



- 1 RAILWAY TRANSHIPMENT SHED
- 2 QUAYING DOCK
- 3 TICKET OFFICE
- 4 OSTLER'S HOUSE
- 5 PRESTON BROOK WAREHOUSE
- 6 DANDY WAREHOUSE
- 7 GREENALLS WHARF
- 8 HAY SHED

# An Imaginary Walk Around Preston Brook in 1914

Preston Brook is an important point where goods in wide beam boats, from the Manchester and Runcorn direction, have to be transhipped into narrow boats if they are heading south through the Preston Brook Tunnel. Narrow beam boats coming north often do not need to tranship, but continue with their cargoes north or west along the wide canal.

At the south end of Preston Brook, the Bridgewater Canal disappears into the Preston Brook Tunnel and changes to the Trent & Mersey Canal after a few yards. There is a cottage for the tunnel keeper situated over the top of the northern tunnel portal.

Coming north, there are a number of cottages set above the canal occupied by canal and railway workers. There is a clear stretch of canal either side towards Cotton's Bridge, before meeting the railway transshipment sheds (1) on the left, sitting between the canal and the railway mainline. A little further north on the east side of the canal, are Cotton's Cottages. The old bridge was a little south of these. Sadly this turn bridge is long gone. Further on the same side is the North Staffordshire Warehouse, opposite the gauging dock (2) where the boats are 'weighed' and from which their toll is calculated. Between here and the road bridge on either side of the canal are various workers' cottages and buildings, including stables for the horses. The Red Lion Hotel can also accommodate a good number of animals, and just before the bridge is the ticket office (3). The cashiers are situated in the building to the north-west of the bridge that straddles the towpath. Here the horse has to be unhitched from the boat and the boat poled through the bridge, as the horse walks round, the master pays his dues.

On the north side of the bridge, the canal is now open on the towpath side with more cottages, the Ostler's house (4), a kitchen and sleeping quarters for boatmen and yet more stables. Opposite, is a number of sizeable warehouses, the largest being Preston Brook Warehouse (5) with a small dock so boats could be dealt with under cover. Further along on the same side, before the Runcorn branch leaves the main canal, there is the Dandy Warehouse (6) and a wharf that is often referred to as the Greenall's Wharf (7), although this has not been verified. These last two locations have no road access and so are used for transferring goods from one boat to another.

Now on to the Runcorn branch where the transshipment sheds are clustered closely together around a quite large dock. Just along this branch over the aqueduct is a variety of 'sheds', Black, Red, Pot, Railway and a number more. The largest is Norton Warehouse which straddles across the dock and Ginny Shed which come out over part of the canal. These allow for better cranes to be used under cover, a benefit to all. Also there are a smithy, gasworks and a shed (8) dealing with feed stuffs for the canal horses. The railway shed also has a covered section out over the canal and was supported by a short branch line from the Birkenhead, Lancashire and Cheshire Junction Railway, Chester to Warrington line through the fields to the canal side. It does not seem to have been successful as Colonel Cobb's railway atlas has its opening and closing dates as 1853 & 1860 (possibly) respectively; it is thought that the rails had been removed by 1877. This is the end of canal side industrial buildings in Preston Brook; the next significant one in this direction would probably be the Astmoor Tannery outside Runcorn.

Although canal business is moving to the faster railways Preston Brook is still a busy place with bulk commodities linked to the war effort being moved and transhipped here.