

# Pandemic in Cambridge 1918

## The return of the flu

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Cambridge Daily News Monday 14th October 1918

### BURIALS DELAYED

Influenza Epidemic Causes Strange Situation in Glasgow

The Central News Glasgow correspondent says the influenza scourge in that city has brought about an extraordinary situation. Undertakers intimate that they cannot guarantee interments fixed hours, or on specified days, and as the cemetery authorities are without sufficient gravediggers, funerals are being unduly delayed. Pressure was great on Saturday that some relatives were obliged to assist in preparing graves. Some interments were delayed until darkness set in. Other burials were deferred until another day.

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Cambridge Daily News Tuesday 22nd October 1918

### THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Borough Schools to be Closed for a Fortnight

### FIVE HUNDRED CHILDREN ILL

We understand that owing to the serious spread of influenza in Cambridge the Education Committee, acting on the advice of the Medical Officer, Dr. Andrew Laird, have decided to close all the public elementary schools in the Borough from to-day until Monday, November 4th. The evening continuation classes will similarly be closed, and it is hoped that private schools and Sunday Schools may be induced to take similar action in order to stamp out, as far as may be possible, the present epidemic. Proprietors of cinemas in the town have been approached, and have agreed to refuse to admit children to their places for the next fortnight.

Influenza is not a compulsorily notifiable disease, and it is therefore impossible to say how many adults are affected in the Borough but we understand that something like 500 children have been reported ill, and undoubtedly the great majority of these are suffering from influenza. These cases come from nearly every part of the town. Cherryhinton and Chesterton are apparently the only districts which have escaped.

It will be remembered that there was a serious outbreak of influenza in Cambridge in June of this year, by which Cadets were badly affected as well children. The present epidemic seems to have started about the end September, and has gradually been getting worse.

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Cambridge Daily News Tuesday 22 October 1918

### PRECAUTIONS RECOMMENDED

"Under present circumstances every patient who has a severe cold or fever should to bed and stay there for three or four days." Such is the advice given by Dr. Arthur Newsholme medical officer of the Local Government Board, in a memorandum setting out the known facts as to the history and prevalence of influenza. He points out that if one attack conferred any considerable immunity against repeated attack influenza would become much less prevalent; but unfortunately this is not so, and the difficulty of prevention is correspondingly increased. The general preventive

measures available are the same for ordinary catarrh and for the more serious influenza. An initial difficulty in securing their adoption is that the ??? for several days may not recognise the serious nature of his illness. It is probable that infection is chiefly spread during earliest stages. Control over the disease is practicable only by the active co-operation of every member of the community. The only safe rule is to regard all catarrhal attacks and every illness associated with rise of temperature during the prevalence of influenza as infectious, and adopt appropriate precautionary measures.

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## Cambridge Daily News Wednesday 23 October 1918

### THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

#### Cambridge and County Girls School Closed

Both in London and in the country generally influenza continues to spread and reports from many places speak of the wholesale closing of schools until the epidemic abates. In addition the closing of the Cambridge elementary schools, mentioned in yesterday's Cambridge Daily News, we understand that the Cambridge and County Girls' School is closed, and also a number of schools in the county.

#### SOME IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS

Among the precautions recommended Dr. Newsholme for safeguarding against an attack of influenza are the following:

It is most important to avoid scattering infection in sneezing and coughing. A handkerchief should always be employed to intercept droplets of mucus, and the handkerchief should be boiled, or burnt if of paper. Expectorations should be received in a special receptacle, its contents being subsequently disinfected or burnt.

General disinfection of premises after influenza not required, but a thorough washing and cleansing of rooms and their contents and washing articles of bedding apparel is desirable.

Influenza is very liable to relapse, and pneumonia may occur late as well as an early complication. Relapse is less likely if the patient goes to bed on the first onset of symptoms and remains there till all fever has gone; avoidance of chill or over-exertion during convalescence is also of great importance as a means of avoiding relapse or complications. During attacks the use of boracic and weak saline solution for frequent irrigation of the naso-pharynx is recommended.

Satisfactory nursing is important in the prevention of complications and in aiding recovery from a severe attack. Sanitary authorities have power, with the Board's sanction, to provide nursing assistance for those who are unable to provide it for themselves.

Gargling the throat with solution one in 5,000 permanganate of potassium in water containing 0.8 per cent common salt night and morning is to be recommended. In addition, this solution should be poured into the palm of the hand, snuffed up through the nostrils, and expelled through the mouth.

The occurrence of epidemic catarrhs would greatly decreased by continuous flushing with air of each occupied bed-room and living-room. This implies the need for adequate warm clothing, especially for persons engaged in sedentary occupations and for children and old people.

Overcrowding in dwellings or in unventilated assembly rooms and places of entertainment should avoided.

The aggregation of large numbers of persons in one room, especially for sleeping, is dangerous when catarrhs are prevalent. The smaller the unit of aggregation of persons, the less is risk of infection.

Dirtiness, whether personal or of living or working rooms, and dusty conditions favour infection. The wet cleansing of all invaded places is important.

Indiscriminate expectoration is always a source of risk of infection, and is especially dangerous during the prevalence of influenza.

Persons with septic conditions of the mouth, teeth, or naso-pharynx are especially prone to catarrhal attacks. The treatment these conditions is important.

Prolonged mental strain or over-fatigue, and still more alcoholism, favour infection; and complication by pneumonia is especially fatal among immoderate drinkers.

It particularly important that sick persons and old people should be protected against exposure to influenza.

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## Cambridge Daily News Thursday 24th October 1918

### INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

#### County Boys' School and 19 Schools in County Closed

The influenza epidemic is prevalent the county as well as the Borough. Up to to-day fourteen schools have been closed in the county. In addition to the closing of the County Girls' School in the Borough, mentioned in yesterday's "Cambridge Daily News," it has also been found necessary to close the County Boys' School. It was also decided the Town Council meeting to-day to close immediately the children's room all the Mill-road branch of the Free Library.

The parishes in the county which are most affected at present are; Bottisham, Burwell, Dry Drayton, Great Shelford, Harston, Hauxton Pampisford, Sawston, Shudy Camps, Swafham Bulbeck, Swafham Prior, Swavesey, and Willingham. All the schools in these parishes have been closed within the last fortnight and it is extremely probable that before the end of the week similar action will have to be taken in other parishes. Not only have the children been attacked by the disease, but in some of the schools the teachers themselves have become victims. A rough estimate from reports received by the County Medical Officer. Dr. Robinson, shows that between five and six hundred children have been absent from the schools which have so far been closed, owing to influenza. Fortunately, it would seem that no deaths have yet occurred.

Dr. Robinson is doing his best counteract the disease, and has prepared a circular letter which will go to all the teachers in the county, drawing attention to the epidemic, and asking the teachers to give immediate information when they have reason to fear that influenza is abroad their parish. Early information is not always obtainable, influenza not being a notifiable disease.

Dr. Robinson is also preparing for distribution leaflet, mainly based on Sir Arthur Newsholme's memorandum on what precautions to take, and this will be sent into the rural parishes. It is felt that many people do not fully appreciate the dangers of influenza and the necessity of taking adequate precautions for its prevention. They do not realise that at this time year an infectious form of catarrh can be contracted which very is difficult to distinguish from influenza. Without proper care, pneumonia may very easily result.

One way in which influenza is spread is among country people is through the agency of the common cart by which they come into market. They are very often crowded together under a tarpaulin cover for a journey of some miles and these conditions are very favourable for spreading infection.

### NEW THEATRE CLOSED TO CHILDREN

The management of the New Theatre deemed it advisable to close the theatre to schoolchildren whilst the Borough Schools remain closed.

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## Cambridge Daily New Thursday 24th October 1918

### TOPICS OF THE HOUR

The influenza epidemic has now been raging for three weeks. On Tuesday the Local Government Board issued to the public a memorandum of action, to be circulated among local authorities the object being, apparently, to prevent further spread of the disease. It would have been better to lock the stable door before the escape of the horse, says the Times. If this advice is likely to have any good effect, its chances of achieving its purpose would have been enhanced had it been published at the beginning instead in the middle of the outbreak. Nor are we disposed to accept the excuse that no one could have foreseen the extent of the present epidemic or the rapid character of its advance. Influenza was very prevalent last summer, and had the experience of the eighties been called to mind it would have been evident that a summer epidemic was likely to be followed by a winter one of greater severity. The need for a Ministry of Health to protect the public in matters of this kind has never received a more forcible illustration.

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## Cambridge Independent Press Friday 25th October 1918

### THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC

Schools Closed in Cambridge and the County

### OVER A THOUSAND CHILDREN ILL

The epidemic of influenza from which the whole country, and indeed Europe, is now suffering, is being felt very severely both in Cambridge and the county. On the advice of Dr. Andrew Laird, the Borough Medical Officer of Health, all the public elementary schools in Cambridge were closed on Tuesday last until Monday, November 4th, and since then both the County Girls' School and the County Boys' School have also been closed. Similar action has also been taken in regard to the Evening Continuation Classes. It is hoped that private schools and Sunday schools will follow the example of the other schools in order to stamp out, far as may be possible, the present epidemic. Proprietors of cinemas in the town have been approached, and have agreed to refuse to admit children to their places for the next fortnight. The management of the New Theatre, Cambridge, have also decided to close the theatre to children for the present.

Influenza is not compulsorily notifiable disease, and it is therefore impossible to say how many adults are affected in the Borough, but we understand that something like 500 children have been reported ill, and undoubtedly the great majority of these are suffering from influenza. These cases come from nearly every part of the town. Several deaths of adults and children have been reported in the borough.

### IN THE COUNTY

Up till yesterday (Thursday) 14 schools had been closed in the county, the parishes chiefly affected being: Bottisham, Burwell, Dry Drayton, Great Shelford, Harston, Hauxton, Pampisford, Sawston, Shudy Camps, Swaffham Bulbeck, Swaffham Prior, Swavesey, and Willingham.

Not only have the children been attacked by the disease, but in some of schools the teachers themselves have become victims. A rough estimate from reports received by the County Medical Officer, Dr. Robinson, shows that between five and six hundred children have been absent from the schools which have so far been closed, owing to influenza. Fortunately, it would seem that no deaths have yet occurred.

Dr. Robinson doing his best counteract the disease, and has prepared a circular letter which will go to all the teachers in the county, drawing attention to the epidemic, and asking the teachers to give immediate information when they have reason to fear that influenza is abroad in their parish. Early information is not always obtainable, influenza not being a notifiable disease.

Dr. Robinson is also preparing for distribution leaflet, mainly based on Sir Arthur Newsholme's memorandum on what precautions to take, and this will be sent into the rural parishes. It is felt that many people do not fully appreciate the dangers of influenza and the necessity of taking adequate precautions for its prevention. They not realise that at this time of year an infectious form of catarrh can be contracted which is very difficult to distinguish from influenza. Without proper care, pneumonia may very easily result.

One way in which influenza is spread among country people is through the agency of the common cart by which they come into market. They are very often crowded together under a tarpaulin cover for a journey of some miles, and these conditions are very favourable for spreading infection.

#### PRECAUTIONS RECOMMENDED

“Under present circumstances every patient who has severe cold fever should go to bed and stay there for three or four days.” Such is the advice given by Sir Arthur Newsholme, medical officer of the Local Government Board, in a memorandum setting out the known facts to the history and prevalence influenza. He points out that if one attack conferred any considerable immunity against repeated attack influenza would become much less prevalent; but unfortunately this is not so and the difficulty of prevention is correspondingly increased. The general preventive measures available are the same for an ordinary catarrh and for the more serious influenza. An initial difficulty in securing their adoption is that the patient for several days may not recognise the serious nature of his illness. It is probable that infection is chiefly spread during the earliest stages. Control over the disease is practicable only by the active co-operation every member of the community. The only safe rule is to regard all catarrhal attacks and every illness associated with rise of temperature during the prevalence of influenza infectious, and to adopt appropriate precautionary measures.

Both in London and in the country generally influenza continues to spread, and reports from many places speak of the wholesale closing of schools until the epidemic abates.

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### Cambridge Daily New Monday 28th October 1918

I do not find much disposition among general practitioners to follow Professor Simpson's rather alarming line of speculation on the influenza epidemic. The scaremonger went about from the beginning assuring us that “it's not really, influenza you know; something much worse!” Nobody, of course, would include the Professor of Hygiene at King's College in that galley, but, unfortunately, his suggestions rather encourage a scare, and the use of the word “plague”—though it is applied in a general and not a particular sense—by some writers tends to increase the trouble. Doctors with whom I have spoken not find any considerable variation from the ordinary clinical symptoms of influenza. “Every man is odd,” and the wise doctor at ordinary times recognises that he has to treat not a disease but patient. At present discrimination is impossible, and victims must suffer for any deviation from the average.

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### Cambridge Daily New Thursday 31 October 1918

#### “FLU” AND FUEL

How the Public Can Help Gas Companies

Influenza has depleted the clerical staffs of the Gas Companies and Local Fuel Overseers to the extent of interfering with the work of rationing fuel and light supplies. The public over the country can help to overcome the difficulty and ensure a quicker settlement of their fuel and light rations if, when filling in the first application form (F.H.F. 2), they state in the space at the back provided for "particulars of gas" whether they are slot-meter or ordinary meter consumers, as the case may be.

The Gas Companies, as a rule, keep records of these classes of customers in different sets of books. An initial intimation by consumers to which class they belong will save much searching in the gas offices, and it will facilitate the return of the F.H.F. 3 form to Fuel Overseers, who in many cases are waiting for them.