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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

Hexham Urban District

Council

FOR THE

Year Ending 31st December, 1920.

Hexham :

Herald Co., Ltd., St. Mary's Chare.

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE
HEXHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

CARNTYNE,
HEXHAM.
April, 1921.

To the Chairman and Members of the
Hexham Urban District Council.

GENTLEMEN,

In accordance with instructions received from the Ministry of Health, my Annual Report must be on the same lines as that of last year.

NATURAL AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE DISTRICT:

Population:—Census, 1911, 8,417. Estimated, 1920, 8,087. Hexham Urban District can be divided into three divisions:—

1. That comprising the centre of the town, clustered round its ancient Abbey. You have here a thickly populated area of very old dilapidated buildings, added to from time to time without any regard to sanitary efficiency. Back to back property up narrow yards, or houses with soil at the back up to varying considerable levels, or back to back with stables. Houses where the fronts have been converted into shops, and where make-shift, dark, dangerous staircases are the only means of access. Tenemented property, old, with no sanitary conveniences, no water or sinks in the houses; the whole constituting a conglomeration of dwellings, dark and damp, insufficiently ventilated, and in these overcrowding is very prevalent. This area can only be dealt with by a drastic town improvement scheme.

2. A more or less modern town surrounding this central portion, where there is nothing very special to report, except that the errors of the early seventies are much in evidence, the long unbroken terrace, small rooms, and minimum air space, with an absence of many of the essentials for domestic comfort, such as wash-houses, baths, etc.

3. The purely agricultural and residential area outside numbers 1 and 2; many of the farm houses therein are damp and do not come up to the requirements of the present day, more especially if they are used as Dairy Farms.

Social Conditions.—Large industries are nearly absent. The town is largely residential, a considerable proportion of the males from the terrace property travelling to and fro to the busier centres lower down the Tyne. The local gas works, artificial manure works, and market gardeners are the main local employers of labour. Our death rate, over 60 years of age, is always high, generally about double the average for the whole county, owing to the immigration of elderly people, when past active work, into the town from the surrounding country area, and generally our birth rate is small.

Deaths.—During the year under review, after making allowance for inward and outward transference of deaths, 134 have been registered as occurring in your district. This is equivalent to a death rate of 16.5 per 1,000 on an estimated population of 8,087, and compares unfavourably with the death rate of 12.98 for 1919, and also for the death rate of England and Wales, which for the year is 12.4. Of the deaths, 67 were males and 67 females.

Births.—217 Births have been registered in your district against 158 for last year, and is the highest I have had to record for some years. This is equivalent to a birth rate of 26.9 per 1,000 on the estimated population of 8,087. Of the births, 109 were males, 108 were females. 11 were illegitimate.

Causes of Death.—One was due to Enteric Fever, 4 to Scarlet Fever, 4 to Whooping Cough, 1 to Influenza, 9 to Pulmonary Tuberculosis, 2 to Tuberculous Meningitis, 2 to other Tuberculous Diseases, 10 to Cancer, 2 to Meningitis, 13 Organic Heart Disease, 3 Bronchitis, 11 Pneumonia, 2 other Respiratory Diseases, 6 Diarrhœa (under 2 years), 5 Nephritis, and Bright's Disease, 5 Congenital Debility, 2 Violence, 3 Suicide, 49 other defined diseases.

Ages at Death.—22 were under one year (of which 3 were illegitimate), 2 were 1 and under 3, 3 were 2 and under 5, 4 were 5 and under 15, 4 were 15 and under 25, 11 were 25 and under 45, 25 were 45 and under 65, and 55 were 65 and over.

22 Deaths under one year is equivalent to an infantile death rate of 101.3 per 1,000 births, and is most unsatisfactory. For the six years previous to 1918 the average was 96.8. In 1918 it was 75, and in 1919, 56.9. This only exemplifies what

I have repeatedly pointed out to you, that under the existing sanitary conditions in Hexham an increased birth rate will be followed by an increased infantile mortality, as the conditions under which the infants have to be reared are so bad.

13 Deaths from Tubercular disease is practically the same as last year, when the number was 14.

74 Cases of Infectious Diseases have been notified against 123 for previous year, but as Whooping Cough and Measles are no longer notifiable you cannot compare the figures. Of these 74, one was Malaria, one Erysipelas, 10 Pneumonia, and 62 Scarlet Fever.

Scarlet Fever made its appearance in the latter part of May and gradually assumed an epidemic form throughout the summer and autumn months, which taxed the resources of your Hospital to its utmost. The Annexe had to be opened and equipped, and a very considerable strain was placed upon the executive to cope with the epidemic. Unfortunately four deaths occurred.

Beyond the Poor Law Hospital, open under Poor Law Regulations, you have no provision for treatment of serious illness or accident. I had hoped that before the publication of this Report the War Memorial Hospital at St. Wilfrid's would have been in being. It will fill a much needed want and be of the greatest possible service.

We are too small an area for setting up a separate scheme for the treatment of Tubercular Disease. The Dispensary for such cases set up under county control is, however, being fully taken advantage of, and most of the cases notified to me are receiving treatment there.

Details as to your water supply and possible pollution of rivers and streams, closet accommodation, and scavenging will be referred to in your Inspector's Report.

Food.—The milk supply is almost entirely from farms in your own district and is retailed direct from the farm to the town. Generally speaking, the farm buildings and the methods adopted leave much to be desired. You have already had the detailed report, and many of the dairy farmers are under notice to remedy serious defects. The adoption of only one delivery of milk a day is a practice I much deplore. It renders the difficulty of maintaining a proper standard both in quantity and quality, and is a distinct hardship to the poor who have no means of storing their supplies and constitutes a menace to health, especially to children. The high price has also a bad effect, curtailing a sufficient quantity. Considering that there is no middle man or cost of transit to be

added, it has always surprised me that the maximum price should be charged, especially when I find that within a few miles a much lower rate is the rule. Owing to private philanthropy, it has not been necessary to advise you to take action under the Milk (Mothers' and Children's Order, 1918), but this may be necessary in the near future.

Maternity and Child Welfare.—This scheme continues to prosper, and I hope that when the necessary alterations are made to the recently acquired building in St. Cuthbert's Lane the benefits to the children will be greater, and will meet all the requirements of the Ministry of Health. They certainly will add very considerably to the ease and efficiency of conducting the scheme.

The Welcome has now completed a fifth year of useful work, and numbers on its register 76 mothers and 102 children. The total attendances have been 745 mothers and 975 children.

The Day Nursery attached to the above has also done most useful work. The attendances for the year being 5,295 and come from 50 homes.

We are still without hospital provision for expectant mothers and children, but possibly ere long this will be remedied by an Annexe to the War Memorial Hospital at St. Wilfrid's. All cases of parturition are, however, attended by fully certificated nurses, either privately engaged or under the scheme of the Hexham Nursing Association, and if pecuniary or other aid is necessary the Hexham Aid Society renders valuable assistance. It is only in the houses in unsanitary surroundings that the births take place which are so unsatisfactory and deplorable.

Housing.—It is gratifying to know that there are now some signs of more and proper houses being provided in your district. I have so often pointed out to you that in this lies the future welfare of your town from a sanitary, social and commercial point of view. Every day the question becomes more urgent. The conditions in the condemned area more especially are getting steadily worse, and as I see no prospect of a Town Improvement Scheme in the near future it will be necessary to condemn a very considerable number of houses, and call upon the owners of others to make very material alterations, to render them fit for human habitation; otherwise, your infantile mortality and your tuberculosis death rate will assume alarming proportions, and some drastic steps must be taken; but where you are going to put the displaced population is beyond my comprehension. At the same time, there is no doubt that advantage has been taken of your leniency

to increase the overcrowding and to allow property to fall still further below the low-water mark of sanitary efficiency, and both overcrowding and degeneration will tend still further to increase unless you are prepared to combat them, placing the public weal before private hardship.

The annexed two tables are instructive and will repay your consideration.

To sum up, gentlemen, the sanitary prosperity of Hexham depends upon what can be done to increase and improve the housing accommodation. The following extracts from my register of births will give you some idea of the conditions existing, and the natural difficulties of rearing infants. Births have occurred under the following conditions in the past few months:—

1	Room	...	...	...	9	Occupants.
1	„	...	...	...	7	„
1	„	...	...	...	5	„
1	„	...	...	...	5	„
2	„	...	...	...	10	„
2	„	...	...	...	9	„
2	„	...	...	...	10	„

The deaths occurred in the Wards as follows, omitting those which occurred in Public Institutions, and allowing for a possible error where doubts existed as to which Ward the case should be allocated:—

Gilesgate Ward	...	...	...	52
Leazes Ward	...	...	...	30
Priestpottle Ward	...	...	...	18
Hencotes Ward	...	...	...	20

GENERAL DEATH RATE 1908 TO 1920.

Death Rate: 1908 to 1912	...	...	13.78
1912	...	...	14.82
1913	...	...	13.05
1914	...	...	14.82
1915	...	...	19.4
1916	...	...	12.8
1917	...	...	15.75
1918	...	...	20.1
1919	...	...	12.98
1920	...	...	16.5

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours Faithfully,

JOHN A. JACKSON,

M.D., M and H.,

SURVEYOR'S AND SANITARY INSPECTOR'S REPORT, 1920.

GENTLEMEN,

From the tables appended it will be seen that 1,335 visits have been made to various premises in the district with the result that 367 nuisances have been discovered and the majority rectified.

No new houses have been erected during the year and certified as fit for habitation.

Water Supply.—The rainfall for the year 1920 was 28.325 inches. The lowest yield from the Springs at Ladle Wells being 315,878 gallons per day whilst the least quantity of water in the Storage Reservoir was 11,927,832 gallons in November. It was not found necessary to restrict the use of water in the district and it has maintained its very high quality.

The following lengths of water main have been laid during the past year, viz.:—Tynedale Terrace, 265 yards of 3-inch water main; Osbourne Avenue, 15½ yards of 3-inch water main.

32 defective iron services have been replaced by lead pipes and three new service connections made.

Sewage and Sewage Disposal.—The district is provided with an efficient system of sewerage and drainage and it has been well maintained. Both sewage outfall works have received regular attention and remained in good working order.

Cowsheds, Dairies and Milkshops.—The number of premises on the register is 34. These have been inspected and a detailed report on them presented to you. Notices had been served on many of the Cowkeepers and Dairymen at the end of the year and will be followed up.

Public Slaughter Houses.—There are no private Slaughter Houses in the town and the Public Slaughter House is cleansed and maintained by you. It was found necessary to condemn 5½ carcasses of beef and 4 carcasses of mutton during the year.

Workshops.—There are 68 Workshops on the Register and they have been found in a fairly good condition. There are 11 Registered Bakehouses but no underground bakehouses in the district.

Offensive Trades.—There are 7 offensive trades carried on in the district and these have been well conducted.

Scavenging.—The house refuse has been collected by the Council's employees daily and there are no privies nor ashpits in the Urban portion of the district.

Infectious Disease and Disinfection.—All the premises in which cases of infectious disease were notified have been disinfected by the Council's staff including a number of houses where cases of consumption have occurred.

Yours Obediently,

J. W. POOLEY,

Surveyor and Sanitary Inspector.

Birth-rate, Death-rate, and Analysis of Mortality during the Year 1920.

	BIRTH-RATE PER 1,000 TOTAL POPULATION.	ANNUAL DEATH-RATE PER 1,000 POPULATION.										RATE PER 1,000 BIRTHS.				PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL DEATHS.			
		All Causes.	Enteric Fever.	Small-pox.	Measles.	Scarlet Fever.	Whooping-cough.	Diphtheria.	Influenza.	Violence.	Diarrhoea and Enteritis (under 2 Years).	Total Deaths under One Year.	Deaths in Public Institutions.	Certified Causes of Death.	Inquest Cases.	Uncertified Causes of Death.			
England and Wales	25.4	12.4	0.01	0.00	0.19	0.04	0.11	0.15	0.28	0.48	8.3	24.3	92.2	6.6	1.2				
96 Great Towns, including London (Census Populations exceeding 50,000)	26.2	12.5	0.01	0.00	0.22	0.04	0.14	0.16	0.31	0.43	10.4	31.3	92.2	7.1	0.7				
148 Smaller Towns (Census Populations 20,000-50,000).	24.9	11.3	0.02	0.00	0.19	0.03	0.10	0.14	0.27	0.38	7.8	16.5	93.2	5.3	1.5				
London	26.5	12.4	0.01	0.00	0.22	0.05	0.17	0.22	0.30	0.47	9.5	6.8	91.2	8.6	0.2				
HEXHAM (Census Population 8,087)	26.9	16.5	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.49	0.00	0.24	0.24	0.24	3.67	59.1	24.1	5.8	0.1				

HOUSING (INSPECTION OF DISTRICT) REGULATIONS, 1910.

STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31st, 1920.

Hexham Urban District.	Total for Whole District.	Particulars for Different Parishes, Wards or Groups of Parishes.	Remarks.
Number of Dwelling Houses Inspected	-	...	
Number of Dwelling Houses found to be "Unfit"	-	...	
Complaints that Houses were Unfit	-	...	
(a) By Householders	-	...	
(b) By Parish Councils	-	...	
Closing Orders	-	...	
(a) Number of Representations to L.A.	-	...	
(b) Number of Orders made	-	...	
Number of Houses Voluntarily Closed	-	...	
(a) After Notice under Section 28, 1919	-	...	
(b) Without Notice	-	...	
Number of Houses Demolished	-	...	
(a) Under Demolition Orders	-	...	
(b) Voluntarily by Owners	-	...	
(a) After Informal Notice	-	...	
(b) After Service of Notice under Section 28, 1919	-	...	
Number of Houses made Fit for Habitation	-	...	
c) After Closing Order had been made	-	...	
d) By Local Authority in Default of Owner	-	...	
General Character of Defects found	-	...	
a) Number of Representations of Obstructive Buildings	-	...	
(b) Number of such Buildings Demolished	-	...	
(c) Representations as to Unhealthy Areas	-	...	
Housing Act, 1890	-	...	
	-	...	(Parts I. and II.)

Registered Workshops.

Workshops on the Register (s. 131) at the end of the year. (1)	No. (2)
Bakehouses	11
Other Workshops	57
Total number of Workshops on Register	68

Other Matters.

Class (1)	No. (2)
Matters notified to H.M. Inspector of Factories :—	
Failure to affix Abstract of the Factory and Workshops Acts (s. 133, 1901)
Action taken in matters referred by H.M. Inspector as remediable under the Public Healths Acts, but not under the Factory and Workshops Acts (s. 5, 1901)
Other
Underground Bakehouses (s. 101) in use at the end of the year
Notified by H.M. Inspector
Reports (of action taken) sent to H.M. Inspector