

[Report of the Medical Officer of Health for Finchley].

Contributors

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Turner, A. A.

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183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
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B O R O U G H O F F I N C H L E Y

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1939.

To the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the
Borough of Finchley.

November, 1940.

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for 1939 which, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health, is an interim report. No attempt has been made to give any detailed account of the work of the Department or of the vital statistics but records will be preserved so that, after the end of the war, a full report may be made covering the whole period from the beginning of 1939 onwards in which separate statistics for each year will be given in order that annual records may be continuous and complete.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, the work of the Department became disorganised owing to the fact that certain members of the staff were called up and nearly all the rest were fully employed in the hasty mobilisation and organisation of the Air Raid Precautions Casualty Services. Before the end of the year, however, most of the Public Health Services were restored as fully as the multifarious new duties thrust upon the Department would permit. I cannot speak too highly of the work ungrudgingly done by the whole staff during these difficult times.

The vital statistics for the year are, on the whole, very good.

The birth rate has continued the upward movement which has been apparent during the past few years and at 14.46 per 1,000 of the population was the highest since 1925. The rate for England and Wales was 15. .

The death rate, 11.11 per 1,000, was higher than in recent years. An increase in the number of deaths in old people accounts for the whole of the rise over the previous year. In 1939, 429 persons over the age of 65 years died as compared with 364 in 1938. The disease mostly responsible for the increase was heart disease. The death rate for England and Wales was 12.1.

The infantile mortality rate remained low. It was 36.8 per 1,000 live births was compared with 35.6 in 1938. The rate for England and Wales was 50.

Infectious Diseases.

The incidence of infectious disease was low in 1939. The notifications of diphtheria reached a new low level and were only 5 in number. Immunization against this disease was continued throughout the year but the numbers dealt with were not as large as in the previous year. No other disease calls for special comment.

Maternity and Child Welfare.

The attendances at the Infant Welfare Centres were slightly less than in 1938 but this was entirely due to evacuation in the last four months of the year. In the case of the Antenatal Clinic on the other hand the attendances increased. Five hundred and twenty eight women attended; a number equal to 57.6% of the total notified births.

The number of confinements attended by the Municipal Midwives continued to increase and it was found necessary to appoint a third nurse towards the end of the year.

Three mothers died as the result of childbirth in 1939 giving a maternal mortality rate of 3.15 per 1,000 births. This rate is higher than for some years but I am of the opinion that the increase is entirely accidental.

The new Health Centre was opened in May. It has been visited by representatives of many Local Authorities and all of them have expressed the opinion that the Council are to be congratulated on having erected such a well planned and serviceable building. It is regrettable that, within a very few months of its opening, it had to be used for work for which it was never intended.

Sanitary Services.

The advent of war seriously curtailed the sanitary supervision of the Borough owing to the Sanitary Inspectors being engaged on Air Raid Precautions duties. Very little routine work was carried out during the last months of 1939; only matters of an urgent character such as investigation of cases of infectious disease, complaints, inspection of food and drainage being dealt with.

Housing.

During the year, 13 houses in Clearance Area No.2 were vacated and demolished and action was taken to obtain possession and demolition of 11 houses in Clearance Area No.3. Representations were made to the owners of four houses and written undertakings were given that the houses would not be

used for human habitation. One hundred and fourteen houses were inspected and dealt with under the Housing Consolidation Regulations.

Food.

The Food and Drugs Act, 1938 imposed duties upon two authorities, the 'Local Authority' and the 'Food and Drugs Authority'. An application to become the 'Food and Drugs Authority' was refused by the Ministry of Health and the powers were retained by the Middlesex County Council. Finchley being the 'Local Authority' is responsible for those parts of the Act dealing with unsound food, food poisoning, precautions against contamination of food, provisions as to milk, dairies, ice cream, markets, slaughter-houses and cold stores and, in this connection, a survey of food preparing premises in the District was commenced with a view to registration.

Towards the end of the year, a Regional Meat Depot was opened supplying, in addition to Finchley, two adjoining districts and it was found necessary for an Inspector to be employed almost whole time to examine the large consignments of carcasses and offal received in the depot.

Staff.

Mr. E. J. Franklin, the Chief Sanitary Inspector, retired after 37 years service with the Council and Mr. J. Gray was appointed Senior Sanitary Inspector in his place.

A. A. TURNER.

Medical Officer of Health.