

The Llanelly Railway Goods Shed

Over the last hundred years shopping has changed considerably. The traditional grocer shop that once stood on every street corner has almost disappeared. Hardware shops and Ironmongers have become a rarity, all being replaced by the modern supermarket. Perhaps the most significant change that has come about is the advent of online shopping or the 'e-commerce market place'? Large warehouses at strategically placed locations from where white vans dash to and fro delivering all sorts of goods from electrical equipment, medicines, clothing and even food to the front door at the mere 'click of a mouse' or the tap of a computer key have replaced them. In the first half of the last century the Great Western Railway operated a network linking South Wales and the West to London. Goods and passengers were transported by well managed routes, moving passengers to railway stations, cargo to goods sheds, and coal to coal merchants, all ready for distribution to wholesalers and retailers alike.



Note about invoices and orders in the images:

The invoices/order in the images are examples of local business. *Kelly's Directory South Wales P496 (1907) Great Western Railway Company.*

D.S. Phillips, Tea Dealer, Grocer, Waterloo St., Llanelly

Andrews Sweet Shop, Llanelly House, Vaughan St., Llanelly

- 06 Oct. 1879 Phillips, delivery of butter and cheese (4s 1d) to Carmarthen station
- 04 Oct. 1879 Phillips, 2 sacks potatoes (1s and 9d) to Swansea station
- Oct. 25th 1879, Raspberry Drops, Acid Drops and Extra Strong Mints (12s 9d) Phillips' order from Andrews Sweet Shop, Llanelly House, Vaughan St., Llanelly

The approx. value of a shilling in the 1870s would be about £3.50 in 2019 and a penny about 30p
The **Carman** referred to at the bottom of the invoices was: *A driver of a van or cart: carrier OED*





M *Phillips* 201 Station.
 (320) Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

Waterlow and Sons Limited, Printers, London Wall, London.

DATE.	TO CARRIAGE OF	FROM WHOM AND WHAT STATION.	WEIGHT.				RATE.	TO PAY.		
			Tons.	cwt.	qrs.	lbs.		£	s.	d.
<i>6/10</i>	<i>2 Lbs Butters.</i>	<i>Chen</i> Station.	<i>7</i>	<i>00</i>						<i>4/1</i>
<i>7/9</i>	<i>15 Cheese</i>									
	<i>paid</i>	<i>Wm. Dwyer</i>								
		Collecting.....								
		Paid On.....								
		Delivery.....								
		TOTAL.....								
		Extra Charge for Cartage beyond the } limits of the Company's Delivery }								
		TOTAL.....								

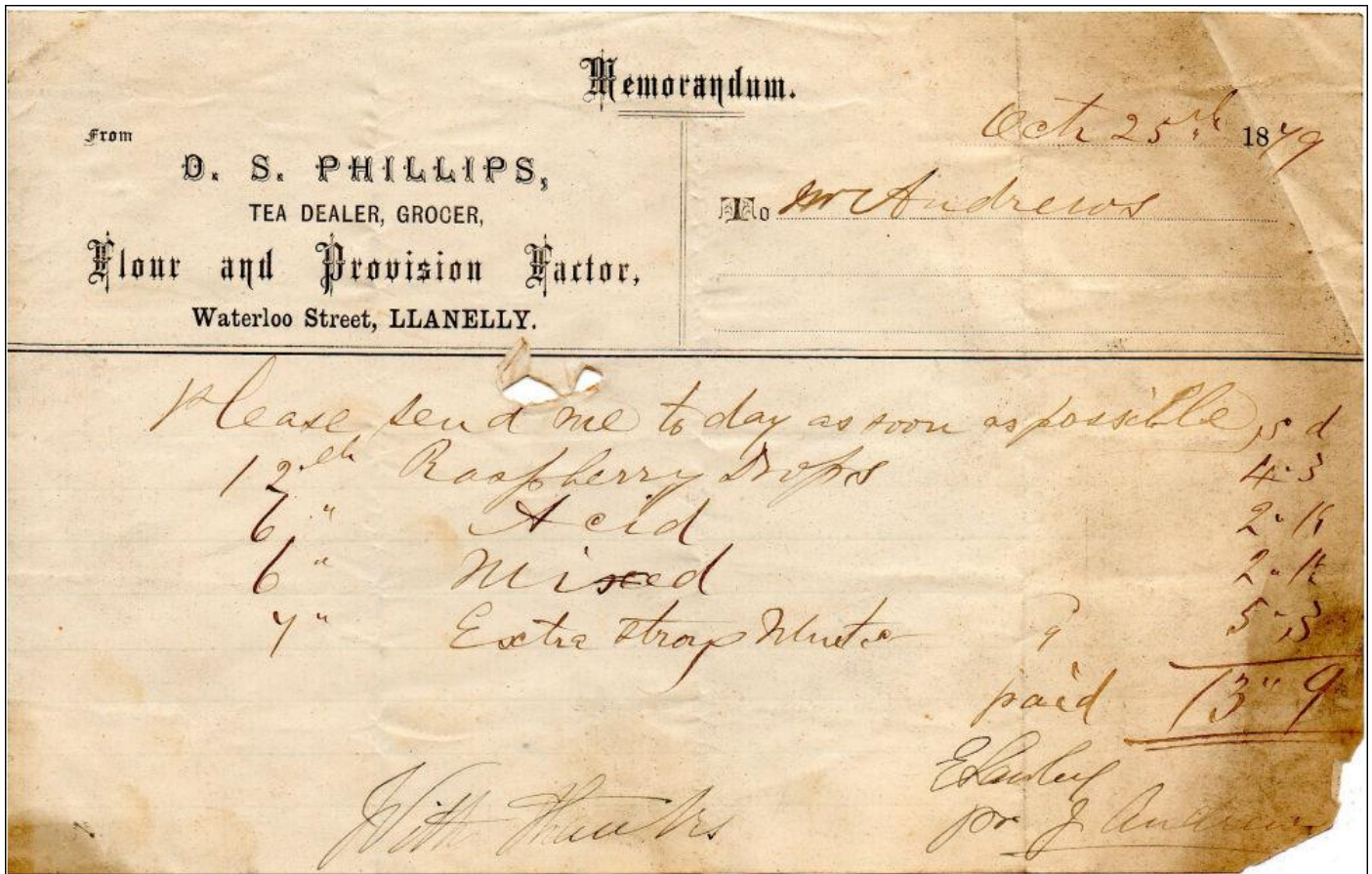
Please to pay the amount above stated to the Carman, and sign his book, as he is not allowed to make any abatement, nor to leave the Goods without payment in full. Should any error be discovered, have the kindness to forward this bill to the Superintendent of the Station above mentioned, for explanation, to whom any complaints respecting the collecting or delivery of the Goods should be made. The duty and responsibility of the Company will cease when the Goods are unloaded from the Company's Van or Waggon, and placed at the door of the Consignee. The Carriage of Empties must be prepaid. If the Goods be returned the expense of a second delivery will be incurred. (TURN OVER.)

M *J. S. Phillips* Station.
 (320) Dr. to The Great Western Railway Company.

Waterlow and Sons Limited, Printers, London Wall, London.

DATE.	TO CARRIAGE OF	FROM WHOM AND WHAT STATION.	WEIGHT.				RATE.	TO PAY.		
			Tons.	cwt.	qrs.	lbs.		£	s.	d.
<i>4/10</i>	<i>2 sacks Potatoes</i>	<i>Mr. Lawrence</i> Station.	<i>4</i>	<i>00</i>						<i>1/9</i>
<i>7/9</i>										
		<i>paid</i>								
		Collecting.....								
		Paid On.....								
		Delivery.....								
		TOTAL.....								
		Extra Charge for Cartage beyond the } limits of the Company's Delivery }								
		TOTAL.....								

Please to pay the amount above stated to the Carman, and sign his book, as he is not allowed to make any abatement, nor to leave the Goods without payment in full. Should any error be discovered, have the kindness to forward this bill to the Superintendent of the Station above mentioned, for explanation, to whom any complaints respecting the collecting or delivery of the Goods should be made. The duty and responsibility of the Company will cease when the Goods are unloaded from the Company's Van or Waggon, and placed at the door of the Consignee. The Carriage of Empties must be prepaid. If the Goods be returned the expense of a second delivery will be incurred. (TURN OVER.)



At the eastern end of Marsh Street, Llanelli stands the empty shell of the former Llanelli Railway Goods Shed. To date, it has not been possible to establish the year that the building was completed, but in November of 1873, The Great Western Railway published an advertisement in **The Cambrian**, seeking “Tenders for the Construction of a Goods Shed at Llanelli Station” (a). Evidence that the building was extant in 1880 can be seen on the Ordnance Survey Map of that date. This Grade II Listed Building of dressed stone was once a busy warehouse linking road to rail, despatching goods to the various factories, wholesalers, shops and houses throughout Llanelli and its district.

Once the scene of death and destruction during the dark days of the 1911 Railway Strike, The Railway Goods Shed now stands peaceful and quiet, a very different scene from the busier days long ago (b). From research carried out at the Llanelli Library we can view a snap shot from the past, a picture of its former days when it was a busy place of work for both men and horses: from 1931 we read a report by H.T Richards...

There is much activity at a Goods Shed in the early part of the day when the rafts of wagons despatched from London and other important manufacturing centres are berthed into it along its platform or "deck". The doors of the wagons are opened to disclose a heterogeneous collection of goods destined for the merchants of the town, cases of butter, wines, various groceries, drugs, etc. bags of sugar packages of furniture, wireless sets, agricultural implements, builders materials, castings, crates of bicycles all duly labelled to various consignees for delivery within the established free delivery area of the town, or perhaps beyond, for which an extra charge is made. The full truck loads of fruit, grain etc., are berthed in the vicinity of the Goods Shed to what is called the mileage siding, to which access is obtainable by the lorries of traders who collect their own goods giving signature in a book at the weighbridge generally situated near the entrance to the Goods Yard.

Immediately on arrival of the wagons in the Goods Shed an energetic junior porter obtains one of the labels off the wagons, records their arrival and takes out of their iron pockets the invoices, documents which describe their contents, the consignees concerned and particulars of the railway charge for conveyance, whether it has already been paid or is to pay. The door of the truck or van having been opened a wedge shaped board is placed against the floor of the van, and over this a porter runs his trolley upon which a Caller-off places the goods and immediately these are raced across the platform to the loading post, over which a Checker has charge, who receives the goods on to the floor of a road lorry which has been backed against the platform, and into the shafts of which when it is fully laden a horse will be placed and the goods taken out for delivery after the Checker has handed the Carman [Carman: A driver of a van or cart; a carrier. (dated)] a set of delivery sheets upon which every article on the lorry is shewn. These delivery sheets have been previously prepared by the cartage clerical staff from the particulars which appear upon the invoices which, having been gathered together, are rushed to the Cartage Office to be "sheeted out".

The average Welsh railway goods porter, at any rate, is an intelligent, energetic unit who speedily clears the trucks of their contents, realising that on the amount of work performed will depend the amount of bonus earned by his gang for the day. The railway company grants a small bonus for weight handled over a certain tonnage as an encouragement to the handling staff for the speedy out-turn of the wagons and consequent clearing of the goods arrived during the day. Incidentally it must be said in the favour of the Goods department handling staff that they exercise great care in the handling of articles which are fragile, a trait not nearly so well developed amongst certain other representative units of a similar grade. It frequently happens, however, that work is stopped temporarily amongst a gang whilst one of the members with blood dripping from his hand is hurried towards the First Aid Cabinet to have it attended to, bandaged, etc. It is surprising how carelessly nails are driven into cases at some manufacturing warehouses, leaving their points exposed and so causing injury to the porter who in the hurry of discharging cannot find time to carefully examine the cases he must handle.

It seems quite an easy matter to push a laden trolley over the boarded platform, but it is not as easy as it looks for a railway trolley in the hands of an inexperienced person can well be likened to a kicking mule. All the goods in a wagon cannot of course be man-handled, and so one of the several cranes erected at intervals upon the "deck" is brought into play, and a heavy

case of machinery or crate of earthenware has to be surrounded with rope slings and carefully slung on to a waiting lorry. It may be too that some containers with their valuable contents have arrived and must be unloaded, and for this the gang must leave the shed and use the big outdoor crane to swing the container from truck to lorry whilst they might be called upon to load up show traffic or motor cars on to wagons over the neighbouring ramp. At a busy transfer station, that is a station to which goods have been despatched from some far distant point to be sent forward with other traffic to small stations beyond to which they could not be loaded direct, the goods are either discharged out of the truck they arrived in and placed in another for further transit or placed upon the platform to be dealt with by a gang of men who come on duty later, and who will load them up with other goods brought in to the station from the premises of local merchants during the day. The late gang see to the loading away of the goods and work on into the evening. On the platform is a warehouse in which is stored goods to be called for or which must be dealt with in some special manner.

The personnel of the Goods platform is presided over by a well-qualified foreman, whose duty it is to see that no delay takes place in the discharging of the goods, to advise the office of the progress of work done, report at the end of the day to the Goods Agent its many incidents of more than ordinary routine, and generally exercise supervision over the working staff. It is only an all-round experienced railwayman who can faithfully fulfil these duties, for continually difficulties bristle at a goods station. Over all of course the goods agent exercises control, but in addition his supervision generally covers a much wider area, for in addition of the Goods Shed and adjacent yard with its many sidings, coal depots etc., it frequently happens that Junction posts exist far beyond the shed, and these too, which serve the big works and through which flows the heavy good mineral traffic, require his attention. The life of a Goods Agent is very full one, and few people realise the scope of his multifarious duties and his wide variety of interests. Some day Perhaps I will draw the veil and reveal a busy day in the life of a Goods Agent. His clerical staff deal with all matters affecting the department, but their duties are so many and varied that they cannot receive any attention to-day. (c)

At the stables, H.T. Richards reports...

Most folk give a second glance of admiration at the splendid railway owned horses which can be seen every day in big towns drawing heavy lorries upon which has been loaded at railway goods depots for delivery to merchants' warehouses and shops, the great assortment of goods which arrive by rail. In these days of motor transport it is somewhat refreshing to sometimes watch in a crowded city street the dignified amble of a sturdy, well groomed cart horse. Their excellent condition must remind us of the railway servant whose duty it is to see that these gracious creatures are well housed, groomed and fed, and so we will spend a day with that most affable of men, the Stableman, who because he loves horses must be a decent sort of chap. We arrive at the stables, which are generally situated near a railway yard, in the darkness of the early hour of 6 a.m., for it is at that hour that the stableman's footsteps (he wears heavy boots) may be heard clamping along from the comfort of his little home, attached to the stables, and towards the long rows of stalls in which his charges have been resting overnight. It maybe he has been out before, because if a horse has been ill or restive he probably heard it and must surely left his bed to minister to it.

"Hullo, Mr. Stableman," we greet him, but although he acknowledges our greeting he insists he has not much time to talk to us as yet, for he must give each of his horses a big mixed breakfast feed of provender. We notice how the horses recognise his step and move aside to give him plenty of room to fill their troughs. He satisfies our curiosity as to how much a horse is allowed to eat each day, with the information that 30 lbs. per day is the scheduled allowance, We watch him as he removes the sawdust bed of the horses and cleans out the stables, greeting from time to time as they arrive for duty the Carmen, who proceed to groom and harness their horses for the day's work. Now he has a little time to talk to us, breaking off occasionally, however, to superintend the work being done, and to satisfy himself that the horses are thoroughly clean and that their harness has been properly fitted. It is a frosty morning, the ground is very hard and slippery, so, ever careful of his four footed charges, he insists that their shoes must be roughed, that is, that long shining spikes like ordinary horseshoe nails sharpened to a wide point must be placed in the shoes to prevent the animals falling. A casual overhaul of the hoofs compels him to keep some horses in the stables for the arrival of the travelling smith, who will take off the old and put on new shoes.

It is now 8.0 o'clock, and quietly the horses file out in procession, for they know their way, whilst the Carmen follow in a group. Here they come, bays, browns, blacks, blue roans and dappled greys, each answering to such names as Emperor, Duke, Blodwen, Baldwin, Ishbel, Ramsay, Marshall, Simon, etc., and their going is certainly a sight to please any horse lover's eyes. Their coats have recently been clipped and this adds to their smart appearance and reflects credit upon Mr. Stableman, who is an expert in the use of a wheel clipping machine. Our friend now has a little spare time to give us some information, but he insists upon a running commentary as we accompany him on his rounds.

First we visit one of several Sick Bays, wide boxes where a sick horse has plenty of room to move about, but closed by a door in which is grid window. On the floor is a thick carpet of sawdust and upon being called, a mare named Crib comes forward and rubs her muzzle affectionately against the stableman's shoulder. She is breathing very heavily, there is no gleam upon her coat, and her eyes are dull and listless. "Bronchitis", explains our guide, and we listen against the horse's thick neck to the heavy wheezing of the creature. The stableman takes her temperature and informs us she is on a special diet and is slowly recovering. In another box we see a horse whose front foot is poulticed as a result of the penetration of a rusty hook picked up on its journeying. The shoe had been removed and a bran poultice applied. When the inflammation subsides we learn a dry dressing will be substituted and soon afterwards the horse will be encouraged to do half an hour's daily exercise in the company of the stableman. We are taken into the Dispensary, where many bottles with liquids of various colourings and boxes are pointed out on a shelf. These we read are colic and fever drinks, tonics and boxes containing powders for horse ailments. The most common of horse ailments we were advised were bronchitis and catarrh. Now it is dinner time and soon the horses will be returning so another good mixed feed must be prepared. The stableman enjoys a short respite after this meal, so we return about 4.30 p.m. to witness the return of the horses after their day's work. It has been raining heavily in the afternoon and Mr. Stableman insists that upon their being unharnessed the horse collars, which have become very wet, should be so arranged around the stove in the mess room, which he has specially stoked that they may at least be partially dried for the following morning. The Carmen are busily cleaning down their horses

with dandy brushes and curry combs, using fresh sawdust to dry out their wet hairy fetlocks, for after all, why should not such splendid creatures be made comfortable for the night. Each horse knows its own stall and goes to it without any guiding. Bedding is provided and the stableman has to provide two more good mixed meals. Then later he goes around each stall and sees that every horse is well, looks into their troughs to see that they have taken their food and then wishes them good night. There are, of course, many other duties in the daily life of a stableman, such as examining harness, requisitioning new and having worn repaired, checking supplies of stores, sawdust and provender received from such railway provender depots as Didcot, seeing that empty bags are returned, etc. etc.

It may be that a horse becomes a little excited. It must be quietened, and many other sometimes tedious jobs have to be done before he locks up the stable gates. The stableman is an all-the-year-seven-days-a-week man, for horses require attention on Sunday and holidays just as they do on weekdays and meals must be provided. On Saturday evening as a special treat he gives his horses a feed of hot bran mash in addition to their ordinary meal, and the silence which ensues is proof of their appreciation. No prancing or stamping then, absolute silence reigns during the partaking of this delectable meal, the only sound being the munching of the warm food. Generally stablemen are not only lovers of horses, but of dogs and cats, and we noticed two of the latter named respectively Tom and Tim, curled up on a bench in the stable. The railway company makes a small allowance for the supply of milk to these creatures and their milk bills appear upon the Company's paybills, whilst incidentally the cats receive much good fare at the hands of the stableman's generous and kindly wife. We were struck with amazement at the affection shewn to the stableman by the really sagacious old railway horses. (d)

By the 1950s, the horses had been replaced by the Scammell Mechanical Horse or the Scammell Scarab. The Great Western Railway Co. had stables located on the site of the old Tyisha Farm, which were converted into a maintenance garage for the Scarabs. Langland Mews now stands at the location. The Goods Yard continued to work as such for almost a century until it was reported in the Llanelli Star of 1966 that a spokesman for British Rail's Western Region head office in Cardiff had announced that...

It will be closed in October and the collection of and delivery of goods by British Rail will operate from Swansea High Street Station instead of Llanelli. (e)

The date of the final closure was Friday 7th October 1966 although the Goods Yard and its office continued to be used for other work for a number of years. (f)

The Llanelli Railway Goods Shed Trust has ambitious plans to restore the historic building in Marsh Street, Llanelli. Llanelli Community Heritage wish the trust every success in the new year of 2019.

Notes and Citations

Lat: 51.673212 Lon: -4.156442

(a) **The Cambrian** 14th November 1873 p 1, c 5

(b) **Remembrance of a Riot** by John Edwards

(c) **The South Wales Press** 18 March 1931 Article by Harry T. Richards

(d) **The South Wales Press** 18 Feb 1931 Article by Harry T. Richards

(e) **The Llanelli Star** 27 August 1966 p1

(f) **The Llanelli Star** 15 Oct 1966 p7