

# Leytonstone and Medical Matters (2)

## The Medical Officer of Health Annual Reports 1914 and 1918

This brief comparison between the annual medical reports for 1914 and 1918 can provide a rough guide as to how the war affected the health of Leytonstone people but the data below tends to promote more questions than it answers.

### DEATHS:

There were 84 more 'non military' deaths in 1918 and the overall death rate rose from 1.04% to 1.5% - but was exaggerated by the reduction in the population. The report explained that the population had reduced by several thousand since 1914.

### BIRTHS

The 1918 report noted that total births had reduced each year since 1914 with a particularly large drop in 1916 - the year of conscription.

1914 / 2800 Births

1918 / 1687 Births

### INFANT MORTALITY

In 1914 the deaths of children aged up to one year numbered 109. In 1918 this figure had risen to 161 and this was unacceptable. However the blame was placed on 'ignorant' mothers who failed to provide adequate childcare. However a number of tragic child deaths are reported in the 'Express' and these suggest that many young mothers of the time needed help and support rather than admonishment. And the council itself was not totally blameless.

### CAUSES OF DEATH:

The report details the numbers of people who died from particular causes and it might be surprising that smallpox was an issue. However the 'Zymatic' deaths were fewer and this reduction had continued a trend which started in 1906.

### NOTIFICATION OF BIRTH ACT (1907)

This Act had stated that the local medical officer had to be informed of all births so that he could arrange for health visitors to provide mothers with the necessary support and training. Leyton had not adopted the act in 1914 but by 1918 it funded an Infant Welfare Clinic which perhaps, belatedly provided the necessary help.

### 'Zymatic' deaths were from:-

Scarlet Fever,	Diphtheria
Whooping cough,	Diarrhoea
Enteric fever (Typhoid),	Measles
Enteritis	

### DENTAL PROVISION

Many potential recruits were rejected by the military because of their poor teeth. The 1907 Education Act had prompted councils to inspect Elementary school children's teeth but treatment was discretionary. However in 1914 Leyton did open a dental clinic and 532 inspections of six year olds were performed. This resulted in 237 children receiving treatment. A meticulous record of each child's treatments was to be kept because annual 'follow up' inspections were to be made every year the child was at school. The older children were not treated. In 1918 inspections for all children became compulsory but it was to be another twenty six years before all children received free treatment. The 1918 health report also reveals that 152 mothers received free treatment and they 'suffered' 224 fillings and 624 extractions - an astonishing average of 4 extractions each.