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URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT

OF THI

MEDICAL OFFICER

FOR THE YEAR ENDING

DECEMBER 31st, 1894.

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ALNWICK URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

REPORT

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DECEMBER 31st, 1894.

ALNWICK, 2ND JANUARY, 1895.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

GENTLEMEN,

The time has arrived when, in the fulfilment of a duty with which you must be conversant, I have to lay before you an Annual Report, which, after reference to some of our experience, and an explanation in general terms of the latest Sanitary condition of the District, sufficiently defines the extent of progress made in the promotion of works for its improvement, some of which have through many years had the Authority's anxious attention.

With greater variety of weather than in 1893, yet with no more excess of either heat or cold than could be tolerated with impunity by persons in moderate health and circumstances fairly good, no distress or misfortune has on this account at any time during the past year been unusually prevalent. I do

not forget, however, that for a short time near the beginning of summer some fear was entertained that a repetition of the previous year's drought might involve us in difficulties less easily overcome than those which gave rise to anxiety in the past. Having already expressed the satisfaction we felt at the sufficiency for all purposes of our water-springs to carry us safely and comfortably through a long period of exceptional demand upon them, it detracts but little from that estimate to say that in the absence of reliable information as to their value beyond a certain limit, it was very desirable that we should be spared the immediate necessity of giving further proof of it till the works projected for an increase of the supply had been completed for use. Happily no such test was applied, and from various causes the year has closed with indications of improvement, which, judging by the death-rate, surpasses even the favourable experience of recent years.

During the year 1894 there have been registered within the District presided over by the Council 108 deaths, of which 62 were males and 46 were females. 9 of them occurred at the Workhouse, and 3 at the Infirmary. 26 were under 5 years of age, and of these 18 were infants who died within the first year of life; 33 attained the age of 65; and of those who exceeded it, 15 at the time of death were above 70, and 9 above 80, The death-rate per 1000 of the population, according as we include those at the Public Institutions or leave them out of the calculation, is 16.14 in the one case, and 14.35 in the other.

The Births during the year have been 202. The number is 22 above that of 1893, making the birth rate per 1000 of the population 30.19.

Two deaths were due to accidental injuries, and of the three attributed to fever, two were notified under the name of Typhoid, and one under that of Puerperal. They were solitary attacks of persons living in well separated localities and associated with easily removable defects quite within the knowledge of those who were most interested in avoiding the risk of their continuance. In one of them, indeed, a too feeble or insufficiently persevering effort had been made to obtain the required help, but in each case the respective parties had so far underrated apparently the importance of promptitude in recovering their position, that the opportunity of doing so without disaster has had a painful termination. While we have to deal with dwellings in confined localities, it should be more widely understood that even innocent looking disarrangements of a certain kind, if neglected, sometimes acquire a particularly baneful influence, and that the uncertainty with which they compromise the safety of the inmates should make them watchful with a view to their early rectification.

The other notifications under the Act refer to a case of Typhoid Fever, imported from a distant town and sent to the Isolation Hospital, to two cases of Scarlet Fever, one of which was removed to the Hospital at the Workhouse, to a mild case of Diphtheria in a back lane, and to eight cases of Erysipelas, chiefly affecting aged persons, or those who had ventured incautiously on some act of imprudence. Attention was given to all sanitary defects in connection with any of them.

There has been a general acknowledgment throughout the year that it is expedient to supplement the present water supply without waiting for a possible proof of its insufficiency during exceptionally trying circumstances, but late in the year, when after much preparation the time arrived for completing the arrangements and commencing work, it was unexpectedly found that since a former examination of the Spring the volume of water in it had become so much diminished that the expense of appropriating it would be quite out of proportion to its value. It is now proposed that in preference to or in precedence of an increased storage of water obtained by saving what runs to waste of the supply in use, search should be made for another and more copious Spring, but hitherto only a very moderate effort has been made towards the discovery. Winter may not be the season for either feeling the need of it or making efforts to obtain it, but considering the length of time usually expended on preliminary arrangements, there is an obvious advantage in keeping the matter well in view. A larger reserve of water beyond our usual requirements, to meet any sudden demand which might overtake us as a surprise, would give to the Town a comfortable feeling of security in times of justifiable anxiety as to its sufficiency.

The discussions of the Board on the Town's Sewage Disposal question have not been altogether barren of results, yet the progress made has fallen considerably short of what was anticipated when the year commenced. Previously, by a unanimous vote of the Board, after long debate and deliberation, a particular scheme had obtained a decision in its favour. It had been submitted to the Central Authority for approval, and after an Inspector from the Local Government Board had visited the Town, examined the ground, and gathered up all that could be said in opposition to it, which amounted to little or nothing, the only thing apparently left for consideration and adjustment was the relative positions which similar works for Canongate and some adjacent property was to occupy towards the main or larger part of the project, which, with this exception, had been practically sanctioned. The considerably lower level at which this part of the Town is situated constituted the difficulty, and in view of the pumping operations which would be necessary to form a connection, and the many objections made to the proposal, it was shortly afterwards conceded by the Local Government Board that the junction might be dispensed with, and the smaller section left to be dealt with separately by works of purification and an outlet of its own. Another interruption, however, followed and had a discouraging effect, which almost took the form of complete inaction, but nothing serious had occurred or was intended.

It had been customary on the Duke's estate in matters of this kind, as in others, to cultivate a trustful understanding which dispensed with the necessity for legal documents binding the contracting parties to the observance of conditions stringently drawn up for the protection of their respective interests. The Local Government Board perceiving probably the changing character of the times, preferred a principle and mode of action not easily affected by it, and it led to the preparation of a leasehold agreement about the required land, whose terms were accounted too severe to be relished by the more sensitive of those who had undertaken to watch over and guard the ratepayers' interests.

Much time was lost before a little explanation prepared the way for the matter being placed on a more comfortable basis, when the season being far advanced it was thought advisable that the newly elected Councillors should have the honour and advantage of seeing carried out from the commencement and under their direction what the Sanitary Authority had through many years carefully selected and arranged for the good of the Town. It is at this stage, and with these antecedents, that the work now passes into your hands.

All the pigs kept in the Town, and at the Workhouse, which were not slaughtered have, in accordance with the bye-laws, been taken to a distance beyond sixty feet from any human habitation, but a removal of the piggeries which were in use, and whose presence favours a renewal of their occupation is not yet complete. The bye-laws moreover throughout the year have been otherwise respected.

I append a statement of other work accomplished during the year, supplied to me by the Inspector. It includes a portion of what was pointed out as desirable in my last annual report, and instalments, doubtless, of the same kind will follow on the occurrence of suitable opportunities. In the meantime, Alnwick, notwithstanding its faulty construction and posture is overtaking a position which even to Towns of comparatively modern growth has brought praise and distinction. Without hazarding a conjecture as to what may shortly, through persistent effort and an undiminished response to it, be the full reward of your labours, I may briefly state that if we regard a low condition of the death rate as the standard of sanitary excellence and attainment towards which we aspire, and by which we measure our success, the progress made of late years by this District in that direction can scarcely, with expectations less than extravagant, be considered disappointing.

The unaltered amount of the population at the last census makes this more easily perceptible. Confining my remarks to the time of my own official connection with the Board, which includes all the years for which an annual return of deaths has been preserved in the report book, I think it is worth remembering (and it seems exemplified in our experience) that we cannot calculate on a salutary effect that is open to observation, being always immediately consequent on removals and changes which, undoubtedly required, and of value, may yet for a period of uncertain length leave the death-rate undisturbed. With this preface it may be interesting and instructive if I place before you the figures which sum up the mortality of the District, as in recent years it has been annually recorded for our consideration. In 1886 the deaths were 186. In the following year the number was less by three. In 1890, that is three years later, the original number had been reduced by 24, and the death-rate to 24.21, while during the four following years, the annual number was successively 165, 149, 135, and 108, the total reduction in eight years being 78, and the fall in the death-rate from 27.79 to 16.14.

As the presumption is in favour of this improvement (which is equivalent to a saving of life in 1894 in the proportion of three out of every seven who died in 1886) being largely due to the benefits derived from careful sanitary supervision, to an increase and better quality of water, to a spreading out of the population over a wider area at both ends of the Town, as well as to a better practical acquaintance with the measures, habits, and dispositions which conduce to health, there is much to give you confidence in a continuance of labours which have proved so promising in the production of good effects.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

GEO. F. EASTON, M.D.,

Medical Officer of Health.

REPORT OF INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES.

URBAN COUNCIL OFFICE, GREEN BAT, ALNWICK,

31st December, 1894.

TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

SIR,

I beg to submit a summary of work done in the way of Sanitation during the year 1894.

Number of Notices issued both formal and informal for the abatement of Nuisances, 232.

Total number of Nuisances abated, 380.

Number remaining on the books in progress and under notice, 23.

No.	of	Water Closets repaired,	•	76.
,,	,,	Closets converted into Water Closets		4.
,,	,,	" cleansed from obstruction		28.
,,	,,	increased Water Closet accommodation		10.
"	"	Drains requiring opening and cleansing obstruction,	from 	41.

No.	of	Drains repaired, 33	3.
"	,,	Drains trapped, 41	1.
,,	,,	Back yards cemented out, repaired, or improved, 48	5.
,,	,,	Premises new spouted, repaired, or cleansed out, 71	1.
"	"	of cases where Pigs were kept contrary to the Board's Bye-Laws, 12	2.
"	"	of cases where Poultry, &c., were improperly kept, 12	3.
"	"	of Miscellaneous Nuisances arising from various causes,	6.

In addition to the above a large number of drains have been smoke tested, and urgent nuisances such as filthy and obstructed water closets and obstructed drains, &c., have been abated by the Board's own men.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS, and MILKSHOPS' ORDER, 1885.

The number of persons registered as Cowkeepers and Purveyors of Milk is 42, the whole of these have been inspected and registered during the year, and on the whole found clean.

FACTORY and WORKSHOPS' ACT, 1891.

This Act, which came into operation on the 1st January, 1892, places the Sanitary Regulation of Workshops under the direct control of the Sanitary Authorities, instead of that of the Inspector of Factories.

The enactment empowers Sanitary Authorities to deal with the cleanliness, ventilation, overcrowding, Sanitary arrangements and limewashing of workshops.

There are 34 workshops or workrooms at present on the list, all of which have been inspected during the year, and the Sanitary condition of some of them has been improved.

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COMMON LODGING HOUSES.

3 in number. These have been inspected and registered, (one temporarily only) thus giving accommodation for 35 lodgers.

PUBLIC BAKEHOUSES.

These, 9 in number, have been inspected and found clean and in good condition. One new bakehouse has been erected, and one remodelled during the year.

MAGISTERIAL PROCEEDINGS.

Proceedings were taken in 5 cases, 3 were pig keeping contrary to the Board's Bye-Laws, and were fined one shilling each and costs.

One case for keeping an unregistered Lodging House, fined one shilling without costs.

One case for committing a nuisance on the Public Street, fined five shillings and costs.

DANIEL WATERS,

Inspector of Nuisances.



