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**BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON.**



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**OF THE**

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.**

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**1906.**

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## To the Okehampton Town Council.

### Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1906.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of submitting my Nineteenth Annual Report on the health of the District under your control.

The Borough of Okehampton is situated on the Northern border of Dartmoor, at an elevation of about 600 feet above sea level. The main portion of the town is placed between the East and West Okement streams, which, rising on Dartmoor, pass northward to join the Torridge. The area of the Borough is 502 acres.

#### VITAL STATISTICS.

At the census of 1901 the population was returned as 2568. Since that time however, the population has undoubtedly increased, and I estimate it to the middle of 1906 as 2900. In addition to the above, which we may call the fixed population, there is, during the summer months, a large influx of visitors.

During recent years many houses have been erected just outside the bounds of the Borough. These houses, although under a different Sanitary Authority, receive their water supply from the Borough mains and drain into the Borough sewers. It has been proposed to obtain powers to enlarge the Borough so as to include these houses. There is no doubt that it would be a great gain to do so.

**Occupation.**—The inhabitants are employed very much as is usual in a small, progressive market town. Extensive quarrying by the London and South Western Railway at Meldon has led to a large number of the men seeking homes and lodgings in the town.

**Births.**—The births of 29 males and 31 females were registered during 1906, giving a rate of 20.6 per 1000. This rate is below the average of the previous ten years.

**Deaths.**—In the Borough there were 42 deaths (20 males and 22 females.) This number really includes deaths of outsiders who came into the town suffering from fatal disease. The death rate for 1906 is 14.4 per 1000.

In addition to the above, 7 deaths (6 males and 1 female) occurred in the Workhouse, but all came from the country district.

**Ages at Death.**—There were 6 deaths of infants under 1 year of age, giving an infantile death rate of 100 per 1000 births. This rate is below the previous 10 year average.

Over 65 years of age there were 15 deaths, corresponding to over 35 per cent. of the total.

**Causes of Death.**—As was the case in 1905, no death was due to *Zymotic Disease*.

*Heart Disease.*—There were 7 deaths due to heart disease, mainly of persons over 60 years of age.

*Pulmonary Consumption.*—6 deaths were caused by this disease,—a number larger than in any previous year of which I have the record. I think the excess may be looked upon as one of the accidental up-strokes so frequently met with in the vital statistics of small populations.

*Bronchitis* caused 4 deaths,—all at the extremes of life.

*Cancer.*—There were 3 deaths due to this disease.

*Accident.*—2 deaths were due to accident, one caused by drowning, and the other by a fall causing fracture of the skull.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

The incidence of Infectious Disease during the year was a very low one,—in fact the lowest since notification has been in force. The following is the list:—

Scarlet Fever	...	2
Erysipelas	...	3

In addition to the above, a few cases of Chicken Pox and Mumps came under notice in the latter part of the year.

*Scarlet Fever.*—Both of the cases were notified in the first quarter of the year. They were of a mild type. After recovery the houses were disinfected.

It is satisfactory to note that for the past seven years no notification of a case of Diphtheria or Enteric Fever has been received.

No case of Infectious Disease was reported from the Artillery Camp. Such cases need not be notified, but seeing the constant communication that takes place between the camp and the town, I always arrange with the Camp Medical Officer to report any such.

The following is a list of the notifications received since the Act was adopted in 1891.

Year.	Scarlet Fever.	Enteric Fever.	Diphtheria.	Erysipelas.
1891	21	2	3	3
1892	15	0	1	7
1893	8	0	0	7
1894	6	1	0	2
1895	4	0	0	3
1896	3	2	0	3
1897	0	2	0	4
1898	3	0	6	3
1899	13	1	3	3
1900	3	0	0	2
1901	5	0	0	2
1902	5	0	0	1
1903	8	0	0	1
1904	23	0	0	3
1905	16	0	0	4
1906	2	0	0	3

In examining the above table it must be remembered that there has been a steady increase in the number of inhabitants, viz :—from 1879 in the year 1891, up to 2900 in 1906.

## REMARKS OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

Inspections have been made from time to time during the year, either with the Sanitary Inspector or by myself. These inspections are made independently of any complaint being received.

**House Accommodation.**—Although during recent years considerable building has been going on, there is still room for further developments. The cottages erected are of good construction, with ample air space, and generally provided with gardens, but the rents demanded necessitate in many instances either the taking in of lodgers or two families occupying one house. Plans of the buildings are submitted and the bye-laws are enforced. A few of the houses of old Okehampton still remain, and in one or two of the courts the cottages do not admit of that through ventilation which is so essential. The paving in these courts is of rough cobble.

No action has been taken under the Housing of the Working Classes Act.

**Sewerage and Drainage.**—The town is well sewered with socket pipe, well ventilated and provided with *Field's* automatic flushing tanks at the higher ends of the system. There is still some storm water which enters the sewers that might with advantage be kept out, as it only leads to difficulty at the outfall, besides causing a silting up of certain parts of the system.

The mains converge to a trunk sewer which is carried to a meadow one mile north of the town, where the sewage is dealt with by broad irrigation, the work being attended to by the Council's employees. There is no doubt that the amount of land now available is insufficient for the purpose, for not only has the Borough grown considerably of recent years, but houses outside the Borough have been connected. At times unpurified sewage has found its way into the stream during the past year.

There are two solutions of the matter under discussion; (1) the sewer should be extended beyond Brightley, where land on Hill Bottoms could probably be obtained—far from houses and from the public highway; (2) land adjoining the present field could be rented, and the amount of liquid at the outfall materially diminished by cutting off as much storm water as possible. A double row of Scotch firs planted on the roadside of the irrigation area would also prove very beneficial.

There is no doubt, however, that the present condition of affairs calls for energetic action on the part of the Town Council.

**House Drains.**—These are, on the whole, satisfactory, but cases of bad workmanship are still met with and remedied.

**Cesspool.**—There is only one cesspool in the Borough, and that belongs to an outlying house at a distance of nearly half-a-mile from a sewer.

**Excrement Disposal.**—A few of the old cottages are still supplied with earth closets, but the bulk of the houses have w.c.'s. The contents of the earth closets are utilised on the gardens, and rarely give rise to complaints.

**Removal of House Refuse.**—This has been carried out as in previous years. Refuse is removed daily in some parts of the town, and in all bi-weekly. As mentioned in previous reports, there is room for considerable improvement in this respect; rows of pails filled with refuse in front of doors conduce neither to the salubrity nor to the appearance of a street. I can endorse the statement of the Surveyor “that the only remedy is for the Council to employ an additional man and a horse specially for this work.” Some good would be done if each householder destroyed on the kitchen fire, the last thing at night, some at least of the waste. I have before pointed out the advantage of proper refuse bins, provided with covers and made of galvanised iron.

**Refuse Depot.**—This question still remains unsatisfactory, but a committee has been formed to try and secure a site. This should be far removed from houses and the public highway.

**Water Supply.**—Until a few years ago the water supply was derived from certain springs on Dartmoor, augmented by subsoil drains. The water yielded by the springs was of excellent quality and colourless, but the subsoil pipes after heavy rain conveyed a water containing peaty matter. The water was conveyed to a covered in and protected reservoir, whence it was gravitated to the town.

As the town grew the supply was found inadequate, and after an only partially successful effort to increase it by carrying trenches along the hillside, it was determined to go to one of the small streams (the Redaven), and by means of a dam impound the water. This was done, and the water conveyed by iron pipes to covered in and enclosed filter beds. After filtration the water is carried to the reservoir, where it augments the old supply.

The amount was found ample, even during the prolonged drought of the past summer. Its quality is excellent during the greater part of the year. After heavy rainfalls succeeding a period of drought, the water becomes of a brownish colour, due to peaty matter. Some of this discolouration is undoubtedly due to the unfiltered water yielded by the old subsoil pipes, although some is caused by the too rapid filtration of the new supply. I think the former, which have now been down a great many years, should be thoroughly examined, and those which drain peaty ground removed. As regards the Redaven, it has been proposed to cut out the tributary streams which yield the peaty matter in greatest quantity.

The subject of the action of peaty waters on lead has been discussed in previous reports.

For the purpose of washing the sand used for filtration on changing the beds, it would be advisable to fix a hydrant in the enclosure. Time would be saved and the work more satisfactorily performed.

**Lodging Houses.**—There is no common lodging house in the Borough.

**Slaughter Houses.**—These are periodically inspected. Structurally they may be classed as generally fair, but not up to the standard of the bye laws. As a rule they are kept clean and regularly lime-washed, but one caused some bother during the year.

**Bake Houses.**—These have been satisfactorily kept during the year. There are no under-ground bakeries.

**Markets.**—In addition to inspection of meat in the slaughter houses, visits are made to the market from time to time, and the food offered for sale examined.

**Schools.**—The two elementary schools are visited, and the sanitary arrangements inspected. Both are provided with automatically flushed trough closets, which work well.

The public water supply is laid on at both schools.

**Dairies and Cowsheds.**—Although most of the dairies in the Borough are in a fair sanitary condition, the cowsheds, with two or three exceptions, are far from satisfactory. The subject has been discussed in previous reports. The regulations have been duly advertised, and notices sent to the cow keepers, so we are now, I hope, within a measurable distance of improvements in this direction.

**Factories and Workshops.**—These are inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and myself. The bulk of the workshops consist of dress-makers' and tailors' rooms, which are generally well lighted and ventilated. No case of overcrowding has been met with during the year.

The sanitary accommodation at one of the larger works is defective. A notice will be given to rectify the defect.

I am not aware of any out workers in the Borough.

**Infectious Disease.**—Cases of infectious disease are visited immediately after notification, and measures taken to prevent the spread. Disinfectants are supplied by the Authority where it is deemed necessary on account of the position of the family. On recovery the infected rooms and clothing are disinfected. Sulphurous acid gas is the usual agent, but formalin vapor and a chlorinated lime spray have occasionally been used. I have, however, found the sulphurous acid very reliable.

After death from consumption, or removal of a consumptive case, the house is disinfected.

I have to thank the Town Clerk and Borough Surveyor for much help during the year.

Appended are the various tables dealing with the vital statistics, etc., and a table of the rainfall kindly supplied by General Holley.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

**EDWARD H. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H., &c.,**

Med. Officer of Health.

OKEHAMPTON,

January 19th, 1907.



## RAINFALL FOR 1906.

Taken by Major-General E. H. HOLLEY, at Oaklands.

Diameter of funnel ... .. 5 inches.  
 Height of top above ground ... 1 foot.  
 Height above sea level ... 500 feet.

MONTH.	Total Depth.	Greatest fall in 24 hours.		No. of days with .01 or more recorded
	INCHES.	INCHES.	DATE.	
JANUARY ...	7.72	.83	12th	23
FEBRUARY ...	5.43	1.00	16th	23
MARCH ...	2.79	.58	8th	12
APRIL ...	1.67	.57	29th	10
MAY ...	2.42	.40	26th	17
JUNE ...	1.44	.80	23rd	8
JULY ...	1.27	.37	18th	10
AUGUST ...	2.74	.75	14th	12
SEPTEMBER	1.35	.62	14th	5
OCTOBER ...	6.19	1.41	1st	24
NOVEMBER ...	4.55	.70	8th	18
DECEMBER ...	4.44	.67	25th	17

Total Rainfall ... .. 42.01 inches.  
 Day of greatest fall (1.41 inches) Oct. 1st.  
 Days on which .01 or more rain fell, 179.

### Vital Statistics of Whole District during 1906 and previous Years.

Name of District ... Okehampton Urban.

Year	Population estimated to middle of each Year.	Births.		Total Deaths registered in the District.			Deaths of Non-residents registered in Public Institutions in the District.	Deaths of Residents in Public Institutions beyond the District.	Net Deaths at all ages belonging to the District.			
		Number	Rate	Under 1 Year of Age.		At all Ages.			Number	Rate		
				Number	Rate per 1000 Births registered	Number					Rate	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1896	2300	77	33.4	9	116.8	35	15.2	4	3	0	32	13.9
1897	2350	53	22.5	5	94.3	31	13.1	4	4	0	27	11.4
1898	2400	73	30.4	4	54.9	32	14.1	5	4	0	29	12.0
1899	2450	68	27.7	11	161.7	55	22.4	20	17	0	38	15.5
1900	2500	63	25.2	6	95.2	39	15.6	6	5	0	34	13.6
1901	2580	63	24.4	8	127.0	39	15.1	7	5	0	34	13.1
1902	2600	73	28.8	10	136.9	41	15.7	11	7	0	34	13.0
1903	2600	54	20.7	2	37.0	21	8.0	5	5	0	16	6.1
1904	2660	67	25.1	9	134.3	35	13.1	7	6	1	30	11.2
1905	2660	55	20.6	11	200.0	47	17.6	10	7	1	41	15.3
Averages for years 1896-1905	2510	64	25.8	7.5	115.8	37.5	14.9	7.9	6.3	.2	31	12.5
1906	2900	60	20.6	6	100	49	16.9	7	7	0	42	14.4

Area of District in Acres } 502.  
 (exclusive of area covered by water) ... }  
 Total population at all ages ... } 2568  
 Number of inhabited houses ... } 524  
 Average number of persons per house ... } 4.9  
 At Census of 1901.

Institutions within the District receiving sick and infirm persons from outside the District—Union Workhouse.

### Cases of Infectious Disease notified during the Year 1906.

Name of District ... Okehampton Urban.

Notifiable Disease.	Cases notified in whole District.			
	At all Ages.	At Ages—Years.		
		1 to 5.	25 to 65.	65 and upwards
Erysipelas ...	3		2	1
Scarlet Fever ...	2	1	1	
Totals ...	5	1	3	1

### Causes of, and Ages at, Death during Year 1906.

Name of District ... Okehampton Borough.

Cause of Death	Deaths at the subjoined ages of Residents, whether occurring in or beyond the District.							Total Deaths whether of Residents or Non-Residents in Public Institutions in the District
	All Ages.	Under 1 Year	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Phthisis (Pulmonary Tuberculosis)	6			1	1	3	1	
Cancer (malignant disease)	3					2	1	
Bronchitis ...	4	1					3	
Pneumonia ...	1		1					
Premature birth	2	2						
Heart diseases	7					4	3	
Accidents ...	2				1	1		
All other causes	17	3	3	1				7
All causes ...	42	6	4	2	2	13	15	7

## INFANTILE MORTALITY DURING THE YEAR 1906.

Deaths from stated Causes in Weeks and Months under One Year of Age.

CAUSE OF DEATH.		Under 1 Wk.	1-2 Weeks.	Total under 1 Month.	1-2 Months.	2-3 Months.	5-6 Months.	Total deaths under 1 Year.
All Causes	{ Certified ... ..	2	1	3	1	1	1	6
	{ Uncertified ... ..							
i. Wasting Diseases	{ Premature Birth ... ..	2		2				2
	{ Congenital Defects		1	1				1
	{ Atrophy, Debility, Marasmus ... ..				1	1		2
ii. Other Causes	Convulsions ... ..						1	1
		2	1	3	1	1	1	6

District of Okehampton Borough. Population (estimated to middle of 1906) 2900.  
 Births in the year—legitimate 53. Deaths in the year—legitimate infants 6.  
 „ „ illegitimate 7. „ „ illegitimate „ 0.  
 Deaths from all Causes at all Ages 42.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health for the Year 1906, for the Borough of Okehampton, on the administration of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1901, in connection with

### Factories, Workshops, Laundries, Workplaces and Homework.

#### 1. INSPECTION.

Including Inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors or Inspectors of Nuisances.

Premises.	Number of Inspections.
FACTORIES ... .. (Including Factory Laundries).	7
WORKSHOPS ... .. (Including Workshop Laundries).	36
Total ... ..	43

#### 2. DEFECTS FOUND.

Sanitary Accommodation—unsuitable or defective ... .. 1.

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