

GLAMORGAN RECORD OFFICE/ARCHIFYDY MORGANNWG

Reference code: GB 214 BK

Title: BOROUGH OF KENFIG

Date(s) 1396/7-1998

Level of description: Fonds (level 2)

Extent: 3 boxes; 8 vols.; 1 bdle.; c.0.36 cubic metres

Name of creator(s) Borough of Kenfig, Kenfig Corporation Property and Kenfig Corporation Trust

Administrative/Biographical history

The Borough of Kenfig was founded in medieval times, with the earliest surviving charter dating from 1396/7. This was granted by Thomas le Despenser, lord of Glamorgan, on 16 February 1396/7, and recites an earlier one issued by his father, Edward, in 1360. The 1396/7 charter granted the burgesses of Kenfig numerous rights and privileges which included:

- Freedom from certain tolls arising from repairs to town walls, bridges and paving.
- Exemption from charges for use of the quay and for breaking ground to erect stalls and booths.
- Right to elect 3 bailiffs from themselves every year, one of whom was charged with assisting the constable of the castle in the administration of the town.
- Right to appoint two ale-tasters.
- Exemption from imprisonment in the castle if any of the townsfolk beyond the castle gate or drawbridge would stand bail for the burgess unless he had committed a felony, or offended the lord or his household.
- Right to hold courts to deal with anyone who violated the town's ordinances, or who had interfered with their privileges or possessions.
- Right to form a merchant guild for the purpose of controlling the town's trade (no stranger was allowed to set up a stall within the town, or brew ale, unless he paid a contribution to the guild merchants and all outside traders had to do business in the town's markets or fairs and not elsewhere).
- Right to hold two fairs each year. One being held for eight days from the eve of St. James (24 July), known as Gwyl Mabsant. The second annual fair was on the Tuesday of Whitsun week.
- Right of common pasture at Cefn Cribbwr, east of Pyle, and in Kenfig Down, together with one hundred perches of arable land lying eastwards of Mawdlan Church.

In addition smallholdings of a few acres, which were called burgages, were allotted to the burgesses for a fixed rent paid to the lord. Houses were built on them and they had the right to lease or dispose of their burgages as they saw fit.

Further charters were granted in 1421 by Richard Beauchamp, earl of Worcester, lord le Despenser, and of Bergevenny and in 1423 by Isabel, countess of Worcester, lady la Despenser of Glamorgan, but these merely confirm their predecessors.

The boundaries of the Borough of Kenfig lay roughly to the west of Pyle, including Kenfig Higher, Llanfihangel, Kenfig Castle, Kenfig Down and Kenfig Burrows. The boundaries are shown in detail on the plan in the Scheme of Management for Kenfig Corporation Trust (ref. BK/184). The plan also shows the subsequent changes to the Borough boundaries.

The Borough's officials comprised of the portreeve who was chosen annually from burgesses who were in-dwellers, with the approval of the constable of the castle, and also the aldermen, recorder (or town clerk), sergeant of mace, ale tasters and hayward, who was responsible for impounding stray cattle. A list of the constables of the castle and portreeves are published in *The Story of Kenfig* by A. Leslie Evans, Port Talbot, 1960 (Glamorgan Record Office library ref. 83/4).

Various courts were held in the Borough. The court leet and view of frankpledge was held bi-annually in May and October. Its duties included the administration of justice in the Borough and the election of officials. The court baron and court of pleas were held monthly before the portreeve. The majority of cases involved the straying of animals. All of the courts eventually fell into decay with the rise of county courts.

Before the passing of the Reform Act of 1832, Kenfig Borough joined those of Cardiff, Cowbridge, Llantrisant, Aberavon, Neath, Swansea and Lougher to send a member to parliament. Subsequently, the Borough formed part of the Swansea parliamentary district and later the Aberavon district.

The ancient Borough virtually came to an end when its corporation was dissolved in 1886 as a result of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1883. The Charity Commissioners empowered to deal with its affairs set up the Kenfig Corporation Property, formed of a committee of twelve people (including representatives from local authorities) charged with the administration of the Borough property. Under a new scheme of management issued by the Charity Commissioners in 1998 the Kenfig Corporation Property was renamed the Kenfig Corporation Trust.

BK/1-176 were originally deposited in the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth in 1944. In 1963 the Trustees agreed that the records should be transferred to the Glamorgan Record Office and the transfer took place in August 1964. Since then the Record Office has received several additional deposits.

Scope and content

The records include charters and transcripts of them, ordinances of the town, a survey, minutes of the various courts, suit rolls, account books, admissions of burgesses and records of Kenfig Corporation Property and Kenfig Corporation Trust.

Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information

All records offered have been accepted and listed

Conditions governing access

Items containing information on named Individuals may be closed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and Record Office policy.

Photocopies of the Borough of Kenfig charters should be consulted by searchers instead of the originals which are in a fragile condition.

Access to BK/181 is restricted.

Conditions governing reproduction

Normal Glamorgan Record Office conditions apply.

Language/Scripts of material

English, Latin

Physical characteristics and technical requirements

The majority of the collection is in good condition with the exception of the charters BK/1-3 which are in poor condition.

Finding aids

Item level list available

Related units of description

Minute book of court leet, view of frankpledge, court baron and court of pleas, 1817-1853, DX906/1.

Date(s) of descriptions

November 2002