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REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GODALMING,

January 23rd, 1912.

LADY AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my third Annual Report as Medical Officer of Health to the Borough.

The year under review has been a remarkable one, and not least so in the extreme variety of weather experienced during the twelve months. The cold spring, hot summer, and rainy autumn have produced abnormal conditions which cannot but have had, on the whole, a detrimental influence on the public health. I am glad to say that, in spite of this, the health of the Borough has been well maintained.

Zymotic Disease.— During the year only fourteen cases of notifiable infectious disease have been reported to me, viz. :—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	4
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	...	5
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	5

Considering the prevalence of Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria in the County during the autumn months, the record is a particularly good one. It must also be remembered that our juvenile population is relatively large.

All the Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria patients were isolated either at the Joint Isolation Hospital at Woodbridge, or in School Sanatoria. As regards the diphtheria patients, three contracted the disease during July by contact with a severe case residing outside the Borough. There is no doubt that the free supply of anti-diphtheritic serum carried out by the Sanitary Authority in accordance with the Order of the Local Government Board, has done much to curtail the disease in individual cases.

The town did not escape the epidemic of Measles which visited the whole country in February and March. The disease attacked a very large number of children, but fortunately in most it ran a mild course; six cases terminated fatally. We can now look forward to several years comparative immunity from this disease.

There have been no notifications of Smallpox during the year. I had occasion at the Quarterly Meeting of the Council on April 25th to call the attention of the Council to the neglect of Vaccination in the town. The Vaccination Officer and his predecessor have kindly provided me with the following striking figures :—

			1910		1911
Births Registered	...	...	159	...	155
Successful Vaccinations	...	...	59	...	60
Died Un-vaccinated	...	...	12	...	9
Postponed	...	...	2	...	1
Removed out of the Borough	...	...	4	...	3
So-called Conscientious Objections			81	...	58
Unaccounted for	...	...	1	...	24

From this it will be seen that half the babies born in the Borough go unvaccinated. Very few re-vaccinations are performed. Thus we have a large and increasing unvaccinated population in our town susceptible to the most contagious and the most fatal of common epidemic diseases.

I fear that many magistrates sign exemption forms without a thought for the possible dangers of the future, and I cannot but think that their action in doing so will be severely criticised when the inevitable epidemic, which the country is so assiduously courting, arrives.

The apathy of the public in this matter is appalling to those to whom the care of the public health is entrusted, and I should be failing in my duty were I not to call your very serious attention to the danger to the community under the present absurdly lax system of vaccination.

Births and Deaths.—According to the returns of the Registrar, 155 babies were born in the Borough during 1911 (85 males and 70 females). Of these three were illegitimate births.

The birth rate is 17·52 per thousand. The average for the last ten years is 20·37 per thousand.

Seventy-eight deaths were registered as having occurred within the Borough, giving a death rate of 8·81 per thousand. In addition to these, nineteen deaths of persons assigned to Godalming took place in County Institutions.

The following table shows how these are distributed :—

Deaths in Godalming Borough itself	...	78, at the rate of 8·81 per 1000.
„ Guildford Union Infirmary	...	11
„ Surrey County Hospital	...	7
„ Brookwood Asylum	...	1
		—
Total Deaths	...	97, at the rate of 10·96 per 1000.

The average death rates for deaths in the Borough itself, and for total deaths during the past ten years are 8·11 per 1000 and 10·44 per 1000 respectively.

In my previous reports I have drawn attention to the longevity of the inhabitants of the Borough. It may be of interest to tabulate the deaths of persons over sixty years of age. They are as follows :—

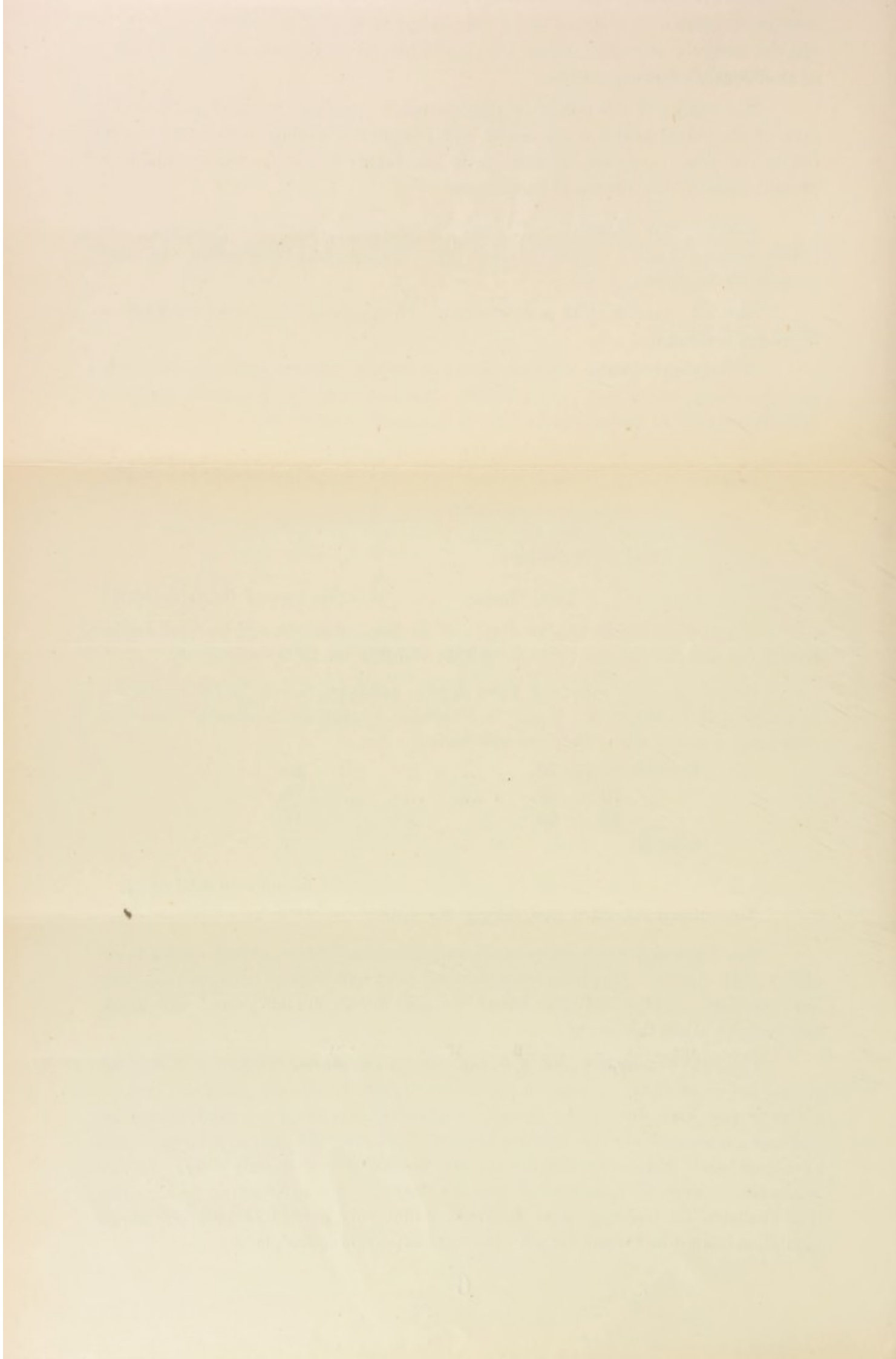
Between 60 and 70	...	...	...	23
„ 70 „ 80	...	...	...	16
„ 80 „ 90	...	...	...	11
Over 90	...	...	...	3
				—

53 out of a total of 97.

No centenarians have died during the year.

The birth and death rates mentioned above have been revised on the basis of the 1911 census. It will be seen that the birth rate is low ; it is, in fact, with the exception of that of 1910, the lowest recorded during the ten years. The death rate remains about the average.

The 1911 census has confirmed the opinion I ventured to express in my last annual Report, that the increase in population during the last ten years had been at a slower rate than during the decade immediately preceding it. Had the annual increase maintained the rate existing between 1891 and 1901, the population would have numbered 9396, whereas the census returns give it as only 8847. In this connection it must be remembered that the Borough was extended in 1892. The land available for building is at the present time very limited, and an increase in population cannot be looked for until the next extension takes place.



Infantile Mortality.—Fourteen infants died before the completion of twelve months of life. This gives a rate of 90·32 per 1000 births, as compared with an average of 75·21 per 1000 births for the past ten years. The prolonged excessive heat of the summer months was very trying for infants, and it is hardly to be wondered at that the infantile death rate is somewhat above the average.

Phthisis.—Only six deaths of the total are certified as having been due to Phthisis; of these five occurred within the Borough itself. An important step forward in the fight against this terrible disease has been taken by the recent Local Government Board Order scheduling Pulmonary Tuberculosis as a notifiable disease. This will enable the Public Health Authorities to become more easily acquainted with the existence of this disease within their areas, and to take the necessary steps to prevent its dissemination.

Measures have been taken to ensure the carrying out of this Order within the Borough.

I have reason to believe that the town harbours comparatively few phthisical subjects. Phthisis is a disease fostered by overcrowding and dirt, and so long as our present high standard of sanitation is maintained we have little reason to fear an increase in the number of cases here.

A scheme is on foot, to which the Council have provisionally agreed, for the utilisation of some of the Smallpox Isolation Hospitals in the County to be used as Sanatoria for consumptive patients during the inter-epidemic periods of smallpox.

Water Supply.—The Corporation Waterworks have been able to cope with the somewhat exacting demands made upon them during the year; but I venture to think that, had it not been for the forethought of those responsible for the Water undertaking, the town would have been threatened with a water famine, with its attendant grave danger to the health of the community. By the opening of the Ockford Works this risk was obviated, and I am glad to say that the supply of water from this source has been well maintained, and is all that can be desired for a public service.

Samples of the water derived from the Borough Road and Ockford sources have been taken quarterly, and in each instance the report of the County Analyst has been uniformly satisfactory. The last quarterly analysis and report will be found appended to this Report.

Milk Supply.—The dairies, cowsheds and milk stores of the Borough have been regularly inspected. In one instance it was found necessary to close a milk store. The results of other inspections have been in each case satisfactory. Practically the whole demand of the town for milk is met locally, and very little milk is imported from a distance.

Food Supply.—The seventeen bakehouses, twelve slaughterhouses, and all shops connected with the sale of meat, fish, game, fruit and provisions are subject to periodical inspection. The prolonged excessive heat of the summer months have made the storage of foodstuffs a matter of some difficulty. The dealers in food are fully alive to their responsibilities, and it is seldom that any trouble is experienced in inducing them to meet the requirements of the Sanitary Authority.

Sewage Disposal.—The sewage of the town has been dealt with during the year without difficulty, and the Sewage Farm flourished during the long drought. The Council are proceeding with a system of under-drainage, which will materially improve the efficiency of the farm. The purity of the effluent has been maintained to the satisfaction of the requirements of the Thames Conservancy regulations.



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Housing, Nuisances, etc.—Twenty-three new dwelling houses have been erected in the Borough during 1911.

Only one case of overcrowding was of sufficient importance to be reported to the Sanitary Committee. Overcrowding, which in past years has been the greatest evil which the Sanitary Authority has had to combat, has owing to increased accommodation and by dint of constant inspection, been reduced to a minimum.

Systematic district inspections have been undertaken by the Sanitary Inspector and myself from time to time.

The house-to-house inspection of premises enjoined by the Housing and Town Planning Act has been vigorously carried out by the Sanitary Inspector, acting under my supervision. This form of inspection is practically the same—only in somewhat greater detail—as that which the Sanitary Authority has been voluntarily undertaking for some years past. During the year the western portion of the Borough has undergone inspection in this way. As a result, in 102 cases minor alterations and repairs were ordered to be carried out. Statutory notices have been served on two owners of seven cottages.

One prosecution under the Public Health Act came before the Guildford County Bench. It was undertaken by the Council with a view to abating a nuisance caused by the insanitary conditions of earth-closets still remaining on one property within the Borough. The Bench ordered a more regular attention to be paid by the owner to the premises in question. I had hoped that an order could have been made enjoining the replacement by modern water-closets of the obsolete earth-closets, as I consider their retention a possible danger to public health. It is the only property in the town unprovided with modern conveniences.

The sanitary conditions of the Elementary Schools within the Borough are satisfactory. The Bell School and all the Infants Schools had to be closed for a short period in February and March owing to the outbreak of measles. The epidemic was attended with the least possible amount of dislocation in educational arrangements.

The question of pig accommodation is engaging the serious consideration of the Sanitary Authority.

The statistical returns published by the County Medical Officer of Health show that the town maintained its excellent health record during 1910, and I trust that the figures for 1911 will help to substantiate my conviction that Godalming is one of the healthiest towns, not only of this county, but of the kingdom.

Factory and Workshops Act, 1901.—The factories, workshops, and workplaces have been duly inspected in accordance with the requirements of this Act, and the necessary schedules forwarded to the Secretary of State.

I am, Lady and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

GERALD F. BIRD,

M.A., M.B., B.C. CANTAB.,
M.R.C.S. ENG., L.R.C.P. LOND.,

Medical Officer of Health.

The results of Analyses expressed in grains per gallon were:—

	<i>Ockford.</i>	<i>Borough Road.</i>
Colour	none	none
Odour	none	none
Turbidity	opalescent	none
Total solid matter ..	17.22	21.58
Losing on ignition	0.42	2.38
Combined chlorine	0.85	1.45
Equal to common salt	1.42	2.39
Nitrogen as nitrates...	trace	0.66
Nitrites	none	none
Saline Ammonia	0.0012	0.0003
Albuminoid Ammonia	0.0005	0.001
Oxygen absorbed from permanganate (4 hours at 80° F.)	0.006	0.010

Hardness (in degrees):—

Temporary	11.2°	8.5°
Permanent	1.3°	4.2°
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total ...	<u>12.5°</u>	<u>12.7°</u>

REMARKS:—

The Ockford water shows no material change from the sample of October last. It is a water of a high degree of organic purity. The opalescence previously noted in this water has not yet completely passed away. This water forms an excellent addition to the public supply.

The Borough Road water is of a high degree of organic purity, and is well fitted for the public supply.

ED. HINKS.

