ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR THE URBAN DISTRICT OF BUCKFASTLEIGH

FOR THE YEAR 1950.

Gentlemen,

I have the pleasure to present my Annual Report as your Medical Officer for the year 1950. It may be of interest to recall that this is the fortieth I have presented.

Statistics.

Area 1365 acres.	
Registrar-General's estimate of resident population	2621.
Population (Census 1931)	2406.
Number of inhabited houses (End of 1950)	906.
Rateable Value.	£14,525.
Sum represented by a penny rate.	£58.

Vital Statistics for the Year 1950.

	Total.	Male.	Female.
Live Births (Legitimate)	31.	15.	16.
(Illegitimate)	1.	-	1.
Still Births.	Nil.		
Deaths of Infants under 1 year old.	4.	2.	2.
Deaths of Infants under 4 weeks old.	3.	1.	2.
Birth Rate per 1,000 Civilian population.	12.2		
Deaths.	48.	28.	20.
Death Rate per 1,000 Civilian population.	18·3.		
Infantile Mortality Rate per 1,000 live births	125.		

Comparative Rates for England and Wales during 1950 -

Death Rate -	11·6
Birth Rate -	15·8
Infantile Mortality Rate	29·8

Causes of death as recorded by the Registrar-General.

Malignant Neoplasms	10
Vascular Lesions of Nervous system	6
Coronary Disease - Angina	2
Other Heart Disease	9
Other Circulatory Disease	5
Pneumonia	2
Bronchitis	3
Nephritis	3
Other Defined Diseases	7
Accident	1

It will be noticed that the Death Rate (18·3) is much higher than that per England and Wales (11·6). A study of the age groups is sufficient explanation.

Ages at Death.

Under 1 year	4
1 - 10	0
10 - 20	0
20 - 30	0
30 - 40	2
40 - 50	2
50 - 60	5
60 - 70	7
70 - 80	20
80 - 90	7
90 -	1

The average age of the 40 people who died after reaching the age of 50 was 72.

12 persons died in Hospital, including 3 of the Infants.

Infectious Diseases.

One mild case of Anterior-Poliomyelitis, who recovered completely after treatment in Hospital, was notified.

Diphtheria Immunisation, is carried out at the Welfare Centre, at the Schools and by the local practitioners.

Parents are most co-operative and it is doubtful if any children have escaped immunisation.

Housing.

The Glebelands Estate of 70 houses - 30 traditional type and 40 Cornish Unit type - is now completed and the houses occupied. Tenants state the only complaint is that the rent is high.

Four dilapidated cottages in Church Street were demolished and the site cleared for future building.

The Woollen Mill at Buckfast closed down early in the year and the property including 38 cottages came into the market. Miss S. Calmady-Hamlyn bought the cottages and offered them as a gift to the Council with a sum of £2500 for the necessary repairs and improvements.

After inspecting the cottages, I reported as follows:-

These houses are definitely sub-standard; they are occupied by people with sub-standard incomes, who have lived in them contentedly for very many years and prefer them to the highly rented modern houses.

I can testify that the sickness incidents have not been greater than in any other group of houses.

There is, and will remain, a demand for this type of house and in spite of departmental disapproval I have no hesitation in advising the Council to accept the offer, as with the resources made available these cottages should be made and remain adequate for tenants of this income group for many years.

The offer was accepted and repairs are in hand.

Five other cottages, four of which were vacant, were declared unfit for habitation.

Drainage and Sewerage.

Maintenance work on the filter beds and on the irrigation meadows has been improved, but I regret to report that no definite progress has been made with the badly needed new scheme, though negotiations are proceeding. The present works are inadequate to cope with the large volume of trade waste.

Water Supply.

The water supply is excellent in quality and owing to the wet summer there was no serious shortage.

It is imperative that the supply be increased as there is a serious shortage in a dry summer.

The Council has engaged a Water Engineer who is "exploring the situation" and hopes to produce plans early in the coming year.

Analyses are taken at least twice annually and have shown that the water supplied to the consumer is free from impurity.

All houses except a few outlying farms and cottages have a piped supply.

In conclusion I have to thank the Chairman and Members of the Council for their constant encouragement and support.

I am,
Your obedient Servant,

S.R. WILLIAMS,

M.O.H.