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Public Health Act, 1872.

REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 1903,

BEING THE

Twenty = Ninth Annual Report

ON THE

SANITARY CONDITION

OF THE


TROWBRIDGE URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT.

PRESENTED TO THE

Trowbridge Urban District Council

BY

JAMES PEARSE, M.D.



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Medical Officer's Annual Report.

To the Chairman and Members of the Trowbridge Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,—

I have the honour to submit to you my second report as your Medical Officer of Health.

Population of district at census, 1901, 11,526.

Estimated population to middle of 1903, 11,422.

Area of district, 2,126 acres.

Number of inhabited houses at census, 1901, 2,817.

The health of the district throughout the year has been good. There has been an absence of serious epidemic disease, and the amount of general illness has been comparatively small.

VITAL STATISTICS.

There have been registered during the year 225 births, as compared with 251 last year, thus giving a birth-rate of 19·5 per 1,000. The rate is fairly constant, averaging 20·9 for the last ten years, which is a low figure. The number of illegitimate births was 12.

The deaths during the year numbered 131, as against 187 last year. The death rate, 11·3 per 1,000, is considerably lower than it has been for several years, and compares favourably with the average for the last ten years of 13·6. There has been a marked diminution in the death-rate from zymotic disease. Only one death has been recorded from influenza, which disease has not been prevalent to any serious extent. The deaths from diarrhœa and enteritis are low, this being dependent upon the comparative coolness of the summer. Phthisis and other tubercular diseases shew a considerable reduction in comparison with last year, and also in comparison with the previous ten years. The deaths from respiratory diseases, other than phthisis, shew a considerable reduction, numbering 21, as against 40 last year, and a ten years' average of 26·4.

Fourteen of the deaths are of children under one year, a rate per 1,000 births registered of 62·2. This is a very considerable reduction, the corresponding averages for the last ten years being 26·5 and 105·5.

Fifty-seven of the total deaths were of people over 68 years of age.

An appended table gives the mortality from various causes, which is also compared with the preceding year.

The number of inquests during the year was 8, as against 15 last year.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

There has been during the year a considerable diminution in the prevalence of infectious disease.

The previous year was characterised by serious epidemics of measles and whooping cough; both these diseases have been but little prevalent, and there is no mortality from either cause.

Of the notifiable diseases I have received intimation of 35 cases, as against 71 last year, and an average for the last ten years of 60.4. The cases comprise: Scarlet Fever, 9; Diphtheria, 9; Membranous Croup, 3; Enteric Fever, 6; Erysipelas, 8.

Scarlet Fever shews a marked diminution in comparison with the recent rate. Five of the cases occurred in the latter part of the year in connection with a private school in the town, and within a few days of one another. I visited the school and advised its closure for ten days, which step was carried out, and no more cases have occurred. There have been no deaths from this cause.

Diphtheria also shows a considerably lessened incidence, there having been 22 notifications in 1902. There was no fatal case. The cases have not been associated in an epidemic form, but have occurred sporadically throughout the year and in different districts of the town, so that it has not been possible to trace them to a common origin. The cases of membranous croup all proved fatal.

There have been more cases of enteric fever than usual, though nothing in the nature of an epidemic. Two of the cases were probably contracted out of the town; the remainder arose independently of one another, and I was unable to trace their origin. Two cases proved fatal: one in a patient aged 58, the second in a girl aged 15, resident in Burbidge's Yard, the sanitary condition of which was extremely unsatisfactory.

The Isolation Hospital has been but little used, only two cases of scarlet fever having been under treatment there. I also sent to the hospital, when it was otherwise empty, one case of diphtheria which it was quite impossible to isolate at home.

A commencement has been made with the erection of the new Isolation Hospital for the district in the Bradley Road. Its completion will prove of great advantage to the town, as it will then be possible to isolate cases other than scarlet fever.

The following table shews the prevalence of notifiable disease during 1903 and the previous ten years:—

	1903.	Average of previous 10 years.
Diphtheria ..	9	6·8
Membranous Croup ..	3	·2
Erysipelas ..	8	12·9
Scarlet Fever ..	9	33·9
Enteric Fever ..	6	3·5
Puerperal Fever ..	0	·9

The total deaths from zymotic disease number 5, a rate of '43 per 1,000.

SEWERAGE.

The year has seen the completion of the laying of the new sewers in the Bond Street district. It would be well that in the case of any houses in the area as yet unconnected, the connection should be made as soon as possible.

Contracts have been let for the northern portion of the new sewage system, and also for the re-drainage of Bradley Road. I hope the latter will be proceeded with as soon as possible, as the blockage of the present sewer is serious. I would also recommend that though the new sewer does not follow the line of the old one, this be taken up.

WATER SUPPLY.

The water supply throughout the year has been well maintained and of good quality.

One well, situated at Wallwayne's Cottages, Trowle, was closed on representation to the owners of its contamination, and a good supply laid on.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.

There are 10 of these on the register. They have been inspected by me once a quarter, and are on the whole kept in a satisfactory condition.

BAKE-HOUSES.

There are 12 of these under inspection. They are usually kept in very good condition. There are no underground bakehouses. The Co-operative Society have erected an excellent new bakery, but its good effect is somewhat marred by its proximity to the Society's stables and slaughter-house.

COMMON LODGING-HOUSE.

There is one of these in Shails Lane with accommodation for 35 inmates. I have always found it well kept. There has been improvement in its state of repair, but the stairs on my last visit were unsafe. An extension has been made to the building with further accommodation for 13 inmates. This will be an advantage, as there will be an influx of labourers in connection with the new sewage works, but improvements will have to be made before its use can be sanctioned.

OVERCROWDING.

Three instances of this nuisance have been dealt with during the year: two in Bradley Road and one in Marsh Road.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS ACT, 1901.

There are 75 Factories and workshops on the register. The enquiry as to the sanitation of these has not yet been completed. On the question of sanitation the Inspector reports: Cleanliness— notices served under Public Health Acts, 3, notices to cleanse, 8; Air Space— notices to abate overcrowding, 6, notices to affix card 5; Ventilation— notices under Public Health Act, 2. Nine reports of sanitary defects have been received from H.M. Inspectors, and these defects have been remedied.

Under this Act it is obligatory on every employer, in certain industries, who employs outworkers, to send a list of such outworkers to the Local Authority twice every year. I would draw your attention to the fact that no such lists have been received.

DAIRIES, COW-SHEDS, AND MILKSHOPS.

In the sphere of Public Health increasing attention has of late years been bestowed upon the question of the milk supply, and the matter is continually assuming more importance both in the medical and lay Press. The association of outbreaks of disease with milk is now a well established fact, and it is desirable that this should be recognised, though there is no desire to exaggerate its importance. Circumstances point to the likelihood of increased stringency in the regulations governing the milk supply, and I have therefore thought it right to draw your attention to the matter and to report on the conditions prevailing in your area. The matter is of importance, not only as regards this district, but also affects other areas, a large amount of milk being sent elsewhere, some as far as Newcastle.

The more important diseases which have from time to time been traced to the milk supply are :—

Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria, associated with infection of milk by persons suffering from these diseases, and possibly with bovine disease.

Enteric Fever, associated usually with contamination of the water used for dairy purposes by an infected person.

Sore throat, which may be of a severe type, associated with suppurative disease of the udder.

Tuberculosis, especially in children, associated with tubercular disease of the udder.

Epidemic Diarrhoea, associated with contamination of the milk by dirty vessels, and by various foreign matters finding their way into the milk at time of milking or subsequently.

The Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops Order of the Privy Council was issued in 1885, and the provisions of this Order have all the force of Statute law. Regulations in conformity with this were adopted by your Authority and were published in the local Press in 1887. I do not think they have since been advertised, nor do I find that they are generally known to exist.

Under the Order it is not lawful for any person to carry on the trade of cow-keeper, dairyman, or purveyor of milk, unless registered. This law has not been efficiently observed.

It is also incumbent upon the Local Authority to keep such a register, and from time to time to revise it. There is a register but it has not been kept up-to-date, the last entry being in February, 1899. During the course of the present year, the Inspector has issued a number of the necessary forms, but the list is not yet complete.

Your regulations require that every cowshed shall be sufficiently lighted and ventilated, and shall have a cubic space of 800 cubic feet for every head of cattle. Most of the cowsheds are open on one side, and are thus sufficiently ventilated; in those which are not thus open, the provisions for lighting and ventilation are insufficient. The question of cubic space is not so important in this as in some other areas, where the cows are kept always in confinement.

Extract from Regulations. "Every cowkeeper shall cause the floor of every such dairy and cowshed to be thoroughly cleaned with water at least once a day." This is not carried out, and some of the cowshed floors show very little trace of a thorough application of water. There is not here the excuse that may prevail in rural areas of the scarcity of water.

Lime washing is prescribed twice a year, but is not carried out with anything approaching this frequency.

Most of the cowsheds are of old construction, and were probably built before the regulations regarding drainage, &c., came into force. Most of the floors are inadequately sloped to allow of the proper draining away of excrement. As a rule, all the manure from the sheds is conveyed to an undrained yard immediately adjacent, where it accumulates till it can be carried to the land. This is a very unsatisfactory provision, and your regulations demand "that every purveyor of milk shall take proper precautions to prevent the infection or contamination of milk by any emanation."

All the dairies and cowsheds which I have visited are supplied with the Company's water. This is used for drinking purposes and the cleansing of vessels, etc., but there is usually also well or pond water used for drinking.

In the places which I have visited due care is exercised over the milk after it leaves the cowsheds. The rooms in which it is stored are kept clean; all milk which is sent out of the district is refriger-

ated, and provisions exist for the thorough cleansing of vessels which appears to be always done with the Company's water. But these precautions come late where due care is not exercised beforehand, and one could wish that the same realisation of the necessity of cleanliness was seen in the process of milking. One is always told that the milker's hands are cleansed, but examination does not bear this out; the cow's udders are often soiled; and in the present condition of cowsheds, sanitary surroundings are wanting. I have seen a cow being milked with an ulcerated udder; a milk can planted directly on a heap of manure; and one milker to shew me the cleanliness of his milk stirred it up with a much begrimed hand! It is not so much elaborate regulations that are required as a clearer understanding of the readiness with which milk can be contaminated with the dangers resulting from this, and the willing co-operation of both cowkeeper and retailer in reducing the risks of contamination to a minimum.

The order prohibits the use of milk from diseased cows. Your regulations do not cover this point, but the clause is none the less obligatory. In view of the danger arising from milk contaminated by pus from suppurating udders, and from cows with local tubercular disease, some provision should be made.

The same remarks apply to the occurrence of infectious disease in persons associated with the milk supply.

I hope in another report to deal with the retail milk supply.

I would recommend to the Council—

The issuing of a warning as to the necessity of every cowkeeper, dairyman, or purveyor of milk applying for registration.

The revision of the Register and its regular correction.

The more regular inspection of dairy premises, etc.; this should be done quarterly.

The revision of the regulations.

“The aim to be kept continually in view is a *pure milk supply*—a clean milk, of good quality; from healthy cows; properly strained and cooled, and protected from infection and contamination.”

RAINFALL.

The rainfall during the year has been excessive here as elsewhere. I am indebted to Mr. Rodway for the following observations taken at Adcroft, from which it will be seen that the total was twice that of 1902.

	1903.	1902.
January ..	3'13	.88
February ..	2'60	.8
March ..	3'78	1'61
April ..	2'34	1'53
May ..	3'17	1'26
June ..	2'99	2'93
July ..	1'13	1'58
August ..	5'45	1'88
September ..	2'68	2'48
October ..	6'70	.37
November ..	1'95	1'99
December ..	3'27	1'92
TOTAL	39'2	19'22

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JAMES PEARSE, M.D.

**CAUSES OF, AND AGES AT, DEATHS DURING
YEAR 1903.**

DISTRICT OF TROWBRIDGE.

CAUSES OF DEATH.	Deaths in or belonging to Whole District at Subjoined Ages.							1902
	All Ages.	Under 1 Year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	All Ages.
Measles ... ..	...	...	...	..	...	...	...	5
Whooping Cough ... ..	...	...	..	...	...	...	...	8
Diphtheria and membranous Croup	3	1	1	1	...	...	...	3
Croup	1	...	1	..	...	...	...	...
Fever { Typhus ... ..	...	...	...	..	...	...	...	...
{ Enteric	2	...	..	..	1	1	...	1
{ Other Continued ... ..	...	...	..	...	...	...	...	1
Epidemic Influenza	1	...	...	...	...	...	1	2
Diarrhœa	2	..	1	...	...	...	1	1
Enteritis	1	1	...	...	...	...	...	1
Erysipelas	1	1	..	...	...	...	...	...
Phthisis	7	...	..	...	1	6	...	12
Other Tubercular Diseases	4	..	1	1	2	...	...	11
Cancer, Malignant Disease	11	...	..	...	...	7	4	13
Bronchitis	13	..	..	...	...	2	11	24
Pneumonia	6	2	2	...	...	2	...	13
Pleurisy ... ..	...	..	...	...	...	...	...	1
Other Diseases of Respiratory Organs	2	...	..	...	...	1	1	2
Alcoholism	4	..	...	...	...	4	...	...
Cirrhosis of Liver }	4	..	...	...	...	...	...	...
Veneral Diseases	1	..	..	...	...	...	1	...
Premature Birth	3	3	..	...	...	...	...	5
Diseases and Accidents of part- urition .. ...	...	..	..	...	...	...	...	1
Heart Diseases	17	1	..	...	1	7	8	22
Accidents	4	..	..	...	...	1	2	3
Suicides ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
All other causes	48	5	1	2	1	11	28	57
All causes	131	14	7	5	6	42	57	187

