

[Report 1948] / Medical Officer of Health, Rothbury R.D.C.

Contributors

Rothbury (England). Rural District Council.

Publication/Creation

1948

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Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the year ended 31st December, 1948.

Lord Ravensworth, Ladies & Gentlemen.

The Area of the Rothbury Rural District is 167.186 acres and the estimated population for 1948 was 5.678 an increase of 28 over 1947.

The number of Births registered was 112, an increase of 20; of these 52 were males and 60 females, two being illegitimate. Twenty three came from outside the District leaving 89 belonging to it. The birth rate, after deducting these 23 was 15.8 compared with 16.4 for the previous year, the rate for England & Wales being 17.9. Still births numbered 3 giving a rate per 1000 of 0.53. Incidentally 59 babies were born at the Cottage Hospital during the first full year of its maternity work

The number of Deaths registered was 67 compared with 65 in 1947. 32 were males and 35 females. The rate per 1,000 was 11.9 compared with 11.6 in 1947, the rate for England & Wales 10.8. There were 3 deaths in infancy, that is up to the age of 12 months. There were 2 maternal deaths following childbirth, the rate being 0.35 (England and Wales 0.73). There were no fatal road accidents; one case of suicide.

The chief causes of death were:- Heart disease and other diseases of the circulatory system, 21; Apoplexy and cerebral thrombosis, 16; Cancer, 7 the same number as in the previous year.

Infectious Diseases notified, 133 - 54 fewer than in the previous year. They were classified as follows:-

Measles	111	Scarlet Fever	3	Typhoid Fever	1
Erysipelas	7	Pneumonia	2	Dysentery	1
Whooping Cough	5	Paratyphoid	2	Malaria	1
		Fever.			

Of the 111 cases of measles 94 were claimed by Rothbury. The two cases of paratyphoid occurred at Whittingham. I wrote a special report of these cases and sent it to the Clerk who forwarded a copy to the Parish Council of Whittingham.

No deaths were due to Whooping Cough or Measles but 2 were due to pneumonia.

There was no case of diphtheria notified during the year probably for the first time on record.

Tuberculosis. Five cases were notified compared with 15 for 1947, a very satisfactory fall. All of these were pulmonary 2 males and 3 females being affected, ages ranging from 21 to 40. Two of these cases did not belong to the Rothbury Rural District. There were three deaths from tuberculosis in 1948 and the number of cases on my register at the end of the year was 23, 16 males and 7 females.

Water Supply, Sewerage & Housing. My thanks are once again due to the Sanitary Inspector for the following brief report:-

Water Supplies- All supplies under the direct control of the Council were satisfactory during the year. No extensions to the mains have been carried out during the year. The Council's Consulting Engineers, Messrs. Waterhouse & Rounthwaite, have prepared schemes for new supplies to the villages of Hepple & Alnham. When these works are completed a long needed want will be met.

The Council supplies approximately 60% of the population, Tynemouth Corporation 30% from their main as it runs through our District and the remainder from wells or springs under private ownership.

Sewerage. No major changes have taken place during the year. The Council agreed to carry out a scheme of privy conversions to 30 houses at Embleton Terrace. Tenders have been invited and it is expected that the work will be completed during 1949.

Housing. The building programme is now well under way with 34 houses completed at Alwinton, Netherton, Thropton, Thrunton and Longframlington. Six houses are under construction at Elsdon and 26 at Rothbury. These together with the 1949 allocation issued by the Ministry of Health in November will make a useful contribution to the Housing needs of the District.

Remarks. The year 1948 was remarkable for its heavy rainfall. The rainfall in England & Wales was 37.6 inches, 2.4 inches above the average. In Northumberland the wettest month was January (5.65 inches) and the driest May (0.67 inches) The rainfall for this County was 37.5 inches against 32.1 in 1947. Leaden skies and North winds prevailed right up to June and summer weather was compressed into 7 days beginning on July 27th when the heat was intense. The food position remained depressing. The Sunday joint with plenty of elbow room lay in splendid isolation on the dinner dish, flanked by the hefty carving knife and fork which might well be replaced by penknife and toothpick. Meat, sugar, butter, eggs, cheese, oils and fats were still in short supply and yet the death rate was not appreciably affected.

But whether or not the average manual worker without extra rations can work as hard and long as his father and grandfather is quite another matter. What he wants and needs are home produced beef, mutton and pork and plenty of them, what he gets are that mysterious compound called sausage meat, meat pies and whale meat and if he be lucky a bit of offal. He does not measure his food by calories but by mouthfuls and given more mouthfuls both his morale and his work would improve.

Fill a man's stomach adequately and without appeals and exhortations you will get a better morale and better morale leads to higher productivity a hungry man is a discontented man and a discontented man is not likely to give of his best. We are warned almost daily that the future of this country depends upon individual output but we are not so frequently reminded that individual output depends upon individual intake, in the shape of more and better food.

Signed. A.S. HEDLEY.

Medical Officer of Health.