

**[Report 1943] / Medical Officer of Health, Worthing Borough.**

**Contributors**

Worthing (England). Borough Council.

**Publication/Creation**

1943

**Persistent URL**

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HEALTH  
26 AUG 1944  
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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  
1943

- by -

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

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Public Health Department,  
Town Hall,  
WORTHING.

AUGUST, 1944.

Public Health Department,

Town Hall,

WORTHING.

18th. August, 1944.

TO:-

HIS WORSHIP the MAYOR, ALDERMEN and COUNCILLORS of the  
BOROUGH of WORTHING.  
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Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in presenting my report on the health of the  
Borough for the year 1943.

It should be a source of satisfaction to your Health Committee  
to know that we have come to the end of the fourth year of war and find  
the health of the citizen in a really satisfactory state, comparing  
quite well with the conditions that obtained before the outbreak of  
hostilities:

The department has undergone many vicissitudes during these  
four years and has undertaken and accomplished a tremendous volume of  
work, a large proportion of which has been due directly to war conditions.

In my recent report to your Education Committee I outlined  
briefly the effect the war had had on the administration and working of  
the School Medical Department. Much the same series of difficult  
circumstances confronted this Department, and no useful purpose would  
be served in recapitulating in this report.

Infectious diseases, infestation, minor ailments and such like,  
affected the evacuated child of pre-school age in much the same way  
as the school child, while the expecting and nursing mothers were not  
immune.

The maternity problem was one of the worst that faced us, but  
it was solved and so far we have emerged from all our troubles in a way  
that should make us feel duly grateful.

During the whole course of hostilities, Civil Defence has  
made a greater call on the personnel of the Health Department than any  
other single section of the work. At the conclusion of hostilities  
I hope to produce a concise account of this work in one of my annual  
reports, which I think the members of the Council will find instructive  
and interesting.

Before going further, I would point out that this year's

report is abbreviated as previous war-time reports have been for reasons with which you will be familiar now.

Vital Statistics.

Live Births

|              | <u>Males</u> | <u>Females</u> | <u>Totals</u> |
|--------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Legitimate   | 402          | 349            | 751           |
| Illegitimate | 352          | 309            | 661           |
|              | 50           | 40             | 90            |

Still Births

| Legitimate   | 15 | 9 | 24 |
|--------------|----|---|----|
| Illegitimate | 13 | 7 | 20 |
|              | 2  | 2 | 4  |

Live Birth Rate )  
per 1,000 of ) 14.3  
population )

Crude death rate )  
per 1,000 of ) 20.4  
population )

Infantile Mortality Rate )  
i.e. death rate of infants ) 32.0  
under one year per 1,000 )  
live births )

Maternal Deaths:-

From sepsis..... Nil  
From other causes ..... 3

Maternal Mortality per 1,000 total births..... 3.9

Most of these figures are discussed later in the report, points of interest to note now are:-

1. The increase in the number of boys born compared with the number of girls; the figures for 1938 were as follows:-

Live births - Males 316, females 335

2. The large number of illegitimate births.
3. The crude death rate. No comparability factor is available for the year, therefore it should be noted that of the total number of deaths 59.41% occurred in people over 70 years of age and 30.22% in people over 80 years of age.
4. There were no maternal deaths from puerperal sepsis.

Infectious Diseases.

Appended is a list of the infectious diseases notified during the year:-

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Scarlet Fever .....         | 76  |
| Diphtheria .....            | 7   |
| Erysipelas .....            | 11  |
| Cerebro-Spinal Fever .....  | 7   |
| Puerperal Pyrexia .....     | 14  |
| Pneumonia .....             | 25  |
| Ophthalmia Neonatorum ..... | 2   |
| Measles .....               | 225 |
| Whooping Cough .....        | 112 |

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The incidence of Measles and Whooping Cough remained rather high in spite of the large number of cases that occurred in the previous two years. Some of the cases of Whooping Cough were severe, but there were no deaths from either cause.

Towards the end of the year I had requests from several parents that their children might be immunised against Whooping Cough, and your Health Committee agreed that where requests were received the work might be carried out. Up to the end of the year 10 children had completed the course, one school child and nine of pre-school age.

In the last quarter of the year the incidence of Scarlet Fever began to rise and an increased incidence was maintained until the Spring of 1944.

#### Diphtheria Immunisation.

It will be noted from the foregoing list that seven cases of Diphtheria were notified during the year. These cases broke a period of two years complete freedom from the disease.

Not one of the cases had been immunised, and four out of the seven were adults aged 48, 47, 24 and 21 years respectively. One of the three children died. All the patients, except one, suffered from severe clinical attacks.

Our diphtheria immunisation campaign has been an unqualified success, but it is incidents like the one just mentioned that may do so much to nullify the good work. A group of careless people, or some who refuse immunisation for other reasons, contract the disease, these people become immediately a source of danger to all the other members of the community with whom they come in contact, for even the immunised can be overcome by high concentrations of the germs delivered at close quarters, such as would be the case with people in the incubation period and the early stages of the disease.

Unfortunately, during 1943, there was a marked drop in the total number of children immunised compared with the previous year; the figures are as follows:-

| <u>Classification</u>  | <u>Number immunised</u> |             |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
|                        | <u>1942</u>             | <u>1943</u> |
| Pre-school age         | 754                     | 366         |
| Between 5 and 15 years | 649                     | 145         |

At the end of the year the estimated percentages of these classes immunised were as follows:-

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Pre-school age .....       | 53% |
| Between 5 and 15 years ... | 76% |

More recent estimates have shown a drop in the percentage of the older group who have completed the course, while in the case of the younger, the percentage has been maintained.

A vigorous push is being made again with the scheme, the results remain to be seen.

During the last four years, since a substantial proportion of the susceptible population has been immunised, only 16 cases of Diphtheria have been notified. This forms a striking contrast with the history of the Borough during the last 30 years as shown by the appended figures:-

| <u>Period</u> | <u>Number of cases of</u><br><u>Diphtheria</u> |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1940-43       | 16                                             |
| 1936-39       | 86                                             |
| 1932-35       | 119                                            |
| 1928-31       | 103                                            |
| 1924-27       | 89                                             |
| 1920-23       | 115                                            |
| 1916-19       | 192                                            |
| 1912-15       | 299                                            |

It is hoped sincerely that the immunisation percentage can be maintained, for it would be a great pity to fall back to the old conditions having once attained such a satisfactory position.

#### Swandean Isolation Hospital.

During the year 214 cases were admitted and 196 discharged  
The following table gives the types of cases admitted:-

|                            |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Scarlet Fever .....        | 149       |
| Measles .....              | 15        |
| Diphtheria .....           | 14        |
| Cerebro-Spinal Fever ..... | 4         |
| Whooping Cough.....        | 3         |
| Erysipelas .....           | 2         |
| Typhoid Fever .....        | 1         |
| Others .....               | <u>26</u> |

Total ... .. 214

#### Scabies.

I am pleased to be able to report a marked improvement in the incidence of this disease the dimensions of which, during 1942, caused me considerable concern.

During the year under review 130 cases were found and dealt with compared with 286 during the previous twelve months. Our cleansing station at the Baths was used extensively and appeared to be appreciated.

#### Disinfection and Disinfestation

Our sterilizing plant was heavily taxed during the year; no less than 10,010 articles, exclusive of material from Swandean Hospital, were put through the machine.

A total of 131 rooms were disinfested for verminous conditions and 182 rooms disinfected in connection with infectious diseases.

#### Food Inspection.

Considering this is the end of the fourth year of war we have been remarkably free from any of the troubles which are likely to arise from the ingestion of unsuitable or unsound food.

Not a single suspicious case was notified during the whole of 1943.

Details of the work done in connection with the inspection of food is given later in the report of the Chief Sanitary Inspector.

#### Infant Life Protection.

At the end of the year, 33 Foster Mothers had charge of 53 children.

All foster homes are kept under constant supervision. On the whole, conditions are quite good and the children's health well maintained.

Maternity and Child Welfare

In connection with this very important section of the work I can say without exaggeration that the health of our mothers and young babies is highly satisfactory; indeed it compares quite well with our pre-war standards and in this Borough pre-war standards taken as a whole were good.

Our infantile mortality figure is better than that of last year and compares favourably in 1943 with the figure for the country as a whole, and with West Sussex County as a whole; the actual figures are appended:-

Infantile Mortality Figures for 1943  
(Death Rate under one year per 1,000  
live births).

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| England & Wales .....    | 49 |
| West Sussex County ..... | 39 |
| Worthing Borough .....   | 32 |

The total number of infant deaths was 24.

Of this total 12 died less than one week after birth, among whom were five who did not survive 24 hours.

As far as one can see humanly there will always be an irreducible minimum of infant deaths caused by congenital defects, acute infections and accidents, but this irreducible minimum should be much less than the figure of the infantile mortality as it stands today.

The deaths which concern me most are those due to prematurity, for quite frequently maternal factors figure in these deaths. This being so the question arises immediately whether better ante-natal care could have averted the untimely end.

Of our 24 infant deaths, nine were due to prematurity, but of the nine mothers who bore these children only one attended our ante-natal clinics.

It is very difficult to follow up cases who do not attend, for so often enquiries are regarded as interference and are resented. It does give satisfaction, however, to note that our ante-natal services seem to be serving a very useful purpose to this end.

In the case of maternal deaths the picture is not so rosy.

Three mothers died from causes directly due to childbirth. None,

however, died from puerperal sepsis, a condition which not so many years ago assumed rather ugly proportions in the country as a whole.

One of these three women died in a hospital away from the town, the other two died in the Borough. In none of the three cases had this department any administrative or clinical control, so that much as the deaths are regretted there is nothing we could have done about them.

These three deaths gave a maternal mortality figure of 3.9 which is much higher than that for the County as a whole, which was only 1.5.

Viewed in retrospect the Maternity and Child Welfare record for 1943 gives cause for satisfaction with the exception of one phase, namely, the increased illegitimacy rate. This, however, together with all its implications gives cause for concern, while the widespread wave of licence which is the direct cause is much to be deplored.

The following number of women were admitted to hospital during the year under the Council's Maternity Scheme:-

| <u>Hospital</u>                                | <u>Number admitted</u> |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Worthing Hospital Maternity Home               | 48                     |
| Southlands Hospital, Shoreham-by-Sea           | 41                     |
| Sussex Maternity & Women's Hospital, Brighton. | <u>7</u>               |
|                                                | <u>96</u>              |

In addition 94 women availed themselves of the evacuation facilities provided under the Ministry of Health scheme, and were delivered in the Ministry's hostels in safer areas.

Special brands of dried milk, extra nourishments and vitamin extracts are supplied to young children and to nursing mothers at cost price. In necessitous cases, these nourishments are issued free or at reduced cost.

The total cost to the Corporation during the year was £67. 5. 2.

The very considerable drop in the cost of this service over previous years is due to the Government's Scheme of Milk Supply to Mothers and Children.

I append a summary of the work done by the Health Visitors during the year in connection with Maternity & Child Welfare:-

|                          |      |       |
|--------------------------|------|-------|
| Total Visits to children | .... | 8,219 |
| Total visits to mothers  | .... | 1,265 |

Attendances at Infant Welfare Centres.

|                        |      |        |
|------------------------|------|--------|
| Number of Clinics held | .... | 124    |
| Total attendances      | .... | 12,215 |

Individual Children who attended at:-

|                   |      |       |
|-------------------|------|-------|
| Worthing centre   | .... | 1,150 |
| Durrington centre | .... | 221   |

Ante-natal and post-natal Clinics:-

At 38 sessions 299 women made 672 attendances.

The Health Visitors made also 510 visits in connection with Infant Life Protection and 260 visits in connection with infectious diseases, mostly measles and whooping cough.

Water

The regular examination of the water showed a high degree of purity consistently.

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The Chief Sanitary Inspector has supplied me with the following brief extract from report of work done by the Sanitary Inspectors:-

Public Health Inspections

During the year, 5,030 inspections and visits have been made, including 125 visits to bakehouses and restaurants; 153 to dairies and cowsheds; 467 to slaughterhouses; 97 for infectious diseases; 593 to food premises; 243 to factories and 41 to schools.

In addition 592 inspections were made of Air Raid Shelters; wilful damage and misuse were frequently detected.

494 complaints were received and investigated.

510 public health nuisances or contraventions were recorded and 343 were remedied before the end of the year.

Housing.

The routine inspection of dwellinghouses has been relaxed for various reasons for the duration of the war, and little work was carried out under the Housing Act during the year.

Houses requiring repairs were dealt with under the provisions of the Public Health Act, and a modified form of fitness accepted.

Notices were served in respect of defects at 96 houses and drainage defects at 54 houses.

5 Statutory Notices were served under the Housing Act and 5 under the Public Health Act.

Sewers in connection with 175 houses were found to be choked.

Food & Drugs Act.

74 samples of various food were analysed under Section 3 for nature, substance or quality.

2 samples of milk and three samples of sausage meat were found to be not genuine. One roundsman was prosecuted in respect of the two unsatisfactory milk samples and appropriate action was taken by the Food Committee in respect of the unsatisfactory samples of sausage meat.

Milk.

60 samples were taken, all of which were analysed for bacterial cleanliness and pathogenic organisms:-

|                           | Tuberculin tested | Pasteurised | Ordinary | Unsatisfactory |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------|----------------|
| For bacterial cleanliness | 13                | -           | -        | 4              |
| " " "                     | -                 | 20*         | -        | 1              |
| " " "                     | -                 | -           | 15       | 10             |
| For tubercle bacilli      | 3                 | -           | -        | -              |

\* 20 samples of pasteurised milk complied with the phosphatase test.

One roundsman was prosecuted on two charges connected with bottling milk in the street and was fined on each charge.

Appropriate action was taken in respect of the unclean milks.

Meat and Food Inspection

Meat.

12,563 animals were slaughtered at the local slaughterhouse under the National Slaughtering Scheme. This figure shows a reduction as compared with 1940, 1941 and 1942, but it is higher than pre-war years.

467 attendances were made at the slaughterhouse and a vast

amount of late night work was carried out by the District Sanitary Inspectors to ensure that every carcase was examined.

The amount of meat found to be diseased was over 17 tons which included 59 entire carcasses, 41 of which were beasts. This meat was salvaged for animal feeding or fat rendering.

#### Other Foods.

The amount and varieties found to be unfit for human food showed an enormous increase over pre-war years. Articles condemned included the following:-

|                           |     |     |     |                       |
|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------|
| Meat products             | ... | ... | ... | 599 lbs and 1996 tins |
| Tinned fish               | ... | ... | ... | 299 tins              |
| Fish Cakes                | ... | ... | ... | 287 lbs               |
| Tinned Fruit & Vegetables | ... | ... | ... | 120 lbs               |
| Raw Fruit                 | ... | ... | ... | 71 lbs                |
| Raw Vegetables            | ... | ... | ... | 3 tons 12 cwts.       |

This can be attributed to war-time conditions and circumstances, i.e. damage at sea, storage, delayed transport, bomb damage or rationing and "point" requirements. A considerable amount of food was damaged also as a result of enemy action to food shops and private dwellings.

#### Diseases of Animals Acts.

Two outbreaks of suspected swine fever were reported, but neither was confirmed.

One pig keeper was prosecuted and fined for two offences.

#### Rats and Mice.

The rat menace has increased during the past three years, chiefly on account of the keeping of poultry and rabbits in back gardens.

153 complaints, the highest ever recorded, were received.

Modern methods of destruction using various poisons, chiefly arsenic, trapping and gassing were employed.

In December a man was appointed to act as full-time ratcatcher.

#### Mosquitoes.

The number of tanks treated in glass-houses for this pest was 2,017. One complaint was received during the year.

Civil Defence.

The Chief Sanitary Inspector resigned from all Civil Defence duties at the end of April and relinquished control of the Rescue & Decontamination (Roads, Buildings and Clothing) Services & Equipment Repairs Depot, which services he had personally organised, trained and maintained for over 3½ years.

I am,

Yours obediently,

*A J Phillips*  
Medical Officer of Health.