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ALNWICK  
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

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REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER

FOR THE YEAR ENDING

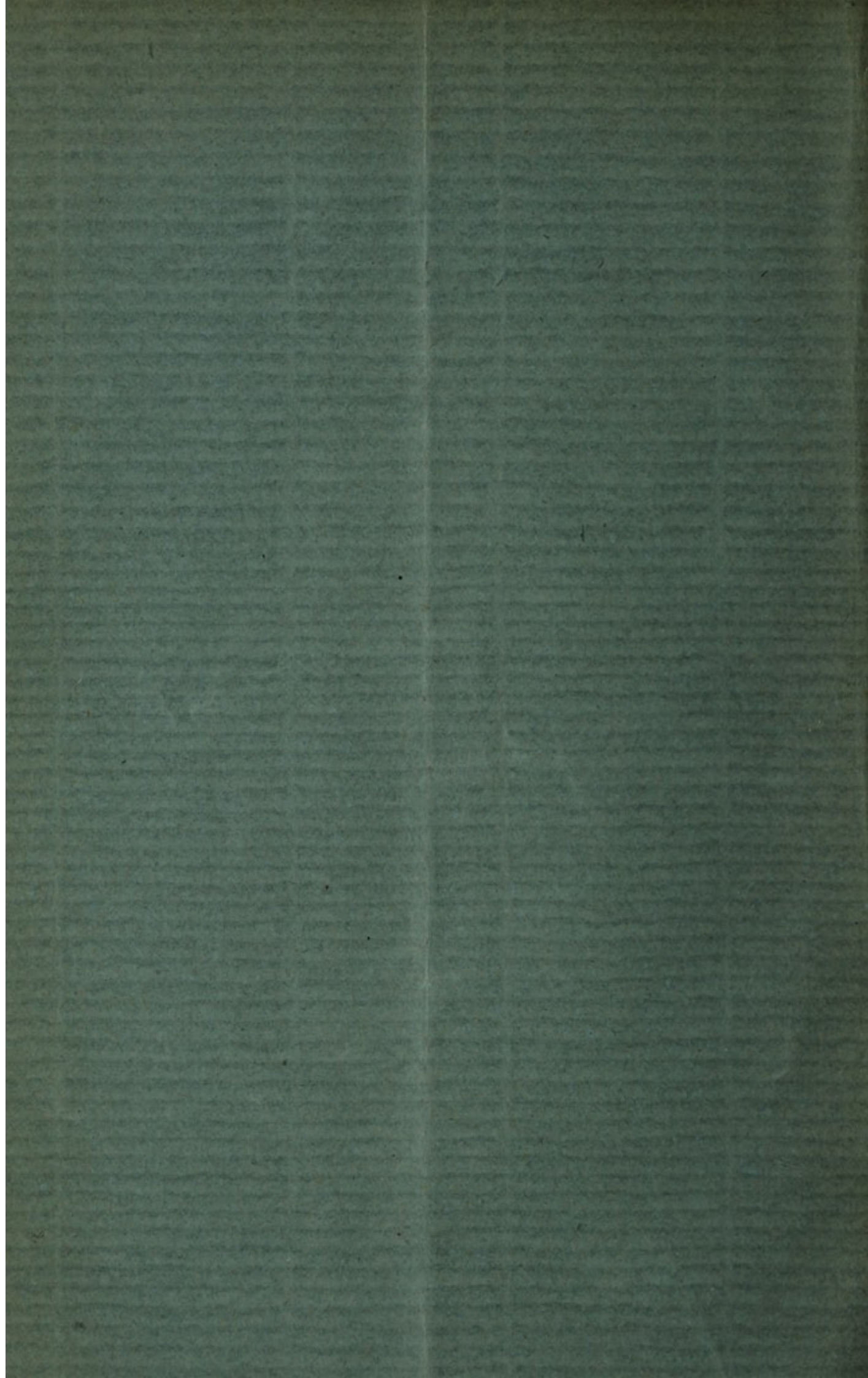
DECEMBER 31st, 1897.

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ALNWICK, *4th January*, 1898.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE URBAN  
DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Gentlemen,

The former half of the year 1897, which abounded in weather which was cold and wet, presented corresponding difficulties for those, whose constitutions or surroundings were unfavourable for encountering them even while adopting such appropriate means as were available for their help and protection. In comparison with our experience in the previous year, the mortality for this period, as a probable consequence in part of the prevailing discomfort, underwent no improvement, the number of deaths being even a little in excess of what was last recorded of it. On the accession of finer weather, better results were expected, but notwithstanding the general satisfaction afforded by the summer and autumnal seasons, the frequent recurrence of a heavy and pervading



mist did not suit the health of everyone, so that the proportion of deaths, though receiving almost no assistance from infectious disease, varied but slightly as the year advanced, till at its close it was found to have made a further addition to our loss.

The detailed account of our experience is as follows:— During the year there were registered within the district of this Urban Council 138 deaths, of which 77 were males and 61 were females. The number when compared with that of the previous year shows an increase of 12 males, and a reduction of 2 females. Sixteen of the deaths occurred at the Workhouse and one at the Infirmary. Of the 38 infants who died under five years of age, 26 did not survive their first year of life, and of the 42 persons who exceeded the age of 65, 23 at the time of death were above 70, 12 above 80, and 1 over 90. The increase of deaths over the number recorded for the year 1896 is made up by no remarkable addition to that of persons who died at any particular age, while as respects disease, it is more than accounted for by the 14 entries under the heading of "other diseases" which were this year in excess of the number for the one I have referred to. The deaths from infectious disease are represented by one from erysipelas in an elderly person. The 10 notifications under the Act received during the year relate to 8 cases of Erysipelas, and 2 of Scarlet Fever.

The Annual Death Rate for 1897 is 20·62 per 1,000 of the population, or, if we deduct the deaths at the public institutions, it is about 18·10. There have been 204 births, the number of boys and girls being exactly equal. They indicate an Annual Birth Rate of 30·49 per 1,000 of the population, and an increase of 40 births, or of 13 males and 27 females over the number in 1896.

The Supply of Water during the year has been well sustained, and the mode of its conveyance (by gravitation in iron pipes) almost secures its purity. In consideration, however, of our having occasionally to supplement it from a less reliable source than the springs which yield it ordinarily for domestic use, and having regard to the general suspicion which arose in connection with serious outbreaks of typhoid fever in various places mostly attributed to water contamination, it has been thought expedient to have samples of it periodically analysed. The examinations of it hitherto have revealed nothing to its discredit, and the knowledge of this should remove any want of confidence in its employment.



The Lodging House Question may be next alluded to. A few years ago there were three of these in the town, from each of which a registration certificate was withheld on account of some failure in the accommodation or arrangements to comply with the requirements of the bye-laws or other sanitary regulations. As this did not admit of an early and satisfactory rectification, and, as in consequence of it, an overcrowding of private dwellings derived a prejudicial encouragement, it was considered advisable, notwithstanding the imperfect condition of these houses, to register them provisionally, in the expectation that they would shortly be superseded by one or more buildings of a less faulty character. The scheme of last year was undertaken with this view, in succession to one or two other attempts to accomplish what was wanted. It has lately, however, been set aside. Yet its abandonment does not relieve, but rather aggravates, the situation, which must continue to suffer from any prolonged inaction in providing a substitute. By the closing of one house, the advanced disrepair and structural defects of another, and the imperfect ventilation and very unsuitable position in a long narrow lane of the third, involving much difficulty in maintaining its cleanliness through want of light, and space for adequate outdoor provision, the town must shortly become dispossessed of any accommodation of the kind, which can reasonably be regarded as commensurate, even temporarily, with its requirements.

Favourable progress, however, has been made during the year in one or two important matters, which have long held a prominent place in your attention, with a view to the sanitary improvement of the town. The Main Sewerage Scheme has been so far completed that a small section of it only, which could not be included, on account of its much lower level, in the course adopted for general use, remains for accomplishment, and means are being devised for doing this in a manner that will be satisfactory, especially to those who retain an interest in the promise made with regard to it by the Council before the work now terminated was commenced. It is gratifying to know that since the completion of these works, with the above-mentioned exception, and the formal opening of them on the 19th of May last, they have apparently well fulfilled the purpose for which they were undertaken, and the town has consequently been free from some of its usual annoyances. Perhaps, however, it is too early to say that they have been sufficiently tested to establish their ability to control the flooding of cellars, &c., which had previously been of frequent occurrence during heavy thunderstorms, or the rapid melting of snow.



At the termination of the year 1896 there was left for more mature consideration the question of providing additional and less unsanitary dwellings for working men and their families. Some zealous efforts made in their favour had proved ineffectual in convincing a majority of the Council that the time had arrived when it became their duty to intervene in a matter acknowledged to be important, but which they preferred to leave in the hands of the men themselves, who, it was argued, knew better than others their own requirements, and, if so disposed, could obtain help from their friends for the relief of their necessities, with the advantage of being able to use it leisurely, according to their taste and convenience. This, if true, and within their power, does not seem to have been so to any great extent, and no evidence of it was forthcoming when Lord Percy generously led the way in assuming the responsibility by placing on favourable conditions land and funds sufficient for the erection of at least thirty houses in the hands of a private association, whose members were of his own selection. Ten of these dwellings, which differ from those formerly resolved upon in being self-contained, are now in the course of construction, and it is no small evidence of the demand for them that all were bespoke and allotted some months ago, while the buildings were still very far from complete. It is said, moreover, that we have by no means yet exhausted the list of applicants, the remnant of which must now bear with patience their disappointment till a similar row of dwellings further reduces the number of competitors for an airy and brighter residence.

It need not be a matter for regret from a sanitary point of view, that a somewhat superior style of building has been substituted for that originally designed, if the purchase money or rent be within the reach of those who most need the better accommodation in a pleasanter and more healthy situation. And as regards this, it may be taken into account that the advantage being considerable, a small sacrifice in the direction of obtaining it would be an act of wisdom in some, who may almost calculate beforehand on an early return of value, if not a more than equivalent gain.

It is probable, however, that you have not yet entirely lost the opportunity of contributing to this work of improvement. The construction, at a somewhat diminished rental, of such sanitary dwellings for family groups, and the specially unfortunate or unthrifty poor as would prove to be no intolerable strain upon their resources, may still claim your attention, and with the help of the Railway Company's



expected provision for those in their employment, may largely reduce the existing overcrowding. On the other hand, you have been reminded by those in high authority that this may be insufficient, and that the town requires for its relief a speedy deliverance from such structural defects and arrangements as became almost necessary for safety in bygone days and have survived, and for other reasons been multiplied, since this excuse for their existence could no longer be defended. In furtherance of this object, a special report by your direction was prepared, and its consideration followed by a circulation of copies of it among those interested in the question. Though relating to a part only of the town, it has some peculiarities which should increase its value. The measurements explain something of the situation to those who, through lack of interest or opportunity, have never examined it, and the four signatures at the end of it give an unusual emphasis to its contents. It need not, however, be accepted as our conviction that it would not have been more convenient, and, in some respects, more satisfactory, had we been able to limit our condemnation to some moderately-sized block of buildings which was specially at variance with sanitary principles, inasmuch as we had to recognise the existing evil as being to a greater or less extent so diffused that it could not easily be defined. We have, therefore, used the word "Area" (which occurs in the "Housing of the Working Classes Act") in its restricted sense, and applied it to the sites of several scattered buildings, intended long ago to serve various purposes, but accounted now to be either useless, obstructive, misplaced, or ruinous. A chief object in dealing with them was explained to be introductory to obtaining an easier access to the yards, and a relief of the confinement entailed by their presence upon the residents in and around them, more especially while there was unavoidable overcrowding through a deficiency of house accommodation. As the matter has passed into other hands, I need only further comment upon it by saying that some little progress, which so far as it goes is encouraging, has been made in carrying out the recommendations submitted to you, and we may hope that it will become more rapid, as experience makes you familiar with the most approved mode of effecting it.

A report by the Inspector, which is appended, gives a summary of his endeavours to remove the nuisances which have come under his personal observation, or to which his attention has from time to time been directed.

It seems unnecessary at present to suggest any addition to the work you have already in hand, or under consideration,



but I may gather up for your convenience the several points which have been alluded to, and from the execution of which there is little hope of escape. The work chiefly needed is as follows :—

A discovery for the Canongate section of the sewage disposal works of the system most suitable for adoption in that particular locality, and an efficient carrying out of the selected plan.

The choice of a site for a common lodging house, and an agreement as to the arrangements proper for it, and the amount of accommodation afforded by it, to be followed by its early formation with appropriate fittings.

A continuation of the relief to the town you have begun to afford in accordance with the report forwarded to and approved by the County Council, subject, however, to the views and modifications of the Local Government Board.

A supplementing upon easier terms to the occupiers, of the provision in course of preparation for the Housing of the Working Classes under conditions more favourable to health and comfort.

An increased storage of water sufficient for use under exceptional difficulties. The list, you will see, has in it much to interest you, and its reference is to work in which variety and profitable employment are well represented.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

GEO. F. EASTON, M.D., F.B.I.PH.



## *Report of Inspector of Nuisances.*

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URBAN COUNCIL OFFICE,

GREEN BAT, ALNWICK,

4th *January*, 1898.

TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

SIR,

I beg to submit a summary of work done in the way of Sanitation during the year 1897.

Number of Notices issued both formal and informal for the abatement of various nuisances	...	...	247
Total number of Nuisances abated	...	...	306
Number remaining on the books in progress and under notice	...	...	11
Number of Water Closets repaired	...	...	91
"            "            cleansed from obstruction	...	...	21
"            New Water Closets erected	...	...	3
"            Increased Accommodation	...	...	1
"            Drains requiring opening and cleansing from obstruction	...	...	40
"            Drains requiring repairs, relaying, or otherwise improved	...	...	15
"            Drains not efficiently trapped	...	...	14
"            Drains smoke tested	...	...	16
"            Backyards cemented out	...	...	3
"            Premises new spouted, repaired or cleansed out	...	...	59
"            Cases where poultry were improperly kept			9
"            Miscellaneous nuisances arising from various causes	...	...	38



DAIRIES, COWSHEDS, AND MILKSHOPS ORDER,  
1883, 1885.

The number of Persons registered as Cowkeepers and Purveyors of Milk is 40, two less than last year. Improvements have been made in some of these during the year.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS ACT, 1891.

There are 35 Workshops or Workrooms at present on the list, and the same are in fair condition.

PUBLIC BAKEHOUSES.

These, nine in number, have been periodically inspected and found clean and in good condition.

DANIEL WATERS, A.S.I.,

*Inspector of Nuisances*



