



MANCHESTER'S IMPROVING DAILY

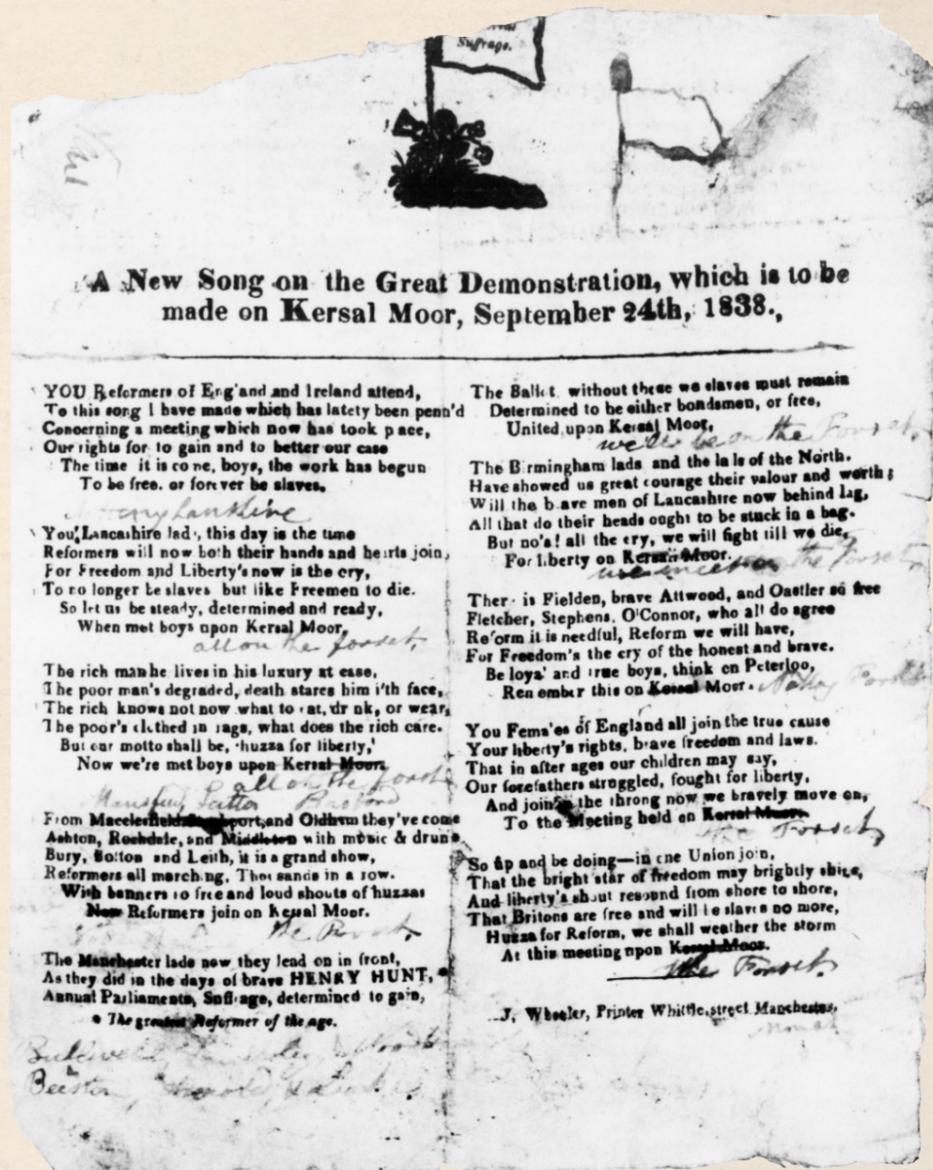
Edward the Second visits Manchester

However, it is not the ill-fated monarch, it is the kings of the roots-reggae soundclash, back in town with a new set of rock-steady tunes. This time, E2 are taking inspiration from the Manchester Ballads, rather than the English Morris tradition. With tales of urban life in industrial Manchester, many of the songs can be traced to the radical protests of the 19th Century. The themes of northern working class identity found in these songs have their literary roots in the writing of 19th century social commentators such as Carlisle, Engels, Gaskell and Marx. In recent years the subject has seen renewed interest, with work by various social commentators, both academic, polemic and populist, with Cooper Clark, Maconie and Winterton all contributing. Regional identity is important as it impacts on how the disparate, individual identities coalesce into a wider social identity, and how the society is, in turn, placed in the wider context of modern Britain.

Protesters have written another song!

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.

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 nineteenth 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.



Landlord Accused of Greed – RagBag!!

The temperance movement had strong roots around Manchester, and when set alongside the numerous pubs and breweries that grew up around the factories and houses, the competing messages can be seen when the ballads are read carefully. In contrast to some of the bawdy drinking songs that were a common and popular topic for penny broadsides, Rag Bag is a cutting commentary on the exploitation of drinkers by greedy, lying landlords:

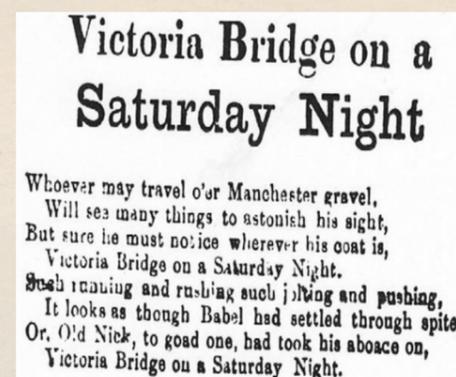
*“The landlord fattens on things that are choice,
And doth chatter, and flatter, and lie;
While his customers starve – both his wife and the mice,
When seen have a tear in the eye.”*

(Rag Bag 1861)

Local Nightlife recalled in Verse

The area around Victoria Bridge is well known for pubs, alehouses and street vendors.

Many of the regions best singers can be heard in the local pubs, from Victoria Bridge up through Angel Meadows and across to Ancoats.



A new song reflects the lively nature of nights out on the Manchester/Salford border – an area where landlords can earn a decent living selling drinks of all kinds to the thirsty workers.

Local Artist pictures the poor.

Evocative of a Mancunian identity that perhaps almost lapses into parody, Lowry provides a neat visual shorthand for the people who feature in the Manchester Ballads. Discussing the depiction of industrial decline and urban poverty in the paintings of LS Lowry, Jeanette Winterson champions the often-criticised images. She expands her defence of Lowry to include observations about the nature of identity and the quality of life available to people working 12 hours a day, 6 days a week, and she references Victorian novelist and social commentator Elizabeth Gaskell, noting that *“the Industrial Revolution is a story we tell about progress, about the coming of the modern. It is also the story of a collective nervous breakdown – I have seen hell and it's white,”* Mrs Gaskell on Cottonopolis – the nickname for Manchester.”

Writer thought to have drunk in local pubs

Many of the Manchester Ballads date from the period that Engels and Marx lived and worked in Manchester, and it is intriguing to think Engels' work was perhaps informed in part by reading some of the broadside ballads, perhaps even some included in The Manchester Ballads collection. He lived around Angel Meadow, which is just a few minutes walk from the Swan Street area of New Cross, a major loci of broadside production at the time. Many of the pubs in the area lay claim that Marx and Engels were visitors, and they probably heard the broadside tradition being sung in pubs and markets around Shudehill. There is a table next to a window in Chethams Library where they are known to have worked – the same library that held many of the broadsides in its collections.

Manchester's Improving Daily.

THIS Manchester's a rare fine place,
For trade and other such like movements;
What town can keep up such a race,

As ours has done for prime improvements
For of late what sights of alterations,
Both streets and buildings changing stations,
That country folks, as they observe us,
Cry out, 'Laws! pickle and presave us!'
Sing hey, sing ho, sing hey down, gaily,
Manchester's improving daily.

Once Oldham Jone, in his smock frock,
I'th' town stop'd late one afternoon, sir,
And staring at th' infirmity clock, [sir;
Said, Wounds, that must be th' harvest moon,
And ecod, it's fix'd fast up i'th' place there,
And stands behind that nice clock-face there:
Well, this caps aw, for I'll be bound, sir,
They mak' it shine there aw th' year round, sir.
Sing hey, &c.

Our fine town hall, that cost such cash,
Is to ali buildings quite a sample;
And they say, sir, that, to make a dash,
'Twas copied from a Grecan temple:
But sure in Greece none e'er could view, sir,
Such a place built slanting on a brow, sir!
But Cross-Street, when there brass to spare is,
Must be rais'd and called the Town-Hall Terrace.
Sing hey, &c.

Once Market-Street was called a lane,
Old Toad-Lane too, a pretty pair, sir;
While Dangerous-Corner did remain,
There was hardly room for a sedan chair, sir:
But now they both are open'd wide, sir,
And dashing shops plac'd on each side, sir:
And to keep up making old things new, sir,
They talk of levelling th' Mill-Brow, sir.
Sing hey, &c.

Stages & coaches soon will run from here
To Liverpool and other place;
And their quicker rate and cheaper fare
Will make some folks pull curious faces:
But though steam-dealers may be winners,
'Twill blow up all the whip-cord spinners;
And stable boys may grieve and weep, sir,
For horse-flesh soon will be dog cheap, sir.
Sing hey, &c.

With bumping stones our streets wur paved,
Froth earth like large peck-loaves up rising:
All jotls and shakings now are saved
The town they're now Mc.Adamizing:

And so smooth and soft is Cannon-Street, sir,
It suits the corns on tender feet sir:
And hookers-in, when times a'n't good there,
May fish about for eels i'th' mud there.
Sing hey, &c.

But though these roads are all the go,
The rail-ways beat 'em, I've a notion;
For carts beawt horses there will show
We've found the true perpetual motion.
And none can say but we may try, sir,
To steer large ship-balloons i'th' sky, sir;
That folks may mount sky-larking there in,
And grow sea-sick by going an airing.
Sing hey, &c.

Th' owd Stony-Knolls must be renew'd,
And feel, in turn, improvement's power;
From there to Bury they'll mak' good
A great hee-road by cutting lower:
The view from hence wur quite a show, sir,
And none but foot-folks o'er must go, sir,
Yet in Whitsun-week, as thick as grass is,
The Knolls wur fill'd wi' creawds of asses.
Sing hey, &c.

A powerful large steam-engine's bought,
And plac'd beneath a'r owd church steeple,
To warm up th' church, and soon it's thought
'Twill play the deuce wi' single people:
For a clever chap's fun eawt a scheme, sir,
To tie the marriage-knot by steam, sir;
And there's no doubt, when they begin it,
They'll wed above a score a minute.
Sing hey, &c.

The spinning-jennies whirl along,
Performing strange things, I've been told, sir,
For twisting fresh and making young
All maids who own they're grown too old, sir.
The power-loom factories, of late, sir,
Have wrought such wonders, when agate, sir,
That we can weave, in time, who knows, sir,
Neat patent stays for dandy beaux, sir.
Sing hey, &c.

Thus at improvements on we go,
We're ever trying at invention;
New objects starting up to view,
And catching all our spare attention:
Then the ship canal, and all such schemes, sir,
Tho' some may call them fancy's dreams, sir,
They'll all succeed, you need not fret, sir,
As soon as John Bull's out of debt, sir.
Sing hey, &c.

SWINDELLS, PRINTER, MANCHESTER.