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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year ended December 31st 1948.

To The Thetford Borough Council

Mr. Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors.

I have the honour to submit my first Annual Report on the sanitary circumstances, health and vital statistics of your District for the year 1948.

The Report is an Ordinary Report, and is written in conformity with suggestions contained in the Ministry of Health Circular No. 3/49 dealing with Annual Reports.

The year under review is important in that the National Health Service Act of 1946 came into force on July 5th. The only change of importance affecting this Area was that on this date the administration for Immunisation and Vaccination passed to the Local Health Authority, the Norfolk County Council.

No action has been taken under Section 47 of the National Assistance Act.

The Birth Rate is slightly higher than the National Rate. The Death Rate, however, is also higher than that of England and Wales but is lower than last year which was 15.6 per 1,000 of the population. The survival rate is satisfactory. The Death Rate of illegitimate children under one year of age is unduly high, but the number of illegitimate births is decreasing.

During the year the long projected scheme of Sewerage and Sewage Disposal Works, which had been given first priority as the result of the Ministry of Health Inquiry held in September, 1946, made a welcome advance. With the approval of the Minister of Health in July, the Council accepted the tender of Adam Eastwood & Sons, Ltd., Warsop, to carry out this work at a cost of £106,682. Owing to that firm having had three other large contracts also accepted, upon which they had started or would commence work immediately, they stated they would be unable to commence work for some months. Consequently, after approach to the Minister, the latter raised no objection to deferment of Messrs. Adam Eastwood & Sons contract for the work until after April, 1949. This work is being carried out with substantial financial assistance from the Ministry of Health and the Norfolk County Council, otherwise the cost would have been prohibitive to the Borough.

It will be seen in this Report that 40 new houses have been completed and occupied since the end of the war. It is essential that the rate of building should increase in order to accommodate the many families at present on the waiting list. There are far too many old dilapidated premises in the Borough which are virtually unfit for human habitation, but have of necessity to be tolerated by reason of the grave housing shortage.

The number of cases of Infectious Diseases have increased since last year because of a measles epidemic which occurred early in the year.

SECTION A.—STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS OF THE AREA.

Area—7,096 acres.

Registrar-General's estimate of the population at mid-year—4,378.

Number of inhabited houses according to the rate book—1,351.

Rateable value—£19,577.

Sum represented by a penny rate—£78 5s.

The area is partly urban and partly rural. Industries in the urban area include Patent Pulp Manufacturing, Malting, Fruit and Vegetable Canning, the preparation of Coffee, Motor Engineering and an electro plating plant. In the rural area there is general estate work, forestry and a chemical manure factory. Sugar beet and fruit picking provide employment in their season.

Extracts from Vital Statistics 1948.

Births.

Live Births.	Total.	M.	F.
Legitimate	77	37	40
Illegitimate	5	3	2
	82	40	42

Birth rate per 1,000 of the population—18.7.

Stillbirths.	Total.	M.	F.
Legitimate	2	1	1
Illegitimate	1	1	-
	3	2	1

Rate per 1,000 of the population—0.68.

Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births—19.3.

Deaths.

	Total.	M.	F.
62	31	31	
Death Rate per 1,000 of the population	...	...	14.2
Natural increase of population (excess of births over deaths)	...	...	20
Deaths from puerperal causes:—			Rate per 1,000 total births
Puerperal Sepsis ... ..	...	1	11.8
Other Puerperal causes ... ..	...	Nil	—

Infant Mortality.

Deaths of Infants under One year of age:—	Total.	M.	F.
Legitimate	-	-	-
Illegitimate	3	2	1
	3	2	1

Infant Mortality Rates (Deaths of Infants under one year per 1,000 live births):—

Legitimate only	...	...	...
Illegitimate only	...	...	600
General	...	...	36.6

The corresponding rate for England and Wales is 34.

Deaths From Certain Selected Causes.

	No. of Deaths.
Measles	-
Whooping Cough	-
Diphtheria	-
Influenza	-
Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	1
Tuberculosis of respiratory system	-
Tuberculosis (other forms)	1
Infantile Paralysis	-
Cancer (all ages)	11

The following table compares various Rates in this Area with those of England and Wales and selected groups of towns for the year 1948:—

	Rate per 1,000 population		Annual Death Rate per 1,000 population									Rate per 1,000 Live Births	
	Live Births	Stillbirths	All Causes	Typhoid & Paratyphoid	Whooping Cough	Diphtheria	Tuberculosis	Influenza	Smallpox	Acute Poliomyelitis and Polioencephalitis	Pneumonia	Total Deaths (under 1 year)	Diarrhoea & Enteritis (under two years)
England and Wales	17.9	0.42	10.8	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.51	0.03	—	0.01	0.41	34	3.3
126 County Boroughs and Great Towns, including London.	20.0	0.52	11.6	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.59	0.03	—	0.01	0.38	39	4.5
148 Smaller Towns, (Resident Population 25,000 to 50,000 at 1931 Census)	19.2	0.43	10.7	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.46	0.04	—	0.01	0.36	32	2.1
London Administrative County	20.1	0.39	11.6	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.63	0.02	—	0.00	0.54	31	2.4
Thetford M.B.	18.7	0.68	14.2	—	—	—	0.23	—	—	—	0.23	36.6	12.2

Causes of Death, 1948.

	Male.	Female.
All Causes	31	31
1. Typhoid and paratyphoid	-	-
2. Cerebro-spinal Fever	-	-
3. Scarlet Fever	-	-
4. Whooping Cough	-	-
5. Diphtheria	-	-
6. Tuberculosis of respiratory system	-	-
7. Other forms of Tuberculosis	-	1
8. Syphilitic diseases	-	-
9. Influenza	-	-
10. Measles	-	-
11. Acute Polio-myelitis and Polioencephalitis	-	-
12. Acute Infantile Encephalitis	-	-
13. Cancer of buccal cavity, oesophagus (M) and uterus (F)	2	2
14. Cancer of stomach and duodenum	-	1
15. Cancer of breast	-	-
16. Cancer of all other sites	3	3
17. Diabetes	-	-
18. Intra-cranial vascular lesions	7	4
19. Heart disease	12	11
20. Other diseases of circulatory system	-	1
21. Bronchitis	-	1
22. Pneumonia	-	1
23. Other respiratory diseases	-	-
24. Ulcer of stomach or duodenum	-	1
25. Diarrhoea under 2 years	1	-
26. Appendicitis	-	-
27. Other digestive diseases	-	-
28. Nephritis	1	-
29. Puerperal and post-abortive sepsis	-	1
30. Other maternal causes	-	-
31. Premature birth	1	1
32. Congenital malformations, birth injuries, and Infantile diseases	-	-
33. Suicide	-	-
34. Road traffic accidents	-	-
35. Other violent causes	-	1
36. All other causes	4	-

SECTION B.—SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA.

1. (1). Water.

(a) A further extension of water main was carried out during the year to serve the new section of the Housing Estate off London Road.

Practically all the houses in Thetford have a piped water supply, either direct into the house or to pipes within the curtilage of the house.

(b) There was no shortage of water during the year. A sample of water was submitted to the Public Analyst for Chemical and Bacteriological examination. The following is a summary of his report:—

Ammonia Free and Saline	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
Albuminoid	...	...	...	...	...	Trace.
Chlorine in chlorides	...	...	...	...	...	1.5
Nitrogen as Nitrates	...	...	...	...	...	0.56
Nitrites	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
Hardness Total	...	...	...	...	...	15.5 deg.
Permanent	...	...	...	...	...	4.9 deg.
Bacteriological Results:—						
Colonies per ml. on agar at 37 deg. C.	...	...	...	...	...	Nil.
Bacillus Coliform	...	...	...	...	...	absent in 100 ml.
Physical Characters	...	...	...	...	...	Clear.

Remarks.—“This is a pure and wholesome water of great organic and bacteriological purity and in every way fit for drinking purposes.”

(2). Drainage and Sewerage.

The only extension carried out during the year was a small one to serve the new housing site.

2. Closet Accommodation.

The only changes during the year were the addition of 28 W.C.s for the new houses. Other changes have been the conversion of 2 vaults to W.C.s and 10 vaults to Pail Closets. These alterations now give, W.C.s 359. Pails 677. Vaults 324.

3. Public Cleansing.

The collection of house refuse remains the same as in previous years.

4. Sanitary Inspection in Area.

No. of inspections for general nuisances	...	...	...	...	...	343
No. of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	16
No. of Statutory notices served	...	...	...	...	...	1
No. of Notices abated as a result of informal notices served	...	...	...	...	...	15
No. in hand at end of the year	...	...	...	...	...	1

SECTION C.—HOUSING.

A limited amount of routine housing inspections have been carried out during the year. 28 New Houses were completed in Nelson Crescent and occupied. These completed the Council's first post war Contract for 40 houses. These new houses provided much needed accommodation for cases of overcrowding and other special cases, but only touch the fringe of the general housing problem. A great number of houses are of the old flint and chalk lump construction and generally these have served their time. They are sub-standard and only in a very few exceptional cases could these houses be brought up to conform to present day standards.

During the year a further 18 new houses were commenced and should be ready for occupation in early 1949. Private building was generally at a standstill.

SECTION D.—MILK SUPPLY.

(a) As in previous years samples were taken and tested by lactometer.

(b) Meat and other Foods.

A considerable amount of meat and other foods were examined during the year, resulting in the following list of foods being condemned as unfit for human consumption:— Fresh Meat 132 lbs.; Frozen Meat 25 lbs.; Meat Pies (5 oz.) 280 lbs.; Corned Beef 24 lbs.; Fish 84 lbs.; Cheese 46 lbs.; Biscuits 6 lbs.; Rolled Oats 290 lbs.; Pearl Barley 2 tons 25 lbs.; Flour 242 lbs.; Macaroni 262 lbs.; Semolina 30 lbs.; Sausage Rusk 224 lbs.; Pudding Mixture, 63 lbs.; Dried Egg 14 lbs.; Tinned Foods 70; Brazilian Oranges 10 cases.

SECTION E.—PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES.

General.

The total number of cases of Infectious Disease notified during the year was 262 compared with 45 for 1947, 93 in 1946 and 133 in 1945.

The total number of each disease notified was as follows:—

Measles	...	...	...	...	189
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	61
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	6
Dysentery	...	...	...	...	1
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	3
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	1
Puerperal Pyrexia	...	...	...	...	1
					262

It will be noted from the above table that the main cause for the great increase was due to an epidemic of measles which occurred during the months of February and March. The last time Thetford had an epidemic of measles was during the first four months of 1944 when 212 cases were notified.

Below is a table of Infectious Diseases according to age groups.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED DURING 1948.

Disease	0—	1—	3—	5—	10—	15—	25—	Age un-known	Totals
Scarlet Fever ...	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	3
Pneumonia ...	—	—	1	—	1	1	3	—	6
Erysipelas ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Dysentery ...	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1
Whooping Cough ...	6	14	16	24	—	—	1	—	61
Measles ...	7	36	45	85	14	1	1	—	189
Malaria ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	13	50	62	113	15	2	7	—	262

The following table shows the immunisation state of the children in the district on 31st December, 1948:—

	Under School Age.	School Age.	Total.
Numbers Immunised ...	315	537	852
Estimated Population ...	396	602	998
Percentage Immunised ...	79.54%	89.20%	85.37%

It is gratifying to report that no case of diphtheria was notified during the year. This happy state of affairs is due to the large number of children who have been immunised and great credit is due to your late Medical Officer of Health.

It is hoped that these figures will be maintained in the future.

TUBERCULOSIS.

The following table shows the age and sex distribution of the notified cases and deaths from Tuberculosis during the year.

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary		Pulmonary		Non-Pulmonary	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
15—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
25—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
35—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
45—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
55—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
65 and upwards	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	2

The following are the number of cases on the register on 31st December, 1947.

	Males	Females	Total
Pulmonary ...	10	10	20
Non-Pulmonary ...	7	15	22
Total	17	25	42

The following are the number of cases on the register on 31st December, 1948.

	Males	Females	Total
Pulmonary ...	12	9	21
Non-Pulmonary ...	8	11	19
Total	20	20	40

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee for the support and encouragement they have given me since I took up my duties. Also I should like to thank Dr. T. L. Oliver for his help and thorough introduction to the Area.

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to the Town Clerk (Mr. G. R. Blaydon) for his great assistance to me during the year. To the Sanitary Inspector, Mr. L. G. Howell, I owe a debt of gratitude for his unflinching help at all times.

I remain,

Your obedient servant,

C. Warden On.
Medical Officer of Health.