Foreword

A progressive history of service

I have great pleasure in introducing this booklet, which catalogues the Annual Reports presented to this Authority, and its forerunners, about the work carried out in protecting the health of visiting seafarers and the local community.

In his final annual report to the Authority in 1907, Ebenezer Davies, retiring Port Medical Officer, mentioned that he’d worked for the Joint Board for 21 years ‘as presently constituted’ thus marking 2011 as the 125th year of service by the Authority across Swansea Bay.

The roots of service by the Authority can, however, be traced back even further. The Sanitary Act 1866 subjected ships to the jurisdiction of the Swansea Local Board of Health as ‘Nuisance Authority’ in whose district they moored making them subject to inspection as if they were houses - ‘Port health’ had become a statutory function for the first time. It remained a function of that Board until the Public Health Act 1872 reconstituted the Board as an Urban Sanitary Authority and empowering it to constitute a Port Sanitary Authority.

In 1873, Swansea Town Council adopted a resolution authorising a Swansea Port Sanitary Authority to control and maintain the health regulations at the port. The Public Health Act 1875 consolidated powers of the Authority and established regulations to deal with infectious disease, nuisances and defects on board vessels, together with the inspection of food & other cargo.

Port Sanitary Authorities gained further statutory powers under subsequent Acts of Parliament such as the Infectious Disease (Notification) Act 1889 and the Public Health Act 1896. Following the Public Health Act 1936, the Authority was renamed Swansea Port Health Authority only to become known as Swansea Bay Port Health Authority, following a new Port Order in 1991.

As jurisdiction of the Authority expanded, offices were established throughout the district. In Swansea, its main offices were originally located at 10 Somerset Place. In 1970, the offices relocated to 16 Cambrian Place until redevelopment of the area necessitated a move to Royal Buildings, Princess Way. Subsequently in 1991, they were again relocated to the present building alongside the Kings Dock Lock to improve service delivery and maintain the Authority’s presence and profile within the port estate.

Currently the Authority is responsible for maintaining public and environmental health provision within the maritime area landward of an imaginary line drawn between Mumbles Head and Nash Point, Porthcawl, including the ports of Swansea, Neath, Port Talbot and Porthcawl.

Councillor John Hague,
Chairman 2011 – 2012
The work of port health authorities is rarely headline material, only being brought to public attention in times of notorious incidents such as during the pandemic infectious disease outbreaks of HIV/AIDS, Swine flu, SARS and the introduction of Foot & Mouth into the UK. Benchmark incidents include the Typhoid outbreak in Aberdeen which had been imported in contaminated corned beef from Argentina whilst and a deadly outbreak of Yellow fever in Swansea in 1865 remains a chilling reminder of the consequences of inadequate preventive controls being maintained at our ports.

**YELLOW FEVER IN SWANSEA, 1865**

The disease was borne aboard the barque ‘Hecla’ which had carried copper ore from Santiago de Cuba to Swansea in the Autumn of that year when the ambient temperature was described as tropical. 27 people were reported to have been infected - 15 of whom died. A small number of mosquitoes infected with the yellow fever virus, transported on the vessel, established an epidemic of yellow fever in the town. Two of the deaths occurred in Llanelli because of a sloop being tied up alongside the ‘Hecla’ before sailing to Penclawdd. It cannot be assumed that the episode will not be repeated.

The ‘Hecla’ on sailing for Swansea had left behind one-seaman dead of YF, and another in hospital. On board were four officers, ten seamen and two passengers. During the voyage, three of the crew were buried at sea, their deaths being recorded as due to YF. Two others who had suffered from fever were recovering on arrival in Swansea. A sixth, James Saunders, had fallen ill on the 27th August. Despite this history, the master did not raise a quarantine flag on entering the Bristol Channel, where he took on board a pilot and some additional seamen to assist his depleted crew work the vessel into port. The ‘Hecla’ tied up in the North Dock at 9.00 a.m. on Saturday, 9th September, when the sick man, said to be suffering from dropsy, was lowered over the side and taken to a lodging house. Before he died he had been seen by three doctors (all of whom diagnosed YF), and by the town's Mayor. The ‘Hecla’ began unloading on 13th September, whilst in the meantime, the passengers and crew had already dispersed. Saunders' death led to questions, which quickly revealed the true history of the voyage, and a series of public health measures were belatedly put into effect. The corpse, shrouded in a tarred sheet, was buried at once, and his bedding and clothing were destroyed. The Sanitary Inspector, together with a lecturer in chemistry at the Normal College in Swansea, was sent to undertake appropriate fumigation of the passengers and crew who had been located by the police. A ships' rigger who was working on a vessel close to the 'Hecla' boarded her briefly on 9th September. Six days later he fell ill, and was subsequently diagnosed as suffering from YF from which he recovered. The second local resident to fall ill was a customs officer whose death had precipitated the investigation by Dr Buchanan, the Medical Officer of Health.

This outbreak seems to have been the largest of its kind in the UK. Other reported smaller incidents involved single rather doubtful cases at Swansea in 1843, 1851 and 1864; and at Southampton in 1866 and 1867, which apparently did not spread beyond passengers and crew who were ill or had died on board while, their vessels were in quarantine after arrival in the Solent. There should be no complacency because this happened nearly 150 years ago - recent cases of ‘airport malaria’ in Britain show that anopheline mosquitoes can now travel by jumbo jet and transmit infection on arrival in the UK. Given increasingly unusually hot weather, and the over-heated interior of airport terminals, who is to say what vectors of disease will follow suit?

The Plan below depicts the distribution of cases during the outbreak. Fabian Street (now Fabian Way) and the Strand still exist whilst the North Dock has been filled in.

Key: H:- the ‘Hecla’  E: - the ‘Eleanor’  Nos: - Locations of the suspected sites of infection

**YELLOW FEVER VACCINATION CERTIFICATES**

Yellow Fever still accounts annually for over 20,000 deaths globally. International vaccination certificates, introduced in the 19th Century, are still required under current International Health Regulations in respect of preventing the spread of the disease. The World Health Organisation, have strict rules regarding designation of vaccination centres. Tawe Medical Centre, Swansea provides the closest local vaccination service to ports under the jurisdiction of this Authority.
AUTHORS OF ANNUAL REPORTS

On the 9th August 1873, the Local Government Board constituted the Swansea Port Sanitary Authority, assigning it duties and powers arising from the Nuisances Removals Act 1855 as amended and the Public Health Act 1872. One requirement was the appointment of a Medical Officer of Health and an Inspector of Nuisances regarding ships, vessels, boats, sailors, passengers and persons employed in or about such ships, vessels or boats within the Authority’s district, which originally included Swansea, Neath and Briton Ferry.

George Buchanan, the first Port Medical Officer of Health, retained his position until being replaced by Ebenezer Davies in 1892. Such reports are valuable tools in acquiring facts about sanitary controls at the ports under jurisdiction of the Authority, vessel traffic and conditions found onboard vessels.

From 1894 - 1971, the reports were presented to the Authority by the Port Medical Officers of Health (PMOH) and thereafter by the Directors of Port Health Services following local government re-organisation in 1972.

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Originally, the reports concentrated upon the detection of infectious diseases such as smallpox, cholera, enteric fever, erysipelas, typhoid, measles and yellow fever. The detection and remedy of nuisances onboard vessels were also recorded by the PMOHs.

The reporting of imported food inspections, shellfish monitoring, pollution control and health education are now also reported to the Authority.

Mitigation of the international spread of infectious disease remains a prime function of the Authority.
ITEMS OF INTEREST REPORTED OVER THE YEARS:

1894 Smallpox at Port Talbot – case onboard SS ‘Rheubin a’ from Lisbon taken to Swansea where, fortunately, he made a complete recovery.

1897 Disinfection of various vessels undertaken following cases of Cholera. Other reports included mitigating the introduction of Typhoid, Diphtheria, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

1921 Queens Dock opened in July 1920.

1925 Officers had dealt with several vessels where seafarers had died of smallpox whilst on passage to Swansea, ensuring that their personnel effects were disposed of safely.

1926 Following the arrival of vessels at Queens Dock from the Middle East, the PMOH reported the following extract from a speech given by the Chairman of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company at its annual meeting in London, indicating progress of port sanitation at Abadan:

‘I am pleased to report that the measures taken by the Company, costly though they were, have been amply justified. The health of the general community of Europeans, Persians etc has never been better. Epidemics of plague and cholera – so distressing a feature of life in many parts of the East – are now, I trust and believe, a thing of the past both at Abadan and elsewhere where the Anglo-Persian Company is at work’.

However, in 1927, the PMOH reported a cholera outbreak in Abadan and great increase in the prevalence of cholera. Complacency has therefore no place in controlling the international spread of disease!

1928 The International Sanitary Convention signed in Paris on the 21st June 1926, was ratified by GB in March 1928. Article 28 required ‘Deratting’ Certificates to be held onboard vessels following inspection by port health authorities. Deratting of vessels was thereby added to the Authority’s statutory duties which also included the inspection of shore & shipboard water supplies, fish & shellfish examination, inspection of imported food, infectious disease control, the inspection of public health nuisance and the medical inspection of aliens.

1933 Arrangements were formalised for this Authority to issue deratting certificates in Llanelli on behalf of the Borough Council.

1934 Four cases of Beri Beri (caused by malnutrition) were detected on a vessel at Port Talbot, all recovered in hospital at Swansea.

1935 Annual Reports to be prepared in accordance with the Article 17(5) Sanitary Officers (Outside London) Regulations 1935. The new format endured as a statutory duty until local government re-organisation in 1972. Following Members’ wishes, present day reports generally remain in this format.

1936 The Public Health Act introduced new measures relating to port health service provision including procedures to deal with nuisances, which have continued until the present day all be that they are subject to amendment and extensive case law.

1937 Revised instructions issued by the Department of Health regarding the survey of accommodation on ships. PHOs asked to co-operate with Board of Trade inspectors – the forerunner of the present day Memorandum of Understanding, signed between the Association of Port Health Authorities and the Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) in 2004, to facilitate effective use of staff resource and improve consistence in ship inspections.

1939 Staff superannuation scheme introduced

Modified annual reports (with minimal detail) were introduced during the war years.

1945 Amended Port Health Regulations introduced to strengthen controls.

1948 The Authority hosted the annual conference of the Association of Sea & Air Port Health Authorities (ASAPHA) in Swansea for the first time.

1953 The PMOH, E.B. Meyrick, persuaded the Regional Hospital Board of Wales to establish a Static Mass Radiography Service in one of our clinics - a first in the UK. This offered seafarers a similar service to that provided for the general public.

The Dangerous Drugs Regulations authorised the PMOH to sanction supplies of scheduled drugs to vessels.

1958 The Dark Smoke (Permitted Periods) (Vessels) Regulations came into operation giving the Authority powers to mitigate smoke pollution from shipping.

1965 Staff complement reported as comprising PMOH and Deputy plus two assistants, Chief Port Health Inspector and Deputy plus five assistants, Rat Searcher, two clerical assistants, a Clerk to the Authority and a Treasurer.
1968  Members of the Authority visited the new £20m deep-water harbour facility at Port Talbot, which became operational in 1970. They also visited the newly completed Ferry Terminal at Swansea.

1969  International Health Regulations were established by World Health Organisation to regularise worldwide health controls on shipping and aircraft.

The Authority hosted an ASAPHA conference for the second time. This was the 70th such conference and was attended by 170 delegates representing some 50 PHAs. The Authority also hosted a visit to Wales by Mr Balarabe of Lagos Port Health Authority, Nigeria - a fellow of the World Health Organisation.

Port Health Staff pictured outside 10 Somerset Place, in 1959

Pictured are Authority staff members: Cliff Owens, Arthur Davies, Dan Jenkins (Chief Port Sanitary Inspector), Tom Richards, John Prosser, Yvonne David, (Clerk/Typist) and Peter Jones (Rat searcher)

1971  A new Fish Market opened in the Prince of Wales Dock replacing the former facility at the South Dock. By the turn of the century, this was to fall into disrepair, later to be re-established as restaurant and office accommodation in the prestigious SA1 development.

1972  An inaugural ferry service was established between Swansea and Dublin.

Closure of Port Talbot Docks with all arrivals to the new Deep Water Harbour.

1973  The 100th and final Annual Report to the Authority by a PMOH reported that the Local Government Act 1972 had altered boundaries and responsibilities of the Authority, which comprised eighteen members representing Swansea City Council, Neath Borough Council, Afan Borough Council, Ogwr District Council and Vale of Glamorgan District Council. The Port Medical Officer of Health became the Port Medical Officer having ‘designated alternative’ PMO assistants.

1974  The first Annual Report to the Authority by a Director of Port Health Services.

1975  West Glamorgan County Council hosted an ASAPHA conference held in Swansea for the third time, the President of the Association being County Councillor Frank Bevan, CBE.

1979  Swansea lost its ferry link with Cork, which resumed in 1987 together with a containerised coal trade between Swansea Container Terminal and Belfast.

1984  The Public Health (Control of Disease) Act introduced a new basis for constituting Joint Board port health authorities. The Act remains in force subject to a revision in 2010.

1989  Following abolition of the National Docks Labour Scheme, it was hoped that the ports in Swansea Bay, due to the facilities at the ports and their location in the Bristol Channel, would achieve their full potential and increased trade.

This Authority assisted the British Red Cross in producing an information package for seafarers regarding HIV/AIDS infection, which had become of pandemic proportions. The package included an educational video produced by Aardman Productions (of Wallace and Grommit fame) translated into five languages.

A belated celebration of 100 years service by the Authority was held by luncheon at a local hotel.
1990 Following adoption of a new badge, the Municipal Mutual Insurance Company donated a Chairman’s badge of office to the Authority.

1991 A new Port Order came into force redefining the Authority’s boundary of jurisdiction

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 came into effect providing better control of emissions to air by introducing a permit system regarding handling operations and management of potentially dusty cargoes. Permits allow the Authority to attach, revoke and amend strict conditions to operations to ensure adequate controls.

1992 Grading and sample monitoring of shellfish harvest beds introduced across the EC under new regulations.

The Authority introduced a staff rota system to facilitate inspection of vessels arriving outside normal office hours. This increased the inspection rate of arrivals new to ports in Swansea Bay from 78% to 92%.

1994 Swansea Dry Dock refurbished and revived.

1996 The Local Government Act 1994 reorganisation of local authorities became effective with the introduction of 22 Unitary Authorities in Wales. Riparian Authorities represented on the Joint Board of nineteen members now included the City & County of Swansea and the County Borough Councils of Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend and the Vale of Glamorgan.

1997 To celebrate the ‘Year of the Seafarer’, the Authority contributed to the provision of a commemorative plaque, designed by the Director of Port Health Services, in the Maritime Museum.

1998 An amended Port Order re-defined the Authority’s area of jurisdiction.

The Authority adopted new staffing arrangements to comprise two full-time and one part-time Port Health Officer.

1999 A berth and storage facility handling forestry products was established at A & B sheds, Kings Dock.

A new waste water treatment plant opened adjacent to Queens Dock had an immediate and dramatic effect in improving the water quality in Swansea Bay.

2000 ‘Corus’, an amalgam of British Steel and a major Dutch steel producer, took over operations at Port Talbot Steel Works. The old dock at Port Talbot was re-opened attracting a new trade in exporting ground granulated blast furnace slag, a by-product of the steel making process, to be used in making durable concrete in combination with Portland cement.

2001 Restrictions were imposed on the Swansea / Cork ferry due to the foot and mouth outbreak resulting in reduced passenger traffic.

A major bulk cement handling facility was constructed at 6 Quay, Kings Dock, whilst a major investment by Associated British Ports at Phoenix Wharf, Kings Dock, established a facility for importing agri-fertilizer.

The Authority participated in a ‘Benchmarking Exercise’, the forerunner of the ‘Best Practice Guides’ regulating port health service delivery in the UK.
2003 The ‘SARS’ pandemic spreading from its original focus in south China demanded consolidation of emergency measures at all UK points of entry to ensure identification of possible cases and their isolation / nursing care.

NHS re-organisation in Wales established Local Health Boards coterminous with the 22 Unitary Authorities. The PMO as Consultant in Communicable Disease Control (CCDC) has continued to provide advice to the Authority regarding infection control.

The Food Safety (Ships and Aircraft) (Wales) Order 2003 included ships in the definition of ‘premises’ thus enabling the control of food hygiene compliance on foreign going vessels.

The Authority contributed to the adoption of microbiological guidelines, sampling, disinfection and storage of water supplies on vessels throughout the UK.

2004 Petro-chemical handling at Queens Dock and Baglan Bay terminals was terminated.

The International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) became operational with increased port security arrangements being implemented throughout Swansea Bay port installations.

The SA1 development was reported as ‘proceeding at a pace’ in replacing derelict maritime buildings at the Prince of Wales dock with tree lined avenues serving apartment blocks, offices, hotels, restaurants and retail outlets.

The Authority hosted an APHA annual conference for the fourth time - Councillor Grenville Phillips being President of the Association.

The Civil Contingency Act 2004 conferred new duties on the Authority to act as a ‘Category 1 responder’ together with other enforcement agencies and the NPHS to formulate and maintain joint plans to mitigate local civil emergencies.

2005 A Merchant Navy Memorial, set in a landscaped area adjacent to the Prince of Wales Dock entrance, was established in SA1.

The revised International Health Regulations established a more rigorous ship inspection regime with Ship Sanitation Certification replacing the requirement on ships to carry Deratting Certificates. Amended Public Health (Ships Regulations) were subsequently introduced in 2007 to implement the new regime in the UK. Domestic legislation consolidating controls on conveyances (inc. ships, aircraft, trains and commercial vehicles) trading internationally are expected in 2012.

2006 The Swansea / Cork ferry service was suspended - to be reinstated in 2007 as a freight only service.

The arrival of the ‘Van Goch’ was the first such cruise vessel to berth at Swansea for 35 years.

Heavy pipe-laying equipment was imported at Swansea for the 113 mile pipeline carrying liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Milford to a distribution hub in Gloucestershire.

A new import trade in wood pulp for the new tissue factory at Baglan Bay began at D Shed, Kings Dock.

2008 A ‘Port Medical Officer Handbook’, produced by the Authority, was adopted across Wales and by some ports in England. The handbook clarifies responsibilities under appropriate legislation, port locations, infectious disease outbreak control plans etc to simplify liaison between port health officers and port medical officers in case of emergency.

The Merchant Navy Welfare committees at Swansea, Cardiff and Newport were merged to form the South Wales Ports Welfare Committee. Concerned with the welfare of seafarers this comprised representatives from port health authorities, marine charities, ship & port operators and shipping agents.

2009 The Swine Flu pandemic originating in Mexico rehearsed the contingency plans already developed to respond to an expected flu pandemic.

The Mission to Seafarers at Swansea closed as a consequence of the continued downturn in shipping movements.

2010 The Port Order was amended to account for changes made to the Public Health Control of Disease Act 1984.

The Swansea / Cork ferry service now operated by Fastnet Line resumed.

A mussel farm was established at Queens Dock, Swansea. After a Sanitary Survey and initial sampling, the quality of the mussel flesh gained an ‘A’ Classification in respect of the bacteriological quality of the shellfish – the only mussel harvest area to hold such classification in the UK. It is hoped that commercial harvesting of the shellfish will commence in the latter half of 2012.
TIDES OF CHANGE IN THE MARITIME TRADE IN SWANSEA BAY

SWANSEA

Swansea’s development as a major port began during the early 18th Century when a rapid expansion in local coal mining and iron production, together with the introduction of copper smelting and tinplate manufacture resulted in the establishment of many new wharves along the banks of the River Tawe.

As trade increased, it became necessary to provide more permanent harbour facilities. In 1791, the Swansea Harbour Trust was therefore founded to “repair, enlarge and preserve the Harbour of Swansea”. Its first task was to widen and deepen the entrance channel to allow access for the larger trading vessels of the day. In 1794, a stone lighthouse was erected on Mumbles Head to improve local navigation and, in 1809, two stone breakwaters were completed which enclosed and protected the river entrance and formed a small tidal harbour within the area known as Fabian’s Bay.

The continuing growth of traffic between the port and the collieries and smelting industries of the Swansea Valley required an improved transport system that led to the completion of the Swansea Canal between Ystradgynlais and Swansea in 1798 – an 18 mile long waterway connection contributing greatly to the development of Swansea’s maritime trade. Construction of the Neath & Swansea Junction (Tennant) Canal - opened in 1824 - provided a link between the Neath Canal at Aberdulais Basin and ‘Port Tennant’ in Fabian’s Bay, Swansea.

By this time, the local copper industry, which had begun with the commissioning of the Landore Copperworks in 1717, was flourishing due to the ready availability of high-grade anthracite essential to the copper-smelting process. During its peak in the middle of the 19th Century, seventeen of the eighteen copperworks in Great Britain were located within the Swansea area. As time went on, the techniques developed within this industry were adapted to other non-ferrous metals such as lead, zinc, tin, nickel, silver, and even gold. Swansea had become acknowledged as a world leader in the metallurgical processing and manufacture business - ‘Copperopolis’ was born.

To accommodate such rapid escalation, the Swansea Harbour Trust found it necessary to provide larger and more efficient port facilities, and so the Town Float – later to be known as the North Dock – was constructed by diverting the lower reach of the River Tawe into a new channel or ‘cut’, and forming an enclosed dock on the original course of the river bed. This work was completed in 1852 when the Swansea Dock Company also began constructing the South Dock on the west bank and foreshore of the River Tawe.

By 1870, the port was handling over 1.5 million tons annually, and in 1877, it was recorded that “there is no other harbour in the Kingdom where such an amount of work is done on a given space as at Swansea”. Such growth required further port facilities and so, in 1879, construction began of the Prince of Wales Dock. Completed in 1881 and extended to its present size in 1898, the dock is today the centrepiece of the new SA1 redevelopment scheme.

Despite a sharp decline in the local copper trade towards the end of the 19th Century, Swansea continued to prosper as a port, with coal exports alone running at over 2 million tonnes per year. Tinplate exports had also increased – from just 6,000 tons in 1875 to more than 250,000 tons in 1895. Further port expansion was again required and, in 1905, work commenced on Kings Dock and the Queens Dock, which was completed in 1920.

With the Kings Dock in operation the exportation of coal, coke and patent fuel quickly grew, reaching a record level of 5.5 million tons in 1913. Tinplate exports reached their peak in 1924, when 621,000 tons were shipped through the port. However, the early 20th Century saw the beginning of a change in industrial energy resources from coal to oil, and the first oil refinery to be built in the UK - the Llandarcy Refinery – was completed in 1918. Facilities were developed within Queens Dock to cater for this new traffic and, during the height of the trade in the early 1950’s, oil imports and exports through the port totalled around 8 million tons per year.

The development of the new docks system on the east side of the River Tawe, together with the progressive reduction of coal exports due to the increasing use of oil, resulted in the docks on the west side of the river becoming largely obsolete. The North Dock closed in 1930 – although the lower basin remained open until 1969 – and the South Dock closed in 1971, only to be thoroughly revitalised in later years later as Swansea’s prestigious Maritime Quarter.
Royal Opening of the Prince of Wales Dock

Pictured on the morning of the 18th October 1881 are Edward, Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra on the opening of the Prince of Wales Dock

The Prince of Wales operating the ceremonial gold and jewelled lever to open the main sluice

QUEENS DOCK.

Completed alongside the Kings Dock in 1909, what would later become known as Queens Dock was initially used both as a timber float, and for the accommodation of laid-up vessels waiting to load or discharge at the Kings Dock or Prince of Wales Dock wharves. It was not until 1919, when the Anglo Persian Oil Company began the construction of the UK’s very first oil refinery at nearby Skewen, that the future of the Queens Dock as a major oil terminal was consolidated. Somewhat belatedly, perhaps, the Queens Dock was officially named by King George V and Queen Mary on the 19th July 1920.

After more than 70 years in operation, the Llandarcy oil refinery has disappeared, as has the petro-chemical plant at Baglan Bay and sadly, there are therefore no more tankers to be seen in the Queens Dock.

In 2011, a local fisherman, Mr. Colin Thomas, agreed a lease with Associated British Ports to develop a mussel farm within the Queens Dock. Samples taken during the development phase of the farm proved to be of such good bacteriological quality that the harvest bed has obtained the only current ‘A’ classification for a commercial mussel production area in England and Wales.
Dry Docks at Swansea
During the 19th Century a total of nine dry docks were built at Swansea. Listed from north to south they included:-

The Villiers Dry Dock, built in 1852, and the Jersey Dry Dock were located on the west side of the River Tawe above the top lock of the North Dock, near what is today the southern end of Morfa Road.

The Phoenix Dry Dock alongside the top lock of the North Dock was, originally operated by the Ocean Dry Docks Co., and taken over by a Mr. W Meager in 1910 before going into liquidation and closing in 1916.

The Swansea Dry Dock, which later become known as the Albion Dry Dock was on the east side of the North Dock. This was owned and operated by the Swansea Dry Docks & Engineering Co. until being taken over by the Victoria Dry Docks Co. (Swansea) Ltd. in 1898, and later by the Ocean Dry Docks Co. in 1916.

The Central Graving Dock on the west bank of the River Tawe next to Weavers Flour Mills was constructed by the Central Graving Dock & Engineering Co. It was bought out by the Ocean Dry Docks Co. (Swansea) Ltd. in 1895, who operated the facility until going into liquidation in 1938.

The Cambrian Dry Docks were also on the west bank of the River Tawe, between the entrances to the North Dock and the South Dock. They were owned and operated by Harris Bros. and known as Harris Bros. Dry Docks Nos. 1 & 2. (These were variously referred to in later years as the Commercial Dry Docks or the Corporation Dry Docks.). Constructed in 1864, Harris Bros. Dry Dock No. 2 was completely rebuilt in 1895 and remained operational until the early 1960’s, after which it was converted into a slipway for the Swansea Yacht & Sub Aqua Club.

The Swansea Globe Dry Dock was built in 1859 within the South Dock itself by the Swansea Dry Docks & Engineering Co. and later taken over by the Victoria Dry Docks Co. (Swansea) Ltd. This was converted to a wet dock in 1908 and now forms part of the Swansea Marina.

The Prince of Wales Dry Dock opened in 1898 was the final dry dock to be built during the 19th Century. Located alongside the original lock entrance to the Prince of Wales Dock, the dry dock was owned and operated by the Prince of Wales Dry Dock Co. (Swansea) Ltd. The site of this former dry dock, which lies within the SA1 redevelopment area, is where the new lock entrance into the Prince of Wales Dock is being built today.

The Harris Bros. Dry Dock No. 3, also known as the Cambrian Dry Dock was in 1918 to be the first dry dock built in Swansea in the 20th Century. Built on the site of the original lock entrance to the South Dock Basin (a new entrance lock had been completed in 1903). This facility was later taken over by Consolidated Fisheries Ltd. for the dry-docking of trawlers, after which it was converted to a wet dock and is now a part of the Swansea Marina.

The Palmers Dry Dock was built in 1924, at the western end of Kings Dock by Palmers Shipbuilding & Iron Co. Ltd.

The Duke of Edinburgh Dry Dock the largest of Swansea’s dry docks, followed in 1959 alongside Palmers.

The Palmers and Duke of Edinburgh dry docks are the last to remain open at Swansea, having been operated over the years by various companies such as the Prince of Wales Dry Dock Co., C H Bailey Ltd., Trushippers Ltd., Bristol Channel Ship Repairers, George Prior Engineering, Harris Pye Ltd and now currently being refurbished by Swansea Dry Dock Ltd.

An artists impression of Swansea Docks during its’ boom period
Aberafan, originally a small natural harbour at the mouth of the River Afan, had been a coal port since the seventeenth century and, from around 1750, with the development of tramline connections to coal mines within the coastal area, the level of trade rapidly increased. The establishment of copper and iron industries towards the end of the 18th Century further augmented trade through the harbour. In 1834, parliamentary powers were obtained to improve the facilities of the port, and the ‘Aberavon Harbour Company’ was set up to undertake this work. A further Act of 1836 – in which the company was renamed the ‘Port Talbot Dock Company’, authorised the diversion of the River Afan into a new channel or ‘cut’, and the construction of a new dock on the original course of the river bed. This work was completed in 1837, and is considered to have been the first major dock ever to be constructed on the South Wales seaboard.

In 1874, the lock entrance to the new dock was enlarged, and in 1894, the ‘Port Talbot Railway & Dock Company’ was formed to further expand the capacity of the port. A large extension to the existing dock together with a new lock entrance was completed in 1898, and a railway system was built to connect the port with coalfields in the neighbouring Llynfi and Garw valleys. By the beginning of the 20th Century, the iron & steel producers in the Welsh Valleys were increasingly dependent on imported foreign ores and therefore relocated their industries nearer to the coast. The founding of the Port Talbot Steelworks in 1902 and the Margam Steelworks, in 1916, resulted in a significant increase in iron ore imports through Port Talbot Docks - imports that were to reach 300,000 tons annually by 1930 and 3,000,000 tons per year by 1960.

However, the dimensions of the entrance lock at Port Talbot meant that no ship carrying more than 10,000 tons of iron ore could enter the docks, and this restriction naturally precluded the use of the new large bulk carrying vessels that were able to transport iron ore at a much lower unit cost. Therefore, in 1966, work commenced on the construction of Port Talbot Tidal Harbour - an entirely new deep-water harbour facility situated to the south-west of the existing docks system. Completed in 1970, this was the first dry-bulk cargo terminal in the UK capable of accepting ships in excess of 100,000 deadweight tonnes. Further dredging in 1996 deepened the harbour by 2.6 metres, thereby increasing the maximum size of vessel that can be accommodated today to 180,000 deadweight tonnes.

In 1998, after being closed to shipping for more than a quarter of a century, the old docks at Port Talbot were re-opened to handle coastwise cargoes of ground and granulated blast-furnace slag for Civil & Marine’s new cement works at Rio Tinto Wharf. Other cargoes handled in the docks have included timber, sand, stone.
Pictured above are passengers boarding the ‘Balmoral’ at Briton Ferry on 28th August 2010. The popular pleasure cruiser was on its voyage from Neath to Ilfracombe for the first time in 60 years, marking the 175th anniversary of the Great Western Railway and the local connection with Sir Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the railways chief engineer who designed the dock at Briton Ferry.

In the 1850’s the Briton Ferry Floating Dock Company bought land from the Earl of Jersey to build Briton Ferry Docks. Opened in 1861, it consisted of an outer tidal basin and an inner floating dock where the water level was maintained by a single gate, which included a buoyancy chamber. In 1875, Louis Gustave Mouchel introduced reinforced concrete to Britain at Briton Ferry - the first building built entirely of reinforced concrete in the UK being constructed for the Weaver & Company mills at Swansea. After World War Two, many warships were scrapped up stream of the dock at Giants Grave. Work is underway to restore what remains of the unique Brunel Dock (which closed in 1959), for use by fishing boats and pleasure craft.

"Giants Grave" is a folk song about the ship-breaking industry at the Briton Ferry Docks. The chorus says

"And me and my old pals
With our hammers and spanners
We'd take out the fittings
We'd work until late
From Lisbon to Lagos
From Belfast to Boston
We'd salvage the cable
Steel rivets and plate"

**Porthcawl**

Construction of Porthcawl as a town started in the early 19th Century when it was decided to build a harbour to service the expanding coal and iron industries of the South Wales valleys. Following a decline in such trade, the harbour has now for many years been used for pleasure craft, fishing vessels and visits by passenger vessels of the Waverley Trust.

Regeneration of the waterfront is now underway by Bridgend County Borough Council. A new £26m Porthcawl Marina plan was recently revealed as a flagship development of the ‘Porthcawl Harbourside’ project launched in 2008. Proposed berths for 400 boats and yachts will make the marina one of the largest in the Bristol Channel and the plans incorporate a new outer harbour and lock, extensive facilities and new coastal defences. Construction will take several years creating around 480 jobs and once completed a potential 30 full time jobs as well as providing wider employment opportunities within Porthcawl.
Councillor John Hague (Chairman) pictured on 23rd September 2011 making a presentation to Roger in recognition of his long service, in the presence of members and staff of the Authority.
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

International spread of disease, the original impetus for setting up port sanitary controls over a century ago, has endured as a prime function of the Authority. International modes of transport have become faster and are increasingly used both for the carriage of freight and passengers. Container ships of increased capacity arriving at Felixstowe and Tilbury will mean that vessels of smaller capacity will look for alternative ports to import their cargoes.

Port health controls are moving with the times, the Association of Port Health Authorities remains the focal point of networking between port health authorities and will continue to work with the World Health Organisation, EU and UK governmental agencies & departments to ensure service delivery remains fit for purpose. A ‘Competency Framework’ for port health officers developed by APHA in tandem with current ‘Best Practice Standards’ ensures that officers remain capable of discharging the Authority’s functions effectively.

‘Austerity to Prosperity’: the APHA conference theme in 2011 considered future local service delivery of a national port health service given the financial impact upon local government staff resources due to the global financial downturn. It was of some comfort to learn from delegates that authorities had adjusted their working practices to maintain presence at the ports consistent with demand. The dramatic economic impact of disease within the human and animal population was evidenced following the catastrophic Foot & Mouth Outbreak in 2001. The effect of not having a fully functioning port health authority could, potentially, contribute to internationally spread disease entering the locality.

SHIPSAN TRAINET: The Authority is currently piloting an EU-wide database system that details ship inspections, port health authorities, shipping companies and agencies. As the system grows by use, it has the potential to provide effective intelligence gathering for risk-based ship inspections. Data held is based upon inspections made under the International Health Regulations (IHRs) and if successful and adopted by the World Health Organisation will be of even greater value to our service delivery.

UK International Travel Regulations: Implementing the IHRs, a new suite of UK regulations are due in 2012. These will consolidate health controls dealing with conveyances including ships, aircraft, lorries, buses and trains trading internationally.

Local Government in Wales: Regional sharing of services, currently on the Welsh Government agenda, appear to be the immediate way forward in reducing costs and mitigating demands upon local budgets. The port health service in Swansea Bay currently serves the district of four Unitary Authorities who share the financial burden of delivering this national service locally.

Following the retirement of the Director in 2011 and in considering the possible options facing local government, the Joint Board therefore decided to appoint its professional staff on short-term contracts until March 2014 when hopefully the future local government structure in Wales will be apparent. In whatever guise, continued local port health service provision will be required within Swansea Bay beyond 2014.

Development: At Swansea, the SA1 development will continue to encroach upon the operational areas within the port. At Port Talbot, the bio-mass power station adjacent to the New Harbour, once completed, will increase shipping movements, whilst the improved access, presently under construction, will create further opportunities for maritime trade.

The Authority remains a committed active partner in the Association of Port Health Authorities - Members have continued their representation on the Executive Board of the Association and have supported its officers in their participation of various APHA working groups and in the Port Health Special Interest Group of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health.

Over recent years, in presiding over the Association, the Authority has hosted annual conferences and has pioneered various aspects of the port health service including the introduction of a ‘Handbook for Port Medical Officers’, the ‘Benchmarking Scheme’ for Port Health Officers and the HIV/AIDS health education package for seafarers.

The Authority is a ‘Category 1 Responder’ as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Officers of the Authority check all vessels for sickness amongst crew and passengers and hygienic conditions on board vessels; monitor the presence and control of imported animals, pests, rodents and vectors on board ships as well as in shore-side premises, and land within the port estates; investigate complaints regarding crew accommodation; enforce controls over imported foodstuffs, locally landed fish and shellfish and monitors local shellfish layings; provide health education and food safety training; sample ship and quayside water supplies for bacteriological examination; control plant and processes having the potential for creating atmospheric pollution; monitor disposal of ship waste including garbage.

Swansea Bay Port Health Authority, traditionally the first line of health protection for seafarers and the local community against the international spread of disease, looks forward to maintaining effective maritime health control within Swansea Bay, in a cost-efficient, timely manner well into the 21st Century. The following quote from the 1946 annual report presented by H. R. Tighe amplifies this ethos:

‘Probably no work reveals so vividly as does Port Health work, the varying standards of civilisation which co-exist in the world or how small an area extends the rule of effective sanitary government. Port Health work certainly tends to counteract parochialism in public health, and to emphasise the universality of disease and infestation’
This booklet was compiled and produced by William Arnold, Director of Port Health Services, and presented to members and guests of the Authority at a luncheon hosted by the Lord Mayor of Swansea, Councillor Ioan Richard, on the 20th January 2012