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TAUNTON RURAL DISTRICT

Annual Report

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

AND

**Senior Public Health
Inspector**

FOR THE YEAR 1972



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FOR THE YEAR 1972

TAUNTON RURAL DISTRICT

Public Health Staff, 1972

Medical Officer of Health :

HUGH MORRISON, M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H.

Senior Public Health Inspector :

W. PLIMMER, M.A.P.H.I.

Additional Public Health Inspector :

B. S. YULE, M.A.P.H.I., F.R.S.H.

Technical Assistant :

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Telephone: Taunton 87275/6

To:

THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE
TAUNTON RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report for 1972. The Report contains the usual information on the health and sanitary circumstances of the district arranged in a similar way to reports of previous years so that comparisons can easily be made. The Senior Public Health Inspector contributes a section on public health inspecting work in the district.

Once again I wish to thank the Members of the Council, the Clerk and Officials of the other Departments, and the Staff of the Public Health Department for their willing assistance and co-operation.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

HUGH MORRISON

TAUNTON RURAL DISTRICT**GENERAL STATISTICS OF THE AREA FOR THE YEAR
1972**

Area (in acres)	70,448
Estimate of resident population, mid-year 1972	27,600
No. of inhabited houses according to the Rate Book on 1st April, 1972	9,131
Rateable Value 1st April, 1972	£862,151
Sum represented by a 1p. Rate, year 1972-73 ..	£8,956.19

VITAL STATISTICS OF THE YEAR

With reference to the figures which follow, it should be pointed out that the standardisation of the rate for births and deaths allows for the differing age and sex distribution of the populations in different areas, and is obtained by multiplying the crude rate by a comparability factor for the district furnished by the Registrar General. This enables comparison to be made with the figures for the country as a whole, or with those for other districts.

1. Births.

(a) Live Births.

	M.	F.	Total	} Crude birth rate per 1,000 of the estimated resi- dent population	11.8
Legitimate	144	161	305		
Illegitimate	11	10	21		
Totals	155	171	326		

{ Standardised Birth Rate, Taunton R.D. ..	12.7
{ Birth Rate, England and Wales	14.8
{ Percentage Illegitimate of total live births ..	6.0

(b) Still Births.

Total	1
{ Rate per 1,000 (live and still) births—	
Taunton R.D.	3.0
England and Wales	12.0
{ Rate per 1,000 estimated resident population—	
Taunton R.D.	.03

2. Deaths.

(a) Total Deaths	378
Crude Rate per 1,000 estimated resident population	13.7
{ Standardised Death Rate, Taunton R.D. ..	10.4
{ Death Rate for England and Wales	12.1

(b) Maternal Mortality.

Total maternal deaths from all causes ..	1
--	---

(c) Infant Mortality.

Deaths of infants under 1 year of age—

Total	..	..	..	5
Deaths among legitimate infants	..	..	..	4
illegitimate	..	..	..	1
"Death Rate" per 1,000 total (live and still) births—				
Taunton R.D.	..	..	..	15.0
England and Wales	..	..	..	17.0

(d) Deaths from Cancer—

Cancer of the lung	..	Males	..	12
		Females	..	5
				17
Cancer in all other situations		Males	..	22
		Females		27
				49

Number of deaths from cancer of lung—England and Wales—

1967	..	..	..	..	28,250
1968	..	..	..	..	28,826
1969	..	..	..	..	29,768
1970	..	..	..	..	30,281
1971	..	..	..	..	30,746
1972	..	..	..	..	31,649

Infant Mortality during 1972

Cause of Death	Under 1 week	1 to 4 weeks	1 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	Total under 1 year
Broncho Pneumonia ..	—	—	1	—	1
Respiratory Distress Syndrome	1	—	—	—	1
Cerebral Haemorrhage	1	—	—	—	—
Congenital Heart Disease	1	—	—	—	1
Unexplained Infant Death Syndrome	—	—	1	—	1

Comment on Vital Statistics

The population of the district continued to show an increase, and stood at 27,600 as compared with 27,290 in the previous year. The Birth Rate was marginally lower than that of England and Wales; the Death Rate lower to an appreciable degree. The Infant Mortality Rate at 15.0 was two points lower than that of the Country as a whole. The percentage of illegitimate births was again 6 which is lower than the rate being returned from some other areas.

The highest number of deaths were attributable to diseases of the heart and blood vessels. As explained in last year's Report, many of these involved very elderly persons but a good number are the result of coronary thrombosis. It is interesting that the number of people dying from coronary disease fell from 83 to 59 whereas those dying from strokes and other blood vessel diseases rose from 87 to 103.

For the first time for seven years a death was recorded from Pulmonary Tuberculosis. This is becoming an uncommon event nowadays. The patient involved was an elderly man. On the other hand, no new cases of Tuberculosis in any of its forms were notified during the year.

Deaths from Cancer of the Lung were marginally lower but the national figures of deaths from this disease continue to mount and a table has again been inserted to illustrate this.

There were six deaths resulting from motor accidents: one more than in the previous year. Other types of accident accounted for four further deaths so that in all ten people fell victim to accidental death in this district in 1972.

No cases of death from suicide occurred.

Causes of Death during 1972

	M.	F.	Total
Tuberculosis, respiratory	1	—	1
Tuberculosis, other	—	—	—
Syphilitic disease	—	—	—
Diphtheria	—	—	—
Whooping Cough	—	—	—
Meningococcal Infection	—	—	—
Acute Poliomyelitis	—	—	—
Measles	—	—	—
Enteritis and other diarrhoeal diseases	—	—	—
Other infective and parasitic diseases	1	—	1
Syphilis and its Sequelae	—	—	—
Malignant neoplasm, oesophagus	1	—	1
Malignant neoplasm, stomach	5	5	10

Malignant neoplasm, intestine	3	4	7
Malignant neoplasm, lung, bronchus	12	5	17
Malignant neoplasm, breast	—	7	7
Malignant neoplasm, uterus	—	2	2
Malignant neoplasm, prostate	2	—	2
Leukaemia	1	1	2
Other malignant neoplasms	11	9	20
Diabetes mellitus	1	—	1
Other endocrine, etc. diseases	—	4	4
Anaemias	2	—	2
Mental disorders	1	3	4
Multiple Sclerosis	—	2	2
Other diseases of nervous system etc.	1	4	5
Chronic rheumatic heart disease	2	—	2
Hypertensive disease	5	1	6
Ischaemic heart disease	29	30	59
Other forms of heart disease	7	7	14
Cerebrovascular disease	31	33	64
Other disease of circulatory system	9	30	39
Influenza	—	—	—
Pneumonia	21	22	43
Bronchitis and Emphysema	13	4	17
Asthma	1	—	1
Other disease of respiratory system	—	2	2
Peptic Ulcer	—	—	—
Intestinal obstruction and hernia	1	1	2
Other diseases of digestive system	1	6	7
Nephritis and Nephrosis	—	1	1
Hyperplasia of prostate	—	—	—
Other disease of genito-urinary system	3	2	5
Other complications of pregnancy etc.	—	1	1
Disease of skin, subcutaneous tissue	1	—	1
Disease of musculo-skeletal system	—	4	4
Congenital anomalies	—	3	3
Birth injury, difficult labour etc.	1	—	1
Other causes of Perinatal Mortality	—	—	—
Symptoms and ill defined conditions	5	3	8
Motor vehicle accidents	2	4	6
All other accidents	3	1	4
Suicide and self-inflicted injuries	—	—	—
All causes — Total	177	201	378

GENERAL PROVISION of HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE AREA

Domiciliary Services

(1) Medical and Nursing

There are nine general medical practitioners living and carrying on the main part of their practice in different areas of the district. In addition to this, most of the Taunton Borough practitioners have some rural district residents on their lists, and there is also, as would be expected, some overlap from the surrounding rural districts in the provision of medical attention. There are adequate arrangements for domiciliary consultation, when required, with consultants serving the Taunton area, and speaking generally, the practice of medicine in the district is of a high standard. The provisions for domiciliary nursing are also satisfactory.

(2) Home Help Service

This service, formerly administered by the County Health Department, has now passed to the control of the County Social Services Department. The administrative change has not meant any diminution in the number of calls on the services of the Home Helps or in the excellent work which they are carrying out; indeed the reverse has been the case. Health Visitors co-operate with Social Workers in the ascertainment of cases where help is required, and of course the local practitioners are also very much involved.

(3) Meals on Wheels

These were distributed by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service in the parishes of Bishops Lydeard, Bishops Hull, Norton Fitzwarren, Kingston St. Mary, West Monkton, Creech St. Michael, Ruishton, North Curry, Stoke St. Gregory, Hatch Beauchamp, West Hatch, Trull, Pitminster and Churchinford. An average of 85 people were taken two meals each per week during 1972. It has still not been found possible to make arrangements to provide a third weekly meal for distribution. Gratitude is due to the members of the W.R.V.S. and other volunteers for their work with this service.

Hospital Services

These were still being provided according to the detailed account set out in the Report for 1969. The standard of treatment and care is high but the services are working under the handicap of having to use out-of-date and widely dispersed premises. These premises have been modified and improved over the years and many new treatment facilities have been made available, but the

whole picture of hospital provision for this area will alter for the better when the new District General Hospital comes into operation.

A scheme for the carrying out of short-stay surgery at Bridgwater Hospital was inaugurated during 1971. This enables non-urgent cases of a relatively straightforward kind to be admitted, operated upon and discharged home to the care of the family doctor and district nurse all within the space of twenty-four hours. The scheme is operating with success and is having a valuable effect in reducing the waiting time for hospital treatment.

The greatest pressure on hospital services at the present time is probably produced by the increasing number of the elderly who are surviving to a greater age, and this is putting a heavy strain on the geriatric services.

The treatment of patients suffering from mental illness or mental handicap is being orientated to an even greater extent, in this as in other areas, towards the objective of care in the community rather than in hospital.

Mass Radiography

Regular sessions are still being held for this purpose in the Borough of Taunton and the facilities are freely available to residents of the Rural District.

The following table gives the detailed figures for examinations carried out at the Taunton Centre during 1972.

	Male	Female	Total
Number examined	473	672	1,145
Abnormalities detected	15	12	27
Details of abnormalities detected—			
Active Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1	—	1
Healed Pulmonary Tuberculosis	3	2	5
Bronchial Carcinoma	1	—	1
Goitre	—	1	1
Sarcoidosis	1	—	1
Congenital Cardiac Lesion	—	1	1
Acquired Cardiac Lesion	1	3	4
Bronchiectasis	1	—	1
Bacterial and Virus Infections of the Lungs	2	1	3
Bronchitis and Emphysema	1	—	1
Abnormality of the Diaphragm	1	1	2
Dorsal Scoliosis	—	1	1
Pleural Thickening	3	2	5

Clinics and Treatment Centres

(1) Tuberculosis

Clinics for patients suffering from this disease, and for the supervision of suspects and contacts, are held by the Chest Physicians at Musgrove Park Hospital. There is an After-Care Committee working in co-operation with these clinics. Mass

radiography has been carried out from time to time on various groups of the County population, by a team working from a centre in Bristol.

(2) Venereal Disease

A combined Clinic and Treatment Centre is carried on at the Taunton and Somerset Hospital which caters for male and female patients of this and surrounding districts. These conditions which had, for some years, become rather uncommon in the district have been latterly showing a marked increase in prevalence; and this is in accordance with experience over the country as a whole.

Gonorrhea, one of the Venereal Diseases, is now the second most common infectious disease in the country, Measles being the commonest, and when Measles is brought under control by immunisation, Gonorrhea is likely to take pride of place.

(3) Maternity and Child Welfare

The Maternity and Child Welfare Acts are administered by the County Council, under whose supervision are also the Health Visitors and Midwives practising within the area. There is an excellent Maternity Home in the Urban District of Wellington at which some of the mothers from Taunton Rural District are confined. Obstetric Consultants in Taunton are available for consultation with Medical Practitioners in the District. Abnormal and complicated cases can be admitted for hospital treatment when necessary. Every case of Puerperal Pyrexia and Maternal Mortality is investigated by the Medical Staff of the County Council. A valuable service is now provided for premature infants. Small or premature babies unsuitable for nursing at home are admitted to a Special Care Unit at Musgrove Park Hospital, an ambulance equipped with an Oxyginaire incubator being sent to collect them from their homes. If the baby is deemed fit to be nursed at home, the district midwife can obtain advice and special equipment to help her with the management of the case.

Child Welfare Clinics at which mothers of young children can have the benefit of advice on health and medical matters are still being carried on in the traditional way in clinic premises, but the direction of development here is that an increasing number of family doctors are undertaking this work for patients of their own practices in their surgeries or in health centres as these become available. This trend has been made possible by the attachment of Health Visitors to individual practices. An increasing amount of attention is being given to the study of normal and abnormal development of the child during the years of infancy and early childhood.

Laboratory Facilities

The Public Health Laboratory Service has a Laboratory in Taunton which undertakes the bacteriological examination of swabs, blood, faeces and sputum, etc. This service is available also to the Doctors practising in the District. Bacteriological and chemical analyses are also undertaken for the examination of milk, foods, water supplies and sewage effluents, etc. The co-operation and assistance of the Public Health Laboratory Staff in investigating all types of bacteriological and epidemiological problems is of the greatest value.

Ambulance Facilities

Ambulance transport for all cases is the responsibility of the Somerset County Council. The main Ambulance Station and Control for the south-west of the County is situated at the entrance to Musgrove Park Hospital. The Ambulance Station serves a very wide area and at 31st December the establishment of vehicles and staff was as follows:—

Vehicles	..	7 Ambulances
		8 Sitting-case Ambulances
		1 Control Vehicle
Staff		6 Sub-officers
		23 Driver -attendants
		4 Leading Ambulance-men
		1 Trainee

All vehicles at this Station are fitted with two-way radio communication.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Acute Infectious Diseases

The following table gives the number of notifications received for various notifiable diseases.

Infectious Diseases 1972

<i>Disease</i>	<i>Number of cases notified</i>
Measles	89
Scarlet Fever	8
Food Poisoning	4
Acute Meningitis	1

Apart from a sharp outbreak of measles occurring towards the end of the year the prevalence of infectious disease was very low. The four cases listed of food poisoning were Salmonella infections, three of them in members of a family who were thought to have been infected from a pre cooked chicken consumed outside the district.

Tuberculosis

	<i>Pulmonary</i>	<i>Non-Pulm.</i>
Cases on the Register at 31.12.72	8	8
New cases during 1972	—	—
Deaths during 1972	1	—

No new cases of non-pulmonary tuberculosis were notified during the year. There has been a great decrease in the prevalence of tuberculosis over the past years but it is by no means on the point of disappearing altogether. In fact, there are still more deaths from tuberculosis in this country than from any other notifiable infectious disease. The treatment and follow-up service is good in this area.

Immunisation

It is considered that this form of protection against infectious disease is one of the most important activities in the field of preventive medicine, and for this reason an up-to-date account of the procedures recommended and their timing is given in the table below. Notes on the various diseases against which the procedure is aimed were set out in the Annual Report for 1970 and it is thought unnecessary to repeat them on this occasion.

Arrangements for carrying out immunisation of children and young people are channelled through the County Council Computer which ensures that each individual is summoned at the appropriate time. Nearly all the actual immunising is done at sessions run by the family doctors in their surgeries. The percentage of children immunised in this area is now very high, but of course, this being a free country, it is still open to parents to neglect to have this matter seen to or to refuse to have anything to do with it. This happens relatively seldom, but we are anxious that it should not happen at all, because it is most important, for the individual and for the community at large, that the percentage of people immunised against these diseases, which formerly were responsible for so much misery and death, should be maintained at the highest possible level.

Age		Vaccine
4 months	..	First diphtheria/whooping cough/tetanus and oral polio vaccine.
6 months	..	Second diphtheria/whooping cough/tetanus and oral polio vaccine.
12 months	..	Third diphtheria/whooping cough/tetanus and oral polio vaccine.
13 months—2 years		Measles vaccination.
4½ years		Diphtheria/tetanus (no whooping cough) and oral polio vaccine.
Over 11 years	..	B.C.G.
11—13 years	..	German Measles Immunisation (girls only)
14½ years		Oral polio vaccine. Tetanus toxoid.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE AREA

Water Supply

The water supplies of the district are now under the control of the West Somerset Water Board, of whose area Taunton Rural District forms one portion.

The service provided by the Board is proving very satisfactory and it is the experience of the Public Health Department that any complaints which arise and any defects which come to light are given prompt attention, and matters are quickly set to rights.

Most of the water supplied to the district comes from Clatworthy reservoir in the Brendon Hills, but some is still drawn from sources on the Blackdowns and there are one or two hill springs used for small areas where the height above sea level makes it impracticable to provide water from the main supply. Most of the areas of the district where it is reasonable to expect a piped public supply have now had this facility provided. Minor works are carried out from time to time to serve outlying concentrations of dwellings.

The Water Board has furnished the following statistics of water testing carried out by them during 1972.

Taunton R.D.C. Water Supply Area 1972

Supply	Chemical		Bacteriological				
	Total Samples	Unsatisfactory	Totals	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4
Fulwood	19	1	18	18	—	—	—
Clatworthy	7	—	7	7	—	—	—
Other (Chlorinated)	28	5	28	19	1	4	4
Other (Not Chlorinated)	11	1	11	1	2	2	6

Additional checks are made from time to time by this department, which also has the responsibility of testing waters from private supplies dependent on wells and springs. There are still a good number of these in the more remote parts of the district, and where properties are situated at a great distance from public water mains it seems likely from economic considerations that private supplies will continue in use. Bacteriological testing was carried out on 46 such supplies, the water being found unsatisfactory in 10 of them. This situation is met by tendering advice to the owners and occupiers concerned.

In the last columns referring to Other Water the unsatisfactory results referred to reports on the water at Lydeard St. Lawrence and West Bagborough which has been known to be subject to slight intermittent contamination.

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

An account of drainage and sewerage provisions in the various parishes of the district was given in a recent annual report and need not be repeated here.

During 1972, the large sewerage scheme to serve the parishes of North Curry and Stoke St. Gregory was completed, as was the scheme serving Stoke St. Mary parish. Provisions for the sewerage of Kingston St. Mary parish were well in hand, and the parish of Pitminster was due for early priority attention. The scheme for septic tank and cesspool emptying undertaken on contract by the Council operated successfully.

Housing

There were 18 two-bedroom flats, 9 two-bedroom houses and 9 bungalows at Monkton Heathfield, 8 bungalows at Stoke St. Mary and 2 bungalows at Norton Fitzwarren erected during the year. An extensive programme of building in the parishes of North Curry, Stoke St. Gregory, West Bagborough and Churchstanton was planned for the year 1973 onwards.

There was a considerable amount of building by private enterprise in the district during the year, 151 houses having been completed and 196 being in the course of erection. Many of these were in areas adjacent to the Borough of Taunton. Since the end of the war 1,121 houses, bungalows and flats have been built by the Council and 2,314 by private enterprise. 283 bungalows were owned by the Council, most of these being occupied by people in the older age-groups. Some flats had also been made available for this purpose.

There were 452 applicants for Council houses on the waiting list at the end of 1972 made up as follows :—

10 urgent bona fide cases.

223 applications for old persons accommodation.

219 desiring accommodation for other reasons.

The following table refers to properties dealt with under slum clearance procedure :

Action	Houses dealt with during 1972	Total number of houses dealt with since 1.1.55
1. Acquired by Council for demolition (site used for erecting new houses)	—	6
2. Demolition Order made ..	7	131
3. Undertaking given not to use for human habitation	3	138
4. Houses actually demolished ..	5	163
5. Clearance Area Procedure carried out	—	5 (in one terraced block)
6. Closing Order	1	32

The year showed very gratifying progress in the field of Improvement Grants. During the year, 70 Improvement Grants and 18 Standard Grants were made, bringing the total of Grants for the District up to the end of 1972 to 919.

REPORT OF THE SENIOR PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTOR

The following is a tabular summary of work carried out during the year 1972:—

Number and nature of inspections:—

Dwelling houses (Inspections and revisits for all purposes)	772
Food Hygiene	274
Slaughterhouses	152
Factories and Workshops	20
Water Supplies	46
Drainage nuisances	271
Refuse disposal	18
Clean Air Act, 1956	10
Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act	282
Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act	19
Animal Boarding Establishments	6
Miscellaneous nuisances and other visits	265
Noise Abatement Act, 1960	40

Food Hygiene (General) Regulations, 1960

Visits to food premises in the area have been continued during the year, but not as frequently as one would wish owing to shortage of staff.

Water Samples

53 samples of water have been submitted for bacteriological examination during the year. 46 samples have been taken from private supplies, and reported on as follows:—

Suspicious	5
Unsatisfactory	10
Satisfactory	31
	—
	46
	—

7 samples from various public supplies have been examined and were classified as satisfactory.

6 public supplies were chemically examined during the year and gave satisfactory results.

All the above results have been sent to the persons involved, together with suitable advice.

Meat Inspection

Extract from the Annual Report of The Medical Officer of Health for the year 1951—

'It is to be hoped that at some date in the near future the whole question of the redistribution of the work of meat inspection will be undertaken—at the moment several small authorities are carrying responsibility far in excess of their normal duties.'

The number of animals presented for inspection in 1951 consisted of 20,924 calves, 15 sheep and 1 pig all from one slaughterhouse. In 1972 3,065 calves, 97,661 sheep, 124,820 pigs and 5,081 cattle from four slaughterhouses were inspected. Further comment seems to be futile.

Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, 1960

The general standard of sites in the area continues to be quite satisfactory. During 1972, 25 site licences were issued.

Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act, 1963

Total number of registered premises at the end of the year 68.
Number of persons employed in registered premises 297.

Ice Cream

The number of retailers of this product in the area is 93. They sell pre-packed ice cream, which is stored in properly constructed refrigerators.

Meat Inspection
Carcases and Offal inspected and condemned in whole
or in part

	Cattle excluding Cows	Cows	Calves	Sheep and Lambs	Pigs	Horses
Number killed (if known)	4,411	670	3,065	97,661	124,820	0
Number inspected ..	4,411	670	3,065	97,661	124,820	0
All diseases except Tuberculosis and Cysticerci						
Whole carcasses con- demned	2	60	25	688	568	0
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned	889	404	1	9,882	19,936	0
Percentage of the number inspected affected with disease other than tuber- culosis and cysticerci ..	20.1	69.2	.87	10.82	16.57	0
Tuberculosis only						
Whole carcasses con- demned	0	0	0	0	3	0
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned	0	0	0	0	793	0
Percentage of the number inspected affected with tuberculosis	0	0	0	0	.64	0
Cysticercosis						
Carcases of which some part or organ was con- demned	1	0	0	0	0	0
Carcases submitted to treatment by refrigera- tion	1	0	0	0	0	0
Generalised and totally condemned	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Report on Rodent Control for 12 months
ending 31st December, 1972**

	Type of Property	
	Non-Agricultural	Agricultural
Number of properties in Local Authority's District	8,058	560
Total number of properties (including nearby premises) inspected following notification	426	35
Number of above properties infested by (i) Rats	349	26
(ii) Mice	62	6
Total number of properties inspected for rats and/or mice for reasons other than notification	450	167
Number of above properties infested by (i) Rats	48	9
(ii) Mice	3	3

Rodent Control

Work under this heading is carried out in conjunction with other public health duties.

Factories Act, 1961

The inspection of factories and workshops in the district from a public health point of view is carried out as often as possible by the staff of the Public Health Department. Routine visits are paid to the various premises and the following table gives particulars of this work.

Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health :—

Premises	Number on Register	Number of		
		Inspec- tions	Written notices	Occupiers Prose- cuted
(i) Factories in which Section 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 are to be en- forced by Local Authorities	8	0	0	0
(ii) Factories not included in (1) to which Section 7 applies	142	20	0	0
(iii) Other Premises under the Act (excluding out-workers' premises)	3	0	0	0
Total ..	153	20	0	0





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