

## **Local History Guide, Every Street, Ancoats**

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This guide takes in two historic sites to investigate how Ancoats and surrounding areas developed socially and physically. As with many other sites of historical importance in Ancoats, these two sites have long been demolished: one torn to the ground and the other left in ruin with only the lowermost layers of bricks left to give indication of the unique building which once stood there. This guide shows how they functioned before their destruction, what they tell us about the area and the ways in which the community interacted with the organisations who operated from within their walls.

This was originally produced for a workshop with local residents on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2025, hosted by Friends of the Medlock Valley (FOMV). You can read more about the group's work on [www.medlockvalley.org](http://www.medlockvalley.org)

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## Site Number 1: Ancoats Hall

Ancoats Hall had a history spanning back to at least sixteenth century, when the 'estate and mansion' of Ancoats was purchased by Anthony Mosley (1537-1607) from Sir John Byron.<sup>1</sup> The Mosley's were a wealthy land-owning family with roots in Staffordshire and Anthony and his brothers Sir Nicholas Mosley and Oswald Mosley made considerable personal fortunes through the early cloth trade in Manchester.<sup>2</sup> Sir Nicolas Mosley was Lord of the Manor of Manchester from 1596 and the manor stayed in the family until it was sold to the Manchester Corporation in 1845. After Anthony's death in 1607, his son Oswald oversaw the rebuilding of much of the hall. Figure 1 is an engraving of the hall where we can see its rebuilt form in neo-gothic style.

For generations, the hall housed members of the Mosley family as a 'country residence'. However, by the mid-eighteenth century, this part of Manchester was no longer the quiet rural landscape it had been. As such, six generations after Oswald Mosley rebuilt the hall his four-times-great-grandson- Sir Oswald '2nd Baronet Mosley of Ancoats' Mosley (1785 – 1871) made the decision to rent the hall and eventually to sell it. He wrote in his family memoirs that 'the near approach of factories, on the burning of limestone on the opposite hills, generally enveloped it in clouds of smoke [...] the place no longer possessed any local attractions'.<sup>3</sup> The hall was sold to George Murray, the owner of Murray's Mills in Ancoats which were at one time the largest Mills in the world. The hall was at this point 'a very ancient building of wood and plaster but in some parts rebuilt with brick and stone', and Murray decided to demolish and rebuild the mansion in neo-gothic style brick.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 1, 'View of Ancoats [Hall]' Drawn by E. Dayes and engraved by P. Rothwell for John Stockdale (1794).



Figure 2, Murray's Mills on Jersey Street. Image from Mike Williams, 'The Mills: The Mills of Ancoats, Manchester', in *Manchester Region History Review*, 1993.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Oswald Mosley, *Family Memoirs* (For Private Circulation, 1849), pp. 22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Axon E (ed.). *Mosley Family Memoranda of Oswald and Nicholas Mosley of Ancoats* (Manchester: The Chetham Society, 1902).

<sup>3</sup> Mosley, *Family Memoirs*, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> John Aiken, *Description of the Country from 30 to 40 Miles around Manchester* (London: John Stockdale, 1795), p.211.



Figure 3, The Renovated Ancoats Hall. Image from Manchester Libraries, 'Ancoats Hall, Manchester, 1900', GB127/M/08910.

The Murray family vacated the hall in 1868, and it was sold to the Midland Railway who used it as a storage facility. The Midland Railways then leased a section of the hall to house the Manchester Art Museum.

The Art Museum was the first museum in Britain to be designed explicitly for a working-class audience to visit. As such, its location, contents and composition were specially curated to entice 'the real Ancoats people [...] the toilers of the district'.<sup>5</sup>

As the Museum developed, it became more than a local attraction for residents: functioning as a 'permanent centre of culture and recreation' in the neighbourhood.<sup>6</sup> The space was used for social events, dancing, music and theatre and for community groups to meet.<sup>7</sup> The Art Museum was designed with this in mind, with displays placed on wooden boards which could be moved to accommodate different types of activity, allowing the community to physically mould and move the museum to adapt to their needs.



Figure 4, Inside the Museum. Image from Harvard Art Museum's Archive, 'Room in Ancoats Hall, (Arranged for a social gathering)', 3.2002.2698.2.

Ancoats Hall shows how 'ownership' of Ancoats shifted, from aristocratic families and then to wealthy elites: the first being rich merchants those who made their money through the international textile trade; the second, rich industrialists who benefited from the labour of local people in the cotton Mills which dominated the physical and vocational landscape of Ancoats. Into the 1910s, the building shows how the emerging middle-classes sought to bring 'high culture' to the area to try and improve conditions for working people and how working-class people could wield these spaces for their own uses. From their manor, these families played a part in structuring what life was like for working people in Ancoats. In the second section of this walk we are going to head to the ruins of the Round House, to discuss in more detail what that life was like.

<sup>5</sup> Anon, 'Manchester Art Museum', *The Manchester Guardian*, 26 March 1887, p.9.

<sup>6</sup> Horsfall, *A Description of the Work of the Manchester Art Museum*, p.3.

<sup>7</sup> Anon, 'Manchester Art Museum', *The Manchester Guardian*, 31 October 1896.

## Site 2: The Round House

The Round House was established in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century as Christ Church Chapel Reverend Dr James Scholefield. It was supposedly designed in a round shape so that ‘the devil had nowhere to hide’. Scholefield was a radical, vegetarian, teetotaller, Swedenborgian Christian, community apothecarist and Chartist. Chartists believed in extending the voting franchise and other reforms to make the political system more democratic and inclusive of working-class men. The chapel was a community hub but also a venue for Chartist meetings—including the Chartist national conference held on 17 August 1842. The conference was attended by delegates from across the country and gained national press after it resulted in multiple arrests for conspiracy.<sup>8</sup> The court proceedings were covered in *The Manchester Guardian* and demonstrated what life was like for people in the district who interacted with the chapel.

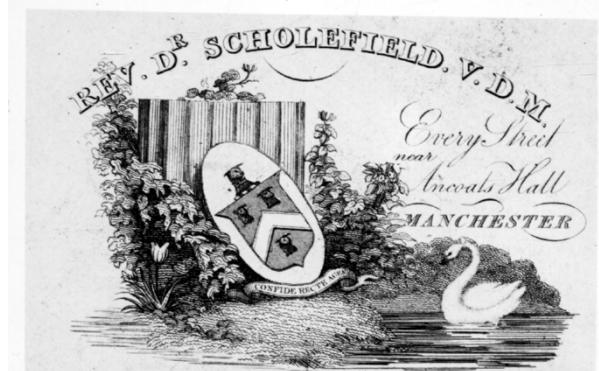


Figure 5, Scholefield's Visiting Card. Image from Manchester Libraries, GB127.m74163.

Rev. Scholefield carried on with his day-to-day activities whilst the conference took place. Amongst his activities over the day were assisting in the running of the Sunday school in the basement, conducting a burial service for a local family and opening his surgery to support an ill member of the community. He spent the late afternoon dispensing soup tickets to the ‘starving poor who crowded his house’.<sup>9</sup> The church was thus both a local and national political rallying point and a space where Scholefield’s mostly working-class congregation could gather support and send their children for free schooling, not just on Sundays but also throughout the week.<sup>10</sup> Following the conference a thirty-foot monument ‘to the memory of Henry Hunt’, a prominent Chartist, was erected on the grounds close to Every Street. Figure 7 shows what a towering obelisk this monument was, and it is also seen on an 1851 map (figure 6) but nothing seems to remain of it today. Can we find it, or where it may have been?

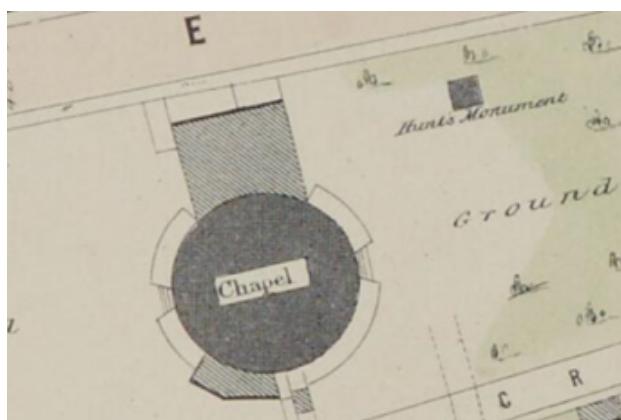


Figure 6, Adshead's Twenty Four Maps of the Township of Manchester, number 16: New Cross Ward Part 3.

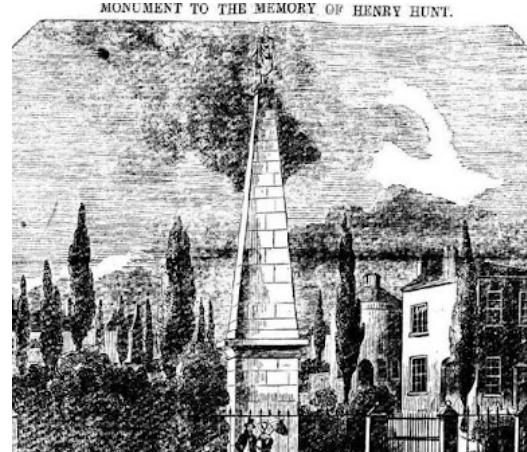


Figure 7, Monument to Henry Hunt. From the Northern Star, 20 August 1842.

<sup>8</sup> Anon, ‘The Chartist Prisoners’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 01 October 1842, p.3.

<sup>9</sup> Anon, ‘North Lancashire Assizes’, *The Manchester Guardian*, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Anon, ‘The Free Churches: Dr. Charles Stelzle on Labour and the Churches’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 10 October 1910, p.14.

Scholefield was also a local councillor where he hoped to represent ‘all the people of Ancoats, especially those who could not vote’ and called on the council to erect streetlights and address public health concerns.<sup>11</sup> In 1842, Scholefield even appeared in court on behalf of ten women accused of ‘riotous conduct and refusing to work’ after being flogged in a local workhouse.<sup>12</sup> He himself was arrested twice, once for conspiracy and once for conducting clandestine burials by burying plague victims in proper graves instead of plague pits at the request of their families. Scholefield buried those of all denominations and none in his burial ground. Who could be under our feet right now?



Figure 8, L. S. Lowry, *The Round House, Ancoats, 1929*, pencil on paper.

Scholefield died in 1855, and the building was left mostly disused until the Manchester University Settlement took it over. The settlement was formally established in 1895 and operated from Ancoats Hall and 20 Every Street- just behind the chapel. In 1900 they raised the funds to buy the site and settled in the recreation room attached to the chapel and the chapel grounds where a playground was built. The recreation room can be seen on the left of Figure 8, a Lowry drawing of the chapel. The main circular chapel remained almost exclusively disused until 1928 when they raised substantial funds which allowed them to renovate the old chapel itself, which they called the ‘Round House’.<sup>13</sup> Settlements like this were built to

try to address poverty and social issues in urban areas. They encouraged university students and volunteers to live and work alongside residents to offer educational, social, and cultural programs and believed this would allow the working-class residents to better themselves. They also organised practical support in the way of clothing banks and a penny bank and legal services. Like the hall, the building was also used as a community space as well for the community to organise their own events.



Figure 9, L. S. Lowry, *Every Street Playground, Ancoats, 1929*, pencil on paper.



Figure 10, W. Johnson, *Round Chapel, Every Street, Manchester, 1900*.

<sup>11</sup> Paul A. Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, “In the Thickest of the Fight”, *Albion*, 26.3 (1994), 461–82 (p.476).

<sup>12</sup> Anon, ‘Local and Provincial Intelligence’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 April 1842, p.2

<sup>13</sup> The University of Manchester Library, *Minutes of The Manchester University Settlement Executive Council*, Meeting of 18 November 1930.

In the 1930s, the settlement was threatened with clearance. By this time the issue of housing in Ancoats had become too large to ignore and the council proposed a programme of slum clearance. Figure 11 below shows the area which was proposed to be cleared in 1937. However, due to the Second World War clearance did not take place until the 1950s. These clearances saw the whole community shifted to different areas of Manchester, and many families found the process of being uprooted difficult. The building escaped this first round of demolitions but with a much smaller community left to serve, the settlement moved out of Ancoats in 1963. The Round House was demolished in 1986.

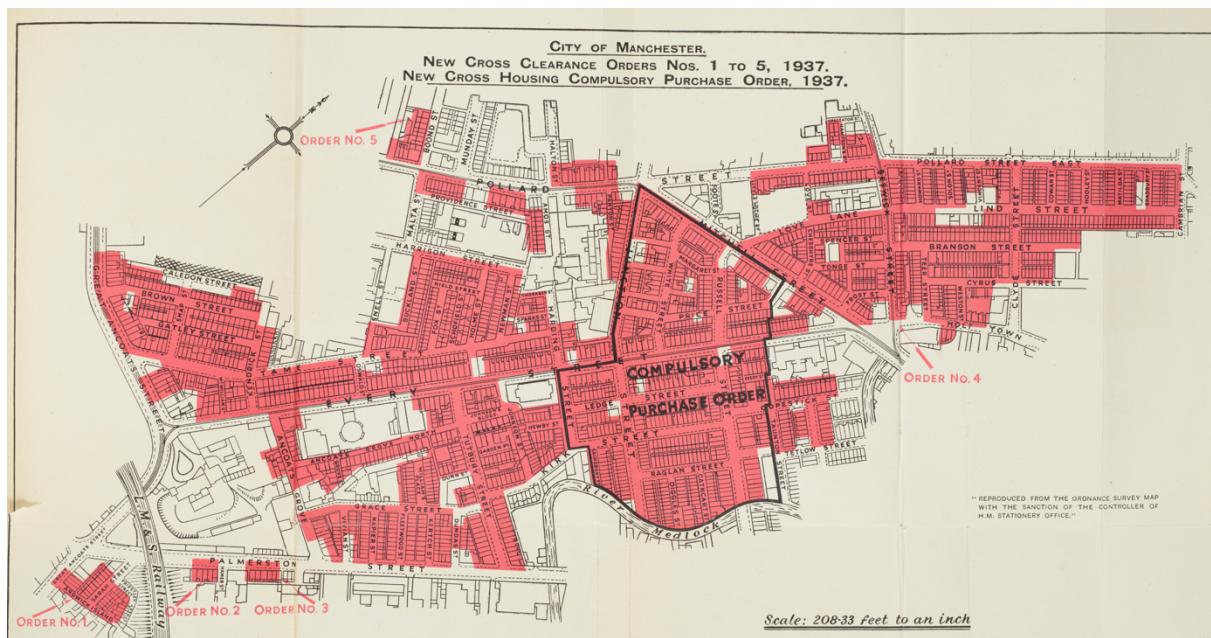


Figure 11, 'Ancoats: a study of a clearance area: report of a survey made in 1937-38'. Manchester (England). University Settlement. 1945.

Does anyone have any memories of the Round House or Ancoats Hall, playing on the playground at the Round House for example?

How can we keep the history of buildings like this alive when- like much of Ancoats- they have been demolished?

Map 1: Swire, 1824



Map 2: Pigot, 1836



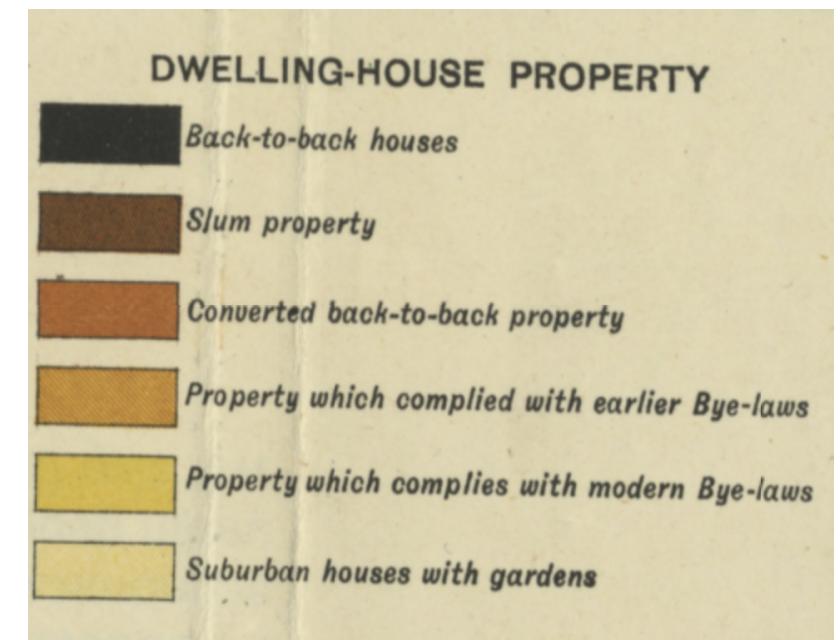
Map 3: Slater, 1848



Map 4: Bacon, 1884



Map 7: T. R. Marr Housing Map, 1904



Map 5: Geographica, 1960



Map 6: The Drink Map, 1889

