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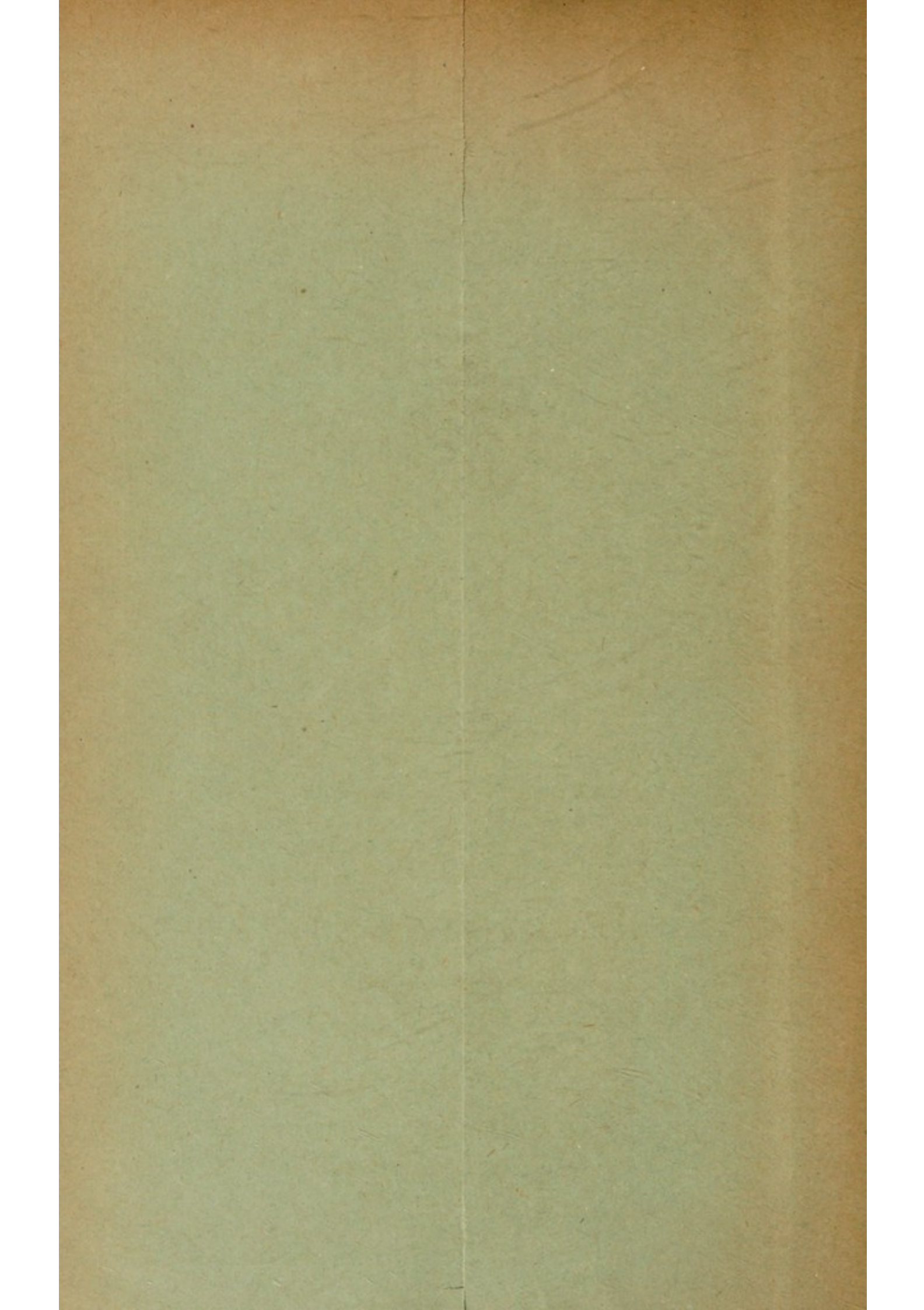
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WORKINGTON
URBAN SANITARY AUTHORITY.



ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,
FOR THE YEAR 1894.

BY
JOHN HIGGET,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

WORKINGTON:
EDWARD RICHARDSON, STEAM PRINTER, JOHN STREET.



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*To the Chairman and Members of the Workington
Urban Sanitary Authority.*

REPORT

OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,

FOR THE YEAR 1894.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

The statistics which I present to you are, as usual, based on an estimated population of 23,000, which represents the return as at last census, and to which in the meantime at least I am committed.

BIRTH-RATE.

During the year 741 births were registered in your district, of which 392 were males and 349 females, being equal to an annual birth-rate of 32·2 per 1000, as compared with 35·5 for preceding year.

DEATH-RATE.

The deaths registered amounted to 344, of which 192 were males and 152 females; this is equal to an annual death-rate of 14·95 per 1000, as compared with 16 for preceding year, and the lowest it has been my good fortune to record.

The death-rate of each of the last twelve years was as follows :—

In 1882	...	24.4	per 1000
„ 1883	...	18.2	„ „
„ 1884	...	16.2	„ „
„ 1885	...	18.7	„ „
„ 1886	...	17.7	„ „
„ 1887	...	18.9	„ „
„ 1888	...	21	„ „
„ 1889	...	18	„ „
„ 1890	...	19.3	„ „
„ 1891	...	16.6	„ „
„ 1892	...	16	„ „
„ 1893	...	16	„ „

The following is a classification of the ages at which the deaths occurred.

	under 1 year	...	90
over 1 and under 5 years	...	52	
„ 5	15	...	19
„ 15	25	...	15
„ 25	60	...	100
„ 60	...	...	68

Total at all ages ... 344

INFANT MORTALITY.

Infant Mortality was at the rate of 122.4 per 1000 registered births, as compared with 131.1 for preceding year. As the average rate is about 150 per 1000 there is room here to congratulate ourselves on the steady improvement which has taken place.

ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE

Was equal to .91 per 1000 as compared with 1.3 for preceding year and included 3 deaths from whooping cough, 2 from enteric fever, 2 from erysipelas, 3 from puerperal fever, 7 from scarlet fever, 2 from diarrhoea, and 2 from diphtheria.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

Under this Act there has been reported to me :—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	200
Typhoid Fever	...	...	25
Diphtheria	...	...	31
Erysipelas ...	...	...	33
Croup (Membraneous)	...	...	3
Puerperal Fever	...	...	3
Total	...	...	295

SCARLET FEVER.

It will be seen from the above that scarlet fever has continued in an epidemic form throughout the whole year; but as the impression seems to be prevalent that it has lately been more than usually severe, I place before you a list of the Notifications as they have been sent to me since the beginning of the epidemic in October, 1892.

October 23rd to Nov. 19th, 1892	...	2 cases
Nov. 20th to Dec. 17th,	...	1 case
Dec. 18th to January 21st, 1893	...	1 „
Jan. 22nd to Feb. 18th,	...	1 „
Feb. 19th to March 18th	...	nil
March 19th to April 15th	...	4 cases
April 16th to May, 20th	...	23 „
May 21st to June 10th	...	19 „
June 11th to July 8th,	...	45 „
July 9th to August 12th	...	70 „
Aug. 13th to Sept. 9th,	...	27 „
Sept. 10th to October 14th	...	44 „
Oct. 15th to Nov. 11th	...	27 „
Nov. 12th to Dec. 9th	...	20 „
Dec. 10th to January 13th, 1894	...	28 „
Jan. 14th to Feb. 10th	...	18 „
Feb. 11th to March 10th	...	10 „
March 11th to April 14th	...	31 „
April 15th to May 19th	...	17 „
May 20th to June 16th	...	24 „

June 17th to August 18th	„	... 26 cases
Aug. 19th to Sept. 14th	„	... 4 „
Sept. 15th to October 20th	„	... 16 „
Oct. 21st to Nov. 19th	„	... 28 „
Nov. 20th to Dec. 31st	„	... 11 „

A perusal of these figures goes to show that the epidemic which began in October, 1892, reached its maximum in July and August, 1893, continued to prevail in more or less varying proportions during the next twelve months, and finally seemed to have exhausted itself about the closing days of 1894. In my last annual report, dealing with this subject, I said:—
 “This is a disease the contagion of which, like that of Small-pox, is exceedingly powerful, and it is well nigh impossible to carry out, with any hope of success, precautionary measures in the crowded houses of the poorer classes. It only requires to gain a footing to enable it to spread like wild-fire through a district, and even in houses where no difficulty should be experienced, the necessary isolation and disinfection are too often grossly neglected, either because they are irksome, or if the case is slight, because they are considered to be needless.”
 I also stated in my last report that the type fortunately was mild, that the mortality was happily low, and that there was no evidence in any way connecting the milk supply with the epidemic. It was this very mildness of type no doubt which led to a neglect of precautionary measures, and favoured the spread of the epidemic. Children were allowed to run about the streets when actually in the “peeling” stage, and at the very time when the disease was most highly infectious, and to stop the epidemic was well nigh as impossible as Mrs. Partington’s well-meant but useless efforts to sweep her house clear of the rolling waters of the Atlantic.

It is perfectly true, and may be remarked upon, that we have at Ellerbeck a hospital for Infectious Diseases but the compulsory powers for removal apply only to such as are “without proper lodging or accommodation or lodged in a room occupied by more than one family, or is on board any ship or vessel.” When it is remembered that Scarlet Fever is a disease which is more prevalent in early years, it will be seen how this permissive clause reduces the value of your

institution. How and when this is to be remedied is one of the greatest problems of State Medicine.

At no time during the epidemic did I deem it necessary to advise the closure of the schools, and this for several reasons. In a densely populated urban district such as ours the children freely associate together in the streets and houses, and we have not as a rule and as prevails in rural districts children coming from another village where the disease may not be prevalent. Care was taken in all cases to debar children from infected houses attending school, though I am afraid the zeal of the attendance officers from an educational point of view led them to neglect somewhat the healing influences of time.

DIPHThERIA.

During the year I have had notified to me 31 cases of Diphtheria, with fortunately the same low rate of mortality as prevailed with Scarlet Fever. Indeed, when we consider what a terribly fatal disease Diphtheria is we may well congratulate ourselves that the mortality has been so low. The new anti-toxin treatment, from which such gratifying results are being obtained at the present time, could not produce anything so completely satisfactory. This is a disease which is always more severe and more prevalent among persons exposed to the foul gases from sewers and drains. Bearing this in mind, and having had complaints addressed to me from than one quarter as to the almost constant discharge of foul gas from many of the manholes in the district, I brought the matter specially forward in my report as far back as August, 1892, in which I said: "Complaints are frequently made by people whose sense of smell is disturbed by the foul effluvia which sewer air engenders, and what do these indicate? One of three things:—(1) that the sewer is insufficiently ventilated, (2) or imperfectly flushed, or (3) that it has been badly constructed in the first instance. I have dealt with the question of flushing, and at the risk of repetition have again to draw your attention to the urgent necessity which exists for the providing of numerous openings communicating with the sewers so as to secure free ventilation. In our sewer system such openings are neither numerous nor complete enough. We endeavour by means of water traps and a proper system of house drain

ventilation to prevent any entrance of drain or sewer gas into houses. But we need to do more this—we require to adopt such means whereby an abundance of fresh air can be introduced into the sewers, so that the mixed air and gases can escape from the sewers at points as remote as possible from inhabited dwellings. If the sewers have not sufficient ventilation openings, or if by any reason these have become choked or stopped up, the air within will find its way through defective joints into the interior of the houses in all these cases where there is no disconnecting trap in the house drain. We want more surface roadway ventilators than we at present have, and if these disturb us by the offensive smells which they give off, this is simply a warning that a deposit of sediment has taken place in the sewer below, and is an indication for more efficient flushing. But over and above these two matters of proper flushing and sufficient ventilation, I am strongly of opinion that many of our sewers are not as perfect as they might be and have been badly constructed in the first instance. Indeed, I should much prefer that our whole sewerage system was made the subject of a proper enquiry, and steps taken to remedy the evils which at present exist. There is work enough here to last a Health Committee for a long time, and there is promise of reward in the Public Health which an improved sanitary condition must command.”

In my report for September, 1894, I repeated almost in substance what I had previously written on the subject, pointing out at the same time that there was “a general prevalence throughout the district not only of Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria, but of a form of sore throat closely allied, which is of a most infectious character, and which probably owes its origin to the foul air from sewers and drains,” together with a renewed reference as to the general scavenging of your district, with the result that at a meeting of the Street Committee held 25th October, 1894, your Surveyor was instructed “consequent upon certain representations having been made as to the escape of sewer gas from many of the sewers in the Borough (and made as far back, be it noted, as August, 1892) to make a special report upon the ventilation of the sewerage system, not only as it now exists, but to advise what means should be adopted for increasing the efficiency thereof.” From

which it will be seen that President Lincoln's favourite dictum "keep pegging away" applies equally to sanitary as to military authorities. However, "better late than never;" your Surveyor has, in accordance with the above instructions, prepared and submitted a "Report on the ventilation of the sewerage system in the Borough of Workington" together with a "special report" on the scavenging department, and I have been favoured with copies of the same. I have read with interest the history of the sewerage system in Workington since its introduction in 1864, and note that the total length of sewers throughout the Borough combination, combining both main and tributary sewers is 15 and a third miles, and that the total number of manholes on all the sections is 286, lampholes 34, and ventilating surface grids 114. Without following your Surveyor through the interesting experiments he has made on the subject of sewer air, about which it is gratifying to know he is at one with Mr. W. Santo Crimp, I am pleased to observe that as regards the ventilation of the sewers he has arrived at the conclusion that the only means of fulfilling this condition is by an extension of the principle that already exists, and that he recommends that the "number of shafts should be increased throughout the Borough and in such positions as may be most needed, as well as any rearrangement of some of the surface grids as may be requisite." This is exactly what I have been contending for, and if care be taken to copy the example set by many of the towns quoted in the schedule and to have the sewers ventilated by shafts not more than 100 yards apart, or by manhole openings assisted by shafts, there will be fewer complaints about foul air from the sewers. I am also glad to note that with respect to the drainage of private property it is his intention to take advantage of the Bye Laws and compel the owners to ventilate their drains.

With regard to the Surveyor's special report on the Scavenging Department and the remedies suggested for improving the same, I agree with the conclusions arrived at from enquiries made, that having the work let by contract is a system which is generally unsatisfactory, and trust that the new departure about to be made will produce satisfactory results. I hope also that your instructions for the carrying

out of the same will prevent it being "impossible to give every place that due attention it ought to have," and that the result will be a general improvement in the surroundings of your district. Before leaving this subject I have a suggestion to make which I submit for your consideration. We have at present no proper Disinfecter attached to the Infectious Hospital, nor do I know that there is a disposition to supply the same. In our Public Library it has occurred to me there may exist a pretty considerable source of infection especially from such a disease as Scarlet Fever, and as we have the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act in force it would, I think, be well to supply the Librarian with the names of the families suffering from infectious disease so as to prevent their using the Library for the time being.

Your Board is to be congratulated on the marked improvement which consequent on the completion of your new sewer exists in your New Yard district; but as the scavenging in the South Ward is let by contract, a system which as has been seen is unsatisfactory, I trust you will be able to remedy this defect.

The cow-sheds and dairies in your district have been inspected from time to time, and have been found to be in a fairly satisfactory condition with this exception, that there is a tendency to overcrowding, and an abhorrence of ventilation.

I append a summary of the year's work by your Inspector, Mr. Sheldon, who has rendered me yeoman service and been most indefatigable in the discharge of his duties, and have the honour to remain,

Yours, &c.,

JOHN HIGHET,

Medical Officer of Health.

Town Hall,

January 9th, 1895.

GENERAL SUMMARY OF YEAR'S WORK.

To JOHN HIGGET, Esq.

Sir,

I beg to submit the following statement as to sanitary matters dealt with in my department for the year ending December 31st, 1894.

GENERAL INSPECTION.

As far as practicable the district has been periodically and systematically supervised and kept in order.

Five hundred and eighty-four nuisances from various causes have been discovered and dealt with as per "Report Book."

INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

Under the Act, two hundred and ninety-five cases have been reported, and in connection with the same, two hundred and twenty visits have been made, premises inspected, and instructions given; disinfectants supplied to the poorer classes, and in twenty cases disinfection personally attended to.

SPECIAL WORK.

Two men were engaged during the summer months for special and extra work; about seventy different places were limewashed, exclusive of water closets and wash houses, slaughter houses, &c. The slaughter houses have been limewashed twice during the year.

REGISTERED COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

These have had attention. Seventy-two visits and inspections made, and are now in fair condition.

BOROUGH SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

These have been inspected on an average four times each week, and with the exception of the destruction of putrid skins on two occasions, I have not seen anything to justify any seizure of flesh meat.

DAIRIES AND COW SHEDS.

At the present time there are forty cowsheds and dairies in

your district, and I have to report them in fairly good condition.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS.

It has been found necessary to summon eleven persons during the year, viz: eight for non-compliance with statutory notices to abate nuisances, one for exposing and selling unsound food, one for keeping tramp lodgers on unlicensed premises, and one for using and unregistered lodging house.

SCHEDULE OF NUISANCES.

To choked water closets	...	...	...	...	34
„ water closets structurally defective	...	...	...	...	207
„ nuisance from over crowded houses	...	...	...	...	22
„ broken pavement in yards...	...	...	...	...	21
„ defective slop-stone pipes	...	...	...	...	6
„ cleansing filty houses	...	...	...	...	10
„ put houses into habitable condition	...	...	...	...	23
„ defective drains	...	...	...	...	20
„ cleansing filth urinals	...	...	...	...	8
„ defective gullies	...	...	...	...	32
„ stopped-up drains	...	...	...	...	60
„ defective surface channels	...	...	...	...	5
„ filthy yards	...	...	...	...	10
„ accumulation of manure, &c.	...	...	...	...	7
„ re-construction of water closets	...	...	...	...	30
„ provision of water closet accommodation	...	...	...	...	12
„ defective spouts	...	...	...	...	18
„ nuisance from poultry keeping	...	...	...	...	11
„ removal of swine	...	...	...	...	3
„ stagnant water in cellars	...	...	...	...	4
„ miscellaneous, not included	...	...	...	...	41
Total					584

One half carcase of beef seized and destroyed on Magistrates' order.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

WM. SHELDON,

Inspector of Nuisances.



