Mr Sadlers Balloon

An exact representation of Mr. Sadler's Balloon, in which he afcended from Manchefter, on Thurfday the 19th of May, at forty minutes paft eleven o'clock, after a rapid progrefs of upwards of fifty miles, he defcended near minutes before one o'clock.

IN Manchefter town a fine Air Balloon,
They fay it went off about noon;
It flew in the air, and hundreds were there,
To fee this fine Air Balloon.
Tho' Miracles ceafe, yet wonders increafe,
Mr. Sadler plays up a new tune;
Our old gallic neighbours fcientifical labours,
Have invented the Air Balloon.
This noble machine, moft people have feen,
And perhaps as a very boon;
Our wide going ile fir, may expect in a while, fir,
The French in an Air Balloon.
It will mount up on high, almoft to the fky,
You may peep if you pleafe in the moon;
All mathematicians, and deep politicians,
Admire the Air Balloon.
A man and a hog, a fheep and a dog,
It will carry aloft very foon;
You may view all the nations particular ftations,
If you ride in the Air Balloon.
Should war again break out as it is not a doubt,
With fome it may happen foon;
The French all invade us, their troops all parade us,
Brought o'er in the Air Balloon.
Then fhips will appear, not in water but air,
And come in a twinkling down;
From Calais to Dover, and all the world over,
Blown up in the Air Balloon.
O then reply'd Pat, but I can't believe that,
It's the tale of fome humbugging loon;
So I fay botheration to the frog eating nation,
Succefs to the Air Balloon.
The balloon flew away, 'twould no longer ftay,
Leaving poor Sadler behind;
The lofs it is great, and will make his heart ach,
For fake of his Air Balloon.

Although in the main this Ballad is an account of a newsworthy local event, there are hints at more serious thoughts, with a veiled warining that the French may well invade by air the next time there is a war, which given the Anglo French history at the time, seemed a certainty.

"Should war again break out as it is not a doubt, With some it may happen soon; The French all invade us, their troops all parade us, Brought o'er in the Air Balloon."

Balloon Street is a name familiar to most Mancunians, being for many years the location of the headquarters of the Co-operative Movement. Although the new NOMA development, just outside the Angel pub, is now the main headquarters, Balloon Street and its surrounding buildings are still very much associated with the Manchester-based Co-Op.

In 1785, the area was a well-to-do residential area, alongside Chethams and just outside the central Market area of Shudehill. Accounts of the two ascents in air balloons show that these events were big news at the time — the Montgolfier Brothers had invented flying air balloons just two years earlier in 1783, so Manchester was (once again, and not for the last time) at the forefront of transport technology.

Although a well known and respected figure at the time of his innovative balloon flights, James Sadler is largely unknown today. This may be due to the lack of his own written accounts, and it may also be partly down to class prejudice: he was a pastry chef in a successful family business, and was not formally educated. In fact, despite being a resident of Oxford and — in later life — accomplished scientist, the town and the university largely ignored him and the academics of Oxford apparently looked down on him, with little acknowledgement of his achievements. Obituaries for Sadler were published in most of the national press, and yet the university's own newspaper wrote a short, almost dismissive account, stating that "Mr James Sadler, elder brother of Mr Sadler of Rose Hill, Oxford, has died."

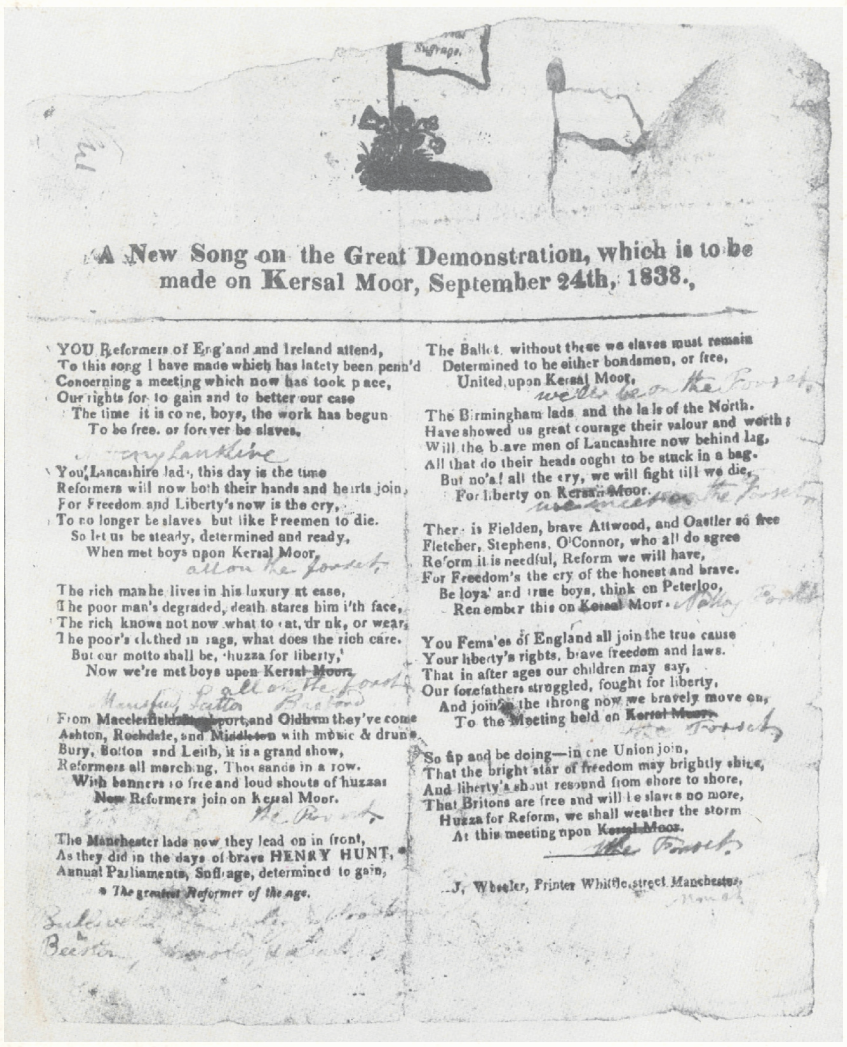
Mr Sadler made two Balloon flights from Manchester in May 1785, the first of which was from a field behind a gentleman's garden on the site of modern day Balloon Street, named in his honour. On this flight he was accompanied by a cat and landed near Bury. On his second journey scent he travelled alone and having risen to around 13,000ft. Mr Sadler travelled 50 miles before landing near Leeds. He was injured, having crashed and being dragged for 2 miles or more by the balloon, which eventually threw him clear before taking off again.

The Ballad sums up the heroic tale of the balloon flights with a distinctly patriotic twist, taking the opportunity to have a pop at the French and also outline the dismissive feelings of some to the new technology:

**"O then reply'd Pat,
but I can't believe that,
Its the tale of some
humbugging loon:
So I say botheration to the
frog-eating nation,
Success to the Air Balloon,"**

KERSAL MOOR

This ballad is all about an area of Salford known as Kersal Moor, which was the site of two rallies held by the Chartist Movement in the 1830's.



A New Song on the Great Demonstration, which is to be made on Kersal Moor, September 24th, 1838.,

YOU Reformers of Eng'and and Ireland attend,
To this song I have made which has lately been penn'd
Concerning a meeting which now has took place,
Our rights for to gain and to better our case
The time it is come, boys, the work has begun
To be free, or forever be slaves.

You Lancashire lads, this day is the time
Reformers will now both their hands and hearts join,
For Freedom and Liberty's now is the cry,
To no longer be slaves but like Freemen to die.
So let us be steady, determined and ready,
When met boys upon Kersal Moor.

The rich man he lives in his luxury at ease,
The poor man's degraded, death stares him i'th face,
The rich knows not now what to eat, drink, or wear,
The poor's clothed in rags, what does the rich care.
But our motto shall be, 'huzza for liberty,'
Now we're met boys upon Kersal Moor.

From Macclesfield, Stockport, and Oldham they've come
Ashton, Rochdale, and Middleton with music & drums,
Bury, Bolton and Leith, it is a grand show,
Reformers all marching, Thousands in a row.
With banners so free and loud shouts of huzzas
Now Reformers join on Kersal Moor.

The Manchester lads now they lead on in front,
As they did in the days of brave HENRY HUNT,*
Annual Parliaments, Suffrage, determined to gain,
The Ballot, without these we slaves must remain
Determined to be either bondsmen, or free,
United upon Kersal Moor.

The Birmingham lads and the lads of the North,
Have showed us great courage their valour and worth;
Will the brave men of Lancashire now behind lag,
All that do their heads ought to be stuck in a bag.
But no'a! all the cry, we will fight till we die,
For Liberty on Kersal Moor.

There is Fielden, brave Attwood, and Oastler so free
Fletcher, Stephens, O'Connor, who all do agree
Reform it is needful, Reform we will have,
For Freedom's the cry of the honest and brave.
Be loya' and true boys, think on Peterloo,
Remember this on Kersal Moor.

You Females of England all join the true cause
Your liberty's rights, brave freedom and laws.
That in after ages our children may say,
Our forefathers struggled, fought for liberty,
And join'd the throng now we bravely move on,
To the Meeting held on Kersal Moor.

So up and be doing—in one Union join,
That the bright star of freedom may brightly shine,
And liberty's shout resound from shore to shore,
That Britons are free and will be slaves no more,
Huzza for Reform, we shall weather the storm
At this meeting upon Kersal Moor.

J. Wheeler, Printer Whittle-street Manchester.

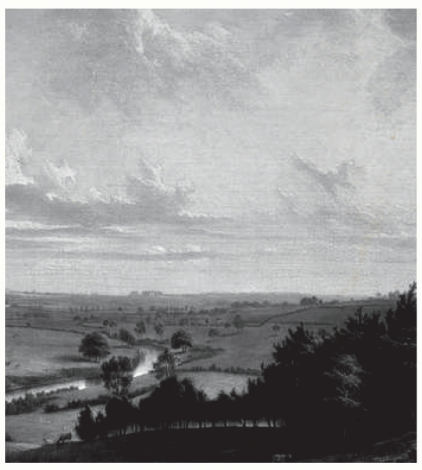
* The greatest Reformer of the age.

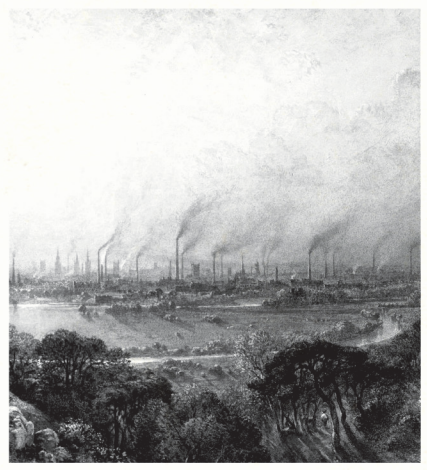
Kersal Moor is now a suburb of Salford and Greater Manchester, with just a few areas of the green open spaces remaining compared to the wide open spaces that dominated in the 18th and early 19th century. These spaces, and the relative proximity to the Salford/Manchester border around Victoria Bridge (the subject of another of the Manchester Ballads) made Kersal Moor a popular meeting point for unionists, reformers and Chartists, and also served as a 'muster point' for local agitators who held protest marches, often meeting up with other contingents from the region.

The full title of the Song that Edward II have called Kersal Moor is "A New Song on the Great Demonstration which is to be made on Kersal Moor, September 24th 1838", and like many broadside ballads, the song is part propaganda, part narrative and part rallying call.

"The rich man he lives in his luxury at ease,
The poor mans degraded, death stares in his face,
The rich knows not what to eat, drink or wear,
The poor's clothed in rags, what does the rich care,
But our motto shall be 'huzza for liberty',
Now we're met boys, up on Kersal Moor"

The Chartist meeting at Kersal Moor was one of many events around Manchester that occurred in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre — another event covered in the Manchester Ballads. Feelings ran high for decades, and the concerns over welfare, housing and inequality are issues that have, in many respects, still not been addressed almost 200 years later.

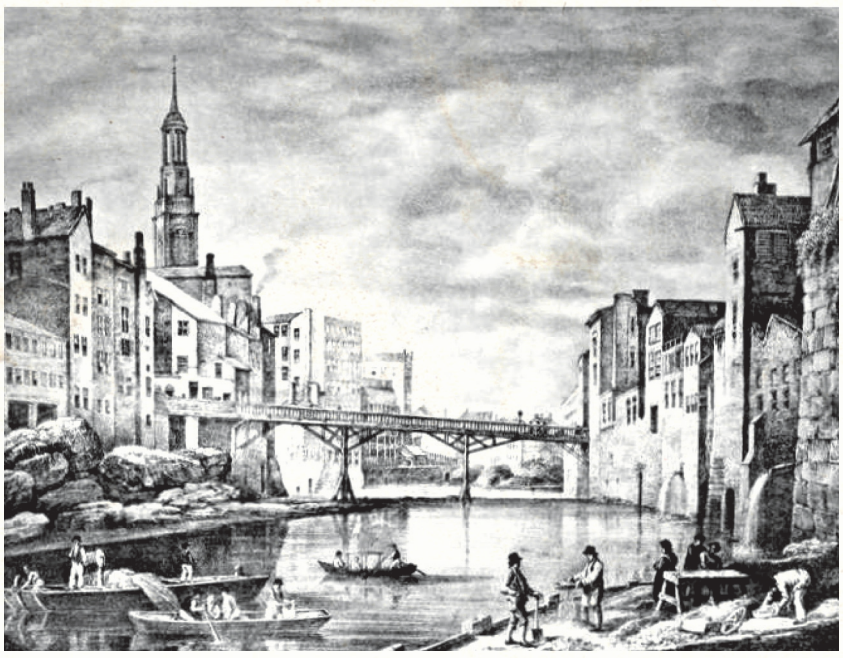


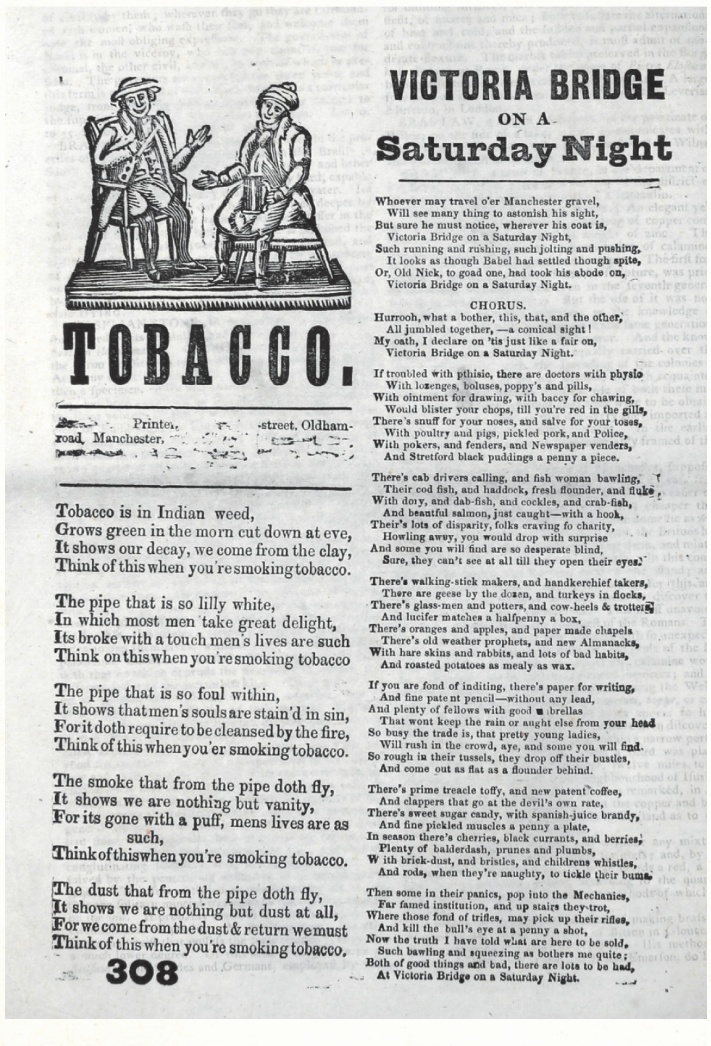


The images above clearly show the scale of industrialisation over a few decades in the 19th century — and although this development has continued into the 21st century, there are still some wide open spaces to be found.

The history of this area is covered in greater detail in a fascinating book by local historian Alice Stead. We were very pleased to have welcomed Alice as our special guest recently at a Band on the Wall gig, as Alice is a supporter of the Manchester's Improving Daily Project, and is now a convert to rock steady roots fusion!

VICTORIA BRIDGE ON A SATURDAY NIGHT





VICTORIA BRIDGE
ON A
Saturday Night

Whoever may travel o'er Manchester gravel,
Will see many thing to astonish his sight,
But sure he must notice, wherever his coat is,
Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night,
Such running and rushing, such jolting and pushing,
It looks as though Babel had settled though spite,
Or, Old Nick, to goad one, had took his abode on,
Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night.

CHORUS.
Hurrooh, what a bother, this, that, and the other,
All jumbled together, —a comical sight!
My oath, I declare on 'tis just like a fair on,
Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night.

If troubled with pthisic, there are doctors with physic
With lozenges, boluses, poppy's and pills,
With ointment for drawing, with baccy for chawing,
Would blister your chops, till you're red in the gills,
There's snuff for your noses, and salve for your tosses,
With poultry and pigs, pickled pork, and Police,
With pokers, and fenders, and Newspaper venders,
And Stretford black puddings a penny a piece.

There's cab drivers calling, and fish woman bawling,
Their cod fish, and haddock, fresh flounder, and fluke,
With doxy, and dab-fish, and cockles, and crab-fish,
And beautiful salmon, just caught—with a hook,
Their's lots of disparity, folks craving fo charity,
Howling away, you would drop with surprise
And some you will find are so desperate blind,
Sure, they can't see at all till they open their eyes.

There's walking-stick makers, and handkerchief takers,
There are geese by the dozen, and turkeys in flocks,
There's glass-men and potters, and cow-heels & trotters,
And lucifer matches a halfpenny a box,
There's oranges and apples, and paper made chapels
There's old weather prophets, and new Almanacks,
With hare skins and rabbits, and lots of bad habits,
And roasted potatoes as mealy as wax.

If you are fond of inditing, there's paper for writing,
And fine pate nt pencil—without any lead,
And plenty of fellows with good u mbrellas
That wont keep the rain or aught else from your head
So busy the trade is, that pretty young ladies,
Will rush in the crowd, aye, and some you will find.
So rough in their tussels, they drop off their bustles,
And come out as flat as a flounder behind.

There's prime treacle toffy, and new patent coffee,
And clappers that go at the devil's own rate,
There's sweet sugar candy, with spanish-juice brandy,
And fine pickled muscles a penny a plate,
In season there's cherries, black currants, and berries,
Plenty of balderdash, prunes and plumbs,
W ith brick-dust, and bristles, and childrens whistles,
And rods, when they're naughty, to tickle their bums.

Then some in their panics, pop into the Mechanics,
Far famed institution, and up stairs they trot,
Where those fond of trifles, may pick up their rifles,
And kill the bull's eye at a penny a shot,
Now the truth I have told whist are here to be sold,
Such bawling and squeezing as bothers me quite;
Both of good things and bad, there are lots to be had,
At Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night.

TOBACCO.

Printed by [illegible] street, Oldham-road, Manchester.

Tobacco is in Indian weed,
Grows green in the morn cut down at eve,
It shows our decay, we come from the clay,
Think of this when you're smoking tobacco.

The pipe that is so lilly white,
In which most men take great delight,
Its broke with a touch men's lives are such
Think on this when you're smoking tobacco

The pipe that is so foul within,
It shows that men's souls are stain'd in sin,
For it doth require to be cleansed by the fire,
Think of this when you'er smoking tobacco.

The smoke that from the pipe doth fly,
It shows we are nothing but vanity,
For its gone with a puff, mens lives are as such,
Think of this when you're smoking tobacco.

The dust that from the pipe doth fly,
It shows we are nothing but dust at all,
For we come from the dust & return we must
Think of this when you're smoking tobacco.

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The version of Victoria Bridge found in the Manchester Ballad collection outlines an area that is alive with trade, drinking, revelry and general mayhem — summing up the scene in an evocative description of a Mancunian 'Babel':

> **"Both good things and bad, there are lots to be had, At Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night."**

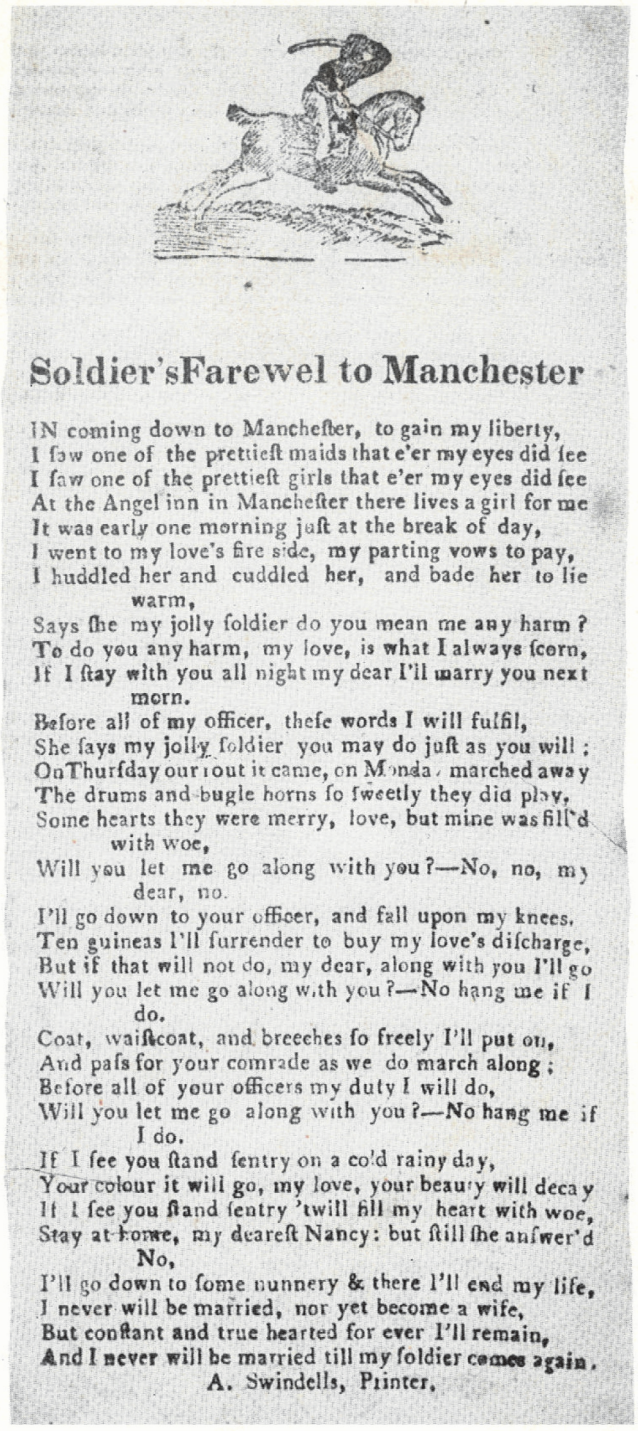
In the 1980 collection, there is mention of a story that when the latest Victoria Bridge to be built was opened by Queen Victoria, a local newspaper reporter deliberately misprinted the word 'passed', substituting the 'a' for an 'i', when submitting copy to The Times, reporting that "Queen Victoria passed over the bridge and duly declared it open". Perhaps this is example of the lack of deference that Mancunians have for authority in general, also reflected in the bawdy humour that can be seen throughout the ballads.

The current Victoria Bridge is located at one of the earliest known locations used to cross the River Irwell. Although Manchester and Salford did not exist at the time, it is almost certain that the occupants of the Roman settlement at nearby Castlefield will have used the location as a crossing point, and it is the origin of the name 'Salford', which is derived from the Old English Sealhford, meaning a ford by the sallows (willow trees).

The earliest known structure dates from the mediaeval period, and was known as Salford Old Bridge. This bridge was considered to be monumental when it was built in the 1300's, but by the 19th century, it was too narrow and was replaced with the current structure.
The Manchester Guardian declared the new bridge "an ornament to the towns which it unites", and a "highly creditable public work to the parties to whom the management of its erection has been entrusted."

Just down the hill from the site of Chethams, Victoria Bridge now links Salford and Manchester by road, but in the industrial era, it was also the location of a thriving street market, and the Ballad describes all manner of goods for sale in the bustling atmosphere of Victoria Bridge on a Saturday Night.

Soldier's Farewell



Soldier's Farewel to Manchester

IN coming down to Manchester, to gain my liberty,
I saw one of the prettiest maids that e'er my eyes did see
I saw one of the prettiest girls that e'er my eyes did see
At the Angel inn in Manchester there lives a girl for me
It was early one morning just at the break of day,
I went to my love's fire side, my parting vows to pay,
I huddled her and cuddled her, and bade her to lie warm,
Says she my jolly soldier do you mean me any harm?
To do you any harm, my love, is what I always scorn,
If I stay with you all night my dear I'll marry you next morn.
Before all of my officer, these words I will fulfil,
She says my jolly soldier you may do just as you will;
On Thursday our rout it came, on Monday marched away
The drums and bugle horns so sweetly they did play,
Some hearts they were merry, love, but mine was fill'd with woe,
Will you let me go along with you?—No, no, my dear, no.
I'll go down to your officer, and fall upon my knees,
Ten guineas I'll surrender to buy my love's discharge,
But if that will not do, my dear, along with you I'll go
Will you let me go along with you?—No hang me if I do.
Coat, waistcoat, and breeches so freely I'll put on,
And pass for your comrade as we do march along;
Before all of your officers my duty I will do,
Will you let me go along with you?—No hang me if I do.
If I see you stand sentry on a cold rainy day,
Your colour it will go, my love, your beauty will decay
If I see you stand sentry 'twill fill my heart with woe,
Stay at home, my dearest Nancy: but still she answer'd No,
I'll go down to some nunnery & there I'll end my life,
I never will be married, nor yet become a wife,
But constant and true hearted for ever I'll remain,
And I never will be married till my soldier comes again.
A. Swindells, Printer.

Most of the buildings from the industrial era have been lost to gentrification, development and demolition, but where they remain they provide evocative indicators of the way social identities were played out. Domestic housing was usually cramped, damp and with few, if any, creature comforts. As a result, many people socialised in communal buildings and in public spaces. This was often done via the demarcation of clear — and often clearly labelled — social spaces such as markets and licensed premises. The Angel Inn, on the edges of Manchester's thriving Northern Quarter, is a perfect example. Although much altered and rebuilt since the Angel Inn of the eighteenth century, this is the site of the pub that is mentioned in the 1859 version of 'The Soldiers Farewell to Manchester', the first broadside in the Manchester Ballad collection. Today, the Angel Inn stands in the middle of the area dominated by the new 'Noma' development by the Co-operative group, with apartments and plush office blocks now surrounding the pub.

When the Angel Inn was opening, it appears that Swindels Printers were commissioned to print a partially re-written version of a much older song as a form of advertising for the opening (Reid 15). The message within the ballad is clear — The Angel Inn is the place to meet the prettiest girls in Manchester. The rest of the song is a variant on a common theme, with a girl vowing to wait in chastity for the return of her true love.

The period covered by The Manchester Ballads is set in an evocative, dramatic cityscape that features in a lot of art, and is therefore familiar to the modern consumer, despite the gentrification and post industrial cleanliness of modern Manchester. In addition to the visual record embedded in images, the arts in general can give insights into the changing social identities of a region.

The paintings of LS Lowry are perhaps one of the best known examples of art reflecting northern life in the dying days of heavy industry. Lowry painted what he saw first hand, often producing subdued images of "faceless figures, over-sized factories, underfed bodies and drab housing" (Winterson 2013) that evoke the poverty and deprivation common across Salford and Manchester.

Seen through the eyes of twenty first century Britain, the protagonists in these artistic depictions live in a different world, and yet they are often walking the same streets, using the same buildings and doing the same jobs. Recent excavations in the city centre have revealed remains of the conditions Lowry depicted. Sites at Birley Fields, Angel Meadow, Danzig Street and Salford Crescent have all revealed the remains of the slum housing that blighted the lives of workers during the industrial revolution.

Edward II will be playing the Soldiers Farwell at The Angel as part of the Manchester's Improving Daily project, and whilst may not be the first time the song is has been sung in the pub, it will surely be the loudest version.

New Cross

one of Manchester's lost locations

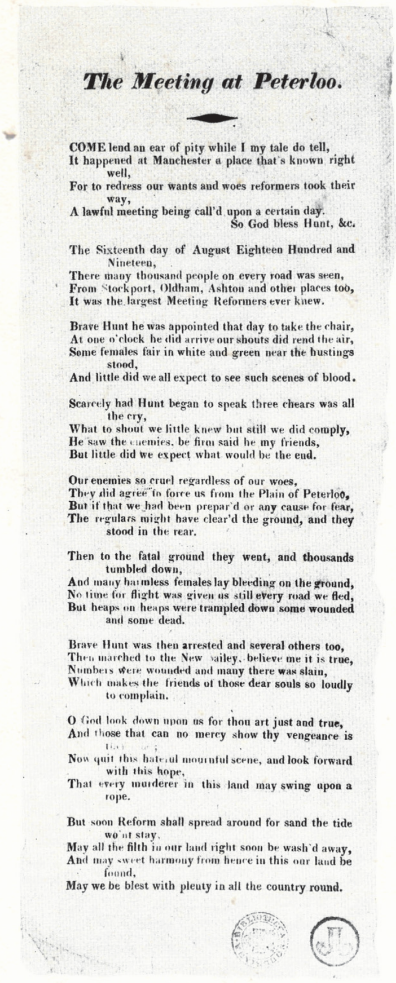
New Cross was a centre of production for penny broadsides in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, with several printers based around Swan Street. Some of the building around Chadderton Street and Cable Street date from this time, but none of the printers businesses survive. However, ask most Mancunians aged under 60 where the area of New Cross is, and the only reaction you are likely to get is a blank stare.

Until the 1960's, the area around the junction of Tib Street, Swan Street and Oldham Street was a well known, and quite distinct, district of Manchester called New Cross. The original Victorian trams stopped here on the way out of the city centre towards Oldham, and the name would have been as familiar s Ancoats, Beswick or Ardwick. Historic maps of the area show that Swan Street was originally named New Cross Street, and that there was a physical cross, perhaps even an old market cross — although this is unclear — located in the centre of the junction opposite the Frog and Bucket and the Historic Crown and Kettle pub. The records show that there was a pub on the corner as early as 1734.

The New Cross name is perhaps best associated nowadays with the shop on Tib Street that sells ex-army gear, a 'destination shop' for several generations of Mancunians looking to buy their first pair of docs, or maybe some waterproof clothing for a festival. There is also the nearby New Cross Dental Surgery, and it is often the case that when place names that have otherwise fallen out of use, they live on in the names of nearby buildings or businesses.

Although the area is currently overshadowed by its better known neighbours Ancoats, Shudehill and Collyhurst, New Cross may yet see a revival, both as an area of commerce and as a name. Manchester City Council has announced plans to develop the area north of Swan Street, between Rochdale Road and Oldham Street, referring to it as the 'final piece of the jigsaw' in the redevelopment of the city centre (M.E.N. 2015)

Peterloo



The Meeting at Peterloo.

COME lend an ear of pity while I my tale do tell,
It happened at Manchester a place that's known right
well,
For to redress our wants and woes reformers took their
way,
A lawful meeting being call'd upon a certain day.
So God bless Hunt, &c.

The Sixteenth day of August Eighteen Hundred and
Nineteen,
There many thousand people on every road was seen,
From Stockport, Oldham, Ashton and other places too,
It was the largest Meeting Reformers ever knew.

Brave Hunt he was appointed that day to take the chair,
At one o'clock he did arrive our shouts did rend the air,
Some females fair in white and green near the bustings
stood,
And little did we all expect to see such scenes of blood.

Scarcely had Hunt began to speak three chears was all
the cry,
What to shout we little knew but still we did comply,
He saw the enemies, be firm said he my friends,
But little did we expect what would be the end.

Our enemies so cruel regardless of our woes,
They did agree to force us from the Plain of Peterloo,
But if that we had been prepar'd or any cause for fear,
The regulars might have clear'd the ground, and they
stood in the rear.

Then to the fatal ground they went, and thousands
tumbled down,
And many harmless females lay bleeding on the ground,
No time for flight was given us still every road we fled,
But heaps on heaps were trampled down some wounded
and some dead.

Brave Hunt was then arrested and several others too,
Then marched to the New Bailey, believe me it is true,
Numbers were wounded and many there was slain,
Which makes the friends of those dear souls so loudly
to complain.

O God look down upon us for thou art just and true,
And those that can no mercy show thy vengeance is
due,
Now quit this hateful mournful scene, and look forward
with this hope,
That every murderer in this land may swing upon a
rope.

But soon Reform shall spread around for sand the tide
wo'nt stay,
May all the filth in our land right soon be wash'd away,
And may sweet harmony from hence in this our land be
found,
May we be blest with plenty in all the country round.

The growing urban discontent that led to the infamous meeting in 1819, like other occasions of civil unrest covered in the Manchester Ballads, grew out of a combination of circumstances that, seen in hindsight, were almost bound to end in conflict.

On the 16th August 1819, the area around St Peters Square in Manchester was the site of a peaceful protest that ended in bloody confrontation with the authorities. Quickly dubbed 'Peterloo', the name is a satirical comment on what was seen as the cowardly actions of the soldiers and yeoman who attacked unarmed civilians. By using the term Peterloo, protesters and social commentators were mocking the troops with a name redolent of the famous battle at Waterloo, where the bravery of men was taken for granted, and a matter of national pride. Peterloo, in contrast, was seen by most as a matter of national shame.

The speakers platform had banner arranged that read " REFORM, UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE, EQUAL REPRESENTATION and LOVE" …. however, events on the day prove just how hard the fight was for the working classes in industrial Manchester and Salford.

The French Revolution of 1789 was still in the minds of many radicals in England, and the word of various activists added to the unease that many workers felt under the increasingly dominant and often abusive grip of the factory owners.

Thomas Paine's rhetoric was typical, and captured hearts and minds across the working classes. Harsh working conditions combined with wage deflation - Lancashire weavers saw a typical weeks wage drop from 15 shillings for a six day week in 1803 down to 4 shilling sixpence by 1818.

Before Peterloo, Lancashire (which then included most of modern Greater Manchester) was represented by just two MP's, and voting restricted to male landowners with freehold land. Voting was done by public declaration. Unrest was growing, and the British authorities, a very conservative, aristocratic establishment, reacted by introducing increasing restrictions on what civil liberties did exist; the suspension of Habeas Corpus the Treasonable Practises act and the Seditious Meetings Act were all attempts to stifle growing public unrest.

In Manchester, radicals organised a "great assembly" with local activists Johnson and Wroe, of the Manchester Observer, inviting renowned orator Henry Hunt to chair a meeting. Following a peaceful series of speeches, events took a turn for the worse when magistrates panicked, and ordered a force of around 1400 men to disperse the crowd.

The events were witnessed by many who objected not only to the violence metered out by the state, but also to the subsequent attempts to blame the confrontation on the civilians. One such witness was local businessman John Taylor, who having witnessed the events and the aftermath, set up the Manchester Guardian in response. Although he was in Italy at the time of the massacre, Percy Bysshe Shelley was appalled by the accounts he heard, writing his epic poem The Masque of Anarchy, which reflected the growing public outrage at events, and into which Shelley said he poured "the torrent of my indignation."

The troops involved included 600 Hussars, 400 men of the Cheshire cavalry and 400 special constables, who were massed behind the local yeomanry as they intervened to arrested the speakers. The local and amateur nature of the militia is thought to have provoked some of the violence, with old scores being settled (on both sides) and grudges between old opponents coming to the fore. A local Yeoman is reported to have shouted " There's Saxton... run him through!"

Although reports vary, between 700 and 1000 men are said to have been injured, with an estimated 18 killed outright. By 2pm, the area is said to have been littered with bodies, the crowd of over 50,000 having fled the scene. The speakers were arrested and charged, along with journalists who reported the events. Despite the violence, the deaths and the subsequent outcry, the Hussars and Magistrates were cleared of any wrongdoing on the day by an official enquiry, and they even received messages of congratulation from the Prince Regent.

The Great Flood

The Great Flood is an example of the Penny Ballad as a combination of newspaper, social media and historical record. The Ballad records an event that shocked many people in Manchester, and it became a notorious and contested news story, with differing accounts of the severity of the flood. Even today, with camera phones, rolling news and live reporting via twitter and facebook, events are misreported, exaggerated and sensationalised — it is nature of such events is that people talk up the drama.

The Great Flood is song that dramatises the events to some degree — with several verses describing events in emotive and sensational language. The flood waters overwhelmed much of central Manchester, so most people will have seen the damage caused, if not the coffins and corpses that washed out of the ground and were, understandably, the most sensational aspect of many accounts. For the working class Mancunians who knew about the Flood but did not see the most grisly aspects of the aftermath for themselves, The Great Flood will have been an engaging and no doubt popular song to listen to in the local pubs and markets in the months following the Flood.

The unusually high water levels impacted on much of the country, with a period of prolonged and heavy rain across much of Europe during 1872. The extent of damage varied across the country, although many towns suffered structural damage, not all saw graveyards washed away, and this no doubt added to the drama and legend around the Mancunian flooding. Archived reports from the Manchester Evening News detail many different versions of eyewitness accounts of the Great Flood, although the basic facts are known.

From the M.E.N. 1872. —

Shortly before 12 o'clock noon on Saturday 15th July the waters of the Medlock began to rise, and reached its greatest height about 3pm, when it was found to be over 21ft, in many places, above its ordinary level. The saddest calamity was the result. The City Cemetery, established by the Corporation of Manchester, runs east and west from Bradford Road, where is the principal entrance, and has for its south boundary the River Medlock, which separates the cemetery from Philip's Park. The two were united by several bridges. The visitor arriving by Bradford Road enters the Protestant portion of the cemetery, at the furthest, or east or west end of which the Calico Printing Works of Messrs Wood & Wright, the Bank Bridge Works, hide the further, or Roman Catholic portion of the cemetery.

Crossing the road, it is seen that the Medlock, where it bounds the 1W burying place, inclines to the south, from the east boundary wall of the cemetery, until reaching the promontory where there is a weir, it makes a sudden bend to the north.

The flood water in the Medlock at 12.50 on Saturday refused to follow the channel inclining to the south, and overflowed its banks, running in almost a straight line to the weir. At this time the river was about 12ft above its usual level.

The descending water and the returned water from the weir eddied here in such a manner as to destroy these graves. The coffins were lifted, broken by being dashed against the weir, and the released bodies, in all stages of decay, were carried down the stream. Some of them floated down through Manchester into the Irwell, and thence into the Mersey — as many as 19 being counted by an observer at Knott Mill. Others floated to Ancoats Bridge, Pin Mill Brow, where they were stayed among other debris." M.E.N. 1872.

There is a BBC Radio 4 programme available via iplayer that discusses the Manchester Flood, and for anyone interested in learning more, it is currently available on the BBC Making History Archive, which can be found via google, or accessed directly a http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/history /making_history/making_history_archive.shtml

Like many of the Manchester Ballads, there is a message within the song that no matter how harsh life was for Mancunians, there is always something to be thankful for :

"Sad, sad indeed must be the lot,
Of those whose all have gone;
To-day much riches theypossess,
To-morrow they have none."