

[Report 1894] / Medical Officer of Health, Nelson Borough.

Contributors

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NELSON,

18TH JANUARY, 1895.

To the Chairman of the Health Committee.

SIR,

I have the honour of placing before you my Annual Report as to the health and sanitary condition of the Borough, and shall pursue the plan I have adopted in previous reports, viz., giving you first the formal record of births and deaths which have occurred in the borough for the past twelve months.

The number of births registered in 1894 was 829 (418 males, 411 females), which calculated on a population of 27,000 (I may here say that during the year I have been taking the averages on a population much below the actual number) gives a birth-rate of 30·7 per 1,000 of the inhabitants. The deaths registered during the same time numbered 413 (204 males, 209 females), this includes those from premature birth and cases submitted to the Coroner, which gives a death-rate of 15·2 per 1,000. The deaths of children under one year, including premature births and inquest cases, totalled 106, giving a death-rate of 12·7 per cent., calculated on the number born during the year. This is a great improvement on last year, when the rate was 16·8 per cent. The following table epitomises the results at which the deaths occurred in the borough :—

Deaths under 1 year...	...	...	...	...	...	...	106	Under 5 years,
„ over 1 year and under 5 years	...	...	...	...	...	...	84	
„ „ 5 years	„	15	„	...	...	...	24	Over 5 years,
„ „ 15 „	„	25	„	...	...	...	18	
„ „ 25 „	„	65	„	...	...	...	126	
„ „ 65 „ and over	...	...	...	...	...	...	55	

I enclose a detailed list of the causes of death, and the ages at which death occurred: Under the “Notification of Infectious Diseases Act” there have been reported 208 cases, viz.: Small-pox, 6; Scarlet Fever, 145; Diphtheria, 33; Enteric Fever, 20; Relapsing Fever, 2; Puerperal Fever, 2. In these cases the Sanitary Inspector took the necessary steps to prevent as far as possible the spread of the contagion, supplying disinfectants, attending to drains, ashpits, &c. The houses from which small-pox cases had been removed received special attention. In the *first* quarter we had a considerable number of scarlet fever cases, but no serious epidemic, in fact we have not been quite free for the year; also a number of cases of diphtheria, and in my report for this quarter I drew the attention of your Committee to a number of pools of stagnant water, particularising the junction of Bracewell-street and Smith-street, Southfield-street and Smith-street, Norfolk-street and Carr-road, also in Forest-street, as a very probable source of contagion. In the *second* quarter we had a visit from small-pox, doubtless imported from Rawtenstall. A man suffering from the disease, being refused admission to their hospital, tramped his way here, and got into the company of some of those who afterwards developed small-pox. This revived the knotty question, “How to prevent the spread of infectious diseases by tramps?” This was referred to and discussed at the Health Congress in London (which I had the honour of attending), but no definite result was arrived at. This year we had our Infectious Hospital and everything ready for such an emergency, with the gratifying result we only had six cases, compared with 21 the year before. I am also pleased to say no second case arose in any of the houses from which the patients were removed.



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This speaks for itself with regard to the sanitary precautions adopted. The want of a steam disinfecting apparatus was again manifest during the epidemic, clothing having to be taken to a neighbouring Authority. In the *third* quarter there was no special epidemic, but a number of sporadic cases of Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria, and Enteric Fever. In the *fourth* quarter we had a severe epidemic of Measles (25 deaths being registered during the quarter from that disease and its complications) so alarming that several of the schools were closed for a time. As this disease is not included under the notifiable cases, I am unable to give you any idea as to the actual number of cases. I may here say that measles is treated much too lightly by a great number of parents, who think all they have to do is to sweat the child, keep it in bed a few days (in a great many cases not even putting the child to bed), then let it run about again; the result in a great many cases being the child gets cold, is attacked with bronchitis or or pneumonia in such a severe form as to endanger its life—in fact, nearly all the fatal cases were from such complications.

In glancing over the tabulated list of the causes of death you will see that during the year 55 deaths were recorded whose ages were 65 years and over. One case of over-crowding was reported, but on enquiry was not substantiated: also a house as unfit for habitation, this was over-crowded. One case of diseased meat reported was found to be groundless. One case of having diseased rabbits exposed for sale was prosecuted, the owner being heavily fined, and the rabbits (21) destroyed. Mr. Staley (Sanitary Inspector) informs me that during the year he received 244 complaints of nuisances, in the majority of cases secured an abatement thereof by a written representation without the service of statutory notice. In one case legal proceedings were instituted for unsanitary water closet, and a conviction recorded. Also that 200 privies and 179 cesspools were altered to water-closets. Twelve notices were issued for alterations of farm premises. The scavenging has been efficiently carried out by the Corporation, the ashes deposited at tips, animal and vegetable garbage treated at the refuse destructor. Here I may say it is expected soon to have a new (and as perfect as possible) refuse destructor, and I hope a steam disinfecting apparatus. The lodging house at Clough Bottom continues to be well managed, and although subjected to great risk during the small-pox epidemic, was happily free from any outbreak of disease. Mr. Bradley (Borough Surveyor) kindly informs me that during the year, 60 streets have been completed at a cost of £16,000, involving the construction of 3,500 yards (lineal) of main intercepting sewers, and about 2,300 lineal yards of branch drains, paving of 4,800 lineal yards of streets, and the laying of 8,300 lineal yards of flagged footway. From the above you will see the sanitary requirements are keeping pace with the growth of the district, and as we have had a plentiful supply of good water (despite the leakage) we may safely say the Health Committee are using their best endeavours to make and keep the Borough free from preventible diseases.

I am, Sir,

Yours obediently,

A. P. MILLAR.

Nelson Corporation.

1894.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

ANNUAL

REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

MILLAR, M.D.,
NELSON.