

A Short History of Pembroke Station



Photograph by George Palmer

Preface

It is regrettable that the era of the railway branch-line seems to be drawing to a close. Just as the railway killed travel by road in the early 19th century and ousted the stage coach so the car and lorry are now wreaking their revenge on rail transport. Memories of the railways in their heyday are fast fading and only kept alive on the preserved lines and by the written word.

The old Pembroke Station has gone for ever - destroyed in an over zealous drive for monetary efficiency. Had this occurred now instead of twenty five years ago undoubtedly the station building at least would have been saved as a Listed Building. This short history of the Station is not intended to be a definitive history but a building block which others can use in their own research.

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*Meadow Cottage,
Lords Meadows Farm,
Pembroke.*

PEMBROKE RAILWAY STATION

The Pembroke and Tenby line was authorised by Act of Parliament on the 21st July 1859 as the South Wales, Pembroke and Tenby Junction Railway. The contractors were Davies and Roberts of Llandinam and the first of their plant arrived at Tenby aboard the schooner 'Pembroke' on the 22nd September 1862. The line was completed from Pembroke to Tenby and ready for opening to public traffic by July 1863.

THE STATION IN 1863

Pembroke station opened on Thursday 30th July 1863 and originally consisted of small temporary wooden buildings.⁽¹⁾ As might be expected no trace remains of these.

The line to Pembroke Dock runs through the station on a curve and over two bridges; one spanning East End (later Station Road) and the other Holyland Road. An embankment joins the two with a stone arch near the East End bridge giving access to the gardens at the rear (now a children's playground). These gardens belonged to the houses in East End and were cut off from the houses when the railway was built.

The 1861 O.S. map shows houses on the site of the East End bridge and four or five of these must have been demolished when the line was constructed. A place called Long Entry has also disappeared.

No passing loop was provided because Pembroke is so near the terminus at Pembroke Dock that there was no necessity to cross trains at this point.⁽²⁾ With hindsight the Station could have been built further to the east allowing the loop which was built later to be sited in the station. As there had already been complaints that the station was too far out of town this idea would not have been popular, if indeed it was ever in the minds of the Board of the P.& T. There were also complaints that the bridges were too narrow for road traffic and so they were widened by the Contractor.

A single siding on the north side of the line branched from the main line to the east of the station and a signal was provided some one hundred feet to the east of the points. As there was no signal box this must have been operated by hand or possibly from a ground frame. Whether it was a starting signal for up trains in the station or controlled trains leaving the siding is not known.

The length of the platform in 1864 was only one hundred and fifty feet and it was obviously still under construction (Plan 'A'). Access to the station was from East End; the pedestrian access from near the bridge was not constructed until later. Adjoining the station was a timber yard served by the siding and there has been a timber yard there ever since.

THE OPENING

The station was officially opened on Thursday, 30th July, 1863, when a train left for Tenby at 12.00 noon with the Mayor of Pembroke (Alderman Henry P. Jones), the Town Clerk, members of the Corporation, the High Sheriff of Pembrokeshire, the Mayor of Haverfordwest and other Gentlemen. On arrival at Tenby they attended a Public Breakfast at the Market House.⁽³⁾

THE NEW STATION BUILDING.



Pembroke Station 1955 decorated for the visit of HM Queen Elizabeth.

Photograph Miss Mary Williams

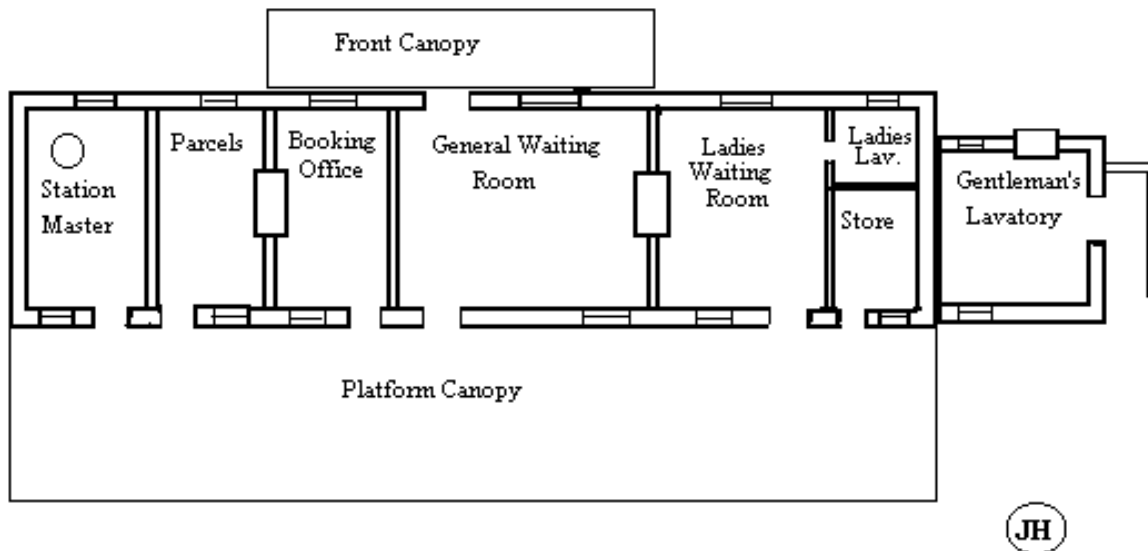
The permanent building was constructed by the Contractors some time after the opening of the line and is not shown on the 1864 O.S. map. When eventually erected the building was of dressed limestone with three ornamental chimneys and a slate roof; very much in the style of Pembroke Dock.

At the eastern end of the main building there was a small addition built of the same materials and this housed the Gentleman's lavatories. As there was a fireplace in this room, it is unlikely that it was originally intended to be a lavatory and may have been a waiting room or staff room. As constructed the station did not have a platform canopy or front entrance canopy.

The main building consisted of five rooms and a store. From the western end they were:-

- the Station Master's Office,
- the parcels office,
- the booking office,
- the entrance hall and general waiting room,
- the ladies waiting room and toilets and adjoining store room.

The general waiting room, booking office and ladies waiting room all had fireplaces but the Station Master had to make do with a coal fired stove with a 'tin' flue (later supplemented by a bottled gas heater).



At the eastern end of the platform there was an uncovered store for coal for the waiting room fires and, one assumes, the Station Master's stove. The station and all buildings on the platform were lit by gas, and continued to be, up to the time of demolition. Only the R.T.O.'s office (built during World War Two) had electric lighting.

The goods yard and signal box may have had gas lighting but it is more probable that they were lit by paraffin lamps in the early days. Whatever the lighting system was it was eventually replaced by electricity. The only part of the original lighting left is a gas lamp post built into the wall of the pedestrian approach to the station.

THE STATION DEVELOPS

The line was worked by the Contractors, Davies and Roberts, for seven years until 30th June, 1870 when it was handed back to the P.& T. Company. In 1882 a new siding was laid at a cost £150. Presumably this was the siding on the north (up) side which later served the corrugated iron goods shed and warehouse. In the following year two houses were built on the south side of the line at a cost of £120 each to house railway employees. and in 1890 the Company provided an 'iron' goods shed. The goods lock-up on the platform as existing in 1955 was of the standard G.W.R. design and of timber construction (horizontal lapboard). It appears to be of the same size as the one shown on the 1908 map and may be G.W.R. replacement of the 1890 'iron' shed.

FINANCIAL DECLINE

Despite good receipts from both the passenger and goods services the P.& T. was not in the best of financial health and the requirements of the Regulation of Railways Act 1889 did not help to improve their position. The Act forced the Company to work the line on the electric train staff system and in addition all passenger trains had to be fitted with continuous brakes. The Company built a thirteen lever signal box to the east of the station and it is probable that the passing loop was laid at the same time. This would account for the need for a thirteen lever box.

The additional expenditure required to comply with the Act did not of course generate any extra income and the Company were forced to issue £6,000 of debenture stock in February 1893. This was increased to

£6,500 in June 1893. A further £1,000 of debenture stock were issued in 1895 to pay for yet more works required by the Regulation of Railways Act.

Their finances were further depleted on the first of January 1888 when £32-1-2d was stolen from the safe at Pembroke station and again in 1890 when £1-5-0d was taken from the cash drawer.

In 1894 and 1895 the Board entered into negotiations with the G.W.R. for the sale of the line. As a dividend of only 1.5% was declared in 1896 the reason for the negotiations was undoubtedly financial.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

On the first of July 1897 the G.W.R. took over and the P.& T. ceased to exist. The growing traffic during the 1880's and 1890's had increased the wear on the rails to the point where complete renewal of the track was being considered. One of the first acts of the G.W.R. was, therefore, to relay the whole of the track in 1898. The new Company then turned its attention to buildings and facilities. The platform and entrance canopies were added in the early 1900's (Pembroke Dock received its canopy in 1902). Both canopies were fully glazed although in later years under British Rail ownership broken glass and rotted sash bars were replaced by asbestos cement sheeting.

Opposite the entrance to the platform there was a standard pattern G.W.R. corrugated iron store for lamp oil. This was surrounded by pine trees and these are still there.

By 1907 the Company had provided a weighbridge and office in the goods yard, an additional siding with an end-on loading ramp and a two pen cattle loading dock. There was also a two ton crane near the loading ramp (see plan 'B') which was relocated later and replaced by a crane of heavier construction.

Facilities were also provided for the unloading and storage of coal and several coal merchants used the station yard in the early 1900's. The most notable was Thomas Rees Saunders who had his own private owner wagons. Number six of his fleet was built by the Gloucester Coach and Wagon Company in 1902. This wagon was painted black with the legend :-

**THOMAS REES SAUNDERS
COAL MERCHANT
PEMBROKE STATION No. 6**

There was considerable freight traffic to and from Pembroke at this time. Potatoes, rabbits and horses (from Pembroke horse fair) figured largely in the export traffic and coal, culm and agricultural supplies were imports. Three freight trains a day ran up to 1914 with additional trains when needed.

A parcels and goods office was added to the platform between 1908 and 1914 and by the latter date the upgrading of the station to G.W.R. standards was almost complete.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND INTER-WAR YEARS.



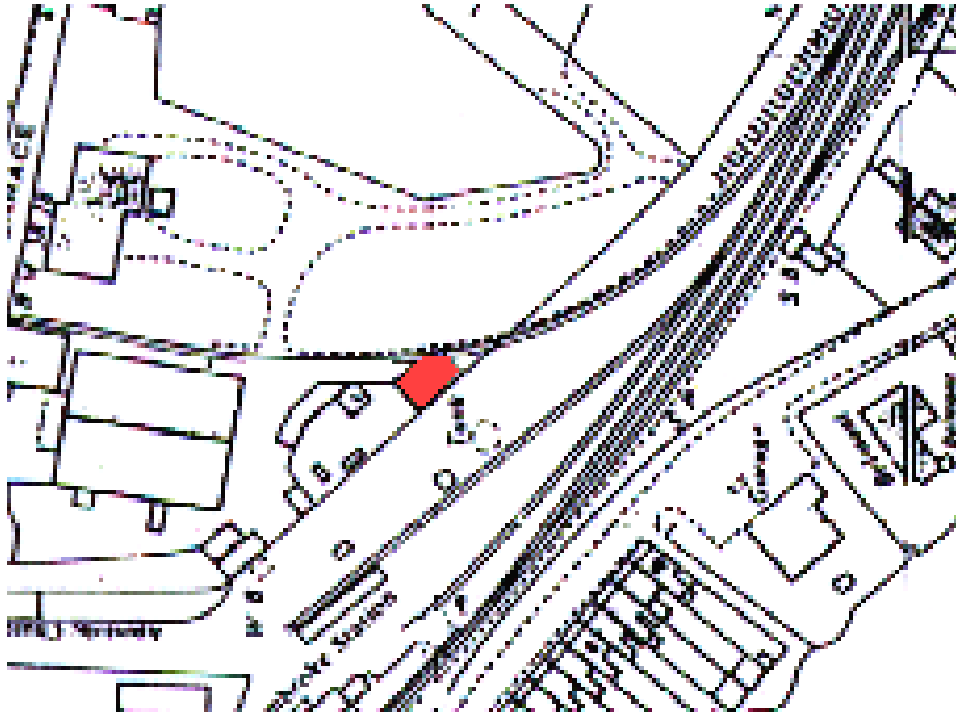
Troops arriving at Pembroke. (Author's collection)

The Great War increased traffic considerably and in 1917 two new sidings were laid on the south side of the track and a new sixteen lever signal box replaced the thirteen lever box. The most southerly of these sidings served a large warehouse which had an unloading platform. The date of construction of this warehouse is not known but, as it was steel framed with asbestos cement cladding to the walls and roof, it was probably during or after World War II. It was used as a cattle feed warehouse by Western Counties and later by Elsdon's (The Colour Spot) as a paint warehouse. The building has been demolished and houses built on the site.

The other siding served a large 'L' shaped wooden building which I understand was built during or after the second world war by the G.W.R. and was used to store agricultural feedstuff. It was sold when the track was removed and is now used by an engineering company.

In the 1920's the station was much used by the Military Authorities and troop trains were sometimes so long that they had to be divided into three parts at Whitland - one part for men, one part for baggage and the third for armoured vehicles. Vehicles were unloaded from flat wagons at the end-loading ramp until the ramp was removed.

T.W. Colley and Sons moved from their premises in Holyland Road in the early 1920's to take over the existing sawmills adjoining the station. This business is shown in the 1920 edition of Kelley's Trade Directory as '*builders merchants, timber merchants, sawing mills, masons and ironmongers*'. They required a private siding in connection with their business and this was accomplished by removing the end-loading ramp from the siding serving the cattle dock and extending the track on a tight curve to end a few feet from, and at right angles to, Upper Lamphey Road. This track extension involved the cutting away of part of one of Colley's sheds at an angle leaving a strangely shaped building. The clearances on this siding were so tight that steam locomotives could not enter the part within Colley's yard and either a large number of wagons had to be attached and propelled into the siding or the wagons had to be 'fly' shunted. The latter procedure did nothing to improve the state of the buffer stops at the Lamphey Road end. This siding was also used by W.R. Morgan Cattle Foods.



To compensate for the removal of the end loading ramp provision was made to unload vehicles over the siding buffer stop at the eastern end of the station platform (this siding is marked on one plan as 'carriage shoots').

SHELL MEX AND B. P.

In the late 1920's or early thirties the increase in the demand for motor and tractor fuel prompted Shell Mex and B. P. to build a petrol and kerosene storage depot adjoining the northern boundary of the goods yard on land owned by T.W. Colley and Sons (opposite the corrugated iron goods shed). The depot contained two large storage tanks for petrol and two for kerosene and. pipelines led from inlets (grid boxes) on the northern side of the siding to these tanks. A can store was also provided (In the 1930's petrol could be bought in two gallon cans which were often carried on the running board of cars). Two ten foot by six foot offices were built in the station yard for use by the staff of the petrol company. (See plan 'C')

With the replacement of horse transport by motor lorries and vans a hand operated private petrol pump was installed by the G.W.R. near the lamp oil store for use by their own vehicles.

There was considerable traffic in livestock and a livestock market was sited in the field adjoining the cattle pens. It was known as Pembroke Station Mart. This was operated by Mr W.E. Thomas and the animals could be driven through a gate in the hedge directly into the cattle dock for loading. The site of this market is now the coal storage yard of T.W. Colley and Sons. The shape of the boundary hedge as shown on the pre 1917 map suggests this market was there in the early part of the twentieth century. Animals could also be imported through these facilities but there is no evidence to suggest that this ever happened on a large scale.



Advertisement from the Pembroke County and West Wales Guardian Friday 17th May 1929.

WORLD WAR II

Following the outbreak of World War II there was yet again a vast increase in Military Traffic. To accommodate this increase and to reduce delays to ordinary services caused by congestion in the station a new loop was opened on the 25th June 1941. It had the nickname 'The Burma Road'. The loop was entered through points controlled by a ground frame near Merlins Cross and ended by branching into the siding on the south side of the track near the signal box. It was 1,100 feet long and remained in situ until the early 1970's.

At about the same time a Nissen hut was erected on the platform for use by the War Department Traffic Control staff (R.T.O's Office) and this building remained until the demolition of the station. It was last used by J.E. England and Sons, potato merchants, as an office and store during the annual potato picking season.

Tanks were unloaded by driving them from Warflat wagon to Warflat wagon and then over the buffer stops at the east end of the platform. As the tanks were wider than the Warflats this was no mean feat of driving and on at least one occasion a tank slid sideways off a wagon and fouled the main line. During the war over 9,000 tanks arrived at Pembroke and were then driven on their tracks by road to Castlemartin. This caused havoc to the road surface and the tarmacadam was replaced by concrete at several locations, notably on Well Hill and Cowshed Hill.

Military traffic continued after the War in connection with the training of men at the Tank Range and even into the 1960's wagons loaded with military vehicles could still be seen in the goods yard.

One special train ran during the 'blitz' of Pembroke Dock to take families out of the town to escape the night-time bombing. The train left Pembroke Dock at 4.00 p.m. daily during the period of heavy bombing, ran as far as Manorbier, and returned the following morning. Many of the 'refugees' left the train at Pembroke and stayed the night there with friends or relatives.

BRITISH RAILWAYS

The line and station changed hands once again on the first of January 1948 when the railways were Nationalised and British Railways came into being with its logo of the 'cycling ferret'. The post war period saw a slow decrease in the number of passengers carried and a corresponding reduction in the amount of freight. Despite such efforts as the introduction of 'The Pembroke Coast Express' in 1953 (with its own distinctive headboard). This train left Paddington Station at 10.55 am and made the journey of 133.4 miles to Newport in 127 minutes giving an average speed of 63 miles per hour. Its progress between Cardiff and Pembroke Dock was much less speedy!

However, the decrease in trade still continued. The trend was National and was caused by the increased number of private cars and the greater use of road transport for freight.



British Rail, with rising losses, employed a deliberate policy of running down small branch lines so as to present a case for their closure. So far as Pembroke was concerned the closure of the R.A.F. base at Pembroke Dock in 1957 and the local Army bases at about the same time did not help the fight to keep the line open. Luckily the line survived the Beeching era due to the efforts of the local people and the fortunate arrival of Pembroke Power Station.

THE ROYAL VISITS

On the 8th of August 1955 the station had a Royal Visitor. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh arrived by train to visit the town and the castle.⁽⁵⁾

The front of the station was decorated for the occasion with three crowns and two Tudor roses on the front canopy, an E R motif over the main door and two flags set in containers at each side of the main entrance. The south wall of the building was hidden by full-height screens decorated with crowns, Tudor roses and wall-hung flower baskets. The screens were set some three feet from the wall to enable Staff to gain access to the various rooms in the station. A gap was left so that Her Majesty could leave by the main door in the centre of the building. Photographs taken at the time testify that the station had been freshly painted.

The access road to the station was lined with flags on flagpoles and there was a dais on the eastern side. A banner across the road at the entrance bore the legend 'GREETINGS'. The area near the station was roped off to accommodate members of Staff and members of local organisations.



The 'screens' for the Royal visit

Photograph Miss Mary Williams

On the great day the Mayor of Pembroke Borough, Aldermen George Burton of Woodsend Farm, waited on the platform with other civic dignitaries to meet the Queen. In the party were the Town Clerk Mr. R.D. Lowless and Mrs. Lowless, Alderman and Mrs. 'Billy' Gwilliam (known as Billy Sticks), Alderman and Mrs. George Jenkins, Councillor George Wheeler and the Stationmaster, Mr. Ernest Williams. A red carpet adorned the platform for the occasion.



Photograph by courtesy of Miss Mary Williams



HM Queen Elizabeth II. Photograph by courtesy of Miss Mary Williams.

Within one hour of the Royal Party leaving the station British Rail had torn down the decorations and the station's hour of glory was over.

In 1960 the Duke of Edinburgh paid a visit to the Tank Range at Castlemartin. He travelled overnight by a two coach special train and after a three hour stop in a siding at Templeton he arrived dead on time at Pembroke at 9.50 a.m. He was met by the Station Master, Mr. Ernest Williams, and was then driven by car to Castlemartin to see a mock tank battle. Unfortunately the weather was misty and very little of the battle could be seen. The same mist, however, caused the cancellation of his helicopter flight home and the people of Pembroke had a second chance to see him when he rejoined his train.

ODDS AND ENDS

For a while a service was arranged in connection with the Friday markets. Staff left Pembroke station on the 10.37 a.m. train which stopped at Beaver's Hill Halt (on this day only) and here they issued tickets to passengers intending to travel to Pembroke and Pembroke Dock. During the same period, Bertram Mills Circus came to Pembroke entirely by rail on a special train (1957 or 1958) and there was at least one occasion (possibly two) when a whole farm was transported into the area by rail. In early summer 'potato trains' were run to move the crop of Pembrokeshire potatoes and that was when J.E. England's staff installed themselves in the R.T.O. building on the platform.

The Army Cadets (mostly from Public Schools) also arrived in summer. Although they arrived on one train from the station nearest their school they returned individually to their homes. There was much extra (unwanted) work for the station staff in issuing hundreds of individual tickets to hundreds of different destinations.

SALVATION

In the late 1960's work started on building Pembroke Power Station and a large silo was constructed in the station yard to store bulk cement. The cement was delivered in 'Presflo' wagons. This fortunate circumstance helped the line to survive when other branch lines were being closed. The presence of the Army at Castlemartin also helped to keep the line alive. Even into the late 1980's Army stores were being delivered to Pembroke Dock on Freightliner trains headed by class 47 diesel locomotives.

In May 1979 the B.& I. shipping line started a ferry from Pembroke Dock to Cork and a Ferry train was laid on by British Rail. As there was no direct connection by rail between the Pembroke Dock station and the ferry terminal, a bus service completed the journey.

THE RUNNING DOWN

With the completion of Pembroke Power station the cement silo was removed and on the 5th September 1971 the signal box was closed. The line from Tenby was now almost a siding. At some time between 1955 and 1971 the steelwork of the platform canopy became unsafe and had to be supported. Corrosion had eaten into the trusses where they met the south wall and, as the rainwater gutter ran the full length of the wall at this point, leakage and spillage over the years was undoubtedly the cause.



Pembroke Station 1963. Note the wooden pillars supporting the platform canopy and the wall of the 'bus shelter' on the left of the photograph.

Photograph by George Palmer

The trusses were given support by eight wooden posts resting in steel shoes which were set into the platform. There were two posts under each truss - one near the wall and one half way across the platform.

On Sunday 8th September 1963 at 5.55 p.m. the last steam-hauled passenger train left Pembroke Dock and a few minutes later puffed into Pembroke for the last time. It was headed by an ex G.W.R. prairie tank number 6118 and was in charge of driver Bryn Hall and fireman Les Evans. Steam was replaced by diesel multiple units and by the occasional diesel locomotive hauled train. No one expected to see another steam train in Pembroke but over thirty years later in 1994, an enthusiasts special double-headed by two ex British Rail 2-6-4 tank locomotives passed through the station *en route* to and from Pembroke Dock. It may well be that this sight will never be seen again.⁽⁶⁾

DEMOLITION

In the Autumn of 1971 the pink and grey 'bus shelter' was built at the western end of the main building and the main building, parcels and luggage office, goods lock-up and the R.T.O.'s office demolished. During the demolition of the main building 'a veritable treasure trove of old Victorian coins was discovered under the floor of the old booking office.' There was a rumour that somewhere under the same floor there was a golden Guinea which had been dropped early in the First World War but there is no record of it being found during the demolition works.

There is some doubt about the story that the station was burned down about the time the signal box was demolished and that the 'bus shelter' was built some time later (J.P. Morris and M.R.C. Price). Photographs

taken by Mr. George Palmer at the time of the demolition show the station main building to be intact and the 'bus shelter' already built near to the west wall of the main building in what was the exit gateway.

A contemporary report in the Western Telegraph on the demolition states that 'all woodwork pulled down has been burned late at night with a fire tender in attendance'. There is no mention of a previous fire and the presence of the fire tender may have given rise to the story that the station was burned down. At the same time, the loop line from Merlin's Cross (The Burma Road) was taken up and the down-line sidings removed.



The site of Pembroke Station 1963

Photograph by George Palmer

The signal box was closed in 1971 and the four men employed at the station finished on the 9th of October 1971. Goods trains were then reduced from daily to once a week. The private siding to T.W. Colley's yard closed in 1975 after some fifty years of use.

Since then the passing loop and the sidings on the north side have been removed and the land sold. The pink and grey 'bus shelter' has in its turn been demolished and replaced by a glass panelled shelter of a more pleasing design. The platform has also been resurfaced with tarmac. A new pedestrian access has been made from the Station Road car park and a wooden screen now divides this from the old station approach road. Shrubs have been planted at the lineside to the east of the station in the ballast of the goods yard. The whole effect is quite pleasing and an enormous improvement on the days of the pink and grey 'bus shelter'; but obviously has not the appearance or the architectural appeal of the old station. It is a sad thought that had the downgrading of the station happened in the 1990's rather than the 1970's the main building may have been saved as being of architectural merit.



Pembroke Station 1999 Photograph by Author

THE STORIES

In its one hundred and thirty two years of existence many interesting events have occurred at the station. A few of these are recorded in 'The Pembroke and Tenby Railway' by M.C.R. Price and are reproduced below but some related by Mr. Glyn Cook and Miss Mary Williams are new to me and are retold.

Intoxication - On one occasion the guard of a goods train who had spent too long in the local public house and was somewhat unsteady on his feet fell from his van as the train left Pembroke Station. The driver was unaware that his train was guardless (or his Guard legless) until he was stopped at Tenby where a porter took over as guard. The drunken guard with his clothes and flags in tatters was put on the following mail train. Whether or not he caught up with his train or how he was dealt with by the Company is not recorded.

A 'Green' Driver - A certain driver who lived in Pembroke never managed to stop his train in the same spot twice at the platform. The down train from Whitland often pulled up with the engine nearly on the bridge and the up train stopped short of the station building. The result was a long walk for disgruntled passengers, often in the rain and wind. Bewildered porters stood by with their luggage trolley and wondered where the luggage van would stop today. Wherever they guessed it would come to rest Charlie always seemed stop it somewhere else.

A Near Miss - Not long after the end of World War I, Canon Bowen, the Vicar of Monkton Church, stepped aside on the platform to avoid a luggage barrow and fell on to the line just as a train was entering the station. 'The Station Master at once jumped down in front of the moving train and rolled Canon Bowen off the track, holding him down alongside the rails until it was safe for him to get up. Although the brakes were applied it was impossible to bring the train to a standstill until the engine and two coaches had passed the spot where the two men lay. Had it not been for Mr. Williams courage and presence of mind Canon Bowen could not have

escaped instant death.’ The Station Master, Mr. Thomas Williams, was awarded the Albert Medal on 13th March 1919 and was also commended for his bravery by the Carnegie Hero Trust Fund.



The Albert Medal awarded to Thomas Williams

Civil Disturbance - During the 1926 General Strike a disturbance at the station was quelled by the Station Master and local police. The reason for the disturbance and how they quelled it is not recorded.

Free Coal - An elderly lady, Miss Elsie Campodonic, who lived at number 12 Station Road, right against the abutment of the railway bridge, told me that British Rail had once kept her in coal for a week.

Some large pieces of coal fell from the tender of a passing locomotive and went through the roof of her outside lavatory. She showed me the large hole in the roof and said, ‘So long as I am not in there, I don’t mind this happening every week!’

Earl Cawdor - Miss Mary Williams, whose father was Station Master, has told me of Earl Cawdor's visits to the station. In Miss Williams' own words

‘The Earl of Cawdor's Pembrokeshire estate was about six miles outside Pembroke. Fifty years or so ago, prior to the last war, a special train arrived and departed from Pembroke Station. Earl Cawdor was a Director of the Great Western Railway and I presume had a right to some privileges. When the family came to Stackpole for the shooting season they brought all their domestic staff with them.

Special coaches were arranged and a guard's van to carry all their possessions, including bicycles. The special coaches left Nairn in Scotland and travelled through the night to Crewe where they were shunted into a siding and then changed lines; and then on to Carmarthen. There they transferred to the Pembroke train, but only after enjoying a first class Welsh breakfast at a first class hotel. Then the journey continued on to Pembroke where they were welcomed by the Station Master all duly regaled in his top hat for the occasion.

The passengers and goods were ferried to Stackpole Court in the 'Black Maria'. This was a large van, coloured black and used on the Estate for all purposes.

The family were always in residence for the pheasant shooting and stayed usually until February. I understand that the festivities over Christmas were wonderful and the Staff looked forward to their visit to Stackpole very much.'

Dusty - Just prior to the Royal visit in 1955 one of the station staff was set the task of keeping the platform and station approaches properly swept until the Queen arrived. Unfortunately, while industriously sweeping the road in front of the station and raising clouds of dust he failed to notice until too late that his dust cloud was settling on the Queen's shining Rolls Royce. Panic and dusters appeared very quickly and the situation was saved. He and his brush were told unceremoniously, and in no uncertain terms, to go and play elsewhere.

STAFF

Of the Station Masters there is little record locally. From the various directories the following names have been extracted :-

1880 - Robert Wrench - Station Master and carrier for the P.& T - thought to be the first Station Master at Pembroke.

1884 - Robert Wrench - Station Master of Auburn Villa

1891 - ?John Williams - Station Master. (This would seem to be an error and should be Thomas Williams) – Robert Wrench - Station Master

1901 - Thomas Williams - Station Master from 1891 to 1920. Salary £70 for the first year, £75 for the second year and £80 for the third year.

Robert Wrench - G.W.R. goods and manure agent

1914 - Thomas Williams - Station Master - East End

1920 - Thomas Williams - Station Master

1923 - Thomas Williams - Station Master

1926 - Joshua May - Station Master

1942 - Ernest Williams Station Master - retired 1963.



Stationmaster Ernest Williams
Photograph Miss Mary Williams.

Track maintenance gangs were based at Pembroke and their motorised trolley lived in a tarred wooden shed adjoining the signal box. There was also a shed behind the signal box which acted as a mess room.

THE REMAINS

Very little remains of the old station today. Part of the south wall of the main building shows above the platform and at the end of the platform there are some G.W.R. 'spear' railings. The coal storage bunker at the east end of the platform is still there but now full of rubbish. A gas lamp post is partly built into the wall of the footpath which leads from the East End bridge to the station and although the lamp oil shed has gone the pine trees which surrounded it are still there. Under the chain link fence on the south side of the track to the east of the station there are still some sleepers and chairs and a nearby earthwork is all that remains of the cattle dock. The station staff houses remain but are now privately owned. Despite the many years since the station was dismantled it is still possible to pick up the odd rail chair-bolt or point rodding pulley if you dare trespass on the track.

STAFF ASSOCIATION

The Staff of Pembroke station were members of the Pembroke Dock Branch of the British Railways Staff Association. Mr. Glyn cook was the secretary for many years.

The Association had their own social accommodation at the Mechanics Institute in Dimond Street. Annual dinners were held and the first of these was at the Bush Hotel in 1956. It was attended by sixty-three staff and

guests and according to newspaper reports a good time was had by all. Local business men such as the late Councillors Alec and Algy Colley, Mr. J.E. Benion and Mr. F.O. Sudbury attended these dinners to represent the businessmen of the town. At the 1960 dinner Mr. J.R. Benion spoke of the often repeated grumbles by passengers of the late arrival of their train and passed this off with the observation that 'very often it is due to the care for the safety of passengers - for it is better to be one hour late in this world than enter eternity before time (applause).'

The evening was usually rounded off with some homespun entertainment by acts such as Mr. Len Rowlands and Mr. Bert Wilcox (piano and clappers) or by performances by Councillor Rufus Jones, Glyn Cook, F.O. Sudbury, Frank Davies and others.

AND NOW

Times change and the past can never be re-lived except in the imagination. Pembroke station is now reduced to the status of a halt and the line to almost a long siding from Whitland. Changes in the way we live over the last fifty years have almost removed the need for a railway and the queues at the station have now been replaced by queues of traffic on the roads. The glory of the railway of the past has gone and with it a way of life that can never return.

I would like to thank Mr George Palmer, Miss Mary Williams, Mr. Glyn Cook and Mr. Brian Colley for the help they have given by providing information and photographs.

Sources

'*The Pembroke and Tenby Railway*' - M.R.C. Price

'*The Pembroke and Tenby Railway*' - J.P. Morris

The Western Telegraph

O.S. Maps 1861, 1864 (1861 survey with amendments) and 1908.

Various trade directories.

Pembroke Borough Council Minutes.

'*The Railway Magazine*' – October 1965.

30th June 1996

NOTES

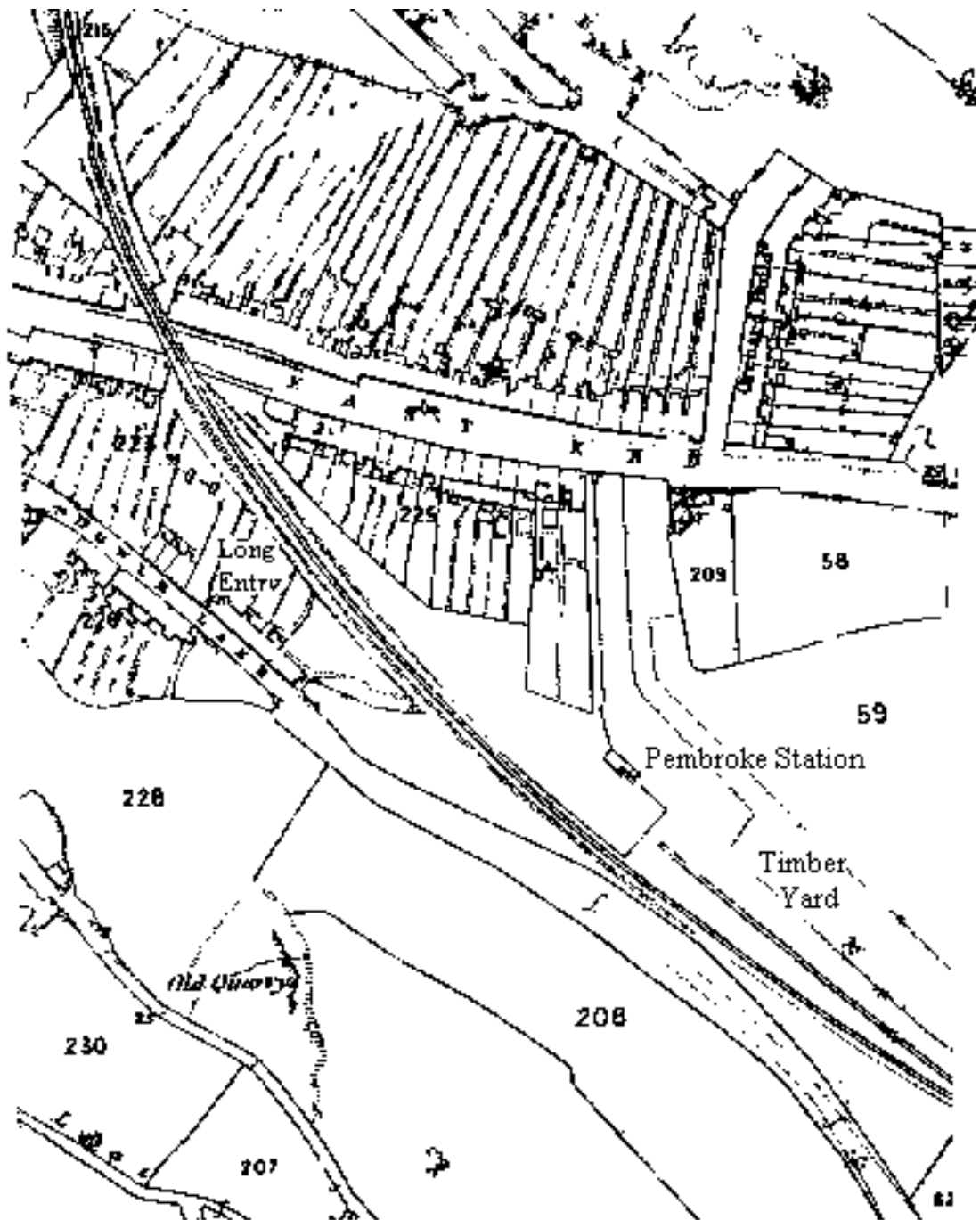
- 1) This structure was about eighteen feet by ten feet and served as a ticket office, waiting room and goods office. There was an addition on the south-eastern side about six feet by nine feet in size. They were sited in the station forecourt near what became the permanent station's north wall and as they were of a temporary nature, they were of wooden construction.
- 2) A passing loop and a siding on the 'down' side were provided at Lamphey but later removed.
- 3) The version given by J.P. Morris is slightly different in that the celebrations started in Tenby with a 'sumptuous breakfast' followed by speeches and the first train left for Pembroke at 7.30 a.m. This version would seem to be the more accurate because the main loco depot was at Tenby and trains would have to start from there. It would still be true to say that Pembroke Station opened with the train leaving Pembroke on the return journey to Tenby but did they have a second 'sumptuous breakfast' when the train arrived back in Tenby?
- 4) The platform canopy at Pembroke was constructed on four steel trusses which were cantilevered from the south main wall. The trusses extended to the north wall where they were tied down. As the girders of the two

end trusses were on the top of the north wall and therefore above roof level they were capped with two lead covered boxes. The lower girders of the centre trusses were continued outwards from the north wall to form the supports of the entrance canopy.

5) The Royal Train was double headed by two Stanier 8F 2-8-0 locomotives, numbers 48309 and 48728, and at 125.75 tons each they must have severely tested the track and bridges! These were the only two members of the class fitted for the steam heating of carriages and were so fitted to enable them to haul the Royal Train.

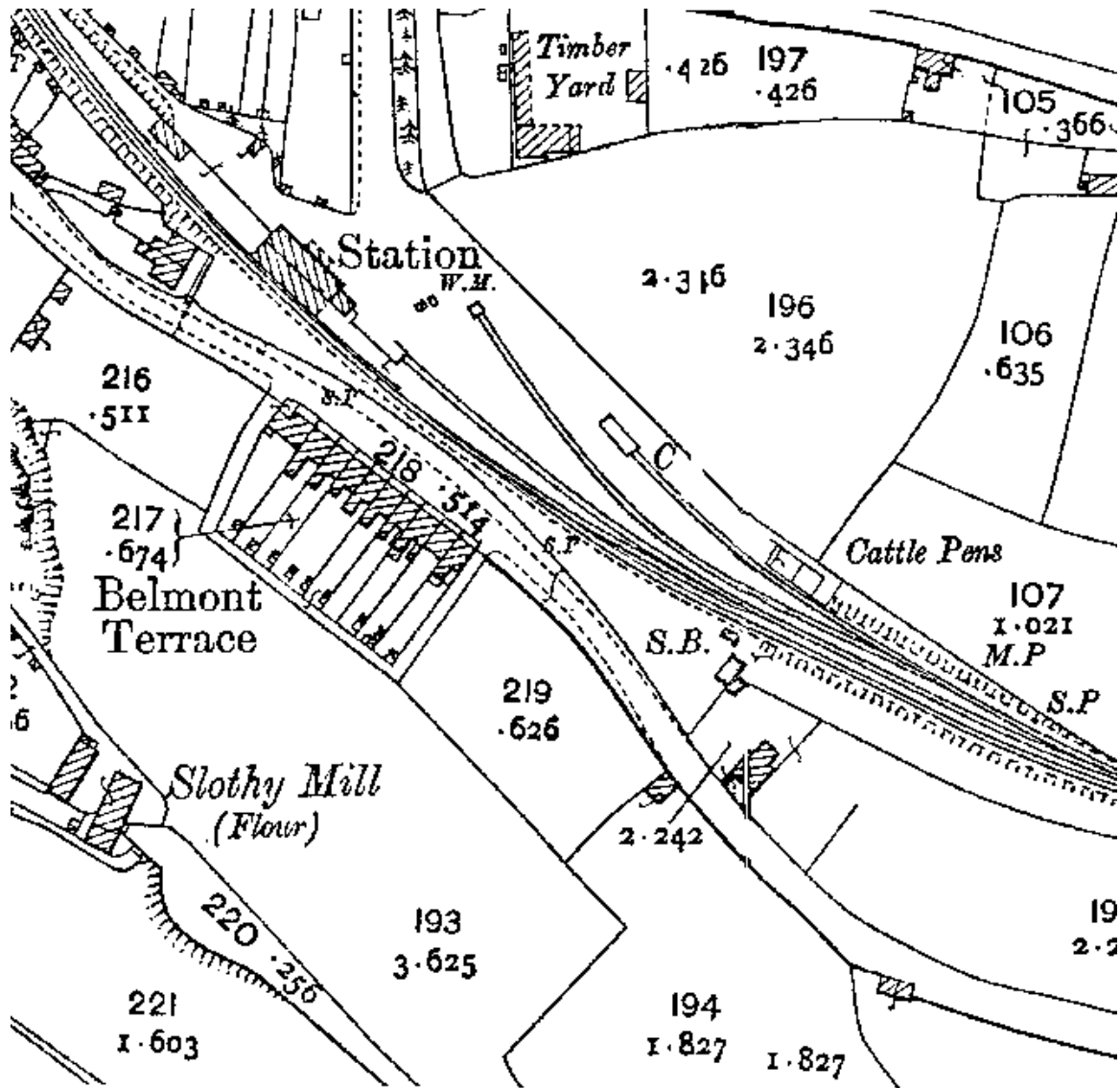
6) The trip to Pembroke Dock was planned for the previous year, but due to the wet weather and possibly an error in calculating the train load the single ex B.R. 2-6-4T failed to take the train up the gradient out of Narberth and the trip was ended there. A second attempt in 1994 succeeded and this train was hauled by two ex BR tanks, numbers 80079 and 80080.





Pembroke Station c1864

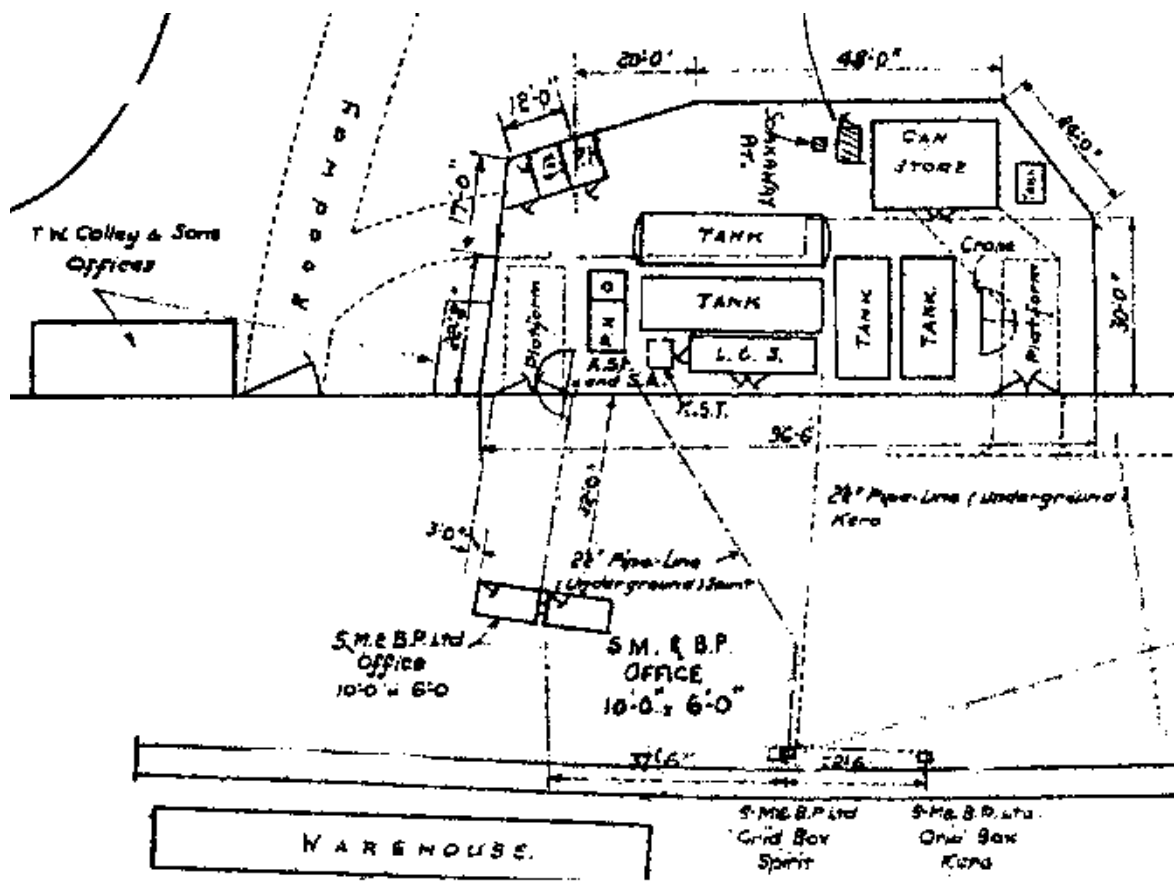
PLAN 'B'.



Pembroke Station 1907 - from the 1/2500 OS Map.

PLAN 'C'

Shell Mex and B P



140702

