

[Report 1894] / Medical Officer of Health, Okehampton R.D.C.

Contributors

Okehampton (England). Rural District Council.

Publication/Creation

1894

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/hvcukhpu>

License and attribution

You have permission to make copies of this work under a Creative Commons, Attribution license.

This licence permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See the Legal Code for further information.

Image source should be attributed as specified in the full catalogue record. If no source is given the image should be attributed to Wellcome Collection.



Wellcome Collection
183 Euston Road
London NW1 2BE UK
T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
E library@wellcomecollection.org
<https://wellcomecollection.org>

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

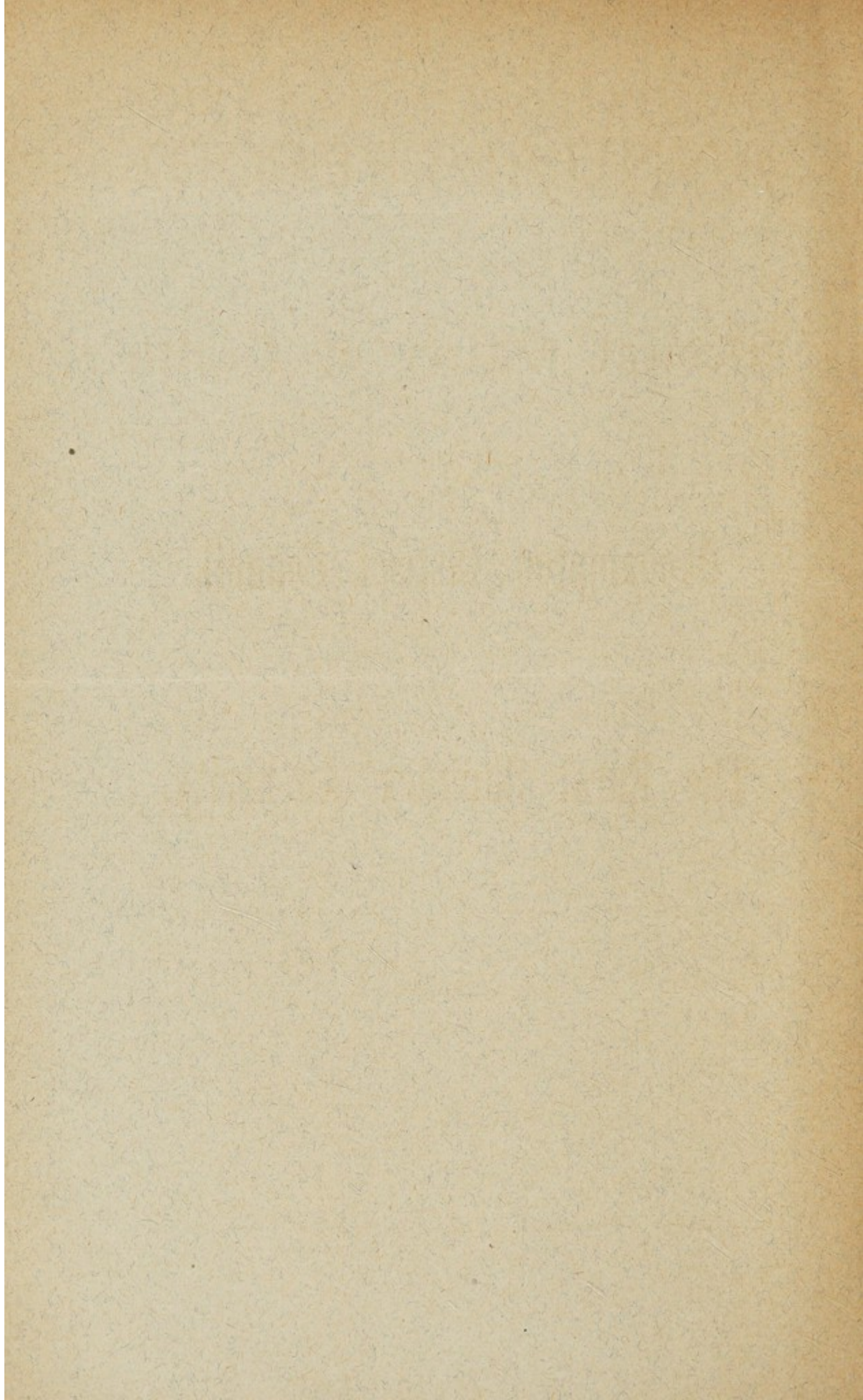
Okehampton District Council,

ACTING AS

The Rural Sanitary Authority.

1 8 9 4 .

Exeter : Printed at the " Daily Western Times " Office.



ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

TO THE

Okehampton District Council,

ACTING AS

The Rural Sanitary Authority.

1894.

ANNUAL REPORT

To the Okehampton District Council,

acting as

The Rural Sanitary Authority.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of Health,

1894.

GENTLEMEN,

I have the honour of presenting to you my Fifth Annual Report dealing with the Sanitary condition of the District during the year, and the means taken for the prevention of disease, as well as enquiries as to its spread. In addition, some remarks will be made as regards the lines on which we may expect future progress as regards the well being of the District under your control.

Area of District—114,556 acres.

Vital Statistics.

In my last Annual Report I pointed out that in dealing with the Vital Statistics of the year it would probably be preferable to take the 1891 Census Returns for our guide, thus assuming that our population remains stationary. I will make the same assumption in dealing with this year's statistics and estimate the population as 14,381.

Births—335 births were registered during the year—171 males and 164 females—giving a birth rate of 23·2 per 1,000. Last year the rate was 26·9 per 1,000 ; but on that occasion the birth rate was higher than usual. As a rule our birth rate does not fluctuate to any great extent.

Natural increase of population, or excess of births over deaths is 107. Last year it was 162, and in 1892 it was 109.

Deaths—228 deaths were registered—110 males and 118 females—giving a rate of 15·8 per 1,000. Last year there were 225 deaths, equal to a rate of 15·6 per 1,000.

Appended is the table giving the birth and death rates of the 5 registration sub-districts.

Sub Districts.	BIRTHS.					DEATHS.				
	Estimated Populat'n 1894.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Rate per 1,000.	Estimated Populat'n 1894.	Males.	Females.	Total.	Rate per 1,000.
Bratton Clovelly	1749	15	21	36	20.0	1749	17	19	36	20.5
Chagford ...	2621	22	33	55	20.9	2621	21	20	41	15.6
Hatherleigh ...	3233	50	38	88	27.2	3233	25	19	44	13.6
North Tawton...	3783	49	40	89	23.5	3783	26	38	64	16.9
Okehampton ...	2995	35	32	67	22.3	2995	21	22	43	14.3

The highest birth rate was in the Hatherleigh sub-district and the lowest in the Bratton Clovelly. Last year the highest birth rate was in North Tawton Sub-District and the lowest in Okehampton.

As regards the death-rate, Bratton Clovelly heads the list. Hatherleigh has the lowest rate, as also was the case last year.

In this, my Fifth Annual Report, I have thought it advisable to give the average annual death rate for each Parish in the Union during those five years. Too much stress must not be put on the figures as showing the well being or otherwise of the various parishes, and, as a matter of fact, my chief reason for tabulating them is as a foundation for future observation. In dealing with such small figures it is necessary to take a long series of years, or deductions from them would be fallacious. An extreme example of this occurs in the list. The smallest Parish, Honeychurch, with a population of only 35 people, shows the highest death rate of all the parishes. In four of the years under notice no deaths occurred in the Parish, but in 1893 there were no fewer than four (making the death rate that year over 114 per 1,000), but a different complexion is put on the matter when we learn that those 4 deaths occurred at the ages of 85, 81, 72 and 64 years.

In addition to the fallacy of comparing small numbers, there are others (*e.g.*, varying age distribution) which would have to be considered.

In comparing the more largely populated Parishes, we have still reason for caution. So far as the 5 years show us, the conditions of healthy life exist to a greater degree in Chagford than in Hatherleigh and North Tawton. This is shown not only by the general death rate, but also by the ages at death. In Chagford 43 per cent. of the deaths were in persons over 65 years of age; in Hatherleigh 38 per cent. of the deaths were in persons over 65, and in North Tawton the proportion was only 24 per cent.

Unfortunately, owing to lack of statistics showing the Parish birth rates, I am not in a position to give the Infantile death rates of these three Parishes.

DEATH RATE of the Parishes estimated on the average of the five years 1890-1894.

	Populat'n.	Death rate per 1,000.		Populat'n.	Death rate per 1,000.
Ashbury ...	69	5.79	Iddesleigh ...	377	16.44
Beaworthy ...	268	20.89	Inwardleigh ...	519	6.85
Belstone ...	181	14.36	Jacobstowe ...	222	11.71
Bondleigh ...	141	18.48	Meeth ...	203	12.80
Bratton Clovelly ...	487	15.60	Monkokehampton ...	191	7.33
Bridestowe ...	586	14.68	North Lew ..	714	17.36
Broadwoodkelly ...	261	14.55	North Tawton ...	1737	21.41
Chagford ...	1460	15.89	Okehampton		
Drewsteignton ...	751	13.04	(Extra Urban) ...	516	12.01
Exbourne ...	355	17.46	Sampford Courtenay	866	14.78
Germansweek ...	211	14.21	South Tawton ...	1264	17.89
Gidleigh ...	129	10.85	Sourton ...	448	18.30
Hatherleigh ...	1437	19.00	Spreyton ...	388	20.10
Highampton ...	284	19.01	Throwleigh ...	281	12.09
Honey Church ...	35	22.85			

In the above list the population set down is that of the 1891 Census, so that the various death rates are probably very nearly correct.

In addition to the high death rate of Honeychurch, with its small population, the low death rate of Inwardleigh parish, with the comparative large population of 519, is worthy of note.

Causes of Death.

Zymotic Diseases.—20 deaths were due to the Chief Zymotic Diseases, giving a rate of 1.3 per 1,000. This is higher than the corresponding rate of last year, .9 per 1,000, but about the average of the last few years.

The following is the list of fatal zymotics :—

Small Pox	...	...	...	...	1
Scarlet Fever	...	...	..	..	6
Enteric Fever	...	...	...	...	1
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	5
Measles	...	..	...	...	1
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	1
Croup	...	...	...	...	2
Diarrhoea	...	...	...	...	2
Erysipelas	...	...	..	...	1

Okehampton had the highest zymotic rate and Hatherleigh the lowest. Scarlet Fever was fatal in three Sub-districts—North Tawton, Chagford, and Okehampton. Whooping Cough in Okehampton and Chagford. The Small Pox case occurred in Chagford Sub-district.

Influenza caused 11 deaths—the same number as last year. Seven of these were in the Hatherleigh Sub-District and four in the Bratton Clovelly.

Pulmonary Consumption caused 21 deaths, as compared with 23 last year. As usual the highest death rate was in the Bratton Sub-district. In Okehampton it was lowest.

Heart Disease.—21 deaths were due to Heart Disease, as compared with 20 last year. Hatherleigh stands lowest on the list.

Bronchitis.—Broncho Pneumonia and Pleurisy caused 42 deaths, as compared with 40 last year. Chagford and North Tawton head the list.

Cancer.—9 deaths were attributed to Cancer—3 each in the Hatherleigh and Chagford Sub-districts ; 2 in the North Tawton ; 1 in the Bratton Clovelly, and none in the Okehampton.

Accidents caused 11 deaths, as compared with 2 last year. Only the Chagford Sub-district was free from this list.

Child-birth caused 4 deaths—one each in all the Sub-districts, except Chagford.

Rheumatic Fever caused 3 deaths—all in the North Tawton Sub-district.

Ages at Death.—96 deaths were in persons over 65 years of age. In the Chagford Sub-District more than one half of the deaths occurred after 65 years of age.

34 deaths were in infants under one year of age, giving a rate of 101.1 per 1,000 births. This rate is much higher than the rate of last year, which was only 54.2 per 1,000, but this low rate was unprecedented so far as I could learn.

Infectious Disease of the Year.

The past year has shown a very marked incidence of Infectious Disease, mainly Scarlet Fever.

Out of 167 notifications received during the year 136 were of Scarlet Fever. In addition to those notified there were probably an equal number of cases that escaped notification, owing to no Medical Man being called in. This, I think, is the main cause of the spread of disease. In a widely scattered district it is difficult to keep under control those cases that are notified ; much more so is it those cases which escape our notice either entirely or only at a late period of the disease. According to the " Notification Act " the parent or guardian is compelled to notify even when no Medical Man is in attendance ; but throughout the year no such notification has reached me. Invariably the same excuse is made by parents, " We thought it was only a cold," or, as an alternative, " We thought it was Measles." There is one thing to be said in the parent's favour, and it is this : Many of the cases are of a very mild type, and beyond fleeting feverish symptoms and a slight rash, there is little to show the character of the disease, until perhaps two or three weeks after, when the child has resumed school work, there is some desquamation about the hands.

Subjoined is the list of Infectious Diseases notified during the year, with the Parishes in which they occurred.

	Scarlet Fever.	Enteric Fever.	Smallpox.	Erysipelas	Diphtheria and Croup.
North Tawton ...	47	5	0	6	4
Sampford Courtenay	13	0	0	1	0
Throwleigh ...	0	0	2	0	0
Drewsteignton ...	13	0	0	0	0
Spreyton ...	10	1	0	1	0
South Tawton ...	23	0	0	2	2
Exbourne ...	2	0	0	1	0
Honeychurch ...	2	0	0	0	0
Bondleigh ...	3	0	0	1	1
North Lew ...	1	0	0	1	0
Hatherleigh...	0	0	0	1	0
Okehampton ...	8	0	0	0	0
Belstone ...	2	0	0	0	0
Chagford ...	3	0	0	0	0
Sourton ...	4	0	0	1	0
Bridestowe ...	3	0	0	1	0
Iddesleigh ...	2	0	0	0	0
Totals ...	136	6	2	16	7

Scarlet Fever.—As was the case last year, the North Tawton Sub-district suffered mainly ; in fact, apart from that area, the disease was almost sporadic, and in many cases could be traced to infection from outside your district.

During the year I have had handbills printed pointing out the precautions to be taken for preventing the spread of the disease. They will probably be found useful, not as a substitute for, but as an adjunct to, the ordinary verbal instructions.

Enteric Fever.—Only two Parishes suffered, viz., North Tawton and Spreyton. The case in the last Parish requires but short notice. The patient was moribund when the doctor was called in, and the history of the case was very indefinite.

In January a case of Interic Fever was notified at Bathe Moor Cottages, some 2½ miles from North Tawton. No history of exposure to infection could be obtained ; but the water supply of the cottages was decidedly bad. On notice, this was rectified by the owner.

In September a case of the disease cropped up in North Tawton Town in a house where there was a case some two years ago. Some fortnight later the medical attendant on the case developed the disease, and six weeks later another case occurred in a house some three or four doors away. About the same time another case was notified in the same street, but had no connection with the previous case. It was a servant girl who had been living away from home and had been exposed to infection at Kingsteignton, where she evidently “ took ” the disease.

All of these cases recovered, and precautions were taken to prevent further spread.

Diphtheria (including Membranous Croup).—Only 7 cases were notified—4 in North Tawton, 2 in South Tawton, and one in Bondleigh.

Of the North Tawton cases, three occurred in January in two adjacent houses, and were undoubtedly due to infection ; the remaining case, also in the same street, did not turn up till November.

One of the cases in South Tawton was associated with Scarlet Fever.

The case at Bondleigh occurred in an isolated farm, where there was a fatal case of the same disease about two years ago. The case this year also terminated fatally. As a result of inspection of the premises the closet was remodelled. The pump water was, on analysis, found to be impure, and the services of a " water finder " were registered by the owner, with the view of providing a better supply. His report is to be acted on.

In none of the Diphtheria cases was there a history of infection from the lower animals.

Small Pox.—The two cases notified in the early part of January were the termination of the outbreak of the disease in Throwleigh Parish at the end of 1893, and which was discussed in my Annual Report of that year. In reviewing the outbreak it is perhaps opportune to emphasise one or two points. Firstly, the protective influence of a recent vaccination or a re-vaccination. When we consider that the cases were treated in their own homes, with healthy persons not only in the same house, but in two or three cases actually sleeping in the same room with the sick, it speaks much for vaccination when we say that, after the disease was known to us, only one person subsequently took the infection, and that was through his own neglect. For a week after exposure to infection, he declined re-vaccination, but by that time the poison had made too far an advance in his system for re-vaccination (which he then underwent) to prevent the disease.

In the second place, the outbreak shows us that although in a thinly populated district the disease can be successfully grappled with on the spot, at the same time it also showed us the many weak points of such a method of dealing with the disease. As a matter of fact, on one occasion the strain was so great as almost to amount to a breakdown.

Seeing how popular your district is becoming as a health resort, surely the time has come when some means of isolating serious infectious disease should be provided !

Measles.—At the end of the year Measles became very prevalent in the Parish of Bratton Clovelly, spreading thence to Beaworthy and Northlew, the adjoining Parishes.

Influenza.—At the end of 1893 and early in 1894 this disease was very prevalent, in fact, I think more widely than in previous epidemics. Lung complications were very common with it ; but nerve affections not so common as in previous years.

School Closing.—The following schools were closed on account of Scarlet Fever :—Whiddon Down, Sticklepath, Langdown, and Drewsteignton.

Measles caused School Closure at Bratton Clovelly, Beaworthy and Northlew.

Rheumatic Fever.—In the Spring and early Summer months a large number of cases of this disease came under notice, in fact, one might almost look upon it as an epidemic. Three deaths were registered from this disease within a few days of each other in the North Tawton Sub-district.

It is worthy of remark, for Rheumatic Fever is by no means so common in your district as it is in the country at large.

Public Work.

HATHERLEIGH.—During the year the Sewerage of this town has been carried on in accordance with the plans of Mr Appleton. The outfall has, however, to be extended for a distance of about 100 yards, as it was properly thought advisable to remove it to a greater distance from the proposed Water Supply. Many of the houses in the town have already been connected with the main sewers, and the work is still going on.

The iron pipes for the New Water Supply have been laid, but the onset of Winter prevented the construction of the Reservoir. In the Spring, however, the work will be proceeded with.

With reference to the proposed source of water supply, I have made three or four analyses of the water during the year, and have found it pretty constant in chemical characters. It has always been pure, and it has practically no action on lead.

NORTH TAWTON.—The Scheme for modifying the drainage of North Tawton still lingers on, but I am informed that the work will be proceeded with as soon as the weather permits.

BRATTON CLOVELLY.—In the Summer complaints were laid that the Public Pump in this Village supplied bad water, worms and other forms of life being constantly pumped. Chemically, the water was found suspicious, and on opening up the well it was found that there was a good deal of soakage from the direction of a neighbouring drain. It was thought advisable to provide a fresh supply. Water was found on the high ground just above the Village, and the Inspector prepared plans for conveying the water to the Village by gravitation. The work is being proceeded with.

BRIDESTOWE.—The water of the Bridhayes again ran very low in the Summer. The Scheme for the Pool Hill Supply was the subject of a Local Enquiry by the Local Government Board Inspector, with the result that, with one or two minor alterations, the plans were sanctioned. It was, however, subsequently thought by some of the inhabitants that an increase of the supply already existent could be obtained at no very great expense, and a Committee of the District Councillors was directed to report on the matter. This Report will, I believe, be presented to the Sanitary Authority at its next meeting, so at present the matter is still *sub judice*.

FORDA, GIDLEIGH.—This Hamlet has been provided with a fresh Water Supply, instead of the Dip Well which formerly did duty.

Summary of Work for the Year.

INSPECTOR'S DEPARTMENT.

Complaints received	...	...	...	16
Notices issued	...	...	...	88
Visits to Lodging-houses	...	..	...	5
Visits to Slaughter-houses	...	...	...	15
Visits to Bakehouses	..	...	...	9
Houses supplied with water	...	...	...	4
New wells sunk	...	..	...	2
Old wells cleaned	...	...	...	4
Bedding and clothing disinfected	...	...	...	14
Houses disinfected	...	..	...	23
Houses repaired and lime washed	...	...	...	28
House drains laid and connected	...	...	...	29
House drains repaired	...	...	...	6
New W.C.'s provided	...	...	...	16
W.C.'s repaired	...	...	...	2
Earth closets provided	...	...	...	26
Privies and ash closets repaired	...	...	...	12
Privies converted	..	...	...	5
Animals removed	...	...	...	8
Manure removed	...	...	...	14
General nuisances abated	...	...	...	29

During the year your Medical Officer of Health has paid 111 visits, nearly all of the Parishes being inspected, and the results made known at your Monthly Meetings.

It has only been found necessary to deal with one house under the Housing of the Working Classes Act. The dilapidated cottage at Bratton Clovelly is still tenanted, and the occupier refuses to quit, although she admits that when it rains there is not a dry corner in the place. It is a pity that nothing can be done in the case.

Water analysis.—17 samples of water were analysed during the year. In the following places the water supply was found to be impure :—Tar Mill, South Tawton, East Haywood, Bondleigh Paze Farm, Sampford Courtenay, Fishleigh, Hatherleigh.

Notices have been sent in each of these cases, and measures are being taken to provide fresh supplies.

Remarks on Future Sanitation.

Water Supplies.—Although most of the larger villages in your District are already, or about to be, supplied with an adequate amount of potable water, yet in some of the smaller places there

is a decided lack of this necessary article for the sanitary well being of the people. The inhabitants of Sourton Village and Romansleigh (South Tawton) have to go a considerable distance for their drinking water.

In several farm-houses and cottages the drinking water also is open to suspicion, being often obtained from shallow dip wells which are liable to pollution. It is, however, satisfactory to note that there is a gradual improvement going on in this direction, for I find from the Inspector's Reports that about 30 fresh water supplies have been obtained during the past 4 years, to say nothing of a large number of cases where existing wells have been cleaned out and protected.

In this place it may not be inopportune to point out that although a well may have provided good water in years past that is no criterion that it will always continue so to do, especially if any leaky drains or soakage from manure exists in near proximity. For a time, it may be for years, the soil is able to purify the water, but then the limit is reached and the water is rendered impure. An example of this was met with during the year at Bratton Clovelly.

Refuse Removal—There is room for much improvement in the removal of refuse matter, manure, &c., from the neighbourhood of dwelling-houses, more especially in the more thickly populated parts of the district.

Houses of the Working Classes—In several parts of the districts the labourers' cottages are in an unsatisfactory state, being inadequate in size, with pebble pitched floors, badly lighted, and often with damp walls. Although several of the worst of these cases have been brought before your notice and dealt with at your monthly meetings, there remains room for much work in this direction. As I pointed out in my Annual Report for 1891, independently of the "Housing of the Working Classes Act," the old Public Health Act of 1875 gives us powers for dealing with many of these old cottages which (though they can hardly be condemned as uninhabitable) are sadly deficient in the characters of healthy dwelling-houses.

Appended to this Report are the usual tables of the births, deaths, and cases of infectious disease occurring during the year; and I cannot close the Report without acknowledging the help I have received from the late Chairman of the Sanitary Committee (A. Guy Whipham, Esq.) and other members of the Board, and my indebtedness to Mr. Hooper, the Sanitary Inspector, for his able help.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

EDWARD H. YOUNG, M.D., D.P.H..

Medical Officer of Health.

Okehampton, January 24th, 1895.

Table of DEATHS during the Year 1894, in the Okehampton Rural Sanitary District, classified according to Diseases, Ages, and Localities.

Registration Sub Districts	MORTALITY FROM ALL CAUSES, AT SUBJOINED AGES.							MORTALITY FROM SUBJOINED CAUSES, DISTINGUISHING DEATHS OF CHILDREN UNDER FIVE YEARS OF AGE.												Total.					
	At all ages.	Under 1 year.						Under 5 upwds	Smallpox.	Scarlatina.	Diphtheria.	Membranous Croup.	Enteric or Typhoid Fever.	Erysipelas.	Measles.	Whooping Cough.	Diarrhoea and Dysentery.	Rheumatic Fever.	Phthisis.		Bronchitis, Pneumonia, and Pleurisy.	Heart Diseases.	Injuries.	All other Diseases.	
		1 year.	1 and under 5.	5 and under 15.	15 and under 25.	25 and under 65.	65 and upwards.																		
BRATON CLOVELLY	36	6	3	0	1	9	17	Under 5	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	5	9
CHAGFORD	41	4	3	1	2	8	23	Under 5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	13	27
HATHERLEIGH	44	6	1	0	2	13	22	Under 5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	4	7
NORTH TAWTON	64	8	11	4	8	15	18	Under 5	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	12	19
OKEHAMPTON	43	11	4	1	1	10	16	Under 5	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	6	—	9	6	—	—	5	15
Totals	228	35	22	6	14	55	96	Under 5	—	4	1	—	—	—	5	2	—	—	—	14	1	—	—	27	57
								5 upwds	1	2	1	1	1	—	—	—	3	22	28	20	10	84	171		

Table of **POPULATION, BIRTHS,** and of **NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS SICKNESS** coming to the knowledge of the **Medical Officer of Health,** during the year 1894, in the **Okehampton Rural Sanitary District ;** classified according to **Diseases, Ages and Localities.**

Registration Sub Districts.	POPULATION AT ALL AGES.		Registered Births.	Aged under 5 or over 5	NEW CASES OF SICKNESS IN EACH LOCALITY COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.				
	Census 1891.	Estimated to middle of 1894.			Smallpox.	Scarlatina.	Diphtheria.	Enteric or Typhoid Fever	Erysipelas.
BRATTON CLOVELLY	1749	1749	36	Under 5	—	—	—	—	—
				5 upwds	—	1	—	—	1
CHAGFORD	2621	2621	55	Under 5	—	4	—	—	—
				5 upwds	2	12	—	—	—
HATHERLEIGH	3233	3233	88	Under 5	—	—	—	—	—
				5 upwds	—	2	—	—	1
NORTH TAWTON	3783	3738	89	Under 5	—	17	2	—	—
				5 upwds	—	60	3	6	10
OKEHAMPTON	2995	2995	67	Under 5	—	10	2	—	—
				5 upwds	—	30	—	—	4
Totals.....	14381	14831	335	Under 5	—	31	4	—	—
				5 upwds	2	105	3	6	16

