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Contributors

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BOROUGH OF SUTTON COLDFIELD

To the Chairman and Members of the
HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

and

To the Chairman and Members of the
MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE COMMITTEE.

Who made

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In accordance with instructions contained in Circular 10/44, Ministry of Health, dated 15th February 1944, I beg to present my Interim Report on the health of the Borough, for 1943.

EXTRACTS FROM THE VITAL STATISTICS.

Live birth-rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	...	...	...	16.13
Still birth-rate per 1,000 total (live & still) births	...	...	...	...	45.52
Death-rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	...	...	...	...	10.98

Death-rate of infants under one year of age :-

All infants per 1,000 live births	...	...	...	37.26
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate live births	...	...	...	36.98
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births	...	...	...	45.45

Birth-rate.

The total live birth-rate for 1942 was the highest recorded in the Borough since the years immediately following the last war, and the rate for 1943 (16.13) shows a further increase of .48 per 1,000 population.

The still birth-rate per 1,000 population (.77) is the highest recorded in the Borough in recent years, and compares with .51 for England and Wales and .61 for the Smaller Towns. The illegitimate live birth-rate is 32.8 per 1,000 births, which compares with an average of 30.8 for the 5 pre-war years.

Deaths.

The death-rate (10.98) shows little change from the rate for 1942 and compares favourably with the rates for England and Wales (12.1) and for the Smaller Towns (12.7).

The influenza epidemic which occurred in the last quarter of the year, although mild, accounted for a death-rate of .46 per 1,000 population. This compares with a rate of .37 for England and Wales and the Smaller Towns.

No deaths were recorded from the principal zymotic diseases with the exception of scarlet fever (1) and infantile diarrhoea (2). Mortality from tuberculosis shows no significant increase.

The high rate from intra-cranial vascular lesions during the war years, to which I referred in my last Report has continued in the year under review, for which the rate is 1.22.

Infant Mortality.

The number of deaths of infants under 1 year assigned to the Borough corresponds to an infant mortality rate of 37.3 per 1,000 total live births. The corresponding rate for England and Wales is 49, and for the Smaller Towns, 46. Premature birth accounts for 3 of the deaths as compared with 13 in 1942. Other deaths are classified to congenital and infantile disease, pneumonia, enteritis and violence.

Deaths from Enteritis (under 2 years).

There has been a significant increase in the mortality from this disease in the Borough during the war years 1939-1943, the average rate for which is 4.2 per 1,000 live births as compared with 1.3 for the five pre-war years 1934-1938. The rate for the year under review is 3 as compared with 5.3 for England and Wales and 4.4 for the Smaller Towns.

Maternal Mortality.

The maternal death-rate from puerperal sepsis is 1.42 and from causes other than sepsis, 2.84 per 1,000 total births (live and still). These rates compare with .39 and 1.45 respectively for England and Wales.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water Supplies.

Mains. The mains supply to the Borough is chiefly from the South Staffordshire Water Company, small areas at Minworth and Kingstanding being supplied by the Birmingham Corporation Water Department. Both these supplies are constant and of excellent quality.

Routine sampling of mains water was carried out with satisfactory results.

Wells. The number of dwellings in the Borough which derive their water supplies from sources (wells etc.) other than the mains is 91 with a resident population of 286.

Twelve wells were sampled in a district where there was a threatened shortage of water. Four were found to be contaminated by organic matter to an undesirable degree. One of the polluted wells, which supplied a dairy farm was protected by reconstruction of the drainage system.

Streams. Four streams were specially investigated during the year on account of gross contamination with unpurified sewage effluents, three from military establishments and one from a temporary emergency hospital. Two of the nuisances were dealt with satisfactorily by connections with the sewer.

Keepers Pool Baths. A minor defect in the purification plant temporarily interfered with efficient chlorination and accounted for deterioration in the purity of the water.

Public Cleansing.

The Borough Surveyor, Mr T. Porter reports that the shortage of labour has again created difficulties in the cleansing of streets, and it has been necessary to rely to a greater extent on the street orderly carts.

The closure of the refuse destructor for repairs in July and August contributed to some extent to the need for tipping of some 25% of the house refuse collected.

HOUSING.

Although the number of inspections made is slightly lower than the figure for 1942, housing supervision has been well maintained. No houses were represented as unfit for habitation, but 25% of the houses inspected were found to be not in all respects reasonably fit for habitation.

Five cases of overcrowding, one of which became over-crowded after abatement, were brought to notice and all were rectified. Three houses occupied by 3 families remained over-crowded at the end of the year.

Camping Sites.

A number of the movable dwellings at Blake Street have been removed during the year and at the end of the year seven remained, three of which were permanently occupied. The nuisance from the overflowing sewage continued unabated.

Schools.

Elementary. The sanitary supervision of the school buildings has been continued and 103 visits were paid during the year for this purpose. No major defects were found and necessary cleansing etc. was carried out.

Private. Thirty-seven visits of inspection were made, but no defects were recorded.

FOOD SUPPLIES.

Milk.

The number of dairymen registered in the Borough at the end of the year was 89 as compared with 94 in 1942, without any change in the number of producers. Visits by the inspectors for the supervision of production and distribution number 1,328.

During the year 130 samples of undesignated milk were examined for bacterial count and 42, or 32% showed such a degree of bacterial contamination that they could not be regarded as of a satisfactory standard of cleanliness. Of the samples taken from milk produced outside the Borough 33% were unsatisfactory as against 32% taken from milk produced in the Borough.

Eighty-two samples of designated milk were examined, including pasteurised, 76; accredited, 3; tuberculin tested, 2; and tuberculin tested (pasteurised), 1. Of the total number examined 33% did not conform with the regulations.

Ten samples of milk, 9 undesignated and one pasteurised were submitted to biological examination for living tubercle bacilli. One undesignated sample, produced outside the Area, gave positive results. The infected sample was taken in process of delivery to a private school.

A sample of the National Dried Milk was submitted for examination on May 25th and the results were unsatisfactory. The colony count was over one million per 100 gms. of powder.

Other Foods.

The total quantity of butchers' meat condemned and destroyed amounted to 530½ lbs in addition to 282 lbs of tinned meat of various descriptions.

Other food condemned included wet fish, 138½ stones, smoked fish, 15 stones, and bacon, 64½ lbs.

Tinned foods condemned, in addition to meat, included fish, milk, fruit, vegetables and preserves to a total number of over 800 tins.

A miscellaneous list of foodstuffs condemned contains many items of "grocery stores", a number of which were collected by the Ministry of Food Salvage Dept. Sugar and flour are represented in the greatest quantities and, in view of the limited supplies available to the general public and their importance as an article of diet the number of eggs which had to be condemned must be regarded as unsatisfactory.

Food and Drugs Act, 1938.

The Chief Sampling Officer of the County Council, Mr J. E. Preston, reports that 85 samples were taken in the Borough during the year, 46 of which were official milk samples. All the milk samples proved to be genuine and only 3 other samples proved not to be genuine. Two prosecutions were taken.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The case rate for scarlet fever is the highest recorded in recent years. The disease, for the most part was mild but such complications as infected throats, middle ear disease and debility were frequently noted. One death occurred in an adult.

Fifteen cases of diphtheria were notified during the year in five of which the diagnosis was revised. Five of the 10 verified cases occurred in the age group 20-35 years and one case only was recorded in the school age groups. A child of 3½ years, who had been inoculated 2 years previously contracted the disease. The mortality was nil.

Immunization was continued in the year under review and 721 children had complete courses of inoculations, 604 under the Local Authority's Scheme and 117 by private practitioners.

The decline in incidence of measles recorded in 1942 has not been maintained and the notification rate has risen from 3.64 to 5.70 in 1945. The mortality was nil.

Over 50% of the cases occurred in the school age groups and all the cases with the exception of three were notified in the first and second quarters.

Whooping Cough was prevalent throughout the year and the notification rate is 1.59 as compared with 1.02 in 1942. Some 50% of the cases arose in the school age groups, 5-15 years, with a slightly less percentage in the pre-school age groups and, amongst the latter three cases only were notified under 1 year. These statistics are of importance if considered in relation to the age at which immunization should be carried out.

The immunization clinic, mentioned in my Report for 1942, has been continued in 1943, and during the year the immunization treatment of 170 children was completed.

A boy aged 5 years was notified in November as suffering from para-typhoid B., the diagnosis of which was confirmed by serological examinations. He was removed to hospital and recovered. The source of infection was not traced.

The notification rate for pneumonia is 1.23 as compared with .85 for 1942. The higher rate is attributable to the influenza epidemic, 18 of the cases notified having been classed to that disease, as compared with 4 in 1942.

There has been a marked increase in the number of notifications of the respiratory forms of tuberculosis, and the case notification rate for the year is .65 as compared with an average of .54 for the war years 1939-1943 and an average of .45 for the pre-war decade. The case rate for the non-respiratory forms of the disease shows no such increase.

Other diseases notified include poliomyelitis (1); cerebro-spinal meningitis (1); and erysipelas, (11). The mortality from these diseases was nil. (Puerperal pyrexia and ophthalmia neonatorum; see section on Maternity and Child Welfare).

Three cases of food poisoning were notified in one family, the cause of which was not discovered.

An outbreak of gastro-enteritis amongst children was brought to the notice of the Health Visitor, the cause of which was suspected to be milk. On inquiry four cows in a herd from which the supply came were found to be suffering from acute mastitis, and a bulk sample from the herd was reported to be heavily contaminated. The infected cows were isolated from the herd and the circumstances reported to the County Medical Officer of Health.

Gastro-enteritis of varying severity has been noted frequently in babies as the result of ingestion of the national fruit juices and, consequently their use for babies under 6 months is discouraged, unless they are prescribed under medical supervision.

Scabies Order, 1941

The elementary school statistics, which may be taken as a reliable indication of the general prevalence of the disease, show that 50, or less than 1.4 per cent of all children on the registers received treatment for the disease throughout the year. The number of families under observation and treatment varied from week to week, but the average weekly figure for the period was less than four. No statutory action was taken during the year.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

Public Health Act, 1936, Section 203.

Live births notified	...	...	...	561
Still " "	...	...	...	17
Births transferred inwards				
	Live births			185
	Still "			13
Births transferred outwards				
	Live births			86
	Still "			2

Maternity and Child Welfare Centres.

Clinics have been continued at four Centres during the year and the attendances at each Centre are set out below -

<u>Centre.</u>	<u>Number of Sessions.</u>	<u>Attendances.</u>
Holland Street	51	Children ... 2,045 Ante-natal ... 169 Post-natal ... 2
Boldmere.	52	Children ... 2,525 Ante-natal ... 190 Post-natal ... 11
Hill.	36	Children ... 887 Ante-natal ... 49 Post-natal ... 2
Minworth.	26	Children ... 573 Ante-natal ... 36

Total number of inspections by a Medical Officer:-

Children	...	...	...	1,478
Ante-natal and post-natal cases				433

Provision for Maternity.

Institutional. A new Maternity Unit has been opened by the County Public Assistance Authority at "Netherwood", Solihull, and this Home is rendering valuable assistance by providing beds for women from the Borough who have no facilities for domiciliary confinement.

During the year 33 women were admitted to "Netherwood" from the Borough and, of these 23 were referred from the Maternity and Child Welfare Centres. Necessary ante-natal visits were made by ambulance.

Women who apply direct to the Public Assistance Officer for admission to the Institution are referred by him to the Maternity Centres for ante-natal examination. At the time of examination inquiries are made as to the need for institutional care, and the Public Assistance Officer is advised if facilities for domiciliary confinement are considered adequate. Such cases can benefit by the Home Help Service.

Fifteen abnormal cases were referred from the Centres to the Maternity Hospital, Loveday Street, Birmingham, and of these seven were admitted.

Home Helps.

Towards the end of 1942 increasing difficulty was experienced in providing for normal confinements and, after reviewing the position your Committee resolved to expand the Home Help Service which had been in operation in the Borough on a part-time basis for some years, and to appoint a number of full-time Home Helps. The Service, as established on a full-time basis, has successfully tidied over an acute emergency, and provided domestic help for a number of families at times when no satisfactory alternative arrangements could be made.

Two Helps were fully employed during the first half year and the number was increased later to five. The total number of cases attended is 87, i.e. 51 normal maternity cases and 36 ante-natal and post-natal and other puerperal emergencies.

Where, in addition to the mother, there is a household and children to be cared for, no other arrangements for normal maternity can be so effective as a satisfactory Home Help Service, the basis of which is the trustworthy and efficient Home Help. When the mother goes to bed she surrenders her duties and cares without hesitation to such a woman and, as a rule she is assured of a peaceful lying-in amongst familiar surroundings in her own home. In an emergency she can be removed with a minimum of disturbance to herself and others.

Puerperal Pyrexia.

The case rate for this disease is 2.84 per 1,000 total births as compared with 11.63 for England and Wales. The mortality was nil.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

Seven cases were notified, four of which were treated at the Birmingham Eye Hospital and three privately. In all the cases the infection was mild and six recovered without damage to eyes. One remained under treatment and was recovering.

Orthopaedic and other Treatment.

Four children were referred from the Centres to the Cripples Hospital, Birmingham, for treatment for deformities, and other treatments carried out under the Local Authority's Scheme include :- tonsillectomies, 15 ; dental, 6 ; for ophthalmia neonatorum (at the Birmingham Eye Hospital), 4 ; refractions by the Ophthalmic Surgeon, 4.

Health Visitors.

No changes were effected in the staff and the full establishment of three Health Visitors was maintained throughout the year.

Domiciliary Visits by Health Visitors.

1st visits to expectant mothers	...	250	
Total " " " " " "	...	...	430
1st visits to children under 1 year		585	
Total " " " " " "	...	...	3,181
Total visits to children between the ages of 1 and 5 years	...	...	3,770
Other visits	...	...	379
Unsuccessful visits	...	...	1,720
			<hr/>
			9,480
			<hr/>
Number of households visited	...	...	8,622

Pediculosis in Children Under 5 years.

(Ministry of Health Circular 2831, 1943)

In my Interim Report for 1942 I referred to the co-ordinated action taken by Health Visitors and School Nurses for the eradication of this form of infestation. Over 10,000 inspections of elementary school children were made during the year and .5 per cent only of infestations of any degree was recorded. The number of individual children found infested, some of whom were infested more than once, represents 1.5 per cent of the children on the registers.

The Health Visitors made special visits in respect of infestation to 29 families, 5 at the requests of parents and 24 on the reports of the School Nurse. Twenty-eight pre-school children were found infested in 20 families and appropriate advice and treatment were given.

In general, improvement in cleanliness and personal hygiene is the continual pre-occupation and objective of the Health Visitors, and such matters are included in the daily routine of their work, but in this as in other public health activities the backward and unsatisfactory family is singled out for special supervision as a matter of course.

Care of Illegitimate Children.

Your Committee have had under consideration the recommendations of the Ministry of Health contained in a Circular addressed to Welfare Authorities, and resolved that the needs of the Borough would be best met by an arrangement with the Birmingham Diocesan Council for Moral Welfare. The Outdoor Worker of the Council, Miss Fielding, is fully trained and has had wide experience in all branches of social welfare; she may be regarded, therefore, as fully competent to discharge the essential social duties required of her in the Scheme.

For some time before this agreement was reached, there had been increasing co-operation between the Diocesan Worker and the Health Visitors in the care of the unmarried mother and her child and, latterly, payment was made by the Local Authority for cases whose lying-in had been arranged by the Diocesan Council. These payments will be continued under the present Scheme.

I have the honour to be,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

T. H. Wright
 Medical Officer of Health.

Council House,
 Sutton Coldfield.

July, 1944.