

**[Report 1897] / Medical Officer of Health, Workington Borough.**

**Contributors**

Workington (England). Borough Council.

**Publication/Creation**

1897

**Persistent URL**

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/ad349jtz>

**License and attribution**


This work has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighbouring rights and is being made available under the Creative Commons, Public Domain Mark.

You can copy, modify, distribute and perform the work, even for commercial purposes, without asking permission.



Wellcome Collection  
183 Euston Road  
London NW1 2BE UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722  
E [library@wellcomecollection.org](mailto:library@wellcomecollection.org)  
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

Unable to display this page



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2018 with funding from  
Wellcome Library

<https://archive.org/details/b30293212>

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

---

---

REPORT  
OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH,  
FOR THE YEAR 1897.

---

---

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

BIRTH RATE.

There were 802 births registered in your district during the year, of which 411 were males and 391 females, and which assuming the population to be as before 23,490 (a somewhat low estimate) is equal to an annual birth-rate of 33·9 per 1000, as compared with 33·7 for preceding year.

DEATH-RATE.

During the same period 338 deaths were registered of which 177 were males and 161 females. This is equal to an annual death rate of 14·46 per 1000, as compared with 15·8 for preceding year.

The death rate for each of the past 15 years has been 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	„
„ 1894	..	14.95	„
„ 1895	...	19.5	„
„ 1896	..	15.8	„

As will be seen from the above figures, the present is the lowest annual death rate for at least the last 15 years.

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

100	Deaths occurred under		1 year	
50	„	„	over 1 and under 5 years	
19	„	„	5 „	15 „
22	„	„	15 „	25 „
78	„	„	25 „	60 „
69	„	„	60 „	„

338—Total at all ages.

#### INFANT MORTALITY.

Infant Mortality was at the rate of 124.6 per 1,000 registered births as compared with 174 for preceding year and included 17 death from gastro-enteritis, 17 from convulsions, 28 from bronchitis, 13 from pneumonia, 10 from premature birth, 4 from marasmus, 6 from meningitis, 2 from whooping cough, and 1 from asthma. The rate is a marked improvement to anything we have yet been accustomed to and would seem to indicate that sounder and healthier principles are beginning to prevail on the subject of infant feeding.

#### ZYMOTIC DEATH RATE.

The Zymotic Death Rate was equal to .518 per 1,000 as compared with 1.5 for preceding year and included 2 deaths from whooping cough, 2 from diphtheria, 2 from scarlet fever, 1 from diarrhoea, 1 from enteric fever, and 2 from measles.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES' (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

Under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act I have received:—

Scarlet fever	...	...	...	44
Enteric	...	...	...	11
Diphtheria	...	...	...	5
Membranous croup	...	...	...	2
Erysipelas	...	...	...	26
Total—				<u>88</u>

Last year the figures were:—

Scarlet fever	...	...	...	414
Enteric	...	...	...	16
Erysipelas	...	...	...	23
Diphtheria	...	...	...	2
Puerperal Fever	...	...	...	2
Continued „	...	...	...	1
Total—				<u>458</u>

In 1895 the figures were:—

Scarlet fever	...	...	...	645
Enteric	...	...	...	20
Diphtheria	...	...	...	2
Puerperal fever	...	...	...	2
Erysipelas	...	...	...	43
Membranous Croup	...	...	...	1
Total—				<u>713</u>

The above figures show pretty conclusively the marked decrease that has taken place during the year in the number of notifications of scarlet fever. This disease as you are aware has been present in an epidemic form for nearly the last 4 years, and it is therefore a matter for congratulation that I am now able to report that with the exception of one or two cases in your infectious hospital your district may be said to be practically free from this complaint.



## ELLERBECK HOSPITAL.

The enquiry which was held at the Town Hall on 7th inst. by Col. Luard with respect to an application for £1,700 towards certain alterations and additions to your Infectious Hospital at Ellerbeck virtually brings to an end, in the meantime at least, work which has been seriously engaging the attention of your Hospital Committee for some time past. The question which they have had to solve has been no easy one, and in the decision arrived at and the consequent responsibility involved, I am quite willing to take my share. We had first to consider that though the present building as it stands was quite inadequate for present requirements it yet offered to us certain advantages which lent themselves to a possible re-construction. The site of course was, and is beyond all question most admirable. Upon this point there could be no difference of opinion. It was decided after careful deliberation to build a new administration block, separate and apart from the Hospital, and to re-arrange the wards so as to comply with modern requirements and to add the necessary outbuildings in the shape of wash-houses, drying-room, mortuary and disinfecting chamber.

In accordance with this decision the necessary plans were prepared and submitted to the Local Government Board, the result of which was that a conference was requested in which the chairman of the Hospital Committee, the Town Clerk, the Surveyor, and myself took part. The plans were then very carefully gone into and overhauled and certain alterations were suggested, then and later, which were intended to increase the safety and add to the utility of your Institution and which were gladly accepted by us. The result was to leave us with accommodation for 20 beds, and the amount of money asked for was £1,700. To build a perfectly new and modern hospital with the same accommodation would have cost over £7,000 and so from a purely economic point of view the decision of your committee stands justified. Nor do I think have we sacrificed anything on the score of efficiency and I am quite satisfied that when



the work is done your Infectious Hospital will serve you for many years to come and be a credit to your authority and a most valuable adjunct to the sanitary equipment of your district. I cannot leave this subject without bearing grateful testimony to the very valuable assistance I have had from the chairman of committee, Mr. McAleer and indeed from all the members and my thanks are specially due to your surveyor and his assistant Mr. Williams for the great pain they have taken with the plans, &c.

During the past year the number of patients admitted to your Infectious Hospital was 26 of which 23 were cases of scarlet fever and 3 of typhoid fever. There is I am glad to say an increasing disposition on the part of the public to take advantage of the great benefits afforded by this Institution in the case of infectious disease and when the new hospital is finished and properly equipped its utility will be much increased. The Thresh disinfector which your authority lately acquired has been found of the greatest service and answers all the purposes for which it was got. Under Section 6 of the Infectious Disease (Prevention) Act 1890, all bedding, clothing, and infected articles are removed by your authority, disinfected and returned to the owners and there can be little doubt that this important addition to your sanitary equipment, the acquisition of which I advocated so far back as August 1890, has played no small part in bringing about a decrease in the number of cases of infectious disease.

#### HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES.

An attempt during the year was made to deal with the question of the housing of the working classes, and in a special report which I submitted to you in March last, I scheduled a large block of property in King street for the most part insanitary, the demolition of which in my opinion was not only advisable from a strictly health point of view but would at the same time provide for the much needed widening of one of the main entrances to your town. The Act under which this representation was made is entitled "The Housing of the Working Classes



Act 1890" and the special section under which action was sought to be taken is 4 (a & b) Part I. Section V, provides that the Medical Officer of Health shall make such representation whenever he sees cause to make the same and Section VI, Clause 3, allows of the scheme being carried out upon such terms and conditions to be embodied in the scheme as may be agreed upon between the local authority and the person entitled to the first estate of freehold in any property comprised in the scheme. To still further explain the mode of procedure under this Act it may be stated that when an official representation has been made to the local authority (as has been done in this case) "the local authority shall take such representation into their consideration and if satisfied of the truth thereof and of the sufficiency of their resources shall pass a resolution to the effect that such area is an unhealthy area and that an improvement scheme ought to be made in respect of such area, and after passing such resolution they shall forthwith proceed to make a scheme for the improvement of such area." The two factors then to be taken into consideration are *the truth of the representation made and the sufficiency of resources*. I may be excused for mentioning all this here but the fact appears to me that though during the past year the matter has from time to time engaged the attention of a Special Committee the whole thing has been "*ultra vires*," the local authority so far as I can find never yet having passed such a resolution as is required by law or expressed any opinion as a body "on the truth of the representation made or the sufficiency of their resources." It will be remembered that at the meeting of the whole Council held 31st March last Mr. Walls moved, seconded by Mr. Crawford "that in the opinion of this Council the portion of King street dealt in the Medical Officer of Health's report is insanitary and should be dealt with under the "Housing of the Working Classes Act." This motion was unfortunately not carried but was defeated by an amendment to refer the matter to the Street Committee. So far as I am concerned my immediate duty ends when I have made my official representation but to show the measure of responsibility which yet remains to you I may



be allowed to direct the attention of your authority to Section X of this same Act wherein it is stated. "When an official representation is made to the local authority with a view to their passing a resolution in favour of an improvement scheme and they fail to pass any resolution in relation to such representation or pass a resolution to the effect that they will not proceed with such scheme the local authority shall as soon as possible send a copy of the official representation accompanied by their reasons for not acting upon it to the confirming authority" in this instance the Local Government Board. So that the question still is "To be or not to be" and if not to be "Why?" So far as I am concerned I am prepared to stand by the truth of the representation which I have made though on the matter of sufficiency of resources I can of course offer no opinion. My aim at present is to emphasise the fact that the representation is still before you and cannot be shelved or disposed of without a resolution of your authority along with the reasons for not acting upon it if so decided.

"If Rome must perish we thy will obey,  
but let us perish in the light of day."

#### WATER SUPPLY.

It is now many years past since I first began to direct the attention of your authority to the question of your water supply and over and over again in my reports have I pointed out the possible dangers to health which may spring from the present intermittent system. My monthly report for August 1890 dealt specially with this subject which to my mind from a public health point of view is perhaps the most important which can claim your attention. It may be that to some the constancy with which in season and out of season I have kept pressing this matter before you may have appeared to be only so much tedious reiteration but I have been for long so strongly impressed with the gravity of the situation that at the risk of being considered pious and even regarded as a "*bore*" I have kept harping away at the same old tune. It has been well said that "everything comes to him who knows how to wait" and it is therefore to me a matter

of special congratulation that this matter is now about to be tackled with energy and I trust with purpose. May I venture to express the hope that an early solution of the difficulty is close at hand and that having once so to speak put your hand to the plough there will be no turning back till you have provided your district with a constant water supply and made better provisions than at present exist in the matter of storage. This latter indeed is not the least important of the many points in connection with this question which will come up for consideration.

I cannot close this report without again referring to the able assistance which I continue to receive from your Inspector, Mr. Sheldon. He has during the last few years, principally owing to the scarlet fever epidemic had a very great amount of work thrown upon his shoulders in the matter of disinfection of houses, &c.

This he has carried out with energy and ability and with a systematic regularity worthy of all praise.

I am,

Yours respectfully,

JOHN HIGHT,

Medical Officer of Health.

---

*To John Hight, Esq., M.D., M.O.H.*

DEAR SIR,—

I have the honour to submit a summary of the work done in my department during the year ending 31st December, 1897.

As shewn in the annexed schedule four hundred and thirty-eight nuisances have been discovered and dealt with; as per the Inspector's Report Book during the above mentioned period.

As in previous years the whole of the Borough has been (as far as practicable) both periodically and systematically inspected.



## PUBLIC SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

These are in good order, having been lime-washed twice during the year, and have been inspected four times each week on an average.

The private slaughter house in Elizabeth street, occupied by Mr. Addison Fisher, has also been frequently inspected and is in good order.

## UN SOUND FOOD.

The carcasses of two cattle and one calf has been seized and destroyed as unfit for human consumption, also twenty hares and one large crate of eggs, in each case but one with the consent of the owners, for the destruction of the latter, a magistrates order was obtained, no prosecution following in either case.

## TENTS AND VANS.

Twenty of these have been inspected as occasion has arisen, and beyond (in one case) slight overcrowding I have found no irregularity to exist.

## COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

These have had my attention, and are kept in fairly good order.

It has however been necessary to take legal proceedings in one instance, for a breach of the byelaws; a conviction was obtained and a fine inflicted.

## WORKSHOPS' AND BAKEHOUSES.

The lime-washing and general cleansing of such industries as come under the operation of the "Factory and Workshops' Acts" have also been attended to and except in one or two cases, I have found no cause for complaint.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES' (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

Under the above Act, 88 cases have been reported, as against 458 for the preceding period, in each of the cases (except erysipelas) visits and inspections have been made; bedding &c. carried to Ellerbeck and passed through the disinfectant, and each house fumigated either by sulphur or formaline gas, and during the year I have removed twenty-six patients to your Infectious Diseases' Hospital for treatment.

## DAIRIES AND MILKSHOPS.

These have been from time to time inspected and are satisfactory.

There are 42 cowkeepers in the Borough; and 54 cowsheds, and beyond manure accumulations a nuisance which those in the trade allege they cannot get rid of, I have to report them in fair order.

Nature of Nuisance.	Number
To cleansing dirty houses, &c. ...	10
„ lime-washing premises ...	9
„ over-crowding in houses ...	8
„ abatement of smoke nuisances ...	2
„ houses put into habitual repair ...	9
„ nuisances from poultry keeping ...	5
„ repairs to spouts, &c., ...	12
„ providing sanitary drainage ...	5
„ repairs to defective drains ...	22
„ repairs to defective gullies ...	20
„ cleansing choked drains ...	65
„ repairs to defective water-closets ...	139
„ opening out and cleansing w.c's ...	59
„ defective pavement in yards ...	18
„ removing accumulations of manure ...	8
„ removal of swine ...	5
„ abatement of nuisance in urinals ...	5
„ cleansing offensive ashpits ...	3
„ better ventilation of water-closets ...	20
„ defective slop stone pipes ...	4
„ Miscellaneous not included in the above	10
Total— <u>438</u>	

From a sanitary standpoint, the disposition of back premises; water-closets, drains, and yards are generally in fair order, but the condition of many of the back lanes, and bye-ways, and open spaces in the Borough, leave much to be desired in the way of making up, paving, draining, &c.

I am, Sir,

Your Obedient Servant,

WM. SHELDON.