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ANNUAL + REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DEC. 31st, 1897.

WALTER C. GARMAN, M.D., EDIN.,


Medical Officer of Health.

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Borough of Wednesbury.

Report upon the Health of Wednesbury, FOR THE YEAR 1897,

BY

WALTER GARMAN, M.D., Edin., Medical Officer of Health

**To the Mayor and Members of the Wednesbury
Town Council.**

MR. MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN,

In presenting to you my Annual Report upon the health of Wednesbury for the year 1897, I have no reason to suppose that any noteworthy change has occurred to alter the population from the numerical standpoint. I have therefore based my calculations upon the assumed population of 25,300.

I—VITAL STATISTICS.

The number of births registered during 1897 was 899 (males 463, females 436) which is equal to a birth-rate of 35·5 per 1,000 of the population. The natural increase of the births over deaths was 400. The deaths from all causes numbered 499, which is equal to a death-rate of 19·7 per 1,000 of the population. The deaths of children under five years of age numbered 267, or 53·5 per cent of the total deaths. Of these 185 were under one year of age.

The following table furnishes an analysis of the deaths occurring under five years of age during the past five years :—

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
Premature Birth and Wasting Diseases ...	97	44	77	75	82
Bronchitis and Pneumonia	42	34	32	44	33
Scarlatina... ..	4	13	15	2	6
Measles	6	8	3	49	8
Whooping Cough	4	19	1	10	6
Diarrhœa	14	12	21	5	36
Diphtheria	—	3	—	5	1
Other causes	43	56	88	81	95
	210	189	237	271	267

As was the case last year more than half the total mortality occurred amongst children under five years of age. As then it was due to the action of the measles epidemic, so now it is mainly the outcome of summer diarrhœa, which caused no fewer than 36 deaths.

The next table gives the deaths due to zymotic disease, 70 in number, and equal to a zymotic death-rate of 2·7 per 1000. For the purpose of comparison, the corresponding figures for the preceding four years are included in the table.

	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
Smallpox... ..	—	4	—	—	—
Fever,—Simple continued, and Typhoid	3	5	3	5	4
Scarlet Fever	11	13	18	3	10
Measles... ..	6	8	3	53	9
Diphtheria	—	3	—	5	2
Diarrhœa	17	10	23	6	39
Whooping Cough	4	16	1	10	6
Total	41	59	48	82	70
Death-rate per 1,000	1·6	2·4	1·9	3·2	2·7

The only striking feature in the list is the large number of deaths due to diarrhœa, viz., 39, and of these little new remains to be said. Ignorance in regard to feeding, dirty surroundings and neglect of medical aid are the three main factors in the production of a high mortality from diarrhœa.

Four deaths have resulted from Enteric fever, and the following are the localities where they occurred :—

4, Darlaston Road...	...	...	1 Case
16, Lloyd Street	...	...	1 „
1 Court „ „	...	...	1 „
23, Hall End	...	...	1 „
Total			4

Inasmuch as the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act is not in force in Wednesbury I am unable to form any accurate idea of the extent to which the disease prevailed in the town. At least I am aware that during the autumn the number of cases was sufficient to create some apprehension lest the disease should assume an epidemic form. Fortunately this was not the case, and before the end of the year enteric fever had ceased to exist in the town. I would here repeat what I have already stated with regard to the disease, viz. : that inspection of premises where enteric fever has occurred rarely leads to the detection of the cause. I am more and more of the opinion that the typhoid poison is most often ingested with impure milk, or vegetables, fruits or fish.

Whooping Cough never became epidemic during the year, but nevertheless produced six deaths.

No case of small-pox arose in the town.

Diphtheria occasioned two deaths, but very few cases of the disease were met with so far as I am able to learn. At the same time this affection has a special interest for us in Wednesbury, inasmuch as the town has been so recently sewered. Before the deep sewers were in use very few deaths arose from diphtheria, and it remained to be seen whether this immunity continued. According to some authorities the greater prevalence of the disease in some of the large towns is traceable to emanations from sewers ; and I have been on the look out to observe

whether we should suffer in Wednesbury from the employment of a deep sewerage system. So far the cases of diphtheria, and certainly the deaths from the disease appear to be no more frequent than formerly. In writing thus upon the subject I am not forgetful of the much greater success obtainable in treating the disease now than was the case formerly; but although in practice in Wednesbury I have only seen so far as I can remember one case of diphtheria in the town during 1897.

Influenza was responsible for four deaths in the first quarter, for two deaths in the second quarter, and for one death in the fourth quarter. It will thus be seen that the town has never really been free from this troublesome malady during the year. It should however, be recognised that these seven deaths are numerically below the annual average for the past eight years; despite the fact that no death resulted from the disease in 1892. The average number per annum is 8, and thus it will be seen that influenza has practically become endemic in our midst.

The next table gives the mortality from pulmonary disease.

Year.	Bronchitis and Pneumonia.	Phthisis.	Total.
1893	114	13	127
1894	66	24	90
1895	87	26	113
1896	96	20	116
1897	73	26	99

The next table gives the vaccinations done during the year from September 1896 to September, 1897 :—

Births Registered.	Successfully vaccinated.	Insusceptible	Dead unvaccinated.	Medical postponement.	Removals known.	Removals unknown	Defaulters
930	132	2	158	12	—	—	626

The record of inquests by the Coroner stand thus :—

Natural Causes	...	...	19
Accident	...	...	4
Suicide	...	...	3
Manslaughter	...	...	2
			—
			28

The next table sets forth the deaths occurring during 1897 from all sources, classified according to disease and ages for the four quarters, and of births for the same period :—

[illegible]

The next table gives the birth, death and zymotic rates for the ten years 1888-1897 inclusive :—

Year.	Estimated population.	No. of Births.	No. of Deaths.	Death-rate per 1,000 living.	Birth-rate per 1,000 living.	Zymotic death-rate.
1888	25,300	878	461	18·2	34·7	2·1
1889	"	890	497	19·6	36·0	3·1
1890	"	897	472	18·6	35·4	2·8
1891	"	881	514	20·3	34·0	8·6
1892	"	966	440	17·3	38·0	2·4
1893	"	847	473	18·7	33·4	1·6
1894	"	825	402	15·8	32·6	2·4
1895	"	872	499	19·7	34·4	1·9
1896	"	959	528	20·8	37·9	3·2
1897	"	899	499	19·7	35·5	2·7

Following is a list of the deaths occurring during the year in each street, the zymotic deaths being separately indicated :

Street	Deaths from all causes.	Zymotic deaths.
Addison Street	4	0
Albert Street	8	4
Alma Street	4	3
Bull Lane	1	0
Brookside	1	0
Butcroft	3	0
Bilston Road	4	0
Birmingham Street...	4	0
Bright Street	3	0
Brickkiln Street	7	0
Bridge Street	7	0
Brunswick Terrace...	1	0
Brunswick Park road	5	0
Camphill Lane	3	0
Camp Street	6	1
Chapel Street	3	0
Chapel Street, King's Hill	2	0
Church Hill	5	4
Church Street	10	1
Church Street, King's Hill	3	1
Cobden Street	8	1
Cook Street	8	0
Cross Street	8	1
Crankhall Lane	3	1
Delves	1	0
Dale Street	14	3
Dangerfield Lane	7	0
Darlaston Road	12	3
Darlington Street	5	2
Dudley Street	12	1
Elwell Street	3	3
Earps Lane... ..	1	0
Forge Street, King's Hill... ..	1	0
Foley Street	3	1
Foster Street	9	0
Franchise Street	7	1
Friar Street... ..	5	0
Foundry Street	1	0
George Street	1	0
Great Western Street	5	0
Hollies Drive	0	1
Hall End	2	2
High Bullen	2	1
High Street... ..	6	2
Hill Street	8	0
Hydes Lane	1	0
Hobbins Street	7	0
Hobbs Hole	2	1
Holyhead Road	13	0

Street.	Deaths from all causes.	Zymotic deaths.
Hope Terrace	2	0
King's Hill	6	1
King's Street	4	1
Little Hill	2	0
Ladbury's Lane	3	0
Lloyd Street	2	2
Longmore Street	1	0
Lea Brook	8	0
Loxdale Street	2	0
Mill Street	4	1
Meeting Street	17	4
Moore Street	1	1
Mesty Croft... ..	1	0
Moxley	8	1
New Cross Street	3	0
New Street	1	1
North Street	3	0
Oakeswell End	1	0
Oldbury Street	1	0
Old Park Road	1	1
Old Union Street	4	1
Oxford Street	2	0
Perry Street	5	0
Piercy Street	2	1
Portway Road	14	3
Potters Lane	4	0
Pitts Square	1	0
Park Street	2	0
Pinfold Street	2	0
Queen's Square	5	1
Rollason Fold	1	0
Russell Street	17	3
Ridding Lane	1	1
School Street Holyhead Rd.	3	0
Short Street	3	0
St. James' Street	3	1
Sampson Street	1	0
St. Paul's Road	1	1
Stafford Street	5	1
Sparrows Forge Lane	3	1
Terrace Street	1	0
Tramway Terrace	1	1
Trouse Lane	6	2
Union Street	7	0
Vicarage Road	1	0
Wood Street	4	0
Walsall Road	2	0
Walsall Road, King's Hill... ..	10	2
Wood Green	8	0

SANITARY WORK.

Appended is a table shewing the work carried out in the Sanitary Inspector's Department, and from this it will be seen that a large amount of useful work has been accomplished:—

Various Nuisances reported upon for Abatement.	No. of Nuisances reported.	No. of Nuisance abated.
Defective Drains requiring Opening or Cleaning ..	123	116
" Spout Drains	32	24
Nuisances arising from Want of Drains	1	1
" " Keeping of Fowls, &c.	11	11
" " Filthy condition of Premises	58	58
" " Accumulation of Water in Cellar	13	13
" " Foul or Defective Urinal	2	2
" " The Overcrowding of Houses	16	16
Swine kept as to be a Nuisance	10	10
Unwholesome Houses, filthy, or with defective roofs	43	37
Houses Disinfected, Cleansed, and Purified, where Zymotic Disease has occurred	18	18
Accumulation of Wash, Deposits of Offensive Matter, &c.	8	8
Foul and Defective Ashpits or Privies	81	70
Houses where the Ashpit or Privy belonging there- to are so defective as to require reconstruction	31	31
Foul condition of Water Closets	15	15
" " Cisterns	2	2
Defective condition of Manure Pits	5	5
" " Cesspools	2	2
Slaughter Houses require connections made to Public Sewer	0	0
Private Houses require connections made to Public Sewer	108	89
Houses closed as unfit for human habitation	5	5
Additional Privies required	9	9
Miscellaneous	6	6
Bed, Bedding, &c., Disinfected	50	—
Lodging Houses visited by day	23	—
" " " night	1	—
Preliminary Notice served	513	—
Final Notices served	113	—
Whitewash Brushes lent	621	—
Ashpits and Cisterns cleansed	3,461	—
Total Number of Nuisances reported	606	—
Nuisances not abated by December 31st, 1896	—	49
Wells closed	2	2
S. S. Water lain on for the dwelling, 5 in number	5	5

The sanitary work of the past year shews nothing striking; but, as was the case last year, no special outbreak of disease has occurred. Reference to the preceding table will make it plain that a large number of nuisances have been abated during the year by diverting drainage into the existing sewers. It will be readily under-

stood that while the sewerage of the town is complete, in that the streets are sewered, and the connections made up to the boundaries of private properties, there are still numerous properties where at any given time no nuisance exists, making it necessary to employ the available sewers. When, however, nuisances are met with, whenever practicable, such are abated by carrying drainage into the sewers. It will be seen that of 108 nuisances calling for treatment 89 have been so dealt with. These figures show the marked benefit accruing to the town from the sewerage system. The slaughter-houses of the town are in a sanitary state, and have in no instance occasioned any nuisance during the year. In the main the food supplies have been satisfactory, and no legal prosecution by the Health Authorities has been necessitated.

At the end of November, in consequence of an outbreak of measles at New Town, an order was made for the closure of the Board School for a month. Later, some doubt arose as to the existence of real necessity for such a step; but at any rate, before the end of the year the violence of the disease had much diminished.

Although the record of sanitary work for 1897 is not in any way striking, many highly insanitary spots have been dealt with. In last year's report reference was made to an outbreak of enteric fever in Elwell's Square at Wood Green, due to an old and most imperfect system of drainage. This has now been remedied by the taking down of the old privies, and doing away of the cistern in connection with them. Instead there were erected 18 new privies on an improved system, whilst the whole block of building, consisting of 30 houses, was connected to the public sewer. This was a most important step in the sanitation of the town, as typhoid fever had become almost endemic amongst the inhabitants of the square.

Then again, the whole of Cook Street Terrace, consisting of 24 houses, was connected to the public sewer, whilst the general brick work of the houses was repaired, and the channelling fronting the houses was paved, this doing away with a considerable percolation of sewage. Further, the houses known as "Five house row," Cobden Street, have been connected with the deep sewers, and the dumb-well which received their drainage has been closed. Likewise twelve houses

in Walsall Street known as Holland's Buildings have been connected with the public sewer, and their privies have been reconstructed. There can be little doubt that the sanitation of the town has been improved by the activity which has characterised the building operations of the past twelve months. Owing to enterprise upon the part both of private individuals and of builders a considerable number of new houses have been built upon modern and sanitary principles, and at the same time a number of old delapidated buildings have disappeared, much to the benefit of the town generally. It only now remains for me to conclude this report by appending my perennial remarks respecting the Notification of Infectious Diseases Act, and the Isolation Hospital. The annual discussion took place as to the advisability of adopting the Notification Act in Wednesbury, and it was negatived. I cannot help thinking that the adverse vote would have been reversed if it had been clearly realised that the adoption of the Act does not necessarily mean the inclusion of all diseases mentioned in the Act. No one more strenuously than myself will exclude from the list of notifiable disease, such as do not admit of more efficient treatment as a result of notification than without it. Thus I would not recommend notification of measles and whooping cough, since their notification does not make them any the more manageable. But surely such diseases as typhoid fever and small-pox, scarlatina and diphtheria should be notified to the Health Authority as soon as they appear, so that causal defects in sanitation may be removed, and disinfection of infected premises be carried out when the proper times arrived. I would once more earnestly commend this matter to the further careful consideration of members of the Council, so that when the next discussion upon the subject takes place they may perhaps see their way to giving the Act their support, in so far as it will be for the good of the town.

So far as the question of an Isolation Hospital is concerned, I almost fear that after my past experience I waste the paper upon which these sentences are written. At the same time I should be failing in my duty if I omitted all mention of the matter. It is now more than fourteen years since I received the appointment of Medical Officer of Health in this town, and during that time the discussion of an Isolation Hospital scheme has been almost an annual affair. Up to

the present time, however, no practical result has been arrived at. As will be seen from a foregoing table, vaccination has to all intents and purposes become a dead letter, so that we may regard the outbreak of small-pox merely as a matter of time. But apart from this disease we ought to be in a position at any time to deal with cases of scarlatina, where such do not admit of effective isolation in their own homes. Only the other day I was attending a bad case of this disease in New Town, where the mother was trying to perform the double office of sick-nurse and shopwoman in a small confined huckster's shop. Does not this state of things constitute a crying shame in an age when the value of isolation is so fully recognised? It may be replied that my duty in such a case would have been to have closed the shop for five or six weeks. Such a step, however, was not so easy in practice, seeing that the woman was a widow and depended to some extent upon her shop for her support. Clearly our duty is to take steps which will enable us to deal with such cases by isolating them. Is it too much to hope that in the near future the Wednesbury Health Authority will really provide the means of dealing with these urgent cases?

I have pleasure in acknowledging the assistance I have received during the year from your Sanitary Inspector.

I remain, Mr. Mayor and Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

WALTER GARMAN,

M.O.H.

