

THE ANNUAL REPORT
OF
THE DISTRICT OF GRAND BAHAMA ISLAND
(WEST END)
THE YEAR 1965

BY

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DISTRICT OF WEST END GRAND BAHAMA

ANNUAL REPORT 1965

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CHAPTER 1
GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

GOVERNMENT

The District of Grand Bahama, which comprises and includes the main island of Grand Bahama with the exception of the area covered by the Freeport District and the adjacent Cays, including Water Cay, Sweetings Cay and others, lies on the Southern edge of the Little Bahama Bank, one hundred and forty miles West North West of New Providence and sixty miles East South East of West Palm Beach, Florida. The District is represented in the House of Assembly by the Honourable Harold DeGregory, M.H.A., who took his seat as an Independent member in November, 1962 when some 93% of an electorate of 2047 exercised their right to vote in the General Election. Early in 1964 he joined the United Bahamian Party and now he takes his seat as one of their members.

At the end of 1964 it was decided that the growth of Grand Bahama had merited an increase of representation in the House of Assembly of two members; this increase will be effective from the next General Election; towards this end, a dual registration of voters is currently being conducted.

ADMINISTRATION

From November, 1963 administrative duties of the District were performed by the writer, assisted by the usual number of subordinate Officers including two Clerks, Customs, and Immigration Officers at West End, three members of the Nassau Constabulary also at West End and four local Constables at various parts of the island.

CHAPTER 11

POPULATION

The population taken at the census at the end of 1963 showed the total population for the whole of Grand Bahama to be 8490. The figure now falls short of the actual population which I feel has reached approximately 22,000.

The death rate among this large population is remarkably low, being a mere 4.6 per thousand head of population. There were 65 deaths in 1965, 39 of them males and 26 of them females; in this figure are included the deaths of 9 children under the age of one year, six of whom were premature. It is clearly noticeable from the foregoing that the number of child deaths has dropped dramatically.

A breakdown of the causes of death is shown hereunder:

Cardio-vascular -	12	Cancer -	2
Asthma -	1	Disability-	4 { Old age - 3 } (Alcoholism-1)
Tetanus -	1	Inter-stinal obstruction	1
Gastro-enteritis -	9	Premature birth	6
Broncho-pneumonia-	6	Suicide (hanging) -	1
Unknown (3 babies and 3 Post mortems) -	6		
Accidental deaths-	16		

Of the 16 accidental deaths 8 were due to car accidents, 2 stabbings, 1 shot gun wound, 1 drowning, 3 burns and 1 industrial accident.

276 people were sent to the Princess Margaret Hospital; of these 115 were males and 161 were females.

The birth rate continues to increase and in 1965 the total number of births was 552 of whom 321 were males and 231 were females; of the total number of births 470 were natives and

82 were Haitians. As in former years the rate of illegitimacy has been in the range of one to every four or five births

Tuberculosis was noted in the area, a total of 9 in all being recorded; none of the patients are from Grand Bahama itself, 6, however, are from other parts of the Bahama islands; the remaining 3 are Haitians.

CHAPTER III

HEALTH AND SANITATION

HEALTH

Although an assistant Medical Officer has been stationed in the District, Doctor Richter, the Medical Officer, has advised me that his work is still a heavy burden despite the fact that his travelling time has been cut down; this is undoubtedly due to the rapidly increasing population.

The following table of statistics, correlated over the five years beginning 1960 is repeated in this report as follows:

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1962</u>	<u>1963</u>	<u>1964</u>
Gonorrhoea	92	83	130	366	547
Syphilis	0	0	3	12	70
Lymphangranuloma	0	0	0	2	21

The Medical Officer has advised me that he is no longer permitted to disclose these figures; he has informed me however that the three main venereal diseases have all decreased considerably. When one considers the sharp population rise, the decrease in numbers of infected persons can only be considered a remarkable achievement on the part of the Medical Department.

The Haitian problem, which has contributed largely to the spread of the venereal diseases, is still present. However, tighter medical surveillance in respect of these people has resulted in a drastic curtailment of the spread of these unfortunate diseases.

The rising pattern of alcoholism continues and an important factor is, paradoxically, the economic prosperity in the area.

Drinking is no longer a luxury afforded to the financially secure members of this society; such is the prosperity in the area that this vice is now common place.

Men and women who formerly could not indulge in any kind of excess are now in a position where they can enjoy this indulgence.

Illegitimacy is also a matter of normal acceptance in much of the community and where formerly this misfortune was much frowned on, very little stigma now attaches itself to the unwed mother of Grand Bahama. A great deal of the cause of this is unquestionably due to the excessive drinking now prevalent among young people and another factor is on account of the influx of new people from the more wordly areas of the Colony.

A successful programme of vaccination and immunisation was conducted as a preventative measure against diphtheria, polio, tetanus, whooping cough, and small pox and the usefulness of this was shown in the drop in incidence of those diseases.

Ante-natal care is accepted now largely as an integral part of child bearing with a corresponding drop in loss of life in these maternity cases and the production of healthier babies on the island. This is also illustrated in the figures showing the small death rate among babies.

A growing interest in family planning is now in evidence and this is in sharp contrast to the attitude of former years; there is no obvious religious disapproval of birth control on the island; the successful handling of this problem can be attributed only to the realistic and practical attitude evinced by the District Medical Officer

SANITATION

There has been little improvement in the water supply systems on the island since last year.

The water supply systems on the island are outmoded and inadequate. Spring water wells and roof-fed cisterns are

the rule and toilet facilities have not increased to meet the requirements of the mushrooming population. An ever increasing danger of fecal contamination in drinking water is present with the ever present threat of disease.

Overcrowding to meet the press of the population explosion on the island also lends itself to the danger of diseases such as tuberculosis. So far there has been no outbreak but the danger is increasing daily with the increase in population.

The need for a sanitary inspector is great and in the larger settlements particularly the problem of maintaining some standard of public health can only be met by the installation of this official. There is, however, a likelihood of an official being appointed in 1966.

CHAPTER IV

HOUSING

Despite the number of new houses going up, the housing problem is critical. A number of jerry-built barracks blocks have been run up in the Eight Mile Rock area and exorbitant rents all over the island are the rule. The population influx is still presenting a housing problem, but this has eased considerably in the last year. It is pleasing to report, however, that many of the new houses are well built edifices of concrete block construction and that more imaginative and ambitious designs are being used.

The town Planning Act which was extended to Grand Bahama in 1963 has made an important contribution to the housing standards.

CHAPTER V

PRODUCTION

FOREST

Large acreage of the vast pine forest covering most of the island's surface has been sold for various Commercial Developements, and forest products of all kinds have been discontinued.

MARINE

The principal marine products are fish, conchs and crawfish. Sea-shells, coral and starfish are also gathered and sold to markets in the United States.

Edible and sport fish of numerous varieties and quantities abound in the waters of this District. Thousands of visitors come by every means of transportation to take part in the sport of game fishing.

All the edible fish are sold to the local market where the demand is much greater than the supply in spite of the continued increase in the price. A number of smacks and dinghy boats are continuously engaged in this fishing business.

The export of the Conch meat was prohibited for many years and now the banks have been closed to the export of the shells. To some this has been quite a blow, but this had to be done sooner or later in spite of the seemingly inexhaustible supply spread over the many miles of banks, North and East of this island. Like fish, the price of this food had increased considerably over the last two years and there is yet shortage in the supply.

It is my opinion that the present ban on the exportation of Conch could soon be raised and that much of our present shortage is caused by the ever increasing demand.

Open season for the Crawfish is from the 1st of January to the 15th of March and from the 1st of October to the 31st of December of each year. It has been found that the cause in the Rules of the Agricultural and Marine Products Board which permitted the taking of a certain quantity of these fish for personal use, during the closed season, had been very much abused; accordingly, this relaxation of the Rules is now no longer permitted with the result that the Crawfish are now better protected during the breeding season.

The 1964-65 season for crawfish was not bad but as maybe expected, the demand still greatly exceeds the supply. At one part of the season the crawfish were captured in great quantity at the Eastern end of Grand Bahama island and this resulted in a sharp income increase to some of the more fortunate fishermen.

It is more profitable and less troublesome for the fishermen to sell their catches on the island rather to send their fish to the United States as in former years.

Very few turtles are caught in Grand Bahama now; this is largely due to the stricter control upon the capture of this marine animal.

Stone-Crabs are now in abundance in many areas around Grand Bahama; however, the taking of these crabs is still prohibited by law, and it is expected, that this ban will soon be lifted.

The people of this District are not agriculturally minded and this industry has steadily decreased until, with the exception of one small agricultural enterprise, it is no longer of any consequence.

POULTRY-RAISING

Poultry-raising is still carried on with, I believe, some increase in numbers; the local demand, however, is increasing to a degree beyond the rate of production.

CHAPTER VI

COMMERCE

The number of crawfish exported to the United States in 1965 was negligible. As has been previously stated, local demand easily absorbs the local supply.

Customs Duties collected on imports at West End amounted to £ 175,989: 6: 3 . This figure was made up by the following items:

<u>DUTY</u>	£ 102,445:12: 9
Emergency Tax	£ 36241:18:10
Alcoholic Liquors	£ 921:12: 1
Inland Tax (Cigarettes)	£1396:17: 6
Gasoline Tax	1: 8: 0
Stamp Tax	2845:17: 0
Radio & T.V. Tax	107:10: 0
Storage Charges	- : -: -
Departure Tax	31921: 5: 0
Export Duty	17: 4: 1
Fines & Forfeitures	90: 1: 0
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TOTAL:	£ 175,989: 6: 3
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CHAPTER VII

WAGES & COST OF LIVING

Despite the proximity of Freeport with its sky-rocketing economy, the level of wages within this District has been maintained. Wages on the island are quite out of proportion to the scale laid down by Government and this leaves me in a poor bargaining position when competing with private employers. Although common labour and artisan rates of pay are largely determined by the exigencies of the moment, I am pleased to note that they have not materially changed from 1964.

The following is the scale of wages which prevailed, generally, in the District during the year under review:

Common Labourers (men)-----	6/- to 8/-	per hour
Common Labourers (women)-----	4/- to 5/6	per hour
Semi-skilled Labourers-----	7/6 to 8/6	per hour
Carpenters & Masons -----	14/- to 16/-	per hour
Plumbers & Electricians -----	15/- to 25/-	per hour
Painters & Chauffeurs -----	9/- to 16/-	per hour
Domestic Workers -----	3/6 to 6/-	per hour

Hours of work are generally from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. with one hour off for lunch, but this varies under certain circumstances.

The cost of living in West End has risen and this presents a hardship to the elderly people in the community. It is economically favourable for a resident of West End to shop in the Freeport area but this is not always possible for everyone concerned.

CHAPTER VIII

EDUCATION AND WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

In all the largest settlements of the District, schools are established and conducted under the supervision of the Board of Education. There are seven Board Schools and one Grant-in-Aid School within the District. They are located as follows:

West End	Board.....	L. V. Smith
Eight Mile Rock ...	Board	S. Gibbs
Holmes Rock	Board	W. P. Parker
Water Cay	Grant-in-Aid	H. Thomas
McLeans Town	Board	W. Bethel
High Rock	Board	R. Dean
Pelican Point	Board	L. Laing
Sweetings Cay	Board	N. Russell

All of these schools are reported to have been conducted fairly satisfactorily and regularly during the year.

WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

Friendly and Burial Societies, including a few Branches of several Secret Orders, are operating throughout the District, and comprise a total membership of several thousand men and women. They are established in just about every settlement of the District in one form or another, for the primary purpose of aiding the sick and burying the dead of their members. Assistance is also rendered to the families of the deceased members whenever the needs warrant it. The funds of these Institutions are deposited, except in very few cases of very small groups, in one of the local Banks or in the Post Office Savings Bank. Some of these accounts are quite substantial.

CHAPTER IX

COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT

MAIL SERVICE

The regular weekly mail service was performed by the motor vessel, Church Bay, and substitutes, during the year under review. This service is not very good but it has improved substantially in the last year. The settlement of Sweetings Cay is now serviced by a separate mail boat which extends its route from Abaco.

The air service supplied by Bahamas Airways Limited and Mackey Airlines has been very good. These services transported thousands of tourists and residents to and from this District and has contributed greatly to the stable economic situation existing on this Island. The sum of £31,921: 5: 0 was collected for Departure Taxes during the year; this represents a slight decrease over last year and this can be explained by the increasing popularity of the Freeport area. The number of vessels entering and clearing at West End was approximately the same as last year.

ROADS

The Grand Bahama main road is still a big problem in the District. This road was widened in March of 1965 by the simple expedient of grading the shoulders and cutting back the undergrowth. The result was pleasing in that the accident rate dropped to nil on this road from March until October. Maintenance of the road towards the end of the year became an enormous problem as the road itself, unquestionably requires remaking. Not only have the numbers of private cars increased on this road but the type of vehicle has in many cases become considerably heavier. Heavy trucks and trailers work havoc on this poor road surface. It has been promised that this road

will be surfaced in the near future for its entire length and that the long awaited for new highway to Freeport will at least be surveyed in 1966.

Licensing of vehicles of all types was carried out daily throughout 1965 and a total of 791 vehicles were registered. This represents a slight decrease on last year but this is understandable when the population trend towards the Freeport environs is appreciated. This, unfortunately, increases the load in that area.

Revenue collected from various sources during the year was as set out hereunder:

REVENUE COLLECTED IN 1965

1. Motor Vehicles	£2,745: 4: 1
2. Drivers	486: 0: 0
3. Provisional Drivers	66: 8: 0
4. Public Service Vehicles	50: 0: 0
5. Public Service Vehicle Drivers	53: 0: 0
6. Miscellaneous (duplicates, Franchises, etc.,).....	176:15: 0
	<hr/>
	£3,577: 7: 1
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Despite the slight decrease in vehicles registered, it will be noted that there is a slight increase in the Revenue from the foregoing sources.

POST OFFICES

There are four Sub-Post Offices in the District, located at Eight Mile Rock, High Rock, Sweetings Cay and Smith Point. The Sub-Post Offices handle only mail and parcels. Each of the Sub-Postmasters holds an imprest of stamps from the District Postmaster of West End. Money orders, Post Office Savings Bank accounts and all post office transactions are handled at West End. The West End Post Office which was

most inadequate was improved beyond belief in 1965 when I redesigned the Government Offices. The Post Office in this settlement is now, I would say, one of the best laid out and appointed offices in the Out Islands. The total cost of this improvement and other improvements in the Court room and Commissioners' Offices was limited to £300; this was not an easy task to perform but by judicious use of used materials, in many cases, and prison labour whenever possible the work was performed for this small figure.

REVENUE

Post Office Savings Bank Deposits.....	£ 1,960:10: 0
Sale of Telegraph Money Orders	34,945:10: 9
Domestic Money Orders	3,445: 5: 4
Sale of British Money Orders	- : - : -
Sale of U.S. & Canadian Money Orders ..	667: 2: 9
Sale of Jamaican Money Orders	734: 2: 1
Sale of Postage Stamps	7,161: 0: 0
Parcel Postage Duty	1,649: 6: 3
Short Paid Postage collected	- : - : -
P.O.Box Rentals	66: - : -

EXPENDITURE

	£ 50,628:17: 2.
Withdrawals Post Office Savings Bank...	£ 1,617:15: 1
Telegraph & Domestic Money Orders Paid.	2,441:18: 0
U.S. Money Orders Paid (+Canadian)....	129:13: 7
British Postal Orders Paid	71:12: 0

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

£ 4,260:18: 8

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telecommunications at West End are good owing to improvement in equipment some two years ago. Much has still to be done for the stations at Sweetings Cay and Water Cay and it is hoped that the Telecommunications system will be extended into the Eight Mile Rock area.

Telegraph and Telephone revenue for 1965 was £ 6,899:16: 3.

CHAPTER X

PUBLIC WORKS

Public Works, as previously were not particularly note worthy owing to the lack of funds allocated. As stated previously, Grand Bahama, I feel, should be given special consideration and I am now advised that this is being done.

The proposed program for 1966 is most impressive and, I may add, well earned.

Work on the School and the Public Warehouse has been disappointing owing to some laxity in the Contractors involved; the same may be said about the Public Dock, the principal part of which was finished in short time in 1964 and the additional tee-piece, started in 1965, has not yet been completed.

CHAPTER XI

JUSTICE POLICE AND PRISONS

Despite the small Police Force located at West End, peace and order were well maintained throughout the year. There was a slight increase in the number of criminal cases and in the number of traffic cases. This is to be expected owing to the increase in population. The following shows the number and nature of the various offences dealt with and how they were disposed of:

Summary Criminal - 195 : Fines - 109: Prison - 17
Probation - 15 : Cautioned-16 : Withdrawn by Police - 7:
Dismissed - 6 : Corporal Punishment - 1 : Pending - 14 :
The various types of offences are detailed hereunder:

Obscene language	- 43	Drunk and Incapable	- 3
Disorderly Behaviour	- 28	Threat of Harm	- 2
Causing Danger	- 7	Discharging Firearms	- 1
Threatening Language	- 3	Gambling	- 5
Unlawful Assault	- 50	Wounding	- 3
Insulting Language	- 5	Obstruction	- 2
Throwing Missiles	- 3	Fighting	- 3
Drunk and Disorderly	- 5	Traspassing	- 1
Resisting Arrest	- 6	Causing Harm	- 1
Br. Marine Product Act.	- 2	Disturbing the Peace	- 1
Br. Immigration Act.	- 15	Idle and Disorderly	- 3
Uncontrollable Child	- 3		

Traffic - There were 257 traffic offences which were dealt with as follows: Fines - 175 : Cautioned - 37 :
Prison - 2 : Bound over - 2 : Pending - 8 :
Dismissed - 4 : Withdrawn by Police - 29 :

There were 98 Civil cases and two Matrimonial cases heard at West End during the year; in addition 3 Inquests were held. A number of Indictable cases were dealt with but figures cannot be given on these as this information is

not forthcoming from the Police Department at Freeport; the method of recording this information covers the whole island of Grand Bahama and it is too extensive a task to separate the two Districts.

POLICE

There are two first grade and two second grade local Constables in the District. The former stationed at West End and Eight Mile Rock and the latter at Pelican Point and High Rock. Under the leadership of the Deputy Superintendent stationed at Freeport, the police have rendered a very fine and efficient service during the year. A special mention should be made of the District Constables who receive no salary but give invaluable assistance to the regular police in the maintenance of peace and good order.

The following men have been appointed as District Constables for the year 1965, in the various settlements under which their names appear:

West End

Clifford Davis
Bernard Hanna
Alexander Rolle
George Forbes
Granville Garvey, Sr.
Ivan Russell
Wilbert Roberts
Charles Grant

Eight Mile Rock

Albert Rolle
Alfred Johnson
Willard Martin
Sea Grape.
Arthur Martin
Robert Bain
Alfred Jones

High Rock

Isaac Smith
Henry Smith
Willie Kemp
Lennard Kemp

Hanna Hill

Ural Smith
Percy Barr

Holmes Rock

John Rolle Jr.,
Horatio Stuart
Dorissie Rolle

Sweetings Cay

Peter Feaster
Wellington Bevans
Alton Cooper

McLeans Town

Bertrom Davis
Henry Carey Jr.
William Pinder

Bradie Point

Elmore Stuart
Arnold Martin
Harris Russell

Water Cay

Walter Field
Locksley Field
Bernice Rolle

Pelican Point

Walter Laing

PRISONS

The three-cell prison at West End is still lacking in accomodation; security, however has been increases and, after some modification, I am glad to report that the prison itself is now literally escape-proof.

Plans are in progress to increase the accomodations at West End and to move the police station to a more central area in the settlement.

There is a two-cell-lockup at Eight Mile Rock, but this is used only for overnight purposes.

CHAPTER XII

LEGISLATION

Numerous changes in legislation in the Colony were made in 1965; the most note-worthy affecting Grand Bahama was the legislation extending the closure of shops on a Sunday. This legislation was introduced with some small difficulty as it has been the practice in this area for shops of all kinds to remain open for seven days a week.

CHAPTER XIII

TAXATION

There is still no direct taxation here, except for Departure Tax levied on passengers from the Colony. I would again suggest to Government that serious consideration should be given to introducing the Real Property Tax which would be used to very good purpose for maintenance of the roads and upkeep of the Settlements. As in former years, I would again urge Government to consider the introduction of a toll charge on the proposed new highway; if this were in fact an established practice, enough revenue could be generated from the proposed new highway to take care of all road maintenance problems which would arise on this island.

CHAPTER XIV

MISCELLANEOUS

PAUPERS

Pauper rations were issued by Government via Relieving Officer of the Princess Margaret Hospital. The rations consisted of grits, flour, sugar and canned milk. These rations were distributed to approximately 63 paupers throughout the District.

RELIGION

The majority of the Islands population are Baptists which accounts for approximately 50% of the people. The Anglican Church accounts for about 30%, Roman Catholics, Methodists, Brethren, Church of God, Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehova Witnesses and a few other unidentified religions make up the remaining 20%.

COMMISSIONER'S VISITS

Regular visits were made throughout the District on an average of every two months.

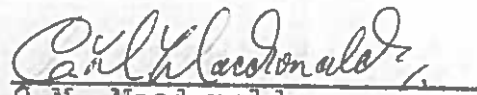
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The outstanding feature on Grand Bahama today is the prosperity which is to be seen every where. Freeport has continued to develop at an amazing rate and this prosperity has reflected throughout the entire Islands. The Jack Tar Hotel has continued to expand and there is no unemployment problem evident on the Island; in this hotel alone some 750 local people have found employment at various levels.

Road Traffic has increased as expected and this has, in turn, increased the number of licences, accidents, Court work and,

of course the problem of road maintenance. The proposal current at the moment is to resurface the entire length of the existing main road as well as to introduce the new highway between Freeport and West End. This is long over due and, with the introduction of these improvements, development in the West End area can only increase.

To close this report, I must point out that it is necessary now for Government to treat the island of Grand Bahama with a different view from the other out Islands. The only similarity between the island of Grand Bahama and the other Out Islands is that none of them are situated on the Island of New Providence. The revenue producing factor, the number of vehicles licences, the increasing population and the rate of development make Grand Bahama a place apart and it is of vital necessity that Government must project it's planning with this in view.


C.M. Macdonald
Commissioner,
District of West End.