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Contributors

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AXBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

A N N U A L R E P O R T S

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

and

SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR

1949.

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICERS:-

R. A. Wathes.	M.A.(Cantab) L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S. Medical Officer of Health.
John H. Ellis.	Senior Sanitary Inspector. Certificate of R.S.I. and S.I.E.J.B. Certificate of R.S.I. for Inspectors of Meat and other Foods.
W. Higham.	District Sanitary Inspector. Certificate of R.S.A.(Scotland) Certificate of R.S.A.(Scotland) for Inspectors of Meat and other Foods.
D. Grantley Smith.	District Sanitary Inspector. Certificate of R.S.I. and S.I.E.J.B.
L. W. Martin.	Chief Clerk.

AXBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

1949.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
AXBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Mr Chairman, Mrs Greenhill and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting my fourth Annual Report, covering the work of your Public Health Department during 1949.

In view of the recent discussions with other Local Authorities and with the Somerset County Council, it seems that my time as your Medical Officer will soon be coming to an end. When that time does come, I shall much regret leaving your service, but I feel confident that the new scheme (which I do not wish to mention here in detail) will provide you with more efficient Medical Services, and will ensure greater co-ordination with neighbouring authorities.

Discussion of this scheme by the Council has made me realise again that I enjoy your confidence, and I wish to express my thanks to you for this compliment, and also for your help and support with my work for you throughout the year.

To the Staff of the Public Health Department I again say "thank you". There is nothing but praise for their work - a great deal is done by a very few people.

I remain,
Your obedient Servant,

R. S. WATHES,

Medical Officer of Health.

The Court,
AXBRIDGE, Somt.
August 1950.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY 1949.

Area of District.	90,551 acres
Number of inhabited houses.	7,411
Rateable Value.	£186,974
Population: 1951 Census	22,076
Registrar-General's estimate for 1949 (Civilian)	25,340
Total.	26,900

LIVE BIRTHS:

	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Legitimate	215	190	405
Illegitimate	<u>12</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>22</u>
	<u>227</u>	<u>200</u>	<u>427</u>

BIRTH RATE: 16.85

STILL BIRTHS:

	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
Legitimate	5	4	9
Illegitimate	-	-	-
			<u>9</u>

STILL BIRTH RATE: (per 1,000 total births) 21.1

DEATHS:

	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>	<u>Total.</u>
	152	176	<u>328</u>

DEATH RATE: 12.94

VITAL STATISTICS.

REGISTERED BIRTHS.

After allowing for inward and outward transfers, the Registrar-General credited the District with 427 live births, for 1949, 227 were males and 200 females. Of these 22 were illegitimate (12 males and 10 females). The registered number of still births was 9 (5 males and 4 females) all of which were legitimate.

The birth rate for 1949 was 16.85 for 1,000 of the population, which was slightly higher than for the country as a whole (16.7).

DEATHS.

328 deaths were registered to the District during the year. Of these 152 were males and 176 females. The death rate for 1949 was 12.94 per 1,000 of the population which was higher than for the country as a whole (11.7)

The following tables show the causes of death in the Axbridge Rural District, 1949:-

	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>
All causes ... Total 328	152	176
Typhoid & Paratyphoid Fevers	-	-
Cerebro spinal fever	-	1
Scarlet Fever	-	-
Whooping Cough	-	-
Diphtheria	-	-
Tuberculosis of respiratory system	5	-
Other forms of Tuberculosis	1	2
Syphilitic diseases	-	-
Influenza	-	2
Measles	1	-
Acute poliomyelitis & polio-encephalitis	1	-
Acute infantile encephalitis	-	-
Cancer of buccal cavity and oesophagus (M), uterus (F)	3	2
Cancer of stomach and duodenum	2	5
Cancer of Breast	1	7
Cancer of all other sites	17	10
Diabetes	-	4
Intra-cranial vascular lesions	16	35
Heart disease	52	58
Other diseases of the circulatory system	2	5
Bronchitis	6	1
Pneumonia	6	5
Other respiratory diseases	3	-
Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	-	1
Diarrhoea under 2 years	1	-
Appendicitis	-	-
Other digestive diseases	2	5
Nephritis	5	5
Puerperal and post-abortion sepsis	-	-
Other maternal causes	-	-
Premature births	-	2
Congenital malformations, birth injuries, infantile diseases	4	5
Suicide	2	1
Road traffic accidents	-	1
Other violent causes	5	5
All other causes	17	14
Special causes (included in All other causes above) -		
Small-pox	-	-

GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES.

1. WATER SUPPLY.

The position is more or less unchanged since my last report. It is satisfactory to note that the District's supply continued adequate throughout the long spell of dry weather during 1949. The notes on water supply are reproduced below.

Every Parish in our District enjoys the benefits of a piped water supply. This supply is owned and maintained entirely by the District Council with the exception of that to Kewstoke; which is supplied from the Borough of Weston-s-Mare.

There are certain isolated or scattered dwellings which are dependent on private means of water supply, either wells or rainwater. The former are usually quite satisfactory. It is, of course, hoped to supply all dwellings in the Rural District from the public mains as soon as possible, and extensions of the mains have been carried out in some parishes. Greater details are available in the Surveyor's Report.

The Public Health Department collect samples of water from the mains at points throughout the District, and submit them monthly for examination at the Public Health Laboratory. The reports thereon have been satisfactory throughout the year, with very few exceptions. Tests for plumbo-solvency have all been negative.

<u>Parish.</u>	<u>Dwelling houses</u>	<u>Dwelling-houses receiving a supply from Public Water Mains.</u>	<u>Population supplied from Public Water Mains.</u>	
			<u>Direct to house.</u>	<u>Stand-pipe.</u>
Axbridge	277	274	1,099	12
Badgworth	109	108	387	3
Banwell	589	554	1,824	-
Berrow	117	114	352	-
Blagdon	316	307	1,055	-
Bleadon	209	190	575	-
Brean	96	94	296	-
Brent Knoll	243	228	751	-
Burnham Without	92	92	289	-
Burrington	139	102	345	-
Butcombe	58	45	152	-
Chapel Allerton	78	76	286	-
Cheddar	806	785	2,694	7
Churchill	361	301	1,013	-
Compton Bishop	121	101	429	-
Congresbury	401	337	1,193	-
East Brent	220	220	793	7
Hutton	174	147	493	-
* Kewstoke	222	188	532	-
Locking	84	70	174	-
Loxton	50	40	143	-
Lympsham	157	157	536	22
Mark	254	253	949	16
Puxton	45	42	186	-
Shipham	188	175	544	-
Weare	135	132	440	-
Wedmore	703	613	2,304	22
Wick-st-Lawrence	50	46	193	-
Winscombe	667	657	2,380	-
Wrington	450	376	1,452	-

* Weston-s-Mare Borough Council Water Supply Area.

2. SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

The Council's problems in the matter of sewage disposal remain almost exactly as they did a year ago, but it is encouraging to think that there is hope of beginning work on the new schemes for Axbridge, Cross and Congresbury in the near future.

The Council maintains sewers that serve at least parts of the larger villages and hamlets. Some of these sewers are old and require renewal, but they have been kept in good working order. When economy permits, renewals will be made.

Efficient new sewers and disposal plants are naturally a part of the Council's new housing programme.

A large proportion of houses depend on private cesspools and even more primitive means of sewage disposal. In a rural area it is impossible to connect every house to a public sewer, but the Council maintains a tanker vehicle and undertakes emptying and cleaning cesspools at a moderate charge. The Sanitary Inspectors keep a careful watch for nuisances arising from wrongly disposed sewage, and at once deal with cases which come to their notice.

3. HOUSING.

More houses are still urgently needed in almost every part of the District, but I feel that it can be said that most of the worse cases of overcrowding and other insanitary conditions have been dealt with.

The Council has, moreover, the problem of providing enough new houses to enable every family to have a home of their own and every newly-married couple to have a house to live in.

At the end of 1949, there were 729 applicants for re-housing on the Council's list. Of these 241 had been awarded "priority points" for public health reasons, though I would add that this does not necessarily mean that all the 241 families were living in insanitary conditions. During 1949, 115 families were re-housed by the Council. There are now a total of 875 houses owned by the Council, 54 houses held on requisition and 64 hutments occupied. It is pleasing to note that the number of occupied hutments is steadily falling.

The Public Health Department continues to work with the Housing Officer to ensure that vacant Council Houses are allotted fairly, and I can report that the existing "points scheme" continues to work well.

I have continued the practice of visiting every applicant high in the list for re-housing just before allocation of new houses is made.

4. INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The year 1949 began during the height of a nationwide measles epidemic from which this District was not excepted. Apart from this, there is nothing worthy of particular notice under this heading.

The following table shows the infectious diseases notified during the year.

<u>Disease.</u>	<u>Total cases notified.</u>	<u>Cases admitted to Isolation Hospital.</u>	<u>Total Deaths.</u>
Small-pox	-	-	-
Scarlet Fever	45	14	-
Diphtheria	-	-	-
Enteric Fever (including paratyphoid)	1	1	-
Measles	459	1	1
Whooping Cough	27	-	-
Puerperal Pyrexia	-	-	-
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	2	1	-
Cerebro-spinal meningitis	-	-	-
Dysentery	-	-	-
Malaria	-	-	-
Pneumonia	22	-	-
Acute Poliomyelitis	2	2	1
Encephalitis Lethargica	-	-	-
Erysipelas	6	-	-
	<hr/> 564	<hr/> 19	<hr/> 2

A dwelling-house, school premises, and 54 rooms were disinfected following cases of infectious disease, during the year. Cases of personal infection are now very infrequent.

5. TUBERCULOSIS.

	<u>Total cases notified.</u>	<u>Total Deaths.</u>
Pulmonary	28	
<u>Tuberculosis-</u> Non-Pulmonary	9	5

Morbidity Rate for Tuberculosis.

Total cases notified 37. Estimated Population 25,340

Rate = 1.46 Incidence per 1,000 per year.

	<u>Pulmonary.</u>		<u>Non-Pulmonary.</u>		<u>Total.</u>	
	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>	<u>Male.</u>	<u>Female.</u>
Number of Cases on Register at 31st. December 1949.	47	36	11	13	58	49

6. DIPHTHERIA IMMUNISATION.

The following table shows the progress of immunisation against diphtheria:-

	<u>Immunisation completed during 1949.</u>	
	<u>Under 5 years.</u>	<u>5 - 15 years.</u>
Number of children	340	62

A total of 3,804 children under the age of 15 years have completed a full course of immunisation at any time up to 31st. December 1949 against an estimated mid-year population 1949 of 5,647.

7. HOSPITALS, CLINICS ETC.

Following remarks made at the last presentation of my last Annual Report, and because of many complaints from private individuals and organisations in the District, I made strenuous efforts to interest the appropriate authorities in providing hospital accommodation for maternity cases in our District. It is with great regret that I have to report my failure in this matter.

Once again I venture to draw the Council's attention to the complete lack of maternity beds within our District, and to the fact that Axbridge Isolation Hospital at present stands with its forty beds almost entirely unoccupied. It is admitted by the Regional Hospital Board that our few cases of infectious diseases could easily be accommodated elsewhere, and I submit that the use of this hospital for providing maternity accommodation would be of far greater benefit to the local community than that given by its present inactivity. It is the intention of the Hospital Board to use the Axbridge Isolation Hospital for cases of tuberculosis at some future date.

Of Ilex Lodge Hospital, I can report with pleasure on its enhanced status as a geriatric unit, and say that Axbridge Rural District is not without facilities for the care of its old people who require hospital attention. The old stigma of the work-house is, I hope, now a thing of the past.

St. Michaels Home and Compton Bishop Childrens' Hospital have continued their functions with little change.

I feel that the increasing interest of the various villages in Infant Welfare is encouraging and the opening of new clinics and welfare centres is likely to be of great help to young mothers.

8. CONCLUSION.

I hope that the Council will receive my Report with favour, and accept my assurance that the Public Health services have functioned efficiently throughout the year.

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR

1949.

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
AXBRIDGE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Mr Chairman, Mrs Greenhill and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the
year 1949.

HOUSING.

Progress in the reconditioning of unfit houses has been negligible. It is extremely difficult for an owner to obtain a Building Licence for this work as the amount of such licence has to be deducted from the District Council's "ceiling" for repair work. The object of repair work is to prevent houses becoming unfit for habitation. Those which have already reached that stage would be better catered for by a special "ex-ceiling" allocation. An allocation such as this need not interfere with the provision of new houses but could supplement the housing programme, for the following reasons:-

- (a) Most reconditioning work requires a comparatively small amount of timber.
- (b) This work can be carried out by labour not engaged on new building.
- (c) Occupiers of unfit houses are normally given high priority in the allocation of a new house. The reconditioning of an unfit house is, in effect, equivalent to the provision of a new house.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that reconditioning work, if it is to proceed, should be of a high standard. This view is substantiated by the following extract from Circular 90/49 of the Ministry of Health.

"Special importance is attached to ensuring that the dwellings provided or improved are of good standard. It will be much better to secure a smaller amount of good houses than to fritter away the building resources and expenditure on the patching of houses which would remain unsatisfactory in many respects."

A clear lead at high level as to whether or not reconditioning work should go forward appears to be needed. For the District Council to try to cope with the problem within the limits imposed by the repair "ceiling" appears to be to attempt the impossible.

RURAL HOUSING SURVEY.

The survey is progressing slowly, inspections being carried out as and when more urgent work permits.

The position at the end of the year was as follows:-

Estimated number of dwelling-houses to be surveyed (i.e. all those of £16 rateable value and under excluding private dwelling-houses erected since 1930 and Council Houses).	4,055
Number of properties surveyed (total to 31st. December 1949).	2,266 55.9%
Number of properties found to be satisfactory in all respects	(Category 1)	225	9.9%
Number of properties found to have minor defects.	(Category 2)	371	16.4%
Number of properties requiring repair or structural alteration.	(Category 3)	1,440	63.5%
Number of properties unfit for habitation and incapable of repair at reasonable cost.	(Category 5)	230	10.2%

OVERCROWDING.

On the 31st. December 1949 there were 10 cases of statutory overcrowding on the register. It is again emphasised that the statutory definition of "overcrowding" is based on a low standard which takes into account living-room accommodation in arriving at the permitted number. A truer picture of those families which are inadequately housed can be gained from the number of applications for the tenancy of a Council House.

MOVEABLE DWELLINGS.

The popularity of camping holidays continues undiminished. The number of caravans is increasing year by year and the demand for sites exceeds the supply. The position has been reached where serious consideration should be given to future policy regarding camping sites. The number of caravans in certain areas is already high and further concentration would necessitate the provision of main drainage schemes. The need for a more positive policy towards camping is apparent; the mere prevention of nuisances on sites is insufficient. In the main, campers prefer a well laid-out site provided with good amenities although most of them have considerable difficulty in finding one.

The matter is one which calls for the closest co-operation between the District Council and the Town Planning Authority. The provision of a high standard of amenities and sanitary services on camping sites must obviously, for economic reasons, be related to a long term policy for camping. Until the future "zoning" of camping sites is settled it is impossible for this policy to be formulated.

Number of camping sites licensed during the year.	44
Total number of moveable dwellings permitted on these sites.	913

FOOD PREMISES.

Legislation, however well framed and however rigidly enforced, will never provide the complete solution to the problem of ensuring the hygienic handling of food. A sense of responsibility to the general public on the part of those engaged in the various branches of the food industry and their intelligent co-operation in safeguarding food from contamination at all stages is essential.

A considerable amount of time continues to be devoted to inspection of premises where food is sold or is prepared for sale.

ICE CREAM.

Special attention has again been paid to ice-cream premises. It is a pleasure to record that the ice-cream manufacturers in the District have been most conscientious and co-operative. The excellent results which have been achieved by these makers are indicated by the summary of the results of ice-cream samples taken.

Number of premises registered for the manufacture of ice-cream. ...	6 (Hot mix 4) (Cold mix 2)
Number of premises registered for the sale of ice-cream. ...	76

Summary of results of ice-cream samples taken.

	<u>Grades.</u>				<u>Total.</u>
	<u>1.</u>	<u>2.</u>	<u>3.</u>	<u>4.</u>	
Ice-cream manufactured within the District. ...	22	6	1	1	30
Ice-cream manufactured outside the District. ...	94	34	28	21	177
	<u>116</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>207</u>

MILK AND DAIRIES.

On the 1st. October 1949 the District Council ceased to be the Authority responsible for the enforcement of the enactments relating to milk production. These duties have now been taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries. In addition, responsibility for the licensing of pasteurisers' and sterilisers' premises has been transferred from the District Council to the County Council.

The District Council retains responsibility for the registration and supervision only of those milk distributors who are not also dairy farmers.

Of the 113 samples taken for examination for Tubercle Bacilli, 2 proved positive. As the result of investigations by the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries' Officers, 3 cows giving infected milk were slaughtered. This number included one tubercular cow traced as the result of investigations arising from a positive sample taken in 1948.

Total number of Registered Milk Distributors.	21
Number of Tuberculin Tested Milk Dealers licensed. ...	12
Number of Accredited Milk Dealers licensed.	-
Number of Pasteurised Milk Dealers licensed.	6

DRAINAGE.

The provision of new sewerage schemes is, in view of the present economic position, likely to be a slow process. Cesspool drainage systems are, however, a poor substitute for main drainage, particularly in built-up areas. The provision of a cesspool cleansing service only helps to alleviate the position and cannot be regarded as a solution to the problem. Drainage systems in the low-lying areas of the District continue to cause difficulties and much time is spent in dealing with complaints of troubles from these sources.

CESSPOOL CLEANSING.

The cesspool emptier has done useful service and appreciative comments on the work of the men engaged on the vehicle are constantly being received.

Total number of cesspools and settlement tanks cleansed during the year. ... 383

REFUSE COLLECTION.

Following the delivery of the new refuse vehicle in March, the extended scheme, providing for a fortnightly collection over the whole of the District, was put into operation.

Early in the year the market for waste paper suddenly collapsed. Exhaustive enquiries were made but it was found impossible to dispose of even the highest grade selected paper. It did appear however, as a result of these enquiries, that the circumstances which had led to the drop in demand for waste paper were exceptional and the District Council were accordingly recommended not to discontinue the salvage scheme but to make certain temporary adjustments to meet the new situation. This action has since been justified as it has been found possible again to sell waste paper, although at a reduced price. However, both demand and price have been on the upgrade.

Estimated total amount of Refuse collected during the year. ... 3,682 Tons.

Total amount of salvage material collected and disposed of during the year:-

		T.	Cwt.	Gr.
(a) Paper.	...	77.	9.	1.
(b) Cardboard.	...	18.	1.	2.
(c) Rags.	...	6.	14.	3.
(d) Bones.	...	2.	12.	3.

The sale of material salvaged realised £856.16. 8d.

RODENT CONTROL.

Excellent work has been done by the rodent operators during the year. The work carried out shows a considerable increase over last year's figures. This is not due to any increase in the rat population of the District but to the fact that people are now more "rat conscious" and readily report infestations which a few years ago would have been ignored. In fact the indications are that steady progress is being made in reducing the rat population. Because of the prolific breeding habits of rats spectacular results cannot be expected and the need for a constant campaign against these pests is imperative.

Total number of infestations discovered or reported. ... 388

Total number of premises treated. 375

" " " pre-baits laid. 11,003

" " " poison baits laid. 5,878

" " " complaints of re-infestation 18

FACTORIES AND WORKSHOPS.

The following table gives particulars of the work carried out during the year.

1. INSPECTIONS for purposes of provisions of health.

Premises	Number on Register.	Number of	
		Inspections.	Written notices.
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2,3,4 & 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities.	14	14	-
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority.	96	70	1
(iii) Other Premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excluding Outworkers' premises).	10	7	-
	120	91	1

2. Cases in which DEFECTS were found.

Particulars	Number of cases in which defects were found.	
	Found	Remedied
Want of cleanliness (S.1)	-	-
Overcrowding (S.2)	-	-
Unreasonable temperature (S.3)	-	-
Inadequate ventilation (S.4)	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors(S.6)	-	-
Sanitary Conveniences (S.7)		
(a) Insufficient	-	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	2	2
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-
Other offences against the Act (not including offences relating to Outwork).	-	-
	2	2

FOOD INSPECTION.

Particulars of foods condemned during the year are as follows:-

Meat	191 lbs	Mustard	49 tins
Cheese	3½ "	Cocoa	1 "
Sugar	8½ "	Dried Eggs	1 pkt.
Spaghetti	28 "	Fish Paste	9 jars
Dried Fruit	31 "	Pickles	28 "
Peas	3,109 "	Eggs	50

Canned Goods.

Condensed Milk	85 cans	Syrup	2 cans
Fish	37 "	Soups	2 "
Meat, various	43 "	Vegetables	49 "
Fruit	19 "	fruit Juice	23
Jams	8	Peas	15

SUMMARY OF SANITARY WORK DONE DURING THE YEAR.

Total number of inspections (including re-inspections)	3,764
Total number of houses and premises inspected	2,385
Complaints investigated	145
Written notices and letters sent	1,163
Cowshed and Dairy inspections	432
Food Shop and Food Premises inspections	277
Camping Sites and Moveable Dwellings inspections	369
Factory inspections	91
Shops Act inspections	61
Ice Cream premises inspections	215
Milk Samples taken	171
Ice Cream samples taken	223
Water Samples taken	170
Rooms, Classrooms etc., disinfected	56
Nuisances from keeping of animals abated	2
Nuisances from accumulation of manure abated	3
Drainage tests of old drainage systems	42

I am indebted to all the members of the Staff of the Public Health Department for their loyalty and for the keenness which they display in carrying out their duties. The work of the Department is, unfortunately, still handicapped by the lack of a shorthand-typist.

May I thank the Chairman and Members of the Council for their sympathetic support which contributes so much to the smooth working of the Department. I would also like to record my gratitude to the Medical Officer of Health, the Clerk and other Officers of the Council for their unfailing help and co-operation.

I am,
Your obedient Servant,

J. H. ELLIS,

Senior Sanitary Inspector.