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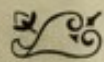
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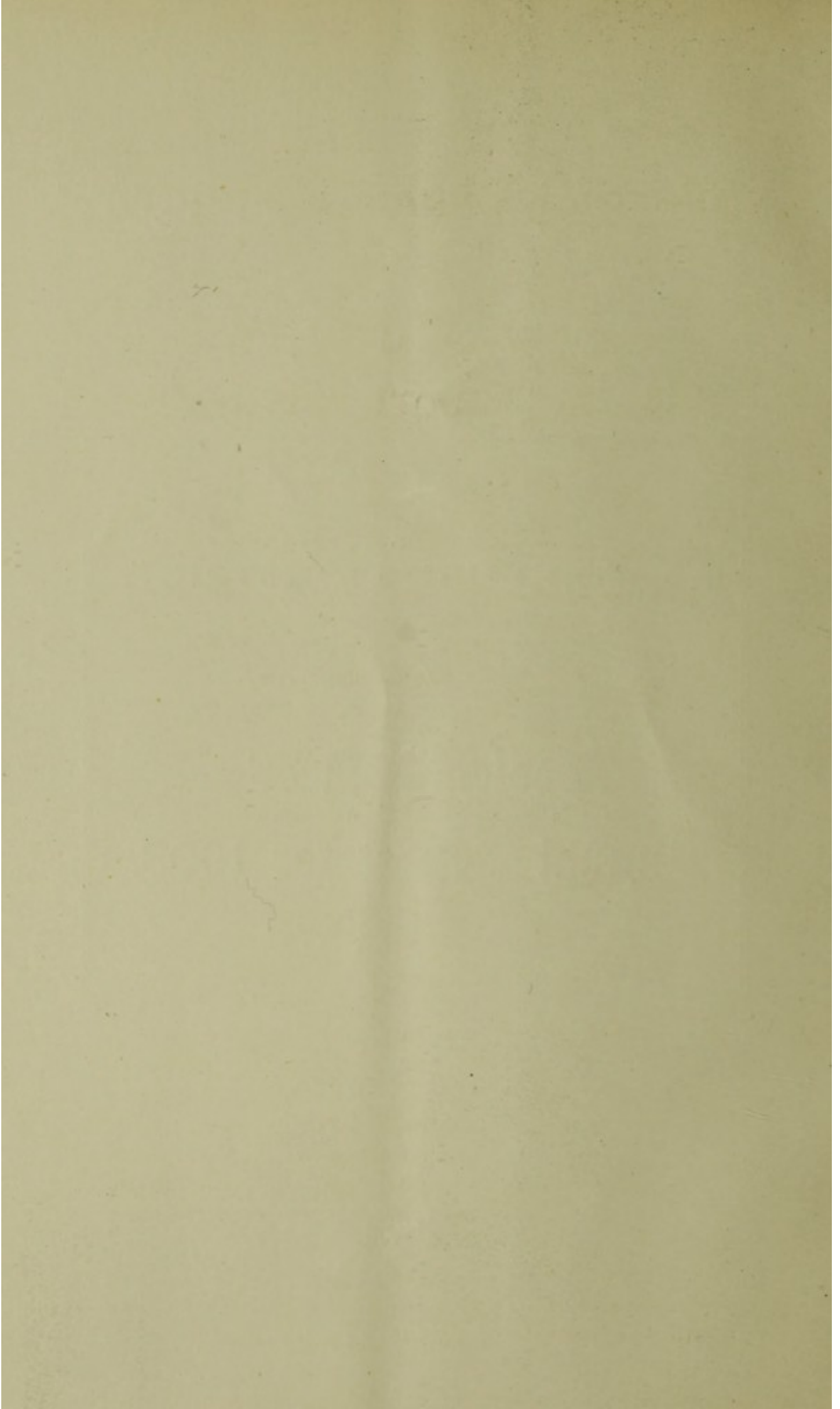


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ASHFORD URBAN DISTRICT.



**Medical Officer's
Annual Report for 1908.**



ASHFORD URBAN DISTRICT.

Medical Officer's Annual Report for 1908.

Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Gentlemen,

Herewith I have the pleasure of presenting to you my annual report for the year 1908.

Vital Statistics.

The population of Ashford, calculated for the middle of the year on the assumption that the increase continues to be at the same rate as that between the census years 1891 to 1901, is 14,564.

The population of North Ashford is 9,522, that of South Ashford 5,042.

As in former years the railway line is taken as the boundary between these two districts.

During the year the number of deaths registered was 159. Five of these were those of non-residents, but as there were also five deaths of residents occurring outside the district, the corrected number remains the same—159.

This gives us a death-rate of 10.91, which is a low one and therefore satisfactory. The death-rate for North Ashford is 10.39 and that for South Ashford 10.90. The average age at death excluding infants under one year was 53.

The causes of deaths will be found classified in Table I. at the end of my report, in which also the statistics for the two districts are compared.

None of these causes of death show any excess over the rate for the country generally and most of them are much below the average.

THE INFANT MORTALITY, that is the deaths of infants under a year old, calculated as a rate per thousand births, is 54.38, which is lower than any year except one in the last ten years.

THE ZYMOTIC DEATH-RATE, or death-rate from the seven principal epidemic diseases, is .20, which is extremely low, due to the absence of any outbreaks of these diseases.

THE BIRTH-RATE. The number of births registered during the year was 331, giving a birth-rate of 22.72, which is about our average for recent years.

Housing.

The great majority of the houses in Ashford consist of small villas built under the existing bye-laws. In consequence they are well built and in excellent sanitary condition. With the exception of a few houses in the old part of the town there is ample air space around all the dwellings.

The town is devoid of slum areas therefore.

The erection of new houses is under the supervision of the Surveyor after the plans have been passed by the Buildings Sub-Committee.

The houses in Rugby Gardens, to which allusion has been made in former reports, have been reinstated in thorough sanitary condition. The cavities under the floors have been filled in with concrete, they have been refloored and refitted internally, and all drains, w.c.s and gulley traps thoroughly overhauled and put in good repair.

Water Supply.

The Town water supply is derived from four wells situated on Henwood Farm, sunk into the lower

green sand and connected with one another by means of adits. These wells are about forty feet deep.

The water is pumped through a rising main to two underground reservoirs at the top of the town holding 280,000 gallons and 36,000 gallons respectively.

From the following figures it will be seen that by far the majority of houses use the public supply.

Number of Houses in District	3,287
Number using Ashford Public Supply	2,804
Number using Willesboro' Public Supply...	110
Number using Wells or other Supply	373

During the year an analysis has been made of water from 11 wells in the district, supplying 48 houses, etc. All these have been condemned as unfit for drinking purposes and the public supply has been laid on instead.

The public supply is analysed quarterly by the Clinical Research Association. Appended is a copy of the last analysis.

The supply continues to be considerably in excess of the needs of the town.

Water Analysis.

	Grains per gallon.
Total solids (dried at 120° C.)	35.35
Combined Chlorine	2.20
Expressed as Na. Cl.	3.63
Nitrogen as Nitrates	0.03
Nitrites	nil.
Saline Ammonia	0.001
Albuminoid Ammonia	0.0022
Oxygen absorbed in 4 hrs. at 27° C.	0.013
Total Hardnes	24° 0
Lead or Copper	nil.

Milk Supply.

The milk consumed in the Urban District is derived from farms in the immediate neighbourhood. The quality of the milk is generally good, being mostly from herds of cows pastured in the fields. There are 11 cowsheds in the district; these have been inspected quarterly and are all in a satisfactory condition. A new cowshed has been erected at Henwood Farm by the owners, the Ashford Urban Council, to replace the old building, which was defective. The new building is excellently designed and constructed, and possesses every modern requirement.

One defect was found in a cowshed, which has since been remedied.

With regard to the milkshops—these have been kept and conducted in a satisfactory manner. There has been greater care taken to prevent contamination from flies and dust.

The visits made during the year were as follows:—

	NUMBER ON REGISTER.	NUMBER OF VISITS.
Dairies	2	8
Milkshops	18	72
Cowsheds	11	44
Total	31	124

Slaughter-houses.

There are twelve licensed slaughter-houses in the district. These are inspected quarterly and the bye-laws are being duly observed in all cases.

No cases of diseased meat being exposed for sale were found.

Although, as I have said above, the slaughter-houses are kept in good condition and the regulations governing them are properly observed, yet as a great many of them are situated in the most populous parts of the town it is almost impossible for them to be so conducted as to give rise to no nuisance, especially in the summer months. It also renders the proper inspection of carcasses an impossibility.

The only remedy is a Public Abbatoir, which would be a much more healthy and sanitary means of providing for the slaughter of animals and would greatly facilitate the regular inspection of animals and carcasses intended for human food. It would, however, be useless to go to the expense of building one unless the present slaughter-houses could be closed, which at present would be impossible as nearly all of them existed prior to 1875.

Sewerage.

The sewage of the town is carried to the sewage farm at Bybrook for treatment; that from South Ashford being pumped, that from the higher ground flowing there by gravity.

Day and night pumping are necessary at the low level sewage pumping station to efficiently deal with the amount of sewage and prevent overflow of crude sewage into the Stour.

Until the separation of the storm water from the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Works is accomplished some pollution of the river must continue in wet weather. Negotiations with the Company are still pending, and it is to be hoped that a settlement may soon be arrived at. At the sewage farm the sewage is first mixed with lime and alumina and is then run into settling tanks, after which it is pumped into the filtration areas.

The area of the farm is 8 acres, and it is divided into 11 filtration areas. The filtration areas are

terraced and each is underdrained with land drains three feet below the surface, leading into an effluent outfall drain.

A 35-h.p. suction gas engine and plant have been recently installed, which can deal with the entire dry weather flow of sewage, pumping the fluid part on to the land and the sludge into the bays. This is a great improvement, as until this was done a certain amount of the unfiltered sewage passed into the river owing to the pumping plant being inadequate to deal with an amount of sewage largely in excess of that which the farm was originally designed to deal with.

The present area of land is insufficient for efficient filtration, as the filtration areas cannot get sufficient rest to allow them to absorb oxygen from the air before they are again flooded.

The disposal of excrement is entirely by means of w.c.s, which in the great majority of houses are provided with proper flushing tanks.

Scavenging.

House refuse is removed daily by the Urban Council's refuse carts. The refuse is deposited by each householder in a proper receptacle outside his dwelling and is collected in the early morning by the carts, which remove it to the refuse depot at Bybrook and South Ashford. At the depot it is piled in heaps and burnt, the residuum being given to the farmers for use as manure.

This method of daily collection works most satisfactorily, as all refuse is removed before it has time to putrefy and become offensive, which was far from being the case under the old arrangement, when dustbins were emptied only once a week, and a part of the district once in three weeks. The work of scavenging is completed each week day before 10 a.m. throughout the town.

Common Lodging Houses.

There are only two of these establishments on the register. Both of these are in good sanitary condition and carry out the bye-laws satisfactorily. They are inspected quarterly.

Offensive Trades.

The only premises coming under the bye-laws regulating these trades are:

Two rag and bone stores,
One tallow chandler,
One fellmonger.

No action was required in the case of any of these.

Schools.

There are five public elementary schools in the district.

All these are in good sanitary condition and are supplied with water from the town supply.

In any cases of outbreak of infectious disease I visit the school affected and examine the children. I made seven special visits to schools for this purpose during 1908.

I found it necessary to recommend the Urban Council to close the infants' section of the Council School from November 27th to December 7th, in consequence of an outbreak of epidemic Roseola.

Infectious Diseases.

During the past year there has been comparatively little infectious disease, apart from Scarlet Fever. Cases of this disease of a mild type have kept cropping up throughout the year, one by one, but there has been no serious outbreak. These sporadic cases are difficult to account for, as it is

usually impossible to trace any contact with a preceding case. In all 56 cases of Scarlet Fever were notified, affecting 28 houses. No deaths occurred from this complaint. In Table III., at the end of my report, will be found particulars of the cases of infectious diseases notified, classified and compared with former years.

During November there was an extensive outbreak of Epidemic Roseola or German Measles, chiefly, of course, affecting the children. The infants' section of the Council Schools was closed for ten days in consequence of the large number of children affected. The other schools were not affected to nearly the same extent, but the attendances at all of them were considerably reduced.

Isolation Hospital.

The Ashford Isolation Hospital is situated close to Warren-lane, which is a turning out of the Maidstone Road.

The three blocks comprising the hospital stand on an eminence, about a quarter of a mile from the main road.

Each block consists of a galvanized iron building on brick foundations.

The walls have a double felt lining. Water and gas are supplied from the public service of the town.

Each block consists of two wards, but besides these there are two small isolation wards in the cottage attached to the oldest block.

In all there are 35 available beds.

The buildings are surrounded by extensive gardens and grounds, some 6 acres in extent.

The sewage is disposed of by irrigation.

In cases of infection disease, after the patient has been removed to the Isolation Hospital, all

infected clothing, bedding, etc., is collected and disinfected by means of the hot-air apparatus.

Infected rooms are disinfected by means of formalin vapour.

The sanitary condition of the premises is thoroughly inspected and any defects are put right.

Isolation Hospital.

During the year 61 patients were treated in the hospital.

Scarlet fever	58 cases.
Diphtheria	2 cases.
Enteric Fever	1 case.

The expenditure was as follows:—

	£	s.	d.
Wages—Nurses and Caretakers	171	8	4
Extra Nursing	23	6	1
Food	152	11	3
Washing and cleaning	10	10	0
Carting coal and coke, etc.	10	5	6
Horse Hire for removal of patients	18	7	9
Coal and coke	32	3	2
Gas	22	7	9
Total	£440	19	10

The total number of days the various patients were under treatment was 3,159.

This gives the cost per patient per day as $2/9\frac{1}{2}$.

Tuberculosis.

The question of adopting a system of compulsory notification of pulmonary tuberculosis was considered by the Urban Council, and after considerable discussion it was resolved not to proceed with the matter for the present.

Notices explaining in simple language rudimentary facts as to the nature, methods of infection and means of prevention of this disease have been printed and circulated by the Urban Council throughout the district, and copies have been hung up in prominent positions in most of the factories and workshops.

In cases where death has occurred from this complaint the sanitary authority are willing to gratuitously disinfect the rooms which have been occupied by the diseased person.

The West Ashford Workhouse has accommodation for a limited number of pauper cases of persons suffering from this disease, but there is no provision for hospital treatment of cases arising amongst the other classes of the population.

Midwives Act.

Two meetings of the Midwives' Sub-Committee were held during the year at which the midwives were present.

Registers and bags were inspected.

In the case of one midwife the bag was found to be so old and worn as to be insanitary and unfit for use. She was requested to get a new bag of approved pattern and has since done so.

The number of midwives on the register is four, but only three of these are in regular practice.

I have visited at the houses of all of these and found them clean and sanitary.

The total number of births attended by midwives during the year was 172.

The number of cases in which the assistance of a medical man had to be called in was 8.

The midwives therefore attend just over 50 per cent. of the births in the district.

Sanitary Inspection.

During the year 101 houses have been inspected by the Sanitary Inspector and in 22 of them defects were discovered.

There were 28 defective bell traps, 2 defective tongued traps and 5 defective D traps. All these have been removed and replaced with salt glazed stoneware trapped gulleys.

In two cases cracked w.c. pans have been replaced with new ones, and in three cases the w.c. pans were found to be in a very filthy state, which has been remedied.

In the case of five houses the drainage consisted of very defective old red earthenware socket pipes with no joints. These have been removed and proper socketted pipes with cement joints have been substituted.

Factories and Workshops Act.

The number of establishments on the register during the year was as follows:—

	NUMBER.	INSPECTIONS.
Factories	37	148
Workshops	57	224
Bakehouses	15	60
Outworkers' Premises	8	32
Totals	117	464

No defects were found.

New premises registered 3

Number removed from register 7

Underground bakehouses in use at end of
year 2

During the year I have made one hundred and one visits, in addition to those made under the Factories and Workshops Act, and the Dairies, Cowsheds and Milkshops Order. They are made up as follows:—

Infectious disease enquiries	72
Slaughter-houses	12
Common Lodging Houses	2
Schools	7
Other	8

I have attended:—

Council meetings	4
Sanitary Committee	8
Sub-Committee	5
Midwives	2

I have also made the following reports:—

Monthly	8
Quarterly	4
Special	1

I have also made two systematic inspections of special localities in the district.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

Claude M. Vernon,

Medical Officer of Health.

I.—TABLE SHOWING CAUSES OF DEATH.

CAUSE OF DEATH.	NORTH ASHFORD.	SOUTH ASHFORD.	TOTAL.	RATE PER 1,000 POPULATION.
Enteric Fever ...	—	1	1	.067
Influenza	1	2	3	. 20
Diarrhœa	1	1	2	. 13
Enteritis	3	—	3	. 20
Phthisis	8	7	15	1. 02
Other Tubercular Diseases }	2	2	4	. 27
Cancer, Malignant Diseases }	8	3	11	. 75
Bronchitis	4	7	11	. 75
Pneumonia	2	3	5	. 34
Other Respiratory Diseases }	1	—	1	.067
Alcoholism	1	—	1	.067
Premature Birth ...	2	1	3	. 20
Diseases and Acci- dents of Parturition } ...	1	—	1	.067
Heart Diseases ...	26	11	37	2. 54
Accidents	4	—	4	. 27
Suicides	2	1	3	. 20
Septic Diseases ...	2	—	2	. 13
All other Causes ...	34	18	52	3. 57

II.—TABLE COMPARING BIRTHS AND DEATHS WITH FORMER YEARS.

YEAR.	POPULATION.	BIRTHS.	RATE.	DEATHS.	RATE.
1898	11,593	254	21.94	144	12.42
1899	11,710	294	25.10	172	14.18
1900	11,850	317	26.32	164	13.83
1901	12,803	296	23.11	163	12.80
1902	13,094	318	24.27	152	11.60
1903	13,328	334	25.06	134	10.05
1904	13,567	281	20.70	166	12.23
1905	13,809	307	22.08	140	10.13
1906	14,056	316	22.48	173	12.30
1907	14,300	305	21.32	175	12.23
1908	14,564	331	22.72	159	10.91

TABLE III.—CASES OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES NOTIFIED.

Disease.	1908	North Ashford		South Ashford		1907	1906	1905	1904	1903	1902	1901	1900	1899	1898
Diphtheria	5	3	2	2	2	4	36	10	10	2	1	16	6		
Erysipelas	3	2	1	3	2	3	7	10	2	3	5	4	3		
Scarlet Fever	56	34	22	35	53	46	48	1	8	17	13	25	22		
Enteric Fever	2	—	2	13	6	7	18	4	—	7	1	19	15		
Puerperal Fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
Small Pox	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	—
Chicken Pox	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	11	—	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	66	39	27	53	63	60	110	36	31	29	24	65	46		