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URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Annual - -

- REPORTS

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

(DR. HUGH DICKIE),

AND

BOROUGH SURVEYOR

(MR. J. DAVISON),

FOR THE YEAR 1903.

PRINTED BY J. & J. S. MACKAY, "HERALD" OFFICE, MORPETH.

MR, MAYOR AND GENTLEMEN,-

In presenting to you my Annual Report for the borough of Morpeth, for 1903, I am glad to be able to congratulate you on the good progress that has been made, and on the tairly satisfactory results that the figures of the accompanying tables show. For accuracy a duplicate set of figures has been, where important facts are concerned, drawn up, showing the vital statistics:—(I) Where the actual increase by excess of births over deaths is supposed to give a correct idea of the population; and also (II.) Where the population is, I think rightly, estimated at 7,000. In either case the figures are satisfactory, and you will have reason to be pleased that we now compare very favourably with other towns of this size, and with the rest of England.

The Local Government Board has drawn up a list of subjects on which they wish information, and on which a Medical Officer's Report is to be based. I shall follow

these headings, thus:-

Physical Features, &c., of the District.— Morpeth lies low in the valley of the Wansbeck, with the river running through its midst. Its climate is, therefore, fairly mild in spring and winter, but apt to become close and relaxing in a hot summer. This latter circumstance did not occur last year, so perhaps to this partly may be attributed the almost entire absence of summer diarrhœa and infantile cholera. On the other hand, the liability to flooding of certain parts of the town when the season is very wet, still exists, as was proved by the serious flood in October last. The continued existence of the weir-heads is a constant manaca to the town in this direction, and, as has been pointed out before, they contribute a serious if more insidious cause of danger and ill-health, in that through them the subsoil water is retained at an abnormally high level beneath the foundations of the houses. This cannot but lead to the prevalence of rheumatism and tubercular diseases among the inhabitants.

Sewage.-At last, during the past year, the Sewage Disposal Scheme, by bacterial beds, has been completed and set in working order. The new Sewage Works have been publicly opened, and have been in operation for over two months. The method is briefly, the liquefaction and destruction of the sewage by bacteria. The actual process seems to work most satisfactorily, and the effluent discharged is as pure, chemically, as the requirements of the law and the regulations the County Council demand. collec..on of the crude sewage has been well engineered, but will, on account of the difficulties of levels, require careful supervision. One of the syphons in the low-lying part of the town was blocked in the late autumn for some weeks, with the result that the sewage overflowed into a burn and created an abominable nuisance, and probably was accountable for one case of typhoid fever and one of puerperal septicæmia.

House Accommodation.—The population of Morpeth has increased litely in a much greater degree than is shown in the table of natural increase by excess of births over deaths. This is due principally to the enterprise of colliery owners in the immediate vicinity, who have opened out and are in process of developing four pits within easy agess to the town, and whose workmen have no housing accommodation to

speak of close to their work and who are therefore compelled to find shelter in the borough. This process of development is still going on, and very soon a large pit is expected to be opened about a mile out on the East Road. The demand, therefore, for workmen's dwellings is thus likely to be still further increased. While the accommodation for the middle classes is apparently satisfactory, there is, for the reason given above, a shortage of accommodation for that particular class of people. The small houses down the various yards-a class of house which, were it possible, should never, in theory at least, be allowed to continue—and the unsatisfactory tenement property in Union Street still remain as crowded as ever, while the recently built suburb in Middle Greens has been diverted from its original purpose, as a residence for the saving native artizan, to closely packed, often overcrowded flats for the recently-come miners. state of matters has caused the necessity for increased accommodation for workmen's dwellings to remain as urgent as ever it was. It is to be hoped that private enterprise and capital may be attracted to remedy the want; but failing that, if the Council wish to retain this increased population within the borough, they must consider whether it is their duty and within their power to tackle the question themselves.

Excrement and Refuse Disposal.—The system in Morpeth is a mixed one. The ideal aimed at by the Authority is that water-closets be universally used, but too many of the old-fashioned and somewhat insanitary methods are still in existence. Till recently, on account of possible deficiencies in water supply, the hands of the Council were not quite free, but now they are rightly insisting wherever possible on the more modern and correct system being substituted in old property, and installed in the new. The scavenging of the town is efficiently done by the Corporation workmen, whose weekly labour is now much lightened by the removal of the Cattle Market from the streets to the well-built and commodious Cattle Market

opened during the year.

Water Supply.—The past year was a very wet one, and the rainfall much above the average. The three reservoirs, Common, Allery Banks, and Tranwell, were always in good working order, and at no time was there any deficiency in the quantity or quality of the water. A few complaints as to the presence of mud in the Tranwell water at times were heard. This last supply is largely surface water, hence a great strain is put on the filter beds, and these require close attention. The reserve supply of water from the pumping station was not much called the pumping station was not much called the state of t upon, but it was occasionally tested for experimental purposes and found excellent in every respect. No town, especially one growing as Morpeth is, can have too many sources of water, and any arrangement by which, on emergency, an extra supply can be obtained when required, is bound to meet with approbation. The Council must remember that the limit of the feeding basins to their present reservoirs has been reached, while the demand for water caused by increased population and the substitution of water disposal of sewage for the old methods is bound to go on increasing.

Lodging-houses.—The registered lodginghouses have been frequently inspected at all hours of the day and also at night, and all found satisfactory without overcrowding or nuisance. There are one or two places in the town which I have reason to believe are practically lodging-houses, but not registered

and not subject to inspection.

Infectious Disease and Isolation.—The town has been free, to a remarkable extent, from infectious disease during the year. We have actually had no cases of diphtheria or erysipelas, while the cases of typhoid and scarlet fever have been very few. I think I dare claim that some credit for this is due to the Council for the rigorous house to house inspection made about two years ago; we are still reaping the benefit of the many improvements, little and great, made as a consequence of that course of action. In two or three years time the Council might well repeat it. Three cases of small-pox occurred in the Union Workhouse, and were promptly isolated in a special ward of the Fever Hospital. These occurred among vagrants in March, and no outbreak took place in the town. As this disease has been prevalent in neighbouring districts, as a precaution,

chicken-pox was made notifiable in September, and a few cases were reported and verified. Scarlet fever cases were rare, and were as a rule promptly isolated with most encouraging results.

most encouraging results.

Factories and Workshops.—In accordance with Section 132 of the Factory and Workshops Act (1900), in company with the Inspector, I have gone round the various workshops of the town, and found the sanitary conveniences and general arrangements satisfactory and in mest cases excellent. A few minor defects were pointed out to the owners and improvement promised. In all cases the cleanliness, air space, ventilation, and drainage left little to be desired.

In conclusion, I have to thank the Urban District Council for their courtesy and prompt attention to any recommendation I may from time to time have made to them.

HUGH DICKIE, M.D.,

TABLE I-FOR WHOLE DISTRICT.

Year.	. rg .	Birth	18.	Death 1 year	Death ages. T	s, all	HE E	fon-	f sti.	Nett Deaths at al		
	Population estimated to middle of each year.	S Number.	A Rate.	o Number.	Rate per 1000 o births registered.	2 Number.	te.	Total deaths in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Non-residents registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents registered in Public Insti- tutions beyond the District.	to the I	Pistrict.
1893 1894 1895 1896 1897 1898 1899 1900 1901 1902	5260 5270 5298 5396 5466 5514 5607 5675 6155 6209	192 187 193 173 177 177 152 200 159 202	38 35 36 32 32 32 24 35 26 32	30 30 28 34 16 32 33 28 31 28	156 162 116 179 91 140 171 140 194 138	152 116 125 102 125 99 117 149 161 123	22 19 19 19 18 17 18 24 26 18	20 16 20 12 21 14 19 22 27	19		104	16:5
Averages for years 1893-1902.	5582	181	32.2	29	143.1	126.9	20.0	19				
1903	6287	216	34.3	28	129.6	138	219	33	23	1	116	18.4

Area of District in acres (exclusive of area covered by water) 323. Total population at all ages, 6,158. Number of inhabited house, 1.134. Average number of persons per house, 5.4 At census of 1901.

TABLE II.—STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1903.

POPULATION RECKONED AT 7,000.

Birth-rate	20.8	in 1901	96.5
Death-rate		.,,	 23
Number of Infectious Diseases Reported	24	,,	 59
Deaths from Infectious Disease	1	**	 6
Death-rate from Infectious Disease	.14	55	 1.0
Deaths from Phthisis Pulmonals	11		 13
Death-rate from "	1.5		 2.1
Death-rate from Tubercular Disease	2.1	,,	 4.5
Infant Mortality per 1,000 Births	129	**	 194
" " for England	132		

	Ca	ses n	otifie	Number of						
Notifiable Diseases.	t all ages.	Under 1.	1 to 5.	5 to 15.	15 to 25.	25-to 65.	65 and upwards.	Cases removed to Hospital from each Locality. Morpeth Isolation		
	At						2	Hospital.		
Small-pox	3	_	_	_	_	3	_	3		
Scarlet Fever	6	-	2	3	-	1		. 4		
Enteric Fever		-	-	2	1	6	-	6		
Chicken-pox	6	-	3	3		-	-	-		
Totals.	24		5	8	1	10	-	13		

TABLE IV.

				Deaths in whole District at subjoined ages.							Total Deaths in
Causes	All ages.	Under 1 year.	1 and under 5	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.	Public Institu- tions in the District.			
Enteric Fever				1	-	-		_	1	-	-
Diarrhœa Phthisis	***	***	31	2	1	1 2		1	8		2
Other Tubercular	Diseas	es	***	4	-	2		-	2	_	
Cancer, Malignan				5			-		1	4	1
Bronchitis				4	2 3	1	-		1		1 2 4
Pneumonia	1000			11	3	3		-	3	2	4
Pleurisy				1		-	-	1		-	1
Alcoholism, Cirrl	iosis of	Liver		2	-		-	-	2	-	-
Premature Birth				5	5	-	-		-	-	-
Diseases & Accid	ents of	Parturit	ion	3		-	-		3 5	-	-
Heart Disease	***		***	12	-	1		1	1	6 2	4
Accidents Senectus	***	***	***	13	_	1			1	13	2 9
Marasmus	***	01	***	5	5					13	_
Nephrits	***	***		4	3				3	1	1
All other causes		***	***	29	12	4	1	-	7	5	7
Total Caus	28		3744	116	28	15	1	2	37	33	33

SURVEYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT.

The following is a copy of the Surveyor's annual report:

During the year ending December, 1903, there has been 22 self-contained houses erected, and one large block not yet completed, consisting of business premises and tenements, offices, &c. Alterations have been made to three houses, and new conveniences and back premises have been provided in ten different properties. Other buildings erected consisted of a block of slaughter-houses cattle market and offices, power station, stables, and sheds. The improvements in house drainage began in 1902, the result of a house to house inspection of the town, have been continued during the past year. New drains have been laid in 16 properties where the old drains were shown to be defective. There are still a few cases where little or nothing has been done to remedy the defects reported. In one case an order was obtained from the Justices before the necessary improvement was made. There have been a few cases of infectious disease,

and one house, where typhoid occurred, was closed as unfit for habitation. In all cases the usual precautions were taken to prevent the spreading of disease. The lodging-houses have been frequently visited, and generally found in good order. Some improvements have been made during the year in regard to accommodation and yards. The existing slaughter-houses will be closed shortly, the new buildings being almost complete.

Dairies and Cowsheds.—These have been visited and usually found in fairly good condition, although structurally some of them might be considerably improved.

Factories and Workshops.—These are, with one or two exceptions, in a good satisfactory condition. Where complaint was made, the owners readily promised to have the necessary improvements carried out.

During the year, a great number of nuisances, caused by blocked drains, animals improperly kept, defective spouting, the want of sufficient privy accommodation, and defective closets and sinks, have been attended to, in most cases by the owners very promptly, but in a few cases, however it was necessary to serve statutory notices.