



Newsletter No. 9

Q3 2010

This newsletter is likely to be the last in this format, as we expect to launch our website in the next few weeks. This will address the history of the area covered by the Trust, and describe the more significant locations. As a taster for this history, we have included a feature on the first site nationally that was designed to facilitate goods interchange between rail, canal and road.

Pickfords and goods interchange

The influence of public carriers of goods, of which Pickford & Co. were the largest, resulted in their obtaining the rights of carriage and distribution of goods on the first railways, including the operations of the London & Birmingham Railway (L&BR) at Camden Goods Depot which started in 1839. Goods sheds had therefore to be provided at the goods depot for each individual carrier.

Pickfords, important carriers of goods by canal, had established their London headquarters at City Road Basin. The opening of the L&BR prompted them to start diverting some of their trade to the railway. This led to a major rift with Joseph Baxendale, a partner of the firm, who was also a director of the Regent's Canal Company. The dispute was resolved when Baxendale in 1839 bought a plot of land on the south side of the Regent's Canal at the top of Oval Road. He asked the noted builder William Cubitt (1791-1863) to create a special building which could transfer goods efficiently between road, water and rail. A large goods shed designed by Lewis Cubitt and constructed by W&L Cubitt was built at Pickford's cost. A bridge over the canal on the west side of Southampton Bridge provided a rail connection with the goods depot on the north bank (see picture below). The shed had extensive stabling in the basement at wharf level. It opened in December 1841.



Pickfords shed on the Regent's Canal, c1843

The idea of connecting road, rail and canal traffic in one building appears to have originated with Pickfords at Camden. The picture above of their shed on the Regent's Canal shows the timber rail bridge alongside Southampton Bridge, the retaining wall along the towpath as far as Southampton Bridge, and the chimney of the coke ovens. The white building on the east side of Oval Road and on the south bank of the canal is Camden Flour Mills. It became Gilbey's gin distillery some decades later. *Can anyone help us locate the original watercolour, which was copied by the London Canal Museum in the 1990s?*

Pickfords greatly increased the size of their shed c1845, when a reduction in carriage rates caused a large increase in traffic volume. The enlarged shed is shown in the picture below, which shows the short-lived Camden Station passenger platform across the main line to Euston from a south-westerly viewpoint (near where St Mark's Crescent now meets Gloucester Avenue). Beyond the four tracks is the ticket collectors' office and Bankriders' waiting room, built in 1846 (Bankriders were drivers of a second locomotive that helped trains up Camden Incline from Euston either in the front or the rear). To the right lies Collard & Collard's piano factory. Pickford's shed occupies the rest of the middle distance, its western façade stepped back twice from its frontage along the main line. On the left of the picture a sailing barge is glimpsed on the canal, and part of the iron railway bridge over the canal appears. Another shed built in 1845 by L&BR for Chaplin and Horne, the second largest of the goods carriers, can be seen beyond the canal on the left of the picture.



Enlarged Pickfords shed viewed across main line, 1848

The goods carriage policy was reversed in 1846, when complaints about the carriers reaping all benefits from reduction in tolls obliged the rail company to purchase Pickfords' shed and rent it back to Pickfords, as part of a new policy to carry out the rail carriage of goods through the railway company's own agents.

While Pickfords gave up long-distance canal carriage from the end of 1847 in favour of becoming an agent for the railways, they retained their City Road premises and although canal usage was greatly reduced they continued to handle some lightered goods between the docks, City Road and the Camden Depot. They rented the goods shed until 1857, when it was reconstructed following a major fire, after which time they shared it with Chaplin & Home. A second fire in 1867 may have persuaded them to

vacate it, after which it briefly became a potato market until in 1869 the LNWR persuaded Gilbeys to move their operations to the Goods Depot and take the shed on a 21 year lease.



Pickfords shed, ground floor, c1846

The interior of Pickfords shed in c1846 is shown above.

Website

We are now advanced with the preparation of a website. The primary purpose of the website is to make available to all a definitive and thoroughly researched history of the former Camden Goods Depot and its associated railway, canal and industry heritage. By explaining the significance of this heritage, we hope to assist both developers and planning authorities, when considering any redevelopment of this highly complex site, to avoid gross misunderstanding of its national importance.

A second purpose is to introduce the general public to this heritage. This will provide those based locally with a better appreciation of their area and encourage more to visit the sites. For those based further afield it should promote the area as a cultural asset as well as a retail destination.

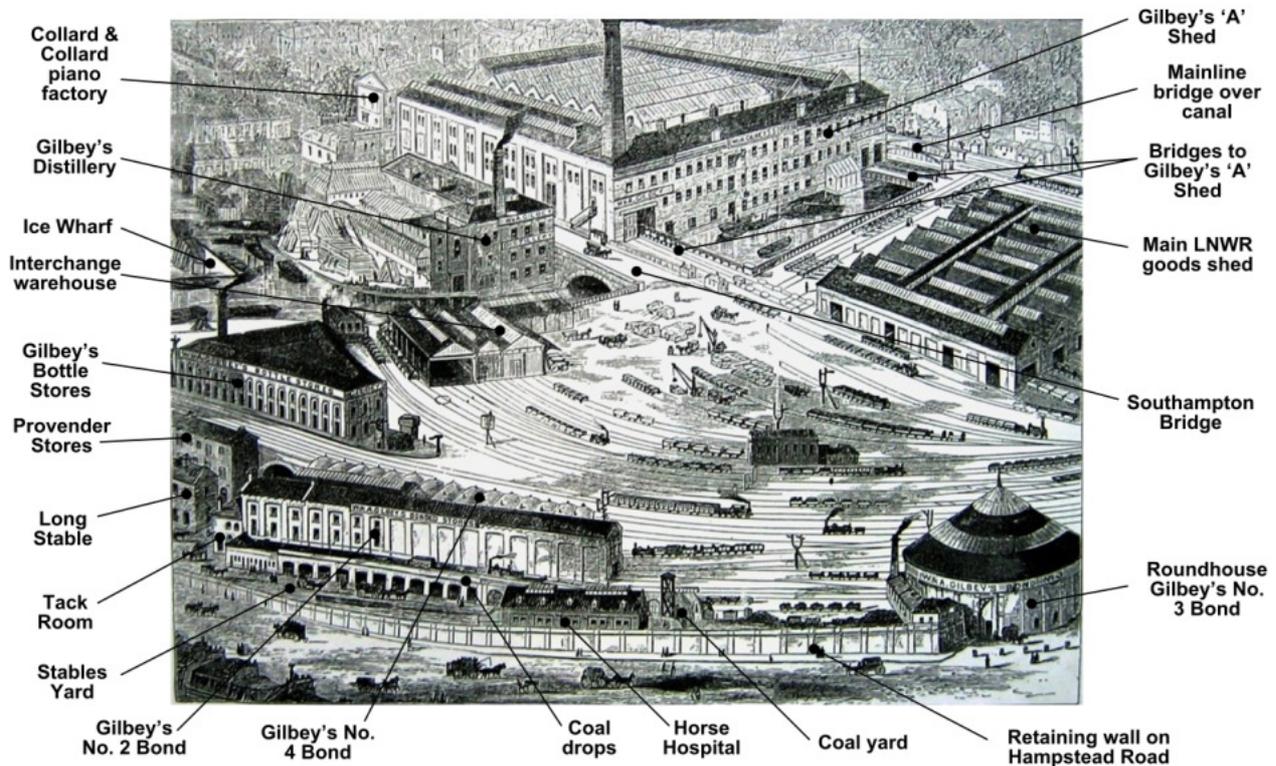
The structure of the website currently is:

- 1 Home page
- 2 History
- 3 Locations
- 4 The Trust
- 5 Camden Railway Heritage Trail
- 6 News and events
- 7 Resources
- 8 Links

We hope to have it operational by the end of October, although some sections of the History will still be under development.

Gilbey Archives

Apart from Camden Local Studies and Archives, National Archives, and London Metropolitan Archives, a major source of information on Camden Goods Depot has been the Gilbey Archives. W&A Gilbey Ltd were the major drinks firm in the world in the last quarter of the 19th century, and their operational base from 1869 was at Camden, where their premises eventually occupied 20 acres of floor space, some but not all shown on the picture.



The Gilbey Archives are split between two sites: the family archives housed in the church in Bishops Stortford which has the family burial vault in the graveyard; and the Diageo Archives near Stirling in Scotland. Typically they are composed of leases, agreements for new works and maintenance arrangements with the railway company, but there is some more colourful material, including some photographs. What is missing is the less formal sense of working life in the goods depot.

Snippets

- The developer of Hawley Wharf has advised that he expects to submit a planning application at the end of this year.
- We have been invited to speak on the subject of the Victorian working horse at the next SERIAC (South East Region Industrial Archaeology) Conference. If anyone has any information/pictures on the use of horses for towing barges; working the railway; moving goods by cart; moving people by cab, omnibus, tram or carriage; services such as veterinary, food supply, waste clearance; riding schools; horse parades and military barracks – preferably related to the Camden area – please contact the Secretary (below).

Guided Walks

The next guided walks around the Camden Railway Heritage Trail will be on Sunday 14 November and Sunday 5 December. We meet on the outside steps of the Roundhouse at 11.00. The walk takes about 2½ hours. Numbers will be limited to 20 on each walk. Please register your interest with the Secretary (crht@aol.com or 020 7586 6632).