

MANCHESTER GROUP OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 2020

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WELCOME

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the Newsletter.

Under normal circumstances we would be wishing all our members a Merry Christmas, but this Christmas promises to be like no other. We can do no more than express the wish that you all stay safe.

Our programme of events still remains on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic and yet further restrictions imposed in November 2020. We regret any inconvenience caused to members but it is intended that events will resume when conditions allow.

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PETER FLEETWOOD-HESKETH, A LANCASHIRE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Richard Fletcher

Charles Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh (1905-1985) is mainly remembered today for his book, *Murray's Lancashire Architectural Guide*, published by John Murray in 1955, and rivalling Pevsner's county guides in the *Buildings of England* series. Although trained as an architect, he built very little, and devoted his time to architectural journalism and acting as consultant to various organisations including the National Trust, the Georgian Group and the Thirties Society. He was a founder member of the Victorian Society in 1958, and the architectural correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* in the 1960s.

As his surname suggests, he was descended from the Fleetwoods and Heskeths, both old established Lancashire families. The Fleetwoods originally came from the Fylde region, predating the fishing port, which one of their members founded in the early 19th century. When the Catholic Allens were evicted from Rossall Hall following the Civil War, the Fleetwoods, who were then living in Buckinghamshire, bought the Rossall estate from the Crown. In the early 18th century, the male line died out, and in 1733, the heiress Margaret Fleetwood married Roger Hesketh of North Meols, near Southport. The Heskeths were originally Lords of the Manor of Rufford, and in the 16th century acquired Meols Hall through marriage.

In 1831, the then head of the Rossall family, Peter Hesketh, changed his surname by deed-poll to Hesketh-Fleetwood. It was Peter who employed the Georgian architect, Decimus Burton, a friend of his from University, to create the new town of Fleetwood at the mouth of the river Wyre. As well as developing the fishing industry, he wanted to promote the town as a fashionable resort, but, as with many similar enterprises of the time, the money ran out, and the town was only half built. In the 1840s, he went to live in London, and Rossall Hall was converted by the architects Paley and Austin into the public school which is still there today.



Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, the subject of this article, was descended from the original Peter's younger brother, Charles, and after various name-changes ended up with the two elements of his surname reversed. He was born at the Hesketh family seat, Meols Hall, and had a privileged upbringing. However, after attending Eton, he decided not to go up to Oxford or Cambridge, and enrolled at the Bartlett School of Architecture, part of the University of London. A fellow student, with whom he became good friends, was John Summerson, who went on to become one of the leading architectural historians of the 20th century. In 1930, he set up practice with David Stokes, the son of the London architect Leonard Stokes, but they quickly ran out of work and went their separate ways. At about the same time he founded an architectural magazine called *The Master Builder* with his brother Roger, but again this was not a success.

His break came in 1933, when he contributed an illustration to John Betjeman's book, *'Ghastly Good Taste'*. The illustration was in the form of a 40 inch pull-out, entitled "The Street of Taste or the March of English Art Down the Ages", and charting the progress of architecture from 1490 to 1933. It attracted a lot of attention and Betjeman later claimed modestly that it was the main reason people bought the book.

In the Second World War, he served with the Special Air Service and was parachuted into France to communicate with the Resistance units. Subsequently he was appointed to the Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives programme, a group of people

usually referred to as the Monuments Men, whose job it was to protect cultural property during and after the War. He was assigned to the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna and had responsibility for recovering its furnishings and converting it into the Headquarters of the British Allied Commission of Austria. After the War, Peter bought the Manor House in Hale village on the Mersey estuary, and moved there with his wife and daughter.



In 1955, he wrote his major work, an architectural guide to Lancashire, published by John Murray and generally known as Murray's Lancashire Architectural Guide. It was one of a projected series under the general editorship of John Betjeman and John Piper, but only three counties were published – the other two were Buckinghamshire in 1948 and Berkshire in 1949. They were distinguished from the rival Pevsner Guides by the large number of photographs, text rather than captions accompanying the photographs, and a more subjective personal assessment of the buildings. Unfortunately, they were expensive, and in the face of disappointing sales, Betjeman and Piper turned their attention to reviving the old Shell Guides instead.

In 1958, Peter helped to set up the Victorian Society, and acted as its Secretary from 1961 to 1964. In 1970, he continued his 'Street of Taste' illustration for a second edition of Betjeman's 'Ghastly Good Taste' – the full length of the pull-out was now over nine feet!

When the late Gavin Stamp wrote Peter's obituary for The Spectator, he likened him to a fantastic creature from another age, with his wealthy aristocratic background, elegant appearance and old-fashioned manners. To some people he came across as a dilettante, socialising with influential people and serving on a wide range of boards and committees. To others, however, he was a key figure in that critical period after the Second World War when the issues of conservation were being debated and the different periods of architectural history were being reassessed, and he played an important role in changing perceptions both within the establishment and amongst the general public.

Photograph of Fleetwood-Hesketh © The Victorian Society
Photograph of Hale Manor House – Wikipedia

FIELDEN PARK, WEST DIDSBURY

Neil Darlington

As early as 1820 the middle-class Mancunians were in flight from the town which, by their enterprise in industry and commerce, they had done much to create. With its entrance gates and network of private roads, Victoria Park, Rusholme (1837 -) was probably the first example of an exclusive and “defensible” dormitory suburb. By 1914 more than twenty such “Parks” had appeared, all based to some degree on Victoria Park.

One such imitator was Fielden Park, set on a bluff overlooking the River Mersey with fine views towards Bowdon, on the road between Didsbury and Chorlton. The potential for development had arisen with the opening of Palatine Road, built in 1862. Originally known as Northenden New Road, Palatine Road was built across land given by Lord Egerton (Withington to Lapwing Lane), Henry Bury (Lapwing Lane to Barlow Moor Road) and Robert Fielden (most of the length from Barlow Moor Road to the Mersey). Robert Fielden owned much of the land between Barlow Moor Road and the River Mersey. He sold some off for the erection of The Beeches and he laid out Fielden Park in 1869. Progress was slow and almost a decade was to elapse before the first houses appeared. Railways, offering rapid connection with the city centre, were an important factor in the success of such residential schemes and it is perhaps significant that West Didsbury Railway Station on Lapwing Lane close to its junction with Palatine Road opened on 1 January 1880.

Two of the earliest houses in the Park were built for Edward Rogerson (1835-1910). Born in Liverpool, he moved to Manchester and by 1876 he had established a successful wholesale and retail ironmongers while living in Cheetham Hill Road. He seemingly retired in the same year and by 1888 was listed as a Director of Chesters Brewery, having had the fortune to marry Martha Elizabeth the younger daughter of Thomas Chesters, the founder of the concern. Edward Rogerson went on to become Chairman of the company, remaining as such until his death in 1910.

In the Rate Books of the 1880s, Edward Rogerson was listed as the owner of two large houses on adjacent sites in Fielden Park, namely “Woodstock” on Barlow Moor Road and “Oakdene” on Mersey Road. In 1878 he is also listed as the occupier of Woodstock but from 1883 the house was rented to William Ford Smith, engineer and tool maker (Smith and Coventry), who remained there until his death in 1904. Later occupants included James Edward Marsland, cotton merchant [1909-11 Directories].

After the Second World War the house was purchased by the British Council and for three years, 1948-1951, used as a hall of residence for overseas students. Judging by the correspondence column of the Manchester Guardian racial prejudice soon became apparent among certain sections of the local community. The decision was therefore taken to put the students into lodgings with those of more tolerant attitudes and to move the British Council offices from central Manchester into Woodstock. Following closure of the offices in the 1980s the building was converted into a public house (Barleymow, Woodstock Arms)

According to Hartwell/Pevsner, Woodstock was designed by Bell and Roper in 1877. When advertised for sale in 1905 it contained three entertaining rooms, billiard room, nine bedrooms, dressing- room and domestic offices together with first-class stabling and greenhouses.



Above
The Woodstock (PH) Elevation to Barlow Moor Road 2020

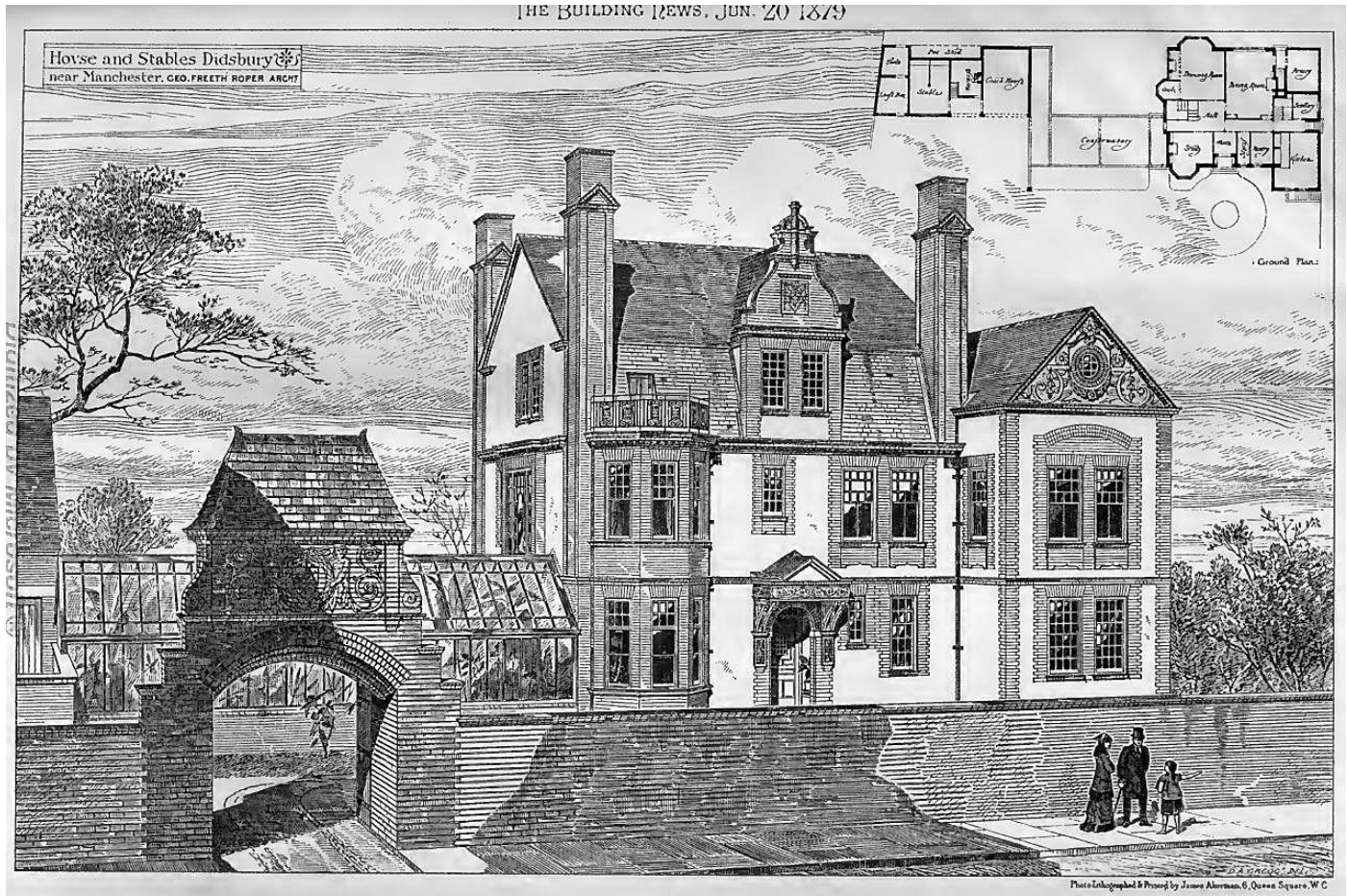


Left
Extract from OS Map showing Woodstock, Oakdene and Riversdale.
The now demolished stables and coach house to Woodstock stood to the north west of the house.



Now demolished, these “first class” stables built to the designs of John Langham had been added to Woodstock in 1887-8 and were illustrated in the Builder of 12 May 1888 with the following text.

STABLES, DIDSBURY, NEAR MANCHESTER – These stables provide accommodation for three horses, and a sick-box in addition. The accompanying plan shows the arrangement. A loft is provided over the entire building. The ventilating-turret provides also space for corn bin, shoots, etc. The stable itself is lined with grey and white glazed bricks, and the ceiling: throughout are of pitch pine, being, in fact, Solid 3-inch planks tongued with iron, and forming the floor to the loft, joists being dispensed with. The stables have been designed to harmonise with a house erected for Mr. Rogerson some years ago. Messrs. W. Southern & Sons, of Salford, were the builders, the contract price being £730. The architect is Mr. John Langham, of Manchester. [Builder 12 May 1888 page 340]



OAKDENE, on Mersey Road and built to the design of George Freeth Roper, is believed to be the house illustrated in Building News 20 June 1879 page 690 under the title “House and Stables, Didsbury near Manchester.” The accompanying text reads: ‘The view we give of this house is of the front facing the Mersey road, the principal elevation being towards the gardens. The whole of the external walls from the ground floor line are to be covered with Portland cement, finished with silicate distemper a toned white, the quoins, cornices, strings, chimneys, etc, being of bright red brick, and the roofs green slates of a small size. We give the ground plan. On the first floor there are four large bedrooms, nursery, and bath room, etc., and on the floor above the same number of bedrooms, all square to the ceiling, a servant's bath room being provided off the half landing of back stairs. A range of conservatories will connect the house and stables, and a large brick wall, with close gateway, inclose the whole of this side of the site as shown in the view. Mr George Freeth Roper, of Haworth's buildings, Manchester, is the architect.’ [Building News 20 June 1879 page 690]

Between 1886 and 1892 Oakdene was let to Sigmund Baerlein(1846-1910) a partner in the firm of Baerlein and Company 12 Blackfriars Street, Manchester, merchants, manufacturers and engineers. Sigmund was also vice-consul for Norway and Sweden. Edward Rogerson then took up residence in 1893 remaining there until his death in 1910.

In 1933 Oakdene opened as a private hotel and continued as such throughout the 1930s. An early advertisement ran:

MANCHESTER'S NEW HOTEL. OAKDENE.
Fielden Park. West Didsbury. Tel.: Didsbury 2227.

This hotel stands in 3 acres of charming grounds, with delightful views from all windows. Quiet and secluded. yet one minute from tram and bus. Spacious. Well-furnished rooms. Private suites. Hot and cold water all rooms. Excellent service and table Home-grown produce. Terms moderate. Tennis, Garages. [Manchester Guardian 1 August 1933 page 2]

MANCHESTER BREWERS AND THEIR MANSIONS: THE HERMITAGE, HOLMES CHAPEL

Neil Darlington



In the late 19th century, a number of Manchester brewers (usually second generation) amassed considerable fortunes and spent these on new residences well away from the smoke and dirt of their native Manchester. Edward Holt built Blackwell in the Lake District as a country retreat, Henry Boddington II moved to Pownall Hall near Wilmslow, Edward Rogerson (of Chesters Brewery) built a new house in Fielden Park West Didsbury and Hubert Malcolm Wilson of Wilson's Brewery acquired "The Hermitage," a 1,000-acre estate on the banks of the River Dane near Holmes Chapel.

Wilson's Brewery Ltd's Newton Heath Brewery, in Monsall Road, Newton Heath, had been founded in 1834 by John Collinson and George Simpson and was acquired by Henry Charles Wilson and Thomas Philpot in March 1865. It was registered September 1894 as Henry Charles Wilson & Company Ltd., the name being changed to Wilson's Brewery later in the same year. It merged with Walker & Homfrays Ltd. in 1949 and was known as Wilson & Walker Breweries Ltd. until reverting to the original title in 1952. Brewing ceased in 1987.

Born in 1861, Hubert Malcolm Wilson was the son of Henry Charles Wilson and by 1901 had become the chairman of the company. He married at St Margaret's Church, Prestwich in June 1883 and resided for about five years at the "White House" in Middleton Road Crumpsall. About 1889 or 1890 he leased and later purchased "The Hermitage" in rural Cheshire in the heart of hunting country. Sited some distance from the nearest public road it was nonetheless a little over a mile distant from Goostrey and Holmes Chapel railway stations on the Manchester to Crewe line. In his new home Hubert Malcolm Wilson very much reinvented himself as a member of the landed gentry (there being no mention of his occupation as a brewer in the local press). He became a major in the Cheshire Yeomanry, and for many years a most popular Master of North Cheshire Hunt.

The Hermitage is now a rambling, irregular house of red brick with sash windows, much altered and extended, and situated in the middle of some 30 acres of secluded parkland grounds including a lake on the banks of the River Dane. It was originally a stone house of the 16th century built for the Winnington family. In 1702 the estate was purchased by Thomas Hall of Cranage who added a taller symmetrical brick house with a shell-canopied doorway and a hipped roof. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries it was variously extended around a courtyard; additions included a brick tower, canted bays overlooking the garden, and an Arts & Crafts extension with a curved bay window.

As shown on the OS map revised in 1873-5 the principle elevation faced west with only a short gable overlooking the south lawn. By 1897 it had been considerably enlarged. With extensions to both the east and west the south front formed the principal elevation. Further changes over the next decade are apparent. By 1907 the road from Hermitage Bridge had been diverted away from the house, a lodge built and new drive created and about this time the tower at the west end of the south front was added.



The Hermitage - south front ©Rightmove

Although the dates, clients and architects responsible for these later extensions is uncertain, it is probable that some at least were carried out by Hubert Wilson. After being occupied for some years by his son, Hubert Malcolm Wilson junior, the Hermitage was leased to Henry Reiss in 1909. In that year yet more changes were contemplated when the architects Maxwell and Tuke were commissioned to prepare designs for undefined alteration works.

Only one 20th century image of the house has been found so far. However, the estate has recently been placed on the market with a number of internal and external images contained in the sales brochure. The house now comprises - Galleried reception hall, drawing room, summer lounge, saloon, billiard room, cinema, dining room, panelled snug, study/library, kitchen/breakfast room, utility room and boot room, wine cellar. Indoor leisure complex with circular swimming pool, gym, shower rooms, trophy room, extensive integral garaging with huge first floor stores over. Impressive lake view master bedroom suite with lounge, twin dressing rooms and two bathrooms, six further suited bedrooms, staff apartment, and top floor bedrooms. In addition, there is a Lodge house, tractor stores and potting sheds, outdoor swimming pool, oak framed boat house and tennis court with pavilion, all set in a mere 30 acres of parkland.

To find out what you get for £10 million, see <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/properties/71458497#/>

REMINISCENCES OF PAT BLOOR 1937-2020

Mark Watson

We regret to announce the death of Pat Bloor, a long-time member of the Victorian Society who died in July. Mark Watson shares his personal reminiscences.

I cannot claim to know Pat at all well but here are a few of my personal recollections. We both shared a love of the history of Manchester.

I first encountered her as a Friend of Victoria Baths. It was there that she discovered our group of the Victorian Society and soon joined and became an enthusiastic attendee. She attended almost every event, both talks and trips, only deterred by a clash with Manchester United home fixtures which rendered travel to and from her home in Altrincham, unpleasant.

She was very keen on the Victoria Baths minibus trips to bathe in historic, pre second World War pools and Turkish baths all over the North of England. Many of these closing for good as we towelled ourselves dry.

As anyone who has ever organised trips will understand, having a number of names that can always be relied upon to attend is invaluable. It provides financial certainty and peace of mind for the organiser, not to mention the treasurer. Pat was such a person. Her favourite events were undoubtedly the Christmas excursions held in towns across Lancashire, Cheshire and even over the hill to Yorkshire. But then, who can resist a slap up dinner in a period setting?

Pat had a broad appreciation of architectural styles. If she liked it, she liked it and said so, whether it was built in the 1850s or the 1950s.

Pat also enjoyed the walks around our city. On one such walk, I pointed out a bronze plaque on a wall near St Ann's Church. Not one of the assembled participants offered a suggestion as to what the initials MS stood for until Pat piped up, that she had worked for Marshall and Snelgrove. Her first job on leaving school aged sixteen was selling ladies' knickers in the lingerie department. Marshall and Snelgrove, in its heyday, was one of Manchester's poshest department stores, and as such, would have employed only the nicest girls.

NEW BOOKS

BREW IN BOOKS



Information

Robert Owen and the architect Joseph Hansom

An unlikely form of co-operation

Penelope Harris

Robert Owen was a charismatic pipe-dreamer, bound to unrealistic expectations. Though born in Newtown, Montgomeryshire, by the time he met Joseph Hansom in Birmingham, he had become a self-taught manager of successful cotton mills in Manchester and New Lanark, Scotland. It was here that he developed his theories of early education and campaigned for factory reform. Lacking the support he needed to advance his plans, he purchased a community in America, only to lose all his money. The much younger Hansom was an ambitious architect, who fast-tracked his own career by winning the competition to design Birmingham Town Hall. Birmingham was a proactive town, open to Thomas Attwood's efforts to bring about the Great Reform Bill, and the advancement of newly-formed trade unions. Along with his partner, Edward Welch, Hansom became so involved in politics that his attention was diverted away from the Town Hall, which resulted in both their bankruptcies. Nevertheless Hansom re-established his career, while Owen strove to develop his master "Plan", the building of a self-sufficient community. He leased a property in a remote part of Hampshire and appointed Hansom. Despite Herculean efforts (as Hansom described the Town Hall), the community collapsed. Under different ownership, it became home to the most prestigious scientists in Britain.

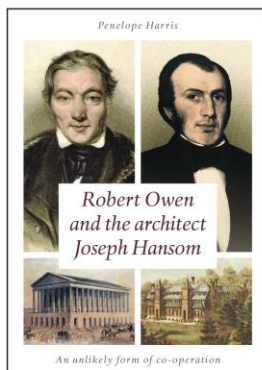
* * *

"The inclusion of Birmingham and Hansom adds a new dimension to the complexities of Robert Owen's life ... a great bit of research ... should grace the shelves of any museum or library where his name rests". Charles Rex Shayler, chairman of the Robert Owen Museum and relative of the architect who designed the building in which it is housed.

About the Author

Dr Harris is an authority on Hansom and the development of the architectural profession in the early nineteenth-century. She is an active member of the Victorian Society and Education Officer of the Robert Owen Museum.

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Members will, no doubt, recall the article by Penelope Harris on Robert Owen and the Manchester Connection published in the Summer edition of the Newsletter.

Her latest book has now been published and members of the Manchester Group wishing to purchase this can avail themselves of a discount.

Orders to P Harris, Ashcroft, Old Chirk Road, Gobowen, SY 3LL. Price £13.95 incl p&p. (List price is £14.95 plus p&p.)

FROM THE LOCAL PRESS

The local newspaper of a certain Lancashire town refers to a lately departed citizen in these remarkable terms: "Although of late years Mr X's death had not permitted him to be regular in attendance at the board meetings, his interest in the success and government of the institution was as real as ever." The reaction of the other board members was not recorded.

Reference Manchester Guardian 5 May 1909 page 5

HERITAGE, CASH AND COVID-19

David Astbury

The world of heritage was drastically affected by the Covid-19 lockdown in March this year. The National Trust, faced with the total shutdown of its entire estate, was quick to forecast its loss of visitor income as potentially being hundreds of millions of pounds. Individual heritage projects, run by Charitable Trusts, faced similar problems which were huge to them. Of our local heritage projects, one of the most affected was Gorton Monastery losing all its considerable visitor, wedding and corporate events income. Fortunately, in October, the cavalry rode into town under the flag of the Cultural Recovery Fund. This Grants Programme, under the auspices of Historic England, offered support to organizations which were financially stable before Covid-19 but were unlikely to survive the loss of income arising from it.

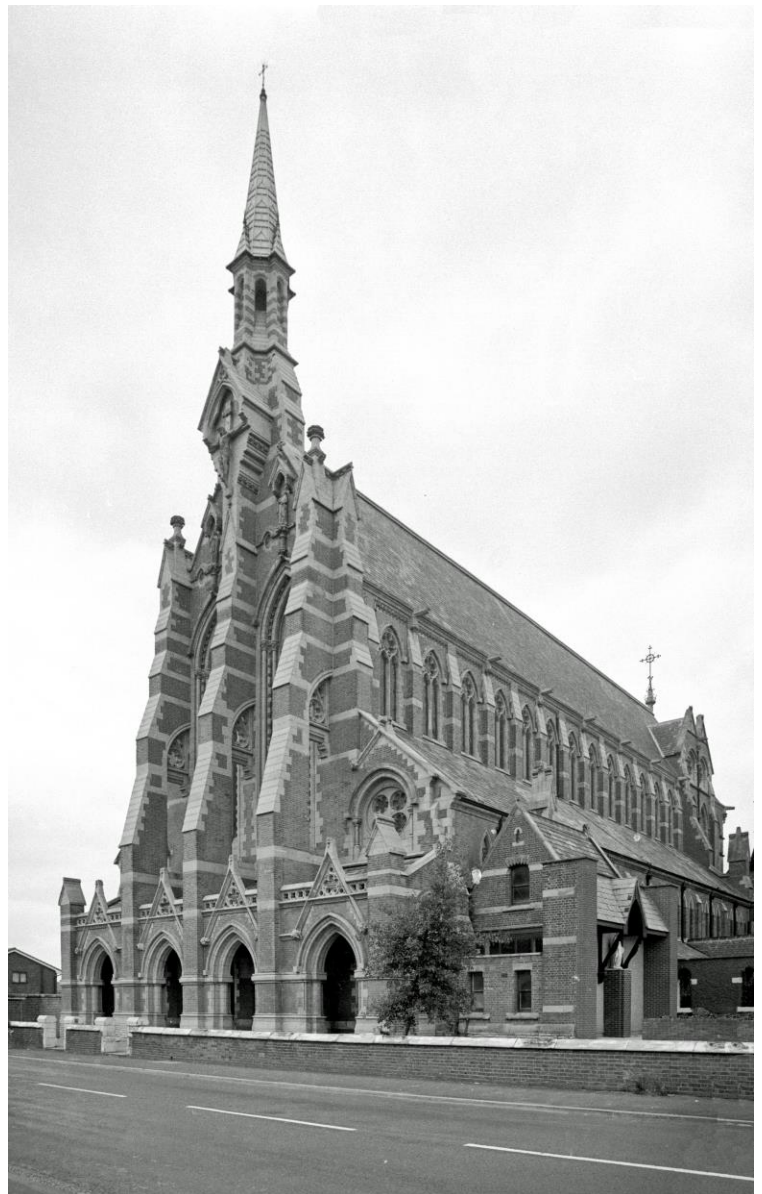
Four hundred Recovery Grants were distributed in total to diverse recipients including gardens, churches and museums. Gorton Monastery receiving £691,800. Heritage Trust for the North West was awarded £187,000 and the Gaskell House £49,700. Unfortunately, the School Room project at Long Street Methodist Church did not qualify because income generation had not started and consequently there was no Covid-19 loss.

Under a separate Recovery Grant scheme administered by Arts Council England, Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre received £2.95 million, the Halle Orchestra was granted £740,000 and the Stoller Hall received £150,000. Chethams Library also received £66,000 ahead of itself and the Collegiate Church celebrating next year the 600th anniversary of its foundation.

The crisis arising from Covid-19 does bring to mind a separate but related concern – the average age of heritage visitors and volunteers is still far higher than we would all like. School engagement with heritage projects and community archaeology may be improving the situation but there is still a long way to go.

David Astbury is the former Chair of the Manchester Group

Right: Gorton Monastery photographed in the 1980s.



COMMITTEE MATTERS

Anne Hodgson

Welcome.

I do hope all our members continue to keep well despite the prevalence of Covid in our region and the current lockdown.

At the time of writing there is still no indication of when it will be possible for our group to recommence the type of events we used to hold. We had optimistically thought we might have a programme in place for 2021, but sadly this is still rather a pipe dream! We are now investigating online talks for 2021 and should the situation change and allow for several people to meet up outside we might hope to have short walks organised which would be advertised by email.

Nationally the Victorian Society has held a series of very successful online talks on a wide variety of subjects from Arts and Crafts churches to the work of Ernest Gimson to the Golden Age of Victorian Pub-Building (which featured some notable Northern examples!). Details of these and forthcoming talks can be found on the VicSoc's national website (in case you have lost the email) and if you have not yet tried one then I urge you to give one a go: they are great value for money and it is also a very helpful way to contribute to the income of VicSoc in these difficult financial times to allow it to continue its campaigning work. Some of you might have attended the online AGM for VicSoc held in October which was a great success.

The Manchester Victorian Society committee met recently via Zoom when various matters were discussed.

As you know, we usually hold the Manchester Group AGM in January. We did investigate the possibility of holding one in our usual format, but the constraints of health and safety planning were extensive and social distancing would mean far fewer members being able to attend while we were also unsure as to whether members would want to venture out! And that was all before the latest Covid regulations were imposed alongside the uncertainty of the situation for January. We propose not to email out written reports from those who would normally report to the meeting but hopefully to include these as part of the Spring Newsletter.

Committee members have agreed to continue in office until the AGM when new members can be elected. However, three long serving committee members have indicated their intention to step down at that time. The thanks of the Manchester Group of the Vic Soc is due to all three for their many years of service in the running of the society.

At the committee meeting it was decided Anne Hodgson should be Acting Chair following the resignation of David Astbury at the last AGM.

Committee members expressed their deep concern over the failure to attract "new blood" to the committee. If the Manchester Group of the Victorian Society is to continue it is essential that more members now become actively involved in the running of the Group. This has now become urgent. Anyone who would like to volunteer for such a role in the society/join the committee then please do come forward and let me know as soon as possible.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and should you have any suggestions for items, could contribute a piece or would like to do an online talk then please do contact us. Let us hope the New Year brings the prospect of life becoming the old normal once again.

Anne Hodgson – Acting Chair

anne.hodgson@hotmail.com