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Contributors

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Alawick

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Medical Officer's Annual Report, 1907.

GENTLEMEN,

I cannot do better than present my report for the year 1907 in that form to which you have been accustomed for the past two years.

The more thickly populated part of the town may be said to be within a circle whose confines are indicated by Hotspur Street, Greenbat, Clayport, Pottergate, Bow Alley, and thence back to the Tower. In the portion outwith this boundary the inhabitants live under much healthier conditions as a consequence of their area being less densely peopled. The residents in these two sub-divisions have, as in previous years been reckoned at about the same, a conclusion arrived at when one remembers that in the inside portion, though the population is denser, the houses are not so numerous.

Weather.

As the weather has a considerable influence on the Public Health in general, and on the death-rate in particular, it is desirable to start from this point. The total rainfall for the year was 28·66 inches, being 3·18 inches under the local average for the past eight years. October 8th saw the greatest rainfall registered, viz., 1·38 inches. Although the total fall is much below the general average, yet we have had rain on no less than 198 days. With the exception of September, the weather was for the most part of a cold and gloomy description. The absence of hot weather in summer time has shown itself in the absence of Diarrhœal diseases. Although we would expect weather such as we experienced to adversely influence respiratory complaints, and people at the extremes of life, it has not, as yet, shown such a marked tendency more especially in bronchial affections, as one would have been led to suppose.

Vital Statistics.

The birth-rate is again slightly below the average, being 25·14.

It is interesting to note that the number for 1907 is the same as that recorded for the previous year, namely 171, of which 92 are males and 79 are females.

The deaths recorded are on this occasion below the average for the previous ten years

There were 119 deaths, 55 males and 64 females. The infantile mortality under one year totals 24. In 1906 the number was higher than in the year immediately preceeding but it was still below the last ten years' average. This year, however, the number is even higher, while it is at the same time slightly above the average referred to. The figures call for no special comment, except, indeed, in the case of infants whose deaths are directly due to wasting diseases. These number 10 and I am bound to say that, in many instances, they are attributable to ignorance on the part of parents in the management and feeding of their offspring.

The death-rate for the year is 17·5 and, if we exclude those deaths in public institutions, the number is 15 per 1,000.

The following is a classified list of the various diseases and the number of deaths from each :—

Epidemic Influenza	2	Childbirth	...	1
Diarrhœa	...	Heart Disease	...	12
Enteritis	...	Accidents	...	1
Erysipelas	...	Senility	...	13
Phthisis	...	Urinary Diseases	...	7
Other Tubercular	...	Alimentary	...	5
Diseases	...	Cerebral	...	18
Cancer	...	Congenital Debility	...	6
Bronchitis	...	Uncertified	...	1
Pneumonia	...	All other Causes	...	6
Premature Birth	4			

The different rates per thousand, which are of special interest, are given in a separate table, and I have sub-divided, as far as I can, the Rural and Urban districts :—

		Town.	Country.	Total.	Town.	Country.	Total.
Estimated Population	6300	590	6800	Rate per 1000.		
Births	157	14	171	24·92	28	25·14
Deaths from all Causes	111	8	119	17·6	16	17·5
„ „ Zymotic Disease	1	—	1	·157	—	·147
„ „ Phthisis	9	—	9	1·42	—	1·32
„ „ Respiratory Disease	10	—	10	1·58	—	1·47
„ „ Cancer	10	—	10	1·58	—	1·47
„ „ Under 1 Year	23	1	24	134·5	5·84	110·3
Infectious notifications	8	—	8	1·27	—	1·17

		Births.	Deaths under 1 year.	Deaths over 1 year.
Old Area	97	15	44
New Area	60	8	45
Rural	14	1	6

My conclusions last year are borne out, but in rather a less degree—for we must look at the particular figures for the year—when I again remark that the conditions of existence in the congested areas, as compared with those in the less densely crowded parts, are not so conducive to life under one year.

In the case of those over one year of age, 39 were persons over 60; of these 14 were over 80, while one attained the age of 98.

Phthisis and Respiratory diseases claim fewer victims, but the deaths from Cancer are more numerous. In my previous report an opposite condition of affairs may be noted.

Zymotic diseases give us one death as compared with 7 in 1906. The Infectious (notifiable) cases are 8 in number—5 Scarlet Fever, 1 Diphtheria, and 2 Erysipelas.

Three of these were sent to Hospital. The Scarlet Fever appeared at intervals of four or five months. The first in January was single; the second and third cases were notified in July, and the remaining two in October. In each of these last two occurrences, the second case was traceable to direct contact.

The case of Diphtheria took place in premises where the drains were defective.

With reference to contagious diseases the following extract is from a circular recently issued by the Local Government Board:—

“The Board have been approached by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries as to the desirability of making arrangements for the Notification of Cases of Glanders, Anthrax and Hydrophobia in man, where the facts point to the possibility of infection having been derived from an Animal or its carcase, or where enquiry under the Diseases of Animals Acts seems to the medical men concerned to be *prima facie* desirable. The Board are satisfied as to the advantage of such an arrangement with a view to checking the spread of these diseases; and they will be glad if the Council will be good enough to invite their Medical Officer of Health to intimate in future to the Clerk to the Local Authority under the Diseases of Animals Acts of their respective districts such cases or suspected cases of Glanders, Anthrax and Hydrophobia in man as may come to their knowledge.”

“In this connection I am to draw attention to paragraph (3) of Article 1 of the Anthrax Order of 1899, and to Article 4 of the Glanders and Farcy Order of 1907, with reference to the duty of Inspectors under the Diseases of Animals Act, 1894, to notify to the Medical Officer of Health outbreaks of Anthrax and Glanders.”

While on this subject I may mention that the Council fell in with my suggestion a year ago, and decided to supply Diphtheria Anti Toxin when recommended by the Medical Officer of Health.

During the year the Smallpox Hospital has been completed, and is now ready for the reception of patients, should the necessity unfortunately arise.

Water Supply.

Our water supply is dependent mainly on three sources, viz., Tuffy's Well, the springs in Rugley Wood, and Rugley Borehole, supplemented, when occasion demands, by the Culvert Springs, and by what is known as Horsley's Borehole. One would have expected that, with a season such as the past, our ordinary water supply would have been sufficient. However, we have been obliged to pump four million gallons from these last two sources. These facts speak for themselves.

Rugley West Boring.

In April, boring operations were commenced at a point about half a mile to the west of the present borehole. A depth of 270 feet has been reached, and, although the water would not rise quite to the surface, a syphon pipe has, since November, been yielding from six to eight gallon per minute.

The water has been analysed with satisfactory results.

After all, we are not much further on the way to secure an adequate water supply without enormous expense. The cry from nearly every town and village from Berwick to Biyth—aye, and even further—is the same. With all diffidence, I would suggest that in some of the higher ranges of Cheviot, where nature provides a sufficiency of pure water, the County Council carry out some scheme similar to what has been done by the Newcastle Corporation, and charge each district accordingly.

Sewerage and Drains.

It will be seen from the Inspector's report that, in the private drains of the town, a number of improvements have been effected.

Regarding public sewerage, Denwick Lane relief sewer was completed in the month of April, the result justifying the expense incurred.

The advice given by me on a former occasion for sewerage extension to St. Thomas' Farm has, I believe, had the consideration of the Committee, but, as yet, no decision seems to have been arrived at.

As last year, the Canonigate sewerage scheme and the other alterations in contemplation, are still *sub judice*.

Erection of Houses.

The erection of houses in the town is pretty much on a par with last year, and the same may be said of dwellings in the course of erection.

Lodging Houses.

In connection with these, any improvements which, after systematic inspection, were deemed necessary, have been satisfactorily completed.

The accommodation has, as usual, been very much sought after.

Slaughter Houses.

These continue to be in a clean and orderly condition, and more details will be found in Mr. Milburn's report.

Cattle Mart.

The new Mart has been completed, and, by the time this annual statement appears in print, it should, I am informed, be in full working order.

Dairies and Cowsheds.

These have been regularly examined, and any small requirements that seemed desirable have generally been willingly carried out.

Bakehouses.

These premises, in so far as they come under our jurisdiction, have been visited periodically and the requisite standard of cleanliness has been maintained.

General Improvements.

There is at this time nothing special to comment upon which may fittingly come under the head of General Improvements, if we except the laying of a 4-inch water main from Bridge Street to the Royal Oak, and the letting of a contract for a similar work to connect dead-ends in Prudhoe Street and Grey Place. This will very materially improve the water pressure in these two districts.

Town Improvement.

The members of this particular Committee have brought forward a scheme and have successfully recommended the Council to erect houses on that portion of land at the top of King Street which has not yet been built upon, and steps are being taken towards the completion of the original scheme, by demolishing the houses in Area Number 2.

Notification of Births' Act.

This has just come into force with the advent of the present year. The Act is optional, and I have advised the Sanitary Committee not to recommend its adoption.

Midwives' Act.

I am glad to state that the Guardians have recognised their responsibility in connection with the above, and have granted a fee to medical men who are called in to assist midwives in cases of difficulty and danger.

Medical Inspection of School Children.

I cannot but feel that the regulations here are too elaborate. I admit that some such scheme, followed out to its logical conclusion, would prove of incalculable benefit to the public health, but, in its present form, it would appear that it would only lead to a gigantic compilation of statistics at considerable expense to the ratepayers.

Requirements.

- (a) A sufficient Water Supply.
- (b) Houses suitable for the labouring classes.
- (c) A Public Mortuary.
- (d) Disinfecting Apparatus.

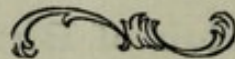
These and others of minor importance have on previous occasions been treated in detail, and I again consider it my duty to bring such under your notice.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity of again thanking the members of the Council for the uniform courtesy which they have always extended to me in receiving my suggestions from time to time, and for the help I have received from the various officials with whom my duties bring me in contact.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. B. ROBSON, M.B., M R.C.S.



REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR OF NUISANCES.

COUNCIL OFFICES,
GREEN BAT,
ALNWICK,

JANUARY, 29TH, 1908.

TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

SIR,

I beg again to submit a brief record of the work done in the Sanitary Department during the year 1907.

The improved conditions noticeable in past years in the tenemented yards, with regard to the use of conveniences provided by owners for their tenants, still continue. This fact may be due to the remedies applied where a recurring nuisance, caused by defects in drains or other conveniences, has been put right, or, let us hope, to a more enlightened idea of the use of such necessities. To whatever cause the improvement is due, I am certain the owners of such properties are benefiting by it, in the decreased cost of maintenance they will be called upon to meet.

Progress is still being made in the betterment of the drainage and sanitation of such premises as are found defective from time to time. As you are aware, a large number of the drains on premises situate in the older parts of the town falls far short of the standard required for present day sanitation, and, although there are evidences of carefulness and forethought having been used when these defective systems were laid in, the limited knowledge of the principles of sanitation and the class of materials at disposal of persons carrying them out, must be taken into account when condemnation of same is under consideration. This inheritance of a faulty system may not be looked upon by its present owner in any worse light than it was by the originator of it, but I can say for the owners of to-day, I always find them open to take any suggestion for improvement in the sanitation of their properties when defects are found, and generally speaking, in the end I get all I ask for in the way of making such properties more healthful for those who occupy them.

The improvements carried out at the Slaughter Houses during the year have given very gratifying results so far ; there are not now the unsightly messes which I had continually to be complaining of, and any objectionable condition can now be charged to parties having the use of the premises upon which it is found.

The occupiers and their servants were very critical as to the success of these alterations at first, but I hope, as time goes on, they will realize that the change is an aid to one of the most important conditions under which the meat supply of the town can be prepared, namely, cleanliness.

JOSEPH MILBURN,

Assoc. Royal San. Inst.,

Inspector of Nuisances.

