 were children under one year of age. This number is very much higher than last year. Ten of the 15 occurred in the first three months of the year and several were due to a low form of bronchitis and the inclement weather. Eight deaths occurred in children between 1 and 5 years, 1 between 5 and 15, 2 between 15 and 25, 12 between 25 and 65 and 16 over 65. Six of these last were over 75 and 1 over 90. Of the deaths 23 were of males and 31 females.

During last quarter of year 14 persons died—r 24.45 per 1,000.

" 1st " " 7 " " 7.73 "

" 2nd " " 11 " " 11.70 "

" 4th " " 12 " " 12.75 "

(3) The zymotic death rate or death rate for infectious disease was very satisfactory. There were no deaths from diphtheria, and the only death at all was from whooping cough in a very young child. The death rate from phthisis and cancer have both gone down considerably, but of course in a place of this size one or two deaths make an immense difference in the statistics.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

	1900	1901	1902
Measles	0	2	0
Whooping cough	0	1	1
Diphtheria	0	3	0
Furunculosis	1	0	0
Tuberculous diseases	7	8	4
	10	14	5

The deaths from infectious diseases are much lower than last year. They are only 5 as against 14. Four of these were from tuberculous diseases, including two from phthisis.

Notifiable Diseases.

	1900	1901	1902
Scarlet fever	0	5	1
Diphtheria	1	4	0
Furunculosis	1	0	1
Erysipelas	0	1	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	3
Chicken pox	0	0	4
	4	10	9

The year has been much more free from notifiable disease than 1901 although not quite so free as 1900. Chicken pox was made a notifiable disease temporarily during the year, and four cases were reported. At the request of the County Council steps are being taken by you to place chicken pox on the permanent list of notifiable diseases. You also asked the Local Government Board to allow you to put pulmonary consumption on the list, but this they refuse to do. They suggest that it should be done by a voluntary arrangement between the doctors, and not compulsorily. This puts the medical man in an awkward position, as he is not at liberty to divulge a patient's disease unless under local compulsion.

"Scarlet Fever.—No cause could be found for the case of scarlet fever, but there have been several cases of a very mild kind in the neighbourhood during the year, and it is quite possible that the patient may have come in contact with an unrecognised case.

"Typhoid Fever.—There were three cases of this disease. No cause could be discovered. There was nothing in common with any of them, except that they all were young men. They contracted the disease at different times (in March, June and October) and they lived in different parts of the district. The cases were all three mild, and all recovered.

Smallpox.—There was no case of smallpox actually within the district, although there was one in a rural adjoining parish. A great number of revaccinations took place at the end of 1901 and beginning of 1902. Of 102 children registered in the district between July, 1901, and July, 1902, 84 were successfully vaccinated, and of the rest nine died before they got to be six months old, 3 removed out of the district and were traced, 1 was postponed on account of ill-health and 3 obtained certificates of conscientious objection. This is a very satisfactory state of things.

"Measles.—There were as far as I know no cases of measles.

"Whooping Cough.—There were several mild cases of whooping cough. The only death from infectious disease (except phthisis) was from whooping cough. This occurred in a delicate baby.

"Influenza.—There has been quite an epidemic of influenza of a mild type during the last six months of the year.

"Isolation Hospital Board.—It was reported last year that the Stevenage Urban District Council had after much consideration decided to join the Haldock and Hitchin Urban District Councils and the Hitchin Rural District Council to form a combined hospital area for infectious diseases. The Joint Committee has now been formed for nearly two years, and if the preparation and equipment of a temporary smallpox hospital be excepted, they have nothing to show to justify their existence. They have selected and dismissed several sites, none of them entirely suitable, but for various reasons not one of them has been adopted. If the Stevenage Urban District Council had taken the matter of hospital accommodation into its

own hands, suitable provision would some time ago have been made; but now it must be at least another two or three years before a hospital is built and furnished to receive patients. Epidemics may take place in that time which might have been stamped out had there been a suitable place in which to isolate patients at the beginning of the outbreak. I am as last year, of opinion that a joint hospital scheme is the most economical and efficient means of dealing with the matter if there is really a desire on the part of the Joint Hospital Board to work together.

"Disinfection.—There is no disinfecting apparatus in the district. Doubtless this will be remedied when the infectious hospital is in working order.

"Water Supply.—Several houses which previously relied on wells have been connected with the town water supply. This has been ample during the year, and is of very good quality. On account of the drought some of the outlying districts ran short of water. This was notably the case with Norton Green, a hamlet containing about seventy people, and lying about one and a half miles south-west of the town. It relied for its supply on two deep wells. These wells ran dry in May. The town water was supplied to the inhabitants in a water-cart temporarily. One of the two wells was deepened, and there is now a sufficient supply of rather chalky water. The parish of Little Wymondley and some of the owners of houses in Graveley applied during the year for water from our supply, but you did not see your way to grant their request.

"Drainage.—During the year the sewage farm and main sewer have worked well. The new ventilating shafts which were put up last year seem to have proved a success, as very few complaints of smells coming from the manholes have been made. The smell from one of the shafts caused a nuisance to an adjoining house, but since this has been heightened the evil seems to have been remedied. The main sewer has been continued up Letchmore Green to the Four Wand Way, as recommended in last year's report, and is a decided improvement. Houses are continually being found which are connected with the old sewer. These are dealt with as they are discovered. There are doubtless still some to be found out. As regards the use of cisterns for flushing cottage closets, I understand that arrangements have been made to compel their use in new houses in the new building by-laws. These have not yet received the Local Government Board's sanction. Even if they do there will still be left a great number of cottages with unsatisfactory flushing arrangements. You have applied to the Local Government Board to obtain power to borrow money to do away with the old brick sewer and to lay a new surface water drain where necessary. It is to be hoped this work will be begun during the next year.

"Sweeping.—This has been more successfully carried out and has worked with greater smoothness than last year.

"Nuisances.—The manure siding nuisance is still with us, but the complaints have been much less frequent than formerly. A much greater nuisance is the way the farmers' carts are overloaded with the manure when they cart it from the station. A considerable quantity falls off the carts on to the roads, and is there frequently left. This not only smells, but it rots the roads and causes them to be filthy as well as dirty. You have adopted regulations with regard to this matter, but you do not enforce them. Most of the other nuisances were of a minor character, such as blocked drains, &c. In nearly all cases these were remedied without any trouble.

"Housing.—There is nothing new to be said on this question. There are a few old cottages which ought to be condemned and pulled down, but if this is done there is no place for the tenants to go. The rents of new cottages are too high. Until some means can be devised for building and letting cheaply cottages in the more rural parts of the district, things must go on in the same way. The rents of good cottages are not too high for the mechanic and the artisan, but they are too expensive for the agricultural labourer.

"Premises under Supervision.—Dairies and Cowsheds.—Your inspector and myself have visited the dairies and cowsheds in the district, and a report supplementary to that of the late Medical Officer of Health will shortly be presented to you. On the whole the dairies are good, but the cowsheds are old-fashioned. They have nearly all been turned to their present use, and were formerly either sheds or stables. Only one was built for its present object. On account of the unsuccessful attempt of the London County Council to obtain powers to inspect, &c., dairies and premises of persons sending milk to London in this and other counties, your County Council have recommended by-laws to be passed by the local bodies. These you are about to consider. Slaughterhouses.—We have also visited and reported on the various slaughterhouses. They, like the cowsheds, have many of them been converted to their present use. They were nearly all clean, and most of them had the town water laid on. I cannot say that they were all suitable for the use they are put to. It is useless, I am afraid, to suggest a public abattoir. Bakehouses.—The bakehouses have all been visited during the year. They were, with one exception, clean and up to the requirements of the Factory and Workshop Act of last year. There are no underground bakehouses. Lodging houses.—There are no common lodging houses in the district. Factories, Workshops and Workplaces.—The Act of 1901 is not yet in working order in your district. There is at present no register of workshops, &c., so that there has been no systematic visiting of these places. Those which your Inspector of Nuisances and myself have visited, and we have visited a good many, seem to fulfil the requirements of the Act.

"By-laws.—The following by-laws are in force in the district as to (a) New streets and buildings.—These were passed in 1891, and are out of date and in many ways unworkable. You have considered new ones, which are or will shortly be under the consideration of the Local Government Board. (b) Slaughterhouses. (c) Nuisances in connection with the removal or carriage through the streets of faecal or offensive or noxious matter or liquid. (d) Prevention of nuisances arising from filth, dust, ashes and rubbish and for the prevention of the keeping of animals on any premises so as to be injurious to health. (e) Tents, vans, sheds and similar structures used for human habitation. (f) Telegraph and other wires.

I append the usual statistics.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

PHILIP H. DUNN,

Medical Officer of Health.

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
WASHINGTON, D. C.

TO THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
FROM THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER

RE: [illegible]

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