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Contributors

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183 Euston Road
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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
GUISBOROUGH URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.



GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my twenty-first Annual Report, that for the year 1939, which, in view of the war, is, in accordance with circular 2067 of the Ministry of Health, confined to essential and urgent matters which have affected the public health during the year.

The vital statistics indicate that the slight rise in the birth-rate noticed of recent years has been accentuated; the death-rate has also risen, although to lesser extent, and in the first year of life the mortality has been satisfactorily small. In September the child population of the district was increased by evacuation from crowded cities; notwithstanding, infectious disease with few exceptions remained throughout the whole year much below the usual level. Scarlet fever showed the lowest prevalence in the district since 1921; diphtheria since 1931; there were only two cases of enteric fever, in one household; and influenza caused but slight fatality. On the other hand measles and whooping-cough, both made notifiable in the last quarter of the year, were somewhat prevalent, although the outbreak of measles was earlier.

The one administrative public health measure of importance was a drive for the immunisation against diphtheria of the younger school children, preparations for which were launched at the end of 1938, and the results of which will be worth attention. To reach the parents the help of head-teachers of infant and junior elementary schools was solicited and was very freely given, and I wish now to place on record their valuable assistance without which the scheme could not have functioned. The head-teachers undertook the distribution to parents of school children of ages five to nine years of a leaflet recommending the immunisation of their children, which their own doctors would be able to do free of any expense to the parents, and, accompanying the leaflet, a card for the parent to sign, requesting that their child be immunised and giving the doctor's name. The head-teachers collected these cards and returned them to me, and I then distributed them, along with sufficient immunising material (A.P.T.) to the doctors concerned. The Council paid for the material and also a fee of 5/- to the doctor for each certificate of completion of the immunising course of two injections. As the first stages of the scheme operated through the elementary schools it was in practice more or less limited to schoolchildren; of these again only those under ten years of age were recommended to be immunised, because of the rather greater tendency to slight soreness of the arm after the injection in older children, and because the younger ones had greater need of protection. A few children under five years of age or over ten were, in fact, immunised, but comparatively few.

The response of parents to the scheme in the various districts in the combined districts was as follows :—

	Estimated No of children aged 5—9 years	No. of children whose parents requested immunisation	Percentage
Redcar Borough ...	2140	869	40½
Guisborough U.D. ...	710	310	44
Loftus U.D. ...	690	294	42½
Saltburn & Marske U.D.	380	172	45
Skelton & Brotton U.D.	1200	512	42½

The parents therefore requested immunisation for from 40 to 45% of all the children aged 5 to 9 years and the proportion varied little between different districts.

Subsequently certificates of immunisation were received from the various doctors and these showed the number of children immunised in the different districts to be as follows :

	No. of children immunised	Percentage of number in which immunisation had been requested
Redcar Borough ...	879	101
Guisborough U.D. ...	284	92
Loftus U.D. ...	169	57½
Saltburn & Marske U.D.	155	90
Skelton & Brotton U.D.	163	32

In this district, and also in Redcar and in Saltburn and Marske all, or nearly all, the children whose parents had requested immunisation received the full course of two injections ; the few exceptions could be accounted for by change of mind of the parents, change of residence, or unwillingness after the first injection to submit to a second. The scheme is as yet too small and of too short duration to expect any definite results and the following figures are given with all reserve. I would explain that the protective inoculations were mostly given in the second quarter of 1939 and the resistance of the body to infection would not be fully established for some months.

	Percentage of children aged 5—9 years immunised, April to June, 1939	No. of cases of diphtheria notified, January to July,	
		1939	1940
Redcar Borough ...	41	30	2
Saltburn & Marske U.D.	41	1	0
Guisborough U.D. ...	40	5	1
		—	—
Total		36	3
		—	—
Loftus U.D. ...	24½	4	4
Skelton & Brotton U.D.	13½	2	8
		—	—
Total		6	12
		—	—

From August to December 1939 one case only of this disease was notified in the combined districts, and that in the Skelton and Brotton Urban District.

In the three districts with at least 40% of the younger school children protected the number of diphtheria cases dropped to one-twelfth; in the other two districts with a much smaller proportion of children immunised the number of cases doubled. The figures are small and the result may depend purely on chance, but the odds are strongly against it. Of the 15 cases so far notified in 1940 all are non-immunised children or (in the Guisborough case) an adult.

The cost to the different Councils is given in the following table, which, however, does not include a small sum, about £5 in all, to cover the cost of printing and stationery. This expense may fairly be compared with the hospital cost entailed by cases of diphtheria, which will average between £15 and £20 per case,

		Cost of Diphtheria Immunisation, 1939.		
		£	s.	d.
Redcar Borough	...	255	6	9
Guisborough U.D.	...	85	11	3
Loftus U.D.	...	50	18	11
Saltburn & Marske U.D.		42	16	4
Skelton & Brotton U.D.		49	0	9

It will be a matter for regret if this scheme is interrupted by the war.

I am, Madam and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

C. R. GIBSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

Guisborough,

16th August, 1940.

Statistics (not yet officially confirmed) for 1939 :

Number of births, 144 ; birth-rate, 17·8.

Number of deaths of residents 107 ; death-rate, 13·2.

Infant Mortality Rate : 28 infant deaths per thousand births.

Notifications received : pneumonia, 8 ; scarlet fever, 5 ; diphtheria, 5 ; erysipelas, 3 ; enteric fever, 2 ; ophthalmia neonatorum, 1 ; whooping-cough, 33. Tuberculosis (new cases) 11.

