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Contributors

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ASHINGTON
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR 1908,

R. J. MILLS, M.B.,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL.

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—
1909.

ANNALS

URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR 1911-12

PRINTED BY THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEDICAL REPORT FOR 1908.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my report for 1908.

The population of our district for last year I estimated at 20,000, allowing roughly 7,000 for Ashington, and 13,000 for Hirst.

During the present year the number of new houses has increased, but for statistical purposes the buildings have only been engaged on since last June in any extent, and no Colliery houses have been erected during that period.

I would thus tabulate the population as follows:—

Ashington in June 1907	...	7,293	Hirst in June 1907	...	...	13,173
„ Excess of Births over deaths from June 1907—1908	...	77	„ Excess of Births over deaths from June 1907—1908	...	...	410
„ New houses occupied from June 1907-8, 5 to each house	...	75	„ New houses occupied from June 1907-8, 5 to each house...	...	...	320
		<u>7,445</u>				<u>13,903</u>

The foregoing figures exactly represent the population as checked by the number of inhabited houses up to the end of the year, but for the reason mentioned above, namely, that extensive building operations were not commenced till June 1908, I still feel justified in keeping the figures the same as last year.

In Hirst also it is well to bear in mind that there is a population of nearly 1,000 which will be estimated in the Morpeth Rural District, and had our extension scheme been forward, we would have at least a population of 22,000 in our district.

DISTRICT.

Our Urban District at present covers an area of 2,384·771 acres. It is bounded on the North, East, and West by agricultural land belonging to the Morpeth Rural District, and on the South by the river Wansbeck.

The surface soil is very shallow, resting on a deep bed of clay—a consequence of this being changes of temperature night and morning due to the easy receptivity of heat by the surface soil, and the equally easy parting of this heat at sundown.

There is but one staple industry in the district, namely, Coal Mining, at which the bulk of the population find employment.

In both Wards of the district the bulk of the house property belongs to the Ashington Coal Company, built in rows of two storey dwellings with yards, ashpits, which are now covered in conformity to the Bye-laws and privies attached. The streets and communicating Avenues between the rows are the property of the Coal Company, there upkeep devolving on the owners, regulated by the Bye-laws of the Council.

The water supply of the district is from the mines belonging to the Ashington and North Seaton Coal Companies, the distribution of which is under Council control.

Since last June building operations on a large scale have been in progress and practically a new township is being erected on the Duke of Portland's Estate at Black Close, with wider streets, more air space, and more suitable gardens than generally obtains in private enterprise.

An extension of our district has been applied for, which would bring within our Sanitary area a considerable number of new streets in continuance of our own, thus making our Council as a Sanitary Authority a more coherent body, and removing an anomalous condition of Urban and Rural Councils administering in a too contiguous area.

With the extension, and pending its coming into force, the Council have arranged for the acquirement of another Public Park and Playground for Hirst Ward, as Ashington is already supplied. This much needed open space will be both a beneficial and pleasant acquisition to the teeming and growing population of Hirst.

BIRTH RATE.

The total number of births registered during the year 1908, was 809; an increase of 106 on that of the previous year—of these 418 were males, and 391 females.

The distribution in the two Wards was as follows:—Ashington 190, Hirst 619; an increase in Ashington over last year of 37, and also an increase in Hirst of 69.

The rate per thousand population is 40·45 that of last year being only 35·15; while the rate in the respective Wards is:—Ashington 27·14 as against 21·85 last year; and in Hirst 47·6 as against 42·3 last year.

I drew attention last year to the falling birth rate since 1903, but we this year are drawing up to the maximum again which was for Ashington 28·37, and Hirst 56·2.

In the following tables you will find the respective distribution of births in each Ward, in which is included the illegitimate births for the year, 21 in all, 8 being in Ashington and 13 in Hirst, giving a rate per thousand to the birth rate of 25·8 as against 22·7 last year.

ASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL. BIRTHS. 1908.

Months.	Males.	Females.	Total.
January ...	32	40	72
February ...	39	35	74
March ...	37	39	76
April ...	39	31	70
May ...	33	31	64
June ...	48	27	75
July ...	38	29	67
August ...	31	31	62
September...	32	20	52
October ...	35	38	73
November...	31	33	64
December ...	23	37	60
Total ...	418	391	809

ASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL. DISTRIBUTION OF BIRTHS. 1908.

Months.	Ashington.	Hirst.	Total.	ILLEGITIMATES.				Total.
				Ashington.		Hirst.		
				Male	Fem	Male	Fem	
January	15	57	72	1	1	0	0	2
February ...	16	58	74	1	0	1	1	3
March	17	59	76	0	0	0	2	2
April	13	57	70	0	0	1	1	2
May	14	50	64	0	0	2	1	3
June	14	61	75	1	0	1	0	2
July	12	55	67	0	0	0	0	0
August	18	44	62	1	0	0	0	1
September ...	13	39	52	0	0	0	0	0
October	22	51	73	0	2	1	0	3
November ...	22	42	64	0	0	1	0	1
December ...	14	46	60	0	1	0	1	2
Total	190	619	809	4	4	7	6	21

DEATH RATE.

The Mortality for this year from all causes is 331; 180 males and 151 females, an increase of 62 on that of last year. The rate per thousand population is 16·5, and eliminating 22 cases of premature birth, 7 fatal accidents, and 1 suicide, we have a corrected return of 15·1.

Although this is very much higher than that of last year, you have to bear in mind that the increase of population during the last six months would correspondingly alter the ratio, as the deaths are taken from the period January to December, while the population is taken from June to June, as already alluded to.

A comparison of the yearly mortality returns since the formation of the Council is as follows:

Year, 1896	Total Mortality, 17·8	Corrected Mortality, 17·4
" 1897	" " 17·8	" " 16·6
" 1898	" " 16·3	" " 15·4
" 1899	" " 18·5	" " 16·8
" 1900	" " 17·45	" " 15·17
" 1901	" " 23·28	" " 21·28
" 1902	" " 17·02	" " 15·3
" 1903	" " 16·25	" " 14·25
" 1904	" " 18·29	" " 17·35
" 1905	" " 15·13	" " 13·6
" 1906	" " 16·35	" " 14·7
" 1907	" " 13·45	" " 11·95
" 1908	" " 16·5	" " 15·1

The Mortality in each Ward per thousand population is, Ashington 12·7 and Hirst 18·6. The distribution of age Mortality is as follows:—

Under 1 year, 164 deaths; 27 in Ashington and 137 in Hirst.

From 1-5	" 50	" ; 15	" 35	" "
" 5-15	" 14	" ; 7	" 7	" "
" 15-25	" 10	" ; 7	" 3	" "
" 25-65	" 59	" ; 20	" 39	" "
" 65 upwards	34	" ; 13	" 21	" "

The following tables show the above distribution each month.

ASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL. AGE MORTALITY. 1908.

Months.	Males.	Fem- males.	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 to 5 years.	5 to 15 years.	15 to 25 years.	25 to 65 years.	65 yrs. and Ups.
January ...	13	16	29	14	6	1	1	5	2
February	13	10	23	12	1	2	0	6	2
March ...	17	17	34	18	4	1	1	7	3
April ...	15	11	26	8	8	2	1	3	4
May ...	8	11	19	6	1	1	1	8	2
June ...	13	7	20	7	2	0	3	2	6
July ...	15	12	27	13	3	1	1	7	2
August ...	20	12	32	20	5	1	0	4	2
September	19	18	37	22	4	1	0	7	3
October ...	17	16	33	21	5	0	2	2	3
November	17	14	31	11	7	3	0	5	5
December	13	7	20	12	4	1	0	3	0
Total ...	180	151	331	164	50	14	10	59	34

DISTRIBUTION OF AGE MORTALITY. ASHINGTON. 1908.

Months.	All Ages.	Under 1 year	1 to 5 years.	5 to 15 years.	15 to 25 years.	25 to 65 years.	65 years and Upwards
January ...	7	0	2	1	1	3	0
February ...	7	1	1	1	0	2	2
March ...	8	2	1	0	1	2	2
April ...	9	2	3	1	1	0	2
May ...	6	2	1	0	0	2	1
June ...	6	0	0	0	1	2	3
July ...	4	0	1	0	1	2	0
August ...	10	7	0	1	0	1	1
September ...	9	2	2	1	0	2	2
October ...	8	4	1	0	2	1	0
November ...	10	4	2	1	0	3	0
December ...	5	3	1	1	0	0	0
Total ...	89	27	15	7	7	20	13

DISTRIBUTION OF AGE MORTALITY. HIRST. 1908.

Months.	All Ages.	Under 1 year.	1 to 5 years.	5 to 15 years.	15 to 25 years.	25 to 65 years.	65 years and Upwards
January...	22	14	4	0	0	2	2
February ...	16	11	0	1	0	4	0
March ...	26	16	3	1	0	5	1
April ...	17	6	5	1	0	3	2
May ...	13	4	0	1	1	6	1
June ...	14	7	2	0	2	0	3
July ...	23	13	2	1	0	5	2
August ...	22	13	5	0	0	3	1
September ...	28	20	2	0	0	5	1
October...	25	17	4	0	0	1	3
November ...	21	7	5	2	0	2	5
December ...	15	9	3	0	0	3	0
Total ...	242	137	35	7	3	39	21

The rate of Infant Mortality over the district is 8.2 as against 5.15 in 1907.

The Wards show a proportion per thousand population of 3.8 for Ashington, and 10.5 for Hirst, showing an increase in each Ward but considerably more so in Hirst.

Basing the Infant Mortality not on the population—but per thousand children born, the rate over the district is much higher than in 1907, namely 202.7 as against 146.7 last year.

In Ashington the rate on the same basis is 142.1 and in Hirst 221.3, these rates last year being respectively 150.3 and 145.45.

The diminished rate in Ashington from last year is due to the excess of births, namely 190 as against 153, thus decreasing the ratio; whereas in Hirst although the births have increased, the deaths in children under 1 year are slightly in excess proportionately to the births, giving an increased rate.

ASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT. CAUSES OF DEATH. 1908.

Causes of Death. 1	Deaths in or belonging Whole District at Sub-joined Ages.							Deaths in Localities at all Ages.		
	All Ages. 2	Under 1 yr. 3	1 and und. 5 4	5 and und 15 5	15 and und 25 6	25 and und 65 7	65 and upds. 8	Ash- ington 9	Hirst. 10	Total Deaths in Public Instit'ns in District. 11
Whooping Cough ..	9	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	9	0
Diphtheria ..	6	0	4	2	0	0	0	3	3	0
Enteric ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Continued ..	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Epid Influenza ..	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Diarrhœa ..	3	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	2	0
Enteritis ..	44	36	8	0	0	0	0	10	34	0
Puerperal Fever ..	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
Erysipelas ..	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Phthisis ..	17	0	0	2	5	10	0	6	11	0
Other Tuber Diseases ..	17	6	7	1	2	1	0	5	12	0
Cancer ..	6	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	5	0
Bronchitis ..	25	16	4	1	0	1	3	7	18	0
Pneumonia ..	8	2	2	0	0	4	0	1	7	0
Other Diseases of Respiratory Organs ..	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Alcoholism ..	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Premature Birth ..	22	22	0	0	0	0	0	1	22	0
Diseases and Accidents of Parturition ..	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Heart Diseases ..	32	1	1	0	0	21	9	12	20	0
Accidents ..	7	0	0	1	1	5	0	5	2	0
Suicides ..	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
Meningitis Non-Tuber ..	13	8	2	3	0	0	0	7	6	0
Broncho Pnuemonia ..	21	11	10	0	0	0	0	1	20	0
Debility ..	25	23	1	0	0	0	1	4	21	0
Senility ..	11	0	0	0	0	0	11	4	7	0
Apoplexy ..	5	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	2	0
Bright's Disease ..	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Convulsions ..	21	17	4	0	0	0	0	5	16	0
All Other Causes ..	24	12	2	2	2	5	1	3	21	0
All Causes ..	331	164	50	14	10	59	34	89	242	1

An analysis of the foregoing table of causes of death, shows the following from infectious diseases, namely :—

Whooping Cough ...	9
Diphtheria	6
Enteric Fever	1
Continued Fever	1
Erysipelas	2
Puerperal	2

21, giving a rate per thousand from these diseases of 1·05, to which must be added our distinctive infectious and troublesome disease, Epidemic Enteritis of which we had 44 deaths, thus increasing the rate to 3·2.

We had only 1 death from Enteric Fever throughout the year out of the 25 cases notified and treated in Hospital.

The deaths from Diphtheria are slightly more this year than in 1907 in proportion to the notifications, namely 6 out of 41, as against 5 out of 60 last year. The result however is on the whole satisfactory, and by the use of the Serum supplied by the Council both in prophylaxis and treatment, and by the more effective isolation, a considerable amount of good has been evident in diminution of cases and prevention.

The deaths from Phthisis this year number 17, as against 12 last year ; and from other forms of this disease 17 also, as against 14 in 1907, showing a total increase of 8 in 1908.

In spite of the precautions taken we thus find an increase in the number of deaths from this disease, and correspondingly an increased ignorance in spite of repeated warnings of its infectivity.

Some steps should be taken to make the disease notifiable, when it would be dealt with by the Council, mainly towards the prevention of its spread in the community.

The matter of acquiring spitting vessels for affected patients has not yet received the attention of the Council.

I again make an appeal to the local charitable organisations in our district in behalf of our consumptive patients. Much can be done in the earlier stages of this disease by suitable sanatorium treatment, and as we have easy access to such, it is worth the consideration of our local Clubs and Institutions to find the means for combating this disease. It would be worth while from a humanitarian point of view, as well as being a safeguard to the community, and bearing in mind what I have already said as to its infectivity, complete isolation alone can be of service both to the patient and those in contact.

The total deaths from Respiratory diseases of all kinds including Phthisis, is 73, an increase of 7 on that of last year, as usual Broncho Pneumonia and Bronchitis constituting the larger proportion, and that in children.

The rate per thousand population of the above diseases is as follows :—

Notifiable Infectious Diseases ...	0·6
Whooping Cough	0·45
Phthisis	0·85
All forms of Tubercular Disease ...	1·7
Bronchitis... ..	1·25
Broncho Pneumonia	1·05

As it is of considerable importance to ascertain the exact ages at which death occurs in premature and debilitated children in order to estimate prenatal or antinatal causes, the former mostly showing up to the first month, I append the following table of causes at the various ages :—

INFANTILE MORTALITY DURING THE YEAR 1908.

Causes of Death.		Und. 1 week.	1-2 weeks.	2-3 weeks.	3-4 weeks.	Total und. 1 month	1-2 Months.	2-3 Months.	3-4 Months.	4-5 Months.	5-6 Months.	6-7 Months.	7-8 Months.	8-9 Months.	9-10 Months.	10-11 Months.	11-12 Months.	Total Deaths under 1 year.
I Common Infectious Diseases.	Small-Pox ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Chicken-Pox ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Measles ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Scarles Fever ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Diphtheria ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Whooping Cough ..	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	6
II Diarrhoeal Diseases.	Diarrhoea, all forms, Muco-Ent. ..	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
	Enteritis, Gastro Ent., Gastro Intest ..	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	7	3	6	1	3	1	4	1	33
	Gastritis, Catarrh ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
III Wasting Diseases.	Premature Birth ..	12	2	1	1	16	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	22
	Congenital Defects ..	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	Injury at Birth ..	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus ..	5	2	1	1	9	5	4	2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	23
IV. Tuber Diseases.	Tuberculous Meningitis ..	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	Tuberculous Peritonitis ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Other Tuber Diseases ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
V. Other Causes.	Erysipelas ..	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	Syphilis ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Meningitis Non-Tuber ..	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	8
	Convulsions ..	2	0	0	1	3	2	3	1	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	17
	Bronchitis ..	0	0	1	2	3	1	2	0	0	3	0	2	1	2	1	1	16
	Laryngitis ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Pneumonia ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Broncho-Pneumonia ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	1	3	11
	Suffocation ..	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other Causes ..	2	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total ..		25	5	4	5	39	20	17	10	15	9	10	8	10	7	9	10	164

The outstanding feature in the foregoing table is the increased Mortality from Diarrhœal diseases. The climatic conditions favoured its spread, the congested housing, the proximity of ashpits and privies, the innocent carelessness of mothers too young to be such, the reprehensible habit of taking advice from one and all except the doctor, and the manifest want of care in Infant dietary all contributed to lessen our usefulness in coping with the danger. Yet one must not be too pessimistic, as from the Epidemic form of this disease, we have only half the deaths we had in the 1904 outbreak, and last year was phenomenal in the history of the Council. It is the apathy that is most intolerable. These infants are the raw material of good workmen and mothers, they are the potential workers of the next generation, the main asset in a working community.

I am sorry to state that there does not exist the same feeling of national loss as a corresponding adult death roll would call forth, and yet it is the raw material that requires the greater nourishing and tending. To combat this, strenuous action is required in a propaganda of education in the moral and hygienic aspects of motherhood. A great deal of this can be done at school and more can be done by evening continuation classes for girls, and still more by the parents taking up this obligation. The self reliant mother can afford to do without the precarious advice of those old dames and neighbours, whose experience without knowledge exacts its toll in disease and infant lives.

Every year I am more and more convinced that preventable diseases, such as Diarrhœa and Broncho Pneumonia, would be more and more mitigated in severity and extension in spite of weather conditions were the proper care taken, and for such there is no other course but to educate.

* This education of young mothers in domestic hygiene, in the administration of pure food, and in their responsibility to themselves as mothers, can be attained by the local Authority in the provision of trained Health Visitors, this end being the chief *raison-d'être* of the notification of Birth Act.

I append a table this year also, showing the proportion of births and deaths in each Ward relative to their population, explaining the difference in ratio to the birth rate which is necessarily higher in Hirst considering the nature of its population.

ASHINGTON.				HIRST.			
Births should be	...	...	283	Births should be	...	...	526
„ are	...	...	190	„ are	...	...	619
			93 less				93 more
Deaths should be	...	...	116	Deaths should be	...	...	215
„ are	...	...	89	„ are	...	...	242
			27 less				27 more
Infantile Mortality should be			38	Infantile Mortality should be			125
„ „ is	...		27	„ „ is	...		137
			11 less				12 more

The relation of Births to Deaths in each Ward is practically the same as last year.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

There is a distinct decrease in the number of Infectious diseases notified during this last year, namely—104 as against 118 in 1907, and 208 in 1906.

The rate per thousand attacked is 5.2 as against 5.9 last year, and the rate in the Wards is, Ashington 6.4, and in Hirst 4.5, exactly reversing the proportion of last year.

Diphtheria is less this year by 19 cases, while Enteric shows an increase of 17 on that of 1907.

The following tables explain the area of distribution in the different months and the ages of those attacked :—

CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED DURING 12 MONTHS ENDING
31st DECEMBER, 1908. ASHINGTON URBAN DISTRICT.

Notifiable Diseases.	Cases Notified in Whole District.							Total Cases in each Locality.		Cases Removed to Hospital.	
	At Ages—Years.							Ash- ington	Hirst	Ash- ington	Hirst
	At all Ages.	Und. 1 year.	1 to 5	5 to 15	15 to 25	25 to 65	65 and upds.				
Diphtheria	41	0	10	29	2	0	0	16	25	0	0
Scarlet Fever	17	0	9	7	1	0	0	1	16	0	0
Erysipelas	19	2	0	1	1	12	3	10	9	0	0
Enteric Fever	25	0	0	9	9	6	1	16	9	16	9
Continued Fever ..	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	0
Total	104	2	19	46	14	19	4	45	59	16	9

DISTRIBUTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES. 1908.

Months.	Diphtheria.		Scarlet Fever		Erysipelas		Enteric		Cont. Fever.		Puer. Fever.		Total.		
	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash- ington	Hirst.	Ash.	H'st	both
Jan.	5	8	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	6	12	18
Feb.	3	2	1	5	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	9	16
Mar.	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Apr.	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
May	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	2	4	6
June	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	5
July	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	3	7
Aug.	0	3	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	6	7
Sept.	0	4	0	0	0	0	9	3	0	0	0	0	9	7	16
Oct.	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	5
Nov.	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	5	5	10
Dec.	0	1	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	7
Total	16	25	1	16	10	9	16	9	2	0	0	0	45	59	104

HOSPITAL.

During the year 25 cases of Enteric Fever were treated in Hospital, 16 being from the Ashington Ward and 9 from Hirst.

Out of this number only one fatal case occurred, and that practically after admission. The Hospital has proved of inestimable benefit this year, and I have no doubt the prompt removal of patients there has been the means of checking what would have been an epidemic this last summer.

I asked last year for improvements in some of the departments and I am glad the Council has consented, as it is of the utmost importance that the efficiency of the Institution should be maintained at a high level.

SEWAGE, SCAVENGING AND DISINFECTING.

I have to report the good working condition of all the sewers in the district. Several extra facilities in the matter of flushing have been successfully instituted with abundance of water for the purpose.

I have again to ask householders when cleaning their yard sinks to keep them filled with water thereby forming a seal.

Notices are periodically sent out with instructions on this matter, and also with advice as to using the clean ashes in privies, which owing to the oxygen retaining properties of these latter would convert the privies into earth closets of a most effective type.

Ashpit cleansing proceeds as usual. Complaints are dealt with as they arise, but much more might be done if householders would refrain from putting vegetable matter therein, which proves one of the greatest nuisances in the hot weather.

I recommend that the Council adopt some more effective means for the removal of trades refuse.

Lime spraying has been carried out most effectively this year, the work being facilitated by the extra machine purchased by the Council.

Deodorising of ashpits is carried out after cleansing with antiseptic powder.

Infected houses are immediately disinfected on the removal or recovery of patients, and we experience no difficulty now, but rather help from the householders in this matter. Not only in definite infectious fevers alone, but in Phthisis and suspicious diseases of all kinds is this precaution taken. Patients clothing, etc., are disinfected at the Hospital with our steam disinfectant.

EXTENSION AND IMPROVEMENTS.

New Houses.—A number of new houses have been erected during the year especially in the latter half, all in accordance with the Bye-laws and of a better type than has obtained previously.

Wash Houses and Cement Yards.—The improvement in type consists in the inclusion of wash houses, in the better paving of yards, and the greater air space between blocks of houses.

Baths.—A considerable number of the new houses have had the water led in and some supplied with baths, an extension of which would be welcomed in our community.

Water Closets.—Another feature in the improved housing is the adoption of the water closet system, a number of which have been introduced during the year.

Urinals.—A fourth Public Urinal has been provided for at a cost of £130.

Highways.—The main street has now been laid with tar macadam, a considerable improvement so far, an extension of which will be probable should it pass the experimental stage.

Footpaths have been improved on the main streets, asphalt paths having been relaid opposite First Row, Long Row and on Woodhorn Road, as well as a considerable amount of repairs to footpaths in the private streets.

Private Streets.—The Council is demanding a superior class of roads to be formed in the private streets with proper footpaths. In the matter of existing private streets there is room for considerable improvement, in which I am glad to say steady progress is being made.

The back streets at Morven Terrace and Station Road which I called attention to last year have now been panned, and I anticipate being able to report more marked progress this year.

Public Seats.—The Public Seats provided for the aged at suitable sites, have justified their erection and additional accommodation is now being carried out.

Lighting.—The Public Lighting is on the whole satisfactory, every endeavour being made to erect lamps at the most needed sites. The system however is somewhat erratic, and an improvement could be made on the "all night" lamps with advantage to the workmen going to and returning from work.

New Schools.—The New Schools erected in Hirst providing against the overcrowding in those existing, are now in use, and the congestion is considerably relieved.

Slaughter Houses.—The extension of our district, and the proximity of most of our slaughter houses to the dwellings justify me in repeating a former request for consideration by the Council of the advisability of erecting a Public Slaughter House.

WATER.

The Council from the beginning of 1907 became the Water Authority for the district.

The Supply is from the Pits of the Ashington Coal Coy. It is tapped a considerable distance underground in from the shaft bottom, where it filters through the free stone roof, is conducted along a specially built channel to which no one has access but officials connected with same, is pumped to the surface, where it is filtered and distributed from tank reservoirs throughout the district. It is a deep well water and its gathering ground is many miles from the district. The sub soil over our district is of clay and to such a depth that contamination from the surface is impossible. From frequent analysis, I find the quality of the water satisfactory both chemically and bacteriologically.

Since taking over the supply, new mains have been laid down to meet the growing needs of the Hirst Ward and new branch mains are being laid down as required. Many houses have now also had the water led into them and the Council anticipate being able to still further increase the facilities in this department.

The services of a Plumber Superintendent and Assistant have been secured, and taps, etc., throughout the district are kept in good repair.

DAIRIES, COWSHEDS AND MILKSHOPS.

Throughout 1908 the standard of the above has been well maintained. There has been an additional Cowshed erected and in conformity as regards air space to the new Bye-laws. Throughout the district there is no over crowding of cattle and the sanitary arrangements are uniformly excellent.

The water supply in the case of Sparrow House Farm is improved, the water being now led in to the farm. The water supply to the other farms, both for the use of cattle, and the cleansing of vessels, etc., is ample, and the condition of the vessels for retaining milk satisfactory.

One case of Diphtheria occurred at one of the farms, but the whole family were promptly removed and isolated till Bacteriological proof warranted their return. The milk was examined both Bacteriologically and after culture by Inoculation with negative results. The house was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

The retail vendors keep their premises in good condition and in conformity to the Bye-laws.

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

In Hirst there are 14 Workshops and 3 Factories. In Ashington there are 9 Workshops and 6 Factories.

These have been visited by your Sanitary Inspector and myself during the year, and we have been pleased with the sanitary conditions existing. The improvements suggested have been willingly carried out, and I expect still further benefits from a sanitary point of view to accrue when they are completed.

There are no under-ground Bakeries.

There are no outworkers in the district.

ALLOTMENTS.

Under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act a number of meetings have been held by the Committee appointed by the Council, also meetings of those wishing to make applications for land.

An Association has been formed and registered as suggested by the Authorities.

Applications for Small Holdings have been forwarded to the County Council and the Urban Councils Committee have been successful in negotiating with the Duke of Portland's Agent for land for Allotments, 10 acres having been obtained in a suitable position. This has been sub-leased to the Association above referred to, and is now in the hands of the applicants, who number about 100.

Further negotiations are in progress for obtaining land on the North Seaton Estate, in close proximity to the population of Hirst, and no doubt these will be taken up when the necessary arrangements have been completed.

HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT.

From the foregoing we may conclude that the general health of our community (with the exception of the outbreak of Diarrhoea) is favourable. Death returns are not a true index of vitality, but taking them as such, we were in 1908 still below the average of the preceding 10 years, namely—16·5 as against the decennial average 17·26.

I commented last year on the danger of children attending school suffering from disease of scalp. This has considerably abated since then, and it is to be hoped that the thorough examination of the children by the Medical Inspector of Schools will engage the attention of parents in this matter in a more effective way than can be done in my report. The Medical Inspection of school children is undertaken by the County Council, whose Officers visit our district periodically.

The other diseases affecting the health of the community have been sufficiently dealt with in the body of this report.

Thanking you for your continued consideration and courtesy during the year.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant,

R. J. MILLS.

