

[Report 1946] / Medical Officer of Health, Okehampton R.D.C.

Contributors

Okehampton (England). Rural District Council.

Publication/Creation

1946

Persistent URL

<https://wellcomecollection.org/works/gg6q7r43>

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>

LIBRARY



OSKHAMPTON RURAL DISTRICT

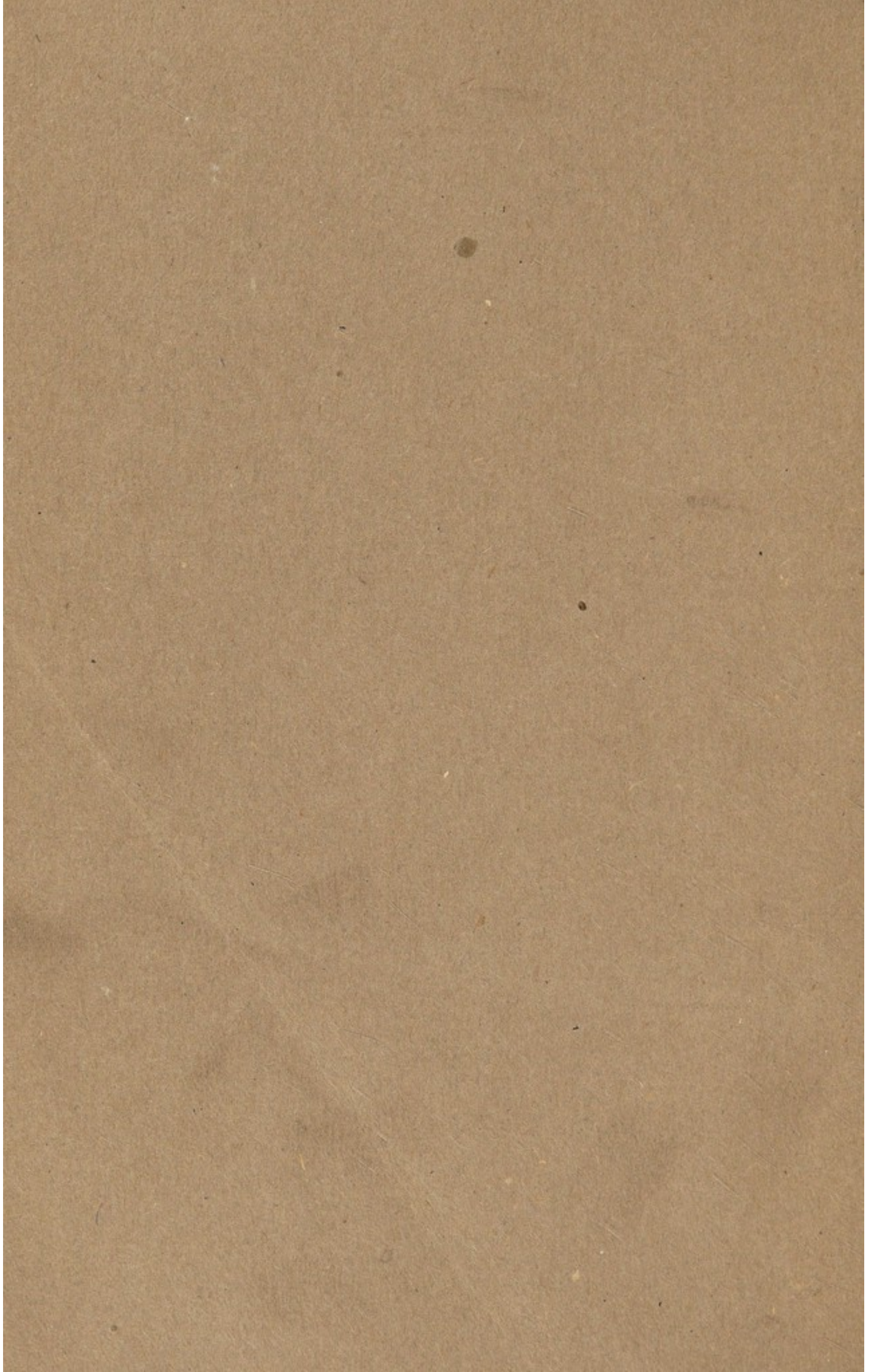
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR

Year ending 31st December, 1946



PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF :

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH :

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D. (State Medicine), Ch.B., D.P.H.

SENIOR SANITARY INSPECTOR :

L. R. CHAPMAN, Cert. R.S.I., Cert. Meat and Foods.

ASSISTANT SANITARY INSPECTOR :

J. F. HAYHURST, Cert. R.S.I., Cert. Meat and Foods.

ASSISTANT IN THE DEPARTMENT :

W. G. COOK.

CLERK IN THE DEPARTMENT :

R. JONES.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year 1946.

The general health of the district remained good throughout the year, and apart from an outbreak of measles and chicken pox, the infectious conditions remained at a very low level.

The births were greater than in the previous year and considerably above the ten year average of the pre-war period. The deaths remained fairly constant, and as can be seen from the accompanying table, the majority of people live to a ripe age.

Your district is fortunate in possessing very great natural beauty with a great diversity of geographic conditions: varying from the undulating area of the northern parishes to the highlands of the south, with rapidly moving streams and the moorland scenery of Dartmoor; all of which is a great attraction to visitors seeking recuperation from the cities' toil.

It may not be inappropriate to discuss briefly the general set up of the Public Health administration in a County District which, in the opinion of your Medical Officer, has little to commend it.

The formation of the areas known as Rural Districts dates back roughly one hundred years, when the great administrators of that time hit upon the expedient of a union of Parishes in an endeavour to solve the Pauper problem. In this decision they were doubtless influenced by the fact that, at that time, as in the present, the social unit was the parish. The size of these unions was also doubtless influenced by the means of communication in those days. This limiting factor no longer remains.

After a lapse of some years, the poor law authorities had other administrative functions placed upon them, the most important of which was the sanitary and health work, and, are still responsible for this most important branch of environmental hygiene.

Much later, the County Councils were formed, and have gradually been entrusted with medical services. At the present time, the majority of the personal medical services are administered by the County Council from a central point, and the environmental services and some of the personal ones are still a local responsibility. There is no co-ordination as the services run parallel, and, as a result, reduplication and inefficiency result.

For the great spending departments such as Education, Highways, etc., it is doubtless necessary on economic grounds, to spread the burden over as wide an area as possible, but this argument does not hold with Public Health. Here it is not vast sums of money which are needed, but an intimate and personal knowledge of the people and their surroundings.

The smaller the unit within reason, the better the requirement is fulfilled. The present County Districts' units are probably too small; as was remarked above, they were found a hundred years ago as convenient units for a specific purpose, and have out-grown the purpose for which they were created.

The time appears to be ripe for the whole ambit of Public Health administration to be brought under one administrative body locally, and, this could best be done by a union on a federal but compendious basis of several of the present districts. By this means, there would be complete co-ordination of all the factors making for health, to the betterment of the inhabitants of all ages.

SECTION A

GENERAL STATISTICS

AREA (in acres)	...	...	...	132,514
POPULATION—1931 Census	...	...	...	13,020
POPULATION—Mid 1946	...	...	...	12,320
NUMBER OF INHABITED HOUSES	...	...	...	4,212
RATEABLE VALUE	...	...	...	£53,006
PRODUCT OF PENNY RATE	...	...	...	£220 16 od.
LOAN DEBT	...	...	...	£137,000

Chief industries: Agriculture, quarrying, and catering for visitors.

VITAL STATISTICS

	Male	Female	Total
Live Births	105	116	221
Legitimate	100	104	
Illegitimate	5	12	
			England and Wales
Birth rate per 1,000 population		17.9	19.1
Still Births	...	5	
Still Birth Rate:			
Per 1,000 live and still births		22	0.53
	Male	Female	Total
Deaths	73	86	159
Death Rate per 1,000 resident population	...	...	12.9
Deaths of infants under 1 year	...	...	9
Infantile mortality	...	...	57
			43

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

Age at Death	Males	Females
Infants under 1 year	4	5
1—5	—	1
5—15	—	—
15—25	1	1
25—35	—	1
35—45	1	4
45—55	3	3
55—65	10	12
65—75	20	14
75 and over	34	45
	—	—
	73	86
Total	...	159

The chief causes of death were :

INFECTIOUS CAUSES :

Pulmonary Tuberculosis	...	3
Syphilis	...	1
Influenza	...	4

GENERAL CAUSES :

Cancer	...	16
Diabetes	...	3
Cerebral Haemorrhage	...	15
Heart and Blood Vessels	...	51
Bronchitis	...	10
Pneumonia	...	6
Other Diseases of Lungs	...	3
Digestive Diseases	...	9
Nephritis	...	4
Prematurity, etc.	...	7
Suicide	...	1
Road Accident	...	2
Other Violent Causes	...	3
Other Causes	...	21

Total ... 159
==

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES.

The general provision of the health services remains as in previous years. In a scattered rural area such as yours, the organisation of an adequate health service presents many difficulties which are not experienced in a large town, and these difficulties are accentuated by the present two tier system of administration. For example, the personal medical services are almost entirely under the administrative control of the County Authority, without any delegation or responsibility devolving on your Council.

It is the considered opinion of your Medical Officer that the public would be much more efficiently served if the day to day administration of these services, and, maternity and child welfare is particularly stressed here, was delegated to your Council in order that requirements as regards housing, health visiting, infantile welfare, and nutrition, could be locally co-ordinated and all the factors needed for the adjustment to healthy living given proper weight.

It is a physical impossibility for this to be done under the present two tier system, particularly as one part of the administrative machinery is geographically so distant.

It would appear from recent legislation that unless some very strong representations are made, this anachronism is likely to be perpetuated.

Another facet of our social structure which has not received attention, is the care of old people. Many cases are brought to my notice of old people, chiefly of the middle classes, having served their country well, who are now existing under conditions of great hardship through no fault of their own. The value of their securities has diminished, and, what is probably worse, they cannot obtain any assistance to minister to their needs. I would recommend the Council to consider provision for these cases in the larger communities, and also the possibility of joint action with the Borough Council.

The Public Assistance Institution is used as a general infirmary, but no maternity accommodation is provided. The only maternity accommodation available is at the Okehampton War Memorial Hospital. Discussions are in progress with the Ministry of Health to increase this.

It is to be hoped that they are rewarded by success, as great hardship is being experienced by lack of this essential service.

SECTION C.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA.

Water Supply—

In accordance with instructions of the Ministry of Health, dated 13th March, 1947, an attempt has been made to give a detailed parochial account of the water supply situation in your 27 parishes. It will be seen from the table at the end, that apart from those parishes which are supplied from the moor or boreholes in the new red sandstone, there is an actual shortage of water. It is hoped that the North Devon Water Board, recently formed, will soon improve this state of affairs.

During the year, 34 samples of water were taken for analysis, and where failure resulted, immediate action was taken to make the supply safe.

Eleven water schemes are maintained by the Council on behalf of the Water Board, and chlorination is done at Hatherleigh and Chagford. The results of bacteriological analysis are satisfactory.

Tin lined copper pipes have to be used in those parishes where plumbo solvent action of the water renders this necessary.

The upland surface water reservoirs have to be frequently cleaned out owing to the deposition of peaty matter brought in from the moor. The year was characterised by excessive rainfall, and the guage on the moor recorded the record of 109 inches for the year.

Drainage and Sewerage.—

New Works : No new works have been carried out during the year. New schemes have been prepared and submitted for Chagford and North Tawton, and disposal works at Exbourne.

Repairs of existing works have been carried out at South Zeal, and arrangements made for further extension of main on completion of the Council's new housing estate.

Throughout the district there are innumerable instances of defective sanitation and sewage disposal, and, unless plans are prepared beforehand and arrangements made to proceed with works, an emergency is likely to be precipitated when the North Devon Water Board begin to lay their mains.

It must be remembered that the Board's estimate for water consumption is about three times the quantity at present used in these Rural Parishes.

SANITARY INSPECTION OF THE DISTRICT.

Many complaints were personally investigated by your Medical Officer, and below is a table giving the record of outside work done by the Inspectors.

Houses including re-inspections	859
Drainage and Sewerage	65
Water Supplies	71
Refuse Disposal	32
Premises to examine Foodstuffs	20
Public Conveniences	24
Schools	6
Infectious Diseases	20
Miscellaneous	126
Number of informal notices served	119
Number of informal notices complied	83

Refuse Collection and Disposal—

Arrangements have been made in several parishes for extension of collection areas and by monthly collections have been inaugurated at Exbourne, Jacobstowe, Throwleigh, and Whiddon Down.*

Arrangements have been made to provide a new disposal area at Whiddon Down for use when the present dump at Chagford can no longer be used.

A comprehensive scheme for refuse collection and disposal has been considered by the Council, and its implementation is very much required.

Factories—

The administration of the Factories Act, 1937, in its application to the Rural District has been carried out, and regular inspections made, with particular reference to the cleanliness of premises and sanitary conveniences, water supply and drainage.

Schools—

The twenty-five public elementary schools were visited regularly during the year.

The sanitary arrangements in many of the village schools are primitive. The great drawback to improving sanitation is lack of water supply, but, a great deal could be done by the education authority to make the children comfortable, *e.g.*, better cloakrooms where their coats can dry, and, what is most important, a reasonable standard of heating in winter.

SECTION D.

HOUSING.

The general position as regards housing, is so well known that space need not be utilised here to reiterate it.

The following report on housing and housing maintenance has been prepared by Mr. Bailey, your Council's Surveyor:

Housing—

The Council's policy in the provision of new houses in the District is governed, in common with all Local Authorities by the Housing Allocation Programme of the Ministry of Health, and cannot exceed the permitted "zonal percentage." This percentage relates to a contract period of nine months, ending at 31st December, 1947, and concerns a total of 11,000 houses allocated to the whole region, of which the number to be approved in this Rural District totals 27 traditional types. Of this total, seven houses have been licensed to private developers. In addition, the Council has been allocated 20 "Airey" non-traditional houses for inclusion in the programme as extra to the zonal scheme.

The labour and materials position will greatly influence the speed at which the housing programme can be implemented.

Of the many basic shortages of building materials, timber and cement, present the greatest difficulties, the supply position having already retarded the Council's 1946 schemes, resulting in several houses commenced during 1946 being brought forward for completion during 1947. At 30th June, 1947, the whole position was as summarised in the following schedule.

It is expected that delivery of the "Airey" houses will be given during 1947, but it should be noted that the Ministry is only concerned with the actual structure, and as the foundations, roof covering and fittings are as required for traditional houses, completion will be subject to the supply position for these materials.

As far as possible, the "Airey" houses are being sited where development is now taking place, and where all services including roads, are available.

In all cases of proposed erection of traditional houses, provision is made for the installation of gas or electricity, and where these services are not as yet available, but where the demand for houses has necessitated early development, the design has been so arranged to allow ease of installation in the future. In the case of some proposals, the areas concerned are not yet serviced by public water supplies or sewerage, and pending these developments it has been necessary to provide water supplies from wells, and to instal small house disposal plants.

Again, in these cases provision has been made for main connections, the domestic systems in each instance being standard.

The future schemes of the Council in the provision of new houses will include small dwellings and flats for old folk and small families, and where possible, these will be included in development of existing estates.

Housing Maintenance—

At present, the Council has erected 210 houses in the Rural District, under Acts from 1909 to 1938.

In many cases, these existing houses are not connected to the public services, and where these are now available, the Council is arranging for installations. This work will necessarily extend over a period, due to the general supply position, and to the many repairs required at all estates.

During the war period, normal maintenance could not effectively be carried out, and due to the present regulation controlling building works, many proposed repairs and improvements must be postponed.

An added difficulty in the repair and maintenance of the Council's estates is caused by the inability, in many cases, of the builders to attend to the work, and again by the scattered nature of the District, some estates being almost 30 miles apart.

The order in which complaints are most frequently received is as follows :

- (a) Defective plumbing.
- (b) Defective Cooking and Heating units.
- (c) Structural defects, including roofs, walls and floors.
- (d) Paths, fences and gates.
- (e) Defective services (water supply and house disposal plants).

Defective plumbing presents the greatest difficulty, as it is of a recurring nature, and is due to the rather old, and in some cases obsolete systems. In some of the houses the domestic system is incapable of withstanding the mains pressure, and in certain cases the siting of pipes and fittings render the system very liable to bursts during frosty weather conditions. Complaints are so numerous in this connection that the proportion of plumbing labour, especially for the Western Area of the District is quite inadequate, and in consequence many of the repairs required are considerably delayed.

It would seem that the only solution to this problem would be for the Council to employ its own labour.

Defective cooking and heating units are replaced according to the supply position.

All classes of structural defects receive attention according to their urgency.

In this connection, many are due to the original construction of the buildings, and can only be remedied by extensive external treatment to walls and roofs. The solid wall construction of many estates is the frequent cause of damp penetration and dry rot, and where this latter occurs at ground floor levels it is only possible to renew floors with a granolithic type of flooring material.

Several attempts have been made to render the properties damp proof, and the latest scientific developments and methods of water proofing are being applied.

Paths, fences and gates are in need of attention at most estates, and should be related to site improvements wherever possible. This could take the form of an open type of estate frontage, with provision for low boundary walls or curbs, and would result in the removal of many types of unsightly fences, posts and gates. The reinstatement of paths will be a costly item, and at present only minimum repairs can be undertaken.

Defective water supply services, and house sewage disposal plants are treated as urgent items for attention.

It seems certain that many disposal plants will have to be resited, as the present areas are sewage-logged, and the effluent irrigation areas very limited.

PARISH.	Number of houses commenced during 1946, and completed before June, 1947	Number of houses in course of erection at June, 1947	Sites selected	Sites approved	Layout plans approved	House plans approved	Number of houses proposed for 1947 housing programme	Anticipated commencement during 1947	Anticipated completion during 1947	Proposed future development to close sites
BELSTONE						4 T			
BRIDESTOWE ..	8 T									
CHAGFORD		*	*	*	*	8 T	*		
CHAGFORD		*	*	*	*	6 NT	*		16 T
DREWSTEIGNTON	4 NT	*	*	*	*			*	
EXBOURNE	2 T	*	*	*	*			*	
EXBOURNE						2 NT	*		
HATHERLEIGH		*				2 T			
NORTH TAWTON		*	*	*		16 T	*		16 T
NORTHEW		*				4 NT			
SOUTH TAWTON	4 NT	*	*	*	*			*	
SOUTH TAWTON		*	*	*	*	8 NT	*		10 T
THROWLEIGH		*	*	*	*	2 T	*		
TOTALS ..	8 T	8 NT 2 T					20 NT 82 T			42 T
		10					52			

Note—"T" denotes traditional types.

"NT" denotes non-traditional types, and includes the Swedish Timber houses and the "Airey" prefabricated houses.

Alkaline treatment is no longer responsive to the gardens, etc., in proximity to the outfalls, the land remaining very acid, and unsuitable for cultivation.

The Council is at present considering a scheme for the provision of store sheds to estates where former provision has not been made, and it is hoped that a comprehensive programme will give adequate storage accommodation in these cases and enable many unsightly sheds to be removed.

External painting of the Council's estates is usually carried out by competitive tender, and will require a period of three years to complete to an approved standard.

In conclusion, in all matters relating to housing maintenance, the desire of your Housing Surveyor is to bring the standard of improvement of the Council's existing houses to compare very favourably with estates now under development.

SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Milk—

One hundred and ninety three samples of raw milk were taken from producers and retailers by your Inspector during the year.

A remarkable state of affairs exists with regard to the supervision of the milk supplies, which once again is directly due to the two tier system of Public Health administration. The County Council are the registration authority for T.T. and other designated milk production, and for their supervision. On the other hand, your Council are the authority for the registration and supervision of the ordinary supply.

The County have appointed a full time Sampling Officer to deal with their side of the business, which is the least needing supervision, and your overworked Inspectors are expected to deal with the remainder.

The ratio of sample failures indicates the relative importance of the two: ordinary samples—failed, 66%; designated samples failed, 22%. The logical solution would be for one officer stationed, and controlled locally to do the lot.

Another cause of worry is the fact that, as far as the writer is aware, there is nothing to prevent a Tuberculin reactor being removed from a T.T. herd and absorbed into an ordinary one and continued in milk until well advanced in the disease, to the grave danger of the community.

Meat—

The meat supply continued to come from the Tavistock Town Abattoir, and was duly inspected there.

By permission of the Tavistock Town Council, the following table of inspections is submitted :

Meat Inspection—

	Number of Animals Inspected.				
	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Calves	Sheep
	1913	1368	304	1430	11,880
Percentage of whole carcasses affected with Tuberculosis	.47%	3.07%	.65%	.41%	—
Percentage of whole carcasses affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	.31%	1.83%	1.64%	2.65%	1.13%
Percentage of organs or parts affected with Tuberculosis	7.00%	16.95%	12.17%	—	—
Percentage of organs or parts affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	61.00%	63.01%	13.48%	.84%	20.78%
Total number of animals killed	...	...	...	...	16,895
Total number of carcasses condemned for Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	59
Total number of carcasses condemned for disease other than Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	208
Total number of animals affected with Tuberculosis in some part or organ	...	...	...	...	403
Total number affected in some part or organ with disease other than Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	4551
	...	...	...	...	5221
	==
	or 30.9% of total carcasses				

In addition to the meat condemned at the Slaughterhouse, 2210 lbs. of corned beef was condemned at the Meat Market.

Inspection of Foods and Foodshops—

2 cwts. 5 lbs. of miscellaneous foodstuffs were condemned during the year as unfit for human consumption. General inspection of food preparing premises has been carried out, and advice given to occupiers in connection with personal and protective food hygiene.

SECTION F.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Your district was again fortunate in not having any epidemic of major infectious disease.

Measles occurred in epidemic form and was unusually persistent. The picture was, however, somewhat clouded by a concurrent outbreak of rubella which, strangely enough, is still confused by quite experienced practitioners with the real thing.

The following cases of infectious diseases were notified by the practitioners:

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	4
Puerperal Fever	...	...	...	...	...	3
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	3
Para-Typhoid Fever	...	...	...	...	...	1
Measles	...	...	...	...	...	98
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	...	2

Five cases were admitted to Hospital.

The following cases of infectious diseases were notified by the Schools in the area:

Measles	...	...	...	...	...	61
Mumps	...	...	...	...	...	2
Whooping Cough	...	...	...	...	...	10
Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	2
Chicken Pox	...	...	...	...	...	67
Impetigo	...	...	...	...	...	7
Ringworm	...	...	...	...	...	1

Diphtheria—

No cases of diphtheria were notified during the year, and immunisation of the child population continued very satisfactorily. The records are kept on an individual card index system, and although it causes much clerical work, it nevertheless has the advantage of being accurate.

Of the 2,433 children in your district, 84% have been treated.

Tuberculosis—

Five new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year, and three deaths were recorded from this cause.

At the end of the year, sixty-six cases of this disease remained on the register—Males, 28 ; Females, 38.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Chairman and Council for the ready hearing I have received at all times.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Councillors,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.

OKEHAMPTON RURAL DISTRICT WATER SUPPLIES

PARISH.	Whether water supply sells, (a) in quality (b) in quantity	Examinations made	Evidence of contamination	Action taken	Particulars of the number of dwelling houses and the number of the population supplied from public waterworks, (a) direct to the houses (b) by means of standpipes		
					Main	Stand-pipe	Total Population.
Asbury	Some wells polluted. Inadequate in quantity	No piped supply	Well water plumb-solvent. No action taken during year	Nil	—	—	—
Beaworthy	Private wells only. Inadequate	No piped supply	No analyses during year	Nil	—	—	—
Belstone	(a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine examination	Nil	Nil	63	—	212
Bondleigh	Wells only (a) Surface contamination in (b) Unsatisfactory	Nil during year	Yes, in the past	Nil	—	—	—
Bratton Clovelly ..	(a) Satisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine examination	Source improved still doubtful	General supervision	4	36	15 139
Bridestowe	(a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine examination	Nil	Nil	72	—	425
Broadwood Kelly ..	Wells only (a) Doubtful (b) Unsatisfactory	Inspection only	Yes	Analysis	—	—	—
Chagford	Piped supply from surface springs (a) Doubtful (b) Satisfactory	Analysis unsatisfactory	Yes	Chlorination	346	—	1168
Drewsteigton	Water from Quarry (a) Doubtful (b) Satisfactory	Major works undertaken to remove contamination	Yes, but dealt with	—	80	—	288
Exbourne	Supply from Borehole (a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine	No	Nil	65	—	196
Germanusweek	Wells only (a) Doubtful (b) Doubtful	Nil	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
Gidleigh	Private supplies only	Nil	Nil	Nil	—	—	—
Hatfield	Water from Borehole (a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine	Failed Bacteriological tests	Chlorination	256	—	877
Highampton	Private supplies One Public Well	Nil	No	Nil	—	—	—
Iddesleigh	One Public Well (a) Doubtful (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
Jacobstowe	Private Wells only	Nil	No	Nil	—	—	—
Meeth	Two Public Wells (a) Doubtful (b) Doubtful	Routine	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
Monk Okehampton ..	Public Well (a) Doubtful (b) Unsatisfactory	Nil	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
Northlew	Public Well (a) Satisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine	No	Nil	—	—	—
North Tawton	Borehole into sandstone (a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine	Yes, but corrected	Engineer	362	—	1012
Okehampton Hamlets	Private Wells only	Nil	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
Sampford Courtenay ..	Partly piped (a) Satisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine	In the past	Nil	24	36	97 110
Sourton	Wells only (a) Unsatisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine	In the past	Nil	—	—	—
South Tawton	Upland Springs (a) Satisfactory (b) Satisfactory	Routine	No	Nil	256	—	798
Spreyton	Wells only (a) Unsatisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Routine	Not recently	Nil	—	—	—
Throwleigh	Private Supplies	Nil	Nil	Nil	—	—	—
Inwardleigh	Private Supplies (a) Unsatisfactory (b) Unsatisfactory	Nil	Nil	Nil	—	—	—



