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# Pontypridd Railway Station Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf

Historic Building Recording



Planning ref: 13/1293/12

Ref: 107140.01

January 2015



**Pontypridd Railway Station  
Pontypridd  
Rhondda Cynon Taf**

**Historic Building Recording**

**Prepared for:**

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
**January 2015**

**Report Ref: 107140.01**



## Quality Assurance

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\* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

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# Pontypridd Railway Station Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taf

## Historic Building Recording

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# **Pontypridd Railway Station Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taf**

## **Historic Building Recording**

### **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Colas Rail Morgan Sindall Joint Venture on behalf of Network Rail to undertake an English Heritage Level 2 historic building survey of the façade of Pontypridd Railway Station, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 307123 189854.

The archaeological survey works comprised photographic recording and enhancement of a measured survey to accurately record the façade of Pontypridd Railway Station. The archaeological survey was undertaken prior to and during repair and refurbishment works in order to ascertain the extent and condition of the historic façade obscured by the current late 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick frontage. This work produced a floor plan and elevation drawing of the station and a detailed photographic record.

Pontypridd Railway Station is Grade II listed and opened in 1840 as part of the Taff Vale Railway Company which ran from Cardiff to Merthyr Tydfil. The Station, originally called Newbridge Junction, was remodelled several times: in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century; in the 1970s; and in the 1990s. The façade seen today dates from the 1990s, however, other parts of the station have retained their historic form and date to 1907-19014.

The historic building recording archive is currently held in the Wessex Archaeology Sheffield Office under the project code 107140. This archive will be deposited along with a copy of the final version of this report with The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.



# **Pontypridd Railway Station Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taf**

## **Historic Building Recording**

### **Acknowledgements**

The project was commissioned by Colas Rail Morgan Sindall Joint Venture on behalf of Network Rail and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Joshua Bowen and Daniel Jeavons in this regard. Frank Camilleri is also thanked for providing access to the Site. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Hywel Matthews of Pontypridd Reference Library and David Gwyer of Pontypridd Museum for their assistance.

The archive research, site survey, photography, analysis and report compilation was undertaken by Maria-Elena Calderón. Illustrations were prepared by Maria-Elena Calderón and Alix Sperr. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Lucy Dawson.





# Pontypridd Railway Station Pontypridd Rhondda Cynon Taf

## Historic Building Recording

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Colas Rail Morgan Sindall Joint Venture (hereafter 'the Client') on behalf of Network Rail to undertake a programme of historic building recording at Pontypridd Railway Station, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taf, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 307123 189854 (**Figure 1**; hereafter 'the Site'). The work has been carried out prior to the repair and refurbishment of the Grade II listed Railway Station (planning application reference: 13/1293/12).
- 1.1.2 The Railway Station was constructed as part of the Taff Valley Railway, opened in 1840 and listed as Grade II in 1990. The scope of the works was agreed between Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), the Local Authority and the Client. A specification outlining the objectives and methodologies to be employed was produced by GGAT (2013).
- 1.1.3 An English Heritage (2006) Level 2 survey was carried out at the Site, in line with the specification (GGAT, 2013), between 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> November 2014, the results of which comprise this report.

#### 1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site comprises a two storey railway station complex, orientated northwest-southeast, located to the south side of Sardis Road. The Station lays 100m south of Pontypridd town centre and is set within the Pontypridd Town Conservation Area. Due to the steep slope upon which the Site is located, access to the Station from Sardis Road to the northeast is at a lower level, whilst from the west access is via a footbridge. The Station is immediately surrounded by housing with open fields beyond and a memorial park to the northeast.
- 1.2.2 The underlying solid geology of the Site comprises Brithdir Member sandstone overlain with superficial Glaciofluvial deposits, Devensian comprising sand and gravel (British Geological Survey).

### 2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

#### 2.1 General

- *To undertake an English Heritage Level 2 survey of the Station façade prior to and during refurbishment works to provide a long-term record of any historic fabric exposed;*
- *To enhance understanding of the development of the Site.*



## 2.2 Documentary research

- *To identify any relevant appropriate documentary material, maps, or photographs to enable a greater understanding of the Site which will aid the interpretation of the results of any archaeological works.*

## 2.3 Historic building recording

- *To identify and objectively record by means of photographs and annotated measured drawings any evidence of the original façade of the railway station;*
- *To analyse and interpret the building as an integrated system intended to perform a specialised function;*
- *To relate the standing structures with the documentary material to create a homogenous understanding of past usage on the Site.*

2.3.1 The objective of the historic building recording is to make a permanent, ordered and cross referenced project archive of the Site and to place this record in the public domain by depositing it with The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Documentary research

3.1.1 A search of relevant primary and secondary sources was carried out by Wessex Archaeology that included online sources and visits to:

- *Glamorgan Archives;*
- *Pontypridd Reference Library;*
- *Pontypridd Museum.*

3.1.2 A full map regression exercise was carried out. A list of consulted maps are detailed in the **Bibliography** section of this report but not reproduced.

## 3.2 Historic building recording

3.2.1 The on-site methodology comprised the enhancement of a measured survey of the principal façade of the building, produced by ARUP and supplied by the Client, creating an annotated elevation, record digital photography and Site notes.

### ***Measured survey/drawn survey***

3.2.2 The Site was subject to a Level 2 historic building survey, in accordance with English Heritage (2006). A measured survey was enhanced producing an elevation drawing of the façade of the building showing archaeological information. A basic plan was also produced.

### ***Photography***

3.2.3 The photographic record comprised a high quality digital format using a Canon EOS 5D MkII digital camera (with 21 megapixel capability), and a Canon EOS 450D.HDR techniques were also employed.

3.2.4 A general external photographic record was made of the Station, which included oblique general views of the building and principal facade. A number of general photographs of

the interior of the building, within the development areas were also taken. Detailed record shots were made of the individual openings created in the modern façade that may have exposed the original façade beyond.

- 3.2.5 The location and direction of each photographic viewpoint was recorded onto the corresponding Site plan. A selection of the photographic record has been used to illustrate this report and can be found in **Plates 1-35**, and plate viewpoints can be found on **Figure 3**.

## **4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **4.1 Introduction**

- 4.1.1 The historical background and development of the Site has been previously undertaken by Building Design Partnership (BDP) (Heritage Statement 2011 within Design and Access Statement, 2011). Additional research was also undertaken by Wessex Archaeology. The following is a summary of that research focusing on the development and modification of the railway station buildings, incorporating local and regional economic and social histories where relevant. A map regression was undertaken but produced no further evidence than that set out within the Heritage Statement (BDP, 2011).

### **4.2 Early history**

- 4.2.1 Formerly known as Newbridge, the town (now Pontypridd) was a small rural hamlet at the connection of the Rhondda and Taff rivers. Pontypridd's most famous landmark, which is now Grade I listed and a Scheduled Monument, is a bridge across the River Taff, known locally as the 'Old Bridge', and was constructed in 1756 by William Edwards, a self-taught stonemason (Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries Heritage Trail).

### **4.3 The Industrial Revolution**

- 4.3.1 It was not until the rise of industry that the town began to expand, with the construction of a turnpike road in 1771 and then more significantly the Glamorganshire Canal. The canal opened from Merthyr Tydfil to Pontypridd in 1792, and then extended to Cardiff two years later. The canal transported coal from the Rhondda and iron from Merthyr Tydfil to the docks in Cardiff. The Brown Lenox Chainworks arrived in Pontypridd in 1818 and within six years almost a thousand tons of iron products were exported along the canal to Cardiff. By 1839 that figure had risen to four thousand tons. Over time as production increased and the canal proved insufficient, like many in England and Wales, the canal was replaced by a railway. At its peak South Wales provided a third of the World's coal (Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries Heritage Trail).

### **4.4 The Taff Valley Railway**

- 4.4.1 Permission was granted to form a company to build a railway from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff docks in 1836. By 1840 the line and selected railway stations opened, which included Newbridge Junction. This was renamed Pontypridd Railway Station in the mid- to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The exact year of this differs from source to source and is stated as occurring in 1856, 1866 and 1891. As the coal industry expanded so did the railway and Pontypridd became the gateway to the valleys.
- 4.4.2 The original station was reconstructed between 1907 and 1914, evidenced by the historic mapping (BDP, 2011a, p28), and installed with what were at the time the longest platforms in the World. Due to the topographic position on the side of a valley, the building

of more platforms was not an option and as such the platforms were designed to take two full length trains (Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries Heritage Trail). The station was furnished with terracotta tiled buildings, in an Art Nouveau style (Listed building description in BDP, 2011, p33). Extant buildings on the platform island date to this and attest to the style and colour of the 1907-1914 station façade (**Figure 7**).

- 4.4.3 In this rise to prominence during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a postmaster, Charles Basset, was appointed. Irritated with constantly receiving mail for other 'Newbridge' towns he was instrumental in changing the town's name to Pontypridd. The name Pontypridd derives from the Welsh for 'bridge by the earthen house', referring to a succession of wooden bridges that formally spanned the River Taff at this point (Pontypridd Town Council).
- 4.4.4 During the 1970s the station underwent modifications, with the decorative façade clad with plain red brick, and again in the 1990s. The current modern façade of the station, in blue engineering bricks, dates from this last phase of modifications (BDP, 2011 p32)

## 5 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The Site survey was undertaken between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The Site comprised a complex of railway buildings orientated northwest-southeast (**Plate 1**) with the principal façade of the station to the northeast. The scope of archaeological works focused on this principal façade.

### 5.2 External

- 5.2.1 The northeast principal elevation is 16 bays in length and two storeys in height (**Figure 2**). The ground floor contains the main entrance and adjacent ancillary rooms, whilst the first floor comprises a brick parapet forming the upper section of the principal façade, with stone copings, and the northern railway line (**Plate 1**). The principal elevation is constructed in blue engineering brick with decorative ashlar sandstone window and door surrounds. A modern glass canopy was attached to the elevation above ground floor window height and was supported by external steels. Positioned projecting from above the current main entrance was further a large glass arched canopy. These canopies were partially removed during the refurbishment works and their removal monitored.
- 5.2.2 At ground floor there are two large entrances that span the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> bays (southeast to northwest) (**Figure 2, Plate 2**) and the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> bay of the elevation (**Plate 3, Figure 2**). The first of these entrances was originally the principal pedestrian entrance now closed off to the public. It comprised a large opening with an RSJ lintel, once supporting a sliding door, since removed (**Plate 2**). The second entrance currently provides the principal public access to the Station, but was formerly an exit. This entrance opening contains a modern glass doorway above which was the large projecting arched steel and glass canopy (**Plates 3, 4**).
- 5.2.3 The first bay of the elevation is blind (**Plate 1, Figure 2**) and the remaining bays comprise six that are fenestrated with modern timber framed windows each with four fixed lights (**Plate 5**) and five bays with double pedestrian entrances with timber doors (**Plate 6**).

### 5.3 Internal

- 5.3.1 Leading from the entrance positioned within bays 2 and 3, is the original entrance staircase (**Plate 7**). The staircase spans the full length of the room and ascends in a

southerly direction before dividing and turning a quarter to the east and west to reach the platform. At the platform level, the staircases are accessed through cast iron lattice gates (**Plate 8**). Positioned in the centre and to either side of the staircase is a decorative wooden handrail, continuing to the platform (**Plates 7, 8**). The walls are finished with a scheme of glazed brick comprising a moulded dado rail dividing a single line of brown glazed bricks with dark orange glazed brick below and white glazed brick above the dado rail. The upper white bricks have been painted dark red in part (**Plate 7**). Internally, within the entrance reveal of bays 2 and 3, historic fabric of the earlier façade was observed with the white glazed brick walls and door jamb with bowtell moulding detailing still visible (**Plate 9**).

- 5.3.2 Within the interior of the adjacent room, the same glazed brick detailing was noted. Internally it was observed that the doorway of bay 4 contains a glazed brick arched head (**Plate 10**). This is part of the original arched door lintel, as depicted in an historic photograph dating to the 1960s-70s (**Figure 4**) but now externally obscured by the later 1990s façade. Further evidence of the same glazed brick can be seen above a suspended ceiling within a room serving bays 5-9 (**Plate 11**). No further historic fabric, finishes, fixtures or fittings were observed in the remaining internal spaces although it is probable that they are retained behind modern finishes.

## 6 RESULTS

### 6.1 Summary

- 6.1.1 A series of small openings were created within the principal facade as part of the refurbishment works during the removal of the glass canopies (**Plate 12**). A number of the openings exposed parts of the historic façade, while others revealed modern features, all since obscured by the 1990s development. Observations were made of each opening from a mobile platform and the position of each opening is located on **Figure 2**.

#### *Openings 1-4*

- 6.1.2 These openings measured 0.43m x 0.17m at the maximum extent and were located within bays 2 and 3 of the façade (**Figure 2**). Only modern concrete, plastic sheeting and steelwork were observed and no historical fabric was exposed within these openings (**Plates 12-16**).

#### *Openings 5-19*

- 6.1.3 These openings were created as a result of removing part of the modern glass canopy and as such are located in line with the retained canopy (**Figure 2**). Each opening measured 0.44m height and 0.33m in width (average). All openings exposed historic fabric in the form of Terracotta tiles, although these were in poor condition and absent of any detailing. This Terracotta fabric was in large covered in each opening by a central rectangular patch of cement with four projecting bolts that would have supported a steel beam carrying the canopy (**Plates 17 – 32**).

#### *Openings 20-21*

- 6.1.4 Openings 20 and 21 were positioned above the main entranceway of bays 10 and 11. These had supported the projecting large arched steel and glass canopy (**Plate 4**). Access to the openings was limited due to health and safety precautions. Opening 20 Measured 0.52m x 0.77m, and Opening 21 measured 0.52m x 0.66m (**Figure 2**). Both were rectangular in shape. Within the openings were the remains of a steel beam and steel plate bonded with at least 6 bolts to an earlier wall. This wall was covered in a



cement render and it was not possible to delineate any brick courses. No further details were observed (**Plates 33-35**).

## **7 CONCLUSION**

### **7.1 General**

7.1.1 The programme of historic building recording has confirmed that the historic façade remains concealed behind the current cladding forming the modern façade of Pontypridd Railway Station. A series of historic photographs (**Figures 4-5**) retained at Pontypridd Reference Library and decorative terracotta tiles previously forming part of the historic station façade, currently on display in Pontypridd Museum (**Figure 6**), confirm that the terracotta tiles exposed within Openings 5-19 belong to the historic façade of the Station. The observed historic fabric of the façade conforms to the fabric and architectural style of the remainder of the extant station buildings (**Figure 7**). However, no architectural detailing was observed and the recorded historic fabric was heavily damaged. However, given that the openings were created for the removal of modern fixtures, they have targeted known areas of interferences with the fabric of the building and therefore have a higher probability of damage in comparison with other areas of the façade which may be retained largely undamaged elsewhere.

### **7.2 Archive**

7.2.1 The recording of the historic buildings on the Site has produced a written and photographic archive. This is currently held in Wessex Archaeology's Sheffield Office and will be delivered to The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust for deposition in due course. If necessary, the paper records of the site archive will be security microfilmed prior to deposition.

7.2.2 An OASIS form will be completed at <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis> for inclusion in the ADS database. This will include an electronic copy of this report in PDF format which will be accessible six months after deposition.



## 8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 8.1 References

English Heritage, 2006, *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording and practice*.

Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, 2013, *Pontypridd Railway Station, Rhondda Cynon Taf: archaeological building and photographic survey specification*

Owen-Jones et al, 1985, *The Railway and Industrial Heritage of Pontypridd and District, GWR 150 1835-1985*

BDP, 2011, *Design and Access Statement: Pontypridd Station*. Report P2003520

### 8.2 Consulted cartographic sources

- 1875 OS
- 1900 OS
- 1919 OS
- 1961 OS

### 8.3 Consulted online sources

- Pontypridd Town Council: <http://pontypriddtowncouncil.gov.uk/about-pontypridd>
- Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries Heritage Trail: <http://webapps.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/heritagetrail/english/taf/thehistoryofpontypridd.html>
- British Geological Survey: <http://www.bgs.ac.uk/home.html>



9 APPENDIX I: LISTED BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Building Name:	Pontypridd Railway Station	Cadw Building ID:	13525
District:	Pontypridd	Grade:	II
County:	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Listed:	17 July 1990
Postcode:	CF37 1DT	NGR:	307203, 189771

**Listing Text:**

Pontypridd Railway Station Main Platform including buildings and canopy

**Location:**

At the S end of the town, entered from the S end of Sardis Road. A high-level station, it is built partly over the S section of High Street.

**History:**

The Taff Vale Railway was the first major locomotive railway in Wales. It was incorporated in 1836, built 1837-40 and opened in 1840-1 from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff, primarily to serve the ironworks of Merthyr Tydfil. The chief engineer was Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Pontypridd developed into a major network as the focal point for transporting coal from Merthyr and the Cynon and Rhondda Valleys to Cardiff. It also enjoyed increased passenger traffic, and in 1907 reconstruction of the station was begun. At its peak it dealt with 11,000 passengers a day and had 7 platforms. The main, island, platform that remains in use was said to have been the longest in the world when built and is still the longest in the Western Region. Remodelled in 1970s.

**Interior:**

The main waiting room has pediments to ends and turned balusters to roof trusses.

**Exterior:**

A long, distinctly curved platform, the majority of which is roofed. The roof is 14 bays long, 8 of which have broad projecting canopies. The roof is carried on I-section steel piers (by the Lanarkshire Steel Company) which stand on fluted oval cast iron bases. The lightly trussed steel roof has segmental principals and a boarded underside. The canopies have deep ogee valencing. Beneath the roof are 6 buildings including ticket offices, station master's office, waiting rooms and toilets. These are in a free Egyptian revival style, of red brick with terracotta. All have parapets, deep bracket cornices, panelled pilasters and high plinths. The openings have labels over lugged and tapered architraves. Mainly fielded panel doors and T-framed windows. A 2x2 bay toilet block with long side bays is at the S end. To its N is the largest of the buildings, incorporating the ticket office, which has a 9-bay platform elevation and 2-bay end elevations, the N end having a square panel with an urn sprouting foliage. The next building N is the station master's office, which has a 6-bay E wall and single-bay end walls, on the S side of each bay being opposed flights of stairs (both now closed) descending to ground level beneath the platform. Both have tall panelled gate piers, the W side with Baroque style overthrow and sliding lattice gates. Side railings with simple Art Nouveau detail are by Bayliss Ltd of Wolverhampton. Another stair, now the main stair, is further N, which has similar piers and overthrow with addition lettering reading 'Way Out'. The lower level is faced in white-glazed tiles. Beyond the N stair is a lift and 3 further buildings.





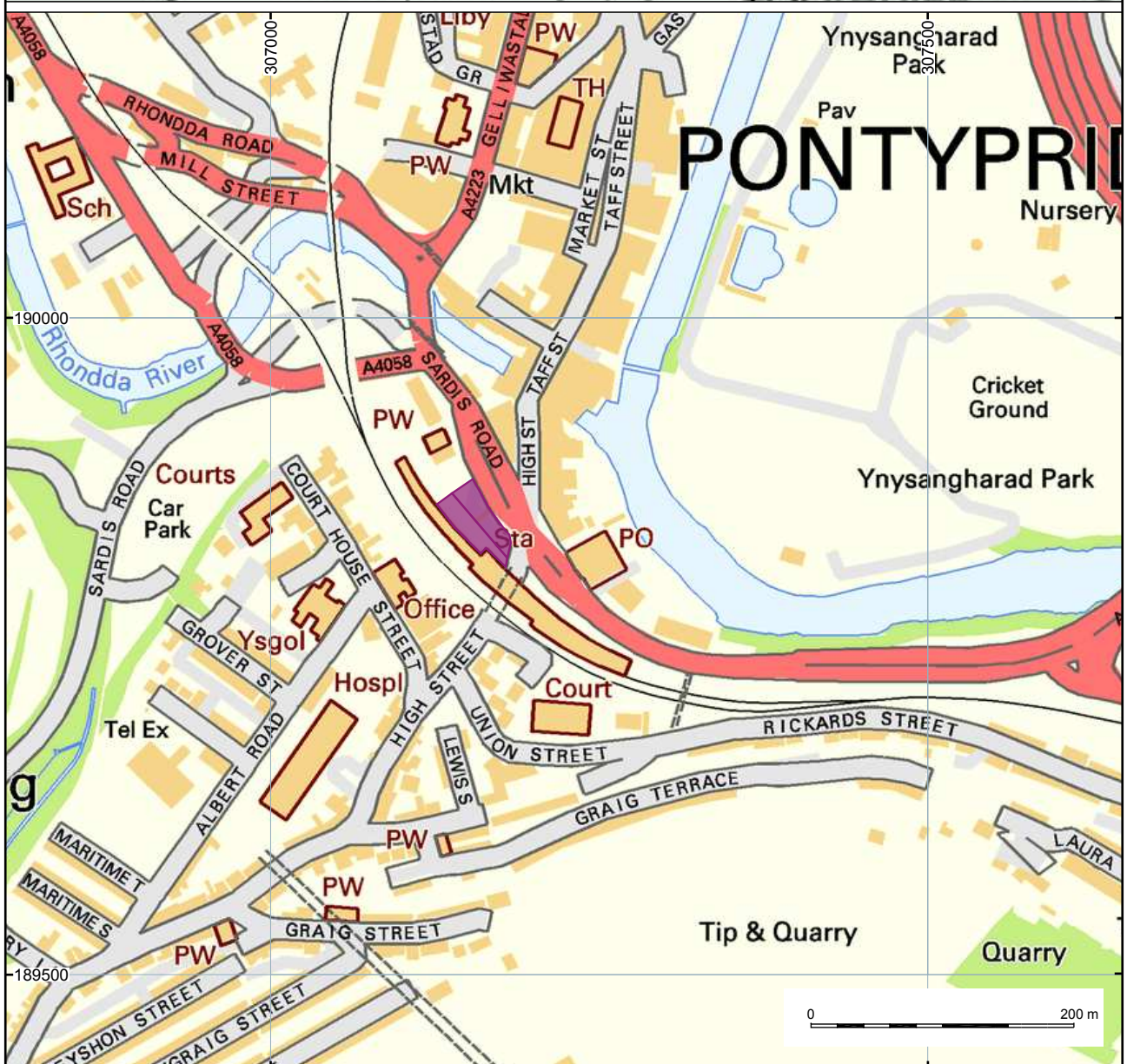
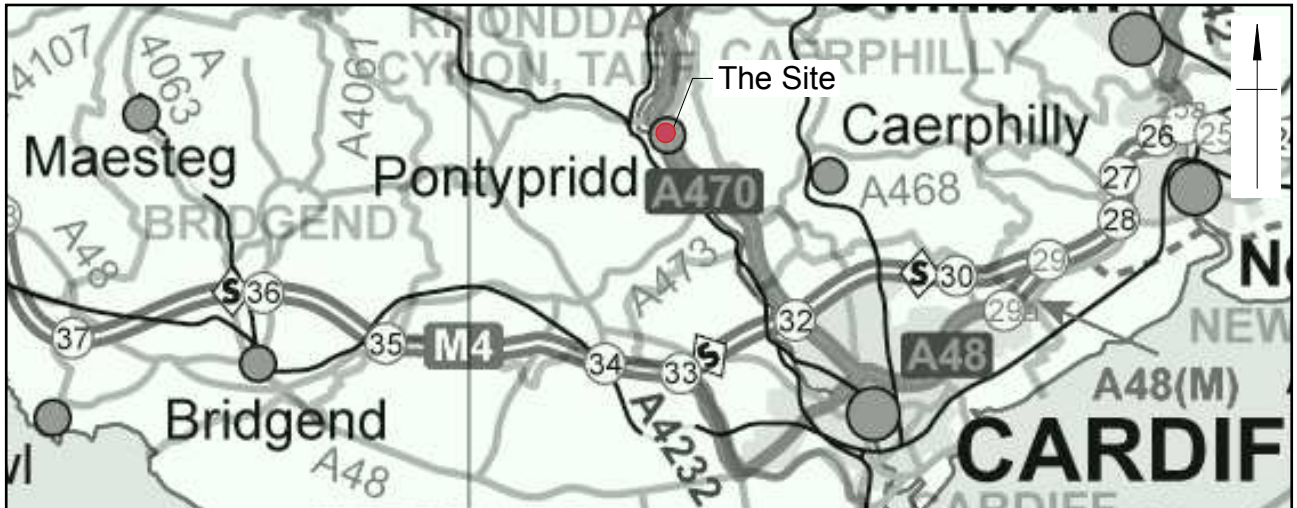
Several benches are retained which have cast iron uprights, including 2 styles of GWR benches and others with 'BR(W)' (British Rail Western Region).



**Reason for Listing:**

Listed for architectural interest as a fine Edwardian railway station retaining original character, and for group value with other listed railway items in the centre of Pontypridd.

**References:**

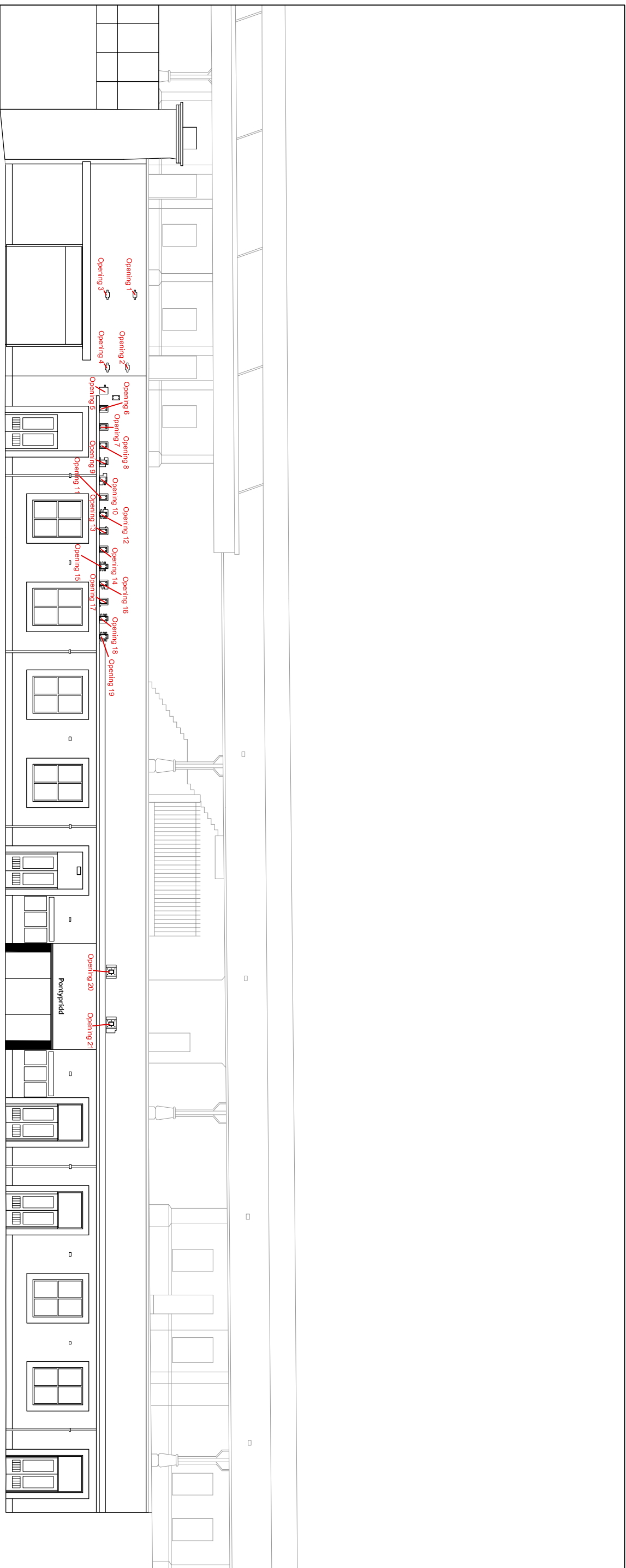
Barrie, D S M, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, vol 12: South Wales, pp144-7.



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Site location

Figure 1

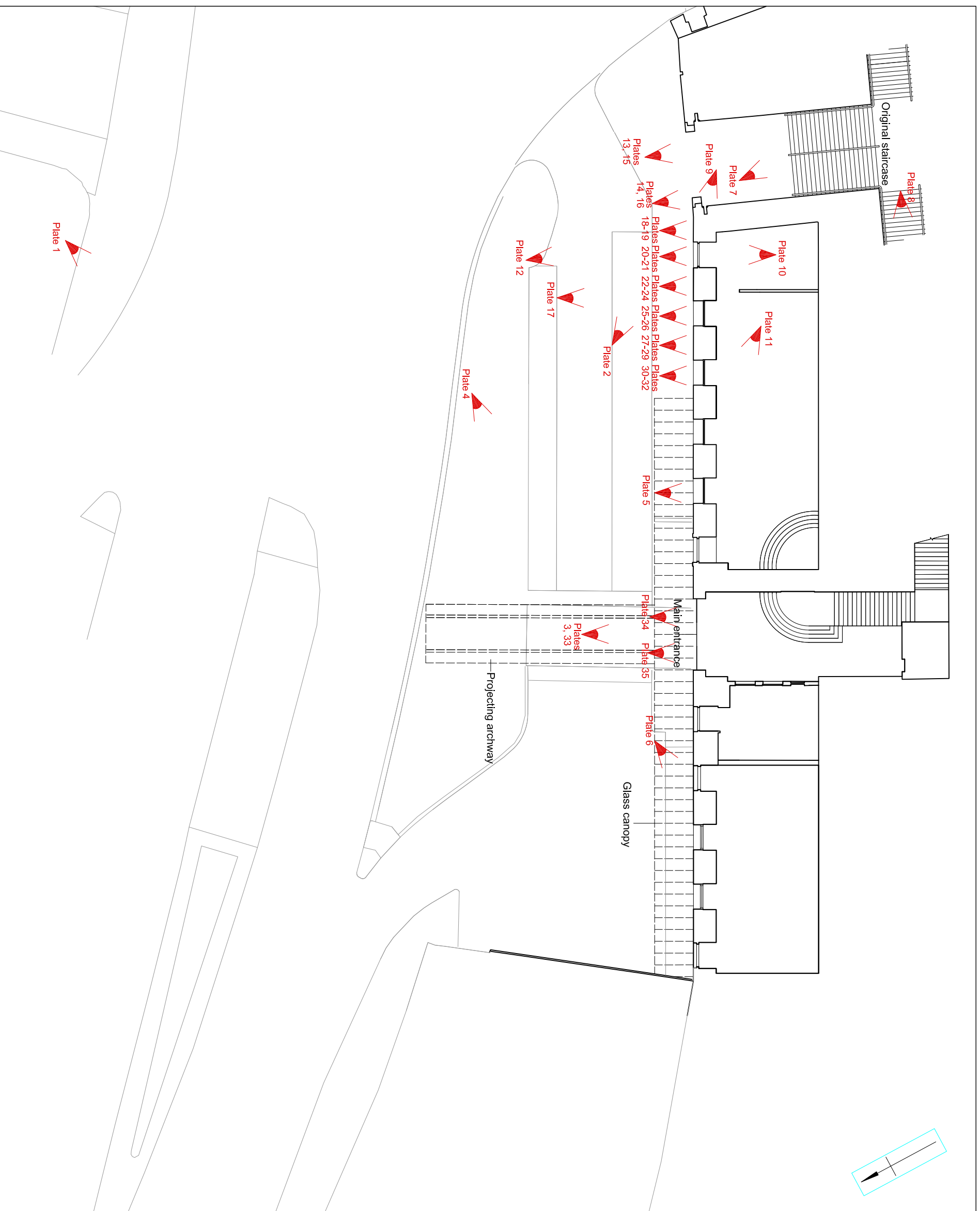



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Principal (northeast) elevation of Pontypridd Railway Station showing openings

Figure 2



	
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Ground floor plan of Pontypridd Railway Station showing plate viewpoints

Figure 3



Figure 4: Historic photograph: Historic façade of Pontypridd Railway Station, c.1960s-70s



Figure 5: Historic photograph: Detail of historic façade pediment of Pontypridd Railway Station, c.1960s-70s


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Figure 6: Fragments of the historic façade, currently on display at Pontypridd Museum



Figure 7: View of current station buildings on platform island, showing historic form


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Plate 1: Oblique view of the principal (northeast) façade, looking west



Plate 2: Oblique view of bays 1-4 the historic main entrance, looking south


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Plate 3: View of the current main entrance, bays 10 and 11



Plate 4: Detail of projecting arch with glass canopy, looking west


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Plate 5: Detail of a typical window



Plate 6: Oblique view of a typical door and windows, looking west


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Plate 7: Detail of the original staircase leading to the platforms



Plate 8: View of the staircase and gate to platform, looking northwest


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Plate 9: Detail of historic door jamb of bay 3, looking west



Plate 10: Detail of entrance within bay 4, looking northeast


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Plate 11: View above the suspended ceiling in room serving bays 5-9



Plate 12: View of inserted openings within the principal facade, looking southwest


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Plate 13: Detail of Opening 1



Plate 14: Detail of Opening 2


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Plate 15: Detail of Opening 3



Plate 16: Detail of Opening 4


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Plate 17: General view of Openings 5-19



Plate 18: Detail of Opening 5


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Plate 19: Detail of Opening 6



Plate 20: Detail of Opening 7


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Plate 21: Detail of Opening 8



Plate 22: Detail of Opening 9



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Plate 23: Detail of Opening 10



Plate 24: Detail of Opening 11


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Plate 25: Detail of Opening 12



Plate 26: Detail of Opening 13



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Plate 27: Detail of Opening 14



Plate 28: Detail of Opening 15



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Plate 29: Detail of Opening 16



Plate 30: Detail of Opening 17



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Plate 31: Detail of Opening 18



Plate 32: Detail of Opening 19



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Plate 33: Detail of Openings 20-21



Plate 34: Detail of Opening 20



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Plate 35: Detail of Opening 21

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