

## WALKING ON WATER STREET

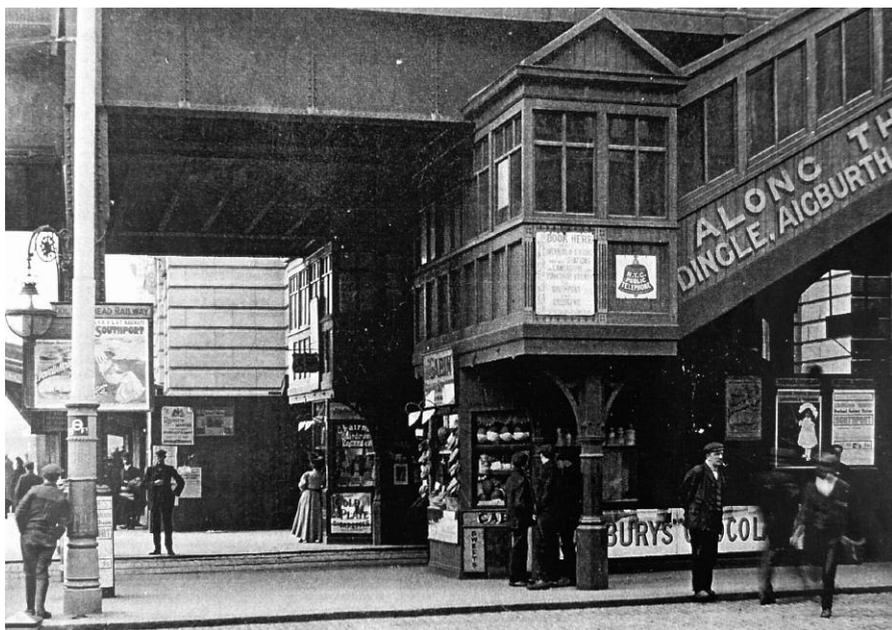
Graham Jones explores the histories of various buildings in the Water Street area.

### Part 2 – THE CABIN & THE KIOSK AT PIER HEAD STATION<sup>1</sup>



For half a century 'The Cabin' and 'The Kiosk' were distinctive features of life at Pier Head Station. In the foreground of the first of the City Engineer's photographs, taken in September 1910,<sup>2</sup> can be seen the fruiterer's shop with the tobacconist's in the background. In the second photograph, taken from the western side of the station, and with the Kiosk now in the foreground, the blurred image of a man can be seen hurrying past a recruitment poster for His Majesty's Army, preparing the nation for a war that would engulf Europe in four years' time. Immediately beneath the poster in the selective enlargement can just be seen a long narrow board advertising 'Zwinger Cigars', whilst behind the tram stop and above the shop counter 'The "Leonardo" Kiosk' sign can be made out.





The Anning and Zwinger families had been present on Merseyside prior to the start of the 20th century, and an account of their connection with the shops at Pier Head Station begins in 1910. One branch of the Anning family was living at 16 Buckland Street, St Michael's, with Arthur G. Anning working as a fruiterer at 19A Water Street (see later). A branch of the Zwinger family was resident at 'Sunnyside', 25 St. Elmo Road, Egremont, with C. Leonard Zwinger working as a cigar importer with premises at 62 Dale Street and also as a tobacconist at 'Pier Head, George's Dock' (the description in Gore's directory in 1910).

The directories show that Mrs Margaret Zwinger took over as the tobacconist in 1911 and that Mrs Bertha Anning took over as the fruiterer in 1914. By 1912 Margaret had moved to Egerton Street and by 1914 to Rowson Street, both convenient to New Brighton Station for her journey to Liverpool. Bertha continued to live at Buckland Street, with a short walk to Dingle Station for her journey on the Overhead Railway to the Pier Head. During the war thousands of troops, dockers and office workers would have been very grateful for the Cabin and Kiosk, and Margaret and Bertha's partnership lasted throughout the war and into the second half of the 1920s.

The Mersey Docks & Harbour Board railway ran underneath the Overhead Railway, and at Pier Head Station the staircases to the platforms can be seen to straddle the MD&HB track.<sup>2</sup> The Cabin and Kiosk were thus separated by the potentially hazardous few steps across the rails, and it was fortunate that a man with a flag always walked in front of approaching MD&HB locomotives!

Throughout her life, Margaret's various homes remained 'over the water' where, in 1918, she was shown as having moved to Rake Lane, Liscard, and by 1926 to Dawlish Road, Wallasey. Bertha remained at Buckland Street until 1928 when the address became listed as being occupied by a Miss Anning. The same directory shows that Mrs Gladys Miller had taken over as fruiterer at both 19A Water Street and at the Cabin. Gladys must have soon decided to move from her former home at North Hill Street, Prince's Park because by 1930 she is listed at Lynton, Lynmouth Road, Aigburth, a short step from Mersey Road Station (its modern name being Aigburth Station) for her daily journey into town.

On the 3rd of November 1930 Drury Buildings, which then occupied numbers 19 to 23 Water Street, was photographed by the City Engineer's Department.<sup>2</sup> In a detail from that photograph, and on a rainy Liverpool day, a woman can be seen sheltering in the entrance to number 21, and on her right can be glimpsed the window and doorway of the fruiterer's shop at number 19A which Gladys had taken over from the Annings.

The directories show that Gladys and Margaret were joined for a brief period in 1934 and 1935 by Martin O'Reilly who had set up business as a newsagent on the station platform. But by 1936 Gladys had departed, to be replaced as fruiterer by Miss Ena Parr. Ena and Margaret then created a new partnership, seeing the Cabin and the Kiosk safely through the second world war and well beyond. Sadly however Ena's shop at 19A Water Street did not survive the May Blitz of 1941 when Drury Buildings and the Corn Exchange both suffered direct hits and were reduced to rubble, with neighbouring buildings (including India Buildings, Wellington Buildings and West Africa House) also suffering damage.

In the view of the devastation to Drury Lane,<sup>2</sup> stretching all the way to James Street Station and the White Star Building, and taken from Tower Building which was itself also damaged, the very bottom right hand corner marks the place where Ena's shop at 19A once stood.

The war over, life for Ena and Margaret at Pier Head Station continued, but with two changes being shown in Kelly's directory entry for 1946. The Kiosk had closed, never to reopen, and Margaret had moved across to join Ena who had discontinued selling fruit to concentrate



upon confectionery. The Cabin must have been a small enough premises for one occupant, let alone two, so perhaps they shared duties there as Margaret grew older for, remarkably, Margaret would be at the Cabin for a further decade faithfully serving customers until both the Cabin and the Overhead Railway were no more.



A photograph from the early to mid-1950s shows the Cabin closed for the day's business.<sup>2</sup> High above the shop, one of the large advertisements reads:-

*Toucans in their nest agree  
Guinness is good for you.  
Open some today and see  
what one or Toucan do.*

Time moved on and by the end of 1956 the Overhead Railway's fate had been sealed. Allan Tankard's evocative watercolour of June 1957 captured a last view of Pier Head Station and Cabin beneath its staircase,<sup>3</sup> both now deserted, and with a policeman directing traffic from the safety of his black and white striped 'dustbin' as local wits had nicknamed it.<sup>4</sup>

The 'Dockers' Umbrella', as the Overhead Railway had been affectionately known, was dismantled between September 1957 and January 1959, and with the closure of the Cabin (still receiving an entry in Kelly's directory for 1958) Ena Parr and Margaret Zwinger finally retired, the latter to live in a flat adjacent to that of Paul Zwinger at Denton House, Sea Bank Road, Liscard. A Liverpool Echo photographer captured the loss of Pier Head Station at Christmas in 1957 in a view<sup>4</sup> which surely must still



bring tears to the eyes of those who remember often alighting there and perhaps buying a banana, a bar of Rowntree's, or a packet of Capstan from the shops below.

However, if you visit the recently opened gallery at the new Museum of Liverpool which features the lovingly restored and only surviving Overhead Railway carriage set within a partial reconstruction of Pier Head Station, you may wish to stand by 'The Cabin' (at the bottom right hand corner of the photograph below) and perhaps imagine yourself as part of the scenes from all those years ago.



### Sources and notes

<sup>1</sup> A modified version of this article will form part of a growing series entitled 'Walking on Water Street' which will be made available in pdf form to the Liverpool Record Office (LRO) when it reopens in 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The City Engineer's and other photographs are from the LRO Photographs and Small Prints collection.

<sup>3</sup> Overhead Railway: Pier Head Station, 1957. Watercolour by A P Tankard. LRO Local Collection 513.

<sup>4</sup> See a close-up of a 'dustbin' at another location in the Liverpool Echo's, *Images of Merseyside*, Breedon Books, 1994. LRO reference 942.753 IMA, which also contains the picture of the demolition of Pier Head Station (courtesy Liverpool Echo & Post).