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Contributors

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WIGAN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

DR. MARSDEN'S ANNUAL REPORT.

The following is the annual report of Dr. J. A. Marsden, medical officer to the Wigan Rural District Council:—"Gentlemen,—The following are the vital statistics for No. 1 division of your Rural Sanitary District. These statistics, speaking generally, must be regarded as of a very satisfactory character, and serve as evidence of the attention which has been given to sanitary matters in this division. Diseases prevalent: Scarlet fever, which appeared at various periods, gave rise to more than the average number of cases, in Shevington 6, Wrightington 7, Parbold 10, Dalton 7. Fortunately, however, not a single death occurred. It will also be observed that eight cases of enteric fever appeared in Shevington, and 11 in Wrightington. The total mortality for this disease was 4. One case of small-pox appeared at Wrightington and was promptly removed to the isolated cottage, and the vigorous measures adopted to prevent the spread of this disastrous ailment were successful. It was not considered necessary to close any schools on account of the prevalence of any fever, but everything possible was done to keep infection in check, and I desire to bear testimony to the splendid action of the Nuisance Inspector, who invariably visited every case as early as possible, and saw that all necessary precautions were carried out. The hospital accommodation for the isolation of small-pox was found necessary for dealing with one case, and your authority has very wisely decided to regard it as a permanent institution. The cottage is, of course, used only for small-pox cases, but I strongly advise your authority to consider the desirability of establishing an isolation hospital, at which any cases of fever might be treated, where suitable isolation at the patient's home could not be adequately secured, for in this way only can many cases of infectious disease be prevented, and valuable lives saved. The Infectious Diseases Notification Act was adopted as soon as the Act came in force, and has been of such service that it seems almost to realise now the country can have been so long without its useful assistance. House Accommodation: This may be described, speaking generally, as good. Many back to back houses have been converted into single ones, but there are very few in the district with which fault can be found. Water Supply: I am very proud indeed to leave all the districts which have been under my charge well supplied with water. This will ultimately be found a boon, which for the moment may not be fully realised, for no expenditure should be considered large which in any way helps to the public health of the district. I am justified in congratulating your authority upon the results of your arduous labours in this district, for the Wigan Union Rural District will bear a very favourable comparison with those of any other union. Scavenging: The Nuisance Inspector gives constant attention to this question, but it is unfair to him, and unfair to the people, that in places like Parbold, Appley Bridge, Shevington Moor, and Crooke, this work is not undertaken by contract at the instigation of the sanitary committees. All newly-built middens are constructed on rational principles, but even then all the conservancy systems are, and must inevitably be, highly objectionable, but no process of reasoning can justify the existence of the old system of construction, which was at once highly dangerous and uncivilised. Drainage: It is very difficult to meet with any house where the drainage for slop water is not good, but Parbold and Appley Bridge cannot be acquitted of river pollution, but it must in fairness be stated that this constitutes but a drop in the ocean of pollution from Wigan and other places. The rates in Parbold are high on account of providing the public water supply, and owing to legal action which had to be taken to prevent large towns from depositing their filthy refuse in this pretty and healthy locality, and a sewage scheme would certainly not be justified upon the grounds that it would improve the public health, which in no wise suffers from the want of such a scheme. No words, however, can too strongly condemn the disgraceful state of the Wigan Sewage Farm, from which arises the most noxious effluvia, dangerous to the health of the inhabitants of Parbold. Canal boats: The Inspector constantly examines these, and there is no doubt the legislation in regard to canal boats has been productive of great beneficial reforms.—Dairies, Cowsheds, Milkshops, &c.: I should like, through the medium of this report, to express my conviction that more attention might with advantage, in the future, be given to the inspection of cowsheds. In the light of recent research, all parties concerned will be benefitted by greater attention being displayed in the accommodation and clean keeping of cows. My sympathies are with both the farmers and the public when I observe that some of the shippens in connection with farms, landlords should be compelled to afford proper accommodation for their tenants' cattle.—Factory Labour: It is the constant experience of medical men that factory operatives, especially the females, are an unhealthy class. The latter are always under medical treatment. The district has been systematically inspected."

