

[Report 1923] / Medical Officer of Health, Hexham U.D.C.

Contributors

Hexham (England). Urban District Council.

Publication/Creation

1923

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ANNUAL REPORT



OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

Hexham Urban District

Council

FOR THE

Year Ending 31st December, 1923.



Hexham

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

Medical Officer's Annual Report

FOR 1923.

CARNTYNE,

HEXHAM.

April, 1924.

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

GENTLEMEN,

I cannot do better than commence my Report for the year 1923 by repeating the first paragraph of the previous Report for 1922. 'I regret, as in the previous year, I have "not a satisfactory record to give you, either in statistics or "progress. Beyond the completion of the houses at Peth "Head, nothing has been done to remedy the gross evils to "which I have so frequently and persistently called your "attention. Your Town Planning Act still remains in "abeyance, at a time when it is more necessary than ever "that it should be in operation if the future of your town "is to be safeguarded. A Town Improvement Scheme "has been initiated, but is at present a very delicate embryo, "and I am somewhat mistrustful that you have the energy "and capacity to see it a live child. Though there has "been a great stride in public opinion in recognising the "necessity for and the vital importance of housing in the "national welfare it seems difficult still to convince you that "in Hexham more than in most places this is a question of "life or death, both literally and figuratively, for your "town. The time for argument is surely past. It cannot "be necessary for me again to reiterate the warnings I have "so frequently given you, and it would only be labouring "the subject if I do more than revert and call your attention "to the strictures I was compelled to make in my report of "1921. I retract none of them, and they bear equal or "more force to-day. The figures I am about to give you "ought to convince you of the necessity for prompt "action."

This paragraph still represents the present state, though another year has past. The strictures of 1921 are still as applicable as ever, and the apathy of 1922 apparently remains unchanged. The delicate embryo of your Town Improvement Scheme has still not seen birth. The cause for this continued apathy and inaction is beyond me. There is ap-

parently some influence at work to account for it. If you, as the representatives of Hexham, or your constituents are satisfied with an Annual Report which year by year gives your total death-rate as $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 above the average for England and Wales, the 105 County Boroughs and Great Towns (including London), and the 157 Smaller Towns, I certainly am not, and I consider it a great blot on the administration of Hexham that I should again have to record similar figures this year.

The year 1923 has been uniformly throughout the country a healthy one from a sanitary point of view, if somewhat disappointing from a climatic one, with the result that death-rates are down all round, and in this reduction Hexham has, I am glad to say, participated; so that against a death-rate of 16.05 for 1922 you have one of 13.4 for the present year. But when we find that England and Wales has a death-rate of 11.6, London itself being 11.2, the 105 County Boroughs and Great Towns, including London, 11.6, and the 157 Smaller Towns, with which we certainly should be able to compete, is 10.6, you will see that a death-rate of 13.4 is anything but satisfactory.

If any of you can give a reason for these figures other than those which I have so repeatedly pointed out to you, I am ready to give it my careful consideration. I refer you for particulars to my Quarterly Report dated the 1st October, 1923, when I go very fully into figures as to the housing conditions which exist in Hexham. **Until** you can materially remedy those figures your death-rate is bound to be abnormally large. Although no actual steps have yet been taken to build a single house during the year, what you have done, as I point out in that report, has not my approbation, and I repeat a paragraph for your further consideration.

"With a density of 11.1 in Gilesgate Ward, you can understand, even if no other reason existed, that I am loath to give my approval to any housing scheme which tends to increase that density, and where, in addition, you have the low-lying position of such sites, the proximity to works such as gas, manure, etc., and the nearness to the railway, which makes it probable that any industrial extensions are more likely to take place in that area, you will still more readily understand my position, that taking both the present aspect of affairs and the future probabilities, I strongly counsel you to seek land elsewhere at a higher elevation."

And I also quote the following from that same Report: "In the interests of the future prosperity of Hexham, in the interests of the suffering humanity existing in your midst, in many cases dying in your midst, I again appeal to you

for less procrastination, more determination and energy to cope with and overcome the difficulties; or has history to repeat itself? I have heard your late Medical Officer say it took him 20 years to get Victoria Yard closed. Has this to be taken as an example of the rate of progress we are to expect from the representatives of the citizens of Hexham at the present time when dealing with such a grave scandal as the slums of Hexham are?"

On the other hand I consider the White Cross Field a site satisfactory in every way, and which, after purchase, would cost less per site than those you have already chosen.

As I have already said, the time for argument is past. Is it not possible to speed up, and during the present year make some substantial advance in the building of houses, in the maturing of your Town Planning Scheme, and of your demolition scheme; because unless you demolish the slums, however many houses you build, the slums will be there as a pestilential sore in your midst? The making up of the back streets of the town is long overdue, and demands your prompt attention. Your present refuse tip at Bridge End is anything but satisfactory, and that question ought not to be lost sight of but a scheme propounded which will be permanent.

Milk Supply.—The unsatisfactory character of your milk supply continues, though I note some slight improvement in that one or two more enterprising Dairymen are breaking away and delivering twice a day, in spite of the opposition of their fellows. They deserve every possible recommendation and encouragement from the public of Hexham in their effort.

The practice of keeping hens in small back yards and in close proximity to dwellings is increasing, and must be abolished, and I have instructed your Inspector to serve notices on all such cases as they are discovered.

It is impossible to live under the conditions of a congested urban district and have the facilities and conditions of a rural district, and as the past administration of Hexham has always been to take the minimum as the maximum whenever air space was concerned. Hexham is particularly unfitted for any attempt at grafting rural conditions upon those of an urban district.

I note on Page 5 of my report of 1922 a paragraph which I again quote. It is some satisfaction, however, that this year instead of being 4 above the whole country and

the large towns you are this year only 2, though you are 3 above the 157 smaller towns. "Your death-rate continuing "year by year, in round figures, about 4 per 1,000 above the "average of the whole country and of the large towns surely "ought to make you realise the necessity for action. It is "computed that every death is equivalent to two years of "constant sickness. If this is correct, and you realise that "Hexham death-rate should certainly not be above that of "the average for the country, we have to admit that we have "lost 30 of our inhabitants during this year more than we "should have, or that we have had 60 members of our "community constantly ill throughout the year with all "the attendant misery that such sickness involves."

Child Welfare Centre.—The Child Welfare Centre in St. Cuthbert's Lane continues its excellent work and is one of the brightest spots in the sanitary administration of Hexham. During the year under review 698 mothers and 1,069 children have attended the Centre. I again specially thank Nurse McCaskell for the zeal and energy which she has shown throughout the whole year, and I attribute largely to her efforts any small improvement which it is possible to report, and that our infantile mortality for 1923 is 79.6: the figures for the last two years, as you will see from the table appended, of 76.3 and 79.6, being pleasant reading against 101.3 and 138.6 for 1920 and 1921. But 79.6 compares unfavourably with the infantile mortality for the whole of England and Wales of 69, i.e., Hexham has 10 per thousand infant deaths above the average for the whole country, 19 per thousand deaths above that of London, and correspondingly above that of the County Boroughs and Smaller Towns. There again, that ought not to be.

The figures for the year are as follows, and appended are several tables which would repay your perusal, and which bear out my remarks of this and previous years. It is the apathy, indecision, and absence of progress which I so specially deplore. Another year has come and gone, and nothing further has been done.

Deaths.—During the year under review, after making allowance for inward and outward transference of deaths, 115 deaths have been registered. This is equivalent to a death-rate of 13.42 per 1,000 on an estimated population of 8,567. The death-rate for England and Wales during the same period is 11.8, for the 105 County Boroughs and Great Towns including London it is 11.6, for the 157 Smaller Towns it is 10.6. Of the deaths 58 were males and 57 females.

Births.—Two hundred and one Births have been registered in your district, against 144 last year. This is equivalent to a birth-rate of 23.46 per 1,000 on an estimated population of 8,567. Of the births 96 were males and 105 were females; 15 were illegitimate. One hundred and ninety-one Births have been notified under the Notification of Births Act, 183 live births and 8 still births; 73 were attended by a Doctor and 118 by Nurses.

Causes of Death.—One was due to Whooping Cough, 8 were due to Pulmonary Tuberculosis, 1 to other Tubercular Disease, 13 to Cancer, 1 to Diabetes, 4 to Cerebral Haemorrhage, 13 to Heart Disease, 3 to Arterio-sclerosis, 7 to Bronchitis, 16 to Pneumonia, 1 to other Respiratory Disease, 1 to Ulcer of Stomach, 1 to Diarrhoea, 1 to Cirrhosis of Liver, 7 to Nephritis, 4 to Congenital Debility, 1 to Violence, 31 to other defined diseases, and 1 to cause unknown.

Ages at Death.—Sixteen were under 1 year, 3 were 1 and under 5, 2 were 5 and under 15, 3 were 15 and under 25, 15 were 25 and under 45, 20 were 45 and under 65, and 56 were 65 and over, of whom 12 were over 80. Sixteen deaths under one year gives an infantile mortality of 79.6 per 1,000 births, against 76.3 for last year.

Infectious Diseases.—Eighty-nine Cases of Infectious Diseases have been notified during the year. Of these 7 were Scarlet Fever, 2 Diphtheria, 1 Enteric Fever, 2 Puerperal Fever, 3 Erysipelas, 3 Ophthalmia Neonatorum, 12 Pneumonia, 34 Pulmonary Tuberculosis, 9 other Tubercular Diseases, and 16 Chicken Pox.

Nine Cases of Infectious Disease have been received in your Isolation Hospital: 5 Scarlet Fever, 1 Diphtheria, and 3 Measles.

Forty-three Notifications of Tubercular Disease is another example of how necessary it is to improve the housing accommodation of the people, as nothing has been more striking in the past years than the steady decline in tuberculosis, which always follows improved drainage and sanitation. The damp, dark, dilapidated dwellings to which I have so often referred are hot-beds for the incidence of and spread of tubercular disease. And whereas we have in Hexham through voluntary effort a well-equipped hospital which can do, and is doing, much for certain forms of this dread disease, and also we have the advantages of sanatorium treatment, the essential points in the stamping out of tuberculosis are, first, to prevent it, and secondly, the after-care of the sanatorium patient. To prevent it we must very

materially improve the housing conditions of Hexham, and what is the use of sanatorium treatment if, on return, the cure is to be completed under such conditions as exist in your slums. The following cases are typical of the 24 from the Gilesgate Ward which have been notified. Let it be understood, however, that insanitary dwellings are not confined to Gilesgate, although there they are worse and much more concentrated, but you have insanitary dwellings in all parts of the town where conditions exist favourable to the onset and spread of tubercular disease and to an increased death-rate. The following cases exemplify the above remarks :

(1.) *M. and M. A., Meal Market.*—Both received treatment at Wooley Sanatorium for six months or more. One of these children already returned to her home above Butcher's Shop, where parents and six children live. The place has been condemned as a dwelling by the Medical Officer owing to smell from shop, etc., affecting the health of the whole family. The elder child (who was a wreck, due to Surgical Tuberculosis) has derived great benefit from her stay at Wooley, but unfortunately, it is proposed to send her home shortly. She will return to this place where she will quickly go back in health.

(2.) *C. T. 12, Gilesgate.*—Received treatment for a considerable period at Stannington Sanatorium; returned to Gilesgate, in the condemned area, to an overcrowded tenemented dwelling.

(3.) *J. H. R., 24, Market Street.*—Was six months at Wooley Sanatorium. Returned to old tenemented dwelling, where at the top of a long, dark, dirty staircase, live the grandmother, parents, and six children, in two rooms.

(4.) *C. M., Giles Place.*—Now at Wooley Sanatorium. Will return to Giles Place, condemned property, and live in two rooms with his parents.

(5.) *W. H., 2, Burn Lane.*—Received treatment for six months at Wooley Sanatorium, and has returned to live with parents and three other children in one room.

The following are typical examples of infantile mortality :—

(1.) *G. H., 2, Burn Lane.*—One room, occupied by parents and 4 children, 1 child being a notified tubercular case.

(2.) *F. T., Church Row.*—Old tenemented property. Parents and 2 children in two rooms, neither of which are fit to live in.

(3.) *J. S., 4, Giles Place.*—Old condemned property. Two rooms hopelessly overcrowded. At the time of the child's death there were 6 adults and 4 children in these two rooms. Since then one adult has died, and two others have removed.

(4.) *W. C. N., 12, Gilesgate.*—Parents and six children in two rooms.

(5.) *J. B., Back Row.*—Condemned building; very damp room.

Births.—The following particulars as to where births have occurred ought to be instructive to you:—

Births in condemned property 8

Births in Gilesgate area 47

Of these, 32 births took place in tenemented dwellings with more than three people living in one room.

Some types of overcrowding:—

Church Row.—Old condemned tenemented building, one room, 10ft. x 6ft., inhabited by ex-soldier, wife, and 3 children.

Mystery Yard.—Parents, 8 children and 1 grandchild, in two rooms.

Post Office Lane.—Parents and 5 children in one room.

6, *Haugh Lane.*—Parents and 7 children in two rooms.

18, *Gilesgate.*—Seven occupants in one room.

Jacob's Ladder.—Parents and 5 children in one room.

Haugh Lane.—Tenemented property. Parents and 5 children in one room.

Foundry Lane.—Eleven occupants in two rooms.

Gentlemen, I have presented you with a much longer report, and given you more specific examples of the evils existing in your midst, than I had intended. It has seemed to me in the past to be very much a waste of time to keep repeating and emphasising the same facts again and again. I have tried to give you figures which will convince you, and I have given you specific instances supporting my contentions. I can only hope that they will fall this year on ears less deaf than on previous occasions.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

JOHN A. JACKSON,

M.D., Lic.San.Sci.,

Medical Officer of Health.

Surveyor's and Sanitary Inspector's Report, 1923

GENTLEMEN,—

The following Works have been carried out during the year :—

The Surfacing of Haugh Lane.

The Re-Surfacing of Gilesgate Bank, Market Street, Alemouth Road, and Windsor Terrace back street.

Much work has also been done in the repairs to footpaths which was necessitated by the numerous openings made by the G.P.O.

From the tables appended it will be seen that 870 visits have been made to various premises in the district, the outcome of which was the finding of 235 nuisances, all of which have been remedied.

Twelve new houses have been erected during the year by private enterprise and certified as fit for habitation.

Water Supply.—The water supply was maintained the whole year direct from the Ladle Well Springs, and a constant and efficient supply was maintained, but I have to state that there is still a large waste of water in the district and I should be glad if the public would assist me by leaving word at my Office or communicating directly with me in the event of any waste of water coming to their notice. It is gratifying to know that the latest analysis shows that the water maintains its exceptional purity.

During the year the following Water Mains were laid :

Elvaston Park Estate	...	33yds	of 4in. main.
"	"	108 "	3in. "
Hellpool Lane	...	100 "	3in. "
Causey Hill Estate	...	63 "	3in. "
Hextol Terrace	...	540 "	5in. ,
"	"	40 ,	3in. ,

Sewage Disposal.—The district has an efficient system of sewage and drainage which has operated well.

Cowsheds, Dairies and Milkshops.—The number of premises on the Register is forty-three, these have been inspected and the condition of the premises is generally good.

Slaughter Houses.—The Public Slaughter Houses were thoroughly cleansed and painted throughout by the Council, and the killing and preparing is carried out under proper Humane and Hygienic conditions.

Workshops.—There are seventy Workshops on the Register, and they generally have been found in a satisfactory condition.

Bake Houses.—Eleven are registered and the condition of these houses is generally good.

House Refuse.—The House Refuse has been collected daily by the Council's employees, but I regret that there is no improvement in the many and varied receptacles which are used by the householders, but especially by the occupants of the tenemented properties in the poorer quarters, and it would be well if covered sanitary dustbins were used by every householder.

Pleasure Grounds.—Pleasure Grounds have received considerable attention and I find that by the kind co-operation of the schoolmasters and mistresses in the town I have been able to prevent a lot of wilful destruction such as has hitherto been done. I suggest that by the kindly assistance of the public that our Pleasure Grounds can be kept in very good order at a small cost to the town.

Infectious Diseases and Disinfection.—All premises in which cases of infectious disease were notified have been disinfected by the Council's staff.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

W. G. LANDALE,

A.M.Inst.C.E.,

Surveyor and Inspector.

APPENDIX.

1. GENERAL STATISTICS.

Area (acres): 5,149.
 Population (1923): 8,567.
 Number of inhabited houses (1921): 791.
 Number of families or separate occupiers: 803.
 Rateable value: £46,416.
 Sum represented by a penny rate: £192.

2 EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR

	Total.	M.	F.	
Births—Legitimate ...	186	89	97	
Illegitimate ...	15	7	8	Birth Rate—23.46
Deaths ...	115	58	57	
Number of women dying in, or in consequence of, childbirth:				from sepsis —0.0
				,, other causes—0.0
Deaths of Infants under one year of age per 1,000 births:—				
Legitimate—74.7. Illegitimate—4.9. Total—79.6.				
Deaths from Measles (all ages)				—0.0
,, ,, Whooping Cough (all ages)				—4.10.
,, ,, Diarrhoea (under 2 years)				—4.10.

3. NOTIFIABLE DISEASES DURING THE YEAR.

Disease.	Total Cases Notified.	Cases Admitted to Hospital.	Total Deaths.
Diphtheria	2	1	0
Scarlet Fever	7	5	0
Enteric Fever	1	-	0
Puerperal Fever	2	-	0
Pneumonia	12	-	16
Erysipelas	3	-	0
Chicken Pox	16	-	0
Opthalmia Neonatorum	3	-	0
Pulmonary Tuberculosis	34	27	8
Other Tuberculous Diseases	9	-	1

Sanatorium.

The Case Rate per 1,000 living is as follows:—

	England & Wales.	Hexham.
Smallpox	0.06	0.0
Scarlet Fever	2.23	0.80
Diphtheria	1.04	0.23
Enteric Fever	0.08	0.11
Puerperal Fever	0.06	0.23
Erysipelas	0.32	0.35

Tuberculosis.

Age Periods.	Now Cases				Deaths			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
10	4	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
15	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
20	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	4	2	0	0	1	2	0	1
35	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0
45	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
55	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
65 and upwards	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	19	17	4	3	5	3	0	1

OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM.

3 Cases have been notified.

All treated at home, vision unimpaired, and complete recovery

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

1920	...	...	...	...	101.3
1921	...	...	...	...	138.6
1922	...	...	...	...	76.3
1923	...	...	...	...	79.6

DEATHS FROM TUBERCULOSIS.

1920	...	...	...	...	13
1921	...	...	...	...	15
1922	...	...	...	...	14
1923	...	...	...	...	9

GENERAL DEATH RATE.

1920	...	...	...	...	16.5
1921	...	...	...	...	15.5
1922	...	...	...	...	16.05
1923	...	...	...	...	13.42

The Deaths occurred in the Wards as follows, omitting those which occurred in Public Institutions:—

Gilesgate Ward	...	33	Priestpopple Ward	...	14
Leazes Ward	...	21	Hencotes Ward	...	22

DEATHS FROM TUBERCULOSIS.

Gilesgate Ward	...	3	Priestpopple Ward	...	3
Leazes Ward	...	1	Hencotes Ward	...	2

CASES OF TUBERCULOSIS NOTIFIED:—

Gilesgate Ward	...	24
Leazes Ward	...	7
Priestpopple Ward	...	12

SANITARY INSPECTOR'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1921. (Sanitary Officers' Order, 1922, Art. 19 (12).

Name of District:	HEXHAM URBAN.	Population: 8,843	Name of Inspector: W. G. LANDALE.	Housing.					Water Supply.	Drainage			Sanitary Conveniences.			Work Effected.											
				Action under P.H. Acts.																							
				Structural Defects.	Nuisances.	Overcrowding.	Unfit for Human Habitation.	Defective Spouting, Dampness.	Insufficient.	Unsatisfactory.	Foul.	Untrapped or Dilapidated.	Insufficient.	Structural Defects.	Insufficient.	Foul.	Dairies and Cowsheds.	Slaughter Houses.	Common Lodging Houses.	Offensive Trades.	Bakehouses.	Other Workshops.	Nuisances from Keeping of Animals.	Paving of Yards.	Other Nuisances, including Smoke.	Totals,	
				12	235	...	...	18	1	...	320	25	2	1	30	2	386	40	6	12	22	10	20	...	25	870	
				Number of Defects or Contraventions of Bye-laws found -	3	52	...	15	1	...	250	17	2	1	18	2	1	6	...	...	...	...	16	...	3	387	
				Number of Defects, &c., outstanding from previous year	...	...	...	...	...	10	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	10	
				Number of Informal Notices by Inspector	3	52	...	15	1	...	250	17	2	1	17	2	1	6	...	...	...	...	14	...	1	382	
				Number of Defects or Contraventions Remedied after Informal Notice	3	50	...	14	1	...	240	17	2	1	17	2	1	6	...	...	...	...	14	...	1	369	
				Number of Statutory Notices Served by Local Authority	1	2	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	
				Number of Defects or Contraventions Remedied after Statutory Notice	1	2	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	4	

Privy Ashpits. Abolished
 Roofed Over
 Repaired
 W.C.'s Substituted
 Ash Closets do.
 Drainage.
 New Drains Provided
 Defective Drains Relaid
 Defective Drains Repaired
 New Traps Provided
 Insps. Chambers Provided
 Water Supply.
 Wells Closed
 Piped Supplies Provided
 No. of Houses Affected
 Disinfection.
 Houses Disinfected
 Schools Disinfected
 Appliances Provided
 Unsound Food. Seized
 Surrendered
 River Pollution.
 Instances Remedied
 S.D. Works Provided
 Other Matters.

Birth-rate, Death-rate, and Analysis of Mortality during the Year 1923.

	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.	Typhoid Fever.	Small-pox.	Measles.	Scarlet Fever.	Whooping-cough.	Diphtheria.	Influenza.	Violence.	Diarrhoea and Enteritis (under 2 Years).	Total Deaths under One Year.	Causes of Death Certified by Medical Practitioners.	Inquest Cases.	Uncertified Causes of Death.
—															
England and Wales	19.7	11.6	0.01	0.00	0.14	0.03	0.10	0.07	0.22	0.44	7.7	69	92.2	6.9	1.1
105 County Boroughs and Great Towns, including London	20.4	11.6	0.01	0.00	0.15	0.03	0.12	0.09	0.22	0.40	9.9	72	92.2	7.2	0.6
157 Smaller Towns	19.8	10.6	0.01	0.00	0.19	0.02	0.10	0.06	0.21	0.38	6.4	69	92.6	6.1	1.3
London	20.2	11.2	0.01	0.00	0.08	0.02	0.09	0.13	0.17	0.45	10.2	60	90.8	9.1	0.1
HEXHAM	23.4	13.4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.11	4.9	79	97.4	0.8	0.8

