

ALTRINCHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1898.

During the year just concluded there have been 442 births registered in the district, of these there were males 235, females 207. The birth rate for the year is 29·1 per 1,000, as compared with the average rate for the past three years of 29·6. During the year 248 deaths were registered, including seven which occurred amongst non-residents—of these 77 were infants under one year, and 55 persons over sixty years—of the total 121 were males, and 127 females. On analysis we find the cause of death was—scarlatina 3, whooping cough 1, typhoid fever 6, diarrhœa 25, phthisis 14, respiratory disease 41, puerperal fever 1, heart disease 23, violence 11, and the rest due to various general causes. Out of the total, 25 deaths occurred in the Hospitals—24 in the General Hospital and one in Lloyd's Fever Hospital. There were 18 inquests held, only one death is uncertified. The death rate for the year, which promised at one time to be exceptionally low, as the first two quarters only gave a rate of 12·4 per 1,000, was raised during the third quarter, for which the rate was 23·2, caused by a very heavy mortality from diarrhœa, after all comes out very satisfactorily at 16·3 per 1,000, as against 19·8 last year, and 18·7, the average rate for the last three years.

The zymotic rate is naturally larger than we hope to see owing to the fatal epidemic of diarrhœa—it is 2·3 per 1,000, as compared with an average rate of 2·3. Last year's rate was 2·9, so that there is no lost ground.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—Of these there were notification of 82—scarlatina 45, typhoid 28, diphtheria 1, erysipelas 7, puerperal fever 1. Taking them in their order—

Scarlatina.—Notified 45 from 32 houses, removed to the Fever Hospital 37, died 3. This disease, after being absent from the town at the close of last year, cropped up in a few occasional cases, mostly removed to the Fever Hospital, during the first half of this. It was not until the beginning of November that any serious outbreak occurred. Then the Roman Catholic School became infected by some unattended cases, which were with some difficulty discovered, meanwhile a number of children had contracted this disease, and of children attending this school and at their homes no less than 29 cases occurred, of these 28 were isolated to hospital, the houses disinfected, the schools closed for a time, and the threatened epidemic was at an end. No cases have been notified since December 19th—this, a second case in a house at which a previous patient had died—of fresh houses no case has been known since December 9th. Average stay in hospital 38·5 days, no return cases.

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Medical Officer's Report—continued.

Typhoid Fever.—Notified 28 from 20 houses, removed to Fever Hospital 2, died 6. This happily is quite a new experience for us. Since 1890 we have never had more than two deaths from this cause; this series of cases began in August and continued through September and early October, since which date there have only been a very few scattered cases, the last, a woman who had been nursing her son with this ailment, was notified on November 25th. These cases are singular in that no connection could be made out, except between a few, and one is driven to the conclusion that climatic conditions had most to do with its incidence, they did not affect one part of the district but were spread abroad—it was not milk supply, and the town's water was perfectly good. It is an experience I hope we shall not renew. More cases would have been removed to hospital if it had not been that it was more urgently required for scarlatina cases. Average stay in hospital 34 days.

Diphtheria.—Notified one, removed to hospital one. This is a particularly fortunate record. It is a subject for congratulation that the Council has made arrangements with the Owen's College, in Manchester, to have suspicious cases of this disease examined bacteriologically. In hospital 38 days.

Erysipelas.—Notified 7. No deaths. One case removed to hospital.

Puerperal Fever.—Notified 1. Fatal.


Measles.—No death from this disease has been registered, and there has been singularly little of this ailment throughout the year.

Whooping Cough.—One death only is recorded, and at no time has there been anything like an epidemic.

Diarrhœa and Dysentery.—Of these diseases 25 cases ended fatally as compared with 19 last year, and an average number for the last three years of 22·6. The whole number, with one exception, occurred in the September quarter, and of the whole 25, 20 were infants under one year, two from one to five years of age, and three in very old persons.

This disease has caused a loss of life equal to a rate of 1·6 per 1,000, and the pity of it is that it seems to be on the increase here. I have taken out the figures for the last 14 years, and find that the average for the last seven years is 14·7, whilst for the preceding seven it was only 7·7.

This seems to show a lamentable loss of infantile life since the population has not grown at anything like the same rate. The housing of the people is distinctly better, and enormous improvements have been made during these years to the sanitation of the town. The mortality is under the age for errors of diet during hot weather, and one is driven to the conclusion that the change from natural nursing to more or less unsuitable or careless bottle feeding, which seems the fashion



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III

Medical Officer's Report—continued.

more and more amongst the working classes, must be held largely responsible for this waste of life.

Respiratory Diseases show a falling off compared with last year, 41 against 54, the first and last quarters as usual being responsible for the majority.

Phthisis.—There were 14 deaths from this cause as against 27 last year—the annual average for the past seven years being 23·2, so that the year has claimed less than its usual share of victims. These deaths equal a rate of 0·9, which is pretty satisfactory.

Hospitals.—In the General Hospital 303 cases have been treated, with 24 deaths, 5 being moribund on admission. Of the 24 deaths, 7 were those of strangers from outside districts.

In Lloyd's Fever Hospital 41 cases have been treated, with one death. Most excellent as this hospital has proved in checking outbreaks of infectious disease, I hope that some alterations and enlargement will be made to enable the different diseases to be dealt with more satisfactorily. It is difficult to thoroughly isolate the different classes of cases at present, and for the better management a convalescent day-room is much needed.

The water supply, from Manchester, has been tested from time to time, and has been satisfactory.

SANITARY WORK DURING THE YEAR 1898.

The Sanitary work includes:—

Privies and Ashpits set back from house walls ...	21
" " re-built	12
" " repaired	34
" " roofed.....	7
W.C's substituted in lieu of Privies	5
W.C's fitted with improved apparatus.....	2
Ashpits provided with doors.....	7
Roof and down-spouts repaired.....	15
Yard drains repaired	59
Yards paved and repaired	49
Passage floors paved	20
Slopstone pipes repaired	10
Horse middens provided.....	9
Stables white-washed.....	2
Overcrowding of houses abated	6
Smoke nuisances abated	2
Chimney firing	15
Urinal nuisances.....	3
Midden nuisance	6
Area grids repaired.....	2
Keeping fowls in dwelling-house and back yards removed	3
Disembowelling a cow on unlicensed premises...	1
Throwing bad tripe into ashpit.....	1
Boiling fish offal in connection with pigs	5
Sundry other nuisances abated.....	7



IV

Medical Officer's Report—continued.

The lodging-houses were inspected 36 times, and found clean and satisfactory.

The slaughter-houses were inspected 36 times, and found clean and satisfactory, with some exceptions as to lime-washing.

The bake-houses were inspected on two occasions, and found satisfactory.

The milk shops were inspected on two occasions, and found satisfactory.

During the year 63 inspections were made to 59 canal boats ; 53 found satisfactory, and notices were served to clean and paint the rest. These boats had registered accommodation for 210 persons—males 83, females 24, and 25 children under 12 years of age. There was no sickness on any of the boats.

The year on the whole has been satisfactory from a health point of view, except for the most unusual incidence of typhoid fever ; this has been already dealt with, and it only remains to say that careful inspection of premises has been made, such defects as were found remedied, and disinfection carried out. The last case was notified on November 25th. A very large new population has been added to Broadheath with the establishment of the Linotype and other new works, probably not less than from two to three thousand in all ; a great quantity of cottage property has been built, with, I think, due attention to air space and later sanitary science. Much work has been done in the direction of making and paving back streets and passages to the comfort and well-being of the poor, and generally a much more prompt attention to sanitary improvements has been required from owners of unhealthy property. On the whole the condition of the town is much improved during the last few years, notably in the substitution of many water-closets for the old privies, where they were a source of danger, the more frequent removal of stable manure, draining and paving of passages and yards, discontinuance of fowl and pig keeping in unsuitable places, attention to smoke nuisances, and in various other ways. It is a healthy sign, I think, to find more of the poorer classes coming forward to report defects of drains and other evils, and it enables us to deal with matters which otherwise might not so soon have come to our knowledge. All these details make for increased general health, and I look forward to a still further reduction of our sickness and death rates.

ALFRED GOLLAND,

January, 1899.

Medical Officer of Health.

