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BOROUGH OF PONTEFRACT.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1939.



To the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors
of the Borough of Pontefract.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present for your information and consideration an Interim Report on the Health of the Borough during the year 1939. It is my eighteenth Annual Report, and on account of the abnormal circumstances prevailing, has been greatly curtailed in accordance with the requirements of the Minister of Health as set out in Circular 2067. The Annual Report of the Chief Sanitary Inspector dealing with Sanitary Circumstances, Housing and Inspection and Supervision of Food is also submitted.

These reports are confined to essential matters, and much of the statistical information normally given has been omitted. After the termination of the war a report will be made dealing fully with the period from the beginning of 1939 to the end of the last complete year.

PART ONE.

STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

Area of the Borough: 4,865 acres.

Registrar-General's estimate of -

- (a) Resident population, mid-1939: 21,560.
- (b) Average population appropriate to the calculation of death rates: 21,410.

Number of inhabited houses (end of 1939) according to
Rate Books: 5,538.

Rateable value: £118,534. (1938: £116,169).

Sum represented by penny rate: £451. (1938: £441).

In January 1939 the number of wholly unemployed persons in the Borough was 856, the corresponding figure for the previous year being 866. In December 1939 the number of wholly unemployed persons was 554, the corresponding figure for the previous year being 782. The total number of wholly unemployed persons and the temporarily stopped was 954 at the beginning of the year under review, and 594 at the close of the year. The general downward trend started in September, and was due mainly to the absorption of unemployed into the coal mining industry, consequent upon increased activity in that industry at the outbreak of war.

Extracts from Vital Statistics.

Live Births:		Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	194	188	382
Illegitimate	...	2	11	13
Total	...	196	199	395

Birth rate per 1,000 estimated resident population: 18.3

Stillbirths:		Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	...	10	6	16
Illegitimate	...	1	1	2
Total	...	11	7	18

Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births: 48.2

Deaths:		Male	Female	Total
All causes	....	148	125	273

Death rate per 1,000 average population appropriate to the calculation of death rates: 14.0

Puerperal causes	-	0	0
Cancer	19	26	45
Measles	0	0	0
Whooping cough	0	1	1
Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	2	0	2

Death Rate of Infants under one year of age:

All Infants per 1,000 live births	...	...	58
Legitimate Infants per 1,000 legitimate live births	...	...	60
Illegitimate Infants per 1,000 illegitimate live births	...	...	-

Notes on Deaths.

273 deaths were registered during the year, 51 more than in the previous year. This figure gives a crude death rate of 12.7, which when multiplied by the areal comparability factor of 1.10 gives a corrected rate of 14.0. The rate for England and Wales is 12.1.

The principal causes of death are set out in the following table:

Table I

Causes of death	Male	Female	Total
Whooping cough	0	1	1
Diphtheria	5	1	6
Influenza	5	0	5
Tuberculosis, pulmonary	7	7	14
Tuberculosis, non-pulmonary	2	1	3
Syphilis	0	1	1
General paralysis of the insane	1	0	1
Cancer	19	26	45
Diabetes	0	3	3
Cerebral haemorrhage	8	12	20
Heart disease	36	36	72
Aneurysm	1	0	1
Other circulatory diseases	4	2	6
Bronchitis	16	2	18
Pneumonia	11	1	12
Peptic ulcer	2	0	2
Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	2	0	2
Diarrhoea (over 2 years)	0	1	1
Appendicitis	0	1	1
Diseases of the liver	0	1	1
Other digestive diseases	0	1	1
Nephritis, acute and chronic	1	3	4
Congenital causes, etc.	4	9	13
Senility	3	1	4
Suicide	2	0	2
Other violence	11	3	14
Other defined diseases	8	12	20
Totals	148	125	273

Of the 273 deaths, 152 (56 per cent of total deaths) were of persons 60 years or over, whilst 23 were of children under 1 year (8 per cent. of total deaths). Female deaths numbered 125, 24 more than were recorded last year; male deaths numbered 148, an increase of 27.

Heart disease gives the highest death rate, 72 deaths having been registered as due to this cause. Cancer was responsible for 45 deaths, 20 more than in the previous year; the increase being mainly due to increased incidence in the 45 to 60 age group.

Diseases of the respiratory system accounted for 30 deaths, 1 more than last year, whilst diseases of the digestive system were responsible for 8 deaths, a decrease of 3.

Infective diseases were given as cause of death in 31 cases, 11 more than in the previous year. The aggregate increase was mainly due to increases in deaths due to diphtheria, influenza and tuberculosis.

Infant Mortality.

The number of deaths of infants under one year of age was 23, 3 more than in 1937. This yields an infant mortality rate of 58 per 1,000 births, as compared with 49 in the previous year. The rate for the triennial period 1936-1938 was 62. The 1939 rate for England and Wales is 50.

The following table gives the causes of infant deaths and age groups:

Table II.

Causes of death	Age groups							All ages under 1 year			
	Under 1 week	1 and under 2 weeks	2 and under 3 weeks	3 and under 4 weeks	1 and under 3 months	3 and under 6 months	6 and under 9 months	9 and under 12 months	Males	Females	Totals
Influenza					1				1	0	1
Bronchitis					1	2			3	0	3
Pneumonia			1		3	1			4	1	5
Diarrhoea					1		1		2	0	2
Congenital malformation			1						0	1	1
Prematurity	6				1				2	0	2
Congenital debility					1				1	1	2
Atelactasis	2								1	1	2
Injury at birth	1								0	1	1
Totals	9		2		8	3	1		14	9	23

Maternal Mortality.

There were no deaths from puerperal causes. The following figures show the position during the five years prior to the period under review:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of maternal deaths</u>	<u>Rate per 1,000 (live and still) births</u>
1934	3	7.57
1935	2	5.57
1936	2	5.62
1937	2	4.67
1938	1	2.36

P A R T T W O .

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES.

Maternity and Child Welfare.

The arrangements for maternity and child welfare are as last year. Attendances at the Centre show a slight increase on last year, the number of attendances by children under 1 year being 5,002, and the number by children between 1 and 5 years being 1,347.

The number of children who first attended at the Centre during the year was 330, whilst the total number of children who attended was 532.

The number of visits paid by Health Visitors has also increased; the figure being 8,591 as compared with 7,895 in the previous year. 279 expectant mothers attended at the Ante-natal Clinic during the year.

The quantity of milk supplied during the year for expectant and nursing mothers and young children was as follows:-

Liquid milk	.. ..	1,136 gallons
Dried milk	.. ..	10,667 lbs.

The liquid milk was supplied free of charge. The dried milk was supplied at cost price, except in necessitous cases, where it was supplied free of charge.

Home Nursing; Ambulance Service; Hospitals, and Laboratory facilities.

These services are as last year.

P A R T T H R E E .

PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER,
INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

276 cases of disease were notified during 1939. This is a decrease on the previous year's figure which was 295.

Notifiable Diseases (other than Tuberculosis) during the Year 1939.

The following table gives particulars of the incidence of notifiable diseases:-

Table III.

Diseases	Total notified cases	Cases admitted to hospital	Total deaths
Scarlet fever	23	23	0
Diphtheria	86	86	6
Enteric fever	3	3	0
Pneumonia	32	0	2
Puerperal pyrexia	1	1	0
Erysipelas	9	0	0
Acute Poliomyelitis	1	1	0
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	1	1	0
Chickenpox	94	0	0

Notes on Notifiable Diseases.

Scarlet fever.

23 cases of scarlet fever is a decrease of 11 on last year's figure, and of 91 on 1937. Cases have been of a mild type, and there have been no deaths.

Diphtheria.

86 cases were notified, an increase of 18 on last year; 42 of these occurred in patients between the ages of 5 and 15, and 14 cases between the ages of 15 and 20. The disease was present throughout the year, incidence being highest in March when 13 cases were notified. There were 6 deaths.

Enteric fever.

3 cases of paratyphoid occurred in the Borough, 2 of which were notified from the Pontefract General Infirmary. There were no deaths.

TUBERCULOSIS.

In the following table new cases and mortality are classified.

Table IV.

Age periods	New cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		Respiratory		Non-respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 5 years								
5 and under 15	2		2	1	1			
15 and under 25	2		1	3	1	2		
25 and under 35	2	2	1	1	4	3	1	
35 and under 45	1	1				1		
45 and under 55		2	1			2		
55 and under 65	2				3			
65 and over	4							
Totals	13	5	5	5	9	8	1	0

The following table summarises particulars contained on the register.

Table V.

Number of cases on register -	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		Total in register
	M.	F.	M.	F.	
At the commencement of 1939	74	52	37	30	193
Notified under the Regulations of 1930 for the first time during 1939	12	4	5	5	26
Brought to notice otherwise than by formal notification	1	1	0	0	2
Removed during 1939	16	11	6	5	38
At the end of 1939	71	46	36	30	183

The reasons for removal of cases from the register are stated in the following table.

Table VI.

Entries relating to -	Respiratory		Non-respiratory		Totals
	M.	F.	M.	F.	
Persons who have died	9	8	1	0	18
Persons certified by the medical practitioner in attendance to have recovered	4	0	4	4	12
Persons who have ceased to reside permanently in the district	2	1	1	1	5
Persons in respect of whom notifications have been withdrawn	1	2	0	0	3
Totals	16	11	6	5	38

Primary notifications pursuant to the Public Health (Tuberculosis) Regulations, 1930, were received in respect of 26 cases, and 2 further cases were brought to notice only upon the deaths of the patients.

17 deaths were classified to Tuberculosis, an increase of 8 on last year's figure.

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the services rendered at the Maternity and Child Welfare Centre by the Ladies' Voluntary Committee.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

W. T. HESSEL,

Medical Officer of Health.

REPORT OF THE CHIEF SANITARY INSPECTOR
TO THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
for the
YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 1939.

Sir,

I submit herewith an Interim Report on the work of the Public Health Department during the year 1939. Usual statistics are omitted, and the Report consists mainly of a resume of the more important activities during the first 8 months of the year. During the latter part of the year almost all routine public health work was suspended, only urgent matters being given attention. Normal duties gave way to work in connection with civil defence preparations: A.R.P. casualty services, billeting, etc.

P A R T O N E.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Water Supply.

Office records indicate that all houses in the Borough are connected to the public supply. The supply was constant and plentiful. One sample was submitted to chemical examination and reported satisfactory. Bacterial control was maintained throughout the year, 42 samples being taken. These were satisfactory up to June, when a series of adverse reports resulted in a recommendation being made that chlorination plant be installed. This was done early in 1940.

Sanitary Accommodation and Drainage.

There could be no spectacular improvement in sanitary accommodation in the Borough as this is already of a high standard, all but some 28 houses being on the water-carriage system. 5 conversions from the conservancy system were effected during the year under review.

Only 58 houses in the Borough are not connected to the public sewers.

Premises Controlled by Bye-laws.

There are 3 registered Common Lodging-houses in the Borough. Generally, conditions were satisfactory. There are 25 premises at which offensive trades were carried on, 23 of which are fish-frying establishments. Nuisances arose from time to time but were abated as the result of informal action. Other premises call for no comment.

Factories.

All factories to which section 34 of the Factories Act, 1937, applies were examined for the purpose of granting certificates relating to means of escape in case of fire. In 10 cases certificates were granted; 4 other cases were outstanding at the close of the year.

Other visits were paid for the purpose of enforcing the provisions of the Act relating to cleanliness, sanitation, over-crowding, temperature and ventilation.

Smoke Abatement.

During the early months of the year a special effort was made to minimise atmospheric pollution by factory chimneys. 115 observations, each of 30 minutes' duration, were made, and the attention given to this matter resulted in considerable improvement.

In July 1939 a deposit gauge was installed. Records are being compiled and investigated in co-operation with the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, London.

Eradication of Vermin.

A considerable step forward in this matter was made in June when for the first time in the Borough the hydrogen cyanide method of treating verminous premises was used. By the end of the year 12 houses had been treated in this way.

The total number of houses treated by various methods by the Corporation was 55.

Rats and Mice Destruction.

In view of the importance of conserving food supplies in war time this matter was not allowed to lapse in September. Action was taken on Corporation properties, and occupiers of private properties which were particularly liable to infestation were enjoined to take all necessary steps to eradicate rodent pests from their premises.

Swimming Baths.

Bacterial control was maintained throughout the year; 25 samples were taken, only one of which was unsatisfactory. Tests were also made for alkalinity and free chlorine content, and whilst tests for pH value were reasonably good, several samples showed an entire absence of free chlorine.

Shops.

Inspections were made of shop premises in the Borough with the view to enforcing the provisions of ss. 10 and 13(3) of the Shops Act, 1934, relating to sanitation and health conditions in these premises. Contraventions of the Act were remedied consequent upon informal action.

P A R T T W O.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Milk Supply.

During the year under review the routine sampling of milk for submission to the Methylene Blue Reduction Test was introduced. 33 of these samples were taken and only 10 were reported upon satisfactorily. During the summer months considerable time was devoted to measures for improving milking methods and dairy premises. There are 21 cowsheds in the Borough and 200 milch beast are kept.

Accredited and pasteurised milks continue to be produced in the Borough. Sampling of graded milks for bacteriological examinations has been maintained throughout the year; 50 samples of pasteurised milk were submitted to the plate count test, 8 of which failed to meet the required standard.

Many of the various samples sent to the County Laboratory for bacteriological examinations were also submitted to biological examination for the presence of tubercle bacilli. In 3 cases the

presence of these organisms was established; the matter was taken up with the Ministry of Agriculture with the result that the milch beasts responsible were slaughtered.

Meat Supply.

The meat inspection service was continued throughout the year. All slaughtering was done in private slaughterhouses, 1,283 visits being made for purposes of inspection.

The following numbers of carcasses were examined: 1,232 beasts, 99 calves, 1,745 pigs and 2,415 sheep. The following numbers of carcasses were condemned as unfit for food: Beef, 2; veal, 1; pork, 6 and mutton, 1. 557 organs and parts were condemned.

At the close of the year arrangements had been made by the Ministry of Food for centralising the slaughter of food animals, and early in the new year a Central Slaughterhouse had been established at Lewtown, at which slaughtering for Pontefract and certain adjoining districts was to be carried out.

P A R T T H R E E.

HOUSING.

In the year under review a schedule of 148 unfit dwellinghouses was submitted to the Council with the report that clearance was the most satisfactory method of dealing with the conditions prevailing in the areas concerned. Details were prepared and the Health Committee had inspected most of the properties, when, on account of the outbreak of hostilities, the project had to be postponed.

A scheme for the systematic reconditioning of 327 dwellinghouses in the Tanshelf area was prepared and put into operation during the year. This scheme also was postponed in September, by which time 100 houses had been inspected, and respecting the majority of which notices had been served; in many cases works were in hand.

Much time was devoted to the investigation of routine housing complaints and almost all the required results were obtained without resort to formal measures.

At the close of the year there were 5 cases of overcrowding on the register. During 1939 27 cases were abated. A further 14 families, although not statutorily overcrowded, lacked adequate accommodation for the segregation of the sexes and were rehoused.

From the above resume it will be obvious that a large amount of preparatory housing work has been done, and it is regrettable that the results of this work will be delayed, probably for some years to come.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,

L. WALSH,

Chief Sanitary Inspector.