

Public health only became a major issue in the nineteenth century, especially in the crowded towns. During the century successive Public Health Acts brought about significant improvements, and also led directly to the present system of local government. Although a rural village, Ayton was not isolated from public health issues, with its proximity to Middlesbrough and its rapid expansion after the arrival of the railway.

The 1848 Central Board of Health has powers to set up local boards where the death rate was high, or where a tenth of the poor law rate payers petitioned for one. In rural areas, local health administration was devolved to Rural Sanitary Authorities, which came under the aegis of the Board of Guardians of the Poor Law. This was a matter of convenience, for as yet there was no structure for local government as we know it today.

Stokesley Rural Sanitary Authority was established in 1873, covering Yarm, Stokesley, Ayton and the other Cleveland villages. It met in the Board Room at the Union Workhouse at Springfield. You can read extracts from their minutes for 1873-1893 at [Stokesley RSA](#)

The Stokesley RSA appointed their first Medical Officer of Health in 1873, and you can read extracts from his reports from 1899-1939 at [Stokesley MOH](#)

The Great Ayton Parochial Sanitary Committee was appointed by the Stokesley Board of Guardians on 3 June 1876. The committee was very active, and gave the village one of the first rural sewage treatment schemes in North Yorkshire. You can read the minutes of the Great Ayton Parochial Sanitary Committee 1876-1898 at [Ayton PSC](#)
[Commentary-on Ayton Sanitary Committee](#)

In 1894 a recognisable structure for local government appeared, with the formation of the Stokesley Rural District Council. It was divided into two groups, the Sanitary Authority and the Highways Authority.

In this section there are also some other entries on matters relating to public health:

[The Black Death in Ayton](#)

[Sewage Treatment Drainage Scheme by Ian Pearce \(Large file - expect short delay\)](#)

[The Pioneering Surgery on William Henry Thistlethwaite](#)

[Notification of Infectious Diseases](#)

[Crisis Mortality in Great Ayton](#)

[Health and Disease in the 18th century](#)

[Ayton's Doctors from c1800](#)