

Manchester in the 1850's

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The 1850s were an important decade for Manchester. Not only did it see the opening of Owen's College in 1851 and, in the following year, the first public library to be established under the 1850 Public Libraries Act, it also the decade when, amongst other events, there was the first visit by a reigning monarch to the town in 1851, the staging of the Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857, the opening of the Free Trade Hall in 1856 and the establishment of the Halle Orchestra in 1858. It was also a period when Manchester continued to expand in population and also had an increasing influence in the country and even, one may say, in the world. However, we must also remember that we cannot look at a single decade in isolation as some of the things that happened in the 1850s were the result of events and actions taken in the 1840s. Likewise, the consequences of things that took place in the 1850s were to be felt later in the 1860s and following decades. To do in great detail about the events of the 1850s would take all day so I am having to be somewhat selective, but I hope that I will give you an impression of what Manchester was like in the middle of the 19th century.

In 1849, Manchester had featured largely in the report published by the "Morning Chronicle" where Angus Bethune Reach had described Manchester as "Queen on the Cotton Cities". The following year, H G Duffield in his "Stranger's guide to Manchester" commented that "There is perhaps, at the present day, no town in her Majesty's dominions, indeed we might say no town or city in Europe, which is increasing so rapidly in size, or rising so speedily into commercial greatness, as Manchester". These two comments, one might say, set the scene for the decade.

I want to start with one of the greatest achievements of the period, one which has had a lasting influence on the world and provided so much pleasure for millions of people as well as a source of knowledge, learning and education, namely the establishment of the first public library under the 1850 Public Libraries Act. This took place on 2nd September 1852 when the Committee that had masterminded the creation of the library officially handed it over to the Borough Council.

Although the Library was officially opened on that date, it was not until 10am on 6th September that it was opened to the public and they were allowed to borrow and consult books for the first time. The "Manchester Guardian", which had been very supportive of the idea of free public libraries reported the handing over ceremony in great detail, devoting almost a page of and a half in reporting the speeches made at the official handing over in the morning and the meeting held in the evening for the working classes. The speeches were reported at length together with comments like "loud applause" and cheers. I have not counted the words used in the report, but it was very small print, no pictures and the paper was larger than the modern broadsheets. I suspect there were more words in the report of the opening than you find in some of today's tabloid newspapers. When was the last time you read an account of an official opening that began with the words: "Thursday last, as we justly observed, was a proud day for Manchester: for it was impossible to calculate to what immense material, no less than immaterial good - to what vast field of mental and moral elevation, individual and social, an avenue was opened for our teeming population on that day - never, we trust, to be shut to the poorest of our fellow townsmen so long as Manchester has an existence or a name."

On 8th September (Wednesday), the paper again devoted one and a half columns to the library, this time commenting on the fact that even before the library opened its doors there was a goodly number of people waiting to be admitted. Things have not changed for even today, there is usually "a goodly number of people" waiting at the doors at opening time. There then followed descriptions of the lending and reference libraries and the rules and regulations for the use of the library. Manchester had a new service that fitted the town's view of being a leader. It was the existence of the library and Manchester's achievement in having the first free public library under the Libraries Act that was one of the reasons why Annie Horniman established her repertory theatre in Manchester in 1907.

It had not been an easy birth for the new library service as there were many on the council who regarded it as a luxury and a waste of money, they were sceptical of what it would achieve. However, those supporting the idea of free, public libraries, were persuasive and their arguments won the day. People like Sir John Potter, Dr Vaughan, the Bishop of Manchester, the local MPs, instrumental in getting the library established and in appointing Edward Edwards to the post of librarian.

We are fortunate in that there are many sources that enable us to build up a picture of Manchester in 1850s. Firstly, there are the local newspapers, the "Manchester Guardian" and the "Manchester Courier", which reported the news and whose advertisements tell us what people were being encouraged to buy or give public information about train services, what was on at the Theatre Royal amongst many other things. Then there is the Slater's directories, which lists some of the many people living in the town, the various businesses and the streets. Thirdly, there is the large scale OS map, surveyed in 1845, and published in 1849/ at a scale of 60 inches to 1 mile which is very detailed, showing lamp-posts as well as privies and the insides of public buildings. Next there is Duffield's "Strangers Guide to Manchester", which is a sort of guide book of what to see and visit when in the town. We are also fortunate that in 1851, there was a census, the surviving enumerators' returns of that enable us to discover who was living where, with whom, what they occupations were and where they were born. Photographs are also very useful. Although there are no surviving ones of 1852, James Mudd took a number in the 1850s and 1860s that show what certain parts of the town looked like. Also there are photographs taken by W H Fischer's photographs in about 1866. These useful in that they show some of the buildings that were in the town in the 1850s. Finally, there are the town's own official records, minute books, rate books, by-laws, private acts of parliament and the like which enable a picture of the official side to be built up. There are many other sources that could be mentioned such as the records of businesses, diaries etc, but to mention all these would take an age.

It must be remembered that the Manchester of 1850s was not the Manchester of today in terms of physical size. It was only 14 years since the borough of Manchester had been incorporated. The newly incorporated borough consisted of the townships of Manchester, Hulme, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Ardwick and Cheetham. It was not until the last 15 years of the century that Manchester began to expand beyond these boundaries. The population of the borough was around 303,000 of which almost 187,000 lived in what we would call today "Central Manchester". Central Manchester was over-crowded, dirty, smelly and noisy. Industry, commerce and residential properties stood side by side. Little had changed since Alexis de Tocqueville had written about Manchester in 1835 in the following words:

"Raise your head, look all around this place; you will see huge palaces of industry. You will hear the noise of furnaces, the whistle of steam. These vast structures keep out both air and light from human habitations which they dominate. They envelop them in a perpetual fog; there is the slave, there the master; there is the wealth of some, here the poverty of most... A thick black smoke covers the city. The sun appears like a disc without any rays. In this semi-daylight 300,000 people work ceaselessly. A thousand noises rise amidst this unending damp and dark labyrinth, but they are not the ordinary sounds that emanate through the walls of large cities. The footsteps of a busy crowd, the crunching of wheels of machines, the shriek of steam from boilers, the regular beat of looms, the heavy rumble of carts, these are the only noises from which you can never escape in these dark, half-lit streets... Crowds are every in a hurry in the streets of Manchester, but their footsteps are brisk, their looks pre-occupied and their appearance sombre and harsh. It is in the middle of this vile cesspool that the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilise the entire universe. From this filthy cesspit flows pure gold. It is here that the human spirit attains complete development, and at the same time utter brutishness. Here civilisation produces its miracles and civilised man is turned back almost into a savage."

Perhaps the best way to illustrate this overcrowded state of central Manchester is to take a look at the area bounded by Peter Street, Deansgate, Great Bridgewater Street and Lower Mosley Street - the site now occupied by G-Mex and the former Great Northern Warehouse. As a result of a survey undertaken in 1862, it is known that around 6000 people lived in the area bounded by Peter Street, Deansgate, Great Bridgewater Street and Lower Mosley Street. The 1850 map shows the area graphically. In the centre of it, where the former Central Station now stands, was a canal, the Manchester & Salford Junction Canal and adjacent to it, the Dacca Cotton Mill. Near the junction of Watson Street and Great Bridgewater Street was a lead works.

Fronting Peter Street were large public buildings - the Gentlemen's Concert Hall, the Manchester Natural History Museum, the Theatre Royal, the precursor of the Free Trade Hall and a Methodist New Connexion Chapel. As you can imagine, the area for housing was limited, especially when if you take out the roads as well. We are talking in high densities per acre, densities that would make the modern planner shudder to contemplate.

Although Manchester was a large important town, it was still a municipal borough. October 1851 had seen a successful visit by Queen Victoria to the town - the first by a reigning monarch. As a result of the visit, it had been anticipated that Manchester would be granted the status of a city, but due to changes in government, moved to grant Manchester this status were delayed so that it was not until 1853 that Manchester became the City of Manchester. Another result of the visit was that the Exchange was granted the title "Royal Exchange".

When Manchester became a borough in 1838, it faced an enormous task of trying to drag the town into the 19th century. Few by-laws existed, houses were built with little regard to those who were going to live in them, roads needed improving, there was no running water for the vast majority, no sewage system, the rivers were highly polluted and toxic. In short, Manchester was not a place to live, yet it was the centre of an industrial area which, according to some experts provided over 40% of the country's exports in the mid 19th century, a third of the exports being textiles. No wonder Manchester regarded itself as an important player in the country and its economy. The success of the Anti-Corn Law League and the growing demand for the removal of restrictions, especially on imports in the hope that other countries would follow suite gave rise to the Manchester School of Economic thought - free trade, less red tape. The Anti-Corn Law League had been a very successful lobbying organisation lead by George Wilson. When the Corn Laws had been repealed, the League was only "dissolved conditionally". Rather a nice state of limbo. Wilson did not believe that those who believed in protectionism and fought against the repeal would not try again to secure their re-introduction. He was right in this for in 1852, the Tories hinted that they would re-introduction protectionism. On 2nd March a meeting of the Anti-Corn Law League Council was summoned at Newall's Buildings and a decision was taken to "unsuspend", if such a word can be used, the Anti-Corn Law League and re-establish it with the same aims and conditions as before. At the meeting, £27,520 was promised to help fight the threat. However, the money was required, a General Election was called and the idea of re-introducing protectionism did not seriously rise its head again until the end of the century. At the following General Election on 8th July John Bright and Thomas Milner-Gibson were returned to represent Manchester. It is interesting to note that in January 1852, at a meeting held in Newall's Buildings and again chaired by George Wilson, there was a discussion about the reform of Parliament and even suggestions made for a secret ballot. Reform eventually came in 1867 and the secret ballot a few years later.

As I have previously said, the council faced enormous problems when it replaced the Police Commissioners as the local government body for Manchester. The first few years were spent in sorting the legal position of the council out, but once that was achieved, it was able to start to tackle the problems that existed. The first move came in 1844 with the passing of the Manchester Police Act which laid down that all new properties were to have what were described as "adequate sanitary facilities", in other words, this meant that new houses had to have their own privies, necessary or what ever you like to call it. It was the first step in tackling the poor conditions on the borough of Manchester.

The main problem was that there was a lack of clean, running water that could be supplied on a 24 hour a day basis, 7 days a week, 365 days a year not only to the wealthy and those who could afford water, but also to the poorer parts of the city centre. In 1848, the Manchester Waterworks Act authorised the construction of a series of reservoirs to supply Manchester with fresh, clean water from the Longdendale Valley. These supplies started to be delivered in the early 1850s and the assets of the Manchester and Salford Waterworks Company were transferred to the borough council. At the end of 1852, the Manchester and Salford Waterworks Company was dissolved and Manchester took full responsibility for the supply of water to the borough and gradually, surrounding areas. This was the second major service to be run by the council, the first being the gas works. With the introduction of running water, it was possible to begin the process of improving the town. It was possible to insist that new developments had at least cold running water, but it took

time to extend it to older property. Fortunately, redevelopment helped in this field as areas of poor quality housing were cleared away to make way for commercial and civic developments.

Manchester was a town of pressure groups. In 1851, the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association was founded. Representatives of this organisation visited the slums of Manchester and prepared reports on what they saw. They also made recommendations as to what should be done to improve these areas. Although they had no official status within the council, their views were often taken into account. They reported their findings at meetings of the society, often attended by leading members of the city council, including the Mayor. Some of their reports make pretty horrific reading, such as the one of Gibraltar in 1853 in which they recommended the whole area be razed to the ground. However, one theme that runs through many of their reports was the need to educate the residents. Landlords could make improvements, but unless the residents themselves took some responsibility for their actions, any improvements would be a waste of time and money. For instance, one landlord in the Knott Mill area put a new privy in the court he owned. He provided each tenant with a key for the door, but within a short period of time, the door was off its hinges. He replaced it and the same thing happened again. It happened for a third time after which he decided not to replace it. The Association considered his action, after the third occasion, to be the correct one to take. Their argument was that what was needed was a programme of education for those living in the poorer parts of the city.

In fact one of the topics on which there was a lot of discussion in the early 1850s concerned the matter of compulsory education. In October 1851, Owen's College had opened its doors providing a higher education on a non-sectarian basis. At this time, there was a debate in Manchester regarding basic education that was centred on its provision and by whom. Was it to be sectarian or non-sectarian. In other words, was it to be an education system provided by churches or one from which the churches were excluded. Even within the churches, there were disputes as to who should run the system with the non-conformists opposing the ideas put forward by the Church of England. The matter came to a head in 1853 when a private bill was introduced in Parliament for compulsory education to be controlled by the Church of England and applicable only to Manchester and Salford. Manchester City Council opposed the proposals, not because they were against compulsory education, but because it would have placed it in the hands of the churches. Many felt that education was too important a subject to leave to the churches and that the type of education they received would be biased to their own particular views.

Manchester wanted a secular system. They were also aware that if it related just to Manchester, the council might end up having to deal with those who crossed from neighbouring authorities, stayed with relatives and got their education that way. It was felt that the compulsory education should be introduced by central government and cover the whole country. It was too important a subject to be left to local authorities to decide what to do.

It is interesting to note that one of the arguments put forward in favour of public libraries and which was stressed at various meetings was that it would be an important aid to the education of the working classes. The importance of education was not lost on business, although some politicians were not so keen as it might increase the rates and taxes.

During the 1850s, Manchester was a major industrial and commercial city. It was to retain this position for many years although like other industrial centres, it suffered from the period swings of the trade cycle. Although Manchester was considered to be the centre of the Lancashire textile industry, the number of cotton mills in the city was small compared with those in other Lancashire towns. Manchester was far more a commercial centre with its warehouses, its Branch of the Bank of England and the Royal Exchange, which brought together not only those directly involved in spinning, weaving, bleaching and finishing cloth, but also those in industries which had an interest in the textile industry. For example, the growth of the chemical industry in the city was due to a large extent to the demands of the textile industry for a wider range of fast colours with which to print the cloth.

The Royal Exchange was the focal point for many of these industries. It was here that commercial information was exchanged and on the floor of the Exchange that deals were struck. The important days were those

of High 'Change when textile manufactures from all over the region came to Manchester to meet each other, strike deals and learn about the state of trade and the price of cotton. According to some, it was also the day when mill owners also saw their share brokers and bank managers in discreet surroundings.

The 1850s saw the development of the textile warehouse. The first warehouse had been completed for Richard Cobden on Mosley Street in 1838 to the designs of Edward Walters. The features of the warehouse rapidly became established with the ground floor being up a flight of steps, a semi-basement for packing and large open spaces on the upper floors where goods could be displayed. Within a short period of time, Mosley Street ceased to be a residential street and became associated with offices and warehouses. New warehouses were constructed along Charlotte Street and the surrounding area. The grid-iron pattern of the streets in the area made them ideal for this type of development as each warehouse was isolated from its neighbour, thus reducing the risk of fires spreading from one building to another. The grandest of all the warehouses was Watts Warehouse on Portland Street, completed for J & S Watts in 1858 to the designs of Travis and Mangnall. It was the construction of these warehouses that started the decline of the residential nature of central Manchester. In fact, some streets were gradually becoming deserted at night. According to the 1851 census, the number of people who lived on Market Street, was very few, most buildings being empty at night.

Apart from textiles, Manchester was a major engineering centre for the region. Several well-known engineering firms existed, making a wide range of products. Firms such as William Fairbairn, well known for its bridges, Joseph Whitworth, known for its machine tools and Sharp Stewart for its railway engines, Richard Johnson & Nephew, for wire, Bellhouse's for its cast iron buildings and Beyer Peacocks, well known for its railway engines. Manchester's products reached many part of the world from Europe to Australia and South America.

Manchester was also developing as an important transport centre. The canal network was well established, but it was the railways where the greatest developments took place in the 1850s. In 1852, central Manchester had three railway stations - Victoria, London Road and Oxford Road, which had been opened in 1849. Both Victoria and London Road Stations were relatively small, but the demand for rail travel was growing. The idea of excursion trains was developing as well as extra services for special events, both sporting and other. For example, in 1852, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway put on extra trains for Simnel Sunday in Bury. The previous year they had organised trips to London for the Great Exhibition and in 1857, they did the same for the Art Treasures Exhibition at Old Trafford. The facilities at both Victoria and London Road left something to be desired, but it was not until the 1860s, the re-building and expansion took place at both these stations. In fact at London Road Station, the decade started with trouble at London Road Station where the LNWR were involved in "passenger kidnapping" and even threw the MS& L clerks out of their offices, the station, it should be noted, was shared.

In 1849, Manchester got its first "commuter" line between Manchester and Altrincham, a journey that could be achieved in under 30 minutes making it possible for businessmen to live in the country and travel easily into the city. During the next decade, places like Altrincham, Sale and even Stretford saw a rise in their populations as the railway attracted more commuters, anxious to escape from the conditions in central Manchester. New lines were built around Manchester, including the Ancoats curve to Ardwick to Miles Platting. Services were increased although most trains were run at times that suited the commercial and business community rather than the average working man.

The 1850s also saw developments in road transport. The number of bus services began to increase. When 1852 opened, these horse buses were drawn by one or two horses, and had seating for passengers both on the outside and inside as well. The inside of the buses, according to Louis Hayes, smelt like a stable in wet weather whilst those sitting outside on the top deck rested their feet on a board, which partially obscured the windows of the lower deck and enabled those inside to see whether you had cleaned your shoes or not and their state of repair. In December, there was a new development in the field of road transport, a new type of horse bus was introduced - the three horse bus. This could carry more passengers at faster speeds and did not have doors, which speeded up the loading and unloading of passengers. Fares were gradually being reduced although it was still cheaper to sit on the top deck than on the lower deck. Bus guards, better known

as conductors in other parts of the country, began to make their appearance as it was not possible for the driver to manage three horses and collect fares. Although public road transport was increasing and becoming cheaper, it was still the preserve of the wealthy. Few workmen could afford 3d or 4d for a single journey. Also, many of the bus services did not start until 7am or even 8am, long after the average working man had to be at work.

The opening of the library provided an alternative for Mancunians who did not want to attend the various places of entertainment. One institution that was open the year round which attracted large numbers of visitors was Belle Vue with its zoo and pleasure gardens. Each year John Jennison introduced few attractions, appreciating the fact that to get people to come back, there had to be something different each year for them to see. For example, in 1852, there was the first of Belle Vue's spectacular firework displays. George Danson was engaged to paint a large background canvas and men employed to act out an event. The first one was the "The Bombardment of Algiers". It employed 25 men, 300 rockets, 25 large shells and 50 Roman candles. The fireworks were made by Mr Bruce of London. The total cost for the season was £1100 of which Danson received £400. The opening night was watched by 1800 spectators. The firework display was located on the island in the centre of the lake where the water would act as a mirror for the fireworks, enhancing their appearance. Another events which took place at Belle Vue the same year resulted in the tragic death of Signor Giuseppe Lunardini, aeronaut, during a balloon ascent at Belle Vue. Signor Lunardini was otherwise James Goulston, an oil cloth maker from London. The accident happened at 7pm. Apparently, Goulston had made 50 successful ascents, with passengers. On the day of his accident, the weather had been wet. The balloon had been partially filled the previous day with gas from the Belle Vue Gas Works, but the weather made the material waterlogged. The flight was delayed for ½ hour because of the weather, but a lull in the rain allowed him to take off on his own. Soon afterwards, the rain resumed and he was lost in the clouds. He was spotted over Leeds and later at Stone Breaks near Springhead. It appears that Goulston was having difficulty letting the gas out of the balloon, which could be easily done with the help of a passenger, so he threw out an anchor which hit the ground causing a jerk which threw him out of the basket, his leg was caught in the netting at the side of the basket and he was dragged along. Some said that Jennison had insisted he flew, but others contradicted this, the advert had made it clear that the flight depended on the weather.

For those who could afford it, there was the Theatre Royal and for gentlemen, the Gentlemen's Concert Society, whose concerts were conducted by Charles Halle. Halle was an advocate of "undress" concerts aimed at a wider audience than that which attended the Gentlemen's concerts. Unfortunately, the committee which ran the concerts did not have such a view and it was not until 1858, after the successful series of concerts at the Art Treasures Exhibition that Halle was to introduce his own series of concerts on the Free Trade Hall at prices which he felt would begin to attract a wider audience.

So far, I have outlined some of the events and developments that took place in Manchester in the 1850s, but what did the town look like if you were to take a walk along its streets. So for the last few minutes, I will take you on an imaginary walk from Victoria Station via Piccadilly to Campfield, to the doors of the Free Library.

Starting at Victoria Station, which was nothing like the present station. In 1852, it consisted on a single platform shared by the London and North Western Railway and Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Companies. In 1851, a new refreshment had been opened which provided not only liquid refreshments, but also hot dinners. The main approach to the station was still along Victoria Street and Hunts Bank rather than Corporation Street. Corporation Street was still in the process of being constructed at this time. The section between Market Street and Withy Grove had been finished in 1846, but the next section, to Ducie Bridge, was not completed until about 1850. The link from Todd Street to the Station dates from some time later as a photograph of about 1858 shows a footbridge across the River Medlock at the point where the road now crosses the river. Staying on the Corporation Street side of the river and following the line of Long Millgate, both Chethams and Manchester Grammar School were occupying adjacent sites. Chethams with its library, Europe's first free public library opened in 1655, occupied the same buildings it had done so when the school was founded in 1655. The Grammar School buildings were in need rebuilding as the changing demands of education had rendered them obsolete. However, it was another decade before anything was done

and the school modernised its curriculum. Across the road from the Grammar School, there was the Sun Inn, which had achieved fame a decade earlier as a meeting place for poets and local authors, but by 1852, all this had been forgotten and the pub was beginning its long decline. Later, in the 1860s, it lost its license. Behind the Sun Inn and the adjacent buildings was a rabbit warren of houses and court yards including Bakehouse Court, which was demolished in the 1870s. Photographs taken at the time of its demolition reveal the presence of a cruck framed building there, suggesting that in the 1852, there were still some late mediaeval house surviving in central Manchester.

Our next port of call is the Market Place and Smith Door. Part of Smithy Door had been demolished in the 1830s when Victoria Street had been constructed, leaving a triangular plot of land bounded by Deansgate, Victoria Street and St Mary's Gate. This area was eventually cleared in the 1870s to make way for Victoria Buildings. The site today has been misnamed. The modern developers and their advisers have decided to call it "The Shambles", but they are wrong. The Shambles lay on the other side of Victoria Street between the Victoria Fish Market and the Wellington Inn and Sinclair's Oyster Bar, underneath Marks and Spencers' shop.

This provides us with the excuse to drop in at the Market Place, which now lies under Mark's and Spencers'. It was not a large market place, becoming very congested on market days. In the 1890s, it was reported that the stalls overshadowed the shops. The Wellington Inn was there together with the Falstaff Hotel and the Bull's Head Hotel, which eventually sold off its Market Street frontage. Facing the Wellington Inn was the Victoria Fish and Game Market, one of the last surviving markets in central Manchester that had not been moved out to Smithfield in the 1820s. Until the construction of Corporation Street, the main way to York Street and Cheetham Hill Road via Ducie Bridge, was through the Market Place, along Old Millgate and Long Millgate - not the easiest of routes for vehicles.

The next important site in Manchester of 1852 was the Exchange, recently granted the title of Royal Exchange after Queen Victoria's successful visit to Manchester on 10th October 1851. This was not the Exchange we know today, but its predecessor, opened in 1809 and designed by Thomas Harrison. It had been enlarged in the 1840s to cater for a growing number of members. It was here that members of Manchester's commercial community, especially those engaged in the textile trade and its various allied and associated branches would meet not only to strike deals, but also to exchange information on the state of trade and the markets in general.

Market Street was still the main north-south road through the centre of Manchester. It was congested with large numbers of horse drawn vehicles passing along its length. Market Street itself had been widened in the 1820s and 1830s although the part by Palace Buildings (a site better known to modern Mancunians as the Cinephone Cinema), was not cleared and rebuilt until the 1870s, thus, in 1852, still jutted into the pavement. Already, Market Street was becoming a commercial street. The 1851 census indicates that there were few people still living there and that the buildings were closed up at night.

Piccadilly was dominated by the Manchester Royal Infirmary that had recently been enlarged and its overall appearance improved. The enlarged had been made possible by the removal of the Lunatic Asylum to Cheadle, now known as Cheadle Royal, in 1845. A new façade had been added so that the building was symmetrical.

In front of the Infirmary, there were still the fountains erected for Queen Victoria's visit in 1851, which apparently never worked properly. Demands were growing for their removal as the stagnant water was becoming "a receptacle for dead cats and dogs and suicides". In 1853, work started on creating the Esplanade, which was to become the location for a statue of the Duke of Wellington, which had first been put forward at a meeting in the Town Hall in September 1852. Late the statues to Robert Peel, James Watt and John Dalton were erected on the Esplanade as well.

Continuing our rapid walk, we pass onto Mosley Street, past the Portico Newsroom and Library that had opened in 1806. Behind the Portico Library, it was worth detouring to George Street to visit the home of the Manchester Literary & Philosophical Society, amongst whose members were many of the leading scientists,

engineers and technologists of Manchester. It provided a meeting place for these people, where ideas could be exchanged and new developments expounded on at Society meetings.

Returning to Mosley Street, passing St James Church, the Union Club and so to the premises of the Royal Manchester Institution, now the Art Gallery, designed by Charles Barry and opened in the 1820s. As well as providing Manchester with facilities where paintings could be exhibited, it also provided a venue for art classes, where Mancunians could learn to paint, draw and sculpt. Before we leave Mosley Street, we can catch a glimpse of St Peter's Church.

From Mosley Street, we turn into David Street, now Princess Street, past the premises of the Mechanics Institute which in 1853 was to move from Cooper Street to 103 Princess Street and so to Cross Street and King Street, past the premises of John Benjamin Dancer, famous for his work on lantern slides and micro-photography to King Street. The junction of King Street and Cross Street was dominated by the Town Hall. This was the nerve centre of Manchester borough council in 1852, ruled over by Sir Joseph Heron, Town Clerk. It was this building that was, in 1878, to become the new home for the Reference Library when the Campfield library was declared structurally unstable and had to be closed.

Moving into St Ann's Square, this has change little in appearance over the last 150 years. True, the Exchange has increased in size, but St Ann's Church has not altered and neither have the buildings of the right. From St Ann's Street, it is possible to see St Mary's, Parsonage Gardens, a church whose life was gradually expiring as the population moved out. By 1888, it was redundant and demolished.

Deansgate was a narrow street. Little had been done to improve it although there were several important shops there, such as Finnigans and Kendals. Peter Street was in a process of change in 1852, the New Jerusalem Church, the Methodist New Connection Chapel were still there, providing a service for those living in the area whilst further up there was the Theatre Royal, the Manchester Natural History Museum and the Gentlemen's Concert Hall. The Free Trade Hall was also there, but not the one for which we see the exterior walls today. The building there is 1852 was the second Free Trade Hall which was soon to be demolished to make way for Walter's masterpiece, completed in 1856 and dedicated, as AJP Taylor put it, to an economic concept, free trade, rather than a local worthy or a saint. According to George Wilson at the opening of the building in 1856, it was dedicated to all those who fought for the repeal of the Corn Laws. He listed them by name, omitting his own name, yet it was he who steered the movement to its success.

From here, we must hurried make out way back along Peter Street to Quay Street, the Water Street and the warehouses of the Mersey-Irwell Navigation, back along Liverpool Road, passing the world's first inter-city passenger railway station, by now a goods depot and so into Byrom Street, passing as we do Barry's St Matthew's Church. In the background, there is St John's Church, but here we must end at the former Hall of Science.

I hope you have found this brief survey of Manchester in the 1850s of interest and has provided some background to city in which your organisation was established in 1856. Manchester was a thriving city, a city full of opportunities for those who were prepared to taken them. It was also a city that was a the forefront of developments and continued to be so for several decades to come. All I can say at the end of this survey is "Happy Birthday" and now you can look forward to your 200th birthday in 2056.