

## GLAMORGAN RECORD OFFICE/ARCHIFDY MORGANNWG

Reference code : **GB 214 LBPOR**

Title : **PORTHCAWL LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH**

Dates of creation : **1893 - 1895**

Level of description: **Fonds**

Extent : **1 vol.**

### **Name of creator**

Porthcawl Local Board (1893 - 1894); Porthcawl Urban District Council (1895 - 1974)

### **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 ch.55) revised, consolidated and superseded all previous acts relating to public health.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. Members of the boards were elected by all those in the local board area who paid rates; a system of multiple votes based on the value of the ratepayers' property was in operation and there was a property qualification for those

who wished to stand for election. 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 and urban sanitary districts were superseded in January 1895 by urban district councils, under the Local Government Act of 1894 (56 and 57 Vict. c.73). Under the same Act, rural sanitary districts ceased to be the responsibility of the poor law unions and separate rural district councils were established. The powers and boundaries of the districts remained unchanged, and in many cases the members and officers of the authorities also remained the same, although elections for the new district councils were held in December 1894. For these reasons, it is not unusual to find that the minute book used by the local board of health for the urban sanitary district remained in use as the minute book of the successor urban district council.

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)
Glyncorwg (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. Similarly, Cardiff Borough became the urban sanitary authority for Cardiff in 1875. 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.

*Porthcawl Local Board* was created in 1893 out of the Bridgend and Cowbridge Rural Sanitary District. It covered the parish of Newton Nottage, including the town of Porthcawl and the villages of Nottage and Newton. The Local Board was succeeded in 1894 by Porthcawl Urban District Council. The minute book used to record the meetings of the Local Board continued in use as the minute book of the Urban District Council, and the volume of Local Board minutes consequently contains the minutes of the Urban District Council until June 1895.

### *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* 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.

### **Dates of accumulation**

1893 - 1895

### **Custodial history**

The records were inherited by Porthcawl Urban District Council in 1895.

### **Immediate source of acquisition**

The records were deposited by Porthcawl Urban District Council in 1947 (accession no. 42, file 11/0118/10).

### **Content of collection**

Minutes, 1893 - 1895

### **Appraisal, destruction and scheduling information**

All records offered have been accepted and listed.

### **Accruals**

None.



**Publication note**

None known.

**Note**

These records are stored in an outside repository. They should be ordered at least a week in advance of an intended visit so that they can be brought into the Record Office for consultation in the search room.

Description compiled in the Glamorgan Record Office in November 1999.