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THE  
RURAL DISTRICT OF ELY

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ANNUAL REPORT

for the year

1956

by



K. S. MAURICE - SMITH,

M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.,

Medical Officer of Health.

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF

HEALTH FOR 1956

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to submit my Annual Report for the year ending 31st December 1956.

1. STATISTICS:

During 1956 the usual statistics have been kept and are available. These are not included in my Report.

2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES:

- (a) Ambulances.- Two ambulances are stationed at Ely, both being operated by the Isle of Ely County Council.

The Littleport St. John Ambulance continues to work under the agency agreement with the County Council. This vehicle, which serves the local area, and those areas adjoining when necessary, continues to be of the greatest value.

As in previous years, the Ely and Littleport St. John Divisions provide attendants for all three vehicles. This work is done voluntarily by members in their spare time. I often wonder if the public generally realises how much it is indebted to these men and women.

- (b) Nursing and Clinic Arrangements.- These are the same as for previous years. The District is much indebted to the District Nurses for their willing and efficient efforts.



2. GENERAL HEALTH SERVICES (contd.)

(c) Hospitals.-

- (i) Tower Hospital for Chronic Sick
- (ii) The Isolation Hospital
- (iii) The Grange Maternity Home

These Hospitals are under the control of the Regional Hospital Board.

3. WATER:

- (a) (i) The supply for the district is drawn from two chalk wells at West Row. During 1956 water supplies of adequate quantity and quality have been maintained.

(ii) There have been no major breakdowns during the year.

- (b) (i) The Chloramine Plant has been in use continually and has proved satisfactory. The chloramine process permits of the treatment of the water at the source.

(ii) The usual chemical and bacteriological examinations were made during the year and proved satisfactory. In addition, all new mains are sampled and no connections are made until the reports on these samples are found satisfactory.

(iii) During the year two sections of the pumping main which pass through the gault bed near Soham, amounting to 1,000 yards in all, have been relaid much to my very great relief and satisfaction.

(iv) There is an abundant supply of pure water available, and at no time has it been necessary to restrict supplies, notwithstanding the insufficient storage capacity.

In the near future serious consideration will have to be given to plans for additional water storage. Each year sees greater demands made on the water supply, and whereas there is sufficient water obtainable at the source, the storage capacity in the district is getting very near danger point.

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### 3. WATER (contd.)

(b) (v) The water has no plumbo-solvent action.

(vi) Referring to the general supply of water to houses in the area, it is estimated that between 98-99% of houses are covered.

I am of the opinion that conditions compare most favourably with those of other rural local authorities and should afford the Council much satisfaction.

There have been no other extensions during the year.

### 4. SEWAGE:

(a) Referring yet again to the ever present problem of sewage disposal I must, once more, emphasise that this problem continues to be pressing and vital, if the vitality of the countryside is to be maintained and adequate labour retained on the land. In view of the extremely unsatisfactory conditions obtaining in the District I must, yet once again, put on record the acute feeling of alarm which I experience continually when I consider these conditions.

(b) It is most satisfactory to note the improved conditions in The Brook Area of Sutton following the completion of the first stage of the comprehensive scheme. There is urgent need, however, for the remaining part of the parish to be sewered. The position in Stretham is unchanged from what it was last year. There have, in fact, been no sewerage extensions during this year, as all plans have been in abeyance on account of national economic conditions. Nevertheless, it seems curious that whereas loans are available to build houses, it is apparently increasingly difficult - even, perhaps, impossible - to obtain loans for the proper sewerage of those and other houses.





5. HOUSING:

Permanent Housing:

No. of dwellings completed during 1956	51
No. of dwellings provided under the Housing Acts to 31st December 1956	1485
No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1956	Nil

Temporary Housing:

Total number of converted ex-service huts occupied at 31st December 1956	54
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Private Enterprise:

New Permanent Houses:

No. of dwellings completed during 1956	20
No. of dwellings completed since April 1945	224
No. of dwellings under construction at 31st December 1956	22

Provision and Improvement of Dwellings with  
aid of Improvement Grants under Housing Act  
1949:

		<u>Schemes</u>	<u>Dwellings</u>
No. of Schemes approved for grant	} since 1949	111	137
and			
No. of dwellings to be provided or improved	} In 1956	35	48
Amount of Grant involved by approved schemes			



5. HOUSING (contd.)

Private Enterprise (contd.)

Provision and Improvement of Dwellings with aid of Improvement Grants under Housing Act 1949 (contd.)

		<u>Schemes</u>	<u>Dwellings</u>
No. of schemes completed	} In 1956	45	52
and			
No. of dwellings provided or improved	} Since 1949	92	107
Amount of Grant paid		In 1956	£12,507:14: 8.
		Since 1949	£25,641: 0: 2.

6. SCHOOLS:

This year has seen the new High School on Downham Road, Ely, nearly completed. Apart from this fact, I do not wish, this year, to make any further comment.

7. MILK:

The majority of milk sold in this area is either pasteurised or T.T. or both. A very small amount is produced by persons keeping one or two cows and this is often given to their employees. There does not appear to be much control which can be exercised over this practice.

Sometimes I wonder if it is realised by those concerned that the Milk & Dairies Regulations (1949) are not just an expression of opinion on the part of the Authorities, but are, in fact, definite legislation, contravention of which lays those concerned liable to severe penalties.

These Regulations, covering the production and storage of milk, the cleaning and storage of all equipment, utensils, appliances etc., connected therewith, have now been in force for a sufficient time to render a plea of ignorance of them quite ridiculous.



## 7. MILK (contd.)

I sincerely wish that members of the public would invariably report every case of dirty or insufficiently cleansed milk bottles to either the Public Health Inspector or myself, so that necessary action can be taken.

On the other hand, members of the public must play their part and use milk bottles only for milk. If I personally, or the Public Health Inspector, have occasion to notice milk bottles used for other purposes, it will be our duty to report offenders to the Council.

I still notice many milk bottles left outside houses, on the pavement or doorstep. This is a filthy habit. I feel that it is very hard on milk producers and dairymen that, whereas they can be severely penalized for using dirty bottles, the general public are not liable to be so penalized for making milk bottles filthy, or permitting them so to become.

If proper Regulations governing this sort of behaviour were in force, it would be a great help to the Council and its Officers.

## 8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES:

- (a) 175 notifications of infectious disease were received.

The total of 175 cases is made up as follows :-

Scarlet Fever	7
Whooping Cough	19
Bacillary Dysentery	1
Measles	131
Puerperal Pyrexia	1
Pneumonia	13
Infective Hepatitis	1
Erysipelas	2
	<u>175</u>

- (b) Disinfection of premises etc. is regularly carried out in cases of notifiable disease; also when infection is reported or requests are received for any special reasons.



## 8. INFECTIOUS DISEASES (contd.)

- (c) No cases of diphtheria occurred in the District during the year. A very satisfactory state of affairs, which can only be maintained so long as the percentage of children immunized against diphtheria is kept at a high level. It is the duty of all concerned with children to make sure that those in their care are adequately immunized either by the Family Doctor or at a County Council Clinic.

Further, vaccination against small pox is highly desirable in these days when travelling, particularly by air transport from countries where small pox is prevalent, has become so much more common.

### (d) Tuberculosis:

9 new cases were notified during the year. After making the necessary adjustments there are the following numbers on the Register :-

<u>Respiratory</u>		<u>Non-Respiratory</u>	
Males	37	Males	4
Females	26	Females	9

Compared with 1955, the figures shew an increase of 5 cases.

## 9. FOOD:

The following is a list of food handling premises in the area :-

(i)	Butchers	15
	Bakers	6
	Fish Shops	6
	Grocery and General Food Stores	53
	Cafes	2

- (ii) 28 premises are registered for the storage and sale of ice cream.

Dairies registered under the Milk & Dairies Regulations 1949 - 1954 = 3.

There is no ice cream manufactured for sale in the area.





## 9. FOOD (contd.)

### Food Hygiene:

The Food Hygiene Regulations 1955 came into force on the 1st January 1956. If these are conscientiously operated by food handlers great strides will be made. Unfortunately there are too many people looking for loopholes in the Regulations to find what cannot be required rather than what can be required. A more positive approach must be achieved and this can only be done by education.

Consideration has been given during the past year to instituting a programme of education in food hygiene.

When condemned, the food concerned is disposed of by incineration at the Council's refuse dump or at the local Gas Board Works.

During the year 149 visits have been made by the Public Health Inspector. When necessary, I have accompanied him. In some cases, advice has been sought, and I would like it widely known in the District that the Public Health Inspector and I much prefer to give advice before rather than be forced to consider asking for action and the possible imposition of penalties after the Regulations have been contravened. In some cases, however, I regret to say that it is obvious advice and assistance will be disregarded and notice will be taken only when direct action is threatened. This is a sad commentary to make on human nature, but in some cases it is only too true.

In certain food shops a very great advance has been made, and those premises, in my opinion, deserve to be mentioned by name. In these instances, improvement has largely been assisted by the co-operation of employees. On the other hand, some employers desirous of doing their duty by their customers have been let down by slack and grubby employees.



9. FOOD (contd.)

Referring to my comments in my Report for 1955, I am still disgusted at the conditions under which food is kept, cooked and served in some houses that I have occasion to visit. Food can be as readily infected and rendered highly dangerous at home, as in a shop, and the public should be aware of this.

10. MISCELLANEOUS:

- (a) Rodent Control.— During the year the Public Health Inspector and the Rodent Officer have done 1077 Inspections, which include 862 dwelling houses and business premises and 215 agricultural premises; 830 treatments, including re-treatments, have been carried out.
- (b) Moveable Dwellings.— As I have stated before, under existing legislation it is impossible adequately to deal with any Public Health problems arising from the use of caravans. I assume that one day amending legislation will be considered, but until then our hands are virtually tied.
- (c) Factories Act.— There is no great problem here as only one factory of any size exists in the District. The position generally is reviewed however, from time to time.
- (d) Slaughter-houses.— The position remains the same as in my Report for 1955, and I have no further comments to offer this year.

11. PERSONAL:

I wish to record once again my sincere thanks to my colleagues the Clerk, Deputy Clerk, Engineer & Surveyor, Public Health Inspector and Waterworks Supervisor, for all their assistance and advice, which adds so materially to the pleasure I always obtain from my work in the Rural Area.

I have the honour to be,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

K. S. MAURICE-SMITH,

Medical Officer of Health,  
Ely Rural District Council.

