

[Report 1963] / Medical Officer of Health, Buckfastleigh U.D.C.

Contributors

Buckfastleigh (England). Urban District Council.

Publication/Creation

1963

Persistent URL

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BUCKFASTLEIGH URBAN DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE HEALTH OF THE DISTRICT
FOR THE YEAR 1963



R.P. RYAN, MB., BS., D.P.H.

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

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REPORTS FROM DISTRICT OFFICER

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R. P. Logan

District Officer of Health.

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BUCKFASTLEIGH URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

To the Chairman and Members of the Public Health Committee.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present the Annual Report for the year 1963.

Section A deals with statistics. This year I have included figures calculated over a period of five years, both for the town and for the whole of the area I am responsible for. It will be seen that both sets of figures compare well with the national figures. On the whole, the statistics are such as could be expected in a town where standards of health are high.

Section B refers to the general provision of health services in the area.

Section C is connected with infectious diseases. An outbreak of infective hepatitis is referred to.

Section D deals with the sanitary circumstances of the town. Reference is made to the treatment of water for the swimming pool.

Section E deals with the inspection and supervision of food.

Section F deals with housing. An account is given of the start of what I trust will be an effective drive to deal with unfit housing in the town.

I would like to express my gratitude to the chairman and to the council for their support and encouragement, and I wish to thank all members of the staff of the urban district, especially Mr Stokes and Mr Allen, for their kindness and help.

I have the honour to be,

Your obedient servant,

R. P. Ryan.

Medical Officer of Health.

BUCKFASTLEIGH URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN Councillor R.T. Willcocks.

CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL Councillor R.C. Northcott, J.P.

and

ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

R.P. RYAN, MB., BS., D.P.H.

Medical Department,

Municipal Offices,

Totnes.

Tel. Totnes 2335

PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR (Also Surveyor)

G.T. ALLEN, MRSH.

Council Offices,

Harewood,

Buckfastleigh.

Tel. Buckfastleigh

2133

CLERICAL ASSISTANT

Miss W.J. Taylor,

Medical Department,

Municipal Offices,

Totnes.

Tel. Totnes 2335

R.P. RYAN

SECTION A.

STATISTICS

Area	1,365
Number of dwelling houses	904
Dwellings owned by the Council (31st March 1963)	331
Council dwellings per thousand of the population	131.3
Rateable value (1st April 1963)	£90,235
Estimated product of ld. rate	£362
Estimated mid-year population	2,520
Population at 1961 census	2,550

Births

Live births (16 males and 12 females)	28
Crude birth rate per 1,000 population	11.2
Corrected birth rate	14.9
Still births	1
No illegitimate birth or still birth was recorded .	

Infant Mortality

Number of deaths in first week of life	1
(No other infant deaths were recorded)	
Infant, neonatal and early neonatal mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)	35.7
Perinatal mortality rate per 1,000 live and still births	69.0

Maternal Mortality

No maternal deaths were recorded.

Deaths

Total (23 males and 23 females)	46
Crude death rate per 1,000 population	18.3
Corrected death rate	13.4

<u>Classification of Deaths</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Malignant neoplasm, lung, bronchus	2	1	3
Malignant neoplasm, uterus	-	1	1
Other malignant and lymphatic neoplasms	1	3	4
Leukaemia, aleukaemia	1	-	1
Diabetes	-	1	1
Vascular lesions of nervous system	6	2	8
Coronary disease, angina	6	1	7
Hypertension with heart disease	-	1	1
Other heart disease	2	6	8
Other circulatory disease	1	-	1
Pneumonia	1	2	3
Other diseases of respiratory system	-	1	1
Ulcer of stomach and duodenum	-	1	1
Other defined and ill defined diseases	1	2	3
Accidents (other than motor vehicle)	-	1	1
Suicide	2	-	2
Total (all causes)	23	23	46

The mortality statistics for 1963 are such as may be expected in a small town with a good general standard of health. The area comparability factors for the birth rate and the death rate, which are 1.33 and 0.73 respectively show that there are more old people, and fewer women of child bearing age in the population than is usual throughout the country. The sole infant death which occurred in 1963 gives the town an infant mortality rate of 35.7 per thousand live births. Last year there were no infant deaths and the infant mortality rate was therefore zero. This shows the wide fluctuations which occur in a small district in the rates calculated from small numbers. I give below infant and maternal mortality statistics for the last 5 years and beside them the same statistics calculated for the whole of area No. 10 Devon County for the same period, and some of those for England and Wales for 1961, which was the year in the middle of the five year period. Area No. 10 consists of Totnes Borough and Rural and Ashburton and Buckfastleigh Urban Districts. The five year figures for the town are still based on numbers which are too small to eliminate chance variation but those for Area No. 10 have more meaning and compare favourably with the national figures for 1961.

	Buckfastleigh 1959-63	Area No. 10 1959-63	England & Wales. 1961
Population 1961	2,550	25,724	
Live births	160	1,645	
Illegitimate births	1	86	
Infant deaths (under 1 year)	1	29	
Neonatal deaths (under 4 wks)	1	24	
Early neonatal deaths (under 1 week)	1	23	
Stillbirths	5	28	
Maternal deaths	0	0	
Illegitimacy rate per cent.	0.635	5.2	
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	6.25	17.6	21.4
Neonatal mortality rate per 1,000 live births	6.25	14.6	15.3
Stillbirth rate per 1,000 live births	30.3	16.7	32.0
Perinatal mortality rate per 1,000 live and still births	36.4	30.5	19.0
Maternal mortality rate per 1,000 live and still births	0	0	0.34

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF HEALTH SERVICES

1. Hospitals.

A general practitioner hospital with 15 mixed medical and surgical beds is situated in Ashburton. Other hospitals which serve the district are Newton Abbot Hospital and Torbay Hospital. There is a maternity unit at Broomborough Hospital, Totnes, to which many of the Buckfastleigh mothers are admitted for their confinement.

2. County Council Health Services.

Under the National Health Services Act 1946, the County Council provides the following services:-

Domiciliary midwives, home nurses, health visitors, supervisory care of expectant and nursing mothers and children under five, ambulance services, vaccination and immunisation procedures, home help services, and the care of persons suffering from illness or mental disorders and the aftercare of such persons.

One district nurse/midwife works in the district together with a health visitor and a nursing assistant. A child welfare clinic is held twice a month and the health visitor for the area is in attendance. The Home Help Service is provided by the County Council and the local organiser has her office at the Central Clinic, 14, Midvale Road, Paignton. A Chiropody Service is provided by the County Council and has been made available for the handicapped, aged and expectant mothers. A chiropody clinic operates in Buckfastleigh for a whole day once a month.

3. Laboratory Service

Bacteriological examinations of pathological specimens and samples of milk, water and ice cream are carried out at the Public Health Laboratories at Exeter and Plymouth. The chemical analysis of water is undertaken by public analysts at Exeter.

4. Mini-Clinic

Plans were made during 1963 in agreement with the local general practitioners for the construction of a "mini-clinic" in Bossel Road. This will be a rural health centre. I have no doubt that it will prove of the greatest benefit to the town, and a model for further developments of the same kind in other areas.

SECTION C.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

1. Notifiable Diseases

Five cases of measles, all in young children, and one case of pulmonary tuberculosis in a man aged 65, were notified during 1963. There was a larger outbreak of measles in 1962; a further large outbreak will not occur until enough susceptible children have again accumulated in the schools.

Pulmonary tuberculosis now adays attacks chiefly elderly men, and the solitary case which occurred was one such.

2. Other diseases.

There was a large and prolonged outbreak of infective hepatitis from July onwards. A few cases occurred among children attending school in Buckfastleigh in July. A large number of cases followed in August among their school fellows; later there were further cases in the families of the children affected.

The total number of residents of the town who suffered from the disease was about 30.

Infective hepatitis is not notifiable. The characteristic sign, jaundice, does not always occur and as a result some patients never consult their doctor; the long incubation period and the delay which sometimes occurs before the onset of jaundice means that even among those who do, diagnosis is difficult and sometimes is delayed. Outbreaks consequently are very difficult to control. Passive immunisation with gamma-globulin is very expensive and is restricted to those who are in particular need of protection. There is no form of active immunisation.

No deaths were recorded from infective hepatitis, but the outbreak caused much ill-health.

3. Immunisation and Vaccination.

Protection is available as a matter of routine against smallpox, poliomyelitis, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus and tuberculosis. This may be provided either by family doctors or by the County Council Health Services.

A case of tetanus in an unimmunised child occurred recently in a neighbouring town. Fortunately the child survived. This underlines the need for all persons to be actively immunised against tetanus. Unfortunately in the public mind there is a good deal of confusion between active immunisation and passive immunisation with anti-tetanus serum, which is given after accidents. Passive immunisation gives only very short term protection. If repeated a second time it is always less effective.

4. International Vaccination Certificates.

108 international vaccination certificates were authenticated during the year, 98 smallpox and 10 cholera. These figures refer to the whole of Area No. 10 Devon County.

SECTION D.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

1. Refuse

Refuse is collected weekly and taken to the refuse tip which is a disused quarry situated well away from the town. While measures are taken to ensure that nuisances do not occur at this tip, it must be realised that fully controlled tipping is not carried out in Buckfastleigh.

2. Sewage.

The sewage works were overloaded throughout the year. In the main this was due to the infiltration of water into the sewage system. Roughly equal proportions of this infiltration came from Ashburton and Buckfastleigh.

Reconstruction of sewers and defective manholes at Buckfastleigh and extension to the sludge drying beds at the Kilbury works were approved during the year. This work is at present in hand. Further extensions to the works and further measures to reduce infiltration will be needed.

3. Caravans

There are two licenced caravan sites in the district, one of which is owned by the Council.

4. Factories

This local authority is responsible for enforcing the provisions in the Factories Act 1961 relating to sanitary conveniences and the regulations made in connection with these in all factories. The district council is also responsible for enforcing the provisions of the act dealing with cleanliness, overcrowding, temperature, ventilation and drainage of floors in all factories not using mechanical power.

Visits were made to the factories in the area by the Public Health Inspector. 21 of the 29 premises in Buckfastleigh do not use mechanical power. Conditions at all the factories were found to be satisfactory.

Part 8 of the Factories Act 1961 deals with home work and the provisions relating to this are enforced by the district council. One outworker lives in the town.

5. Swimming Pool.

The swimming pool has a capacity of 59,100 gallons. The water is obtained from a leat running through the town the origin of which is an upland surface source on Dartmoor. The leat however runs through a part of the town and some mixed farming country before arriving at the pool and the water is not filtered before it fills the pool, which is unheated. The water is chlorinated by hand and is changed at least once a week. This method of providing water for the swimming pool cannot be regarded as satisfactory and if the pool is to remain in use, a system whereby water is continuously filtered and chlorinated should be installed as a matter of urgency.

6. Rodent Control.

Under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949, this local authority has an obligation to ensure that, as far as is practicable, the area is kept free from rats or mice. For this purpose frequent inspections are necessary and, in addition, occupiers of land are required to give notice to the local authority whenever it comes to their knowledge that rats or mice are present on the land in substantial numbers. In the case of food premises, the notification must be made to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

A rodent operator works on a part time basis for this authority and regular treatment is carried out on the refuse tips. Test baiting is carried out in the sewerage system, and the operator visits private and business premises in order to destroy pests. No charge is made by the local authority for services carried out at private dwelling houses. This concession is of considerable value as it ensures that householders are not deterred in reporting the presence of pests on account of the financial sum which would be involved in treating their premises.

7. Water.

The South Devon Water Board renamed the South West Devon Water Board took over control of the water supply to the town on 1st October 1963. I am grateful to the officials of the board for their help and information. I would like especially to express my gratitude to Dr. Smales its medical officer.

Upland surface water is collected on Dartmoor and reaches the district by gravity from a large storage reservoir. The water is chlorinated, and hardened by passing over soda ash. The treated water is not **plumbo solvent**.

Bacteriological examinations are carried out at regular intervals at least monthly; no contamination of the water occurred during the year. The quality and quantity of the water was satisfactory throughout the year.

About 2,500 persons living in 871 houses were supplied with water from the public mains. 6 dwellings occupied by 10 persons were supplied with water from the public mains by standpipes. 6 dwellings had their own private water supply.

The fluoride content of the water supply was less than 0.1 p.p.m.

following is a table showing the meat inspected and the quantity consumed

Total	Pigs	Sheep & Lambs	Cattle	Goats etc.	
216	1	278	8	248	No. killed
278	11	268	8	278	No. inspected
-	-	-	-	-	No. of entire carcasses consumed
7	-	-	-	7	No. carcasses of which some part was consumed

SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

1. Food Premises

There were 43 food premises operating in the district during the year and this figure includes 10 cafes, hotels and restaurants and 33 retail food shops. It was not possible to visit every one of these premises but random visits were made throughout the year.

2. Food Hygiene

All food handlers have an obligation to be acquainted with the requirements of the Food Hygiene Regulations. Unfortunately minor breaches of these regulations are only too common.

3. Unsound Food

The following quantities of unsound food were surrendered or condemned during the year.

Cooked meat	196 lbs.
Corned beef	30 lbs.
Pork luncheon meat	6 lbs.
Minced beef loaf	4 lbs.
Ox tongue	6 lbs.
Pork	2 lbs.
Tuna fish	7 ozs.

All this food was canned.

4. Meat Inspection

On the 1st October 1963 regulations requiring 100% inspection of meat came into operation. The regulations require provision to be made for the inspection of meat during the absence of leave of those usually responsible for it.

Two slaughterhouses were open in the district during the year. The following is a table showing the meat inspected and the quantity condemned.

	Steers etc.	Calves.	Sheep & Lambs.	Pigs.	Total
No. killed	248	8	658	1	916
No. inspected	238	8	608	11	855
No. of entire carcasses condemned	-	-	-	-	-
No. carcasses of which some part was condemned	7	-	-	-	7

SECTION F.

HOUSING

1. General

Of the 884 inhabited houses in the district 331 were owned by the council.

2. Housing Survey

During 1963 an outside public health inspector made a systematic inspection of the houses in the town. His first recommendations were received in May 1963. The houses which he found unfit were reinspected in detail by your medical officer and the public health inspector in June and July 1963. 12 individual representations of unfitness were made to the council in July following these inspections. Seven closing orders and five demolition orders were made. The closing orders and one demolition order were not contested. The remaining demolition orders were subject to an appeal which was heard in the County Court in 1964 and which was decided in favour of the council; the orders were confirmed. One house, the property of the council, was not relet after it had fallen vacant. This house, No. 13 New Buildings is part of some of a block of old property accepted by the council some years ago as a gift. These houses are old fashioned and cramped and should not be reoccupied when they fall vacant.

3. Housing improvement grants

Improvement grants were approved in respect of 9 properties in the town.

SECTION G.
GENERAL HEALTH

1. Housing

I was very glad to inherit the arrangements for a comprehensive housing survey and have had much pleasure in dealing with the problems raised by it. Many of the dwellings in the town are at the end of their useful life. The provision of satisfactory housing is the most important public health problem now facing the town, and housing questions are likely to take up much of your medical officer's time in the future.

2. Fluoride deficiency

It is unlucky that the water supply to the town is very deficient in fluoride. Fortunately the remedy for this is simple and cheap.

	1950	1951	1952	1953	Total
No. of houses	100	100	100	100	400
No. of people	200	200	200	200	800
No. of children	100	100	100	100	400
No. of people under 15	100	100	100	100	400
No. of people over 15	100	100	100	100	400

APPENDIX A.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

IN RESPECT OF THE YEAR 1963 FOR THE

URBAN DISTRICT OF BUCKFASTLEIGH IN

THE COUNTY OF DEVON

prescribed Particulars on the Administration
of the Factories Act, 1961.

PART 1 OF THE ACT

1. Inspection for purposes of provisions as to health.

Premises	Number on register.	Number of		Occupiers Prosecuted.
		Inspections	Written notices	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Factories in which sections 1,2,3,4, & 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	2	4	-	-
Factories not included in (1) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority	21	42	-	-
Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority (including out-workers premises).	6	12	-	-
Total	29	58	-	-

PART VIII OF THE ACT

Outwork

(Sections 133 and 134)

Nature of Work	Section 133			Section 134		
	No. of Outworkers in August list required by Section 133 (1)(c)	No. of cases of default in sending list to the Council	No. of prosecutions for failure to supply lists	No. of instances of work in unwholesome premises	Notices Served	Prosecutions.
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Wearing Apparel (making)	1	-	-	-	-	-

