The Borough’s Hospitals

The chief hospital is St. Olave’s, in Lower Road, Rotherhithe. This is a 12-ward hospital with 500 beds, and having full medical and surgical facilities is one of the busiest in London. It is under the control of the Bermondsey and Southwark Hospital Management Committee, and in the past few years a progressive policy of development has resulted in its value to the residents of Bermondsey being considerably increased. The history of the hospital has been, in fact, one of continued progress since it came within State jurisdiction, and in face of what appeared at times to be almost baffling difficulties. Particularly was this so in the matter of finance, which has necessarily been restricted in view of the national economic position.

It is perhaps not generally known in Bermondsey that parts of the hospital have been in existence for more than 200 years, with the result that, coupled with the enforced neglect during the war years, the Management Committee were faced with a problem of major proportions when they accepted responsibility for the hospital services. St. Olave’s is now a completely modern hospital with vigorous and expanding out-patient and

Refreshment Pavilion, St. Olave’s Hospital
casualty departments and treatments in physiotherapy, radiology, remedial gymnastics, radiotherapy and chiropody. As a result of a policy of expansion more beds have been opened, substantial improvement made in the wards, and the whole organisation keyed up to a pitch which has resulted in the hospital having a reputation second to none far beyond the confines of the Borough.

Among the many recent improvements were the completion of an extensive scheme of modernisation in the kitchen, the installation of the latest type of X-ray apparatus, and the conversion of the boilers to oil firing.

The total nursing staff is 155, including 105 student nurses taking their training there. The hospital is recognised by the General Nursing Council as a training school for the full State Registered course, and the most up-to-date facilities are provided for the purpose, including the provision of a school complete with lecture rooms, demonstration rooms and a library.

Another interesting feature of the hospital's work on the medical side is that, since it is so near the docks, it is called upon regularly to treat casualties off ships of almost every nationality. Close liaison is maintained with the various shipping lines, and with the help of welfare officers and interpreters, the hospital does invaluable work for seamen all over the world.

The Bermondsey Medical Mission Hospital, in Grange Road, is mainly concerned with the care of the elderly, but this gives no indication of the loving care devoted to the patients by the staff, and the hospital is still carried on in the spirit and traditions which sponsored its foundation.

The work of the Medical Mission began in 1904, when Dr. Lena Fox, still the guiding spirit after more than half a century, took over the original premises. Some years later the building of the permanent hospital was begun, and the formal opening ceremony took place in 1929. The hospital had 20 beds and full medical and surgical facilities. This selfless service continued until the outbreak of the Second World War, when the
premises were designated as a First Aid Post, which meant the compulsory closing of the wards. After the war it was obvious that so small a hospital with limited resources could not offer to patients the full range of services available in the larger hospitals, and in 1947 the decision was taken to concentrate on the care of the elderly. This work still goes on against the still strong spiritual background which has been evident since its foundation, and the Mission has enlarged the scope of its activities by opening or taking over three country and seaside homes for the elderly.

The Public Health Centre, in Grange Road, provides certain consultative clinics, including a chest clinic, a physiotherapy department, an X-ray department and an orthoptic department, the latter opened in 1953 and now well established. The Centre plays an important part in the health of the Borough, and the number of out-patient attendances and treatments is striking evidence of its usefulness.

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The functions of the Bermondsey Council of Social Service, of which the Mayor is President, include the rewarding task of caring for the old people and those who are physically handicapped.

Much of the practical work necessarily falls on the Welfare Organiser, Miss A. English, M.A.O.T., S.R.N., who can be contacted at the Town Hall (BER 4726). One of her chief duties is to visit regularly physically handicapped people, in an effort to make life easier for those who cannot help themselves. Apart from this, many other means of achieving the same object have been found. During the summer a “Not Forgotten” coach collects people for a day in the country, lunch being taken in Kent and tea in Surrey, an unforgettable experience for many who have not left their homes for years. A Christmas party, in the presence of the Mayor, is held in Lady Gomm House, where the guests are entertained to a puppet show and each given a parcel of good things, presented by various local firms. Similar parcels are taken to those unable to be present.

A club has been formed at Lady Gomm House, and despite initial difficulties, mainly connected with transport, it has now become a valuable contribution in the good cause. Billiards are provided for those who find themselves able to play, while others play cards and games or sit and chat, “very happy to be in the outside world for a while”.

The Council’s most urgent needs are means of transport to lighten the task of visiting homes, help by volunteers to lift guests on and off the coach for their weekly visit to the club, and of course more help financially. Expenditure on organisation is kept rigidly to the absolute minimum, and the Council hope that the generosity of the people and firms in the Borough will enable them to increase the scope of their work for the physically handicapped.

The Council also have two standing, and financially independent, committees, the Council for the Welfare of the Blind and the Council for the Welfare of Old People. These function on the lines indicated by their titles, and do much to make the lives of the blind and the aged more enjoyable. Old People’s Clubs are organised under the aegis of the Old People’s Welfare Council and a meals service for homebound old people is in operation. The Borough Council give financial assistance to this very worth-while work.
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AMBULANCE SERVICE
The London County Council provides the following ambulance services free of charge:
1. Accidents (wherever occurring) and sudden illness (in the street, public place or place of employment). The ambulance may be called by private, public or police telephone; dial 999.
2. Very urgent illness at home. For conveyance to hospital, provided a doctor certifies the case is one of life and death and arrangements have been made with a hospital for admission. Telephone: WAT. 6000, NEW. 2645, REL. 3622, CEN. 6301, or REG. 4000.
3. Maternity cases. Normally the expectant mother has booked a bed at a hospital or nursing home, and has a white card (Form LAS 23) with full instructions for summoning the ambulance. In case of emergency in the street or public place, act as in (1) above. In all other cases a doctor or midwife must apply.
4. Other illness. For removal to and from hospital, etc., provided the ambulance is ordered by the hospital, by the Emergency Bed Service, or in certain circumstances by a private doctor. Apply in writing or by telephone to WAT. 3311.

AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION, St. John
Local Branch: The Bermondsey Settlement, Farncombe St., S.E.16. (BER. 2127).

AMBULANCE BRIGADE, St. John
Local Branch: No. 33 (Bermondsey) Division, Chaucer Institute, Weston Street, S.E.1. (HOP. 3230).

ANIMALS
People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals, 154 St. James’s Road, S.E.1. (BER. 1206).

AREA OF BOROUGH—1,503 acres

ASSISTANCE—NATIONAL

BAND OF HOPE UNION
Bermondsey Band of Hope Union: Bermondsey Gospel Mission, 1/7 Jamaica Road, S.E.16.
Secretary: Miss M. Brown, 39 Sandrock Road, S.E.13. (TID. 4196).

BANKS
Barclays: 177 Jamaica Road, S.E.16, and 248 New Kent Road, S.E.1.
Lloyd’s: 56 Old Kent Road, S.E.1.
London Trustee Savings: 255 Southwark Park Road, S.E.16.
Midland: 98 Jamaica Road, S.E.16, 106 Bermondsey Street, S.E.1.
280 Old Kent Road, S.E.1, 345 Jamaica Road, S.E.16.
239 Southwark Park Road, S.E.16.
Westminster: Tower Bridge, 201 Tooley Street, S.E.1.
BIRDS
Bermondsey and District Cage Birds Society. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. O. Wilson, 93 Gostermwood Street, S.E.8.

BLIND—WELFARE OF
Chief Officer, Welfare Department, London County Council, 5 Princes Row, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1. (VIC. 0162), District Office: 283 Tooley Street, S.E.1. (HOP. 1772), Local Welfare of the Blind Committee: Hon. Secretary: Mrs. L. M. Brown, 320 Jamaica Road, S.E.16.

BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE
South London Transfusion Centre, 38 Stanley Road, Sutton, Surrey. (VIG. 8221).

BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY
Local Branch: Bermondsey Town Hall, Spa Road, S.E.16. (BER. 2441).

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Bermondsey & Rotherhithe Chamber of Commerce. Hon. Secretary: Mrs. E. Westbrook, 26 Rotherhithe New Road, S.E.16.

CHARITIES
United Charities of St. Olave, St. Thomas and St. John. Clerk: F. Richardson, Esq., 6 Druid Street, S.E.1. (HOP. 2530).

CHILDREN
Invalid Children's Aid Association, Area 4—195 Old Kent Road, S.E.1. (HOP. 5433).
Save the Children Fund: Queen's House Club, 47 Rotherhithe Street, S.E.16.
Children's Care (L.C.C.), Area Children's Officer: 128 Brook Drive, S.E.11. (REL. 1271).
Children's (School) Care Committee. Local Office: 68b Old Kent Road, S.E.1. (ROD. 5555).

CHURCHES AND CHAPELS:
Church of England:

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