

[Report 1925] / Medical Officer of Health, Alnwick U.D.C.

Contributors

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MEDICAL OFFICER'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1925.

GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in presenting the ANNUAL REPORT for 1925, which is a comprehensive or Survey Report.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

The Area of the Urban District is 4,777 acres.

The Population. According to the 1921 Census, the population of the district is 6,920, and the estimated population for the year 1925 is 6,988, an increase of 68 in five years.

The Physical Features and General Characters of the District. The town site is of a hilly nature varying from 113 feet to 300 feet above sea level. To the West lies the higher ground, some 3,000 acres of the Alnwick Moor, at an altitude of 500 feet above sea level, on which have been erected a number of cottages on the Freeman's Estate.

Most of the houses in the Town are constructed of the local sandstone, except those built lately, which are of brick. The hilly nature of the town's site affords facilities for self cleansing gradients to the main sewerage and private drainage.

The number of Inhabited Houses. In the census return for 1921 there were 1643 houses occupied by 1691 families. At the end of 1925 there were 1775 houses—38 being erected during the year.

The rateable value of the Urban District is £35,203, and the sum represented by a penny rate is £128.

Social Conditions. The chief occupations of the inhabitants are Agriculture, Mining, Quarrying, Shopkeeping, Fishing Tackle Manufacture and Malting. These do not exert any particular influence on the health of the community.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The Total Births—corrected for inward and outward transfers—numbered 139—78 being males and 61 females.

Births 1925 number 139 and the birth rate is 19.89 per thousand per annum.

„ 1924 number 150 „ „ is 21.29 „ „ „

„ 1923 number 134 „ „ is 19.00 „ „ „

Birth Rate for England and Wales 1925 is 18.3 „ „ „

There were six illegitimate children born during the year.

The Total Deaths—corrected for inward and outward transfers—numbered 115—54 being males and 61 females.

Deaths 1925 number 115 and the death rate is 16.45 per thousand per annum.

„ 1924 number 92 „ „ is 13.06 „ „ „

„ 1923 number 88 „ „ is 12.48 „ „ „

Death Rate for England and Wales 1925 is 12.2 „ „ „

The following are the causes of death at all ages:—

Enteric Fever	1	Bronchitis	2
Measles	7	Pneumonia (all forms)	11
Diphtheria	1	Ulcer of Stomach	2
Influenza	1	Diarrhoea, etc.	1
Tuberculosis of Respiratory Tract	6	Acute and Chronic Nephritis	2
Other Tuberculous Diseases	2	Diseases of Pregnancy	2
Cancer	17	Congenital Debility, etc.	9
Rheumatic Fever	2	Suicide	1
Diabetes	1	Other Deaths from Violence	3
Cerebral Haemorrhage	8	Other Defined Diseases	22
Heart Disease	8	Causes unknown or ill-defined	2
Arterio Sclerosis	4		

Infantile Deaths. The deaths in infants under one year of age numbered 20 (10 male and 10 female), as compared with 10 for 1924. No illegitimate children died during the year.

Infantile Death Rate, 1925, equals 143.88 per thousand births.

„ „ 1924, „ 66.66 „ „ „

„ „ 1923, „ 44.77 „ „ „

Infantile Death Rate for England and Wales, 1925, 75 per thousand births.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF HEALTH SERVICES.

Hospitals. The hospital accommodation within the Urban District consists of a General Infirmary, now being enlarged, an Isolation Hospital containing two wards with three beds and three cots in each, and a Workhouse Infirmary. A Smallpox Hospital with accommodation for 12 cases is situated in the Rural District, three miles from Alnwick, and is maintained jointly by the Urban District of Alnwick and the Rural Districts of Alnwick and Belford.

Ambulance Facilities. A motor ambulance, maintained jointly by the Alnwick Urban and Rural Districts, is available for the removal of medical and surgical cases. The Isolation and Smallpox Hospitals have cabs for the removal of infectious cases.

Clinics. A Maternity and Child Welfare Centre has been established in the Town by the County Council and is open one day a week.

Public Health Officers of the Local Authority. These consist of the Medical Officer of Health (part time) and the Sanitary Inspector who is also the Surveyor.

Nurses. There are two District Nurses resident in the Town and extra assistance can be obtained in times of Epidemics. Examination of pathological specimens, etc., are carried out by the Northumberland County Council, and the Alnwick Urban Council supply Sera and Vaccines free of cost to necessitous cases.

Legislation in Force. Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1890, parts II and III, adopted 1st September, 1891. Public Health (Amendment) Act, 1907, parts II and III, sections 52-68, inclusive of part IV and part V, adopted 2nd December, 1908; Bye-laws in respect to new streets and buildings, 2nd June, 1914; Slaughter Houses, 21st July, 1903; Tents, Vans, Sheds, 7th February, 1899; Common Lodging Houses, 7th May, 1884; Nuisances, 7th May, 1884; Regulations with respect to Dairies, Cowsheds, Milkshops, 3rd February, 1914; Public Health (Meat), 1st April, 1925.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water. With the exception of the drought in 1920-1921 the water supply of the Town during the last five years has been satisfactory, and the quality of the water is good.

The Urban District is supplied from three sources:—

- (1) The Freeman's Spring Supply for the Moor.
- (2) Gravitating Main from Rugley Borehole and Springs.
- (3) Pumped Supply from Hulne Park Spring.

The first supply belongs to the Freeman of Alnwick, whilst the two other supplies belong to the Urban Council. The Town mains are divided into High and Low Service Sections fed from reservoirs situated 500 o.d. and 300 o.d. respectively. The High Service Reservoir (constructed 1913) holds 97,000 gallons. The Low Service Reservoir (constructed 1854) holds 210,000 gallons. The new filter beds, constructed on up-to-date lines in conformity with the requirements of the Ministry, were completed and put into operation on October 22nd, 1925.

Water is laid on inside the majority of the houses in the Town, and there are cases where stand-pipes are fixed in yards.

Rivers and Streams. The River Aln passes by on the North Side of the Town and there is no pollution from the Urban District.

Drainage and Sewerage. The Town is served on the partly combined system, there being surface water culverts in some parts which take the surface water from the streets. The main sewers and drains have good self cleansing gradients. The sewage goes by gravitation to the Sewage Disposal Works at Heleyside, situated one mile below the Town. Part of the Town (Canongate and Walkergate) is at a low level, and the sewage from this district is collected at the Sewage Ejector Station from which it is delivered into the gravitating main sewers. The Sewage Disposal Works are 8 acres in extent and consist of open settling tanks in duplicate and five acres of sand and gravel beds. The effluent is discharged into the River Aln and no complaints were received during the year, either as to the effluent or emanations from the works.

Closet Accommodation. The Town itself has the water carriage system, there being about 1527 water closets. The cottages on the Moor and the outlying parts of the district have earth closets, the number being 87. There are no privies.

Scavenging. The bi-weekly ashbox system of house refuse collections continues in satisfactory operation, the work being done by the Council's own men, horses and carts. The refuse is carted to the refuse depots on the Moor. A considerable quantity of paper and refuse is deposited in the ashboxes, which could be easily destroyed by burning, by which means householders would help the work of this department.

Sanitary Inspection of the District. Particulars will be found in the report of the Sanitary Inspector, appended:—

Urban District Council Offices,
Alnwick,
3rd March, 1926.

Dear Sir,

I beg to submit to you a summary of my work as Sanitary Inspector, for the year ending 31st December, 1925. These particulars are all recorded by me in the Inspector's Journal.

The summary is a copy of the return which has been sent to the County M.O.H.

PARTICULARS,	Inspections made.	Defects Found.	Defects Remedied.
Structural Defects	168	16	15
Dampness	9	7	3
Unfit for Habitation	0	3	2
Defective Spouting	32	17	16
Foul Drainage	32	19	19
Defective Drainage	37	27	27
Defective W.C.'s.	20	11	11
Insufficient W.C.'s.	4		
Foul W.C.'s.	196	16	16
Dairies, Cowsheds, and Milkshops	35		
Slaughter Houses	384		
Tents, Vans, etc.	1		
Workshops and Workplaces	25		
Keeping of Animals	3	2	2
Offensive Accumulations	14	7	7
Petrol Stores	12		
Totals	972	125	118

Yours faithfully,

JOHN TEMPLE ROBSON, F.S.I.,
Sanitary Inspector.

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Number of Inspections	972.
„ „ Notices Served	120.
„ „ Nuisances Abated	118.

Premises or Occupations controlled by Bye-laws or Regulations.

Lodging Houses. There is one common lodging house situated in Pottergate and this has been inspected periodically. Three cases of Diphtheria, being children of the same family just come into the Town, were removed from the Lodging House to the Isolation Hospital and the cubicles disinfected.

Slaughter Houses. There are no privately owned slaughter houses, but a block of ten slaughter houses is owned by the Urban Council, and these are rented to the butchers of the Town. Inspections are made on the slaughtering days and one case of tubercular meat was dealt with.

Cattle Market. This market is owned and controlled by the Urban Council. The sales are run by the Alnwick Auction Mart Co., and the market is thoroughly disinfected and washed after every sale. The whole of the market is cemented, and shallow troughs have been made at each entrance gate which are filled with disinfectant, so that stock has to pass through this when coming in and going out of the market.

Bakeries. There are three bakeries which have both proper sanitary accommodation and washing facilities.

Dairies and Cowsheds. There are 33 registered cow-keepers and two dairies.

Schools. The Sanitary condition and water supply of the schools is quite satisfactory. No closing of schools for infectious disease was considered necessary during the year.

HOUSING.

General Housing Conditions. There has been a big improvement in the housing conditions since 1920, as 105 more houses have been erected and occupied, whilst the remaining houses on the Council's site in the Swansfield Park Road area will be completed in a short time. Also a considerable number of houses have been built in the neighbourhood of Alnwick although not in the Urban District. These houses belong to the neighbouring Collieries and a number of families have removed to them from the Town. These two factors have helped to reduce the overcrowding in the Town, but there still remains some 150 names on the Council's register of applicants for houses. The Council endeavour to further reduce the overcrowding by giving to large families those houses they have to let. A new housing site in Victoria Terrace—which adjoins the present housing site—is under consideration by the Council. This would provide a further 33 houses. Should this materialize the Council will have attained the number of houses—viz. 150—which was included in the estimated return of housing needs for the Town.

Fitness of Houses. The general standard of housing is good, but there are a number of houses which are unfit and some which are damp and congested. Since 1920 thirteen houses have been demolished, and minor repairs have been carried out by the owners of others without the necessity of taking special action. The houses have water supply and sanitary accommodation.

Unhealthy Areas. In 1913 the Council obtained an order under Part II of the Housing of Working Classes Act, 1890, with respect to a scheme for dealing with No. 2 Area. Property housing 29 families with a population of 144 persons was acquired for clearance. Up to 1920, no commencement had been made with the demolition of this property owing to the difficulty in finding suitable alternative accommodation for the tenants. Since then, however, some of the houses have been demolished, but there still remains property housing 15 families with a population of 71 persons.

HOUSING STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1925.

The total number of new houses erected during the year (including those given below) is 38 with State Assistance under Housing Acts:—

By Local Authority	18.
By Other Persons	19.

1. Unfit Houses:—

Number of Houses inspected for defects	209.
„ „ „ and recorded	209
„ „ found unfit for habitation	Nil.
„ „ not fit for habitation in all respects	43.
2. Remedy of Defects with Service of formal Notices:—These number	36.
3. Action under Statutory Powers	Nil.
The number of houses demolished	8.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

The Milk Supply. The milk produced within the area is of wholesome quality, and adequate arrangements are in being for its supply and distribution.

Meat. The slaughter houses are visited on the days of slaughter and the carcasses examined. During the year there were killed 752 cattle, 2,559 sheep and 712 pigs. In only one case was it necessary to condemn a half-side of beef. Any condemned meat is buried at the refuse depot by the Council's men. On the whole the butchers are conforming to the requirements of the Public Health (Meat) Regulations of 1924 and give every assistance to the Sanitary Inspector.

Rats and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919. The refuse depots and other premises were visited and rats destroyed.

Disinfection. During the year 31 houses have been disinfected after cases of infectious disease.

Hospital. Eighteen cases of scarlet fever and four cases of diphtheria were admitted into the Isolation Hospital during the year.

New Drainage. Improvements have been carried out to eight drainage systems and three new disconnecting chambers provided.

Factory and Workshops. Twenty-five inspections were made during the year and in no case was it found necessary to take any action under the Act.

PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

During the year there were notified to me :—

21 cases of Scarlet Fever.	1 case of Erysipelas.
6 „ Diphtheria.	12 cases of Chickenpox.
2 „ Enteric Fever.	10 „ Pulmonary Tuberculosis.

Eighteen of the Scarlet Fever cases and four of the Diphtheria cases were admitted to the Isolation Hospital, the remaining cases being treated at their respective homes. One of the cases of Diphtheria died, also one of the two cases of Enteric Fever. All the cases of Scarlet Fever recovered. Chickenpox was only made a notifiable disease during the year, the object being to lessen the risk of mild cases of Smallpox remaining undiscovered. Four of the cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis died and some were admitted for Sanatorium benefit. The following is a comparative table of notifiable diseases for the last five years :—

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925
Smallpox ..	0	0	0	1	0
Scarlet Fever ..	8	22	8	14	21
Diphtheria ..	0	4	2	0	6
Puerperal Fever ..	0	0	0	0	0
Erysipelas ..	1	1	0	0	1
Pulmonary Tuberculosis ..	3	4	3	3	10
Other Tubercular Diseases ..	2	1	2	2	0
	14	32	15	20	38

I do not consider there is any real increase in the number of cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, but believe cases are more often notified now than hitherto.

An epidemic of Measles and an epidemic of Influenza made their appearance during the early part of the year. Luckily in neither case was the disease of a severe type. One death from influenza and seven from measles took place during the year.

Bacteriological aids to diagnosis are considerably utilised. The Council provide serums, etc., free of cost to necessitous cases.

No primary or re-vaccinations were performed by the Medical Officer of Health under the Public Health (Smallpox Prevention) Regulations, 1917.

No action has been taken by the Council with regard to Venereal Disease from which I consider the Town is particularly free.

No use has been made of the Schick and Dick tests in Diphtheria and Scarlet Fever respectively, or of the recently developed artificial methods of immunization against these diseases.

The report of the Sanitary Inspector is appended, from which it will be seen that much valuable sanitary work has been done during the year.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

B. TREVOR-ROPER, M.B., Ch.B., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.
Medical Officer of Health.