



The Manchester Group of the Victorian Society

NEWSLETTER

Christmas 2024

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Manchester Group of the Victorian Society

Newsletter Christmas 2024

A message from the Chair

Welcome all to our Christmas Newsletter. It has been a pleasure to join the Manchester committee as Chair this year and see the programme of events first hand (and the fantastic work that the committee do behind the scenes to make it all happen – so a festive thanks to them!) For those attending our Christmas event at Werneth Grange have a fabulous time and if you didn't make it to our tour of Rochdale Town Hall you can now visit the Martlet restaurant in your own time (as approved by Jay Rayner). I hope you all have a lovely festive break and we see enough of the winter sun which always shows our wonderful Victorian buildings in the best light.

Do stay in touch, we have a new email address manchester@victoriansociety.org.uk or you can follow us on Facebook (The Victorian Society – Manchester) and Instagram (@manvicsoc).

Kate Martyn (Chair)



CONTENTS

- 4 ROYTON TOWN HALL AND LIBRARY
- 7 THE MYSTERY HOUSE, VICTORIA PARK, MANCHESTER
- 10 THE PROTECTOR LAMP AND LIGHTING COMPANY LIMITED, ECCLES
- 13 NOTES AND JOTTINGS
- 14 PAST EVENTS: ROCHDALE TOWN HALL
- 16 PAST EVENTS: THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MUSEUM, MANCHESTER MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF ART
- 17 PAST EVENTS: ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF SICILY
- 19 FUTURE EVENTS: January – April 2025

COVER CHRISTMAS LIGHTS, R.H.S. BRIDGEWATER, WORSLEY
©Sian Crosby December 2022



Royton Town Hall. Photo © Neil Darlington 2024

Royton Town Hall and Library

While Manchester and Rochdale Town Halls have received much publicity for their extensive restoration works, the restoration of Royton Town Hall and Library has passed largely below the radar. Finally, on Friday 13 September this year, Oldham Council Leader, Cllr Arooj Shah, and MP for Oldham West, Chadderton and Royton, Jim McMahon, were at last able to officially re-open the buildings, including a new community garden at the rear named in memory of a local war hero, Sergeant John Hogan VC. Born in Royton, Sergeant Hogan received the Victoria Cross in 1914 for his bravery during WWI.

Specialist contractors have carefully refurbished the buildings, preserving original features where possible. The restoration included repairs to the clock tower's copper roof and clock face, repairs to the slate roofs, and the demolition of the rear extensions which the planning notes described as "somewhat utilitarian in appearance.....uses a different colour palette and is relatively unsympathetic to the design and context of the original buildings". The interior has been stripped back to preserve as much of the original décor and features as possible. The Town Hall meeting room has also been refurbished and will be available for community hire. The adjacent library has undergone a complete re-fit and is now fully accessible, with new lifts and improved facilities for people with disabilities, including a Changing Places toilet with adult-sized changing benches, hoists, and space for carers.

Royton Town Hall was designed by the Oldham architect William Cooke and was opened on 16 September 1880 by James Ashworth, the first Chairman of Royton Local Board of Health. The adjacent Royton Library opened in 1907 with a donation from the Scottish-American steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, whose name is synonymous with the funding of public libraries in Britain around the turn of the twentieth century.

An architectural competition was held with entries limited to four - Butterworth and Duncan of Rochdale, who had already erected several Carnegie libraries: Jesse Horsfall of Todmorden and Manchester, and Dixon and Potter of Manchester (whose designs had been placed first and second in a recent competition for the Crompton library), and Thomas Taylor of Oldham.

Building News was unimpressed with Royton Council. According to its review: "The conditions issued to competitors were meagre in the extreme and contained several most objectionable features. The drawings were sent in signed instead of under motto, or subject to the more usual and desirable system of being consecutively numbered as they are received. Further, architects were asked to state their terms instead of the authority undertaking to pay the usual 5 per cent commission on the cost of the building, paid generally by all public bodies throughout the country, in accordance with the recognised system and the rules of the R.I.B.A. Competitors were also asked how much they would allow towards the salary of the clerk of works whom the Council will appoint: —two points, which could only occur to the minds of an authority on the outer slopes of a bleak moorland scarcely suitable even for the hardiest of grouse.'

Building News continued: "The library site is on the main road, the tramway route from Cheshire through Manchester, Oldham on to Rochdale, and possibly to the innumerable small manufacturing towns still further north. It has a frontage of 60 feet and a depth of 76 feet. On one side it abuts on the town hall, on the other on a narrow street six yards wide. Competitors were therefore all compelled to place their main entrance in the front elevation. Along the town hall were several windows which, it will be noted, considerably influenced competitors in their planning. The elevations were to harmonise with those of the adjoining town hall. Italian in style: £3,500 was the limit of cost." The design placed first was submitted by Butterworth and Duncan of Rochdale.

The design was intended to be carried out in Ruabon bricks with Stancliffe stone dressings. The whole of the internal joinery was to be in fumed oak, dull wax polished. A lecture-room occupied the whole length of the frontage on the first floor. The lending library has stacking accommodation for 14,000 volumes. The contract has been secured by Whitworth, Whittaker, and Co., Rochdale Road, Oldham.

The last word should go to the competition winner.

Sir.—In your review of the Royton Library Competition, or rather of the unsuccessful designs, your reviewer unfortunately not having seen the successful design, strong objection is taken to competitors asked to state their terms. I am pleased to inform you that the district council are paying the scale of remuneration recognised by the Institute.—I am, &c.. WM. H. DUNCAN. 4, South Parade, Rochdale, May 26. 1906



Royton Carnegie Library. Photo © Neil Darlington 2024

The Mystery House, Victoria Park

Research Richard Fletcher, David Hilton

Richard Fletcher recently received a query regarding a house in Victoria Park near to the Christian Science Church by Edgar Wood, with the suggestion that this might be a previously unrecorded work by the same architect. While it was quickly established that there was no evidence of Wood's involvement, the search began to establish responsibility for the design of this Arts and Crafts house.

Victoria Park was established in 1837. By 1900 the east side of the park had progressed significantly. However much of the western side, between Anson Road and Stockport Road, remained as open fields. Some plots had been taken mainly along Anson Road and Daisy Bank Road, Addison Terrace being among the earliest. In the mid-1890s the policy of selling off individual plots for development had virtually ended. Instead, much of the land was developed as a grid-iron pattern of streets of terraced houses with only the occasional individual one-off dwelling. Archive architectural drawings held in Manchester Central Library indicate that the architect J. H. Maybury was responsible for much of this work, building a dozen or so houses at a time. One of the rare individual houses of the period was originally named "The Homestead" but is now numbered 14 Scarsdale Road. It was commenced on 2 August 1906 and completed in February 1907, built in a distinctly arts and crafts style unlike anything else in the district.

Surprisingly, The Manchester Library archives show that the house was an early work by Arthur Henry Walsingham of 62 Market Street Manchester. Better known for the design of a series of Pendleton Co-operative Industrial Society branch stores, The Homestead remains his first and only known domestic work. Built by Smith and Thompson, builders and joiners of 2 Booth Street Chorlton-on-Medlock, the house has a butterfly plan. Externally it features grey rendered brick walls, buttresses and decorative brickwork on the chimneys, all typical of the Arts and Crafts.

The first owner was Julius Frith, a lecturer in electrical engineering at the University of Manchester. Born in Chesterfield, he was also the youngest son of the famous Victorian photographer and publisher, Francis Frith. Julius remained at Scarsdale Road until sometime during the 1920s when he moved to a house on Brooklands Road in Sale, which he also named The Homestead.



Illustration above

OS Map 1915. The Homestead, Victoria Park and adjacent terraces on grid iron pattern



Illustration

A H Walsingham - Residence, Scarsdale Road, Victoria Park © Neil Darlington. 2024



ELEVATION TO LITTLETON ROAD



ELEVATION TO GERALD ROAD

PENDLETON INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY BRANCH No 32, CHARLESTOWN

10 0 3
feet metres

Architect eArthur Henry Walsingham

© Neil Darlington 2014-2016



The Protector Lamp & Lighting Company Limited



Those who watched the proceedings at the Olympics at Paris this summer may well have noticed the Olympic flame being transported in brass lanterns bearing a remarkable similarity to miners' lamps. However, their connection with Manchester is less well known. Indeed, these are specially modified miners' lamps as manufactured by The Protector Lamp & Lighting Company Limited of Eccles and can be safely carried on commercial airlines while lit. An air seat cradle holding two flame lanterns allows these to be held securely in standard airline seats.

The Protector Lamp & Lighting Company has a long history as a manufacturer of miners' safety lamps. The Company was formed in May 1873 to acquire the business and patent rights of William Edward Teale, oil and lamp manufacturer, of 11 Mark Lane, Manchester. The Company's Memorandum of Association mentions two patents which had been obtained by Mr Teale: one dated 15th November 1869 for 'Improvements in Mining Lamps' and the other dated 4th December 1872 for 'Improvements in Guards for Gas Lights, and in an improved method of Lighting while under the protection of Guards'. W. E. Teale continued as Managing Director of the new company until at least 1883, acquiring further patents for a gauze brushing machine in 1876 Teale's Patent Protector Colliery Lamps.

The company was first established at Worsley, near Eccles, a little over one mile from the entrance to the Duke of Bridgewater's coal mines at Worsley Delph. A lease was taken on a large four-storey former cotton mill near Worsley Road, Sindsley, close to the Worsley-Swinton border. Employing between forty and fifty people, they manufactured protector colliery lamps, gas protectors, etc as well as carrying out experiments in electric lighting. In different parts of the mill there were also stored between 500 and 600 casks, each containing 36 gallons of petroleum and 180 gallons of oil.

On the night of 12 August 1882, the inevitable happened when a serious fire broke out. At one time the surface of Sisley Brook for a distance of about 150 yards was a mass of flames fuelled by the exploding barrels of petroleum. When the fire brigades from Salford, Eccles, Pendleton and Broughton reached the site the total destruction of the mill was regarded as inevitable, efforts being concentrated on saving adjacent cottages threatened by the blaze. Damage was estimated at £10,000.

By 1890 the company had been joined by the engineer Joseph Prestwich, (1851-1919) who had been working on an improved safety lamp. The minutes of the board meeting held on 10th November 1890: record: 'With regard to Mr Prestwich's improvement, it was decided that it would be taken out in the joint name of the Company and Joseph Prestwich.' Development of the new safety lamp proceeded rapidly and was patented in 1891. Letters patent for a further improvement were taken out in 1892.



Photo Type 6 Safety Lamp of 1970. ©Neil Darlington 2024

The Type 6 Deputies re-lighter lamp comes with a stainless-steel top. It was used in UK and Australian coal mines until the late 1970's and was carried by Pit Deputies whose task it was to ensure the safe working of the mine, they would inspect their designated area and test for firedamp, (methane) and bad air.

In 1914 an article in The Business World reported that over a million Prestwich Patent Lamps had been supplied to miners, both in the UK and overseas. In the years following the First World War flame safety lamps were steadily supplanted for illumination purposes by battery powered electric lamps which were either fitted to the miner's helmet or carried by hand. Also, the main passages underground came to be lit by electric power.

These developments coupled with the ending of deep mines in the UK have naturally affected the Protector's production of safety lamps. However, the flame safety lamp has continued to remain an essential item of the miner's equipment, though their principal use nowadays is for testing for presence of methane in underground workings and tunnels.

Not a heater only but a lamp with "rot" uses, absolutely safe in all.



Keep your engine warm

on frosty nights with a
'PROTECTOR'
PATENT SAFETY LAMP

(Approved by the leading Insurance Companies and used by H.M. Government)

and you will have an easier start-up in the morning.

You will also be secure against a freeze-up, cracked cylinders and jackets, and will find it quite unnecessary to drain the radiator, even in the coldest spell. But for safety you must have a "Protector," the only radiator warmer of its kind which is absolutely safe against fire and explosion.

GET A "PROTECTOR"
—you will find it the most useful accessory you've got.

The "Protector" burns petrol, 30 hours one filling, costing less than 1d. Gives 1 C.P. light (adequate for inspection purposes), is clean, free from smell. Turned in solid brass, British made, weighs 2½ lbs. measures 10" x 3½".

20/-
Carr. Paid in U.K.

The new model, fitted with self-contained Flint Igniter, 25/-

Place lamp in bonnet overnight and ensure easier starting in the morning.

Sold by Garages and direct by the Sole Makers,
PROTECTOR CO., LTD., ECCLES, MANCHESTER

Always searching for new markets, the company introduced the A1 or Utility lamp which was produced from the 1890's until the 1930s. Based on early miners lamps they were sold as a house lamp or car lamp.

Before the introduction of anti-freeze, the lamp was hung on a car radiator overnight in winter to stop the water freezing. They came with the Prestwich Patent self-extinguisher and could also be purchased with a re-lighter. They use a round wick and burn paraffin.

As well as several other products, they also tried producing motor vehicles from 1899-1906. At 95 guineas the "bijou" car was an attempt at a light car that was more affordable than some of its rivals. The company also tried to target the commercial vehicle market with a van body built on the same chassis for 100 guineas.

In March 1902 The Autocar reported that: "the Town Council of Eccles had ordered a "motor fire engine" from the Protector Lamp Company. Built on the "bijou" chassis, this is thought to be one of the earliest examples of a motorised fire engine.

References The Protector Lamp and Lighting Company Limited

Illustrations The Protector Lamp and Lighting Company Limited©

Pevsner's Buildings of England

This summer saw the publication of the revised guide to Staffordshire and also marked the completion of the Buildings of England revisions after 41 years. These started at Penguin in 1983 before finding a home at Yale University Press in 2002.

Manchester Town Hall Update

The grade-I listed Town Hall has been closed since 2018 for a huge refurbishment, which was initially expected to be completed this year. However, that deadline slipped back to 2026 as the Covid-19 pandemic and unforeseen issues created delays in the project. Now, bosses say they believe there is roughly around two years of work to complete, but they are confident progress will speed up — and the Town Hall will reopen in July 2026.

The restoration of Manchester Town Hall will cost at least £76 million more than first planned, the council has confirmed.

Salford Local History Day

Saturday 26 October at Swinton Civic Centre 10am-4pm

The Manchester Group ran one of 30 stalls at this popular local event. Most attendees were older people, few younger age groups being attracted. New names were added to our list of contacts, and flyers with information about the group were distributed. An emphasis on Victorian buildings in Salford in our displays would be useful on future occasions. Thanks to Steve Roman and Stephen Broadhead for staffing the stall.

Victorian Society Manchester Group Christmas Event

Saturday 7 December at Werneth Grange, Oldham.

Talk and tour followed by optional lunch at The Egyptian Room, Oldham Town Hall led by Steve Roman.

Built in 1871 for cotton magnate Joseph Lees, Werneth Grange became the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in 1907. Although on the main road, it was hidden away behind thick hedges and trees, but has this year been restored and converted into a conference venue, owned and operated by St Mark Universal Care. The chapel is used by the Coptic (Egyptian) Orthodox Church.

Bookings have now closed for this event.



Photo: Rochdale Town Hall from the south-east. ©Anthea Darlington 2024

An Architectural Tour of Rochdale Town Hall

Saturday 27 September 2024 at 2.00pm

Our guides for this event were Caroline Storr, Strategy and Operations Manager, Property Services at Rochdale Borough Council and Simon Malam, lead project conservation architect from Donald Insall Associates. The Town Hall ceased to be the H.Q. of the council some years ago. The restoration, carried out over four years, has been achieved on a miniscule budget compared with the amount being spent on Manchester Town Hall. The first phase of the project, financed by Rochdale Council, involved structural work for a new lift and access point in the tower and the cleaning of external stonework. As noted in Simon Malam's article in the November issue of *The Victorian*, there is evidence that an additional entrance under the tower was part of the original plan but never carried out. That fact proved to be unfortunate in terms of the practical usage of such a large building. The first phase also involved removing ill-advised internal wall partitions and a mezzanine floor. The second phase, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, involved cleaning the many painted surfaces in the major rooms, restoration of stained glass and external roof and stone repairs. At the same time, improvements were made regarding access & circulation, toilet facilities and energy efficiency. As Caroline Storr pointed out, HLF involvement meant that a number of "mandatory tick boxes" had to be fulfilled. Amongst these were: securing the long-term future of the building, community and volunteer involvement, and an educational remit. These arise from the HLF having had a problematic start following the creation of the National Lottery in 1994. It was initially accused of creating heritage white elephants such as Bradford's 'Transperience' Museum, opened in 1995 with £8M HLF funds. In the acid words of the *Yorkshire Post*, "there weren't enough people interested in riding on a Hungarian Tram or a retired Leeds Trolleybus." The venture closed in 1997, £1M in debt. Those in charge of HLF funding responded quickly and well to these criticisms, but the downside was for HLF applicants to have to deal with what became known as "The Business Plan" to outline the commercial viability of the enterprise. In the case of the second phase of the Rochdale Town Hall restoration, the requirement to secure the future of the building was a responsibility shared by the two guides to the visit. Simon from Donald Insall Associates to create a weatherproof, modernized building with heritage features intact and Caroline, on behalf of the council, to make it a financially successful project.

An important part of the income stream for the renovated Town Hall will come from a café (The Martlet) and the ability to host major functions such as weddings and civil partnerships using the Great Hall. The adjacent kitchens have been modernized and re-equipped. It is an unfortunate matter of timing that at present catering is not quite as profitable as used to be the case. The market for major functions is also very competitive, as every newly created venue is in competition with every other old and new venue. (It so happened that on the day of our visit, a large wedding reception was in progress. Because we had used the new tower entrance and the building's internal circulation has been improved there was no collision of the two events.)

It was appreciated from an early stage that as the town had been the home of the Rochdale Pioneers, the founders of the modern Co-Operative Movement, the project should reflect in some way that Pioneer Spirit. One way was the training of a volunteer workforce in the specialist cleaning of the delicate surface painting in rooms such as the Great Hall and the Mayor's Parlour. Under the auspices of Lancashire County Council Museums Service, a specially created Heritage Skills programme introduced volunteers to the conservation and craft skills required. The Town Hall was originally lit by gas and, as up to recent times half its users would have smoked, the effect of removing the layers of brown grime from the surfaces has been remarkable. The building has considerable expanses of stained glass – its restoration was carried out by York Glaziers Trust. The approach and setting of the Town Hall, previously a muddle of car parks, has been enormously improved along with disabled access. Rochdale was an important and prosperous Lancashire town as evidenced by the erection of its very ambitious Town Hall in 1871. The home of the Co-Operative Movement and of John Bright now has an improved and restored version to take forward into the future.

Our thanks to Caroline and Simon for leading the tour.

David Astbury

PAST EVENTS

The Arts and Crafts Museum at the Manchester Municipal School of Art

Saturday 12 October 2024 at Stretford Public Hall

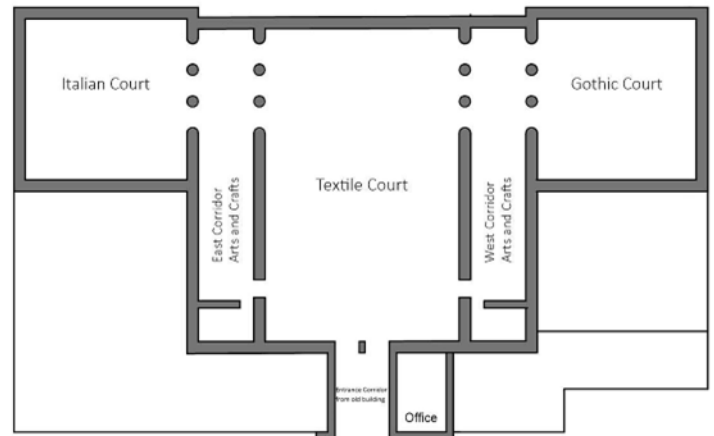
At a well-attended talk at Stretford Public Hall Stephanie Boyd, curator of special exhibitions at MMU gave an interesting talk on the development of the museum at the Manchester Municipal School of Art based upon the catalogue published in 1903

The School of Art had formed a collection for study purposes as soon as it had been opened in 1881. The collection was enlarged when an exhibition area was created in the new wing of the building.

Paid for from the profits of the Manchester Royal Jubilee Exhibition of 1887 and housed in a building designed by Joseph Gibbon Sankey this was opened to students and the public in October 1898.

It was created to inform and inspire students and the public alike by giving them access to examples of world-class craft and design that were not available elsewhere in Manchester. The school promoted the Arts and Crafts movement's philosophy, and its collection includes metalwork,

jewellery, wallpapers, a tapestry made by Morris & Co. designed by Edward Burne-Jones, Whitefriars glass by James Powell and Sons and George Henry Walton, silverware by Charles Robert Ashbee and the Guild of Handicrafts ceramics from Pilkington's Art Pottery at Clifton.



The centrepiece of the collection placed centrally on the south wall was undoubtedly the “Adoration of the Magi” tapestry, designed by Sir Edward Burne-Jones in 1890, made by Morris & Company in 1894 and gifted by William Simpson, a member of the City Council. The large central chamber, the Textile court, was originally given over almost entirely to a remarkable collection of textiles brought together by Dr. Bock.

To the right of the Textile Court was a smaller room containing examples of Gothic work. Here were casts of Ruthwell and Irton Runic crosses, and pieces of architecture such as the great Romanesque doorway at Clermont-Ferrand. A similar room to the left, the Italian court, was full of casts of Florentine sculpture.

The School of Art Museum collection is linked to some of the most celebrated names associated with the Arts and Crafts movement, such as Walter Crane and William Morris, but also to significant cultural and political figures in nineteenth century Manchester. The talk coincided with the publication of “The Northern Art Workers Guild and the Arts and Crafts movement in Manchester,” Stephanie Boydell being one of the authors, along with Barry Clark and Richard Fletcher. All three were present at the talk.

The book and talk represent an important contribution to the architectural history of Manchester in a previously under-researched area and are a most welcome addition.

Neil Darlington

Art and Architecture of Sicily

A talk by Julian Treuherz on Sunday 17 November 2024 at Stretford Public Hall



On a wet and dreary November afternoon in Stretford, we gathered together in significant numbers at Stretford Public Hall for a talk by one-time member of the Manchester Group Julian Treuherz on the Art and Architecture of Sicily. Julian and his partner Peter visited Sicily many years ago and fell in love with the place, so much so that they bought a home there where they spend part of each year. Julian introduced us to the amazing variety of art and architecture of the island in a whistle-stop tour reflecting its many cultural influences and the quintessentially Sicilian quality of their interpretation, from rock tombs of the 18-9th century BC to 20th century motorways.

Photo © Stephen Broadhead

Sicily is situated at the heart of the Mediterranean and has a complex history of invasion and settlement- by Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Normans, Arabs, Austrian Hohenstaufens and Spanish Aragonese. In the 18th century it changed hands between Austria and Naples, eventually becoming part of a united Italy in 1861. The influx of different peoples led to originality and inventiveness in culture: what is known as acculturalisation elsewhere is known here as Sicilianisation!

We were treated to some wonderful pictures of the buildings and works of art which exemplify this, starting with the well-preserved Greek temple of Segesta in the west of Sicily built c. 420 BC and the temple of Olympian Zeus at Agrigento (c. 480 BC), long gone but of a highly original design with solid outside walls. From the period of Roman occupation come the incredible mosaics of the Villa Romana del Casale at Piazza Amerina (4th C AD), the biggest collection of Roman mosaics in the world, preserved by a mudslide and containing the famous 'bikini girls.' There are few remains for the Byzantine and Arab conquest periods, but both had an influence on future design. The Norman period from the 11th century saw the creation of many buildings characterised by their own Sicilian style and incorporating Byzantine, Arabic and Greek influences: Norman French in Paternio Castle of 1072; Romanesque in Cefalu Cathedral; and the magnificence of Monreale Cathedral (1172-89) and the Royal Palace at Palermo (1143) whose chapel with its Cosmati mosaics is a mixture of Byzantine, Norman and Arabic Fatimid styles, reflecting the freedom of worship permitted under Norman rule.

Great castles characterise the architecture of the period of Hohenstaufen rule (1194-1266): Castello Ursino begun in 1239 and Castello Maniace in Syracuse (1232) reminiscent of crusader castles and the work of the Master of St George for Edward 1 in Wales (think Harlech). From the period of conquest by the Aragonese comes the south front

of Palermo Cathedral (1430) in Catalan Gothic style, and castles by Matteo Carmilivari in 1490-5, again in the Catalan style. During the Renaissance sculptors from North Italy came to work in Sicily, including the Gagini dynasty who designed the altar of St George in St Francis Chapel, Palermo. Michelangelo's most trusted assistant Montarsi designed the Orion Fountain in Messina (1550)- a highly original free-standing structure. In this period, when direct rule from Spain was stretched to its limits, fresco painting was epitomised by Antonello da Messina's painting of St Jerome in his study of 1475. Caravaggio came to Sicily while he was on the run from the authorities in 1609 and created 3 large altarpieces, including the Resurrection of Lazarus now in the museum at Messina.

A huge earthquake in the east of Sicily in 1693 created an opportunity for architects and builders to rebuild the old medieval towns reduced to rubble, resulting in the creation of the distinctive architectural style known as Sicilian Baroque. The first important Baroque church in Sicily, Santa Maria della Pieta in Palermo, had been built in 1689 designed by Giacomo Amato, a cleric. Its cut-back cornices, statuary and facades full of movement are in contrast to the flat facades of churches in mainland Italy. Many of the churches exhibit the use of coloured marble inlay known as 'marmi muschi', exemplified by the Jesuit Church in Palermo (1658) and the main altar of the Church of the Immaculate Conception (1604-1740). The newly constructed town centres had vistas with important buildings at key points e.g. San Giorgio at Ragusa (1738) and Santa Agatha at Catania (1735-67). Villas were built for the rich to escape the heat, including the Villa Palagonia in Bagheria with its statues of grotesques- monsters with human faces.

The administrative buildings of the Botanical Garden in Palermo (1789) demonstrate the neoclassical style. 19th century Sicily did not take kindly to becoming part of a unified Italy and ended up being ruled by martial law, but some new building did take place in the Victorian period, including the Teatro Massimo in Palermo by the Basiles (father and son 1897), the biggest opera house in Italy. Turn of the century Art Nouveau can be seen in two houses in Palermo: Villa Igeia refurbished by Basile as a luxury hotel in 1900; and Villa Ida (1904) built as his own home in a Secessionist style. Also in the 20th century, Casa Cuseni in Taormina has a dining room decorated by Sir Frank Brangwyn (1910). An outstanding interwar building is Palermo Post Office by Angiolo Mazzoni (1929-34) in the Italian Rationalism style with Futurist interiors.

The remarkable sight of Alberto Burri's project to cover the ruins of Gibellina (destroyed in an earthquake in 1968) in concrete while maintaining the street plan (finished 2015), completed this grand tour of Sicilian art and architecture. The appreciative audience were able to treat themselves further by purchasing copies of Julian's recently published book on the Art and Architecture of Sicily. Alexa Fairclough thanked Julian warmly on our behalf for a fascinating talk. We can't wait to visit!

Anthea Darlington

Julian Treuherz is an art historian who was Keeper of Art Galleries for National Museums Liverpool between 1989 and 2007. He has written many books, articles and exhibition catalogues and over the last twenty years has spent part of the year in Sicily studying its art and architecture. Julian was an active member of the Victorian Society in Manchester in the 70s and early 80s and is an authority on Victorian art. This talk however covered a much longer period of history tracing the waves of successive cultures that have influenced the art and architecture of Sicily from prehistory to the 1980s. His book Art and Architecture of Sicily was published by Lund Humphries in Summer 2023

FUTURE EVENTS

January 2025 Annual General Meeting

Saturday 25 January 2025, 2pm for 2.15 pm at Stretford Public Hall Booking not required No charge

Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the AGM held at Stretford Public Hall on 27 January 2023
3. Matters arising
4. Chair's report
5. Membership and mailing list report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Events report (including future proposals)
8. Election of officers and committee
9. AOB

Tea and biscuits followed by (at 3.15pm approx.)

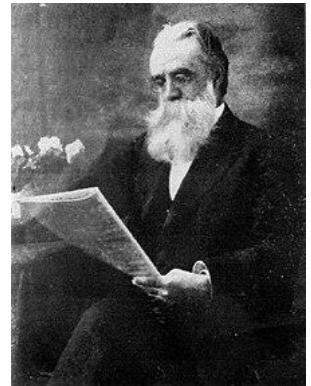
A talk on **The Saving of Stretford Public Hall** Speaker: Kate McGeevor, member of staff at the Hall



February 2025 “One of the Busiest Men in Manchester”: W. E. A. Axon (1846-1913)

Wednesday 12 February 2025 7.00 pm at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester
Cost £10. Booking required by email to manchester@victoriansociety.org.uk A talk by Lucy Evans

Lucy Evans has written a biography of W E A Axon, an important figure in the history of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society and an almost unbelievably prolific writer and social reformer. Lucy has tracked down over 1000 books, pamphlets, articles (including many in the LCAS Transactions), obituaries, poems, translations, stories and dialect pieces so anyone interested in the history of Manchester will have come across him at some point! He came from a difficult background. Born illegitimate, he was adopted by the Axons and was self-taught, including learning many languages, and his jobs included assistant librarian at Manchester Free Library for ten years, editor of the “British Architect” for three years and on the literary staff of the Manchester Guardian for around thirty years.



Lucy M. Evans is an author and retired librarian who enjoys delving into the obscure Victorian world of northern librarians and learned societies. She has previously written about the longevity guru Maurice Ernest and Andrea Crestadoro, a Chief Librarian in Manchester.

March 2025 George Shaw in Uppermill

Saturday 8 March 2025 meeting at Christ Church, Friezland OL3 7LQ at 11 am. A joint visit with the West Yorkshire group and other organisations. Further details and cost available in the New Year.

A talk by Dr Peter Lindfield on George Shaw followed by a walk round Uppermill.

Dr Lindfield is an architectural historian based at the University of Cardiff specialising in Georgian and Victorian architectural fashion—especially the Gothic Revival—as well architecture’s application to the allied arts of interior design, decoration, and furnishing. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and former lecturer at MMU. He has worked extensively upon the early Victorian architect, antiquary, and forger George Shaw (1810–76) of Uppermill, and recently curated the exhibition ‘A Royal Tudor Bed and a Northern Rogue’ at Manchester Cathedral and Chetham’s Library featuring the marriage bed of Henry VII found by Shaw in the 1830’s and recently rediscovered, which was the inspiration for the many high class fake Tudor beds and other furniture items he provided to Victorian aristocracy and Chetham’s Library itself.



George Shaw (1810-1876) was an English architect specialising in Gothic revival churches and other buildings. He was also an antiquary and collector of medieval, Tudor and Jacobean relics, including books, armour, furniture and architectural salvage. From about 1830 he began to convert his parents’ farmhouse in Uppermill into a ‘Gothic’ manorhouse with interiors inspired by Sir Walter Scott’s home at Abbotsford, Scotland. For the interior woodwork Shaw used a combination of salvaged late medieval woodwork together with joinery and carving of his own invention. He later named the house St Chad’s and it survives today as Uppermill Public Library (see picture above). Unlike many architects, Shaw not only designed buildings but also built them, using predominantly local workmen under his direction. He designed and built a number of churches mainly in what is now greater Manchester, but he also

undertook commissions further afield, in North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and North Wales. A less well-known side of Shaw's work was the manufacture of fake furniture, stone monuments and other decorative items. It grew out of the experience he gained repairing and restoring antique furniture and woodwork as he transformed the interiors of his own house and other buildings. This is the area of Dr Lindfield's current research.

March 2025 Annie Swynnerton (Artist)

Wednesday 26 March 2025 7pm at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester

Cost £10: advance booking not required

A Talk by Rebecca Milner

Manchester born Annie Louisa Swynnerton, (nee Robinson) ARA was a British painter best known for her portrait and symbolist works. She studied at Manchester School of Art and at the Académie Julian, before basing herself in the artistic community in Rome with her husband, the monumental sculptor Joseph Swynnerton. Influenced by both GF Watts and Burne-Jones and much admired by John Singer Sargent, she was adept at painting children and portraits, often painting the Garrett family and their friendship circle. An ardent supporter of women's suffrage and friend of the Pankhursts, she painted a noted portrait of Millicent Fawcett. Most of her work is in Manchester City Art Gallery, where Rebecca Milner curated an exhibition of her work in 2018.



Rebecca Milner is a Curator of Fine Art at Manchester Art Gallery where she specialises in British and European art pre-1900. She has organised and curated numerous exhibitions and displays including 'Annie Swynnerton: Painting, Light and Hope' in 2018. She was previously Custodian of 2 Willow Road, a National Trust property in London, and has worked as a curator at the V & A in London.

Millicent Fawcett 1930

Illusions 1900



April 2025 G E Street at Swinton

Saturday 26 April 2025 at 11am: at St Peter's Church, Swinton M27 0WA, at the invitation of Fr Jeremy Sheehy

Cost £10: advance booking not required

An opportunity to visit St Peter's, Swinton built to the designs of G E Street – Including a talk by Anthea and Neil Darlington on the architect G E Street and his relationship with the influential Heywood family.

The church stands on Chorley Road, close to Salford Civic Centre and Swinton Shopping Precinct. There are frequent bus services to Manchester and Swinton Railway Station is approximately 200 yards away. The church was built in 1869 at a cost of £18,000. The choice of Street is testimony to the Tractarian convictions of the two Heywood brothers who built the church. There are five windows to the four arcade arches of the chancel: Street felt so strongly about five windows as an improvement on four that he paid for the fifth one himself! The 2004 edition of Pevsner's *Buildings of England, Lancashire: Manchester and the South East* says 'One looks at St Pater's with respect ... we ought to be grateful for three such Victorian churches distant from each other by only a few miles [St Peter's, St Augustine's Pendlebury and St Mark's Worsley]. Pendlebury and Swinton stand out above any contemporary Gothic buildings in France or Germany.'



The Heywood family – the sons of Sir Benjamin Heywood, a Manchester banker, dominated the religious life of Swinton and Pendlebury throughout the Victorian age. Employing only the best architects of the period, they built two of the finest Victorian churches in Greater Manchester - St Peter's Church at Swinton by G E Street and the nearby St Augustine's at Pendlebury by Bodley.

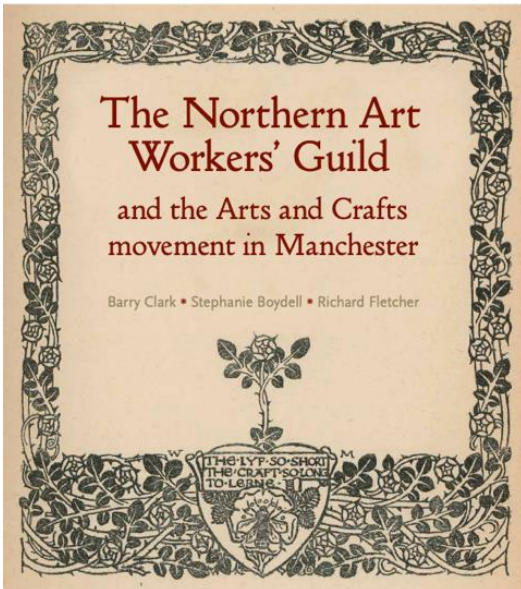
Photo: St Peter's Church from the north-east. P13074-2 © Neil Darlington.2019]

Neil Darlington is a retired architect and editor of the *Dictionary of Manchester Architects 1800-1940*. Anthea Darlington is a retired head teacher who worked in Swinton for many years. They have been members of the Manchester Group of the Victorian Society for over 40 years.

May 2025 The Northern Art Workers Guild and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Manchester

Wednesday 14 May 2025 7pm at the Friends' Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester Cost: £10 No booking required.

A talk by Barry Clark following the publication of "The Northern Art Workers' Guild"



The Art Workers' Guild was an organisation established in 1884 by a group of British painters, sculptors, architects, and designers associated with the ideas of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. The guild promoted the 'unity of all the arts', denying the distinction between fine and applied art. The Northern Art Workers Guild followed in 1896, and until the publication of the book in 2024 its history has been largely overlooked or made up, partly because its membership records have never been found. One thing that can be stated categorically is that unlike the national organisation, women were members from the start. Edgar Wood and Walter Pearce were early Masters, and Will Mellor its Secretary for many years. This book is a major study giving us at last a reliable history of the Guild and its members, and its role as 'an essential component of the Arts and Crafts movement located in the heart of industrial England.'

Stephanie is Curator at Manchester Metropolitan University Special Collections Museum with a specialist responsibility for the Manchester School of Art collection of art, craft and design. Barry is an independent researcher, craft bookbinder and member of the Manchester Society of Bookbinders. Richard is a researcher who has written and lectured on architectural history throughout the North West.