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BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

—  
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH  
LIBRARY  
Medical Officer of Health

FOR THE

YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1953



BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

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**ANNUAL REPORT**

OF THE

**MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH**

FOR THE

Year ended 31st December, 1953

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**PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF :**

*Medical Officer of Health :*

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D., D.P.H.

*Borough Engineer and Sanitary Inspector :*

R. A. BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

*Assistant to Sanitary Inspector :*

E. FURSE



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Mr. Mayor, Aldermen, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ended 31st December, 1953, in accordance with the instructions of the Ministry of Health.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year and the weekly sick returns remained at a low average.

The population of the Borough, according to the Registrar General's return, fell by some 39 persons, and the birth rate was below the average for England and Wales.

The number of deaths registered in the town was 112 and is several times the average. This figure is entirely due to an order which prescribed deaths occurring at the Castle Hospital to be recorded locally. Fortunately this order has now been revoked and the rational method of transferring deaths restarted. The death rate of 29.2 for this year can be entirely disregarded.

The vital statistics are set out in the following table.

## SECTION A

### GENERAL STATISTICS

Area (statute acres) ... ..	786
Population—1931 Census ... ..	3,519
Population—1951 Census ... ..	3,897
Estimated Home Population—Mid 1953 ... ..	3,840
Number of Inhabited Houses ... ..	1,154
Rateable Value ... ..	£26,306
Product of Penny Rate ... ..	£104
Loan Debt ... ..	£103,576

### VITAL STATISTICS

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Live Births ... ..	25	21	46
Legitimate ... ..	25	20	
Illegitimate ... ..	—	1	

		<i>England &amp; Wales</i>
Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population ... ..	12.0	15.5
Corrected Birth Rate ... ..	11.8	
Still Births ... ..	4	
Still Birth Rate per 1,000 live and still births ... ..	80.0	22.4

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Deaths ... ..	64	48	112
Crude Death Rate per 1,000 population ... ..	29.2	11.4	
Corrected Death Rate ... ..	23.4		
Deaths from Maternal Causes ... ..	Nil		
Maternal Mortality ... ..	—	0.76	
Deaths of Infants under 1 year ... ..	1		
Infant Mortality ... ..	21.7	26.8	

Year	Population	Birth Rate	Death Rate
1946	3,925	24.5	13.2
1947	3,952	23.0	15.5
1948	4,090	16.9	15.4
1949	4,020	15.4	16.4
1950	4,040	16.3	14.1
1951	3,929	12.7	15.3
1952	3,879	12.4	12.6
1953	3,840	12.0	29.2

The chief causes of death were as follows :—

*Infectious Causes :*

Influenza	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
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*General Causes :*

Heart Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	36
Cerebral Vascular Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	26
Cancer	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Coronary Disease	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	4
Disease of the Prostate	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Leukaemia	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Accidental	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Other Causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	8

*Infants under 1 year :*

Congenital Debility	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
---------------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	---

TOTAL ... 112

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

Age at Death	Male	Female
Infants under 1 year	—	1
1-5 years	—	—
5-15 years	—	—
15-25 years	1	—
25-35 years	—	—
35-45 years	1	1
45-55 years	3	—
55-65 years	9	1
65-75 years	18	16
75 & over	32	29
TOTALS :	64	48

## SECTION B

### GENERAL PROVISION OF HEALTH SERVICES

There was no change in the provision of health services during the year, but it is still felt that various services at present administered from far-away Exeter could be more efficiently attended to on a decentralised basis. As an example of this is the Ambulance Service which on a decentralised basis run by the local St. John Brigade and Association a most efficient 24 hour a day service obtains.

#### NATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT, 1948

It was necessary in two cases to invoke Section 47 of the National Assistance Act, 1948, as amended, in order to get proper care and attention for one old man living on his own in insanitary conditions, and similarly for an elderly woman.

## SECTION C

### SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Mr. Brunskill has submitted the following report on the sanitary circumstances of the Borough for the year :—

#### WATER SUPPLY

Supplies at the intakes have been quite adequate throughout the year.

**RAINFALL :** Rainfall records are taken at two points on the watershed and at the Filter Station. Returns are sent monthly to the Air Ministry Meteorological Offices. The 1953 figures were lower than the previous two years and were about average. Readings are taken monthly at Cranmere and Newbridge and daily at the Filter Station.

	1953	1952	1951	1950	1949
Cranmere ... ..	65.65	77.65	92.18	91.00	66.50
Newbridge ... ..	54.08	72.60	79.00	79.10	61.95
Filter Station ... ..	41.48	58.24	65.00	62.13	44.40
Dry Days (No Rain)	187	152	128	144	176

The total rainfall was the lowest since records have been taken in the past 24 years. The driest months were January, March and February, and the wettest September, October, April and July, in those orders. There were long dry spells of ten days average in March, May and October. On five days there were more than 1" falls.

**FILTRATION AND TREATMENT :** The plant has been in continuous operation throughout the year. Minor intermittent faults were remedied by the attendant is daily attendance. Walls and concrete paths adjoining the filter station sludge beds were rebuilt, and the beds were cleared and overhauled.

The treated water is clear, soft, colourless and of excellent taste. It is particularly pleasant for both personal use and domestic washing. Analyses indicate it to be of a satisfactory standard of purity both bacteriologically and chemically. Six samples were taken for chemical and nine for bacteriological analysis, of the latter seven passed Class I and two Class II of the Ministry of Health Classification. pH values have been generally maintained at 7.0.

**DISTRIBUTION :** Mains were regularly flushed and leak inspections continuously carried out. Leaks were found and repaired on 26 Corporation service pipes, 4 Corporation mains of which 3 were completely fractured, and 29 consumer services. Considerable maintenance work in clearing service pipes, mainly by force pump, was again carried out, 35 services being treated in this way.

In the Klondyke H.L. area, work of scraping and clearing mains was completed and a greatly improved supply resulted.



In High Street H.L., mains from Prospect to Bright View were opened up, scraped and cleared. This work was followed by an extension of the 3" mains, including fire hydrant, to South Church Lane, which was in progress at the end of the year. Additional mains were also laid at Savile Mead, at the rear of houses in Simmons Way and Ashley Road.

At Uplands, Parklands, a new pressure gauge box with four gauges covering all H.L. mains in this area has been fixed.

Small temporary emergency supplies, transported by tank waggon, were provided on request for consumers in the adjoining Rural District.

New services and supply pipes are now mainly being laid in copper tube, and stopcocks are fitted direct on the mains to obviate cutting off main supplies during repairs. New services have been provided for two existing properties and two new private houses.

On behalf of the Devon County Fire Service a hydrant conversion programme was put in hand and was in progress at the end of the year.

#### DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily with no serious defects. Further repairs were carried out on the East and West rivers sewers after the storms of August, 1952.

In New Road, near Prospect Steps, and in High Street, lengths of sewer were found to be crushed and in each case the defective pipes were taken out and replaced by new pipes.

Additional labour was again provided for the farmer for clearing and spreading sludge. The irrigation channels were partially cleared. Effluent standards have been well maintained and no complaints as to river pollution have been received.

#### RIVERS AND STREAMS

The East and West Ockment rivers are self cleansing and very clean. Solid rubbish is periodically removed. On the East Ockment river the weir at East Bridge, damaged by the floods of August, 1952, was repaired and rebuilt.

#### SWIMMING POOL

The swimming pool and paddling pool, both of which are supplied by continuous running water, have been well maintained and conducted. The pools are cleaned periodically during the season and lightly chlorinated.

#### SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE AREA

The following visits were carried out by your Inspector during the year :—

Houses	...	...	...	...	...	34
Houses <i>re</i> housing	...	...	...	...	...	71
Drainage	...	...	...	...	...	24
Water Closets	...	...	...	...	...	11
Sewerage	...	...	...	...	...	28
Water Supply	...	...	...	...	...	53
Rivers	...	...	...	...	...	9
Refuse Disposal	...	...	...	...	...	18
Salvage	...	...	...	...	...	6
Bakehouses	...	...	...	...	...	18
Refuse Disposal Tip	...	...	...	...	...	22
Tents and Vans	...	...	...	...	...	5
Schools	...	...	...	...	...	11
Rodents	...	...	...	...	...	2
Animals	...	...	...	...	...	6
Food and Meat Shops	...	...	...	...	...	122
Offensive Trades	...	...	...	...	...	4
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	...	19
Informal Notices	...	...	...	...	...	30
Remedied	...	...	...	...	...	26

## PUBLIC CLEANSING, REFUSE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL

Refuse collection has been carried out with weekly collections throughout the year. A driver and two men collect the refuse satisfactorily on Thursdays and Fridays each week, with an additional trade collection on Mondays.

Street cleansing is carried out over some areas at the same time as refuse collection. Normal street cleansing is by orderly truck, and streets are also cleansed daily including Saturday afternoons and Sundays.

Refuse disposal is by regulated tipping on the Council's refuse tip where rodent control is carried out by the Council's own Operator.

## SALVAGE

Collection and disposal of salvage was continued weekly from business premises only. Since the start of the salvage campaign Okehampton has sent away enough tightly baled waste paper to fill a goods train of over 70 trucks. The gross receipts since the inception of the Borough Council Salvage Scheme were well over £3,000 in eleven years.

## RODENT CONTROL

In accordance with Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' requirements, rodent control has been in operation throughout the year with a part time Operator. Block control has been carried out where necessary throughout the area to a progressively lessening extent. The incidence of infestation in the area has again continued to decline to desirable limits.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES AND DISINFESTATION

One house was disinfected and fumigated during the year. No cases of infectious diseases had to be dealt with for the sixth year in succession. Disinfestation treatment has not been necessary.

## SMOKE ABATEMENT

Four minor cases of smoke emission were dealt with by informal action.

## FISH FRYING

There are two small fish-frying shops and one larger fish-frying shop and cafe, which have been well conducted. No formal action was necessary.

## OFFENSIVE TRADES

At the two establishments inspections were made.

## FACTORIES ACTS, 1937 and 1948

### 1. Inspections

<i>Premises</i> (i)	<i>Number on Register</i> (ii)	<i>Number of</i>		
		<i>Inspections</i> (iii)	<i>Written Notices</i> (iv)	<i>Occupiers Prosecuted</i> (v)
(i) Factories in which Sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities ...	31	51	2	—
(ii) Factories not included in (i) in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	12	9	—	—
(iii) Other premises in which Section 7 is enforced by the Local Authority ...	8	6	—	—
TOTAL ...	51	66	2	—

2. Cases in which Defects were found

Particulars (i)	Number of cases in which defects were found				Number of cases in which prosecutions were instituted (vi)
	Found (ii)	Remedied (iii)	Referred		
			To H.M. Inspector (iv)	By H.M. Inspector (v)	
Want of Cleanliness ...	—	—	—	—	—
Overcrowding	—	—	—	—	—
Unreasonable Temperature	—	—	—	—	—
Inadequate Ventilation...	—	—	—	—	—
Ineffective drainage of floors ...	—	—	—	—	—
Sanitary Conveniences: (a) Insufficient	—	—	—	—	—
(b) Unsuitable or defective...	2	2	—	—	—
(c) Not separate for sexes	—	—	—	—	—
Other offences	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL ...	2	2	—	—	—

**SECTION D**

**HOUSING**

**REPAIRS :** Individual defective houses were inspected and 6 were rendered fit by informal notice.

**MANAGEMENT, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS :** Normal maintenance repairs of a minor character, in small numbers, were carried out during the year on the pre-war houses at North Road, post-war houses at Savile Mead Estate, temporary bungalows and requisitioned properties. All properties were cleansed, repaired and re-decorated on changes of tenancy.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION :** At the beginning of the year erection of a further 32 houses and flats, all in blocks of four, was in progress at the Savile Mead Housing Estate in accordance with plans prepared by the Borough Architect. The erection is by local Contractors and the houses are all traditional.

At the end of the year 6—2 bedroom houses, 8—3 bedroom houses, 2—4 bedroom houses, and 8—2 bedroom flats, a total of 24 houses and flats, had been completed and occupied. The remaining four houses and four flats were in course of erection at the end of the year.

Three private houses were completed and four were in course of erection at the end of the year.

CLEARANCE AREAS AND INDIVIDUAL UNFIT HOUSES

RETURN FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1953

PART A—CLEARANCE AREAS (Housing Act, 1936)

	Number of dwelling-houses demolished in the period		Number of persons displaced
	Unfit houses	Other houses	
(1) Land coloured "pink" ...	Nil	—	Nil
(2) Land coloured "grey" ...	—	Nil	Nil

PART B.—HOUSES NOT INCLUDED IN CLEARANCE AREAS.

	Number of Persons Displaced	
	Houses	
<b>DEMOLITION AND CLOSING ORDERS:</b>		
(1) <i>Housing Act, 1936</i>		
(a) Houses demolished as a result of formal or informal procedure under Section 11 ...	Nil	Nil
(b) Houses closed in pursuance of an undertaking given by the owners under Section 11, and still in force ...	Nil	Nil
(c) Parts of buildings closed (Section 12) ...	Nil	Nil
(2) <i>Housing Act, 1949</i>		
(a) Closing Orders made under Section 3(1) ...	Nil	Nil
(b) Demolition Orders determined and Closing Orders substituted under Section 3(2) ...	Nil	Nil
(3) <i>Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1953</i>		
Closing Orders made under Section 10(1) ...	Nil	Nil
		<i>Number of Houses</i>
<b>REPAIRS:</b>		
<b>INFORMAL ACTION</b>		
(4) Number of unfit or defective houses rendered fit during the period as a result of informal action by the Local Authority under the Public Health or Housing Acts ...		4
<b>ACTION UNDER STATUTORY POWERS</b>		
(5) <i>Public Health Acts</i>		
Number of houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices ...		
(a) by Owners ...		Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of Owners ...		Nil
(6) <i>Housing Act, 1936</i>		
Number of houses made fit after service of formal notices (Sections 9, 10, 11 and 16) ...		
(a) by Owners ...		Nil
(b) by Local Authority in default of Owners ...		Nil

## SECTION E

### INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD

#### MILK

Sixty-four inspections of cowsheds, dairies and milk shops were made and informal notices were given. The standard of cleanliness continued good and in some cases very good.

The following table shows the number of samples taken during the year and the results obtained :

<i>Grade</i>		<i>Total Samples Taken</i>	<i>Passed</i>	<i>Failed</i>
Non-Designated	...	42	30	12
Tuberculin Tested	...	16	11	5
Accredited	...	2	2	—
TOTALS :		60	43	17

Of all samples taken from 18 producers, 10 had no failures, and similarly from 8 retailers, 3 had no failures during the year.

#### ICE CREAM

Samples of ice cream for bacteriological examination were taken during the year with the following results :

<i>Grade I</i>	<i>Grade II</i>	<i>Grade III</i>	<i>Grade IV</i>	<i>Total Samples Taken</i>
19	8	3	2	32

Of samples taken from 12 different retailers, 10 had no failures.

#### BAKEHOUSES, MEAT AND FOOD SHOPS

These premises have all been well maintained, and improvements have been carried out in a number of them. One meat shop has been transferred to new premises with a very high standard of accommodation. Inspections were made and informal notices were given in four instances.

New Byelaws made under Section 15 of the Food and Drugs Act, 1938, for the proper handling of food sold for human consumption have been in operation since February, 1952.

The number of food premises in the area is as follows :—

Grocers	...	...	...	...	12
Greengrocers	...	...	...	...	7
Confectioners	...	...	...	...	6
Bread and Cakes	...	...	...	...	5
Meat Shops	...	...	...	...	6
Fish shops	...	...	...	...	2
Milk Shops	...	...	...	...	2
Dairies	...	...	...	...	6
Hotels and Bars	...	...	...	...	8
Cafes	...	...	...	...	5

#### FOOD POISONING

No case of food poisoning was notified during the year.

#### MEAT

The Tavistock Urban District Council have authorised the inclusion of the following report and table of meat inspection at their Abattoir from whence you derive your meat :

“ The town abattoir continued to serve not only Tavistock but a large part of the surrounding areas and 13,817 animal carcasses were dealt with during the year, an increase of 462 over the preceding year.

All carcasses were inspected before release to the meat depot and this duty involved 604 visits to the abattoir.

The number of animals inspected and the carcasses, parts or organs condemned are set out in the following table :

CARCASSES INSPECTED AND CONDEMNED

	<i>Cattle, excluding Cows</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep and Lambs</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
Number killed ... (if known)	1962	588	1234	7328	2705
Number inspected	1962	588	1234	7328	2705
All diseases except tuberculosis: Whole carcasses con- demned ... ..	12	32	146	133	21
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned ...	928	280	4	1426	516
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuberculosis ...	47.50%	53.06%	12.12%	21.27%	19.85%
Tuberculosis only: Whole carcasses con- demned ... ..	11	24	3	—	8
Carcasses of which some part or organ was condemned...	86	101	—	—	134
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis ...	4.95%	21.25%	.24%	—	5.25%

OTHER FOODSTUFFS

Foods have been examined and 56 condemnation certificates have been issued covering in nearly all cases foods which have deteriorated owing to defective containers. The total weight of food condemned was 8 cwts. Condemned food is destroyed at the Council's refuse disposal tip.

SAMPLES TAKEN UNDER SECTION 3, FOOD AND DRUGS ACT, 1938

The following samples were taken under the above Act during the year :

Milk } Milk } Milk }	All Genuine	Pork Sausages } Ice Cream }	All Genuine
----------------------------	----------------	--------------------------------	----------------

In addition, 8 samples of milk were subjected to the Gerber Test. Result : Satisfactory.

## SCHOOL MILK

The following samples were taken by the County Inspector :

Tuberculin Tested : *Total*—8. *Passed*—7. *Failed*—1.

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## SECTION F

### PREVALENCE OF AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASE

An epidemic of measles occurred during the summer months but fortunately the visitation was free from untoward complications.

Whooping Cough was prevalent but did not reach epidemic proportions.

Cases notified by doctors and schools are set out in the accompanying tables.

### DIPHTHERIA

No case was notified during the year and immunisation against the disease was proceeded with.

### POLIOMYELITIS

Three cases of this disease were notified. The two schoolboys were typical cases of the disease who did not develop any degree of paralysis. Another younger boy did develop some paralysis. He was a family contact of one of the other boys and developed the disease within the incubation period of family contact.

### TUBERCULOSIS

Three new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year but no deaths were recorded.

At the end of the year 21 cases of tuberculosis remained on the register as follows :—

<i>Pulmonary</i>		<i>Non-Pulmonary</i>	
Males	... 10	Males	... 2
Females	... 7	Females	... 2

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In conclusion I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

*Medical Officer of Health.*

INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED BY MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

Age	Scarlet Fever		Whooping Cough		Measles		Poliomyelitis		Pneumonia		Erysipelas	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
Under 1 year	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-2 years	-	-	2	3	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
3-4 years	-	-	1	1	10	7	1†	-	1	-	-	-
5-9 years	1	1	7	6	13	14	1*	-	-	-	-	-
10-14 years	-	-	-	-	2	1	1*	-	1	-	-	-
15-24 years	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25 and over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2
Age unknown	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTALS :	1	1	12	10	29	26	3	-	2	1	1	2

† Paralytic

\* Non-paralytic







