

**[Report 1945] / Medical Officer of Health, Devon No. 2 Area (Axminster R.D.C., Sidmouth U.D.C., Honiton R.D.C., Honiton Borough, Ottery St Mary U.D.C., Seaton U.D.C.).**

**Contributors**

Devon

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*ANNUAL REPORT*

OF THE

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH**

FOR

**No. 2 SANITARY AREA**

**DEVON**

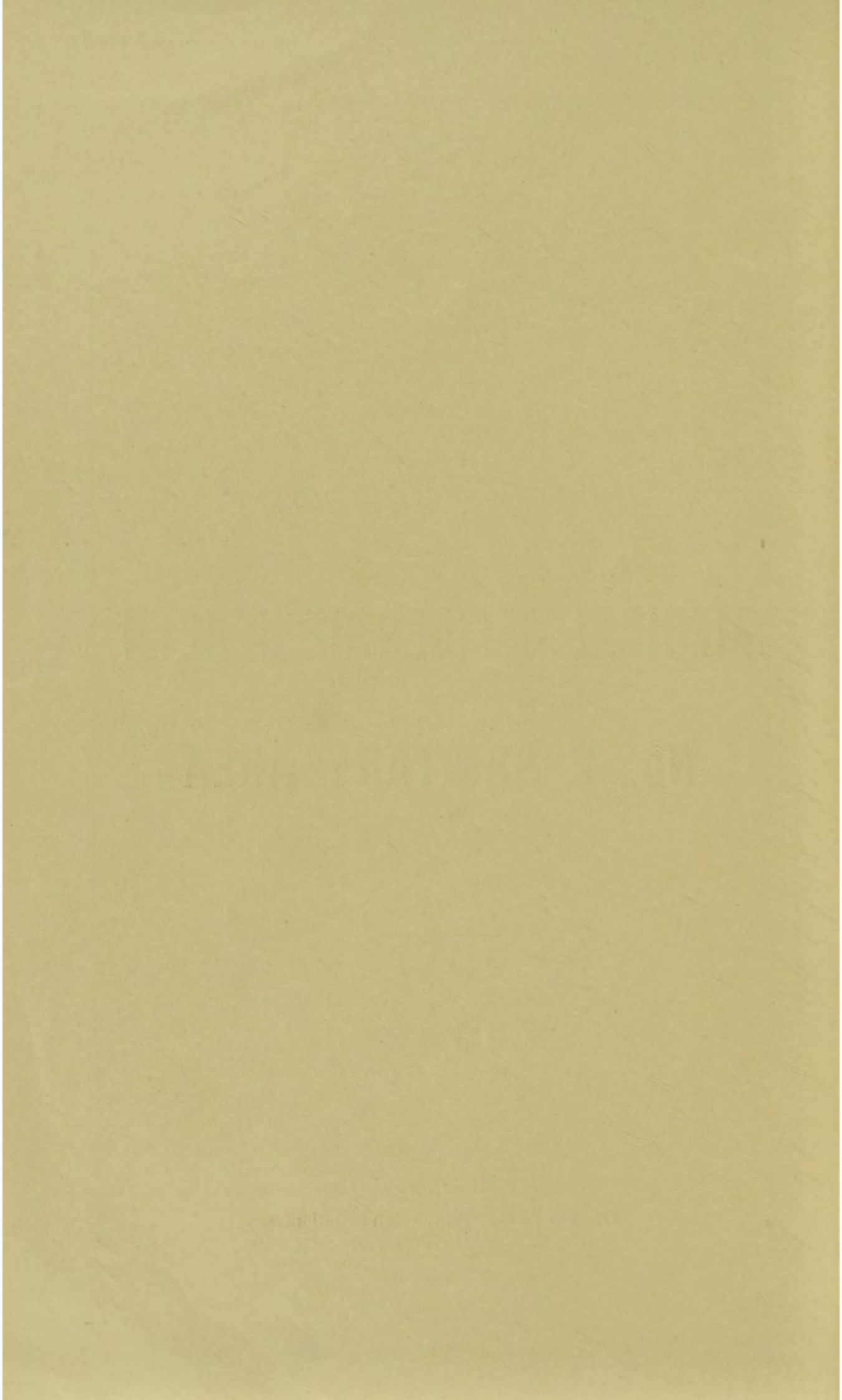
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**1945**

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# ANNUAL REPORT

for No. 2 Sanitary Area for 1945

comprising:—

AXMINSTER URBAN, AXMINSTER RURAL, HONITON BOROUGH,  
HONITON RURAL, AND SEATON URBAN.

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DUNCOMBE STEELE-PERKINS, *Med. Officer of Health.*

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*To the Chairmen and Councillors for the  
District comprising No. 2 Sanitary Area.*

I have much pleasure in presenting my Annual Report for 1945 and which is again limited in scope, as the Ministry of Health do not require a concise report, but somewhat limited on the lines of the 1944 report.

With the exception of Measles in the Spring of the Year and which was very widespread, but not of a severe type, the whole of my Area has been exceptionally free from any major Infectious Disease approaching any serious proportions, and the general health of the population well above the average. This is most satisfactory in view of the rationing now in force, and one is forced to the conclusion of several years of rationing that in all probability rationing is all for the good of the general community, although it is most distressing to the housewife, who has to bear the brunt of the catering.

*Scabies.*—This, I am glad to say, has practically disappeared in my Area, and the only cases, which are very few, were amongst those who are more or less chronics, and no amount of teaching and instruction on cleanliness seems to be any good. However, these few cases are periodically visited and kept under observation.

*Diphtheria.*—I am very glad indeed to report that throughout the whole of my Area only 2 cases of Diphtheria were reported. One case occurred in an elderly woman in the Honiton Rural Area; she had not been immunised; but here again to show the value of Immunisation, the children in the house who had been immunised did not contract the Disease; and one in the Borough of Honiton, also unimmunised. Immunisation Clinics were held throughout the Area during the Year, special clinics being held at Axminster, Honiton

and Seaton, while I visited all Schools in the Area and held Clinics at each School. The number of children presenting themselves to be immunised was highly satisfactory, and I was particularly pleased with the number of pre-school age children who were brought by their parents to the Clinics, and I am quite satisfied that the parents in my Area fully realise their responsibilities and are very eager to have their children protected.

The Government has now decided that from January 1st, 1946, the cost of Immunisation shall in future be a County charge instead of a charge on the Local Ratepayers. This particularly refers to the pre-school age children, and I shall in future render an account to each Council of all immunisations done by private practitioners, through my Councils, who will reclaim the cost from the County Council.

*Scarlet Fever.*—During the year only seven cases of Scarlet Fever were reported, as against 24 in 1944. These were all of a very mild type and were removed at once to Whipton Isolation Hospital, where good recoveries were made. The cases occurred: Honiton Rural, 5; Axminster Rural, 2. This is by far the lowest number of cases per annum reported to me in any one year since I have been your Medical Officer of Health.

*Puerpural Pyrexia.*—Only three cases were reported in 1945, as against 4 in 1944. All cases recovered. The cases occurred: Axminster Urban, 1; Seaton Urban, 1; and Honiton Borough, 1.

*Burwood Sick Bay.*—This Sick Bay continued its good work during the Year, but the number of cases admitted were very few, and in the latter part of the year was turned into a Hostel for Difficult Children, but owing to the impossibility of obtaining an adequate Staff, the Ministry decided to finally close down. I would here like to pay a tribute to the Matron, Mrs. K. Drysdale Anderson, who has been with us from start to finish, and it was entirely due to her wonderful tact and efficiency that the Sick Bay was such a great success.

During the year all my Councils have been urgently considering plans for Housing, Water Supplies and Sewage Schemes, but with all these schemes progress seems to be so desperately slow, and as my Councils know only too well the reasons why progress is so slow, I think it is almost unnecessary to comment on.

*Water Supplies.*—I can add little further to my full report I made on water supplies in my report last year. Conferences have been held as to the setting up of a joint scheme for the East Devon

Area, some progress has been made, but up to the present no definite decision has been reached. There is no doubt that only a joint scheme will give the necessary supplies of water required for my various Districts. There are ample supplies in the Area, and it is a matter for the engineers to decide which supplies should be linked up to supply our requirements.

*Housing.*—Progress has been made with the purchasing of sites and approval of plans, but beyond that very little building has been done, and the housing shortage seems to go from bad to worse.

I would like to express my grateful thanks to my Sanitary Inspectors for their very excellent work during 1945, and who have been terribly overworked owing to the shortage of staff.

I now append a report on each District, taking them in alphabetical order.

#### AXMINSTER URBAN.

Area	...	...	...	...	1300 acres
Population	...	...	...	...	2424
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£18,640
Penny Rate produces	...	...	...	...	£74

#### Infectious Disease.

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1945 :—

	1944	1945
Measles	61 cases	6 cases
Diphtheria	0 ..	0 ..
Whooping Cough	3 ..	0 ..
Scarlet Fever	0 ..	0 ..
Para Typhoid	0 ..	0 ..
Erysipelas	0 ..	1 ..
Pneumonia	1 ..	0 ..
Puerpural Pyrexia	2 ..	1 ..
Cerebro Spinal	2 ..	1 ..
Opth. Neon	0 ..	1 ..

#### Deaths.

Number of Deaths registered from all causes :—

1944—(18 Males, 14 Females)	...	...	...	32
1945—(8 Males, 12 Females)	...	...	...	20

**Live Births.**

Number of Births registered:—

1944—(24 Males, 32 Females), and includes 5 illegitimate births) ... ..	56
1945—(20 Males, 24 Females), and includes 6 illegitimate births) ... ..	44

**Still Births.**

Number of above registered:—

1944—(2 Males, including 1 illegitimate) ... ..	2
1945 (Nil registered) ... ..	0

**Deaths of Infants under 1 year.**

1944—3 Deaths were registered.

1945—1 Death was registered.

During the year I continued my Immunisation Clinics with most satisfactory results, the number of children attending these Clinics being well up to the average, and I am glad again to report no case of Diphtheria occurred during the year, in fact we have not had a case of Diphtheria since 1941, when I commenced my Immunisation Clinics. This is a splendid record, and one to be well satisfied with.

There has also been a remarkable absence of Infectious Disease, as you will observe from the tabulated list.

*Water Supplies in the Urban Area.*—The position is the same as I reported in 1945 and a Regional Scheme will be of great assistance, as the Urban supplies have to be augmented by supplies from the Rural District.

*Deaths.*—The number of deaths registered, 20, shows a big drop from 1944 and the causes of death were as follows:—

Tuberculosis	1	Bronchitis	1
Cancer	6	Other Causes	7
Heart Disease	5		

*Births.*—The Births also show a big drop, 44 Births as against 56 in 1944, and again I have to record 6 illegitimate births.

*Water Supplies.*—The position is the same as I reported last year, the Council having to draw on the Rural District to augment their own supplies.

*Housing.*—A site at Stoney Lane for 26 houses is being prepared and 11 temporary houses have been allocated for Boxfield Road.

**AXMINSTER RURAL DISTRICT.**

Area	...	...	...	...	51,468 acres
Population	...	...	...	...	10,490
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£50,746
Penny Rate produces	...	...	...	...	£209
No. of Parishes	...	...	...	...	14

**Infectious Disease.**

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1945:—

	1944	1945
Measles	189 cases	192 cases
Pneumonia	6 "	6 "
Diphtheria	0 "	0 "
Whooping Cough	14 "	10 "
Scarlet Fever	13 "	2 "
Erysipelas	2 "	0 "
Typhoid	0 "	0 "
Puerpural Pyrexia	0 "	0 "
Cerebro Spinal	4 "	1 "
Encephalitis Lethargica	0 "	1 "

**Deaths.**

1944—(78 Males, 66 Females)	...	...	...	144
1945—(72 Males, 71 Females)	...	...	...	143

**Live Births.**

1944—(99 Males, 82 Females)	...	...	...	182
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13 Illegitimate Births were registered and are registered in the above total of 182.

1945—(71 Males, 57 Females)	...	...	...	128
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11 Illegitimate Births were registered and are included in the above total of 128.

**Still Births.**

1944—2 Still Births were registered.

1945—4 Still Births were registered (1 illegitimate).

### Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1944—7 Deaths were registered (all legitimate).

1945—5 Deaths were registered (3 legitimate and 2 illegitimate).

*Infectious Disease.*—With the exception of the epidemic of Measles, which was very general everywhere, the Rural District has experienced a very satisfactory year, and one which they can be well satisfied with; I have put a comparison table with 1944, which will confirm the almost absence of any major Infectious Disease, and a great source of satisfaction to me, is the entire absence of Diphtheria.

*Deaths.*—These remain about the average for the District, 143 as compared with 144 in 1944.

The chief causes of Death in the Area were:—

Tuberculosis (all types)	6	Heart Disease	37
Cancer	28	Bronchitis	8
Inter-cranial Vascular		Pneumonia	2
Lesions	26	Other Causes	36

*Births.*—These show a big drop, 128 as against 182 in 1944, and include 11 illegitimate births.

*Water Supplies.*—The preparation of the scheme for supplying the parishes without satisfactory supplies is proceeding slowly owing to the necessity of co-ordinating with the schemes of neighbouring districts.

A further extension of the 3" main has been carried out at Red Lane, Raymonds Hill, to supply an area dependant on rain water supplies.

Further extensions have been sanctioned as follows:—

1. Pidgeons Lane, Raymonds Hill.
2. Coaxdon, Smallridge.
3. Rocombe, Uplyme.
4. Yawl Hill, Uplyme.

These will be carried out as soon as labour and materials are available.

*Sewerage.*—The Council's consulting engineer is preparing preliminary proposals for Whitford, Musbury and Kilmington, which are very urgently wanted; other districts will have to be tackled after these are done.

*Refuse Collection.*—Arrangements have been made for the collection of tins and bottles in parishes where there is no regular collection of refuse. Whilst this arrangement is satisfactory for the sparsely populated area, it is not satisfactory for the larger villages, and a regular collection of all household refuse should be undertaken.

A very good site for a controlled tip has been obtained at Woodbury, and will be used as soon as the existing dump has been properly finished.

*Housing.*—Progress is slow owing to the difficulty of obtaining land by negotiation. The Council own one site, but have been unable to obtain tenders.

Six Swedish houses have been allocated for erection at Colyford.

*Rats and Mice.*—An operator has now been engaged and has to be shared with four other districts, but work is proceeding slowly.

*Staff.*—None have returned from the services, and present staff is temporary, and inexperienced, although willing.

*Immunisation.*—Clinics have been held at all the Schools throughout the area, with very satisfactory results.

### HONITON RURAL DISTRICT.

Area	...	...	...	...	61,265 acres
Population	...	...	...	...	6,940
No. of Parishes	...	...	...	...	22
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£24,715
Penny Rate Produces	...	...	...	...	£160/16/7

#### Infectious Disease.

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1945 :—

	1944	1945
Scarlet Fever	7 cases	5 cases
Diphtheria	3 „	1 „
Whooping Cough	5 „	0 „
Measles	54 „	89 „
Pneumonia	4 „	8 „
Erysipelas	1 „	0 „
Puerpural Pyrexia	1 „	0 „

#### Deaths.

Number of Deaths registered from all causes :—

1944—(38 Males, 32 Females)	...	...	70
1945—(45 Males, 41 Females)	...	...	86

#### Live Births.

Number of Live Births registered :—

1944—(66 Males, 47 Females)	...	...	113
The number of illegitimate Births registered was 7, and are included in the above total of 113.			
1945—(78 Males, 53 Females)	...	...	131
The number of illegitimate Births registered was 16, and are included in the above total of 131.			

#### Deaths of Infants under 1 year.

1944—7 Deaths were registered (6 Males, 1 Female).

1945—5 Deaths were registered (5 Males, 0 Female), including 1 illegitimate.

### Still Births.

1944—Number of Still Births registered was 3 (legitimate).

1945—Number of Still Births registered was 2 (legitimate).

*Infectious Disease.*—With the exception of Measles, the Honiton Rural District has had a very satisfactory year.

There was, however, one case of Diphtheria occurring in an elderly person, who had not been immunised. Here again in this case there were children in the house who had been immunised, and they escaped the disease. The patient made a satisfactory recovery at the Whipton Isolation Hospital.

*Scarlet Fever*, of a very mild type, produced 5 cases as against 7 in 1944.

*Deaths.*—The number of Deaths registered were 86 as compared with 70 in 1944. The chief causes of death were:—

Heart Disease	31	Tuberculosis	1
Pneumonia	2	Measles	1
Cancer	7	Suicide	2
Intra Cranial Vascular Lesions	8	Other Diseases	34

*Births.*—These show a big increase, 131 as compared with 113 in 1944.

*Water Supplies.*—These were dealt with very fully in my 1944 report, and I have nothing to add, except to again stress the extreme urgency of the situation, and we are still awaiting a decision as to a Regional Scheme; unless progress is made considerably faster than in the past, the situation is going to become really desperate. I feel perfectly satisfied that only a Regional scheme, with the Wilmington supplies used as the main source, is the only solution to the Rural requirements.

*Sewerage Works.*—The Sidmouth Junction and Feniton works have continued to function extremely satisfactorily during the past year, and for the first time for many years, I have received no complaints. As there seems to be a desire to develop Sidmouth Junction as a Light Industrial Area, the Council may have to

consider enlarging these works, should much development take place. The present works could deal with at least another 20 to 30 houses.

In the near future, the Council will have to consider the urgency of providing efficient sewage works for a large number of their villages. They are urgently required, and with the building of a large number of Council Houses in the near future, the urgency becomes greater every day. I have already presented to my Council a list of villages in the order of priority I consider they should receive, and I append a copy.

Estimated cost of Sewerage Schemes required for Honiton R.D.C. :

Priority	Parish	£	s.	d.
1.	Payhembury	6,000	0	0
2.	Buckerell	5,000	0	0
3.	Plymtree	2,500	0	0
4.	Widworthy	4,000	0	0
5.	Kerswell	1,000	0	0
6.	Branscombe (extension)	6,280	0	0
7.	Broadhembury	11,000	0	0
8.	Gittisham	4,500	0	0
9.	Offwell	3,200	0	0
10.	Combe Raleigh	2,800	0	0
11.	Sheldon	700	0	0
Total Cost		£46,980	0	0

*Immunisation.*—During the year I visited all the Schools in your Area and held Clinics, and I was quite satisfied with the number of children presenting themselves to be immunised. This work will be continued annually.

**HONITON BOROUGH.**

Area	...	...	...	...	...	3,134 acres
Population	...	...	...	...	...	3,399
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	...	£28,374
Penny Rate Produces	...	...	...	...	...	£116/1/0

**Deaths.**

Number of Deaths registered from all causes:—

1944—(19 Males, 20 Females)	...	...	...	39
1945—(28 Males, 21 Females)	...	...	...	49

**Live Births.**

Number of Live Births Registered:—

1944—(27 Males, 30 Females)	...	...	...	57
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6 Illegitimate Births were registered, and are included in the above total of 57.

1945—(32 Males, 26 Females)	...	...	...	58
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8 Illegitimate Births were registered, and are included in the above total of 58.

**Still Births.**

1944—5 Still Births were registered, including 1 illegitimate.

1945—1 Still Birth was registered.

**Deaths of Infants under 1 year.**

1944—No deaths were registered.

1945—2 Deaths were registered (1 legitimate and 1 illegitimate).

### Infectious Disease.

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1945 :—

	1944	1945
Scarlet Fever ... ..	0 case	0 case
Diphtheria ... ..	0 „	1 „
Whooping Cough ... ..	1 „	1 „
Measles ... ..	25 „	8 „
Erysipelas ... ..	3 „	2 „
Pneumonia ... ..	2 „	9 „
Puerpural Pyrexia ... ..	1 „	0 „
Poliomyelitis ... ..	0 „	1 „
Ophthal Neon ... ..	0 „	1 „

The health of the Borough has been exceptionally good, and is a record, which, like 1944, will stand for many a day.

There was one case of suspected Diphtheria in a visitor to the Borough, and although removed to the Exeter Isolation Hospital as a precautionary measure, it was, from a medical point of view, a case only of Clinical Diphtheria, as the Diphtheria germ could not be localised. The Pneumonia cases of 9 were rather heavy, but I am of opinion these cases, which occurred chiefly in young children, were the direct result of the Measles epidemic in 1944, and where there were a very large number of cases of measles which were never seen by a doctor, and consequently no notification was received by me, and therefore did not receive medical attention and advice. Pneumonia is the great danger after Measles unless great care is taken during the convalescence.

*Deaths.*—The number of deaths registered were 49 as compared with 39 in 1944. The chief causes of death were:—

Cancer, vascular	12	Bronchitis	1
Intra Cranial Lesions	8	Pneumonia	1
Heart Disease	13	Other causes	14

*Births.*—The number of births registered were 58, as compared with 57 in 1944, but I am sorry to report amongst this number were 8 Illegitimate Births. This is a very large number for the Borough of Honiton, and let us hope, now the war is over, these will be non-existent in future.

*Still Births.*—1 Still Birth was registered, as against 5 in 1944.

*Deaths of Infants under one year.*—Two deaths occurred, including one illegitimate, as against none in 1944.

*Housing.*—The housing situation in the Borough is becoming desperate. The appeals I receive for accommodation is really heartbreaking, and although my Council have made every possible effort which is humanly possible, yet we always seem to be up against a brick wall all the time, and also in fairness to everyone concerned, we have been constantly changing the heads of our departments through resignations, and this factor alone must be one of the many reasons why delay has occurred. However, the prospects for the future as I pen this report do seem brighter, and I hope ere 1946 is out, to be able to see some houses really built. I am of opinion that in order to really satisfy the needs of the Borough properly close on 200 houses will have to be eventually built. I shall then be able to deal with a large number of houses, which but for the war and the housing shortage would have been condemned, but until such time as there is ample housing accommodation in the Borough, it is impossible to carry out any further condemning of properties.

*Water Supplies.*—As I reported last year the Borough is in a very happy position, with the Wilmington supply now assured to the Borough, which when all sources are tapped will yield nearly 1,000,000 gallons a day, leaving a very large surplus for a regional supply, which I sincerely trust will soon materialise, as the neighbouring districts are desperately short of water.

The water at Wilmington is on the hard side, whereas the supply from St. Cyres, which, by the way, is almost sufficient in the winter for the Borough needs, is very soft, and is plumbo solvent.

*Sewerage Works.*—These works continue to function well, and I have received no complaints, as in past years, as to smells arising from same, and no complaints as to sewage pollution of the river Otter. At the same time I receive frequent complaints of oil being discharged into the Otter, and as this oil has first to pass through the works, it must considerably decrease the activity of the Bacteria. This oil apparently comes from one of the numerous garages in the town, and is naturally very difficult to trace.

*Immunisation.*—I have held my usual Clinics in the Borough, at which the attendance has been exceptionally good, and I would especially like to thank Miss Lee, Headmistress of the Infants' School, for the time and trouble she takes in organising the mothers and children to attend these Clinics.

**SEATON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.**

Area	...	...	...	...	1,190.43 acres
Population	...	...	...	...	2,960
Rateable Value	...	...	...	...	£31,378
Penny Rate Produces	...	...	...	...	£125/5/8

**Deaths.**

Number of Deaths registered from all causes:—

1944—(14 Males, 27 Females)	...	...	...	41
1945—(34 Males, 22 Females)	...	...	...	56

**Live Births.**

Number of Live Births registered:—

1944—(18 Males, 17 Females)	...	...	...	35
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No illegitimate Births were registered.

1945—(21 Males, 16 Females)	...	...	...	37
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7 Illegitimate Births are included in the 37 Births registered.

**Still Births.**

1944—1 was registered.

1945—1 was registered.

**Deaths of Infants under 1 year.**

1944—1 was registered.

1945—1 was registered

**Infectious Disease.**

The following cases of Infectious Disease were notified in 1945:—

	1944	1945
Scarlet Fever	4 cases	0 cases
Puerpural Pyrexia	0 „	1 „
Whooping Cough	4 „	11 „
Measles	3 „	91 „
Pneumonia	6 „	4 „
Erysipelas	0 „	2 „
Diphtheria	0 „	0 „
Bac. Dysentery	0 „	1 „

As in previous reports, Seaton again holds a remarkable record of freedom from any Major Infectious Disease, no cases of Scarlet Fever, Diphtheria or Typhoid having been reported.

Seaton, like all other areas, suffered from the severe outbreak of Measles, which was general throughout the whole county, but I would say this in regard to the number of cases notified, viz., 91 cases, that the doctors in Seaton do notify every case they attend, while I am quite certain in parts of my area notification is not always carried out. Whether it is due to the small fee of one shilling per case I am not certain, but I feel sure if the fee was raised to the standard of 2s. 6d. as in other Notifiable Infectious Diseases, I should receive more reliable data to judge my area from.

*Deaths.*—The number of deaths registered from all causes was 56, as compared with 41 in 1944. The chief causes of death were:

Cancer	12	Pneumonia	2
Intravascular Disease	11	Ulcer of Stomach	3
Heart Disease	14	Other Diseases	13
Bronchitis	1		

*Live Births.*—The number of births registered were 37 as compared with 35 in 1944, but I am sorry to say included in these 37 births were 7 illegitimate births. This is a very high percentage, and one can only hope, now the war is over, matters will greatly improve.

*Immunisation.*—I have held my usual Clinics at Seaton during the year, and these I am glad to say are steadily improving, but I would still like to see more children attend them. The children attending the National Schools contain a very high percentage of immunised children, and in this respect I am more than satisfied, but it is in the children attending Private Schools, and those being done by Private Doctors under the Government Immunisation Scheme, that I should like to hear of a larger number of children being done, as they are as liable to Diphtheria as any other child attending a National School.

*Housing.*—As I reported last year, the need for more and more Houses in Seaton is still a desperate cry. The overcrowding, and this leads to immorality, is desperate. I know of no area so desperate for new houses as Seaton. I know my Council are doing

all they can to get houses built, but like other Areas they seem to be up against a stone wall, and progress is so slow that it is a heart-breaking job for a Medical Officer of Health to reply to the enormous number of letters he receives, begging and imploring him to help. All I can do is to refer the letters to your Council with my observations, but that does not help these people. A very large programme of building is required in Seaton to satisfy the wants of the people.

*Water Supplies.*—As I reported last year, Seaton in a normal season has sufficient supplies for their needs, but with a large building programme ahead of them, I expect you will find, you will have to augment your supplies. Here a Regional supply which could be utilised, would be exceedingly useful to Seaton .

Your obedient servant,

DUNCOMBE STEELE-PERKINS.

*Medical Officer of Health.*

