

GLAMORGAN RECORD OFFICE/ARCHIFYDY MORGANNWG

Reference code : **GB 214 BC/LB**

Title : **CARDIFF LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH**

Dates of creation : **1850 - 1879**

Level of description: **Sub-fonds (level 2.5)**

Extent : **16 vols; 0.08 cubic metres**

Name of creator

Borough of Cardiff, acting as Cardiff Local Board of Health

Administrative history

Local boards of health were set up under the Public Health Act of 1848 (11 and 12 Vict. c.23), amended by the Local Government Act of 1858 (21 and 22 Vict. c.98). These Acts did not impose a uniform system of local public health authorities on the whole country simultaneously, but enabled individual localities, following certain procedures, to adopt the provisions of the Acts and become local boards of health if they so wished. Consequently, local boards were set up at different dates in different areas, and in some areas none were set up at all. They were usually set up only at the request of local inhabitants (a petition of one tenth of the ratepayers had to be presented) but in areas with a very high death rate it was possible for the Acts to be imposed by the General Board of Health.

It was not until the passing of the Public Health Act of 1872 (35 and 36 Vict. ch.79) that an attempt was made to establish a comprehensive system of local authorities for public health matters. The country was divided by the Act into urban sanitary and rural sanitary districts. Where local boards of health had been set up, these became the local authorities in the urban sanitary districts (except in municipal boroughs, where the borough council was the sanitary authority). The poor law boards of guardians became responsible for public health in rural sanitary districts, which consisted of all those parts of the poor law unions which were not included in urban sanitary district. In 1875, a new Public Health Act (38 and 39 Vict. ch.55) revised, consolidated and superseded all previous acts relating to public health.

Local boards of health were responsible for matters relating to public health and civic amenities: the provision of a water supply and sewerage, the cleansing of streets, maintenance of highways, approval of building plans, registration of slaughter houses, and provision of parks, as well as other functions. They were also in some cases responsible for burial grounds, although in some areas these were provided by separate burial boards. The boards appointed a salaried clerk, treasurer, surveyor, inspector of nuisances, and usually a medical officer of health, although this was not compulsory until 1872.

Local boards of health were supervised centrally to a greater or lesser extent, first by the General Board of Health (1848-58), then by the Local Government Act Office, a department of the Home Office, (1858-71), and finally by the Local Government Board (1871-94).

In Glamorgan, twenty boards of health were set up between 1848 and 1894:

Aberdare (1854)	Merthyr Tydfil (1850)
Barry and Cadoxton (1888)	Mountain Ash (1867)
Bridgend (1851)	Ogmore and Garw (1887)
Briton Ferry (1864)	Oystermouth (1874)
Caerphilly (1893)	Penarth (1875)
Canton (1859 - 1875)	Pontypridd (1873)
Cardiff (1850 - 1875)	Porthcawl (1893)
Cwmdu (Maesteg) (1858)	Roath (1859 - 1875)
Glyncorrwg (1893)	Swansea (1848)
Margam (1884)	Ystradyfodwg (Rhondda) (1877)

Note that Cowbridge was created an urban sanitary district in 1888, out of the Bridgend and Cowbridge rural sanitary district, but the sanitary authority for the district was Cowbridge Borough Council, not a local board of health. Strictly speaking, boards set up under the 1848 Act were called 'local boards of health', and those established under the 1858 Act were simply 'local boards', although this distinction does not seem to have been made consistently.

Cardiff Borough Council was constituted the Local Board of Health for Cardiff in September 1850, having adopted the provisions of the 1848 Public Health Act following an enquiry carried out by Thomas Webster Rammell, inspector of the General Board of Health, on the petition of one tenth of the ratepayers. The Council acting as Local Board of Health held separate meetings from the Borough Council; it also set up a number of committees (including the Cabs and Lighting, Lighting and Water, and Public Works Committees), which reported to it, as did the officers it appointed to carry out Local Board of Health work. In August 1875, with the extension of the boundaries of the Borough of Cardiff to include Canton and Roath, the Canton and Roath Local Boards were amalgamated with the Cardiff Local Board of Health. In November 1875 it was decided that the Local Board of Health should no longer meet separately, but that business should be transacted, and reports of committees and officers received, at special meetings of the Borough Council. From this date, records for the Council acting as Local Board of Health are consequently not kept separately, but form part of the main series of Borough Council minutes and committee minutes.

Bibliography

Record Sources for Local History by Philip Riden (Record Office library reference R/694) gives in chapter five a brief account of the development of local boards of health.

'*A Sanitary survey of Glamorganshire*', by William Williams, medical officer of health for the Glamorgan County Council, published in 1895 (Record Office library reference G/134) contains useful information on the urban sanitary and rural sanitary

districts in Glamorgan, at the time of their change to urban district councils and rural district councils. (The surveys were carried out between 1893 and 1895.)

'Investment in Public Health Provision in the Mining Valleys of South Wales 1860-1914', by Hamish Richards, in *Modern South Wales. Essays in Economic History*, edited by Colin Baber and L.J. Williams. (Record Office library reference W/532)

Trade directories also give useful brief details on Local Boards of Health.

Census returns (enumerator's books) for 1871 give the local board, and those for 1881 and 1891 give the urban sanitary district, in which any particular locality falls; they can thus be useful for determining the areas covered by individual boards.

Ordnance Survey maps, first edition (c. 1875), six-inch to the mile scale, also show the boundaries of urban sanitary districts.

Rammell's *Report to the General board of Health on....the sanitary condition...of the town of Cardiff*, 1850 (Record Office library reference C/140).

Cardiff. A History of the City, by William Rees contains in section III, pages 314-20, information on the activities of the Local Board of Health and the provision of sewerage and water supply in Cardiff. (Record Office library reference number C/82).

Dates of accumulation

1850 - 1875

Custodial history

The custodial history of these records has not been documented, but they appear to have remained in the custody of Cardiff Borough Council.

Immediate source of acquisition

The records were transferred from Cardiff Central Library in 1975 (accession no. 3506).

Content of collection

Minutes, 1850 - 1879 (incomplete, but including committee minutes for the period 1875 - 1879); register of hackney carriages and drivers, 1860 - 1866; register of costs of private improvements and house drainage, 1861 - 1871; letter books, 1851 - 1877.

Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information

All records offered have been accepted and listed.

Accruals

None.

System of arrangement

See detailed list.

Legal status

Non-public records.

Access conditions

No restrictions on access.

Copyright/Conditions governing reproduction

Usual Glamorgan Record Office conditions apply.

Language of material

English

Physical characteristics (condition)

Most items in good condition. No items unfit for production.

Finding aids

A detailed list is available.

Location of originals

The collection is original.

Existence of copies

None known.

Related material in the Glamorgan Record Office

Bu/B C	Records of Cardiff Burial Board
B/C 4/6-9	Cardiff Borough Council Minutes containing records of the meetings dealing with Local Board of Health matters after November 1875.
B/C 16	Cardiff Borough Council, Sanitary Committee minutes

Associated material held in other repositories

Records relating to individual local boards of health can be found among the records of the General Board of Health (1848-58), the Local Government Act Office (1858-71), and the Local Government Board (1871-94) held at the Public Record Office in London.

Publication note

None known.

Note

Description compiled in the Glamorgan Record Office in November 1999.