REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

GODALMING,

January 24th, 1915.

LADY AND GENTLEMEN,

I have pleasure in submitting my sixth Annual Report as Medical Officer of Health to the Borough.

The year under review will go down in history as having seen the commencement of hostilities between European nations on an unparallelled scale. The European War has exerted its influence upon the Borough in many ways; some effects are those common to all centres of population, great or small, others are due to our situation within an area occupied by the military for the purposes of training the New Army.

Our manhood has been called upon to supply a large number of young men for His Majesty's Forces: no official figures are yet available, but I know that Godalming and the district of which it forms the centre have done remarkably well from the point of view of recruiting.

The town has been privileged to receive many sick and wounded soldiers from the front for treatment, and to provide hospitality to many Belgians.

Camps have suddenly sprung up in the neighbourhood, and troops have been billeted in the town and surrounding villages during the last three months.

Our public services are being called upon to provide for this temporary increase in population—water has to be supplied, sewage disposed of, and our roads are being torn up by heavy traffic.

Altogether, circumstances have arisen undreamt of six months ago, materially altering the conditions of private life and public health within this district.

Climatic conditions have been equable on the whole. A mild spring and normal summer were followed by an open autumn, but the year closed in a deluge of rain.

Births and Deaths.—During the year 1914, 172 babies were born into the Borough. Of these 101 were male and 71 female children. The illegitimate births numbered seven. The birth-rate obtained from these figures is 19·38 per 1,000 per annum.

The deaths of residents in the Borough numbered 72. In addition to these, 29 Godalming people died away from the town, most of their deaths being notified from institutions in the County. I append a table showing their distribution:—

Deaths within Godalming Borough ...	72, at a rate of 8·11 per 1,000 per annum.
,, in Surrey County Hospital ...	7
,, in Guildford Union Infirmary ...	14
,, in Joint Isolation Hospital ...	1
,, in Brookwood Asylum	3
,, elsewhere	4
Total ...	101, at a rate of 11·37 per 1,000 per annum.

The average death-rates for the Borough and for total deaths for the last five years are 7·76 and 10·58 respectively. The following is the analysis of the deaths of 'residents' above 60 years of age :—

Between 60 and 69	14
„ 70 and 79	12
„ 80 and 89	8
90 and upwards	3
Total ...	37

It will be seen that this represents roughly one half of those dying in the Borough.

Infantile Mortality.—Seventeen infants died within twelve months of birth : of these, the death in eight instances was registered as being due to premature birth or congenital malformations incompatible with healthy life. The death-rate per 1,000 births works out at 98·80.

The birth and death-rates given above are much what we are used to in this town of late years. The birth-rate has risen progressively during the last five years from 16·50 in 1910 to its present level of 19·38. I hope it may continue to do so. The death-rate is practically the same as last year, and shows a slight rise on the five-year average given above. The infantile mortality is low, when the deaths from premature birth, etc., are taken into consideration.

Notifiable Disease.—The following cases of notifiable diseases occurred during the year :—

Scarlet Fever	91
Diphtheria	12
Tuberculosis—Phthisis	15
„ other forms	5
Enteric Fever	2
Tetanus	1
Erysipelas	4
Cerebro-spinal Meningitis	1
Ophthalmia Neonatorum...	1

Scarlet Fever was again prevalent in the County this year. The good fortune experienced by the Borough during recent years has rendered it more vulnerable to attack from this disease by providing a large number of susceptible subjects. The greater number of the cases were notified between August and November, and, as I have noticed before, the infection tended gradually to spread westward through the town. I give the monthly notifications in the following table :—

January	2	July	7
February	2	August	14
March	6	September	15
April	3	October	16
May	2	November	13
June	7	December	4

All the patients were treated either at Woodbridge Isolation Hospital or at Charterhouse School Sanatorium ; one case unfortunately proved fatal, but the majority ran a mild course. The difficulties encountered in dealing with an outbreak of Scarlet Fever are very great, and are enhanced by the increasing mildness of the symptoms and signs in its earliest stages.

Diphtheria calls for little comment. The Sanitary Authority provides a supply of Antitoxin, and the majority of the patients are inoculated at the earliest moment, and to this is partly due the good results obtained in the treatment of our diphtheria cases.

Fifteen patients were notified as suffering from **Phthisis**. This number compares with 16 last year and 11 in 1912, since when compulsory notification has been in force. The treatment of insured persons is undertaken by the Surrey Insurance Committee. The County Council, as the responsible authority for the treatment of tuberculosis throughout the County, are making arrangements to open dispensaries in various towns, and the County Medical Officer informs me that it is intended ultimately to establish one here. Owing to difficult negotiations between the authorities concerned and to the outbreak of war, there has been some delay in bringing the full scheme into operation.

One sporadic case of cerebro-spinal meningitis occurred. It unfortunately proved fatal.

The two cases of **enteric fever** and one of tetanus were notified from the Charterhouse Military Hospital. These diseases, when under efficient nursing conditions from the start, as in this instance, seldom give cause for anxiety from the point of view of public health.

Ophthalmia Neonatorum only became notifiable under a recent Local Government Board Order, and the case recorded is the first we have had in the Borough since.

Of the minor zymotic diseases, a somewhat extensive outbreak of **chicken pox** in Farncombe made it necessary for me to order the closing of the Farncombe Infants' Schools for a fortnight in February. **Mumps** were prevalent among the school children during October and November. **Measles** has hardly been seen during the year, nor yet **German** measles.

There have been no notifications of **small pox** in the Borough during the past year. The following table, compiled from statistics kindly supplied by the Vaccination Officer, shows the extent to which exemption from vaccination has attained :—

	1910.	1911.	1912.	1913.	1914.
Births Registered	159	155	162	163	172
Successful Vaccinations... ...	59	60	61	46	50
Insusceptible	0	0	0	0	1
Died Unvaccinated	12	9	2	9	8
Postponed	2	1	1	5	2
Removed out of the Borough ...	4	3	6	2	3
"Conscientious" Objections ...	81	58	70	75	83
Unaccounted for, December 31st	1	24	22	26	25

Thus is our unvaccinated population allowed to grow. Each year, in common with Medical Officers of Health throughout the Kingdom, I call attention to the increasing danger. Recent European events have justified the warnings of some "scaremongers." My only hope is that our "voices, which have been crying in the wilderness" for so long may not also be listened to when perhaps too late.

Water Supply.—The Corporation Waterworks maintained an efficient supply until the middle of December. The quarterly analyses for the first three quarters were satisfactory. The presence of iron in suspension in the Ockford water gave rise to occasional turbidity in the area supplied from that source. It had been hoped that as this source came into full use, the proportion of iron would decrease. This has proved not to be the case, and during the summer an experimental filter was erected at Ockford, which gave promising results.

The Borough Road supply was seriously affected by the high floods of mid-December. The first intimation of trouble came on December 12th in the shape of complaints of mild gastro-enteritis among consumers in the Frith Hill area of supply. It will be remembered that on the two preceding days the Wey Valley was visited with floods higher than any experienced for the last fifteen years. Mr. Hinks, the County Analyst, was summoned from London that afternoon, and as a result of our investigations it was decided that the Frith Hill reservoir should be emptied—this was completed that same night—and that no further pumping from the Wey Valley sources should take place. A supply of water was maintained from the Ockford and Catteshall sources, and consumers advised to boil all water to be used for drinking purposes. Dr. Eyre, Chief Bacteriologist at Guy's Hospital, visited all the sources on December 17th and recommended the temporary treatment to be adopted for the Borough Road supply. To add to the difficulties of the Water Engineer, trouble arose with the machinery at Ockford owing to subsidence of the foundations of the building. The floods did not subside until the middle of January.

On December 22nd I reported to the Council and strongly recommended that the whole question of the water supply should be taken in hand without delay. Our supply has up to the present time been good in quality and adequate in quantity to supply the needs of the district, and I see no reason why the quality and quantity should not be maintained. Within the last few months an enormous increase in the population to be served by the Godalming water has taken place. The large military camp at Rodborough has suddenly sprung up, a large sanatorium is to be built at Hyde Stile, another at Sattenham, and an influx of civilian population may be expected as a result of the military occupation of the district. In order to supply this suddenly increasing demand, fresh measures will have to be taken. On my recommendation, the Council invited Dr. Thresh, the well-known specialist in these matters, to examine the whole question. He has paid several visits to the district and will shortly be in a position to furnish his report to the Council. He approves of the emergency measures taken by the Water Engineer in the very difficult circumstances in which he was placed.

A point worth the consideration of the Council is as to whether in future some sort of powers should not be sought for the purpose of controlling the various methods of sewage disposal in its water area.

Milk Supply.—There are two registered cow-keepers within the Borough boundary, and five registered milk shops. The cleansing and lime-washing of the sheds, premises and utensils, have been the subject of periodical inspection by the Sanitary Inspector.

Climatic conditions during the year have been favourable to a good milk supply.

Food Supply.—There are twelve slaughter-houses within the Borough: seven for cattle, and five for pigs. The Sanitary Inspector has paid frequent visits to these premises and reports that the bye-laws with regard to cleansing, lime-washing and offal removal are in all cases properly complied with by the owners.

There are fourteen bakehouses: most of these are old buildings, but all are well maintained.

Shops dealing in food are systematically inspected. There is seldom any difficulty in this town with regard to unsound food.

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.

At the close of the year there were 90 registered workshops in the town.

Sewage Disposal.—The drainage system has been efficiently maintained, and the sewage farm has coped with the flow of sewage. During the last weeks of the year the amount dealt with has much increased, and if the rate of increase is maintained, it is a question whether some further provision to deal with it must not be made in the near future.

Housing, Nuisances, &c.—The Sanitary Committee has approved of the plans of three new dwelling houses during the year. The number of dwelling houses in the Borough (excluding lock-up shops) now totals 2,013. Without an extension of the boundary there is no further room for building on a large scale.

The Sanitary Inspector has inspected 179 houses for the purposes of the Housing Regulations (1910) under the Housing and Town Planning Act. Ninety-seven were rented at from £30 to £17 per annum, and of these 51 were found satisfactory, and 46 required general repairs or lime-washing. Of 82 houses rented at £16 and under, 35 were found satisfactory, and 47 required general repairs or lime-washing. In every case the owners have readily responded to the notices served upon them to carry out the necessary work, and only in one instance has application been made to the Sanitary Committee for a Statutory Notice.

There have been no closing orders made during 1914.

The sanitary conditions of the elementary schools are satisfactory; only one school closure has been necessary—that mentioned above.

In accordance with instructions received from the Local Government Board, I have kept in close touch with the Medical Officer in charge of the troops billeted in the town and neighbourhood.

So far the health of the troops has been remarkably good. The baths erected by the Corporation on the Wharf in a building kindly placed at their disposal by Mr. Murray Marshall, have been of great value to the men and much appreciated.

A large number of minor nuisances have been attended to, too numerous to recapitulate in this report, and it is satisfactory to note that all have been settled without having recourse to prosecution under the Public Health Act.

The past year has brought tremendous events to the world at large, and this Borough has not escaped without its troubles. Let us hope that by the time the next Annual Report comes to be laid before you, a happy issue may have been reached from the perils threatening our country, and from the minor difficulties which confront us in our small town.

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.