

[Report 1939] / Medical Officer of Health, Torquay Borough.

Contributors

Torquay (England). Borough Council.

Publication/Creation

1939

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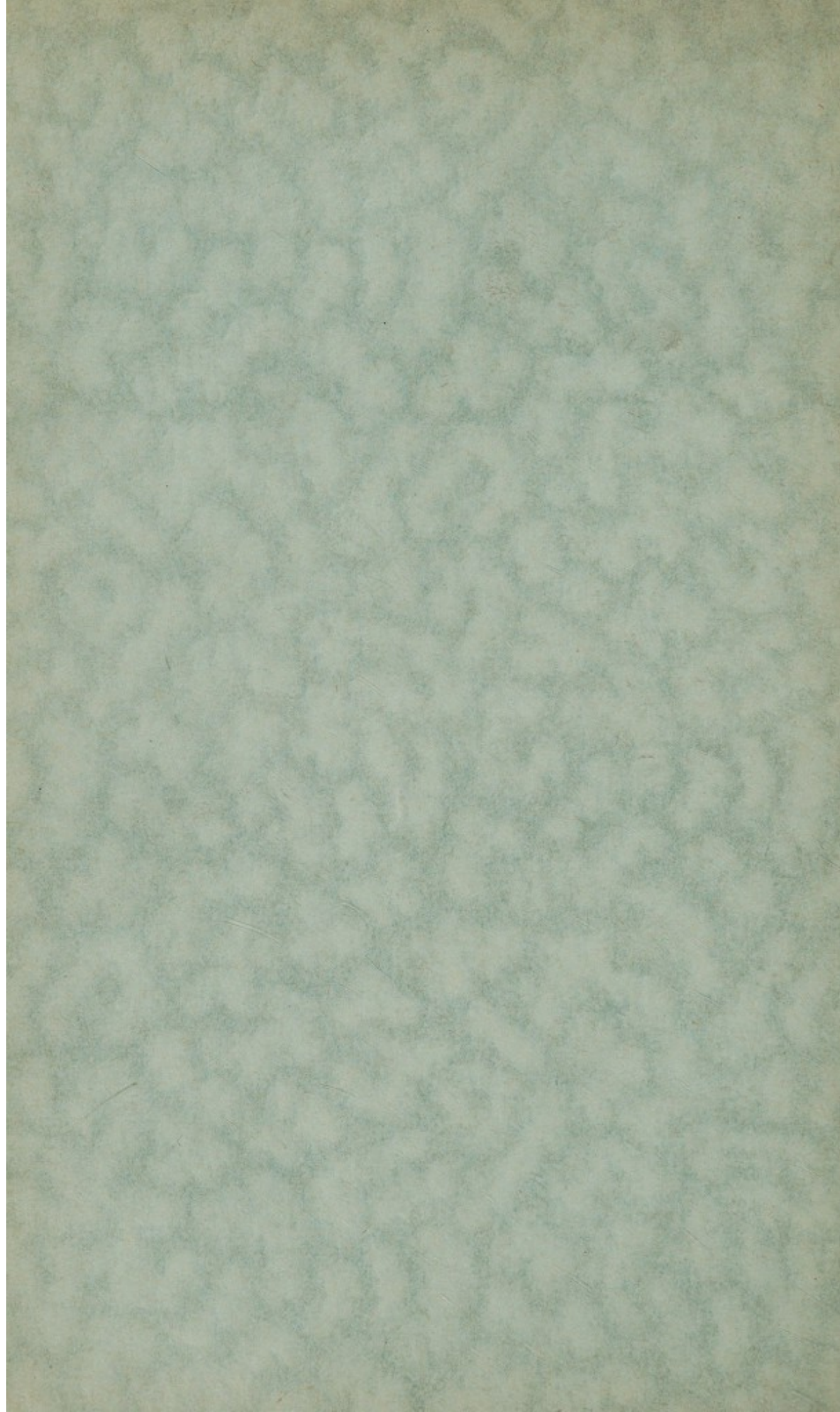


BOROUGH OF TORQUAY

INTERIM REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health
for 1939





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ST. MARYCHURCH TOWN HALL,
TORQUAY.

*To the Worshipful the Mayor and to the Aldermen and Councillors
of the Borough of Torquay.*

MR. MAYOR, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour to submit an Interim Report for 1939, in accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health. In view of the increasing pressure of work it is requested that an interim report should be prepared, referring only to essential and urgent matters affecting public health ; but arrangements are made for the careful preservation of all records so that after the end of the war a more comprehensive report can be submitted, covering the whole period.

A year of uneasy peace hastening into declared war has indeed been exceptional, and in connexion with the necessary measures of civil defence and of evacuation many new and unusual burdens have been placed upon the health services. The whole of the survey of accommodation under the evacuation scheme, together with the preparations for the reception of evacuees and the subsequent billeting scheme were undertaken by the health department; it was soon apparent that the problems of evacuation, constant and exacting as they are, are largely concerned with health and with education, and a unique social experience has been obtained through the intimate linking up of billeting, school medical inspection and public health.

While in the midst of evacuation problems, it was a strange coincidence that the Health Department was itself evacuated to the wilderness of temporary accommodation, pending the completion of the promised new Health Centre ; and although the war has automatically deferred the scheme, the consummation of this much-needed ideal with all the attendant immeasurable advantages to the work will be awaited with patient hopeful expectation.

The success of prevention in medicine is measured by the forgetfulness of the public, but that is no reason why preventive measures should be entirely overlooked or wholly forgotten at a time when the best preparation of a people for war or for peace must be soundness of body and of mind ; and the effect of the unprecedented stress of modern war upon the community, especially upon its youth, must be closely watched.

On the whole the year was healthy, and there is little in connexion with the usual work upon which to report ; indeed everything is rightly subordinated to the immediate needs of the

war, and there must necessarily be delay before progress in normal schemes can be resumed. For as Carlyle said "Our duty is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand;" and we must obey this dictum, content to work, to hope, and to wait for the return to normal preventive medicine, confident that

*"There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
What was good shall be good, with for evil so much good more."*

In conclusion, it is with appreciation that I acknowledge both the encouraging support given to me by the Chairman and members of the Public Health Committee, and also the co-operation and mutual helpfulness of the Medical Profession of the Borough in the many contacts of daily work during the unusually difficult times.

It is impossible for me to speak too highly of the constant willing help of the staff in the almost overwhelming maze and range of duties; literally their work has been at all times and in all places, and no department could have more loyal and unstinted support from every individual member. Much more satisfying that the acknowledgment which is obviously their due, the staff can certainly feel that it is by such efforts that preventive medicine can consolidate its past gains, maintain its important first-line positions, and be prepared for the advance to victories yet to come.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient Servant,

J. V. A. SIMPSON.

STAFF.

(a) Medical

Medical Officer of Health, School Medical Officer, Medical Superintendent of Isolation Hospital, and Chief Billeting Officer.

J. V. A. SIMPSON,

M.D.LOND., B.S., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H.CAMB.

Acting Deputy Medical Officer of Health and Assistant School Medical Officer.

T. GIBSON, M.D.ED., C.M., D.P.H.LOND.

Medical Officer, Ante-Natal Clinic and Post-Natal Clinic.

*P. A. McCALLUM, M.B.GLASG., CH.B., D.P.H.CAMB.

Obstetric Consultants.

*P. A. McCALLUM, M.B.GLASG., CH.B., D.P.H.CAMB.

*B. VENN DUNN, M.D.ED., F.R.C.S.ED.

Ophthalmic Surgeon (School Medical Service and Maternity and Child Welfare).

*J. MASTERTON THOMSON, M.B.GLASG., CH.B., D.O.M.S.ENG.

Aural Surgeon (School Medical Service, Maternity and Child Welfare, and Isolation Hospital).

*W. H. BRADBEER, M.S.LOND., D.L.O.ENG.

Pathologist and Bacteriologist.

*H. A. FIELDEN, M.D.DURH.

(b) Dental

School Dental Officer and Dental Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare.

†N. HARRIS, L.D.S., R.C.S.ENG.

Acting Dental Officer.

MISS E. M. STILL, L.D.S., R.C.S., ENG.

(c) Nursing

Health Visitors, Child Protection Visitors.

†MISS P. MULLINEAUX, S.R.N., S.C.M., H.V.CERT.R.S.I.

†MRS. V. E. NEWCOMBE, S.R.N., S.C.M., H.V.CERT.R.S.I.

†MISS M. IRONS, S.R.N., S.C.M., H.V.CERT.R.S.I.

Matron, Isolation Hospital.

MISS M. J. STEWART, S.R.N.

(The staff at the Isolation Hospital includes the Matron, Sister, four nurses and three probationers)

(d) Sanitary*Senior Sanitary Inspector, and Billeting Officer.*

M. G. CROOK, C.S.I.B., Meat Cert., Instructor's Cert., C.A.G.S.

District Sanitary Inspectors, and Billeting Officers.

G. J. LOVELESS, C.R.S.I. and Meat Cert.

A. THOMPSON, C.R.S.I.

J. F. H. SMITH, C.R.S.I., and Meat Cert.

H. T. BEECHEY, C.R.S.I. and Meat Cert.

(e) Other*Orthoptist (School Medical Service and Maternity and Child Welfare).*

*Miss M. B. DAVIES, B.A.

Borough Meteorologist.

*C. BELLINGER, F.R.MET.S.

*Clerks.**(Public Health Department).*

‡W. H. NICKELS.

MRS. V. J. KNAPMAN.

P. H. BURGE.

§Miss C. EVANS.

‡W. D. WHITE.

§Miss P. M. ROWELL.

(Maternity and Child Welfare).

Miss K. HUDSON.

Assistants to Sanitary Inspectors.

E. D. TUCKER.

E. J. SELLEK.

‡ On Active Service.

* Part Time.

† Also School Nurse.

§ Temporary.

SECTION A.

**STATISTICS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS
OF THE AREA**

Area (in acres)	—	—	—	—	6,244
Number of inhabited houses (end of 1939) according to					
Rate Books	—	—	—	—	12,690
Rateable value (end of 1939)	—	—	—	—	£537,383
Sum represented by a Penny Rate (end of 1939)	—				£2,110

SOCIAL CONDITIONS,

Including the chief industries carried on in the area and the extent of unemployment.

There is nothing exceptional to record on the social conditions ; but the following figures, kindly supplied by the Manager of the Ministry of Labour Employment Exchange, show the extent of unemployment for January (1939 and 1940) when it is highest, and in July 1939 when it is probably lowest :—

	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
January, 1939 ..	1385	455	78	86	2004
July, 1939 ..	659	114	23	20	816
January, 1940 ..	1741	558	96	117	2512

VITAL STATISTICS.

These will be retained, when they are received from the Registrar-General, for inclusion in the further report at a later date

SECTION B.

**GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES FOR
THE AREA**

1. (i) *Full particulars of the Public Health Officers of the Authority, including their duties, are incorporated in the beginning of the Report.*

In September Mr. G. E. Body, Senior Sanitary Inspector, retired on account of ill-health, and was succeeded by Mr. M. G. Crook, of Wembley. Mr. Body had been on the staff for many years, and was a very able and zealous officer ; he was especially proficient in meat and food inspection and in laboratory work, and it is largely owing to him that the meat inspection of the Borough is of such a high order.

It is not easy to appreciate fully the excellent work of the pioneers who had to contend with many difficulties unknown to-day ; and it is fitting for those of us who come after to show our appreciation of, and gratitude for, so creditable a record as Mr. Body has left in his long service to the Borough.

In November, Mr. Norman Harris, L.D.S., Dental Officer, who was on the Emergency Reserve of Officers, was called up for Active Service with the Army Dental Corps ; and the Central Dental War Committee (through the Local Committee) nominated Miss E. M. Still, L.D.S., of the L.C.C. staff, to act as temporary Dental Officer. So prompt were the arrangements, that an interval of only three days was lost before Miss Still took over the duties of Mr. Harris.

Mr. W. H. Nickels, Chief Clerk, was mobilised with the Territorial Army and left for active service on the outbreak of war ; and Mr. W. D. White volunteered and later left for army service.

In July, Dr. W. J. Hogg, Deputy Medical Officer, left to take up another appointment in Ross and Cromarty ; and as war broke out before a new appointment was made, it was decided, with the approval of the Local Medical War Committee, not to make a permanent appointment but to retain as temporary Deputy Medical Officer, Dr. T. Gibson (ex-Medical Officer of Health and School Medical Officer, Wakefield), who had been acting as *locum tenens* during the holiday of your Medical Officer.

Miss M. E. Carter, one of the Health Visitors, left in October to go to Harrow, and Miss M. Irons, of the Northampton County Staff, was appointed to fill the vacancy.

2. *Hospitals : Public and Voluntary.*

During the year the extensions at the Isolation Hospital were completed, and provide up-to-date and well-equipped facilities which are greatly appreciated, especially in the present emergency. With the new cubicle block and with the other alterations and additions, it is now possible to deal with infectious disease in accordance with the latest advances of scientific knowledge.

3. *Midwifery and Maternity Services.*

(i) *Midwives Act, 1936.* In March and April two midwives of the St. Marychurch and Babbacombe District Nursing Association voluntarily surrendered their certificates ; and the Association at the end of April terminated their agreement with the Corporation under which they took part in the scheme for a domiciliary service in the Borough. As a result arrangements were made with the Queen's Institute to carry out the whole of the domiciliary midwifery, and a scheme on these lines was prepared and approved.

In February, an order was made to take effect as from 1st May, prohibiting unqualified persons from acting as maternity nurses in the Borough.

(ii) *Emergency Arrangements.*

By courtesy of the Roweroft Convalescent Home Trustees, facilities were provided, at short notice, for the admission of normal maternity cases among the expectant mothers who came under the Government Evacuation Scheme, abnormal cases being admitted to the Torbay Hospital. The Trustees carried out, at their own expense, a number of substantial alterations to make a well-equipped labour ward; and this, together with two small wards, each of three beds, and a duty room, form a very satisfactory unit. The willing co-operation shown, and the considerable help given, by this Home are acknowledged with much gratitude.

The midwifery was carried out by members of the staff of the Queen's Institute, and it was not found necessary to reinstate under the Emergency Regulations any midwives who had surrendered their certificates. There were seven admissions to this Home, and four cases were admitted to the Torbay Hospital.

(iii) *Infant Welfare Centres.*

Owing to the large numbers attending the Market Street Welfare Centre, it was decided to open a fourth centre at Shrublands and Blagdon, the site of the proposed Health Centre, on Friday afternoons; this centre started on 20th October, and is greatly appreciated by the mothers from Torre and Chelston.

SECTION C.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

1. (i) *Water.*

The Borough Water Engineer, Mr. Norman G. Elliot, M.Sc., A.M.Inst.C.E., has kindly supplied the following details:—

“No new sources of public water supply have been tapped during the year and no important extensions of mains have been made.

In September a chlorinator was installed and since that date, the water has been chlorinated after filtration with a dose of 0.4 parts per million of chlorine. No ammonia is used.

The supply has been satisfactory (a) in quality and (b) in quantity.”

(ii) *Drainage and Sewerage.*

In connexion with the Main Drainage Scheme, a start was made early in 1939 and work is now in hand for the construction of a new system for the Torre and Chelston areas. The work involved includes the construction of a large pumping station and

intercepting sewer, and also the construction of new sewers in Belgrave Road, Avenue Road, Newton Road, Mill Lane, Shiphay Lane, Rosery Road, Sherwell Valley, Walnut Road, Rathmore Road and Torbay Road.

During the few years prior to the war, there have been an increasing number of applications for houses to be built with septic tank and cesspool drainage, in parts of the Borough where sewers are not available ; and the multiplication of this form of drainage gives rise to considerable anxiety. Your Medical Officer has repeatedly and consistently opposed these schemes for septic tanks which are often nothing more than cesspools with overflows ; and several Ministry of Health Inquiries have upheld the decision of the Local Authority.

At a time when an extensive scheme for the modernisation of the sewerage system is being undertaken it is greatly to be regretted that there should be such a marked increase in any form of drainage other than main drainage. A reversion to such obsolete conditions as multiple conservancy systems cannot be countenanced with equanimity, and it is deplorable that stricter control is not permitted. To wait until a nuisance with its possible dangers to public health has arisen and then to attempt to abate it, is certainly neither common-sense nor preventive medicine.

(iii) *Salvage.*

The Borough Engineer, Mr. W. P. Ladmore, M.Inst.C.E., has kindly given me the following details :—

“ Before the war the Torquay Corporation had been collecting many articles of potential value which are regarded as waste by the average householder ; and during 1939, the Corporation collected about 145 tons of waste paper, 35 tons of mixed paper (cardboard, cartons, etc.), 5,560 dozen mixed bottles, 48 bottle cases, 30 dozen milk bottles, 12 cwt. of rolled aluminium and nearly 2 cwt. of cast aluminium, 26 cwt. of brass, 8 cwt. of copper, 30 cwt. of lead, 35 tons of cast iron, 42 tons of baled scrap tin and 29 cwt. of rags.”

This very creditable record of pre-war times has prepared the way for the wider scope and ample extension of intensified salvage which the conditions of the emergency demand.

2. *Sanitary Inspection of the Area.*

The inspection of all areas in the Borough has been carried out during the year under your Senior Inspector ; owing to circumstances arising out of the war and its associated emergency measures, to which reference is made elsewhere, some of the routine work has necessarily been greatly curtailed or is less detailed than usual, but nothing essential has been omitted.

SECTION D.

HOUSING

There is nothing exceptional to record in this interim report.

SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

In this section the routine work has been generally uneventful. The scheme for Government-controlled slaughtering is in operation, the centralisation having necessitated the temporary closure of slaughterhouses other than the so-called public slaughterhouse; and this has intensified the difficulties of bad accommodation. The need for adequate facilities, recommended so insistently before, is now more than ever apparent; and perhaps the return of peaceful days may bring about a complete modernisation of building and of equipment.

On 1st October, the Corporation became the Food and Drugs Authority responsible for administering the new Act, which came into operation on that date.

SECTION F.

**PREVALENCE OF, AND CONTROL OVER,
INFECTIOUS AND OTHER DISEASES**

On 1st November, measles and whooping cough were added to the list of notifiable diseases.

The incidence of infectious diseases like scarlet fever, diphtheria, erysipelas, and puerperal pyrexia, was not exceptional; five cases of paratyphoid fever occurred in a general hospital and a full report of the epidemiology of the outbreak was published in *Lancet* 1939, 2, 1235.

Influenza was prevalent in January and February, and the staffs of several institutions were considerably depleted on account of the epidemic; a number of cases were complicated by pneumonia.

It is satisfactory that the incidence of infectious disease was not increased by the abnormal movements of population during the first few months of the war.

SECTION G.

PORT HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

This section is not being published, a minimum number of copies having been reproduced for submission privately to the Local Authority and to the Ministry of Health.

SECTION H.

MISCELLANEOUS**1. *Government Evacuation Scheme.***

Under this scheme Torquay is a reception area and your Medical Officer (who is also School Medical Officer) was appointed Chief Billeting Officer, and the Senior and District Sanitary Inspectors were appointed Billeting Officers. Complete co-ordination has thus been maintained throughout between the Public Health and School Medical Services and the Evacuation Scheme.

In January, the survey of available accommodation was undertaken by the staff of the Public Health Department together with voluntary help from teachers and the special constabulary; and following the results, intimation was received of the numbers allotted to Torquay. A detailed scheme was prepared and everything in connexion with reception and billeting was arranged, so that the scheme could be implemented at short notice. How satisfactory were the preparations is reflected in the excellent and smooth way in which, when evacuation became necessary, the whole arrangements were carried through in the first few days of September; and acknowledgement must here be made to the Station Masters and railway authorities, to the Police, to the Devon General Omnibus Company and to the Teaching Staff of the Torquay Schools for their co-operation and assistance. Torquay received about 400 mothers and children from Acton in the initial evacuation; but later the St. Olave's Grammar School (about 450 boys and staff) of Tower Bridge, London, was transferred on 13th October, to be followed early in 1940 by the Paddington and Maida Vale High School of about 270 girls and staff. The majority of the mothers and children drifted back to their homes, but the schools have remained remarkably constant as distinct units.

In addition to these official evacuees, there were numerous others including two large business companies, a training college, a private school, together with many private persons.

Evacuation is not entirely new in this country, for London was evacuated in the days of the Black Death when plague was rife; and the first recorded evacuations of schools as units were in Tudor times—Eton and Langley in 1509 and Westminster to Wheathampstead in 1564, while Oxford University was also evacuated during the same period. But nothing on the scale of the unparalleled exodus of this war had ever been attempted; and the actual evacuation and reception were carried out with amazing success and punctuality.

In the billeting scheme, with so many conflicting interests there are many difficult problems from day to day, demanding unending patience, infinite wisdom and a wide understanding of human nature. It soon became apparent to find how hard it is to obtain the much-needed adaptation, that ability to see the other point of view,—and more important still

*“ To see oursel’s as others see us !
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
And foolish notion.”*

In the case of children, the absence of happy and affectionate home ties engenders a feeling of insecurity and instability which endangers their future emotional relations; psychiatrists have shown that without the background of a happy home with unselfish parental love, difficult and neurotic children develop. There are powerful emotional forces at work, and if these are not adequately understood it is easy to see how perilous might be the consequences of suddenly removing nearly half a million children from their homes and placing them in the homes of strangers. Those who have worked in the busy exacting turmoil of the billeting scheme and who have experienced it in their own houses, know something of the difficulties of uprooted children, of harassed hostesses and of deprived parents.

What does it feel like for a child to be suddenly taken from home with the familiar faces and familiar places, for an indefinite—almost, it would seem to the child, unending—time? What is the feeling of finding other people’s children billeted in our houses, where along the cool sequestered vale of life we kept the noiseless tenor of our way? How does it feel to realise that the house is silent and empty with no children to care for, no children to see to bed and get up for school in the morning? These are the questions which lie at the root of billeting. Children are excellent dissemblers and the extent to which they miss their homes and parents is often under-estimated; evacuation is a family matter and much study and patient work are yet required before the necessary information is obtained, so that future evacuation and billeting schemes can be placed on a scientific basis and thereby avoid some at least of the many pitfalls.

In connexion with the medical arrangements, the local medical war committee working under the Central Medical War Committee was responsible for the Scheme by which domiciliary treatment of unaccompanied school children was undertaken by medical practitioners; payment to the doctors concerned was arranged by the local medical war committee and no charge fell upon the parents of the children or upon the householder. Your Medical

Officer, who is Hon. Treasurer and an Hon. Secretary of the local medical war committee, was responsible for the detailed organisation and administration of the scheme for the whole of the Torquay Division of the British Medical Association, which includes a large part of South Devon in addition to the Borough of Torquay.

Furthermore, provision has been made so that all the clinic and other facilities of the School Medical and Maternity and Child Welfare Services in Torquay are available for evacuee children.

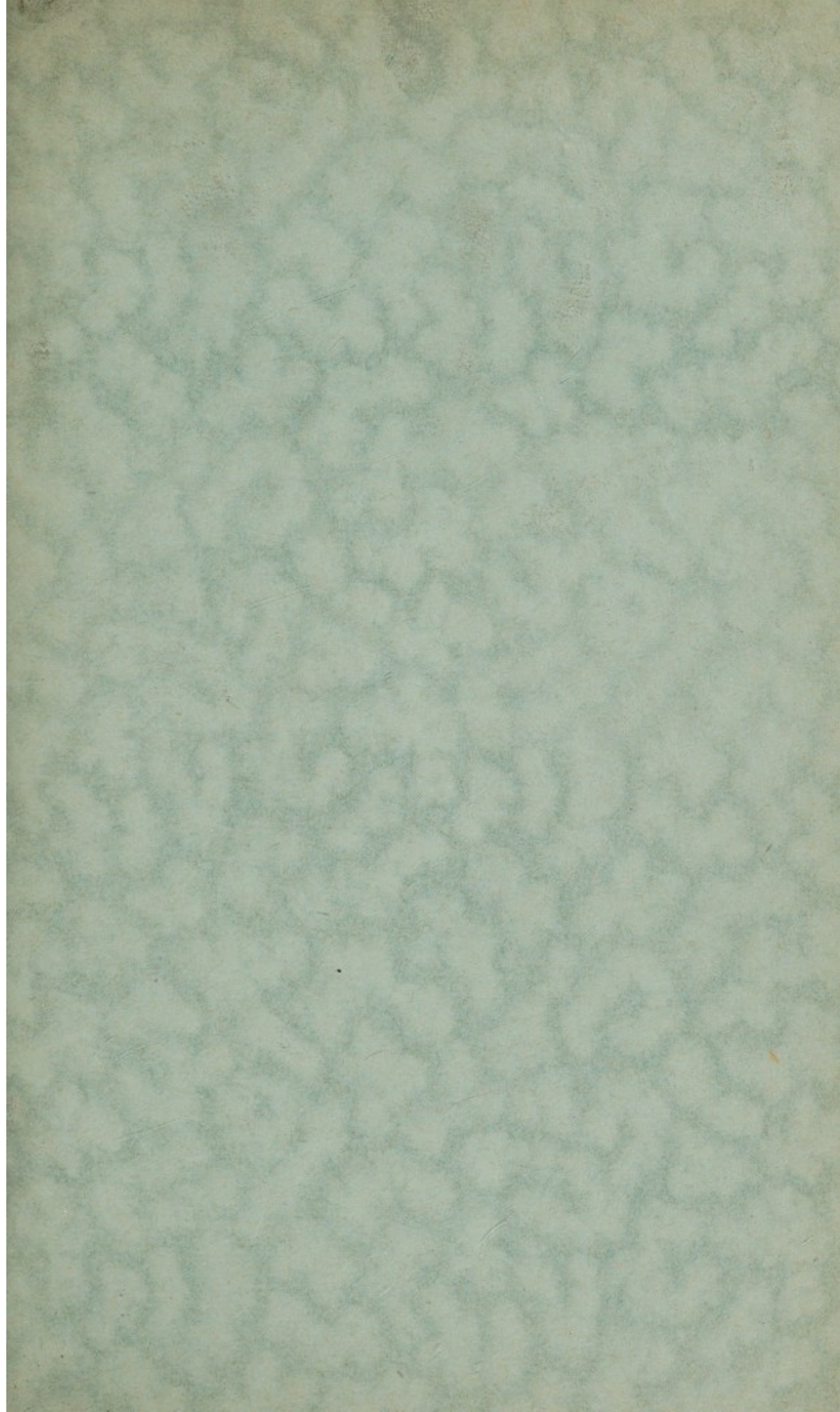
(2) *Air Raid Precautions.*

During the early part of the year there was a considerable extension of the scheme which was ready to be placed on a wartime basis when this was required. In the medical services some re-arrangement and further organisation of the first-aid posts were needed; and the fixed post was ultimately located at Shrublands and Blagdon, (the site of the future Health Centre), while the mobile post was placed at the Grey Cars Garage. The medical officers of these posts were appointed on the recommendation of the local medical war committee, Dr. H. K. Lacey being placed in charge of the fixed post (with Dr. T. Dunlop, and Col. C. I. Ellis, C.M.G., M.D., as assistants), and Dr. W. D. Currie was appointed for the mobile unit (with Dr. W. J. Dobson Smyth and Dr. G. M. Oakden as assistants). Training of the personnel was amplified and practice was obtained in mock raids.

The allocation of the ambulance service was completed, and later certain vehicles were purchased for the necessary adaptation; the Grey Cars Garage is used as a station for the ambulances so far as Torquay is concerned.

The Torbay area is a scheme-making authority, and includes Torquay, Paignton and Brixham; in the area there are five first-aid posts (two fixed and three mobile) and your Medical Officer is responsible for receiving all the medical equipment, dressings and drugs, for issuing them to the various posts as required, and for arranging for a bulk reserve to be held in store.

Schemes were also prepared for giving mutual assistance to neighbouring authorities, for the notification of casualties and for the establishment of a casualty bureau at the Public Health Department, St. Marychurch Town Hall, and for the removal to mortuaries and for the interment of the dead.



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Printers, etc.,
14 Frankfort Street.
Works : Regent Street*