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Contributors

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Alnwick Rural District.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1918.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The climatic conditions of the year 1918 presented no very remarkable extremes. The early part of the year was more than usually mild, but a cold month of April brought the prospect of a very early spring. The summer was comparatively dry, but there was a deficiency of sunshine. The early part of the Autumn proved very wet and September showed much the heaviest rainfall of any month of the year. The year closed without any severe frost or snowstorm. The total rainfall was 28.18 inches for 1918 against 29.70 inches for 1917 and 37.9 inches for 1916. The rainfall for 1918 was 3.30 inches below the average of the last ten years.

VITAL STATISTICS.

For the year 1918 I have to present to you vital statistics which compare unfavourably with former years. There is, however, no difficulty in explaining either the high death rate or the low birth rate for the year. Up to the last three months of the year the number of deaths registered was unusually small, but in those three months nearly as many deaths occurred as in the previous nine months, the cause being the severe epidemic of influenza which swept over the district. The number of births for 1918 is the lowest recorded in the district. This decrease which has been very marked for the last three years is of course due to the withdrawal of so large a proportion of the most robust of the male population in war service.

As regards the number of deaths in the district I am unable to make my statistics agree absolutely with those supplied by the Registrar General, who in a memorandum states that such variations must exist apparently owing to differences between the number actually dying within the 52 weeks and those registered in the same period. The Registrar General makes the number 176, which I adopt in the first table of the general death rate. My returns from the local registrar's make the number 174 which I adopt when analysing the deaths for ages and sub-districts, as I have no means of placing the two additional deaths.

The number of deaths of persons not belonging to the district, but who died within it exactly balances the deaths of persons belonging to the district but who died out of it—21 in each case.

The following table gives the number of births and deaths belonging to the district for 1918 with the corresponding rates, and for comparison the figures for the preceding years are given.

	Births	Deaths	Birth rate per 1,000	Death rate per 1,000
1916	200	16.92	140	32.80
1917	236	17.49	145	33.60
1918	107	16.33	176	16.55

In the above table for 1918 the birth rate is calculated on a population of 11,914. The death rate is calculated on a population of 10,633 by the Registrar General's instructions. This arrangement is as Lord Dunsyre remarks "one of those things that no fellow can understand," and its most remarkable effect is to make the death rate higher for a smaller number of deaths, than the birth rate with a larger number of births. The number of births for 1918 was 9 less than in 1917 and 3 less than in 1916; the birth rate for 1918 being 96 less than in 1917 and 30 less than in 1916.

The number of deaths for 1918 was 31 more than in 1917 and 36 more than in 1916. The death rate for 1918 was 2.95 higher than in 1917 and 3.60 higher than in 1916.

Of the births 101 were males and 96 females. Of the deaths 77 were males and 97 females. Contrary to the figures for the two preceding years the balance is in both cases in favour of the male population, which as regards the deaths, is what one would expect owing to the withdrawal from the district of so many men. There is, I believe a popular superstition that a larger proportion of males is born in war time, but this is the first time in three years that this has been realised.

The following table shows the ages at which the deaths occurred and for comparison the two preceding years are given.

	Under 15	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 and over	Total
1916	15	1	3	10	13	42
1917	17	1	9	3	22	52
1918	14	3	6	5	14	42

The above table as I have already stated shows two deaths less than the return of the Registrar General. As I cannot trace those two deaths I am unable to classify them. This table shows a lamentable increase of the total number of deaths over previous years. It will be observed that the increased numbers for 1918 are confined to the deaths between the ages of 15 and 65. The number of deaths under 15 years in 1918 although greater than in 1916 is less than in 1917. The number of deaths under one year is one less than in 1916 and three less than in 1917, which fact although the most satisfactory in the table is discounted by the small number of the births. The great increase of deaths between the ages of 15 and 65 years is accounted for by one cause i.e. influenza with its chief complication, broncho-pneumonia. The number of deaths from this cause was 36 and if this number be added

to the total of 140 for 1916 and 145 for 1917 it will be seen that in other respects, excluding this fatal epidemic, the returns for this district would have been quite as favourable as usual. The small deaths (over 65) were 2 higher in 1918 than in 1917 and 13 less than in 1916.

The infantile death rate for the whole district in 1918 was 74.6 as compared with 82.2 for 1917 and 75.9 in 1916. In Workworth sub-district 113 children were born and 9 died under one year. In Embleton sub-district 75 children were born and 6 died under one year. In Denwick sub-district 9 children were born and none died under one year.

This gives the sub-districts the following infantile death rates:

	Workworth	Embleton	Denwick
	79.6	80.0	nil.

The infantile death rate is thus seen to be very evenly divided between the two big sub-districts, as was also the case in 1917 although for several years previous the figures for Embleton sub-district had been extraordinarily favourable. Denwick sub-district which is too small to give an average has fluctuated from 230.7 in 1917 to nil in 1918.

At present, the total deaths for the sub-districts were as follows: Workworth, 97; Embleton, 66; and Denwick, 11, but I cannot give the death-rates as I have no means of estimating their individual populations under the existing conditions.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year 1918 there were notified in the district 63 cases of infectious disease. Of the cases reported 14 were scarlet fever, 5 diphtheria, 3 erysipelas, 33 measles and 8 tuberculosis. As regards the sub-districts the distribution was as follows:

	Scarlet Fever	Diphtheria	Erysipelas	Measles	Tuberculosis	Total
Workworth	14	3	3	32	5	55
Embleton	0	2	0	1	3	6
Denwick	0	0	0	0	0	0

The number of notifications for 1918 shows a considerable reduction on 1917 with 130 cases, and still more on 1916 when 185 cases were reported.

The Scarlet Fever cases all occurred in the south-east part of the Workworth sub-district in the first half of the year.

Diphtheria occurred as five single cases. This speaks well for the precautions taken in isolation and disinfection, as in no case did the disease spread beyond the first patient. In one case which occurred in a caravan I had to provide a test for the rest of the family, and the season being summer, this succeeded admirably.

Measles occurred almost entirely in the early months of the year and there was no severe epidemic. Only one case is notifiable from any house within three months.

During 1918 we enjoyed complete immunity from enteric and puerperal fevers. Tuberculosis Disease. The number of cases reported was 8 for 1918 as against 7 for 1917, and 10 for 1916.

During the year 1918 there were registered 15 deaths from infectious disease, which is one more than in 1917. Of these deaths one was from scarlet fever one from diphtheria, one from erysipelas and 12 from tuberculosis. Of the latter, four died in various institutions outside the district, although they were natives of the district, and therefore transferable for registration purposes. This gives a death rate from notifiable infectious disease of 1.41 per thousand per annum.

Influenza caused the deaths of 35 persons within the district, excluding the deaths of soldiers. If those 36 deaths be added to the deaths from notifiable diseases we get a total of Zynotic deaths of 51 giving a death rate from Zynotic diseases of 4.8 per thousand per annum. After an interval of about 28 years epidemic Influenza has again manifested itself, practically all over the world. Most of us can remember the epidemics of 1889-90 and 1918-19, which a similar visitation appeared in the same way and caused much suffering and many death. The epidemic of 1918 is divided into two parts the first appearance being in June and July, the second in October and November. The first epidemic although quite evidently the influenza and affecting large numbers of the population was of a comparatively mild type and caused few deaths. The second epidemic in October and November proved to be of the most virulent character. The complications which proved fatal were: (1) most frequently, a particularly septic form of broncho-pneumonia, usually affecting both lungs and (2) less frequently, inflammation and suppuration of the ear causing death by extension to the brain. This latter complication mostly affected those who had previously had ear trouble. The shortage of medical men was very severely felt in this district, the supply in Alnwick and the surrounding district being for some weeks reduced to one civilian practitioner, who could not have carried on, but for the assistance of Capt. Threlfall, R.A.M.C., who was allowed to help by the Military Authorities. Even then, it can be easily understood how ineffectively, two men could, in such an epidemic, provide attendance for a district which found work for nine doctors, in ordinary times before the war.

Finally I have to thank the Chairman and Council for their continued support, and specially for their patience with regard to this report, which is somewhat overdue owing to causes which it is needless to re-tell. To the Clerk and the Inspector I beg to express my obligation for frequent help, at a time when many outside duties were imposed upon them.

SCOTT-PURVES, M.D.Sc.,
Medical Officer of Health.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT FOR 1918.

THE TOWN PLANNING, Etc. ACT, 1909,
HOUSING (INSPECTION OF DISTRICT)
REGULATIONS, 1910.

STRUCTURAL Improvements.—A dangerous gable which was bulging out at North Charlton, Middletonmoor has been rebuilt. At Arden Dean a fence has been fixed in a fold yard to keep cattle off a cottage. Reed's property at Felton has been spotted, and the house in the Stable Row at Radcliffe. A yard at Craster has been paved. Requirements.—Improved light and ventilation for River View, Alnmoor. Ventilation for a low loft, used as a bedroom, in the Butler's cottage at Eglingsham. Air grates under floors at Tillingham Farm Cottages. The lowering of a high wall behind a farm servants cottage at Denwick. The removal of the soil above ground floor level at Foxton Hall Cottages and at Hazon Mill.

DEFECTIVE SPOUTING AND DAMPNESS: Requirements.—Excessive dampness, caused chiefly by defective, or high ground level, are caused as follows: Overhanging, Shandon Hill, the owner's house at Newton-on-the-Moor, the Burn Row at Radcliffe, Shillbottle, Town Foot, Low Leachfield House and cottage, Cottages at Tillingham Farm, cottages at Craster Bank, Redstead, Dal Place, (Pringles) Workworth Orchard Cottage at Leppity, Hazon Mill, Lemington Mill, Broomwood, Shipley Hill, Tarry at Eglingsham, Craster Tower, Mitcheson's Cottage at Shillbottle, the corner's house at Glanton, West End Cottage, Embleton, Browne's property at Alnmoor in particular in Chapel Lane which is flooded from the high ground of the Manor House.

WATER SUPPLY Improvements.—At Little Mill Station a new iron pipe has been laid from the well to the signalman's cottage, in place of one which caused the water to smell strongly of tar. Tape fixed on the walls of W.C.'s at Nos. 5 and 6, Osborne Place, Alnmoor, have been removed, and fixed in a better position. Requirements.—Better water supplies are needed at Gloster Hill, Low Leachfield, North Charlton Mill, Lemington Mill, East Link Hall, Swarford Hall South Lodge, West Link Hall cottage, Shillbottle Town Foot cottages, and Alnmoor Link End.

DRAINAGE Improvements.—At Rose Cottage at Glanton a gully inside the scullery has been put outside. A new gully has been fixed at Shipley Lane, and one in Swarford village. At Felton a surface water drain under a dwelling house has been disconnected from the sewer. New drainage has been provided at Hensley Lane Garden Cottage, Eglingsham Hill Cottage, the school, and at a cottage at the Terrace, Eglingsham, where a drain under the dwelling house has been diverted round the back.

Requirements.—New drainage is greatly needed at the easternmost cottage in Ackington, the piggeries, at West Ditchburn, the blacksmith's cowshed at Longhoughton 31, Craster South Side, Low Leachfield cottage, three cottages at Alnwick, "Pretoria Cottage" at Radcliffe, Brunton cottages, Rose cottages and the cow-house at Lemington, as well as the Bank Top, the Square at Leppity, East Bolton, and the Middle Stead, Bolton Hall, Elyhaugh, Harehope Hall Lodge, Eglingsham Moor Cottage, at Tarry and the "Ogle Arms" Inn, at Eglingsham.

PRIVIES, WATER CLOSETS, etc.: Improvements.—New privy ash pits have been built at Denwick Quarry House Cottages. A new privy closet has been erected at Rose Cottage, Glanton. At Eglingsham a privy has been restored, and a ashpit built for the schoolhouse.

Requirements.—Improved sanitary offices are needed at the North Row at Shillbottle, where flooding occurs. Overhanging, the Old Hall at Newton-by-the-Sea, High Newton Farm Cottages, Shandon Hill, at nine wooden houses at Newton-on-the-Moor, which are without lavatories. Bilton Branch, End, 30, Craster South Side, Low Leachfield, Cottage Shandon east and west lodges, Rose cottages at Lemington, the "Cathill" and Orchard Cottage at Leppity, Battlebridge, Lemington Hill Road, Hartley, North Charlton Farm East Link Hall, Redstead, Mid Stead, Bolton Wood Hall, and the Schoolhouse, West Bolton buildings, "Laborum House" at Denwick, Low Borton, Necessary Lodge at Hazon Park and at the Park Farm cottages the Bath at Harehope, Swarford Farm, South Charlton, Glanton East Farm, Arton Hall Cottage and at Stanley Terrace, Embleton, where one foul privy exists for 21 persons.

MILK SUPPLY.—Forty-seven cow keepers are on the register who keep 413 cows for the public sale of milk which is 52 more than last year.

Improvement.—A vent-hole in a cowshed which opened into the yards of the houses at River Bank Road, Alnmoor, has been blocked up.

DITCHES Improvements.—Seven ditches have been cleared at at Rennington and Glanton.

Requirements.—Foul ditches contravening section 91 of the Public Health Act 1875 exist at Ackington Mart, Alnwick, Greenfield Moor, Broadfield, Tillingham Hill, Hartley and Peppermoor.

DISINFECTION.—In addition to a number of houses disinfected at private expense, twenty houses have been disinfected with formalin by the Council.

INSPECTIONS.—Commencing in June, 1902, I have, in every year, endeavored to inspect the whole of this rural district, and, in the course of my visits, to every township, I have called upon every District Councillor, 51 in number.

