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Contributors

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REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GODALMING,

January 25th, 1914.

LADY AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my fifth Annual Report as Medical Officer of Health of the Borough.

So far as the Public Health is concerned, the year has been a very satisfactory one. Climatic conditions have been equable on the whole, the town has been free from epidemics, and no new influences have arisen likely injuriously to affect the health of the locality.

Births and Deaths.—163 babies were born into the Borough during 1913. Of these 79 were male, and 84 female children. Six births were those of illegitimate children. It is seldom that the female births outnumber the male. The birth-rate arrived at from these figures is 18·38 per thousand per annum. This is well up to the standard of recent years, the average rate for the last five years being 17·91.

Seventy-one residents died in the Borough during the year—the same number as last year. In addition to these, 27 persons belonging to Godalming died away from the town, many in institutions in the County. In the following table it will be seen how these are distributed :—


Deaths within the Borough itself	...	71, at the rate of 8·00 per 1000.
„ in Surrey County Hospital	...	7
„ in Guildford Union Infirmary	12	
„ in Brookwood Asylum	...	3
„ Elsewhere	...	5
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Total	...	98, at the rate of 11·04 per 1000.

The death-rates in the last column compare with average rates of 8·11 and 11·00 for the last five years for the town and for total deaths respectively.

I give a table below of the deaths of 'residents' over 60 years of age ; it will be seen that they comprise half the total of those taking place in the town :—

Between 60 and 70 years of age	14
„ 70 and 80	„	...	10
„ 80 and 90	„	...	7
Over 90 years of age	4
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Total	35

Infantile Mortality.—Twelve infants died before reaching the age of twelve months. Six of these deaths are attributed to premature birth, and congenital malformations. The death-rate per 1000 births is 70·00.



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Taken altogether, the above statistics are not unsatisfactory. The birth-rate shows a slight increase for the last four years; the death-rate remains about stationary; and the figures for infantile mortality, although not up to last year's high standard, are below the average.

Notifiable Disease.—The cases notified during the year are as follows:—

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	7
Diphtheria	...	...	...	...	...	11
Erysipelas	...	...	...	...	...	4
Tuberculosis—Phthisis	...	...	...	...	...	16
Other Forms	...	...	...	...	...	4

The actual notification forms received are far in excess of these figures owing to the notification of each change of address of phthisical patients under treatment.

Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria.—The Borough has been fortunate in escaping with such a light toll of scarlet fever and diphtheria cases, as these diseases have been most prevalent in this part of the County this autumn and winter.

The few cases of scarlet fever which occurred here were of a sporadic type, and the disease in all ran a mild course.

Seven of the diphtheria patients were notified from Farncombe during the early autumn; one proved fatal. It was found necessary as a precautionary measure to close the Schools to children attending from one outlying district. The antitoxin supplied by the Sanitary Authority has been made use of in the majority of the diphtheria cases, and without doubt has tended towards mitigating the severity of the disease in those treated.

In combating these two diseases—scarlet fever and diphtheria—reliance is placed on early diagnosis, isolation, disinfection of premises, and observation of contacts. Prompt notification is a *sine qua non*, and in this town the Sanitary Authority has reason to be grateful to the local medical men for their ready co-operation in this, and in other matters relating to the suppression of infectious disease.

All the scarlet fever and diphtheria patients were treated at the Woodbridge Isolation Hospital. This institution has now been equipped with a motor ambulance, which gives our patients a much more speedy and comfortable journey than the old horsed ambulance. The cases of erysipelas were all treated at home and were only mildly infective.

Phthisis.—The compulsory notification of phthisis has now been in force for two years; that of *all* forms of tuberculosis for twelve months. In 1912 eleven cases of phthisis were notified, in 1913, sixteen. Of these sixteen patients, eleven have received institutional treatment of one sort or another, the remainder have been treated at home throughout. Three cases have proved fatal during the year. Four patients suffering from tuberculosis other than phthisis have been notified.

The present position with regard to the systematic treatment of tuberculosis is as follows. The comprehensive scheme for the whole County outlined by the County Council has not yet come into operation. The County tuberculosis officers are available for purposes of consultation with medical men on any tubercular patient; and their skilled assistance is frequently sought in this connection. When a definite diagnosis of tubercle has been made, the patient, if insured under the National Insurance Act, applies to the County Insurance Committee for “sanatorium

benefit"; this term is a misnomer, as many of the cases are quite unsuitable for a sanatorium, and the benefit may take the form of hospital treatment or treatment at home. The essential fact is that the County Insurance Committee makes itself responsible for their treatment. Patients under the Poor-Law are provided with treatment by the Guardians. At present no provision is made for patients who cannot be classed in one or other of the above categories—insured and pauper. From the point of view of the public health it is desirable that a uniform scheme be adopted, and I hope that before very long that of the County Council will be in full working order.

With regard to zymotic diseases which are not notifiable, measles has been conspicuous by its absence, thanks to the immunity conferred on a large proportion of the juvenile population by the 1911 epidemic; there was a fairly large number of mumps in January, of whooping cough in April and May, and of chicken-pox in November.

There have been no notifications of small-pox during the twelve months. Following my custom of the past few years, I give the vaccination statistics for the Borough, kindly supplied by the Vaccination Officer:—

	1910.	1911.	1912.	1913.
Births registered ...	159	155	162	163
Successful vaccinations ...	59	60	61	46
Died unvaccinated ...	12	9	2	9
Postponed ...	2	1	1	5
Removed out of the Borough	4	3	6	2
"Conscientious" objections	81	58	70	75
Unaccounted for ...	1	24	22	26

Viewed from the standpoint of Public Health, the purport of the above figures is lamentable. Year by year the unvaccinated population grows, and the death-rate of the next epidemic will be high, unless the "conscientious" objectors of the present day overcome their scruples when actually confronted with this loathsome disease. No magistrate is bound to sign an exemption order; some of the blame for the severity of the next epidemic will rest with those who are now signing these orders wholesale.

Water Supply.—There has been no difficulty in maintaining the water supply in the town during the year. Some complaints have been received from consumers outside the Borough as to the occasional turbidity of the water; this is not due to impurities, but to the impossibility of maintaining a continuous steady pressure in the longer mains.

Samples from the Borough Road and Ockford sources have been sent every quarter to the County Analyst, whose reports have proved entirely satisfactory. That of the last analysis will be found set out below.

Milk Supply.—There are only two cow-keepers registered as having cow sheds within the Borough: the regulations with regard to cleanliness and periodical lime-washing have been attended to. The five registered milk shops have been subject to regular inspection by the Sanitary Inspector and myself, and attention given to the proper cleansing of the premises and utensils.

There was very little really hot weather this summer to interfere with the milk supply.

Food Supply.—The Twelve slaughter-houses in the town have been periodically inspected: the bye-laws regulating them are complied with by the owners. Two carcasses have been condemned and destroyed after voluntary notification.

There are now fourteen bakehouses in the Borough: these are subject to inspection and are satisfactorily maintained.

All shops dealing in foodstuffs have been frequently inspected. Owners of businesses in the town dealing with food are generally alive to their responsibilities, and the matters requiring adjustment during the year were of minor importance.

Factory and Workshops Act, 1911. 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.

Sewage Disposal.—The drainage system has had no difficulty in coping with the demands made upon it during the year. The Sewage Farm has worked efficiently, and the outfall has maintained the standard of purity required by the Thames Conservancy, from whom no complaints have been received.

Housing, Nuisances, &c.—Plans have been submitted during the year for eight new dwelling houses, three of which are finished, and five approaching completion. This brings the total number of dwelling houses within the Borough boundary up to 2,000.

No serious instance of overcrowding has been brought to my notice during the year.

The Sanitary Inspector has carried out 151 inspections of dwelling houses in accordance with the Housing Regulations (1910) under the Housing and Town Planning Act. In addition to these, 47 houses have been inspected under the requirements of the Public Health Act (1875). 119 premises were found to be in a satisfactory condition; 79 required general repairs and lime-washing. The notices served in order to carry these into effect have in all cases been complied with by the owners.

No closing orders have been made this year.

The sanitary conditions of the elementary schools remain satisfactory; no school closures have been necessary during the year.

Many nuisances have been abated—or better, in some cases prevented—and in no instance has it been necessary to institute legal proceedings.

The duties of the Public Health Authority are becoming annually more multifarious. It is impossible within the limits of this report to detail all its numerous activities in every direction. Suffice it to say, in conclusion, that during the past year as much as possible has been done to preserve the reputation of Godalming as one of the healthiest towns in the County—and the country.

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.

Chemical Analyses, in grains per gallon :—

					<i>Ockford.</i>	<i>Borough Road.</i>
Colour	...	...	...	...	none	none
Odour	...	...	...	...	none	none
Turbidity	...	...	...	...	slight opalescence	none
Total solid matter		...	...	...	17.72	20.61
Losing on ignition	...	...	...	...	0.56	2.97
Combined chlorine	...	...	...	...	0.90	1.55
Equal to common salt	...	...	...	...	1.49	2.55
Nitrogen as nitrates	...	...	...	...	0.14	0.58
Nitrites	...	...	...	...	none	none
Saline Ammonia	...	...	...	...	0.0019	0.0004
Albuminoid Ammonia	...	...	...	...	0.0004	0.0002
Oxygen absorbed from permanganate (4 hours at 80° F.)					0.011	0.014

Hardness (in degrees) :—

Temporary	...	...	...	...	12.3°	8.7°
Permanent	...	...	...	...	2.2°	4.8°
Total	...				<u>14.5°</u>	<u>13.5°</u>

REMARKS :—

Ockford.—This sample shows no material alteration in the composition of this supply. It is chemically a water of a high degree of organic purity, and is well fitted for the public supply, with the exception of its opalescence which still persists.

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

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