

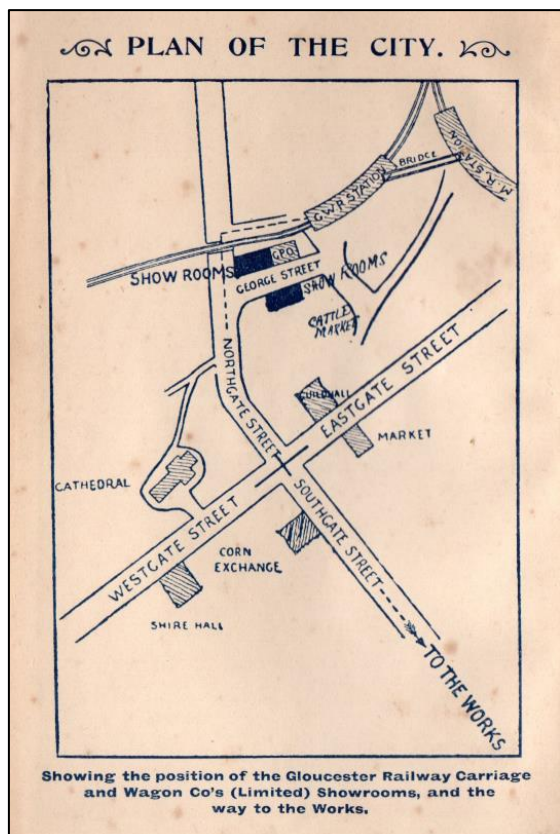
Showrooms of the Gloucester Carriage & Wagon Company Limited

By Mike Smith

The brass door plate shown in the photograph was offered for sale at a recent railwayana auction. Having a particular interest in the history and products of the Gloucester Railway Carriage & Wagon Company (GRCW), I realised this needed further investigation.

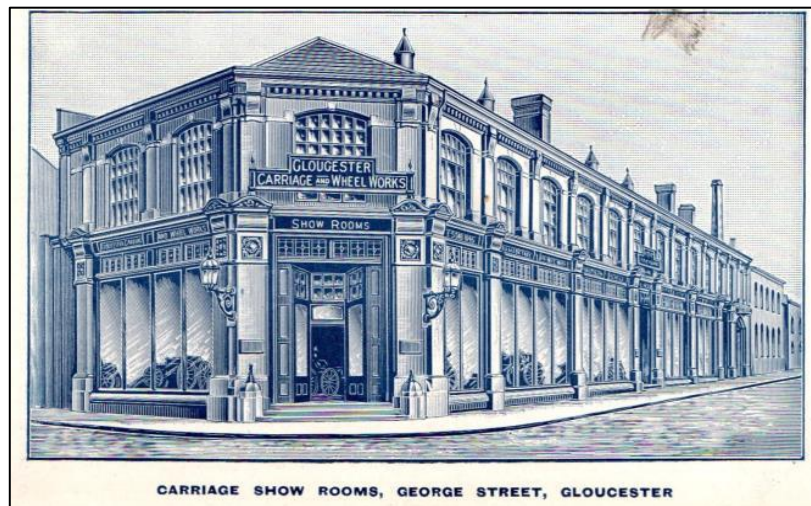


Among my collection I have a GRCW publication entitled "The Gloucester Diary and Directors' Calendar for 1904". It contains over 100 illustrations reproduced from photographs taken by the GRCW's photographic department and the illustrations accompanying this article have been copied from that diary.



The GRCW is best known for its railway vehicles, but this door plate was fitted to a road vehicle showroom. The GRCW had two road vehicle showrooms close to the GWR's Gloucester station and the location of them is shown on the "Plan of the City" that shows the "Position of the Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Co's (Limited) Showrooms and the way to the Works".



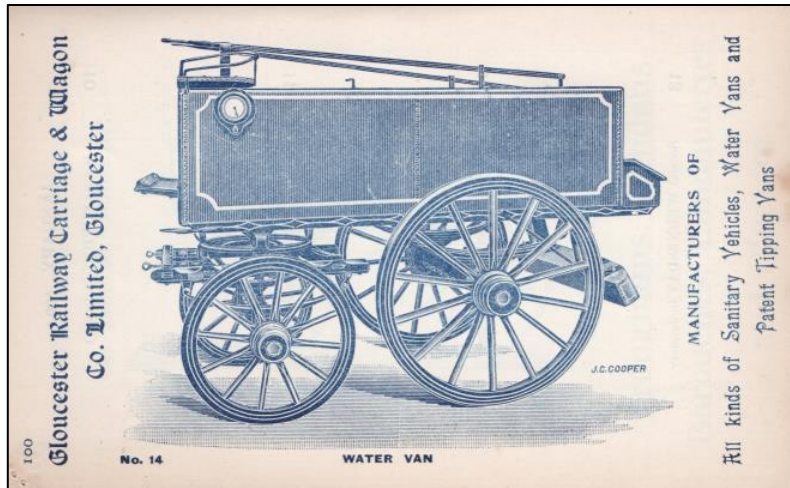


The building next to the GPO on the GWR Station side of George Street was the Carriage Showroom and features in another of the illustrations. This building still exists and is now home to an architectural practice, Robert Limbricks Ltd, an appropriate business for such a fine building.

The GRCW order books contain more orders for spares and batches of components than for complete vehicles. The illustration of the Carriage Building, as it is known today, proudly declares the building to be the Show Rooms of the Gloucester Carriage and Wheel Works. The company was never called the "Gloucester Carriage and Wheel Works", so the sign above the entrance was an advertisement informing customers that the GRCW could provide them with a new carriage but if all they really needed was a new wheel for their Landau or Trade Cart, then they could provide that too.

The interior view of the ground floor of the Carriage Show Rooms shows a selection of the types of vehicles available, so a car showroom is the modern equivalent of the "Carriage Show Rooms".

The second showroom no longer exists. This was the Trade Vehicle Show Room and the map shows that it could be accessed both from George Street and the Cattle Market. Unfortunately the diary does not contain any interior views of the Trade Vehicle Show Rooms so I have included an illustration of a "Water Van" as an example of what could have been found there. A commercial vehicle dealer's showroom is the modern equivalent of the "Trade Vehicle Show Room".



When my diary was published, George Street ran from Station Road to London Road. Today, if you walk down from the railway station towards the Bus Station, you will pass the truncated remains of George Street behind the Station Hotel. It ends at a gate that gives access to a car park beyond the Station Hotel and the through route that was George Street has been replaced by a new road, Bruton Way, on the opposite side of the Station Hotel. Traffic on Bruton Way passes over the site of the Trade Vehicle Show Rooms and the bus station now occupies the site of the cattle market.

Which building did the brass door plate come from? Was it the Carriage Show Room or the Trade Vehicle Show Room? We will probably never know for certain, but the illustration of the Carriage Show Room shows what could be brass plates attached to the pillars on both sides of the entrance door. Similar plates are not visible on the illustrations of the Trade Vehicle Show Rooms so on my next visit to Gloucestershire Archives, I'll take a look at their collection of GRCW photographs. If the showroom photographs have survived, I may be able to read what is written on those plates attached to the pillars of the Carriage Show Room.