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B O R O U G H O F W O R T H I N G .

Report of the Medical Officer of Health for
the Year 1940.

- by -

H. J. PHILLIPS, B.Sc., M.D., D.P.H.,
Medical Officer of Health.

Town Hall,
WORTHING.
July 1941.



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Public Health Department,
Town Hall,
WORTHING.

July 1941.

TO:

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR, ALDERMEN and COUNCILLORS of the
BOROUGH OF WORTHING.

Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the same reasons as last year only a brief report is being made to you on the essential Health Services of the Town.

The evacuation problem caused us very little trouble during the year.

At the beginning of 1940 we still had some thousands of evacuees with us, but by this time many necessary adjustments had been made and the extra population was being absorbed quite nicely into our expanded services.

Just when the fruits of our labours were beginning to show themselves, the re-evacuation took place and all our schemes had to be dissolved.

At the end of 1940 only a few evacuated mothers and young children remained in the Borough.

I am glad to be able to say that the general health of the Borough during the year has been good.

During the last quarter the incidence of measles and whooping cough began to rise among the children, this matter I have dealt with already in my School Medical Report, but apart from this the notifications of infectious disease were small.

The actual cases are set out below:

Scarlet fever	42
Diphtheria	3
Erysipelas	11
Cerebro-spinal-fever	7
Encephalitis lethargica ..	1
Typhoid	1
Para typhoid	3

We were particularly fortunate in our incidence of cerebro-spinal-fever which has been fairly wide spread throughout the country.

The case of typhoid fever was an isolated one but was very severe.

One of the para-typhoids was also isolated, but the other two occurred in the same district.

Very extensive investigations were carried out on all the cases but the source could not be traced.

The great importance of the occurrence of disorders possibly due to unsound food has been stressed by the Ministry of Health. Such matters are, of course, of particular importance in war time.

Under Section 17 of the Food and Drugs Act 1938, Medical Practitioners are required to notify to the Medical Officer of Health of any case of actual or suspected food poisoning who comes under their care.

In addition to these regulations, I notified all practitioners of the urgency of the matter.

Several suspected cases were notified to me and were duly investigated.

It was not possible to incriminate any particular article of food in any of these suspected cases.

In only one case was any of the suspected food available for examination but no harmful organisms were isolated from it.

In other cases where some particular article of food was considered to be a likely cause, no satisfactory conclusion could be reached as some weak link in the chain of evidence presented itself.

In one group of cases investigated, the final evidence was in favour of Influenza of the Intestinal Type rather than of food poisoning.

Such investigations take up a considerable amount of time which under present conditions is very hard to spare, but even though they prove negative they always serve a useful purpose, for after each set of cases is followed up, some useful fact comes to light.

The diphtheria immunisation work was continued throughout the year and has been described to you in some detail in my Annual School Medical Report.

There were remarkably few complaints of any alleged nuisances during the year.

As all kinds of complaints arrive in the department on trivial provocation, I think your Public Health Committee may congratulate itself on the high state of efficiency at which the Health Services have been maintained.

I do not suggest, however, that the state of our services give any cause for complacency and the Council can rest assured that there will be no relaxation of efforts in this department.

The Infantile Mortality Rate was not satisfactory and reached a figure of 49 per 1000 live births against figures of 22 and 29 for 1939 and 1938 respectively.

The causes of deaths were as follows:-

<u>Cause.</u>	<u>No. of deaths.</u>
Prematurity	11
Pneumonia	8
Meningitis	3
Pemphigus	2
Congenital defects	4
Other defects	4
	—
Total	32
	—

It will be noticed that over 50% of these deaths were due to prematurity and pneumonia.

The premature child has a very severe handicap from the start and in many of the cases very little can be done for it, indeed very few of these cases live long enough to come under our observation at all. Of the eleven children noted in the

table above, seven lived less than twelve hours, one lived one day, one 2 days one 5 days and one 3 weeks. The very severe winter would help to account for the large number of pneumonias, nevertheless an infantile death rate of this size is too big for a Borough like Worthing, and a very careful watch must be kept on the state of nutrition of the mothers, particularly with such a large number of premature children. Many cases are brought to our notice where economic conditions leave much to be desired.

During the course of the year the Health Visitors paid a total of 9,437 visits to children under 5 years of age of which 4,998 were to children under one year.

Milk supplied to expectant and nursing mothers and young children during 1940 exclusive of the National Milk Scheme was as follows:-

Liquid milk - 597½ gallons.

Dried milk - 12,530 lbs.

Part of this milk was given free and part sold at half cost price to necessitous cases at a cost to the Council of £553. 2. 8d.

The maternal mortality figures give some cause for satisfaction. Out of a total of 652 registered live births, there were only two maternal deaths, and one of these was from non-puerperal causes.

If such results as these are maintained there would be a very full justification for the heavy expenditure which is involved in the Maternity Service.

During the year 117 women were sent to the Worthing Maternity Hospital and 35 to Southlands Hospital, while 217 women attended at our ante-natal Clinics. The nurses paid 428 visits to expectant mothers in their homes.

Air Raid Precautions work continued to make heavy demands on the time of the Public Health staff, particularly from June till the end of the year.

The Chief Sanitary Inspector gives the following brief resume of the work done by the Sanitary Inspectors.

3,840 routine inspections of premises, including 933 visits to food premises have been carried out. 208 drainage tests have been applied, 59 systems have been reconstructed and 24 premises with cesspools have been connected to main drainage.

58 inspections were made of Air Raid Shelters.

714 public health nuisances were recorded, and 571 were abated by the end of the year.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT.

77 samples of various foods were analysed under Section 3, and 13 proved to be adulterated or not genuine. 5 prosecutions in respect of adulterated milk resulted in fines totalling £22, and proceedings against another farmer were dismissed. One shopkeeper was fined £5 for selling cooking fat as lard.

One butcher was presecuted and fined £1 for manufacturing sausages in unregistered premises.

42 samples of milk were also analysed for bacterial content.

MEAT INSPECTION.

This work has increased enormously under the National Slaughtering Scheme. During the year 20,529 animals were slaughtered and every carcass was examined, as compared with approximately 9,000 slaughtered per year before the war. The amount of meat found to be diseased and unfit for food totalled approximately 89,500 lbs. which included 201 entire carcasses.

845 attendances were made for the purpose of examining carcasses and a vast amount of week-end and night work was carried out by the District Inspectors. On 83 occasions an Inspector was in attendance between 11.15 p.m. and 4.45 a.m.

A very large quantity of foodstuffs found to be unfit in other premises was also disposed of.

The amount of public health work carried out during the year by my Staff has been remarkably good considering the amount of time devoted to Civil Defence by myself; to Meteorology (sunshine statement appended) and other war-time duties which are being carried on by a reduced Inspectorial Staff.

Worthing - number of hours of sunshine recorded - 1966.9.

20 years (1921 - 1940) Average - Statement.

	<u>Hours.</u>
WORTHING	1827
Ventnor	1823
Sandown	1822
Eastbourne	1819
Torquay	1750
Hastings	1723
Bournemouth	1710
Clacton-on-Sea	1690
Plymouth	1660

I am,

Yours obediently,

H.J. PHILLIPS, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.