

Grangetown Local History Society



Fact Sheet No. 10

Grangetown's Laundries

Zena Mabbs and Ray Noyes

THE LAUNDRIES OF OLD GRANGETOWN

In an effort to acquaint some new members of the Grangetown History Society, Zena Mabbs and Ray Noyes have gleaned some information in relation to Laundries in Grangetown circa 1910. We have endeavoured to use material stored in the Grangetown Local History Society archive wherever possible. The use of Street Directories revealed some interesting facts i.e. two of the major laundries in Grangetown started out with different names and there were also at one time at least four in Grangetown.

Chinese Laundries

It is interesting to reflect upon the history of Chinese immigrants and the laundries they set up in the ports of the UK. Chinese seamen were employed by the East India Company to import China and Tea to the UK; they were used because they were cheap labour. Changes to labour laws in the early 20th Century meant Chinese sailors found difficulty in getting employment on ships, so instead they turned to running restaurants and laundries.



LAUNDRIES – 12 HOLMESDALE STREET

1920 Thomas Cooper

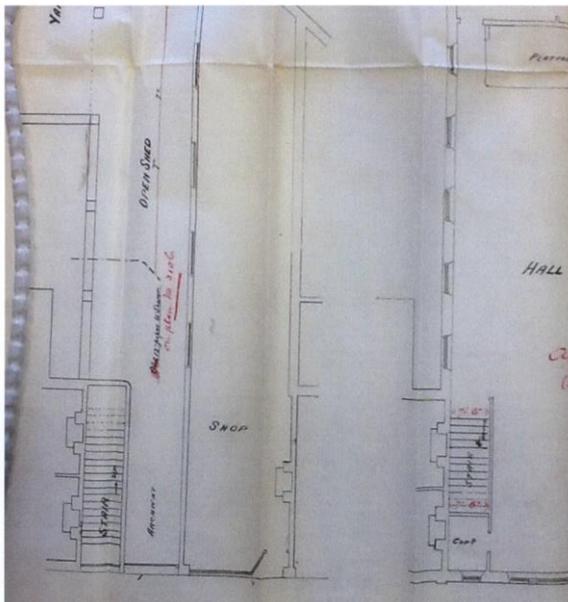


Shops houses and Windsor Hall in Holmesdale Street, Grangetown. Hall built by Sol Andrews who also built Andrews Terrace on Ferry Road.

Note on reverse: "Windsor Hall was once the Salvation Army Meeting Place." Photograph from GLHS Archive.

The Cardiff Times reported on 24th September 1910: “*Dr Watson, the Cardiff Medical Officer of Health, presented to the Health Committee (Dr Smith presiding) his report on the Chinese laundries in Cardiff. It showed that there are 22 Chinese laundries in Various parts of the city, employing in all 55 Chinese and two English persons. With one exception, all the Chinese employees at these laundries are males. The appliances are usually of the most simple kind, and no steam power is used. Generally, the laundries were found to be clean and in good order. The employees for the most part well conducted, clean, industrious and temperate people.*

“*Dr Watson also reported that there were seven ordinary dwelling houses not laundries or lodging houses occupied by Chinese and also four licensed seamen’s lodging houses occupied entirely by Chinese and containing altogether accommodation for 98 persons. When these are full the population of Chinese in the town may be roughly estimated at 180 male persons. No Chinese women have been seen in any of the houses visited. The report was adopted”*



Mission Hall, Holmesdale Street.
Plan dated 27 April 1881

1910 No. 14 Holmesdale shown as Windsor Hall Meeting House, Hector Mansel Boilermaker.

The Mission Hall was on the upper floor with a shop on the ground floor.

Built by Sol Andrews who also built nearby Andrews Terrace on Ferry Road.

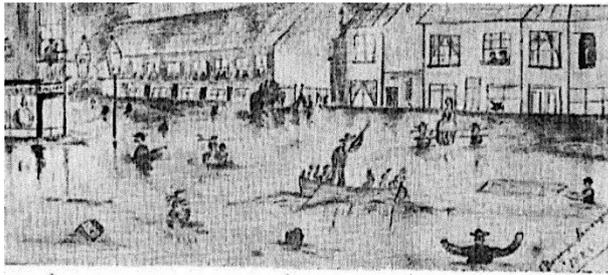
And this was the case in Grangetown. One such laundry was situated at No. 12 Holmesdale Street (which was next to the Windsor Clive Meeting House) In Directories it is referred to as the Grange Laundry occupied by Kee Yong and in 1920 by one Thomas Cooper, it later became J. Warwick Confectionary Manufacturer. This area has been demolished with housing now on the site.

VIEW OF SITE 2018

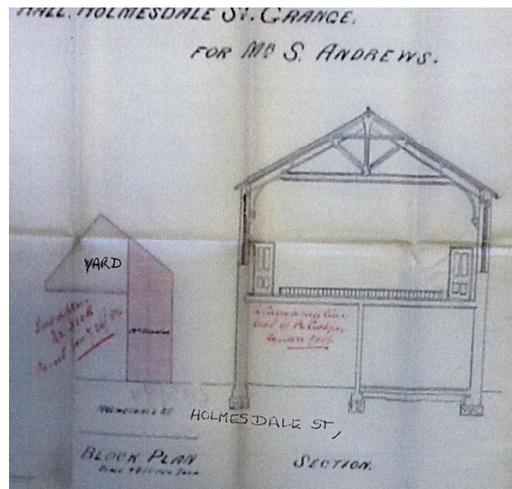


HOLMESDALE COURT

R H Corner the rear of “Step Houses” in Ferry Road.



There was being held in Windsor Hall this night, special meetings conducted by Mr. Harries of Bedford, he was a very tall man and our Brother Mr. James Buck of Windsor Hall was much shorter. Mr. Harries carried our Brother Buck to his home. In the old Iron Room at the bottom of Paget Street, they were holding Harvest Festival Services and when the people came out, they also found themselves in the flood waters. This was to become a great event in my life as God used it to my conversion in Windsor Hall in 1884.



The Windsor Clive Meeting House, referred to as a Mission Hall on a plan in 1881, was built by Solomon Andrews, who also built Andrews Terrace around the corner in Ferry Road. In the downstairs shop area of this building he once owned an undertaker business.

Kelly's Directory of 1920 shows The Grange Laundry belonging to a Thomas Cooper, located next to the Windsor Clive Meeting House.



[As an aside, the Windsor Hall gets a mention in an article on the great flood of 1883. A cross-section of the hall is shown above.]

In 38 Paget Street Mr. Lew Sing Lee carried on a Chinese laundry business in a property in the middle of a block; he also owned a laundry in 88 Cornwall Street which was only two doors away from the Cornwall Pub. However, by 1952, 38 Paget Street was home to a Picture Frame Manufacturer by the name of W. Haines.

Details from the 1911 Census in relation to 38 Paget Street reveal that Mr. Lew Sing Lee was the laundry owner, born in Canton, China, and was aged 22.

GRANGETOWN LAUNDRIES – 1910

Lee Low SING - 38 Paget Street and 88 Cornwall Street



38 Paget Street is the property in the centre. (2017)



88 Cornwall Street, two doors away from Cornwall Pub.

Illustrating the remarks in a report in 1910 on Chinese Laundries in Cardiff by Dr. E. Watford, Cardiff Medical Officer of Health:

“The premises consist of ordinary dwelling-houses.”

Lee Lo – 41 Corporation Road



2017 No. 41 Corporation Road is the right hand building, apparently in the course of conversion.

Kee Yong was proprietor in 1920

1955 Directory proprietor Leong Wing

41 Corporation Road is situated on the block between Coedcae and Cymmer Streets.

In 1955 directory there were only 7 Chinese Laundries in Cardiff.

By this time launderettes were opening up in the City.

The Chinese Laundry in 41 Corporation Road is well known to current members of the History Society, and a descendant of the last owner still resides in the Llanishen area of Cardiff. This business was still thriving in 1955, proprietor Leong Wing. People loved to send items to the laundry that needed “special attention”. In the 1911 Census the occupants of this Laundry were all born in Canton, China the head being Gong Lee and two assistants, Hong Lee and Wong Sung.

Before leaving Chinese laundries, it is worth noting that in 1911, during a seamen’s strike, every one of the 30 Chinese laundries in Cardiff was attacked by Welsh mobs. This was because the employers, in order to keep the port open during the strike, decided to import foreign labour such as Chinese seamen, and they paid them higher rates than those usually paid to the striking men. The situation became extremely volatile.

Indigenous Owners

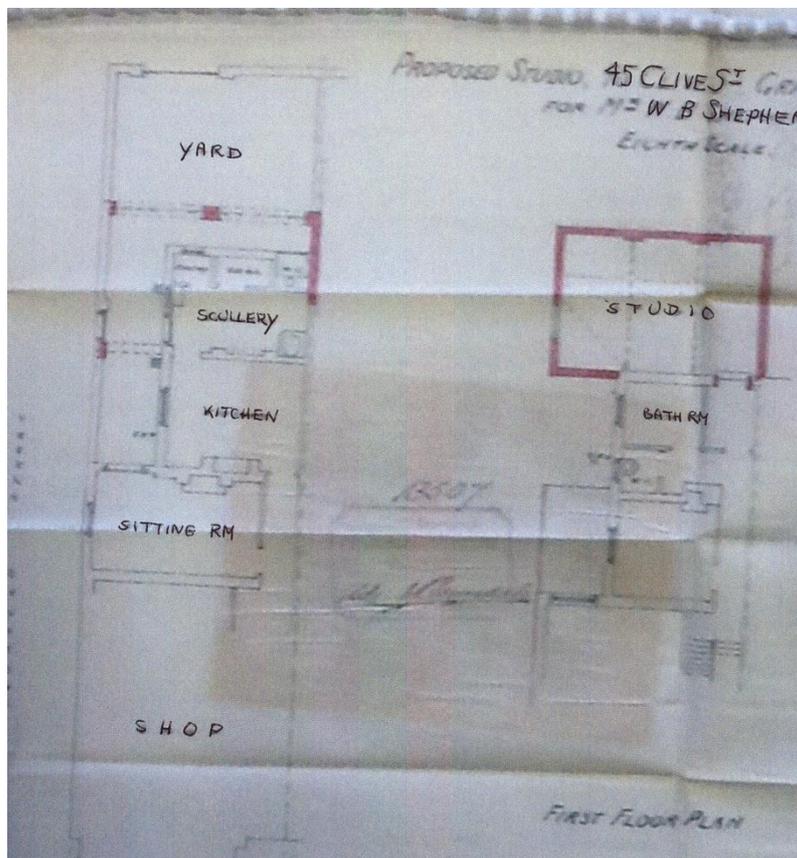
Location of laundries in Grangetown

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| 56 | Clare Road |
| 41, 43A and 60 | Corporation Road |
| 88, 80 and 60 | Cornwall Street |
| 12 | Holmesdale Street |
| 80 | Maerdy Street |
| 38 | Paget Street |
| 45 | Clive Street |
| | Pendyris Street and Redlaver Street |

No. 45 Clive Street, a substantial property on the corner with Penhevad Street, was a laundry run by a Mr James Cox in 1910. By 1952 it had become a shoe repairer’s run by a Mr H.J. Briggs. Early plans of the site reveal that this property was actually built with an upstairs bathroom and toilet, luxury



indeed to those of us who lived in one of the earlier streets of Grangetown! The builder of 45 Clive St. was a Mr. Marshall who was a prolific builder in Grangetown in 1899.





Clare Road Laundry, Proprietor William Vincent 1915

In 1900, 56 Clare Road is shown as occupied by a Mr A. Foreman; in 1910 a Mr Charles Shuramer occupied it and in 1920 Albert Webber. In the 1952 Directory the laundry is no longer in existence, but the premises is occupied by Mrs. Phyllis Psarelis. A relative of hers visited the History Society on one occasion with a promise of letting us have some memories of her ancestor and the laundry. The photographs from our archive reveal this business was diverse being a dry cleaner's and a 'beater and cleaner of carpets'. The lovely photographs of the horse carts and their advertisements on the side meant that this business was astute in getting their message over to their customers without the need to advertise in local magazines etc.,





Long before the days of modern appliances, Clare Road Laundry was very much in demand.



Shown above is the location of the laundry.

Large laundries

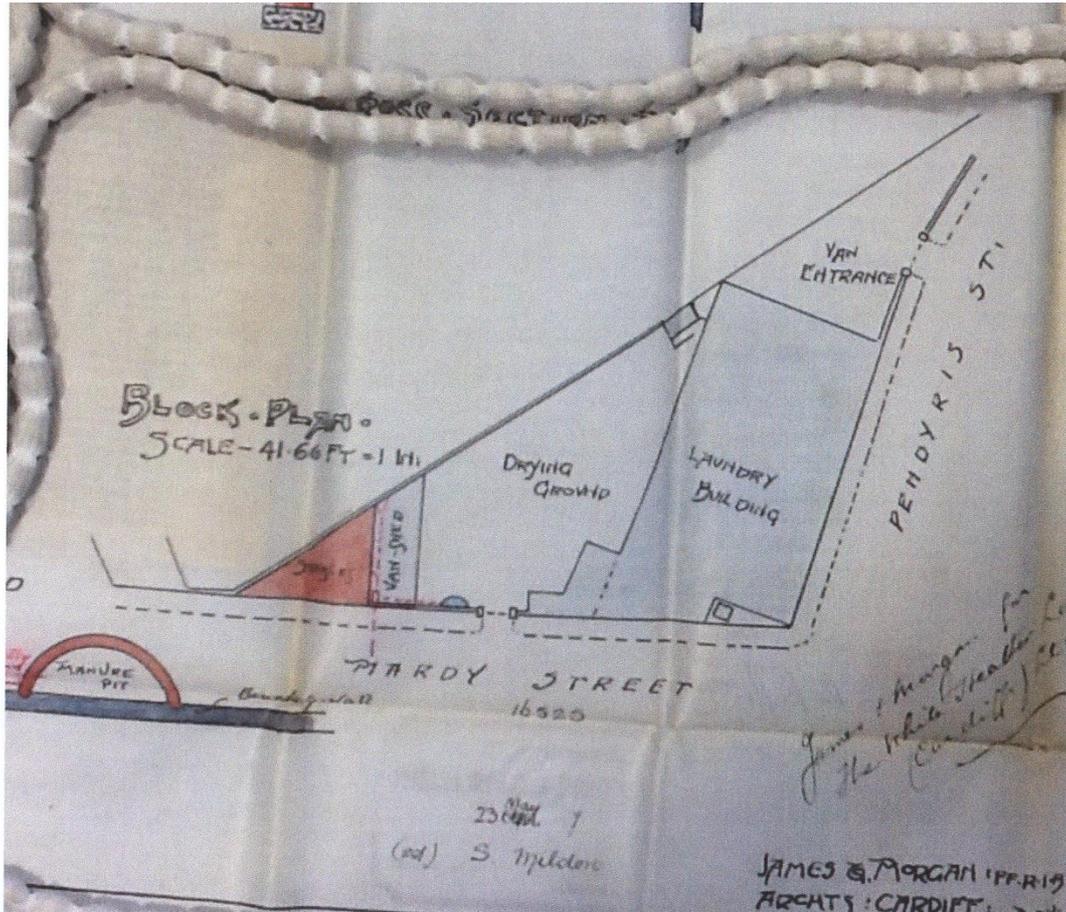


The two largest laundries in Grangetown originally went by the names The South Wales Steam Laundry (1908) Co. Ltd and The New White Heather Laundry Limited. Both eventually changed their names: the former became The Crystal Laundry, located in Redlaver Street and the latter became The New Era Laundry located on the corner of Pendyris Street and Mardy Street. Shown here is an extract from a page of a street directory.

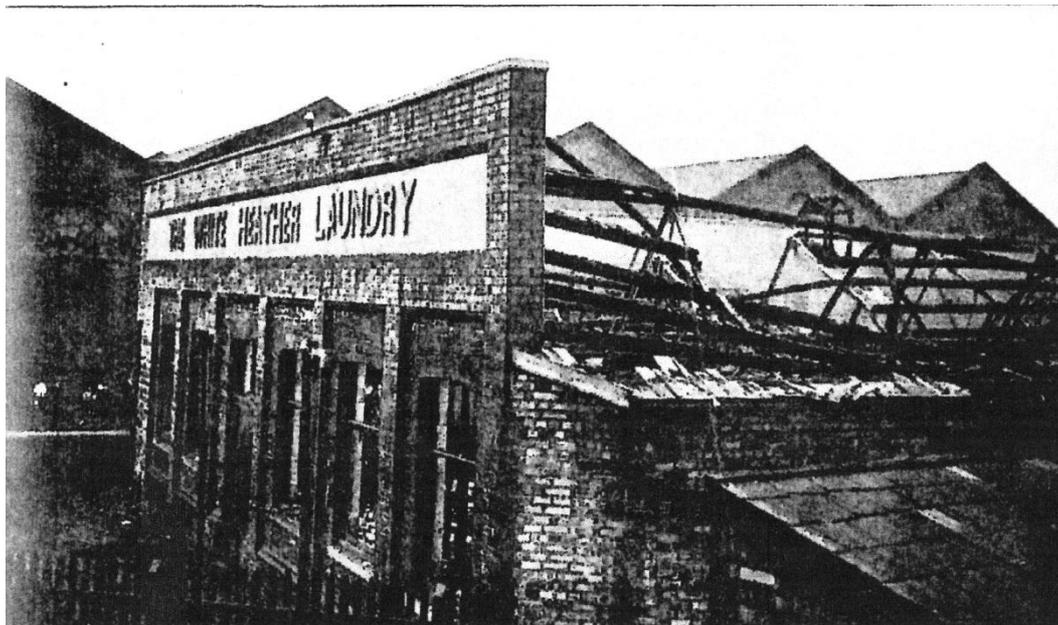
The White Heather Laundry (New Era Laundry)

In 1907 The White Heather Laundry (as was) submitted plans for the addition of stables to their premises on the corner of Pendyris and Mardy Streets. The plan is interesting, showing a 'drying ground' at the rear and a semi-circular manure pit.

The plan was approved by Mr Samuel Mildon of the Public Works Committee who was a well-known Grangetown builder. (His will featured in our Grangetown Memories Book One (2011)). A copy of the proposed alterations to the building is shown below.



Disaster struck in 1908 when the premises were gutted by fire. A photograph of the fire-damaged building is shown below. In 1913 the business was still listed in a business directory as the New White Heather Laundry managed by a Mrs. Holland. In 1915 it became the New Era Laundry. The Laundry was still functioning in 1964. Today the site is occupied by housing.



Another business to suffer a serious fire was the White Heather Laundry in Mardy Street which was completely gutted in 1908.

The laundry was not a minor employer. Below is shown some of the women who once worked there – date unknown. The photograph on the right is of a group circa 1939 – with thanks to Jan Taylor. Their names are listed below.



Names of persons in the right-hand photograph:

Back Row left-to-right:

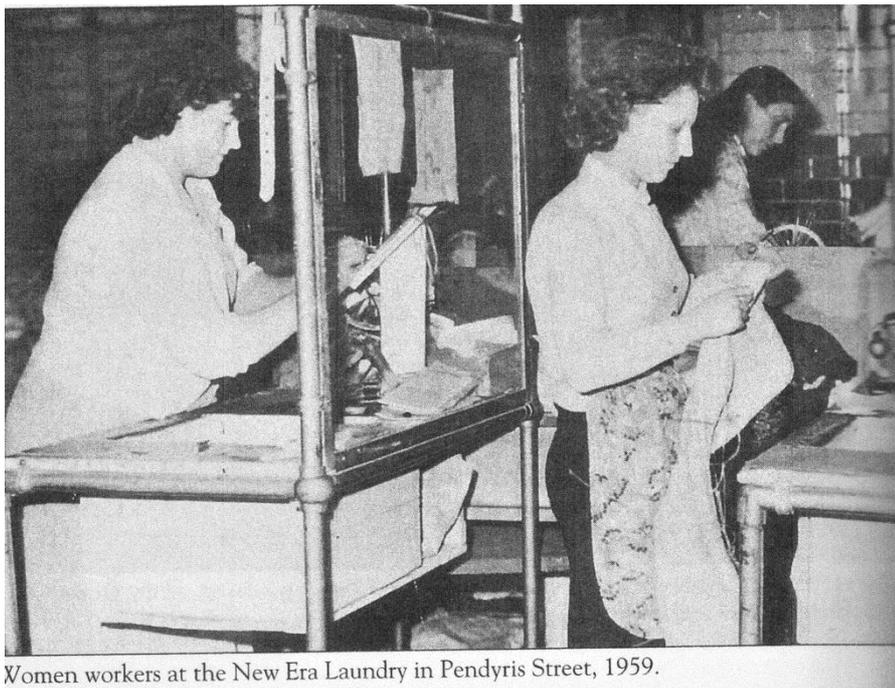
Kathy, Violet Wilson.

Right-hand side next to man: Lena Coles

Centre Front: Rose Nicholls

Right-hand front (in glasses) Violet Biddings.

[Note: the arches of the tram depot can be seen in the background.]



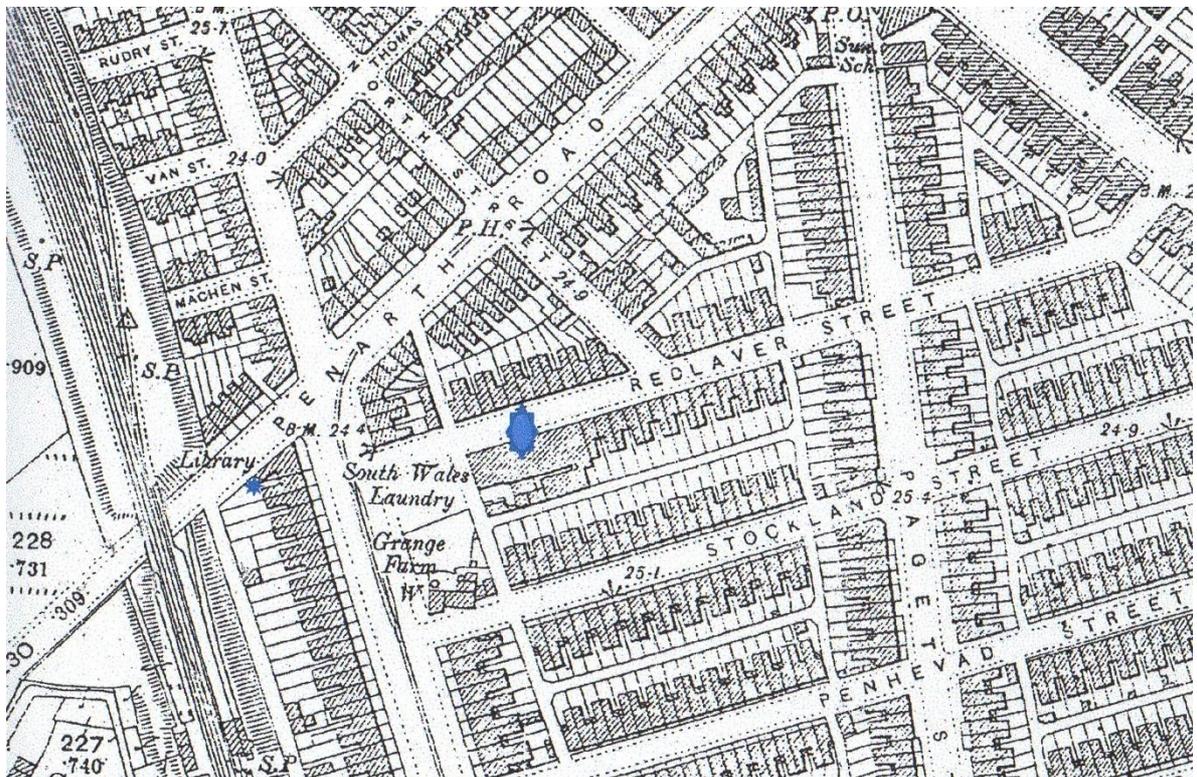
Women workers at the New Era Laundry in Pendyris Street, 1959.

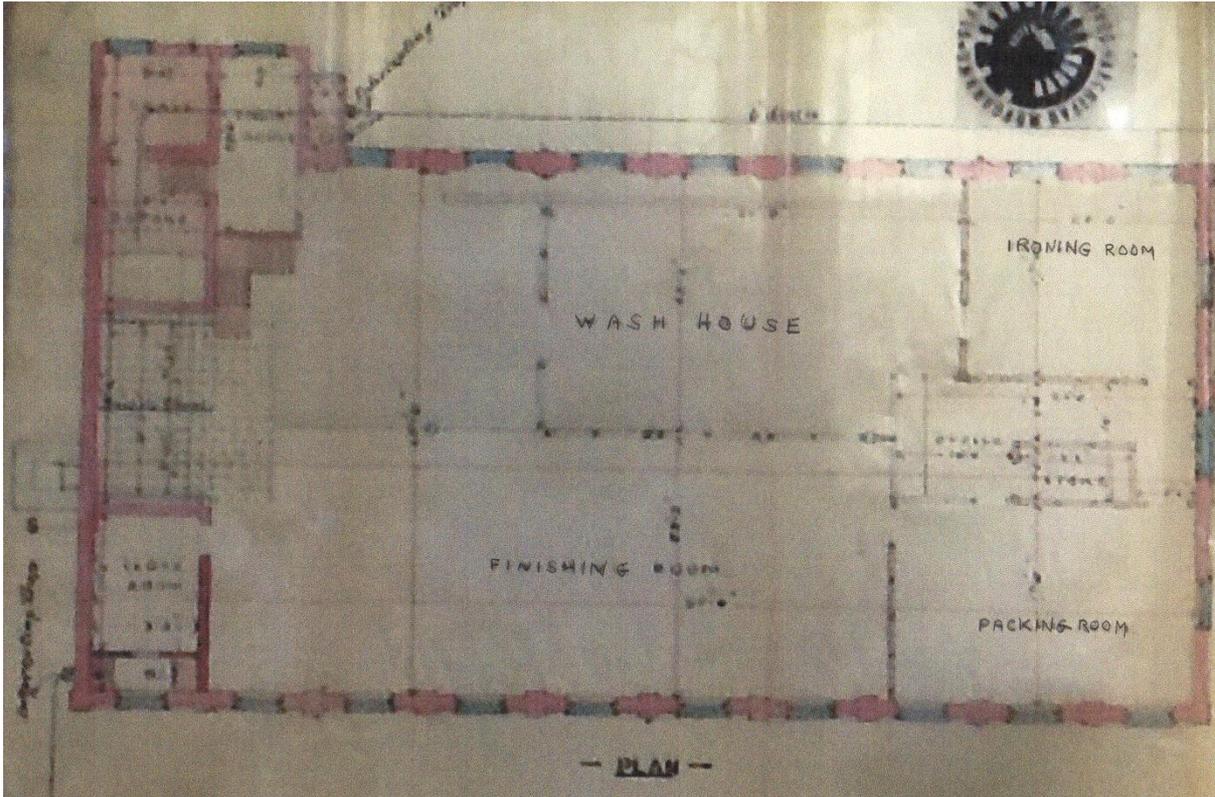


current site of New Era Laundry

The South Wales Steam Laundry (Crystal Laundry)

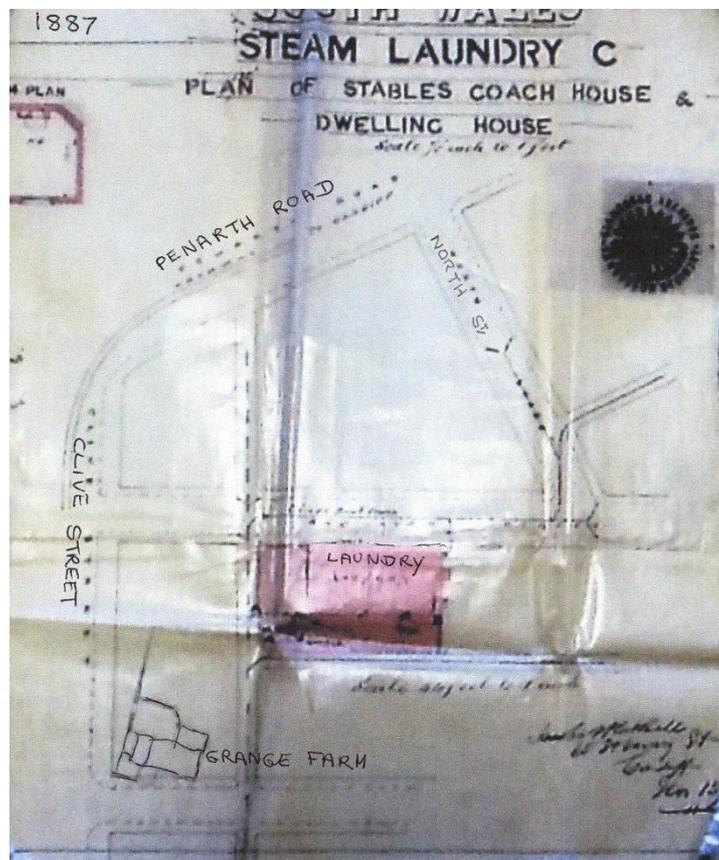
The 1901 Ordnance Survey map of the area shows how large were the laundry buildings in Redlaver Street. They occupied the site of what became the Grangetown Library. The street plan shows an earlier library on the opposite corner in Clive Street.





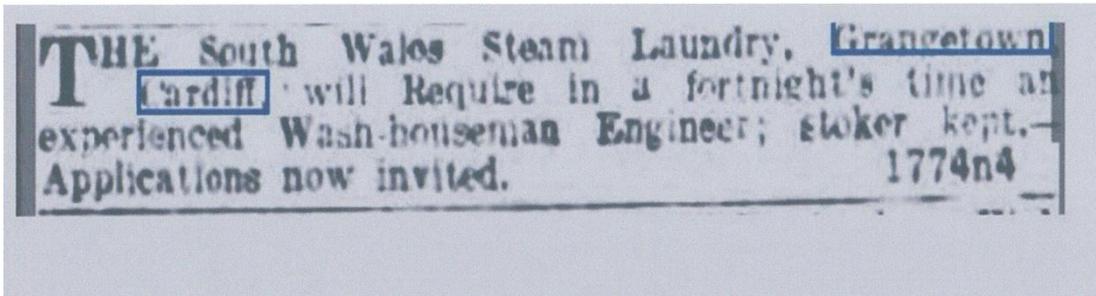
In 1887 an application was made for stables, coach house and a dwelling house to be erected at the rear of the laundry. The building consisted of a wash house, finishing room ironing room and packing room. One plan shows a 'curtain and blanket room.

The position of the Grange Farm is clearly indicated on the planning application.



ADVERTISEMENT FOR STAFF
“an experienced Wash-houseman Engineer”

(Thanks to Ray Noyes for the Advertisement)



The South Wales Steam Laundry in the 1920's had a good customer in Mr. Pritchard owner of the nearby Grange Hotel in Penarth Road. Laundry receipts from the Grange Pub archive reveal interesting aspects of sending items to a laundry during this period, the cost of the laundry and that despite the fact that the Chinese laundry in Corporation Road was the expert at laundering stiff collars Mr. Pritchard decided to send his to the South Wales Steam Laundry.



(Mrs Lock)

| | | |
|---|--------------|-----------|
| 3 | Sheets | 9 |
| 2 | Towels | 4 |
| 2 | Shirts | 8 |
| 1 | P. Pants | 3 |
| 1 | Singlet | 3 |
| 1 | Bolster case | 2 1/2 |
| 4 | Pillows | 8 |
| 2 | Blouses | 8 |
| 1 | Night dress | 4 |
| 1 | P. Bloomer | 3 |
| 1 | Chemise | 3 |
| 1 | Blanket | 4 0 |
| 1 | P. Trousers | 4 0 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 11-11 1/2 |

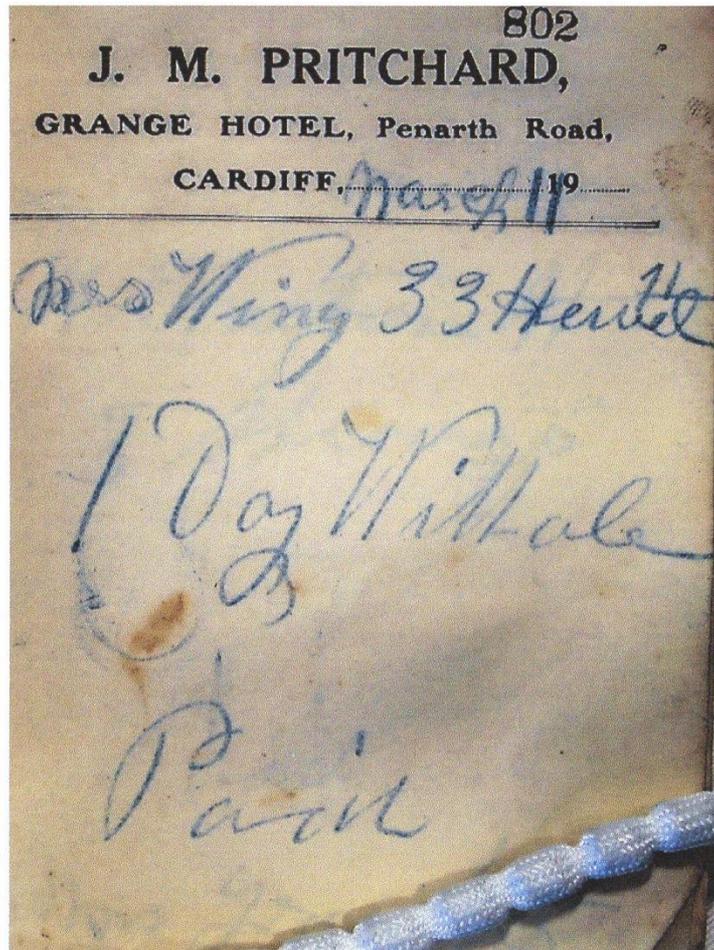
(Mrs Lock)

| | | |
|---|---------------|----------|
| 2 | Sheets | 6 |
| 1 | Bolster case | 2 1/2 |
| 1 | Pillow | 2 |
| 1 | " | 4 |
| 2 | Towels | 4 |
| 1 | P. Combs | 6 |
| 1 | Sleeping Suit | 9 |
| 3 | Vests | 9 |
| 3 | Shirts | 12 0 |
| 1 | P. Pants | 3 |
| 2 | Chemise | 6 |
| 2 | Aprons | 4 |
| 4 | Blouses | 14 |
| 1 | Slipstitch | 2 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 61-5 1/2 |

| | | |
|---|------------------|-------|
| 2 | Table cloths | 4 |
| 3 | Sheets | 9 |
| 1 | Night dress | 4 |
| 3 | P. Coats | 9 |
| 2 | Pillowslips | 4 |
| 9 | Shirts | 18 |
| 1 | Top of pants | 1 |
| 1 | Vest | 2 |
| 1 | Sailor Suit | 6 |
| 1 | Bath towel | 2 |
| 1 | Night dress Case | 2 |
| 1 | Jersey | 3 |
| 1 | Quilt | 4-6 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 57-11 |

(Mrs Lock)

| | | |
|---|---------------|------------|
| 4 | Sheets | 12 0 |
| 1 | Bolster | 2 1/2 |
| 3 | Pillowslips | 6 |
| 3 | Towels | 6 |
| 1 | Sleeping Suit | 9 |
| 1 | P. Pants | 3 |
| 2 | Singlet | 6 |
| 1 | Quilt | 14 0 |
| 1 | Green Suit | 2-6 |
| 3 | Shirts | 12 0 |
| 1 | Night dress | 4 5 |
| 1 | Chemise | 3 |
| 1 | P. Bloomer | 3 |
| 1 | P. Combs | 3 |
| 4 | Blouses | 14 2 |
| 1 | Apron | 3 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 111-10 1/2 |



Shown above is an interesting receipt in Mr. Pritchard's book, he sold some beer to a Mrs. Wing of 33 Hewell Street

Advertisement Western Mail 1944

CHANGE OF NAME

CUSTOMERS
PLEASE NOTE:

**CRYSTAL
LAUNDRY
(CARDIFF) LTD.**

FORMERLY
**SOUTH WALES LAUNDRY
GRANGETOWN
CARDIFF**

TEL.: **CARDIFF 1473.**

The South Wales Laundry changed its name in 1944 to The Crystal Laundry (Cardiff) Limited.



This group of workers shows one man in a cap and we can wonder if he is the stoker or the 'Washouseman Engineer' mentioned in the job advertisement above.



Eventually the premises became rather uncared for, with graffiti on the walls and windows blocked up. It was demolished to make way for housing. The demolition site is shown below.

Thanks to Peter Ranson for taking these photographs.

And finally

It is worth reflecting from the photograph of the magnificent laundry building that once existed in Marlborough Road, Cardiff, that lots of interesting old buildings not only in Grangetown but across the whole of Cardiff are being demolished to make way for – you guessed it, Housing!

They failed to save the one in Marlborough Road, though which is shown below.



It is hoped that some of the information given to you in this Work Sheet may encourage you to maybe do some of your own research into interesting aspects of Grangetown's past. In relation to the old Laundries of Grangetown it may be worth asking yourself how was it that there were so many laundries in Grangetown when its occupants were very poor, how could they afford to send items to a laundry?



Special thanks are due to the staff at the Glamorgan Archives for their assistance with Plans

