

(No. 32.)



1883.

---

T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

---

H E A L T H O F F I C E R :

REPORT FOR 1882.

---

Laid upon the Table by Mr. Moore, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
July 24, 1883.



In the foregoing table the deaths for the various months are given in contrast with those of 1881 and with the average for the past twenty years; also the numbers are apportioned to the City and Suburbs. The aggregate is 32 more than in 1881. December heads the list with 68 deaths, while October had the fewest, 44. The City share of deaths was 413, which is 5 more than in 1881, and 39 more than in 1880. Taking the population of the City to be approximately 22,000, we have a death-rate of 18.7 per 1000. This undoubtedly leaves room for improvement, and must not be considered as altogether satisfactory, especially when we remember that the last column of the table, deaths at the Invalid Dépôt at New Town, probably contains many which should be properly credited to the City; though, on the other hand, many of the deaths which occur in the City are those of people brought from the country in time of sickness for the sake of medical treatment. The figures, therefore, cannot be relied upon as an accurate death-rate, though exact as to numbers actually occurring. New Town had the large number of 177 deaths, but this is swelled by the 153 which took place at the Invalid Asylums, leaving 24 for the rest of New Town, or 3 more than in 1881. In the Town of Sandy Bay only 13 deaths occurred, or one more than in 1881; while the Town of Wellington had 15, which is 4 more than in the previous year, and includes those deaths which occurred at the Asylum for Insane, Cascades. Subtracting this total, 618, from the aggregate for the year, we have a balance of 49, which represents deaths occurring in the Hobart District, principally at the Hospital, of those belonging to other districts.

TABLE II.

Class.	Order.	Disease.	January.	February.	March.	April.	May.	June.	July.	August.	September.	October.	November.	December.	Total, 1882.	Total, 1881.	Total, 1880.	Total, 1879.	Total, 1878.	
1.—ZYMOTIC.	Miasmatic.	Scarlatina .....	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	1	1	4	..	3	..	1	
		Diphtheria.....	..	..	1	2	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	4	1	12	9	21
		Quinsy .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
		Croup .....	..	..	2	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	5	8	5	7	5
		Whooping-cough	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	7	12	3
		Typhoid Fever...	..	..	3	..	2	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	..	9	8	17
		Erysipelas.....	..	..	1	..	1	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	3	1	..	7	3
		Metria .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..
		Catarrh, &c. ....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
		Dysentery.....	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	2	..	..	2
		Diarrhoea.....	9	7	3	2	..	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	8	32	29	51	35	37
		Cholera .....	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	1
		Other Zymotic...	2	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	1	..	..	1	..	6	19	8	7	2
		Enthetic .....	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	2	..	..	4	6	2	8	7
Dietic .....	2	2	1	..	..	1	1	1	1	..	..	1	..	9	1	..	2	3		
Parasitic .....	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	1	1	1	..	..	..	4	1	3	3	5		
ZYMOTIC TOTALS.....			13	10	11	5	7	5	3	4	6	2	3	10	79	70	101	98	107	
2.	CONSTITUTIONAL .....		8	8	12	9	7	8	7	7	8	6	5	12	97	82	85	93	80	
3.	LOCAL.....		16	23	11	32	18	23	31	30	24	20	27	23	278	278	294	282	283	
4.	DEVELOPMENTAL.....		22	22	18	16	15	10	24	13	8	15	11	22	196	180	147	148	132	
5.	VIOLENT.....		2	3	1	1	3	1	2	1	..	1	1	1	17	25	20	20	28	
TOTALS.....			61	66	53	63	50	47	67	55	46	44	47	68	667	635	647	641	630	

In this table the totals for each month of 1882 are divided into the five classes according to the diseases causing death, while the first, or Zymotic Class, is divided into Orders, and the Miasmatic Order further subdivided into diseases: these monthly totals are then contrasted with those for the four preceding years. The total number of deaths from Zymotic diseases for the year is 79, which is 9 more than in 1881, but considerably less than in the three preceding years. Scarlet Fever and Typhoid, which had no deaths in 1881, had 4 and 5 respectively last year, while Diphtheria had four deaths, or three more than in 1881. There was no death from Whooping Cough, but three from Erysipelas. Diarrhoea was again the most fatal disease in the order, no less than 32 deaths occurring from this cause, or three more than in 1881. In "Other Zymotic" there were only six deaths—Measles not being prevalent. In the other orders the deaths were more numerous, 9 deaths occurring in the Dietic Order to one in the previous year. There is no striking contrast in the numbers in the other classes, except that fewer deaths from Violence occurred this year. Looking at the table in the light of our increasing knowledge of sanitary science, it is apparent that while the deaths from preventible causes are below the average of the past five years, there is still much room for improvement. Too many deaths occur annually from Typhoid Fever and from Diarrhoea—especially in children,—and the causes are not far to seek, while hundreds of others suffer in a similar way, account only being taken here of the fatal cases; the wonder is rather that, with so many festering cesspits and other nuisances in our midst, and an almost total absence of drainage, the deaths from Zymotic diseases are not largely increased.

TABLE III.

<i>Months.</i>	<i>Under 1.</i>	<i>1 to 5.</i>	<i>5 to 10.</i>	<i>10 to 15.</i>	<i>15 to 20.</i>	<i>Total under 20.</i>	<i>20 to 60.</i>	<i>60 and above.</i>	<i>Total at all Ages.</i>
January .....	25	1	1	1	0	28	14	19	61
February .....	22	6	0	1	2	31	10	25	66
March .....	10	3	1	0	4	18	16	19	53
April .....	14	4	3	0	4	25	12	26	63
May .....	6	1	0	0	1	8	15	27	50
June .....	5	3	0	0	2	10	16	21	47
July .....	7	0	5	0	0	12	10	45	67
August .....	9	2	1	1	1	14	16	25	55
September .....	6	4	0	1	2	13	12	21	46
October .....	5	0	2	1	0	8	12	24	44
November .....	7	2	0	0	1	10	13	24	47
December .....	13	7	1	1	2	24	16	28	68
TOTALS, 1882.....	129	33	14	6	19	201	162	304	667
TOTALS, 1881.....	144	37	7	14	13	215	159	261	635
TOTALS, 1880.....	118	46	15	9	21	209	154	284	647
TOTALS, 1879.....	127	43	16	8	23	217	148	276	641
TOTALS, 1878.....	125	35	22	8	22	212	178	240	630

In this table the monthly deaths at various ages are shown, and the totals for the last five years contrasted. The infant mortality, or deaths under one year, which in 1881 had reached the alarming number of 144, fell this year to 129. Contrasting this number with the births for the year, which were 917, we have a per-centage of 14.06 deaths. In 1881 the per-centage reached 16.2. This, which is but very little less than the per-centage of England and Wales, might, by proper care and healthy conditions of living and feeding, be reduced to at least one half. Altogether, the table has a favourable aspect, for by comparing the totals for the past five years it is seen that in 1882, notwithstanding the increase of population, fewer deaths occurred under 20 years of age, while more deaths happened in those over 60 years, a fact which is to be accounted for by the exceptionally severe winter,—cold weather, as already remarked, invariably increasing the ailments and mortality of the aged.

TABLE IV.

*HOBART Registration District.*

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Births.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>	<i>Births in excess of Deaths.</i>
1872.....	718	545	173
1873.....	725	584	141
1874.....	733	586	197
1875.....	755	753	2
1876.....	761	605	156
1877.....	809	759	50
1878.....	844	639	205
1879.....	858	648	210
1880.....	900	647	253
1881.....	887	638	249
1882.....	917	683	234
	8957	7087	1870

In this table the births and deaths registered in the Hobart Registration District during 1882 are contrasted with similar returns for the previous ten years. More births were registered in 1882 than in any year before, the total reaching 917, or 30 more than in the previous year. By this table it appears that 683 deaths were registered in the district during the year, though in reality only 667 actually occurred; the reason of this marked difference is that, through the promptness and energy of the present Registrar, the returns from the various institutions are now made on the last day of each month, so that in this year are included the deaths in the institutions for two Decembers.

Passing from statistical details, I feel it my duty to note such progress as has been made during the year in matters appertaining to the health of the community, and to draw attention to defects in our sanitary arrangements where such exist. It is satisfactory to be able to record that we have at last a Quarantine Station and Small-pox Hospital, to which patients can be removed should occasion arise. The building at Lindisferne, though small, and at present only sufficient for one sex, forms the nucleus of an establishment which could easily be added to did the necessity require it. In the city large additions have been made to the accommodation at the General Hospital by the building

of a magnificent block intended for the reception of patients suffering from infectious and contagious diseases, which is fast approaching completion. It is impossible not to admire the liberality, wisdom, and forethought displayed in the erection of these magnificent buildings, which are situated in an elevated position, and constructed with due regard to the health and comfort of patients, while ample opportunity is given for the complete isolation of contagious cases.

But while acknowledging the wisdom and forethought shown in providing hospital accommodation on a liberal scale for Zymotic diseases, it were surely greater wisdom to endeavour to eliminate some of the many causes of these diseases which are everywhere around us. The absence of any comprehensive system of drainage throughout the city and suburbs has been frequently alluded to in these Reports in the past, and to day we are but little better off in this respect than we were ten years ago. The works in connection with the creek or main sewer of the city are only slowly progressing; the side channels of the streets have in many places to do duty as underground sewers, not only in carrying off surface water but all house drainage, and occasionally even fœcal matter, by an overflow pipe from some underground tank; hundreds of houses have no drains at all, the slops and house-water being emptied out at the back, to evaporate or decompose and poison the air. Badly constructed and leaky cesspools abound everywhere, whose contents have for years soaked the surrounding ground, whence emanates for yards around an abominable stench,—a fruitful source of diarrhoea in summer time, especially among children. Pigs, too, and other animals, are kept in various parts of the city and suburbs in a filthy condition. As Officer of Health to the City Authorities, I have lately been making a house-to-house visitation of the central part of the city, with a view to abate some of the nuisances above alluded to, and, as a consequence, I am urging upon the City Council the necessity of taking into their own immediate control the removal of sewage, and I hope next year to be able to report that this has been done, as at present there is no one responsible for the work. Should the course I recommend be approved, those noisome cesspits, which have become a nuisance, will have to be filled in and as far as possible the pail system adopted, sufficient power being given under the clauses of the Police Act to compel this. The practice of keeping pigs, too, which must always be a nuisance in thickly populated places, is very common in our town, and I am endeavouring to have the same discontinued. In the more sparsely populated suburban towns the practice is not so objectionable.

The appointment of Public Vaccinators for the North and South of the Island marks a progressive step in compulsory vaccination, for it is only in this way that outlying districts can be systematically visited at reasonable cost, and vaccination placed within the reach of all. In Hobart, during the year, only fifty cases have been successfully vaccinated at the central station, and very few, I believe, privately, leaving large arrears for the future. Another outbreak of Small-pox in Sydney, though happily promptly checked, is surely warning enough not to neglect these simple precautionary measures, but to insist on the provisions of the Act being carried out in their entirety.

During the year further progress has been made in the removal or repair of dilapidated buildings, many visits of inspection having been made by the Mayor and Health Committee, and much good work done. In several places new buildings have been erected instead of the former insanitary and decaying tenements. But the good effected cannot be altogether measured by the amount of work performed by the Corporation, for it must not be forgotten that such inspection has a stimulating effect on owners in general, who are compelled to be more careful in maintaining their properties in proper repair lest they should be condemned. In many of the houses, however, there is much room for improvement, and landlords in Hobart are as unwilling as elsewhere to remedy such evils as dampness, bad drains, and want of ventilation.

Never before have Hobart and its suburbs been favoured with such a pure and abundant water supply as now: the completion of the stone aqueduct, and the laying of the new pipes, have tended to conserve and increase our resources so that during the past summer there has been no scarcity whatever. We are indeed fortunate in being able to tap such a supply as Mount Wellington affords without being dependent on wells or rivers, both liable to contamination; and when the contemplated reservoirs are completed, and more care is taken in checking a very unnecessary waste, we shall, both in the city and suburbs, be far removed from the possibility of a scarcity of pure water. In some parts of New Town the inhabitants are dependent on the New Town Rivulet for their supplies, and my attention was called to a pollution of the stream which was taking place near the Invalid Dépôt, the irrigation water from the highly manured gardens soaking into the rivulet. On my representation this was promptly discontinued. During the year I thoroughly inspected the Bone Mill at New Town; but though the stench is highly objectionable to the surrounding inhabitants, and the whole place in a dilapidated and filthy condition, I could detect no evidence of a violation of the Rivers Pollution Act.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

*The Honorable WILLIAM MOORE, M.L.C.,  
Chief Secretary, Tasmania.*

*EDWARD O. GIBLIN, M.D.  
25th May, 1883.*