

The 1830 Warehouse, Liverpool Road Station, Manchester

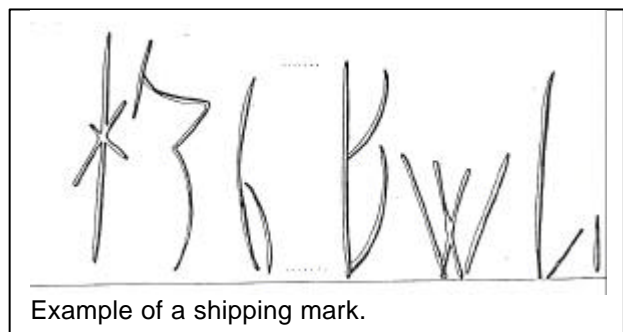
The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester occupies much of the former Liverpool Road Station site, which was built as the Manchester terminus of the Liverpool & Manchester Railway (L&MR). Liverpool Road Station continued in railway use from 1830 until its closure by British Rail in 1975. Two of the 1830 buildings survive - the passenger departure station and the 1830 Warehouse, both of which are Grade 1 listed. The 1830 Warehouse is particularly remarkable because it survived in substantially original form.

Construction of the 1830 Warehouse

The L&MR Company spent a long time deliberating what sort of goods facilities it should provide. It could not look for guidance to existing railways, such as the Stockton & Darlington Railway, because they did not carry the range of goods that the L&MR expected to carry. Canals offered closer comparisons so it is not surprising that the 1830 Warehouse appears to have been modelled on warehouses serving the nearby Castlefield canal basin. Indeed, before deciding to provide its own warehousing at Liverpool Road Station, the L&MR Company looked into the possibility of leasing local warehouse space. This idea was abandoned in March 1830.

On 3 April 1830, the L&MR Company placed a notice in the *Manchester Guardian* inviting tenders for the construction of five brick warehouses. This description is misleading as the resulting building was actually one warehouse divided into five bays. Five firms submitted tenders ranging in cost from £12,000 to £14,000. The second lowest bidder, David Bellhouse Jnr., gained the contract. He had taken over his father's building and contracting business in about 1820. His father, David Bellhouse Snr., was also a leading local timber merchant and carrier. These family business connections were valuable because the appointed contractor was responsible for procuring the necessary building materials, other than bricks, which were supplied by the L&MR Company.

The stated completion date was 15 August 1830, giving less than four months for construction. Bellhouse had certainly succeeded by the official opening on 15 September 1830, when the top floor of the Warehouse was where the refreshments for guests were laid out. The demanding schedule was doubtless one of the reasons why the 1830 Warehouse has a timber frame rather than a fireproof frame of brick and iron. A timber frame was faster to fabricate and assemble. Four types of wood were used: European oak for the majority of the posts; European pine for the roof timbers, beams, joists, floor-boards and some posts; dense Latin American greenheart for the spreader pads between the posts and beams; durable African oak for the loading bay door sills. The pine timbers bear shipping marks, a form of identification used to denote the quality and origins of Baltic timber.

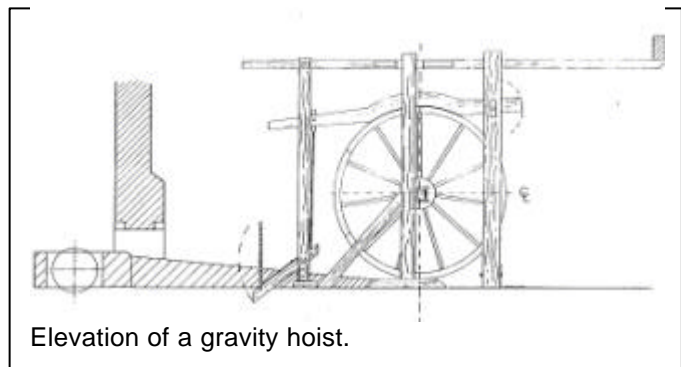


Goods Management

The 1830 Warehouse was used for the storage of a variety of goods. Cotton, one of the L&MR's most important cargoes, was only stored there until two Cotton Stores were completed in 1831. The 1848 Ordnance Survey Map shows the following allocation of goods: corn in Bays 3 to 5, spirits in the western end of Bay 3, groceries in Bay 2 and butter in Bay 1. At some point after 1848 but presumably before the completion of the Grape Street Bonded Warehouse in 1869, the basement was adapted for storing bonded goods, such as spirits. Security was increased by infilling the loading bay wells (except for one) and light wells, and nailing metal strips across the underside of the floorboards that formed the ceiling. Two stock books found in the warehouse in 1991 reveal the type of goods stored there in 1885 and 1905. They list a wide range of goods including various meats, bananas, chemicals such as caustic soda and bleach, clog blocks and bottles. Oyster shells and cockleshells were found in the building, suggesting that it was also used for storing shellfish.

The stock books are not the only evidence of stock control practices used in the 1830 Warehouse. Painted signs and numbers on the internal walls show that goods were stored in demarcated areas. Some of these areas were assigned to particular carriers, including the Great Western Railway and Pickfords. There were offices on three of the five floors for the clerks who would have been responsible for recording the arrival and departure of goods. The most substantial and best-preserved of these is in Bay 1 at rail level, which still has its built-in sloping desks. Another sign of stock control activity at rail level is the high incidence of nails in the storey posts. This suggests that as goods came in, the matching dockets were nailed to the post until the whole consignment had been accounted for. There were two offices in Bay 1 on the ground floor, close to where a weighbridge stood in the yard outside. The clerks who worked there were probably mainly concerned with recording the weights of cargoes.

Each of the five bays was designed and equipped to operate independently as regards the vertical movement of goods. The key requirement was for goods to be deliverable to and from rail and road levels, where they were transhipped. Each set of loophole doors, fourteen each on the north and south elevations, was originally surmounted by a hoist. These contra-wound hoists were manually operated with gravity assistance. This system soon proved to be inadequate for the high volume of goods traffic. In 1831, a steam engine was installed, which powered about half of the hoists. Steam power was supplanted in about 1870-80, when hydraulic power was adopted throughout Liverpool Road Station as part of a major redevelopment scheme.



Elevation of a gravity hoist.

For more information:

- Visit** The *Warehouse of the World* audio-visual show in the 1830 Warehouse.
- Read** Greene, J. Patrick. "An Archaeological Study of the 1830 Warehouse at Liverpool Road Station, Manchester", *Industrial Archaeology Review* XVII:2 (Spring 1995): 117-128.
- Consult** Archaeological survey records and records relating to the restoration of the 1830 Warehouse, available in the Museum's Collections Centre Study Area.