

Dr. F.W. Barry's report to the Local Government Board on the general sanitary condition of the Howdon urban district / [Fred. W. Barry].

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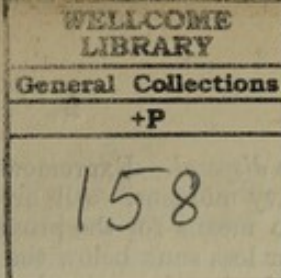
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**Dr. F. W. Barry's Report to the Local Government Board on the
General Sanitary Condition of the Howdon Urban District.**

GEORGE BUCHANAN,
Medical Department,
August 22, 1883.

Area, 16 acres ; rateable value (1882), 2,140*l*.

Population (1871), 1,112 ; (1881), 1,090 ; inhabited houses (1881), 82.

Persons per house, 13·3 ; persons per acre, 68.

1.—*Description*.—The Urban Sanitary District of Howdon is the one which has the smallest area probably of any in the kingdom. It is situated at the south-eastern extremity of the Wallsend parish, in the Registration Sub-district of Wallsend, and is wedged in between the Willington Quay and Tynemouth Urban Sanitary districts. It is of a somewhat triangular form, and the inhabited portion lies in a hollow, bounded on the north-east by an old pit heap, on the west by a ballast hill, and on the south it is separated from the river by an embankment constructed by the Tyne Commissioners. The population of the district has slightly decreased since 1871. This is owing to the removal of some old houses by the Tyne Commissioners. The inhabitants are mostly engaged in the dockyards, and there is also a brewery which employs some of them.

2.—*Dwelling Accommodation*.—The houses, with the exception of two, are all old and are very much crowded together. The yards are, as a rule, very confined and ill-paved, and the whole place bears a very neglected aspect. Several houses in the south of the district are very dilapidated, and seven tenement houses in particular, the property of the Tyne Commissioners, were noticed which were totally unfit for habitation, the lower rooms being about five feet below the level of the ground at the back, and the houses themselves being dilapidated, damp, and without any privy accommodation of their own or means of drainage. No new houses have been built since the formation of the Board, and only two have been reconstructed.

3.—*Water Supply*.—The district is supplied throughout from the Newcastle and Gateshead Waterworks. The supply is stated to be constant, but there is no arrangement by which fresh air can freely enter the mains during occasional intermissions.

4.—*Sewerage and Drainage*.—The district is said to be sewered by means of pipes which discharge partly direct into the Tyne and partly into a culvert situated between the Howdon and Tynemouth districts. The sewers in the town itself are unfurnished with any means for inspection, ventilation, or flushing. The culvert already noticed, which is of recent construction and which receives a certain amount of sewage from Willington Quay, is ventilated by means of open grids at the surface.

The private drains, which are also said to be of glazed pipes, have, fortunately, no direct communication with the interior of the houses, the slops, &c. being got rid of by means of trapped gullies situated in the backyards.

5.—*Excrement and Refuse disposal.*—Excrement and refuse is disposed of by means of common uncovered privy middens. All are built on the same faulty principles, that is to say, there is no means for the proper mingling of ashes with the excreta, and as they are all more or less sunk below the level of the surrounding ground, and are unroofed, they receive both rain and subsoil water, and the offensive effluvia consequent upon rapid decomposition is thereby insured. The middens are of such a size as to favour the accumulation of large heaps of refuse, and at times are in close proximity to houses, under bedroom windows, &c.

The byelaws prescribe a minimum instead of a maximum capacity, directing that the middens should be of sufficient size to contain the ashes and refuse of 14 days' accumulation; but in one that had been recently erected I found the dimensions to be 6 feet $\times$ 4 feet, 6 inches $\times$ 4 feet, this giving a capacity of 108 cubic feet, equal to 12 cart-loads, manifestly more than a fortnight's accumulation. This midden, which is situated 10 feet from the windows of the house, was so constructed that in addition to the rain falling directly upon it it received all that fell upon the roof of an adjoining wash-house, which had an area of 56 square feet. Taking the average rainfall at 27 inches, this midden would receive over 1,000 gallons of water from this source alone per annum.

The Authority undertake the cleansing of these middens as they become full, the refuse being shovelled out into the middle of the street and then taken away in carts. The total cost of the scavenging in 1881–82 was 98*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*

There are no common lodging-houses or slaughter-houses in this district.

6.—*General Sanitary Administration.*—The Local Government Act was adopted in Howdon in 1864, at which time the district was only 9½ acres in extent, the present increase of size being due to the reclamation of land effected by the Tyne Commissioners.

The following loans have been sanctioned since the establishment of the Board:—

	£	
1865 - - - -	300	For general purposes.
1868 - - - -	300	do.
1881 - - - -	450	For construction of culvert.

The *Medical Officer of Health* receives a salary of 7*l.* 10*s.* per annum. He lives at Humshaugh, in the Hexham Union, 26 miles from his district, and his duties appear to have been chiefly performed by one or other of his assistants acting as his deputy. No portion of his salary is paid out of the parliamentary grant. He has hitherto received no return of births or deaths occurring in the district. He reports monthly as to any cases of infectious disease which may have occurred, but hitherto no annual report has been furnished, and beyond recommendations as to the emptying of ashpits and the application of chloride of lime to masses of filth, little advice appears to have been given. As there is no provision in the district for the isolation of persons suffering from infectious diseases, or for the efficient disinfection of infected articles, it is, of course, impossible for him to take any effective action for limiting the spread of epidemics when such occur.

The *Inspector of Nuisances*, who is also Surveyor and Collector, receives for the combined offices a salary of 20*l.* per annum. His ideas of the sanitary requirements of this district are of the most primitive description, his chief anxiety apparently being to secure the sealing of all drains and sewers, and the provision of privy-middens that shall be "large enough."

Byelaws with regard to (1) the management of business, (2) new streets and buildings, (3) street cleansing and removal of refuse, &c., and (4) common lodging-houses have been in force since 1864. Those relating to streets and buildings are extremely defective, scarcely any points being defined, but everything left to the discretion of the Local Board or their Surveyor.

7.—*Mortality Statistics.*—In the appended table I have given the mortality statistics for the Howdon Urban Sanitary District for the 10 years ending 1882.



**MORTALITY STATISTICS for the URBAN SANITARY DISTRICT of HOWDON,
for the 10 Years, 1873-1882.**

Year.	Estimated Population.	Total Deaths from all causes registered in the District.	Total Deaths corrected for Workhouse.	Corrected Death Rate per 1,000 living.	Deaths from							Death Rate from Diseases in Columns 5-11 per 1,000 living.	Births.	Deaths under 1 Year of Age.	Deaths under 1 Year of Age per 1,000 Births.
					Small Pox.	Measles.	Scarlatina.	Diphtheria.	Whooping Cough.	"Fever."	Diarrhoea, Dysentery, &c.				
Columns.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1873	-	32	32	28.8	—	—	3	1	—	1	3	7.2	59	12	203
1874	-	34	34	30.6	—	—	10	—	—	—	3	11.7	55	6	109
1875	-	36	38	34.1	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	0.9	62	10	161
1876	-	33	34	30.6	—	—	1	—	1	—	5	6.3	54	11	204
1877	-	15	16	14.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2.7	53	4	75
1878	-	22	22	20.0	—	—	—	—	3	1	—	3.6	51	7	137
1879	-	22	22	20.0	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	1.8	45	8	178
1880	-	33	35	31.8	—	1	8	—	—	—	1	9.1	44	9	204
1881	-	25	26	23.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	0.9	49	7	143
1882	-	19	20	18.2	—	—	1	—	3	—	1	4.5	46	4	87
Mean for 10 years, 1873-1882	1106	27	28	25.2	—	0.90	22.60	0.90	7.23	1.81	15.37	4.8	52	7.8	150
Mean for 10 years, 1873-1882	Wallsend Registration Sub-district -			20.2	—	2.88	17.02	0.88	3.68	4.00	8.08	3.6	—	—	135
	Tynemouth Registration District -			22.0	0.05	2.48	13.25	0.72	4.77	4.42	10.16	3.6	—	—	155
	England and Wales -			20.8	0.79	3.76	6.94	1.27	5.03	4.22	8.45	3.0	—	—	145

Rates per 10,000 of the population per annum.

From this it will be seen that the general death-rate for this period has been as high as 25.2 per 1,000 living, or 5 per 1,000 above the average rate prevailing in the sub-district of Wallsend in which it is situated. It will be further seen that this unnecessarily high mortality has been made up to a noteworthy degree of such diseases as scarlet fever and diarrhoea; in fact, with regard to the former, the average rate is higher for this district than for any other within the Union. The above results are such as might reasonably have been expected when we consider the sanitary circumstances of the district as detailed in this report.

FRED. W. BARRY.

June 1883.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

I.—It is important, with a view to preventing the spread of infectious diseases in their district, that the Authority should have in readiness (1) some means for the isolation of persons found suffering from infectious diseases, and who in their own houses are without proper lodging and accommodation; (2) some apparatus for the efficient disinfection of infected bedding, clothing, and other articles; (3) a mortuary. It would possibly be found advantageous to make these provisions in conjunction with one or more of the adjoining Sanitary Authorities.

II.—The condition of the privies should receive the early attention of the Sanitary Authority, and arrangements should be made so that the nuisance resulting from the present system of excrement disposal may be prevented. If any form of privy be retained it should be so constructed and managed that nothing can escape from the

privy pit into the neighbouring soil: that thorough mingling of ashes with excreta, dryness of contents and their frequent removal should be ensured, conditions which will be most easily obtained by placing some movable receptacle beneath the privy seat.

All privies that cause nuisance should be efficiently dealt with as such.

III.—The Sanitary Authority should without delay provide their sewers with adequate ventilation, by openings so placed as not to cause a nuisance, and also with sufficient means for flushing.

IV.—Proceedings should be taken to have all dwellings which are nuisances, and as such, unfit for habitation, closed, either permanently or until they have been made fit to be used.

V.—Wherever yards are, from defective paving or otherwise, in such a state as to be a nuisance, their condition should be at once remedied.

VI.—Means should be adopted to provide for the free entrance of air into the water mains during any periods of intermission which may occur owing to repairs or otherwise.

VII.—New byelaws as to streets and buildings, based on the model series issued by the Local Government Board, should be adopted by the Authority, and should be carried into effect in such a manner as to secure, amongst other things, the dryness, good ventilation, and general wholesomeness of the houses to be thenceforth erected.

VIII.—The Authority should arrange with the Registrar of Births and Deaths for a return to be made every month to the Medical Officer of Health of all deaths and births registered as having occurred in their district during the preceding month, and also for an immediate notice to be given to him of all deaths from infectious diseases.

IX.—The attention of the Sanitary Authority and the Medical Officer of Health should be directed to the Local Government Board's general order of March 9th, 1880, prescribing the duties of Medical Officers of Health.