

[Report 1903] / Medical Officer of Health, Wantage U.D.C.

Contributors

Wantage (England). Urban District Council.

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February 29th, 1904.

To the Urban District Council, Wantage.

GENTLEMEN,

The following is my Report for the year 1903, being a summary of the Sanitary history, and of the conditions affecting the health of the District, of which I am the Medical Officer of Health.

GEOLOGY.

The area is 2,296 acres.

The Geological formation, chalk and green sand.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The population at the last census (1901) was 3,766, and estimated to date numbers 3,782. The average increase for the last 20 years is between 9 and 10 per annum.

DEATHS.

The total number registered in the District during the year amounted to 60, equal to a death rate of 15·8 per 1,000, but deducting 15, who died either in the Cottage Hospital or Union Workhouse, not belonging to the District, we get 45, being at the rate of 11·8 per 1,000; this is the lowest death rate since 1893.

As the death rate of England and Wales is between 21 and 22 per 1,000, our very low death rate is very strong evidence of the healthiness of our town.

BIRTHS.

The Births numbered 96, being at the rate of 25·4 per 1,000.

NOTIFIABLE DISEASES.

The following were reported to me during the year:—

Diphtheria 10, all recovered.
Erysipelas 17, ditto
Scarletina 10, ditto
Enteric Fever 20, one death.

Total 57

DEATHS FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Compared with the previous five years the figures are:—

	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
Enteric Fever ...	1			1		1
Diphtheria ...						
Influenza ...	2	5	3	6	2	4
Scarlet Fever ...			1			
Measles ...	3					
Erysipelas ...						
Whooping Cough...		3			1	
Puerperal Fever ...						

ENTERIC FEVER.

Twenty cases were reported during the year, of which one proved fatal. This is a considerable increase on previous years; the figures for 1902 were 4 cases; for 1901, 4 cases; and none in 1900.

Probably the excessive rainfall may have found weak places in the sewers, and so polluted some of the wells, though the outbreak in Stirlings Road, in the late autumn, appeared to be quite independent of local insanitary conditions.

Ten cases were reported during May, June, July, August, and September, occurring in Church Street, Little Lane, Ormond Road, Wallingford Street, and Mill Street. In all these cases either water pollution or some sanitary defect was found.

Between November 14th and December 4th 10 cases were reported in Stirlings Road. Nothing wrong was found with either the water supply or drains, but there was some evidence that the disease was due to eating watercress grown on sewage-soaked soil.

INFLUENZA.

This disease was very prevalent during the early part of the year, causing 4 deaths; but the last nine months there was much less than in any year since the beginning of the epidemic, some 15 years ago. The continual rains, and, possibly, some other climatic conditions, seem to have been unfavourable to the development and spread of the microbe, which is the cause of the disease.

SMALL POX.

There has been no case of this disease during the year.

DIPHTHERIA.

Ten cases were reported during the year, but no death. All the cases were of mild type, and occurred at different times and places.

The above cases of Infectious Diseases were isolated when necessary, and the sanitary conditions in the houses and immediate neighbourhood investigated, and where defects were found they were promptly remedied.

PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Prevention is better than cure, and I can only repeat what I have before expressed in previous reports, the importance of pure air and water, wholesome food, dry, well-ventilated houses, and when an infectious case occurs, prompt isolation and subsequent thorough disinfection.

WATER SUPPLY.

Is satisfactory, except where water from shallow wells, supplied by surface water, is used; boiling will render the most impure water perfectly safe to drink.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

Is fairly good, and each year improves. I am pleased to report the houses I have referred to (in previous reports) as unsanitary, situated in the South side of Stirlings Road, have been pulled down, and good cottages erected on their site.

SEWAGE.

At my suggestion a number of ventilating shafts have been connected with the sewers, which will prevent dangerous pressure within the pipes, and so prevent the entry of sewer gas into the houses.

FOOD.

My attention has only been directed in one instance to unwholesome food during the year. Last March, acting on information I received, I examined and condemned a quantity of fish which was unfit for human consumption.

OFFENSIVE TRADES.

None exist in this District.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS' ACT, 1901.

I have visited the Workshops in my District, and they appear to comply with the provisions of the Statute, both as regards cleanliness, ventilation, air space, and suitable sanitary conveniences.

SYSTEMATIC INSPECTION of the District has been made at intervals, as required by the Local Government Board.

I have much pleasure in recording my appreciation of the prompt and efficient help given me by your Inspector of Nuisances, Mr. Belcher, in dealing with nuisances, and the isolation of infectious cases and subsequent disinfection.

SUMMARY OF WORK DONE DURING THE YEAR, 1903.

Houses inspected	111
Drains, Sewers examined	40
Wells examined	37
Samples of Water examined	33

Appended are the usual Tables of Statistics.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

THOMAS G. EMERSON, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health, Urban District of Wantage.

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