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SUSSEX PUBLIC OFFICIALS.

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ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL MEETING AT LEWES.
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THE WAR AND PUBLIC HEALTH WORK.

The ninth annual meeting of the Sussex Public Health and Local Government Officers' Association was held in the Council Chamber at Lewes Town Hall on Saturday afternoon. Alderman J. MILES (president) occupied the chair, and there were also present the Mayor of Lewes (Councillor T. G. Roberts), Mr. R. T. Baxter (town clerk, Lewes), Mr. D. Roberts (borough surveyor, Lewes), Mr. A. Ward (sanitary inspector, Lewes), Mr. W. E. Woollam (surveyor, East Grinstead Urban District), Mr. T. B. Phillips (sanitary inspector, Uckfield Rural District), Mr. J. H. Olett (sanitary inspector, Eastbourne), Mr. C. T. Gardner (sanitary inspector, Worthing), Mr. J. A. Cuckney (meat inspector, Brighton), Mr. T. Buckman (rate collector, Lewes), Mr. H. F. Veness (sanitary inspector, Hastings), Mr. A. G. Tucker (district surveyor, Mayfield), Mr. W. S. Tucker (district surveyor, Lewes), Mr. G. Plummer (surveyor, Haywards Heath), Mr. A. Robinson (inspector and surveyor, Cuckfield Rural District), Mr. T. Fairhurst (East Grinstead Rural District), Mr. J. McQuillan (surveyor and inspector, Battle Urban District), Mr. E. Brown (surveyor and sanitary inspector, Burgess Hill Urban District), Mr. W. Walker (surveyor, Eastbourne Rural District), Mr. E. W. Ray Johnson (surveyor, Uckfield Rural District) and Mr. C. Turton (engineer and surveyor, East Grinstead Rural District). Apologies for absence were received from Alderman Every (Lewes), Councillor T. J. Farncombe (chairman of Lewes Town Council Finance Committee), Councillor E. D. Charman (chairman of Lewes Town Council Sanitary Committee) and Mr. H. Blackman (Battle).

The CHAIRMAN, in briefly introducing the Mayor, said they did not meet under very bright conditions owing to the war, but he hoped next year the national outlook would be brighter.

The MAYOR extended a warm welcome to the members of the Association to the county town. He said he had the pleasure of welcoming them two years ago, but last year illness prevented him from attending their meeting. Of course the war affected public officers as it did every other phase of national life, but the domestic sanitary work must be kept up as far as possible, for the health of the community was even more important now than formerly. He would like to congratulate the Association upon having Alderman Miles as their president. Alderman Miles was keenly interested in public work, of which he had expert knowledge, and they were fortunate in being able to retain him as their president.

THE ANNUAL REPORT.

Mr. D. ROBERTS (chairman of the Executive Council) read the annual report, which was as follows: "In presenting the ninth annual report of the Association the Executive Council regret that owing to the abnormal conditions produced by the war the proceedings of the Association for 1915 have been almost in a state of suspension. Their report, therefore, is of the briefest. The quarterly general meeting, which it had been fully hoped to hold at Burgess Hill in July, had at the last moment to be deferred owing to the pressure of work falling on Mr. Brown, who had kindly extended the invitation, caused by his only assistant joining the Colours and a number of soldiers being billeted in the town. Realising the difficulty of fixing the quarterly meetings under the existing circumstances, your Executive decided that it was advisable to suspend these meetings, and therefore requested the Secretary to send a circular letter to the members explaining the circumstances and appealing for their continued support and interest. Two new members were enrolled, namely, Councillor E. Wyborn, Lewes; and Mr. F. Greenaway, sanitary inspector for the Battle Rural District Council. The only paper contributed during the year, and read at the annual meeting of the Association, was by Dr. J. R. Steinhauser, medical officer of health for Lewes, entitled "Some Notes on Public Health Work in a Military Camp." The Secretary regrets that owing to the abnormal conditions which have prevailed during the year he has not found it possible to issue more than one number of the Journal (No. 17). He, however, thanks those members who have kindly contributed articles and hopes to be able to issue Journal No. 18 shortly, in which these articles will appear. Whilst recognising the many claims and appeals made on members for monetary help through the year, your Executive think it desirable to draw attention to the need of subscriptions being paid as far as possible, and trusts that the members will continue their financial support to the Association. Your Executive held three meetings, at which there was an average attendance of eight members. The Executive regrets that in consequence of illness and military service Mr. C. T. Gardner and Mr. G. W. Warr respectively have been prevented from being present at either meeting during the year." In proposing the adoption of the report, Mr. Roberts said, "as in all walks of life, public officials found their ranks thinned considerably owing to colleagues going on war service. Those left behind had to carry on the work in the best possible manner and to try and overcome the difficulties with which they were often faced. He read the roll of honour of members on service as follows:—

Vice-Presidents.

Mr. Hugh Stott, Lewes, Major, R.A.M.C.
Dr. Duncan Forbes, Brighton, Captain, R.A.M.C.
Dr. W. G. Willoughby, Eastbourne, Major R.A.M.C.

Honorary Members.

Dr. J. R. Steinhauser, Lewes, Captain, R.A.M.C.
Dr. W. A. Dow, Lewes, Major, Sussex R.G.A.
Dr. G. W. Eustace, Arundel, Captain, Sussex Yeomanry.
Councillor E. F. Young, Lewes, Orderly, British Red Cross Hospital, Netley.

Members.

Mr. A. J. Jenner, Battle, Sergeant, Sussex Yeomanry.
Mr. R. P. Cheale, Lewes, Corporal, 69th Heavy Siege Battery, R.G.A.
Mr. C. E. Greenfield, Brighton, Sergeant, Sussex Yeomanry.
Mr. H. W. Newman, Brighton, Sergeant, Army Service Corps.
Mr. H. G. Cottrell, Lewes, 2nd Lieutenant, R.F.A.
Mr. J. E. Foster, East Grinstead, Corporal, R.E. (Motor Cyclists).
Mr. A. E. Cockerton, Horsham.
Mr. Guy Voice, East Grinstead, Lieutenant, Norfolk Regiment.
Mr. G. W. Warr, Southwick, Lieutenant, R.E.

Mr. VENESS seconded the adoption of the report, and the motion was carried.

Mr. WOOLLAM (hon. treasurer) presented the balance sheet, showing that the balance in hand had been increased from £7. 1s. 5d. at the beginning of the year to £3. 16s. 4d. at the end, while there was a credit balance of £1. 19s. on the library account. He moved the adoption of the balance sheet, and the motion was seconded by Mr. ROBINSON and carried.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

The officers were re-elected as follows: President, Alderman J. Miles; vice-presidents, Alderman Every (Lewes), Dr. Duncan Forbes (Brighton), Mr. W. H. B. Fletcher (Bognor), Alderman G. Holman (Lewes), Alderman M. Martin (Eastbourne), Dr. A. News-holme, C.B. (London), Councillor A. E. Ruge (Lewes), Mr. J. J. Robinson (Arundel), Councillor Hugh Stott (Lewes), Major R. L. Thornton (Fram-field), Dr. W. G. Willoughby (Eastbourne) and Mr. F. J. Wood (Lewes); hon. treasurer, Mr. W. E. Woollam; hon. secretary, Mr. A. Ward; hon. auditors, Mr. A. Courtney Groves and Mr. A. G. Tucker; and the following members retiring by rotation from the Executive Council were re-elected: Messrs. C. T. Gardner, E. W. Ray Johnson, J. H. Ollett, W. S. Tucker and G. W. Warr.

Mr. OLLETT explained the absence of Mr. Groves from the meeting by stating that a sort of poetic justice had overtaken him, as the tyre of his motor cycle had been considerably damaged while he was riding over his own roads to attend that meeting (laughter).

A communication was received from the National Association of Local Government Officers with reference to the raising of a war relief fund in connection with the Benevolent and Orphan Fund for the dependents of Local Government Officers who needed help owing to the war adversely affecting them. A fund of £50,000 was needed, and it was suggested that each local Association should contribute a proportionate amount. The contribution from Sussex worked out at £150.

The letter was referred to the Executive Council.

It was decided that the next meeting should be held at Burgess Hill in June or July, if possible, and Mr. BROWN said he would do his best to make the local arrangements if the meeting there was found to be convenient.

The Mayor and the Town Clerk of Lewes were elected hon. members of the Association, and Mr. W. Walker (surveyor to the Eastbourne Rural District) was elected an ordinary member.

A cordial vote of thanks was accorded the Mayor and the Lewes Town Council for allowing the use of the Town Hall for the meetings; and to Alderman Miles for presiding.

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR.

A paper prepared by Mr. T. Brice Phillips (formerly hon. secretary of the Association) on "The Effect of the War on Public Health Work" was read by Mr. A. WARD. The writer of the paper stated that the European War had proved so different from all that was expected, even by military experts, that an attempt to predict what the future might bring should be made with a certain amount of diffidence. Nevertheless, it might be interesting to consider some of the circumstances which were likely to affect those branches of national life with which the work of the members of the Association was connected. Such a world-wide war could not take place without interfering with the work of public officers. The records showed that officials had responded to the nation's call in all departments. A number were on active military service, whilst others were helping in various ways in military matters at home. This had resulted in a depletion of staffs, and public work had been reduced to the lowest possible minimum. In common with every branch of industry, the public health work of the country had been entirely re-organised for war purposes. In constructional work

—that branch which affected surveyors chiefly—drainage and water supply schemes had been suspended, road-making had been delayed and there had been a cessation of building operations in most districts. In the more direct work of public health—that affecting medical officers of health and sanitary inspectors—there had been a similar state of affairs. At an early stage the Local Government Board issued a circular to local authorities which amounted to a demand to reduce work to its lowest possible limit. Even in unofficial organisations which formerly helped public work there had been a general slackening of effort. Road conferences, sanitary congresses, housing and town planning meetings, and the activities of many other associations, had to be abandoned for the time being. There was thus an accumulation of arrears which would require to be overtaken as soon as the opportunity arose for doing so. It was too early to predict what the actual result upon the health of the public would be, but there had already been one indication of falling away in the line of least resistance, namely, infantile mortality. The recent Order for the compulsory notification of measles might be taken as a sign that, even in these distressful times, it had been found necessary to take this step in order to prevent an abnormal increase in the death rate of infants. There could be no question that this increase was due in a great measure to the slackening in the general efforts to ensure public health.

AFTER THE WAR.

With regard to the after effects of the war, the general conditions likely to prevail after the declaration of peace were: (a) A great influx of male labour into all the ordinary channels of occupation; (b) a number of people who have held temporary appointments during the war will be thrown out of employment; (c) a great increase in the demand for labour in connection with the work of repairing the wastage of war, combined with a possible shortage of efficient male labour; (d) adverse financial conditions which are likely to impede all kinds of public work. The great influx of labour to be expected when the armies were released from service must have its effect upon public appointments. There was likely to be a great number of men, some of them invalids or partly so, who would be seeking employment, and the work of public authorities would be one avenue open to them. Public sympathy would be an important factor in favour of the employment of such men, and those from the Front would be welcomed among officials wherever their appointment was justified. It should, however, be noted that employment of persons who had not been actually trained would be in opposition to the aims and objects of most organised associations. Prior to the war much had been done in the way of organising public work, and admission to most branches could only be obtained after special training and education. Even allowing for the extraordinary conditions evolved from the war it would still behove officials to maintain this position, as far as was reasonable, and such associations as theirs might lend assistance in preventing the excessive employment of unskilled labour. The numerous temporary appointments which had been made during the war might also be the cause of trouble. True, such appointments were held on the understanding that they were to be relinquished upon short notice after the war, but the effect would be a further glut in the market of persons seeking employment. Some relief would probably be found in the fact that there would also be a great demand for labour in connection with the work of repairing the wastage of war. A great impulse would be given to all the more important of the peaceful arts and industries. The towns of those countries that had been devastated would have to be re-built, industries that were ruined would be revived, and the rivalry between the belligerent nations now carried on by force of arms would be continued with renewed activity in strenuous commercial competition. In the British Empire there would be a tendency for emigration to increase, for with the re-opening of the new markets and the desire to conserve the trade of the Empire a renewed spirit of enterprise would be aroused which could only find its true outlet in the wider expanses of the British Colonies and Dependencies.

LABOUR AND FINANCE

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It also had to be remembered that although there would be a great demand for new labour it would be accompanied by a comparative shortage in men on account of the losses through the war. It was probable, therefore, that the demand for labour in trade and commercial circles would be such as to prevent any undue competition arising in the ranks of public officials. Financial considerations were also likely to affect the work of public authorities. It was well known that during the war attempts had been made to keep expenditure as low as possible, and public officials had borne their share in doing this. Often, however, it had been done at the expense of work which in ordinary circumstances would be considered necessary, and in other cases only by putting off until a later time work which should have been executed without delay. Although this had resulted in a great amount of public work getting into arrear, the state of public finance after the war was likely to continue to hinder work for some time in the interest of national economy. An indirect result that might be looked for would be a broader public spirit among men returning from the war. Public opinion in the past had always played an important part in maintaining public health work, and in this connection nothing was likely to appeal more strongly to the British people than the fact that the war had amply justified all previous efforts in the interest of public health. It was not possible at present to give figures as to actual health statistics of His Majesty's Forces, but it was already known that the results would prove that the Army Medical Corps, with its attendant nursing and sanitary complements, had played a very important part in maintaining the health and efficiency of the Army. The immunity of the troops from typhoid fever, the excellent arrangements made for food supply and the efforts to secure pure and wholesome food, even under most trying conditions, were all elements which would help to teach future generations that public health work was worth maintaining, and that whatever sacrifices may have been made by Britain the protection of public health could not be given up lightly. Summarising the foregoing remarks, it might be expected that for a few years after the war public health work might languish somewhat from the pressure of public financial questions, but once these conditions had been overcome, as they would be overcome by British dogged perseverance, the various departments of public health work would take a renewed lease of life and would probably win greater triumphs still in the beneficent work of uplifting humanity.

Mr. D. ROBERTS proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Phillips for his paper.

Mr. OLLETT, in seconding, said many of the problems raised by the war had to be faced while the war was in progress and could not be left till the close of hostilities. For that reason such gatherings as that Association held were important, because they furnished opportunities for an interchange of opinions and experience which was of great assistance to the members. There should be no slackening in their efforts for sanitation. The camps, the billeting of troops in the towns and other matters had furnished fresh problems for those engaged in sanitary work to cope with. They all knew of the circular of the Local Government Board as to economy, but he did not think that was meant to suggest that work really necessary for public health should not be done. True economy was economy in the life and health of the nation, and the Local Government Board had given them an example of that in the recent Order for the compulsory notification of measles, even in these abnormal times.

The motion was heartily carried, and Mr. Ward was also thanked for reading the paper.

At the close of the meeting Alderman Miles invited those present to tea, and he was cordially thanked for his hospitality, on the motion of Mr. WOOLLAM.