

[Report 1941] / Medical Officer of Health, Skelton & Brotton U.D.C.

Contributors

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TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
SKELTON AND BROTTON URBAN DISTRICT

LIBRARY



Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1941 which, in accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health, is again confined to essential and urgent matters affecting the public health.

The estimated population is practically unchanged since 1940, slightly less than the pre-war figure. The birth-rate shows a 12% increase above the average of the last five pre-war years, while the death-rate, and also the infant mortality rate, shows no appreciable change.

Of notifiable diseases measles was epidemic, with 303 cases, and there were a few cases of cerebro-spinal fever. Otherwise infectious disease was less than usual.

There were fewer new cases of tuberculosis and the number of deaths was not above average. In this respect the district has the advantage over neighbouring ones and over the country as a whole, where an increase has already occurred, due to the operation of powerful factors associated with the war and hence likely to continue for the present and even increase. Of these factors possibly the most important is the strain, especially mental, affecting nearly everyone under the conditions of war. As this will not be lessened until victory, it behoves public health authorities meanwhile to scrutinise carefully their operations designed for the prevention of this disease and to obtain improvement if possible. Broadly, prevention rests on two groups of measures: those maintaining or raising the general health of the people, by good nutrition with fresh foods, good housing, and so on; and those aiming at the prevention of the infection of new cases by the earliest possible diagnosis of the disease and the removal of the infectious consumptive from close contact with non-infected persons (especially children) until he is no longer a source of danger. Tuberculosis is spread undoubtedly to a certain extent by milk from diseased cows, but the main fact is that the paramount source of infection is the consumptive. Unfortunately, perhaps, while the infection of diphtheria, measles, etc., takes but a few days to develop and show itself, so that the connection of one case with an earlier one is often very clear, the infection of tuberculosis usually takes many years to become evident, and so one is inclined to forget even that it is an infectious disease, in which, as in the others, measures of isolation are of importance. In the Combined Districts, in the year 1941, deaths from all the acuter infectious diseases together, such as diphtheria, measles, cerebro-spinal fever, and so on (but not including pneumonia as an infectious disease) totalled, in all, 21; deaths from tuberculosis numbered 35. Of these thirty-five deaths twenty-eight were due to tuberculosis of the lungs, and these patients had, without doubt, been infectious for months or years before their death. Among these twenty-eight cases twenty-three spent at least their last months, when the infection was likely to be at its height, and died, in their own homes. One cannot avoid the conclusion that a tragic crop of future cases has been silently sown, and will inexorably be harvested in years to come.

Children Immunised Against Diphtheria.

	Guisborough U.D.	Loftus U.D.	Redcar Borough	Saltburn and Marske U.D.	Skelton and Brotton U.D.
Number immunised at end of 1940 ...	436	342	1287	624	462
during 1941 ...	301	151	948	497	957
to 30/6/1942 ...	119	411	208	293	34
Total immunised 1935—30/6/1942 ...	856	904	2443	1414	1453
Estimated total number of children under 15 years old ...	1807	1860	5350	1283	3199
Percentage of children immunised	47½%	48½%	45½%	100%	45½%

In the Combined Districts there were in 1941 sixty-three cases of diphtheria notified in children under 15 years of age: fifty-five (with five deaths) in children who had not been immunised, and eight (with no deaths) in children who had received immunising injections. The insurance afforded by immunisation cannot now be doubted; the safety is evidenced by the fact that out of many thousand immunised in the combined districts no case of any trouble, beyond an occasional very temporary redness of the arm, has been reported.

Only four cases of scarlet fever were notified in the district in the year, and the total in the last three years has been the record low figure of 16 cases. This comparative absence of scarlet fever has been shared with the others of the combined districts, although not found in the statistics of the country as a whole. The total cases in the combined districts in the three years 1939 to 1941 were only 183, while in the single year 1938 there were 195 cases, and in 1937, 319, a figure which previously had several times been exceeded. If, and when, the disease does become epidemic locally again, it will find a larger proportion of children unprotected by a previous attack, and it is to be hoped that it will maintain the mild type that has characterised it of recent years in increasing degree.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

Guisborough,
28th August, 1942.

C. R. GIBSON,
Medical Officer of Health.

Vital Statistics for 1941.

Population, estimated for mid-1941 by Registrar-General: 12,430.

Number of births 231; birth-rate 18·6.

(Average 1934—38, 215; birth-rate 16·6).

Number of deaths of residents, 162; death-rate, 13·0.

(Average 1934—38, 173; death-rate 13·3).

Infant Mortality Rate: 68 infant deaths per thousand births.

(Average 1934—38, 78).

Notifications received: Scarlet fever 4; diphtheria 10; cerebro-spinal fever 5; poliomyelitis 1; encephalitis lethargica 2; erysipelas 1; puerperal pyrexia 1; pneumonia 2; measles 379; whooping-cough 17.

Tuberculosis (new cases): 1 pulmonary; 2 non-pulmonary.