EPIDEMIOLOGICAL NOTES

Infectious Diseases for the Week

With the single exception of enteric fever, the principal notifiable diseases decreased in prevalence in England and Wales during the week. The decrease was notable in respect of pneumonia (primary and influenzal), measles, scarlet fever, and cerebrospinal fever.

In London there was an increase by 1 of cerebrospinal fever, but deaths fell from 15 to 6. But despite the general decrease exactly the same number of administrative areas—fifty—were affected as in the immediately preceding two weeks, but only five recorded more than 20 cases compared with eight in the previous week. Counties chiefly affected were: London 52 (Stepney 8, Wandsworth 6, Camberwell 5); Lancaster 41 (Liverpool 11, Manchester 6); Yorks, West Riding, 36 (Sheffield 13, county boroughs of Barnsley, Halifax, Leeds, and Wakefield 2 each); Glamorgan 25 (Cardiff 5, Swansea 3, and the rural districts of Caerphilly and Rhondda 4 each); Surrey 21 (Croydon 3, Guildford M.B., Malden and Coombe M.B., Woking U.D., Guildford R.D., Hambledon R.D. 2 each). In Scotland thirty-one areas were involved, nineteen counties and twelve burghs, compared with thirty-three in the previous week. There were 5 cases each in the counties of Ayr, Dumfries, and Fife, and 3 cases each in the counties of Dumbarton, Inverness, Moray and Nairn, and Selkirk. The burghs chiefly affected were Glasgow 23 (7), Edinburgh 19 (1), Dundee 7 (1), Aberdeen 5 (1), Kirkcaldy 3 (0). Figures in brackets relate to deaths.

Enteric Fever

Despite the rise in the incidence of the enteric fevers in England and Wales the disease remains infrequent and sporadic. Notifications were received from nine administrative areas, but only in three was there more than one case, while one area, Lancaster, accounted for nearly three-fifths of the total—namely, 18, distributed widely among urban and rural areas (Liverpool 6, Preston 3, Bootle 2, and 1 each in the county boroughs of Bolton, Manchester, Oldham, and Wigan, in the municipal boroughs of Farnworth and Leigh, and in the urban district of Hindley). The 3 London cases occurred in the metropolitan boroughs of Greenwich, Lewisham, and Westminster. In the county of Leicester 2 cases were notified—1 in Leicester city and 1 in Coalville U.D.

In Scotland during the week 14 cases of typhoid fever, 175 of paratyphoid B fever, and 1 case of paratyphoid A fever were notified. Of the typhoid fever cases 9 were in Glasgow, 2 in Edinburgh, 1 each in Fife county, Kirkcaldy (in Fife), and Paisley (in Renfrew). The paratyphoid fever cases belong (with three exceptions in Fife, one of which was returned as a case of paratyphoid A fever) to the outbreak in Glasgow and adjacent districts, in which 114 were notified in the previous week. Three counties are involved so far, but on account of the extensive distribution of the disease and uncertainty as to the agent or mode of infection, spread to neighbouring areas must be regarded as probable. During the present week notifications were: Lanark county 28, and in the following burghs in the county: Glasgow 104, Coatbridge 3, Rutherglen 2, Hamilton 1, Motherwell and Wishaw 1; Renfrew 13, in Paisley burgh 10, and Port Glasgow 2; Dumbarton 3, and in the burgh of Clydebank 7. Probably some of the cases are "secondary"—that is, have been the result of exposure in households from which cases have already been removed. At the time of going to press 2 fresh cases have been reported in Paisley after an interval of several days, both of which occurred in households previously affected. The attacks have been of moderate severity, with vomiting and diarrhoea as the chief clinical features. Three deaths were reported, two of them due to perforation.

Registrar-General's Statistical Review of England and Wales for 1938

The number of live births registered in England and Wales during 1938 was 621,204, giving a birth rate of 15.1 per 1,000 persons living. This rate was 0.2 above that for 1937, 0.3 above that for 1936, and 0.7 above that for 1933, which was the lowest ever recorded. The county with the highest rate was Staffordshire with 17.7, followed by Durham with 17.1. The counties showing the lowest rates were Cardiganshire 11.9, and Cambridgeshire 12.1.

The death rate was 11.6 per 1,000 persons living. This is 0.8 below the rate for 1937. The only year with a lower rate is 1930, when it was 11.4. When allowance is made for the fact that the proportion of old people in the living population is increasing every year, the resulting corrected or standardized death rate was 8.5, an improvement of no less than 0.5 upon the previous record reached in 1935.

NEW LOW RECORDS

The mortality of infants under 1 year was 53 per 1,000 live births, or 4 per 1,000 below the previous lowest rate on record.

Mortality from infectious and parasitic diseases in general dropped to 1.01 per 1,000, a decrease of 0.40 compared with the previous year, and 0.16 below the previous low record of 1936. The whooping-cough death rate per million children under 15 years of age reached a new low record of 126, compared with the previous lowest level of 170. The standardized death rate declined for tuberculosis to 602 per million persons of all ages, an improvement of 55 on the previous record. For pneumonia and nephritis the standardized rates for each sex showed substantial improvement on the previous lowest records. The erysipelas standardized rates fell to about a quarter of the rates in 1933–4.

The cancer rate, also standardized to allow for the increasing age of the population, rose slightly to 1,005 per million from 1,002 in the previous year.

Maternal mortality, excluding deaths from abortion, declined for the fourth year in succession, and reached a new low level of 2.62 per 1,000 live and still-births (the rates for the four years 1934 to 1937 were 3.78, 3.37, 3.16, 2.78). The abortion deaths, including criminal cases, totalled 306, compared with 307 in 1937.

ACCIDENT RATE

Accidental deaths by fall or crushing, including traffic fatalities, showed a very slight improvement, the rate of 304 per million being 2 per million lower than that for 1936 and 1937. The county boroughs showing the most satisfactory ratios of standardized mortality to that in England and Wales as a whole were Oxford, with a ratio of 77 per cent., Canterbury and Croydon with 85, and Hastings with 90 per cent. The four administrative counties with the lowest ratios, also corrected for differences in the estimated age distributions of their populations, were Rutland (71 per cent.), Cambridgeshire (77 per cent.), and Bucks and Norfolk with 78 per cent.

A new table classifies the deaths of males at separate ages registered during the latter half of the year according to the marital condition of the deceased, this information having been obtained for the first time by virtue of the Population (Statistics) Act of 1938. The conclusions as to relative mortality of married and single men to be derived from this new information will be dealt with in the text volume of the Review.

Universities and Colleges

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND

Arnott Demonstrations

Dr. A. J. E. Cave began a series of demonstrations on the anatomical contents of the Museum in the theatre of the College (Lincoln's Inn Fields, W.C.) on April 10, when he discussed applied anatomy of the head and neck. He will speak again on this subject on April 17 and 24, and on May 1, 8, and 15 he will discuss applied anatomy of the abdomen. The demonstrations begin at 5 p.m. and are open to advanced students and medical practitioners.

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No. 12

INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND VITAL STATISTICS

We print below a summary of Infectious Diseases and Vital Statistics in the British Isles during the week ended March 23, 1940.

Figures of Principal Notifiable Diseases for the week and those for the corresponding week last year, for : (a) England and Wales (London included). (b) London (administrative county). (c) Scotland. (d) Eire. (e) Northern Ireland.

Figures of Births and Deaths, and of Deaths recorded under each infectious disease, are for : (a) The 126 great towns in England and Wales (including London). (b) London (administrative county). (c) The 16 principal towns in Scotland. (d) The 13 principal towns in Eire. (e) The 10 principal towns in Northern Ireland.

A dash — denotes no cases ; a blank space denotes disease not notifiable or no return available.

Disease	1940					1939 (Corresponding Week)				
	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
Cerebrospinal fever	475	52	106	2	9	37	4	15	—	2
Deaths		6	11				1	—		
Diphtheria	678	31	245	50	32	914	90	213	40	24
Deaths	20	1	5	—	3	26	1	8	5	—
Dysentery	28	2	63		—	44	3	27		—
Deaths			—	—	—			1	—	—
Encephalitis lethargica, acute	4	—	1		—	5	—	—		—
Deaths		—	1				2	1		
Enteric (typhoid and paratyphoid) fever	29	3	189	2	—	16	—	7	8	1
Deaths	2	1	1	—	—	2	—	1	—	—
Erysipelas			52	3	1			70	5	4
Deaths		—	—				—	—		
Infective enteritis or diarrhoea under 2 years										
Deaths	35	2	11	12	7	62	13	13	6	3
Measles*	4,111	51	58		180		23	126		4
Deaths	7	—	1	1	3	4	—	—	3	—
Ophthalmia neonatorum	83	6	25		2	76	11	33		—
Deaths										
Pneumonia, influenzal†	1,296	68	26	11	9	1,063	118	20	11	16
Deaths (from influenza)	•221	16	15	7	11	174	49	8	1	—
Pneumonia, primary			255	7				167	22	
Deaths‡		69		21	28		17		13	4
Polio-encephalitis, acute	1	—				2	—			
Deaths		—					—			
Poliomyelitis, acute	4	—	2		—	7	2	1		—
Deaths		—	—				—	—		
Puerperal fever	1	1	13	2	—	5	5	14	1	—
Deaths		—					—			
Puerperal pyrexia	169	7	24		—	184	21	21		1
Deaths										
Relapsing fever	—	—			—	—	—			—
Deaths										
Scarlet fever	770	29	129	38	55	1,772	152	319	60	67
Deaths	2	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	—	1
Small-pox	—	—	—		—	—	—	—		—
Deaths	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Typhus fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Deaths			—	—	—			—	—	—
Whooping-cough*	449	14	17		32		296	458		46
Deaths	7	—	2	—	1	23	8	7	—	1
Deaths (0-1 year)	452	55	75	43	45	403	62	63	20	17
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)						62	52			
Deaths (excluding stillbirths)	6,153	929	809	214	194	5,596	1,157	625	253	142
Annual death rate (per 1,000 persons living)			15.1	14.3	17.0	13.7	14.7	12.7	17.0	12.5
Live births	5,526	890	780	271	201	6,190	1,032	871	380	258
Annual rate per 1,000 persons living			15.8	18.1	17.7	15.2	13.1	17.6	25.5	22.7
Stillbirths	252	29	35			257	38	44		
Rate per 1,000 total births (including stillborn)			43			40	36	48		

* Made notifiable generally on November 1, 1939.

† Includes primary form in figures for England and Wales, London (administrative county), and Northern Ireland.

‡ Since January 1, 1940, figures for London (b) have been for deaths from all forms of pneumonia ; the corresponding figures for 1939 relate to deaths from lobar pneumonia only.

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