MINEHEAD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH'S INTERIM REPORT FOR 1946.

There is a slight decrease in the population of the town. This is now 6,984 as against 7,171 in 1945.

During the summer months the town was full and during the holidays all the accommodation was taken. During the winter months the town returned approximately to its Pre-War habit. Some of the hotels were partially filled, others remained closed until the Easter holidays. There was some temporary overcrowding during the holiday period.

The health of the town has not been remarkable in any way. A mild epidemic of whooping cough and the usual occasional sporadic cases of the infectious fevers occurred during the year.

The health of the juvenile population as a whole has been good.

Water Supply.

The main reservoir at Nutscale provided an ample supply throughout the year of excellent quality. No shortage was at any time experienced and no curtailment was necessary.

Minor extensions for supplies to new buildings were the only new works undertaken. Proposals for the coming year include connection of Nutscale supply to Alcombe to provide sterilised water and eliminate unsterilised supplies, and the completion of the dam and ancillary works at Nutscale reservoir.

The number of houses supplied by the Council water is 2,166 all of which have the water laid on direct to the houses.

The water was tested several times at the distributing points. The results were satisfactory with the exception of one case in which there was very slight contamination of bacillus coli.

Sewage Disposal.

The sewage disposal has been satisfactory and no new works or extensions have been undertaken during the year. There is one exception during heavy rain. Flooding of the lower districts of the town occurs and there is in some cases a reverse flow of sewerage through the manholes and into private premises. The question of dealing with the surface water is under consideration. An engineering survey of the whole of the existing drainage will be necessary and a comprehensive scheme for dealing with the nuisance prepared.

The total number of houses is 2,166. The number of houses erected during the current year was 10.

Conversions of existing buildings carried out have provided seven flats and four dwelling houses.

The programme of new houses to be erected by the Local Authority will be affected by the reduction in the housing programme recently effected by the Ministry of Health. At present no definite figures are available.

The total number of houses in process of erection at the end of the year was 63.

The total number of applicants for Council Houses at the end of the year was 230. These are dealt with according to the circumstances of the applicants and their needs.

Overcrowding.

There were 19 cases of overcrowding, 18 of which were re-housed.

Infectious Diseases.

Infectious diseases caused little anxiety during this year. An epidemic of whooping cough and aporadic cases of measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria and chicken pox occurred. Infectious diseases are treated at the local Isolation Hosipital. It is practically certain now that the County Authority will close this institution, the reasons being (1) difficulties in staffing, and (2) the cost of necessary alterations and repairs (3) the advisability of centralising this branch of medicine.

Disinfection of premises after infectious diseases is carried out by the Council's servants. Disinfection is also carried out after cases of an unpleasant or unhygienic nature on the recommendation of the attending medical practitioner.

With regard to scabies, only disinfection of the affected premises is undertaken by the Council. Cases which do not respond to domiciliary treatment are sent to a Centre for this purpose on the recommendation of the medical practitioner responsible.

The local institution, the Minehead and West Somerset Hospital, serves the town and the surrounding country for surgical, medical and obstetrical requirements.

The Maternity Department deals with all difficult labours and as many uncomplicated cases as space will allow. The accommodation, however, is strictly limited, and a large percentage of the cases falls to the care of the District Midwives.

I am happy to report that this institution has maintained its efficiency and answered all demands made upon it in spite of the gravest difficulties caused by shortage of nursing and domestic staffs.

Uncertainty as to the status of the Hospital under the Public Health Act has for the present prevented any planning for the improvement of the Institution. Alterations in many directions envisaged before the War must now remain in abeyance until the Act comes into force. For many reasons it is hoped that the Hosipital may retain its position as a small General Hosipital.

Clinics for Infant Welfare and Ante-Natal treatment are maintained in the town under the direction of Dr. H.M. Chappel.

Tuberculosis and Venereal Disease Clinics are held in the town and are under the control of and maintained by the County Council.

The Tuberculosis Allowances Scheme is also under the control of the County Council through the Tuberculosis Officer and the Health Visitor.

Promature infants are in the care of the District Nursing Association.

The notifications of tuberculosis and mortality from this disease show very little alteration; 25 cases were notified and there were 2 deaths; in 1945 were 24 and 3.

I have pleasure in taking this opportunity of acknowledging the courtesy and help of the Officers of your Council.

W. BAIN, M.B., B.S., Lond.

October, 1947.