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Contributors

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Public Health Department,
St. Paul's House,
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TAUNTON.

3rd December, 1940.

ANNUAL REPORT

of the Medical Officer of Health
for the Borough of Taunton for the year 1939.



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In accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health in Circular 2067 of 19th July, 1940 these reports are to be curtailed and confined to essential and urgent matters which have affected the Public Health during the year, including outbreaks of infectious disease and measures for maternity and child welfare etc.

As this is a reception area, arrangements were made for the reception of evacuee school children. The official scheme was put into operation on the 1st September and continued until 4th September. In all about 620 official and 159 unofficial evacuee school children together with 180 mothers (of whom 34 were expectant) and 206 children under school age accompanying them were received and billeted by the Billeting Officer.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

Registrar General's estimate of resident population for mid-1939.	
	Birth Rate. 28,120.
	Death Rate. 28,820.
Number of inhabited houses (end of 1939) according to the Rate Book.	8,055.
Rateable value (end of 1939)	£223,889.
Sum represented by a penny rate.	£856.
Birth rate live.	13.8.
" " still.	0.6.
Death rate crude 10.6 and corrected by factor 0.87	9.2.
Infant Mortality Rate.	37.5.
Death rate from Diarrhoea, under 2 years of age.	2.5.

GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA.

A full description of these was given on pages 7 and 8 of my report for 1938. The following changes have been made:--

Treatment Centres and Clinics.

The Health Centre was taken over in September by the Somerset County Council as a First Aid Post and became unusable for its original purpose. Temporary premises for use as a Health Centre were made available in North Street Sunday School and the removal effected on the 23rd September.

The services there include:--

Infant Welfare Centre - On Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-4 p.m. and commencing 8th September, Fridays 2-4 p.m.

Ante-Natal and Post-Natal Clinic - Wednesdays 2-4 p.m. and from 11th September to 16th October Mondays 2-4

Minor Ailments Clinic - Each weekday with doctor attending 9-11 a.m.

Dental Clinic - A whole time service was begun on 1st April and it is now open 9-12 and 2-4 on school days and 9-12 on Saturdays for general anaesthetic.

Eye Clinic - Two sessions on a Tuesday in each month by appointment.

It was not possible to accommodate the Orthopaedic Clinic of the Somerset County Council in the temporary premises and after an intermission in September this was resumed in the original Health Centre on Fridays as usual.

It was not possible to resume the Artificial Sunlight Clinic in October owing to the resignation of the nurse in charge.

The Mothers' Welfare and Advice Centre also ceased in September mainly owing to lack of support.

MATERNITY AND CHILD WELFARE.

A full description of the services provided was given on pages 9 and 10 of the report for 1938.

The reception of 180 mothers of whom some 34 were expectant and 206 children accompanying them under the Government Evacuation Scheme and the unofficial evacuation of many others to this area made extensive in this service necessary. These were an extra session of the ante-natal clinic commencing 11th September, an extra session of the Infant Welfare Clinic commencing 8th September and the placing of three extra beds and necessary equipment in the newly provided night nursery at the Maternal Home with the provision of extra nursing and domestic staffs.

All the services available to ordinary residents were open to the evacuees.

The Ante-Natal Clinic.

Sessions held were 58, total attendances - 970 by 260 women, also 24 post-natal attendances, and in addition 4 women who had booked midwives were examined by a doctor at the request of the mid-wife.

Maternity Home.

The number of women admitted was 124 while 6 were also admitted for ante-natal treatment prior to confinement.

Obstetric Consultant.

This service was required for 14 cases at the request of the doctors attending.

Puerperal Pyrexia.

Eight cases of this condition were notified and five of these were removed to special cubicles in the Isolation Hospital. There were no deaths from this cause.

Births.

The number notified under Sec. 203 of the Public Health Act, 1936 was 447, these included 17 still births.

Infant Mortality.

Deaths of infants under one year of age numbered 15. One infant born of an evacuee mother in the Maternity Home died aged 5 days.

Infant Welfare Centre.

Number of sessions held was 119, total attendances were 2701 and 451 new infants were brought for consultation.

Health Visitor.

The Health Visitor paid 3,448 visits to homes in connection with the welfare of infants and the mothers. The increased time required by the extra session of the Infant Welfare Centre reduced the time available for home visiting.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

Water Supply.

A continuous supply was maintained throughout the year. Samples for bacteriological examination were taken at least twice each month.

Housing.

Up to September 118 houses and 20 flats had been erected under the Housing Acts, for rehousing and to abate overcrowding. In accordance with Circular No. 1866 on 8th September the erection of further houses ceased and the demolition of unfit houses vacated was temporarily postponed.

At this time 17 houses in confirmed clearance orders had been demolished and 254 were due for demolition.

Infectious Diseases.

An outbreak of Measles commenced in January and continued until June. 646 cases were notified; there were no deaths. A special nurse was engaged for the home visiting of cases.

There was no undue prevalence of any other notifiable disease. Very little advantage had been taken of the scheme for the free immunisation against Diphtheria for children aged 1 to 8 years, for after being in operation for 13 months the total number immunised was only 296 or about 13% of the child population for whom the scheme is available. This proportion is too small to affect any reduction in the Diphtheria rate and may even tend to increase it.

JOHN ALLEN.

Medical Officer of Health

and

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Borough of Taunton.