

L/AH/PH/11/1/29

COUNTY BOROUGH OF LIMERICK.

PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT,

Athenacum Buildings,
LIMERICK.

Sirs,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1931 on the health of the population and on the sanitary condition of the City. During the twelve months under review, there were seven cases of Enteric fever, sixty-eight of Diphtheria, and eighty of Scarlatina, notified. Measles was prevalent during the year, and has not been made a notifiable disease in the County Borough. It has become a more serious illness than Scarlatina in recent time owing to the complications which are likely to ensue in the respiratory system. Broncho pneumonia accounts for many of the deaths, while chronic bronchitis is apt to remain as a sequela in children who recover, but who have not been properly nursed during the illness. There were 24 deaths from Measles, one from Scarlatina, seven from Diphtheria, and one from Enteric fever.

The birth rate (per 1,000 of the population) continues to compare favourably with other Irish centres. The death rate from all causes and the death rate from the principal Epidemic diseases remain high. Comparative figures for the Twelve Principal Towns in Saorstad Eireann are as follows, (per 1,000 of the population.)

	Births	All Causes	Deaths Principal Epidemic Diseases
City of Dublin ...	25.3	15.9	1.2
Boro' Dun Laoghaire ...	16.7	14.2	0.5
Cork County Borough ...	23.7	16.2	0.7
Limerick „ ...	24.9	16.1	1.7
Waterford „ ...	23.0	15.8	0.7
Galway Urban District ...	25.7	14.4	1.4
Dundalk „ „ ...	20.3	12.8	0.9
Drogheda „ „ ...	25.6	15.9	0.3
Wexford „ „ ...	22.6	17.2	0.3
Sligo „ „ ...	20.3	12.8	0.6
Tralce „ „ ...	16.8	15.8	1.3
Kilkenny „ „ ...	21.4	14.8	1.5

There were 1,131 births, 981 of whom belonged to the City, during the year. The number of infants under the age of one year who died amounted to 118, which represents a rate of 120 per 1,000 Births. This latter figure is called infantile mortality rate, and it is said to be the most sensitive index of social welfare which we possess. It indicates the usage to which the population in general is subjected by recording the fatalities sustained by the weakest members of the community. Comparative figures for the Twelve Principal Towns in Saorstad Eireann are as follows :

	Total Births	Deaths of Infants under one year	Deaths of Infants under one year per 1,000 births
City of Dublin ...	10,425	977	94
Boro' Dun Laoghaire ...	590	49	83
Cork County Borough ...	1,856	135	73
Limerick „ ...	981	118	120
Waterford „ ...	614	56	91
Galway Urban District ...	366	35	96
Dundalk „ „ ...	284	24	84
Drogheda „ „ ...	326	22	67
Wexford „ „ ...	268	21	78
Sligo „ „ ...	232	20	86
Tralee „ „ ...	177	17	96
Kilkenny „ „ ...	215	17	79

Unlike the findings in other Cities, the number of infants who die between the age of 3 and 6 months is greater than that in the period of either, under one month of age or the period 6 to 12 months. This unusually high mortality can be attributed to a deficiency of food and incorrect methods of feeding. A great number of mothers are undernourished and live under insanitary conditions, and are necessarily compelled to institute artificial feeding from the third month onwards or before that period. The greatest number of deaths are recorded as being due to "Convulsions." This is a symptom rather than a disease, and it is to be feared that it is a condition representing the end results of starvation through an insufficient amount of cow's milk and ignorance in handling it.

SUMMARY OF VITAL STATISTICS.

	1931	1930	1929	1928	1927	1926	1925	1924
Population	...	...	39,448	39,448	39,448	39,448	38,518	38,518
Area—Acres	...	...	2,386	2,386	2,386	2,386	2,386	2,386
Density	...	...	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6	16.6
Births	...	...	681	1,096	1,131	1,032	1,036	1,036
Birth Rate	...	...	24.9	27.7	28.6	27.1	26.0	27.5
Deaths	...	...	636	637	645	634	616	742
Death Rate	...	...	16.1	16.1	16.3	16.1	15.5	18.7
Death Rate from principal Epidemic Diseases	...	...	1.7	0.7	0.9	1.4	0.6	3.1
Infantile Deaths under one year of age	...	...	118	135	132	129	108	151
Infantile Mortality Rate	...	...	120	114	117	—	—	—
Tuberculosis Rate	...	...	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.6	1.8	1.8
Excess of Births over Deaths	...	...	345	459	486	434	416	294
Deaths from all forms of Tuberculosis	...	...	63	66	69	65	61	66
Deaths from Cancer	...	...	46	54	43	31	30	31
Deaths from Phthisis	...	...	55	57	62	57	54	—
Deaths from other forms	...	...	8	9	7	8	7	—

TUBERCULOSIS.

The number of deaths from Tuberculosis was 65, as compared with 71 for 1930, 69 for 1929, 65 for 1928, 61 for 1927, 61 for 1926, and 70 for 1925. These figures represent the equivalent of 600 persons in the community who suffer from Tuberculosis. That they do not all suffer from symptoms or distress due to disease is true, but, nevertheless, they are a potential source of infection to others. A considerable degree of misapprehension regarding the infectivity of Tuberculosis exists in the public mind, and it should be emphasised that the careless consumptive is the chief source of spread of the disease. The sputum of a tuberculosis person sometimes contains innumerable bacilli, and which, if allowed to dry, enables the bacilli to be discharged into circulating air with consequent risk to persons in the surroundings; discharged into a sputum flask, however, and suitably disposed of, it constitutes little danger.

Notification of Tuberculosis has been made compulsory by an Order made in 1900, in circumstances where the person suffering is, in the opinion of the medical practitioner attending on such person, liable to communicate the disease to other persons, and either,

- (1) Habitually sleeps or works in the same room as any other person or persons not so suffering; or
- (2) Is employed in handling, preparing, or distributing milk, meat, or other article of human food intended for sale to the public.

Notifications received were, 4 in 1930, and 36 during the year under review. A necessary adjunct to such notifications is the provision of facilities for the bacteriological examination of sputum, which were not provided during the year.

The number of new cases who attended the Dispensary during the year was 106. Total attendances in all were 708.

Institutional treatment for Pulmonary Tuberculosis was provided for 29 patients in Sanatoria, and for 69 patients in the City Home and Hospital, and in the case of Surgical Tuberculosis, for 17 patients in Local Hospitals, and for 13 patients in Open-Air Hospitals.

Owing to the absence of working facilities for the bacteriological examination of sputum, claims were made for the treatment of persons suffering from illnesses other than Tuberculosis, and it was with difficulty that inroads on the financial resources of the Scheme were prevented.

The treatment of surgical tuberculosis was, in many cases, prolonged and expensive, due to the late stage of the disease in which the patients were found. As time goes on, patients will come under notice in an earlier stage, with better results to themselves and more economy to the Scheme. The installation of three efficient X-Ray apparatus in the City will be a considerable aid towards this end.

SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE.

There are 16 schools in the City with a population of 7,200 children. The School Medical Service Scheme provides for a particular medical examination of each child every three years, and also for an examination at any time during the year, at the request of the parent.

The Scheme provided ophthalmic treatment and spectacles for 192 children suffering from Squint and defective vision, treatment for 173 children suffering from External eye disease, and operative treatment for 120 children suffering from Tonsils and Adenoids. Towards the close of the year, dental treatment was provided at St. John's Hospital, on one morning a week; 63 children were recommended for treatment, of whom 55 attended. Children suffering from other defects were referred to existing agencies for treatment.

40% of the children suffer from one or more defects (excluding dental defects).

15%	...	...	...	...	Tonsils/Adenoids.
12%	...	...	...	...	Squint and Defective Vision.
70%	...	...	...	...	Decaying Teeth.

In a general review of the children, squint is prevalent, jaw and teeth formation poor, and the physical development of children of both sexes under the age of 8 years and of girls of all ages, is poor. Boys play more out of doors on the streets than do girls, and thereby regain their development. Slum dwellings and lack of children's playgrounds account for the poor physical development and possibly for the unusually amount of squint observed in the children, their eyes being almost continually focussed on near objects. Representation with regard to clearing some of the derelict sites in the City so as to provide playgrounds has failed to yield results.

The poor development of the jaws and teeth is attributable to a deficiency in diet in infancy and during school age. The deficiency lies in the restricted use of milk. Normally, a child should consume a pint of milk per day. The provision of milk by the School Meals Scheme has been a useful and necessary help, and should prove to be a highly economic asset to the welfare of the coming generation. Approximately, 178,000 meals, each of which included half a pint of milk, were supplied during the year.

It was considered necessary to recommend the closure of three of the Schools during the year, owing to the prevalence of measles.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

The infant centre welfare holds sessions on every Wednesday morning at Bedford Row Hospital. Dr. H. G. Roche-Kelly, who is in charge of the centre, has kindly supplied me with the following report:

"Despite very inadequate accommodation, about thirty cases are dealt with each week, on an average. The vast majority of these come under the heads of infantile diarrhoea and other forms of indigestion, usually due to improper feeding."

Advice, and printed cards giving the rules for proper infant feeding in a simple form are supplied by the doctor in charge of the clinic, and free medical treatment given when necessary. The results in these cases have been remarkably good. From the experience gained in this clinic it would appear that a large infant mortality has been due to ignorance of mothers as to the proper methods of feeding their babies, and particularly to their failure in their duty to supply the natural food of young infants—namely—breast milk.

Ultra violet ray treatment for suitable cases is also available at the clinic, and numerous other ailments have been referred to the City Dispensaries or to various hospitals for appropriate treatment.

The Child Welfare Committee has also taken over the organisation formerly known as Mrs. O'Brien's Milk Fund, whereby milk is distributed at a cheap rate to poor families with children under 5 year old.

This service has recently been supplemented by making grants for the supply of milk by kindred societies to necessitous cases entirely free of charge, as it was found that many parents were so destitute as to be unable to buy sufficient milk even at the reduced price, with the result that many infants were in a state of starvation."

There is need for more adequate accommodation for the Infant Welfare Centre, and an extension of its working hours. It has been the experience of Public Health Services, wherever they have been in operation over a period of years that the most fruitful results securing a healthy population are to be obtained in the proper care of young children.

The best thanks of the citizens are due to the Child Welfare Committee and to Dr. H. G. Roche-Kelly for the valuable pioneer work which they have carried out for many years.

Under the administrative control of Midwives' regulations, 37 Midwives notified their intention to practise during the year.

CLEAN MILK.

The importance of a sufficient and wholesome milk supply to a City cannot be overestimated. Milk is our most important food. Its exceptional value is due to the fact that it contains all the essentials of a balanced diet. It is essential for growing children.

The supply to the City is estimated at 0.54 pint per head per day. One pint per head per day is considered to be a normal supply, and in other countries every effort is made to secure this supply. In the U.S.A., the daily consumption of milk per head rose from 0.5 pint in 1900 to 0.93 in 1917, and to 0.94 in 1923. From observation made in malnutrition in children, combined with the evidence that 30% of infant deaths under the age of one year are attributed to convulsions, and that the period of greatest infant mortality lies between the age of 3 and 6 months, it is almost certain that the children of the poor are deprived of the one food without which they cannot survive.

There is an abundant supply of milk available at a low cost in the surrounding country, and a suggestion might, with advantage, be made to the authorities administering Poor Law that in the disbursement of out-of-door relief they might substitute for portion of the payment, vouchers for the supply of a pint of milk per day for each child in a family.

There are no Bye-laws in existence for the control of the public milk supply, one of which should be that suppliers be compelled to use tankards having taps instead of decanting milk from a churn into a vessel on the side of the street. The insanitary condition of the lesser streets requires that the greatest care be taken in the delivery of milk. Any organisms which contaminate it, proliferate and cause an increasing amount of damage, hour by hour. Dirty milk is a potent cause of infantile diarrhoea and digestive disorders in children.

The following report is supplied by Mr. J. J. Dundon, Chief Veterinary Officer :—

Number of Inspections of Milk shops and Dairies	...	...	...	757
Number of Milk shops and Dairies in which Notices were served	...	...	...	115
Number of visits to Dairy Yards	...	...	...	110

Nearly in all cases orders were given for improvements, and were carried out in some, and arrangements made for same in others.

"In connection with the work of my Department as regards the supervising of the milk supplies of the City, I would like to bring to your notice the fact that one outstanding feature presents itself, and that is the bad methods employed in the distribution of such a valuable article of food.

On the 15th April, 1931, and again on the 11th November, 1931, in reports to Council, I called attention to this fact. The methods employed in this City as regards the distribution of milk are in very many instances antiquated, and under such prevailing circumstances it is impossible to ensure milk will be in a proper condition of cleanliness. I advised milk purveyors and retailers to provide taps for tankards instead of the present method of pouring milk into buckets in public streets, and also advised vessels with spouts, so as to obviate the constant removal of cover. In many instances these essentials are not carried out. I advised milk cars constructed for the conveyance of milk only. It is really an eyesore in our City to see some of the vehicles provided for milk vessels—in fact, I am satisfied that nowhere in any other large City does such antiquated methods exist. Again, I asked the public to co-operate on this question of the clean handling of milk, and still one constantly sees open jugs and vessels deposited outside doors awaiting the milkman—surely not a very encouraging action towards demanding that people require their milk delivered in as clean and hygienic condition as possible.

The supply of milk to the poorer people is often not as large as their requirements, and of course, they send messengers to the retail shops for their supplies. The vessel brought is usually an ordinary jug with no cover whatsoever, and into this is placed milk on the clean production of which the farmer has often done his best to produce, but his best results are completely negated by this abominable habit of hawking milk in open jugs and vessels through the public streets and lanes. As the law stands at present, it is impossible to enforce any ideal methods of distribution, and this ideal is all the more impossible to achieve without the co-operation of the public and the demand from them that they are going to insist on being supplied with milk on a clean and hygienic manner. I would suggest that Bye-Laws are provided to augment the present law, so as to improve the conditions under which our milk supplies will be handled."

(Signed) J. J. DUNDON,

Chief Veterinary Officer.

MEAT INSPECTION.

There is now an efficient system of meat inspection in operation, under the control of Mr. J. J. Dundon, Chief Veterinary Officer, whereby all meat exposed for sale in the City has previously undergone Veterinary inspection.

WATER SUPPLY.

The construction of modern mechanical filtration plant was at the close of the year, nearing completion under the guidance of Professor Purcell, Consulting Engineer.

SANITARY ADMINISTRATION.

The following returns have been supplied by the Sanitary Department in the Town Hall.

WORK DONE	YEARS.				
	1931	1929	1928	1927	1926
Orders or Notices to abate Nuisances, make Connecting Drains or perform other Sanitary work served	588	568	486	455	700
Prosecutions for neglect of Orders or Notices	71	25	49	55	38
Convictions	58	25	46	50	31
Fines imposed by order of Justices	£7 10 6	£8 15 6	£19 9 6	£15 7 6	£11 18 6
Samples of Food and Drugs submitted for analysis	299	214	211	—	71
Prosecutions for Sale of Unwholesome or Adulterated Food—Convictions obtained	14	17	24	10	6
Fines imposed in respect of Unwholesome or Adulterated Food	—	15	17	10	6
Unwholesome Food seized and destroyed (lbs.)	£7 19 6	£11 1 0	£17 8 0	£12 19 6	£9 11 6
Houses, yards, and premises Inspected by S.S. Officers	5252	5270	5279	5232	4366
Houses, rooms, or premises lime-washed	150	149	326	42	328
Dwellings disinfected	109	109	56	54	77
Disinfecting Chamber used by persons	—	—	—	—	—
Articles of Clothing disinfected therein	—	—	—	—	—
Clothing and Bedding destroyed to value of	—	—	—	—	—
Orders or Notices complied with	423	395	338	329	247
Reports sent to Medical Officers of Health	294	281	265	285	233
Reports received from Medical Officers of Health	193	255	240	236	165
Drains constructed	35	14	14	31	12
Water Closets constructed	39	23	32	31	25

A book for recording complaints of insanitary conditions was placed in the Town Hall offices, at the beginning of the year, and entries to the number of 176 were recorded during the year. It provides a formal method of reporting insanitary conditions to the Sanitary Authority.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACTS.

Description	1931		1929		1928		1927		1926	
	Specimens Analysed	Adulterated or Defective	Specimens Analysed	Adulterated or Defective	Specimens Analysed	Adulterated or Defective	Specimens Analysed	Adulterated or Defective	Specimens Analysed	Adulterated or Defective
Milk	231	9	164	11	158	15	129	9	55	7
Butter	30	4	12	4	17	10	10	3	14	3
Buttermilk	...	...	1	...	...	...	3	...	...	...
Whiskey	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cheese	3	1	...	...	3	...	3	...	...	...
Skim Milk	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Margarine	12	...	10	...	4	...	10	...	2	1
Castor Oil	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cream	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Wheaten Flour	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mustard Powder	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cod Liver Oil	3	...	3	...	1	...	3	...	...	...
Tea	3	...	3	...	5	...	6	...	...	...
Ice-cream	3	...	3	...	3	...	...	...	...	...
Coffee	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Strawberry Jam	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Black Currant Jam	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Raspberry Jam	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Vinegar	2	...	...	...	1	...	3	...	...	...
Easton's Syrup	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Carbolic Acid	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Drugs	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Flour	...	...	4	...	5	...	4	...	...	...
Black Pudding	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Sausage	...	...	4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Corn Flour	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Condensed Milk	...	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	...	...
Glycerine	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Spirit Saville	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Acetic Acid	...	...	...	...	1	...	1	...	...	...
Lime Juice	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Salad Cream	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Peppermint	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...
Liquid Paraffin	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...
Sugar	...	...	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...
Marmalade	...	...	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Strawberry & Apple Jam	4	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Totals	299	14	214	15	211	25	181	12	71	11

HOUSING.

Housing is poor in the City, and there is much overcrowding, nevertheless, much of the misery in the overcrowded areas could be alleviated by more modern methods of street cleansing and removal of domestic refuse; the re-introduction of Byelaws regarding the keeping of animals; and the services of a separate and independent sanitary department. It is to be feared that some of the inhabitants resort to the expedient of withholding rents in order to induce the landlord to do necessary repairs, instead of appealing to the Sanitary Department. The withholding of rent leads to an impasse which may result in the ejection of the tenant, and the letting of the premises at a higher rent, as soon as repairs are carried out.

Plumbing works are, in a great many instances, of faulty construction and do not appear to have been satisfactorily supervised by the Sanitary Authority during the course of construction.

CLEANSING OF THE CITY.

The cleansing of the City has undergone an improvement and the citizens are beginning to appreciate the value of cleaner streets for reasons other than aesthetic considerations.

The greater portion of the street surfaces has been concreted within recent years, but little has been done to keep the channel courses in repair. Frequently, there are holes in them holding filthy water and domestic refuse. This is very unfortunate, owing to their proximity to overcrowded dwellings. The brush and shovel method of removing domestic refuse is still in use. The citizens ought be encouraged to use refuse bins or containers, whilst the cleansing department needs to be re-organised in order to effect the collection of refuse by this method.

Many of the lanes are concreted, and the necessity for sprinkling chloride of lime has ceased. They should be flushed daily with a hose pipe.

Attention has been directed to the filthy condition of the gully traps underneath the street gratings, but without result. They should be periodically cleansed, and during dry weather should be kept filled with water in order to prevent unsealing.

The refuse dumps at Corkanree and at Clare Street are not under proper control. There is nothing done to prevent trespass and the kindling of dump fires, which greatly aggravate the nuisance of these dumps.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.

There are 23 slaughter houses, several of which are situated in congested areas of the City. Efforts to secure a Public Abattoir made during the year failed. A Court Order for the closure of one of the premises, overhead which two families are in dwelling, was obtained, and a very regrettable situation arose in which the Sanitary Authority subsequently declined to secure enforcement of the Order.

GENERAL.

After a period of two years delay the necessary requirements in office furniture were provided and two wooden partitions were erected, so as to form offices in the Athenaeum Buildings ; and with the appointment of a typist clerk in December, the organisation of the Public Health Department was begun. Prior to this date, the services were, of necessity, carried on in a state of confusion and much valuable time was lost, owing to the absence of a system for keeping records, which is essential in a Public Health Department. With a few notable exceptions, I am unable to thank the staffs in the employment of the Council for any help or co-operation in establishing this department.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) T. W. MORAN,

Acting Medical Superintendent Officer of Health.

To the Chairman and Members
of the Public Health Committee.

Dated 19th July, 1932.