

# **Angel Meadow: A Study of The Geography of Irish Settlement in Mid-Nineteenth Century Manchester**

M.A Busteed and R.I. Hodgson

Manchester played a key role in the historiography of Irish settlement in nineteenth-century Britain. As the first great manufacturing centre of the industrial revolution, it not only attracted large numbers of Irish migrants in search of employment but also many celebrated observers anxious to comment upon a new way of life in which the Irish were seen to figure prominently. Most local and visiting commentators conveyed negative images of the Irish that were to travel the world and colour both popular and academic perceptions for many decades to come (Busteed & Hodgson, 1993). The migrant Irish were seen as overwhelmingly concentrated in certain tracts of large towns and cities and associated with high levels of poverty, a lack of skills, poor housing conditions and crime; with a propensity to drink, live in squalor, and lower the wages and corrupt the behaviour and health of any native workers with whom they came into contact (Dillon, 1973; Werly, 1973).

In recent years, a series of detailed local studies of several British towns and cities have shown that the experiences of Irish migrants in nineteenth-century Britain were rather more varied than this traditional picture suggests. Above all, it has been shown that they differed with the rate, volume and timing of the migrant influx, the size and economic structure of the place of destination and its particular local history and civic leadership. For example, it now seems more likely that while spatial concentrations might have occurred in particular streets, some Irish people were to be found in all parts of the Victorian town or city (Herson, 1989; Large, 1983). In other words, the pattern was one of both concentration and dispersal (Collins, 1993; Davis, 1992). Swift (1992) has argued that such segregation as did occur never involved total isolation from the host community, and that by and large economic factors determined that "the Irish lived cheek by jowl beside natives of the same social class", if there was such a thing as "an Irish community" it did not rest on a pattern of strict residential segregation ... "There were predominantly poor Irish streets and courts ... But the ghetto at its strictest was not completely sealed".

In our present state of knowledge even these conclusions must be regarded as somewhat tentative, for, as Swift (1992) also admits, the whole question of residential segregation "warrants further study, in part through the application of quantitative analysis to the diachronic study of census returns at a local level". Nowhere is this more urgently needed than in the case of Manchester, the very place which did so much to create the stereotype of the Irish migrant in nineteenth century Britain, but upon which, somewhat surprisingly, relatively little modern scholarship has focussed other than to reiterate the views of contemporary observers (Werly, 1973). Work is now in hand to remedy this deficiency by undertaking a detailed examination of an important data source which was not available to contemporary commentators and which provides evidence against which to measure the validity of their views and findings: the census enumerators' returns. This paper, which looks at the geography of Irish settlement in Manchester before and particularly at mid-

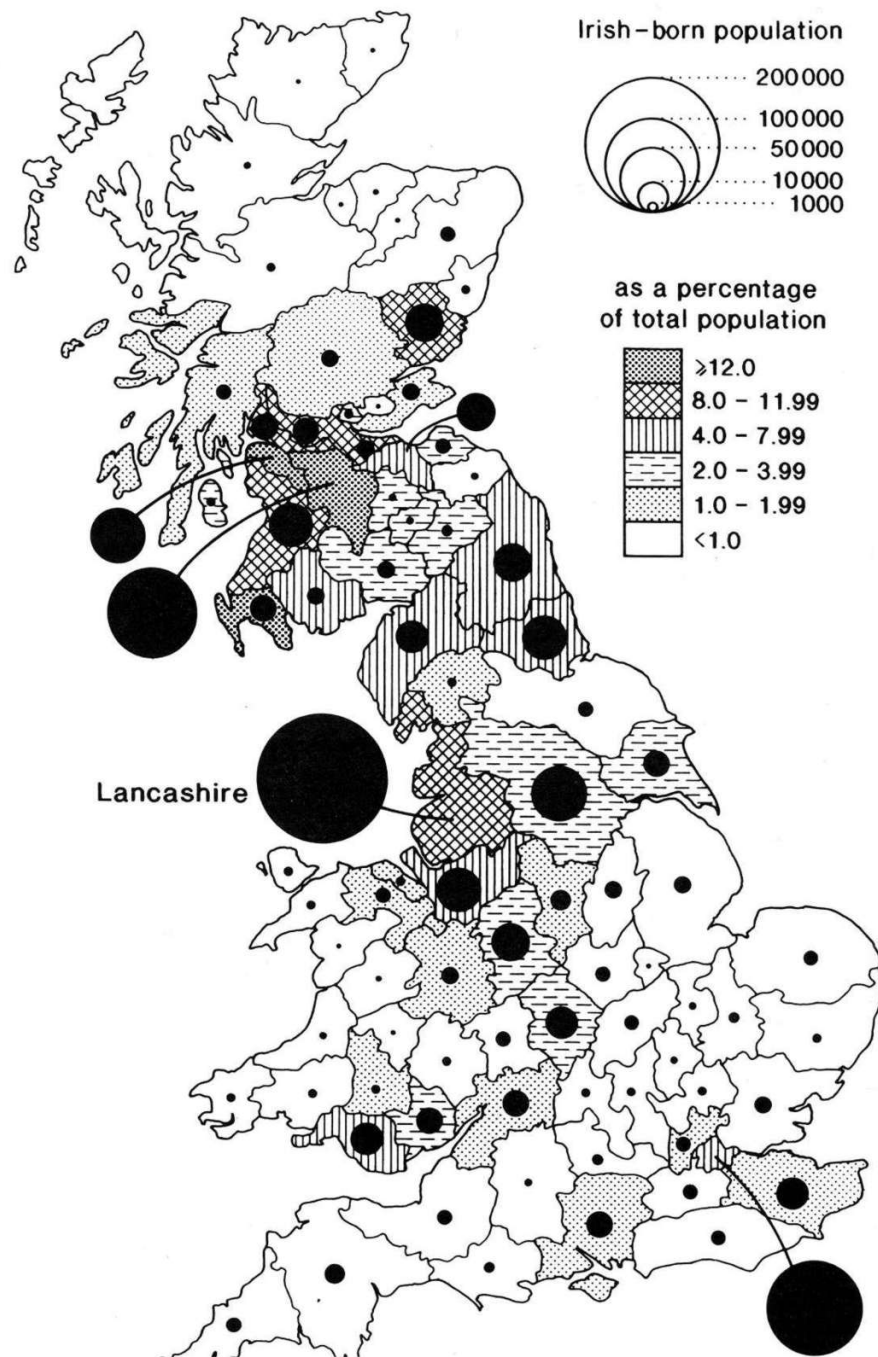


Fig. 1: Irish-Born as Percentage of Total Population in Registration Counties of Great Britain, 1851.

century, utilises contemporary cartographic and written evidence before investigating the census enumerators' returns for a small working-class area of the city known as Angel Meadow. First, however, it is necessary to consider the wider temporal and spatial setting of Irish settlement.

### The Irish in North-west England

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Lancashire had the greatest number of Irish-born of any county in Great Britain, and the highest density of any county in England and Wales (Figs. 1 & 2). There were particularly notable concentrations in the registration districts which included Liverpool (83,813 Irish-born in 1851), and Manchester-Salford (52,801, or 13.1% of the total population enumerated). Among British cities, only London (108,548), Glasgow (59,901) and Liverpool outstripped Manchester-Salford (Pooley, 1989). While many of those enumerated in 1851 as Irish-born were undoubtedly recent arrivals, fleeing the Famine of 1846-48, others had been in Britain for a much longer period. Indeed, a long tradition of Irish migration to, and settlement in, Britain, especially the North-West, meant that a considerable number of people who were of Irish descent and still regarded themselves as Irish were not recorded as such in the census simply because they had been born outside Ireland.

From at least the early fifteenth century there had been Irish people in England who were regarded by the native population as parasitic vagrants, living off the charity of private individuals and public institutions. An act of 1413 had ordered their expulsion but the fact that it had to be replicated over the following 450 years shows the persistence of the problem. Manchester had its share of Irish vagrants who benefitted from local charity and exasperated churchwardens and overseers charged with relief of the poor. When in 1811 local magistrates suggested that disbursements should top up an indigent's earnings to 3 shillings per week, those in charge were horrified and replied with the significant comment that "most, even of the Irish, would not expect so much" (Redford, 1940).

From the late eighteenth century significant numbers of Irish migrants came to parts of Britain to help with the grain and hay harvests. A pattern of movement was established which persisted into the early years of the twentieth century. Before long some authorities concluded that without such assistance it would prove extremely difficult to get the harvest in (Irish Poor Report, 1836; hereafter IPR). In 1887, a Manchester newspaper reporter recorded the arrival of the harvesters in terms which implied they were an accepted part of the annual rhythm of city life. He noted their journey by the now traditional route of Liverpool in the customary month of June and observed that "Cheshire, Yorkshire, Lincoln and the East of England, are their chief resorts; but they wander over most of the agricultural districts of this country, and many are employed about Manchester" (Manchester Cuttings, 1887). From the early nineteenth century, however, it had been noticed that some were forsaking seasonal farming work for permanent settlement in the expanding manufacturing towns and villages of Lancashire (Redford, 1926).

It was the growing pace of technological change which provided the first significant boost to the permanent Irish population of Manchester. The mechanization of cotton spinning created a fast growing demand for skilled hand-loom weavers. Some Manchester merchants responded by recruiting throughout Britain and Ireland. One

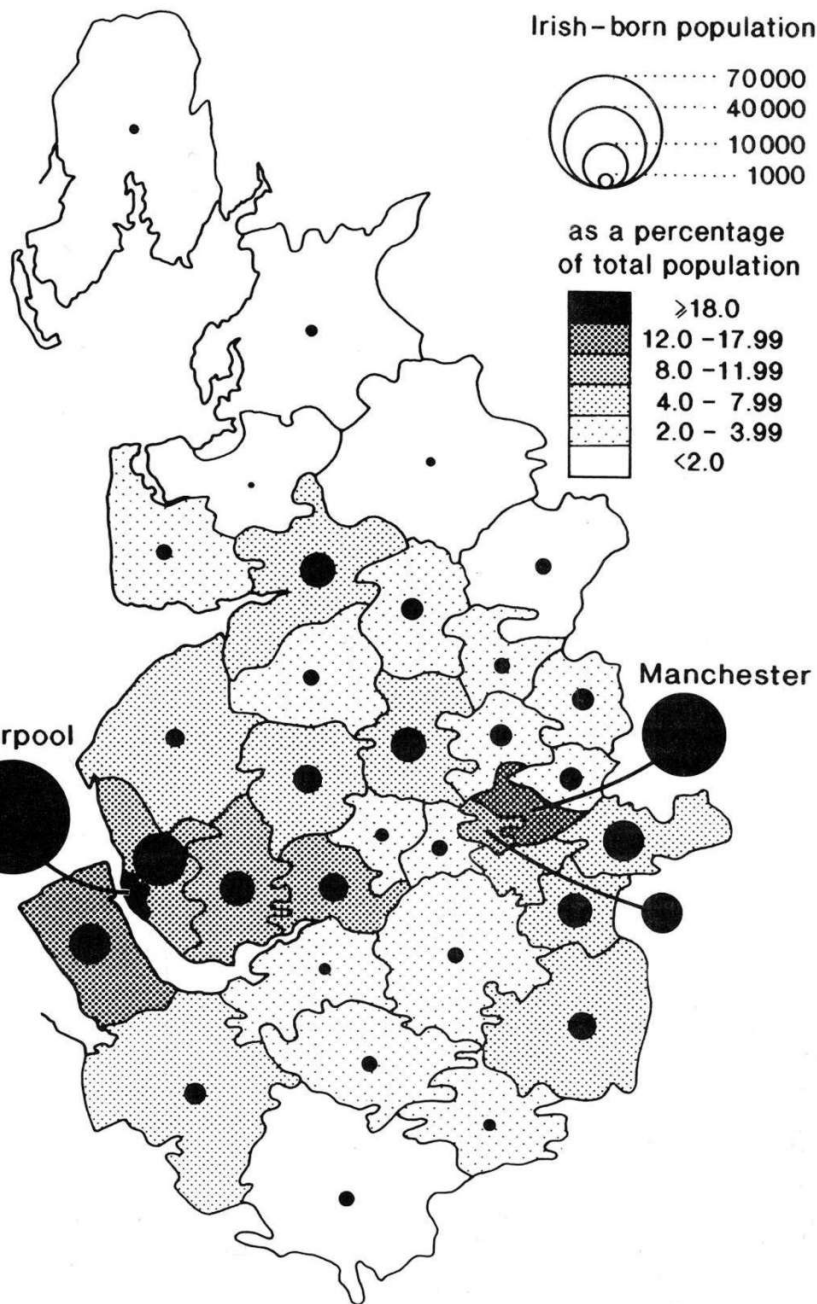


Fig. 2: Irish-Born as Percentage of Total Population in Registration Districts of Lancashire & Cheshire, 1851.

result was commemorated in a piece of doggerel (Blundell, 1938) relating to the opening in Mulberry Street in 1794 of St Mary's Catholic Chapel, erected in order to relieve pressure on the existing central church of Rook Street:

*"The same year the Catholics deemed it quite meet  
To build a chapel in Mulberry Street.  
For the trade of the town, and hands wanted for weaving,  
And bread to be found there, poor Irishmen craving,  
Brought an influx of Catholic weavers to town,  
And filled Rook Street chapel to near breaking down."*

By the early years of the nineteenth century it is estimated that there were 5000 Irish people permanently resident in Manchester (Redford, 1938), including a significant element of skilled hand-loom weavers.

Though subject to periodic fluctuations in its intensity, the migrant flow was to continue with renewed vigour in the early decades of the nineteenth century; for just at the time when the quickening pace of industrial growth on mainland Britain was acting as a powerful 'pull' factor for migrant labour, conditions in Ireland conspired to 'push' out yet more men and women in search of better job prospects. The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 saw prices move in favour of less labour-intensive pastoral produce and this, together with periodic economic recession, as in 1816-17, led to increased migration (Cullen, 1976). The 1801 Act of Union of Britain and Ireland had a similar effect. Its economic clauses, together with the growing strength of free trade convictions, led ultimately to the abolition in 1824 of all tariffs between Britain and Ireland. With the exception of linen, the impact on embryonic Irish textile industries was disastrous, because they were now exposed to the full force of competition from their most advanced British rivals (Cullen, 1976; O'Malley, 1981). One of the most notable sufferers was the Irish cotton industry, which had grown up behind tariffs erected by the Dublin parliament and had served the domestic Irish market. Now it had to cope with competition from Lancashire, at this point the home of the most sophisticated cotton textile industry in the world, producing an unparalleled product range combining value and quality with novel design and colouring. By 1840 the Irish industry was almost extinct. Many of the workers from its most notable centres in Belfast, Dublin and Cork emigrated, frequently to North-West England. In late 1829 it was reported that when a relief committee helped 433 families of weavers, numbering 1,589 persons, to emigrate from the Dublin working-class Liberties district, the places they were sent to included "*Manchester, Coventry, Congleton, Macclesfield and Leeds*", and when the weavers of Bandon, Co. Cork, emigrated, they "*went to London and Manchester*" (O'Neill, 1977).

This penetration of the Irish market, and indeed the migration process itself, was accelerated by developments in shipping technology and ferry services. In 1818 the first steam packet, the "*Rob Roy*", had linked Belfast with Glasgow. By the 1820s there were frequent, regular and relatively cheap ferry services from Belfast, Dublin and Cork to Liverpool and most other west coast British ports. Competition between companies drove fares for the passengers as low as 10d. in steerage and 3d. for those who chose to stay on the open deck (Neal, 1986; Swift, 1992), making movement to Britain a feasible option for all but very poorest.

Service in the British Army and Navy also brought significant numbers of Irish



people to Britain. It has been estimated that by the mid-Victorian period 30% of the regular army were Irish-born with an even higher proportion in the rank of R.S.M. and below (Gilley, 1985). This meant that in some places a large element in the garrison could be Irish - in York it was 76.5% in 1851, and 95% twenty years later (Finnegan, 1982). The Irish presence in the army in the Manchester area was demonstrated on St. Patrick's Day, 1830, when the 87th regiment (or Irish Fusiliers), based at Salford barracks, marched to divine service at St. Augustine's Catholic Church, Granby Row, Manchester, preceded by their band playing "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning", and accompanied there and back by "great numbers of their countrymen wearing the shamrock in their hats". (*Manchester Guardian* - hereafter *MG* - 30 March 1830). Soldiers on occasion married into local families, while others on retirement often took up residence in the place they mustered out. The census enumerators' returns for Angel Meadow in 1851 record several retired army personnel of Irish origin among whom was 26 year-old William Hawksworth of 3 Ludd's Court who was described as a "Pensioner, Light Infantry".

But for most migrants it, was undoubtedly the immediate attractions of sustained economic growth in rapidly urbanizing industrial Britain, and the widening range of job opportunities which this created, that brought them to North-west England. Until the second half of the eighteenth century the settlement of Manchester had strayed little from its medieval core at the confluence of the Irk and the Irwell, where its development had long been overshadowed by that of neighbouring Salford. However, as a town where the control of the lord of the manor was weak, Manchester was free to develop and expand when economic opportunities were opened by the beginnings of mechanization of the long-established textile industry in the late eighteenth century (Frangopulo, 1977). The growing output of cloth demanded increasing amounts of water for fulling, dyeing and bleaching and here the rivers of Manchester were ideal. Meanwhile, coal for both domestic use and later to supply the new steam-driven machinery was readily brought from surrounding mines via the rivers and canals which could be so easily built thanks to the low relative relief. The construction of canals, roads, warehouses, foundries, mills and factories, residential areas and, finally, railways and their associated stations and goods yards, generated a demand for unskilled and semi-skilled labour which was drawn from a steadily widening area, including Ireland.

The dynamism of the new urban area is best illustrated by the remarkable growth of its population. The number of people within the township of Manchester alone arose from around 17,000 in 1758 to 43,000 in 1788, 76,788 in 1801 & 316,213 in 1851 (Kidd, 1993). Reliable statistics on the Irish during this period do not exist until 1841 when the census recorded 30,304 Irish-born people (the equivalent of just under 10% of the total population enumerated at that date, or, looked at another way, about 57% of the number of Irish-born recorded for 1851). The question which must now be addressed is: just where in the urban area of Manchester did the Irish live?

### **Irish settlement in Manchester: cartographic and literary evidence**

There is some evidence to suggest that long before the mid-nineteenth century the Irish were tending to cluster within selected districts of the town. As part of Manchester's late eighteenth century expansion, there had grown up on the north-eastern side of the medieval core, along the banks of the river Irk, a working-class district which contemporary cartographers depicted as "New Town". Significantly,

the most authoritative map of the time, that by W. Green, who surveyed the town between 1787 and 1794, depicts a small street which Bancks' map of 1831 designates "Irish Row". If this were its name in the late eighteenth century it could indicate an Irish presence in the area, and possibly a sign of embryonic residential clustering, by this date. Clustering almost certainly existed a quarter of a century later at the time of the Peterloo massacre. Thus when the radical leader Samuel Bamford, who was present on St. Peter's Fields, Manchester on 16th August, 1819, recorded the march of the Middleton contingent to the meeting he could recall how "at Newtown we were welcomed with open arms by the poor Irish weavers, who came out in their best drapery, and uttered blessings and words of endearment, many of which were not understood by our rural patriots. Some of them danced, and others stood with clasped hands and tearful eyes, adoring almost, that banner whose colour was their national one, and the emblem of their green island home. We thanked them by the bank striking up 'St. Patrick's day in the morning'; they were electrified; and we passed on, leaving those warm-hearted suburbans capering and whooping like mad". (Bamford, 1844; Herbert, 1989).

Circumstantial evidence suggests that at least one other district of significant Irish settlement was emerging by this date. Just as Mulberry Street chapel had opened in 1794 to house the overspill Catholic worshippers of Rook Street, 1820 saw the opening of the first purpose-built Catholic church outside the town's medieval core. This was St. Augustine's in the Chorlton-upon-Medlock area, on the south-eastern fringes of Manchester. Situated on Granby Row, it was to serve the inhabitants of what was soon to take on a name which indelibly marked it as an area of heavy Irish settlement. Thus on 14 July 1832 the *Manchester Guardian* chose to describe a fight in the town ".... as tending to illustrate the peculiarly pugnacious disposition of the natives of Green Erin, particularly as illustrated in that district which, from being inhabited chiefly, if not wholly, by them, possesses the appellation of 'Little Island'". In the same year a second Catholic church outside the historic core, St. Patrick's, in Livesey Street, off St. George's (later Rochdale) Road, was opened; presumably to serve the needs of the faithful of Newtown. Not only was there a large concentration of Irish people living in the district by this time: they could also form the bulk of the workforce at particular locations. When, on 12 July 1830, an Orange Order procession was attacked by Catholic Irishmen, it was noted in the *Manchester Guardian* that the assault was led by ".... a party of them, supposed to be composed principally of the workmen in the factory of Mr. Parker, in New Town".

1832 represents a watershed in our knowledge and understanding of the Irish presence in Manchester, for in that year, Dr. James Phillips Kay, while writing on the condition of cotton employees in the areas, described at some length the character and habits of the Irish in terms which were to exercise a formative influence on British perceptions. Among other things, he explicitly identified three areas of town in which the Irish were then concentrated. The aforementioned New Town, which was also "denominated Irish Town", and the nearby Ancoats were said to contain "a greater proportion of Irish than any other portion of the town" (Kay, 1832). But his most graphic prose was reserved for that part of Chorlton-upon-Medlock enclosed by the Rochdale Canal and a loop of the River Irwell known as "Little Ireland". His commentary on this district was to enter the mind of the British establishment and public as descriptive of the archetypal Irish migrant community and its living conditions.

In 1833, Gaultier, in his discussion of the first two hundred cases of cholera which had broken out in the town in June 1832, confirmed the clustering of the Irish in these three districts; and a year later evidence on Manchester given to a parliamentary commission investigating the Irish poor in Great Britain reinforced the picture. For instance, Joseph Sadler Thomas, Deputy Constable of the Township of Manchester, found such a strong sense of community solidarity amongst the Irish that "In Angel Meadow, or Little Ireland, if a legal execution of any kind is to be made, either for rent or debt, or for taxes, the officer who serves the process almost always applies to me for assistance to protect him; and, in affording that protection, my officers are often maltreated by brickbats and other missiles". Several witnesses gave evidence which implied a high level of residential segregation. Amongst them was Rev. Daniel Hearne, parish priest of St. Patrick's, who declared unequivocally that "The Irish in Manchester are mostly isolated and live in quarters on their own". Yet it is also important to note a certain ambiguity in the testimony of some other witnesses. Thus Mr. John Redman of "Newtown- often called Irish town", could, on the one hand, assert that "the English do not associate with the Irish, so as to imbibe their principles and habits; their religion keeps them asunder to a considerable degree" while admitting, on the other hand, that some degree of intermingling did occur to the extent that "none but the very lowest classes of society mix with the Irish" (IPR, pp. 522, 536, 549, 523).

Later observers conveyed an equally ambivalent picture of both segregation and mixing. In 1844 Leon Faucher described the condition of the Irish as much improved following a recent visit by Fr. Matthew, the renowned temperance reformer, but could still depict them as isolated in disease-ridden neighbourhoods that were "the chosen retreat of vagabonds and criminals". These points were elaborated in footnotes by Faucher's translator, an unnamed member of the Manchester Athenaeum. He was in fact a barrister, J.P. Culverwell, and his observations provide an illuminating window on what by then were probably conventional English middle-class perceptions of the Irish. As far as he was concerned, they inflicted "a deadly blow upon the health and comfort of the working-classes in Manchester. They congregate together, and form in the town a number of distinct communities, each of which is a nucleus for the generation and diffusion of fever and human miasma" (Faucher, 1844, pp. 28-9, note 10). The implication is clear: the Irish were spatially concentrated, but not to the extent of preventing contamination of the working-class English with their infectious diseases.

A similarly ambiguous message was conveyed by the commentator who was arguably the most famous of Manchester's visitors during this formative period: Frederick Engels, son of a devout middle-class German family which part owned a local cotton spinning mill. His experience of the town, especially in 1844, inevitably led him to describe the concentrations of Irish people in Irish Town and Ancoats and, most famously, in Little Ireland, which he describes vividly and at some length, with liberal - and not always accurate - quotes from Dr. Kay, thereby contributing powerfully to its subsequent status as the archetypal Irish community in nineteenth-century urban Britain. Referring to urban Britain in general, he declared that while the Irish were "to be found everywhere" it was "the slums of all the big towns" that seemed to "swarm with Irish". Elsewhere, however, he wrote in a fashion which implied a considerable degree of mixing between the Irish and the native working-class. He noted "inter-marriage and ....daily contact in the workaday world" and

implied that such encounters were sufficiently frequent for the Irish to influence not only the economic status but also the outlook and values of the native workers, for both good and ill. While commenting that the lively, mercurial, fiery Irish temperament could well temper the unduly stolid English character with some warmth, he also argued that the Irish had "grown up in a virtually uncivilized condition ... They are uncouth, improvident and addicted to drink. They introduce their brutal behaviour into a section of English society by no means noted for civilized habits or moral principles". He estimated that 20% to 25% of the workers in every big town were Irish immigrants or their English-born children, and argued that such a strong element must have deeply influenced the habits and intellectual and moral values of the entire working-class: "it is not surprising that a social class already degraded by industrialization should be still further degraded by having to live alongside and compete with the uncivilised Irish" (Engels, 1845, pp. 6, 71-5, 104-7, 139).

There is, therefore, strong contemporary literary evidence to suggest that in Manchester, as in other early British industrial towns and cities, the Irish were concentrated in particular working-class areas. Beyond this, however, the evidence is ambiguous. There are contemporary references which could be interpreted as implying a marked degree of residential segregation from the native working class, but there are also occasional references to intermarriage and quite frequently to the considerable - and usually detrimental - influence which the Irish could have on the character and conditions of the rest of the working-class. The literary evidence will now be compared with the census data for an area which has been subjected to close examination.

### The Irish in Angel Meadow

The area chosen for detailed investigation lies at the heart of "Newtown" or "Irish Town", one of the three areas which, as we have seen, were widely regarded as being distinctively Irish in mid-nineteenth century Manchester (Busteed, Hodgson & Kennedy, 1992). In 1851 it was part of the Anglican parish of St. George's, which lay north-east of Victoria Station, centred on St. George's (later Rochdale) Road (Fig. 3). The name Angel Meadow, which commemorates a former piece of meadow land by the Irk, was in common use in the nineteenth century, though the boundaries of the territory to which it relates were never clearly specified in any consistent manner. For purposes of this inquiry, therefore, the limits of the study area have been chosen to embrace the essential Angel Meadow as depicted in contemporary accounts while at the same time marking out a manageable area for investigation within the resources of time and labour available. Even so, it is not assumed *a priori* that the boundaries of the study area as shown in Figure 4 (Miller Street, Long Millgate, the River Irk, Back Irk and Gould Streets and Rochdale Road) will necessarily represent any significant socio-economic divide.

Late eighteenth century maps show that when Manchester began to industrialise, Angel Meadow was one of the first areas to be built on. By the early 1790s most of the western portion had been built up to the western side of Angel Street, and large parts south of Ashley Lane. St. Michael's Anglican Church (a curacy of St. George's) had been consecrated in 1789. Green's map of 1794, with its depiction of dye houses, mills and timber yards and names such as "Factory Lane" and "Factory Court",

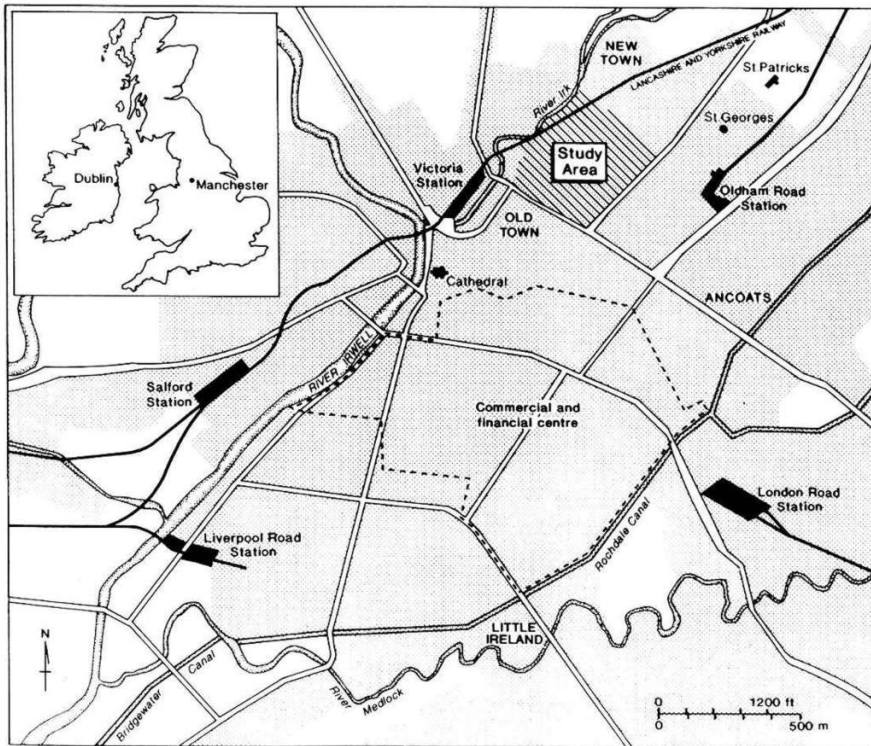


Fig. 3: Location of Study Area.

suggests that both industrial and residential land uses were intermingled. By the early 1830s almost the entire study area was covered by a dense mixture of residential, manufacturing and commercial premises, while just to the north-east stood the newly opened St. Patrick's Catholic Church, built in 1832. The final significant element was the construction of the Manchester and Leeds (later the Lancashire and Yorkshire) railway line, which crossed the north-western end of the study area. When Adshead mapped this 12 hectare (30 acre) district in 1850-51, 50 per cent of it was covered by 211 industrial, commercial and business premises, including two chemical factories, two cotton mills and 12 public houses. There were also two churches, four schools and, on the six hectares (15 acres) devoted to residential building, 1,206 dwelling houses.

From quite early, Angel Meadow was not only a place where the Irish were said to congregate in large numbers, it also acquired a reputation as one of the most squalid and disreputable parts of Manchester. In 1832 Dr. Kay referred to it as "that mass of cottages filling the insalubrious valley through which the Irk flows" while Engels, after his visit in 1844, described it (p.65) as "composed of single rows of houses and groups of streets which might be small villages, lying on bare clayey soil which does not produce even a blade of grass" and with the houses "in a disgraceful state because they are never repaired. They are filthy and beneath them are to be found damp,

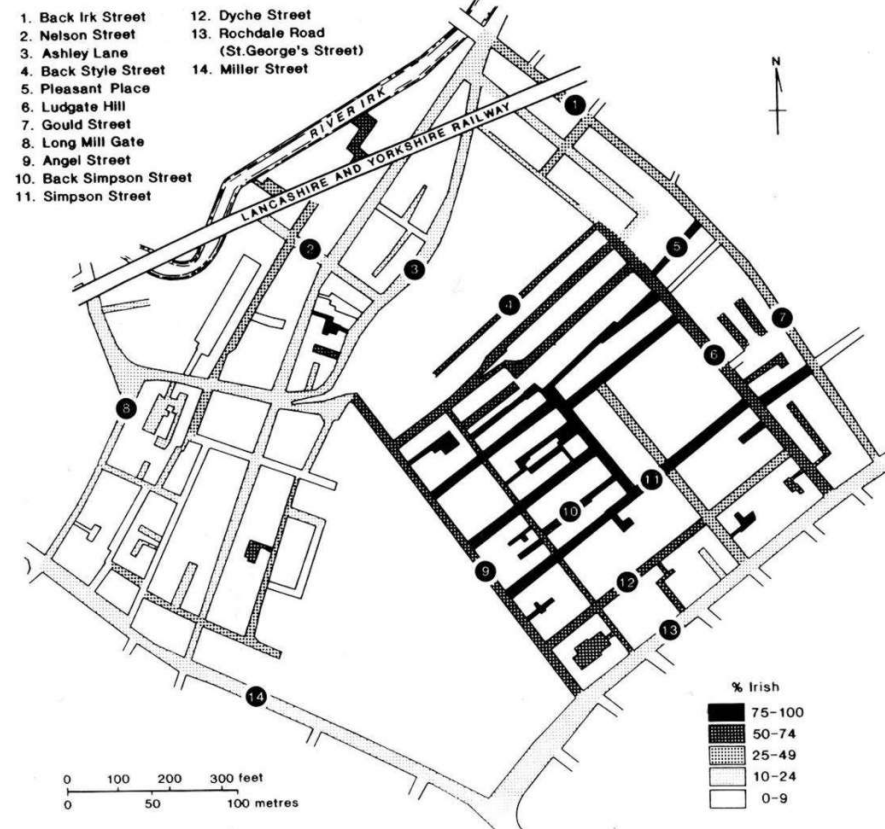


Fig. 4: Proportion Irish in Streets of Study Area.

dirty cellar dwellings; the unpaved alleys lack any form of drainage ... The lanes in this district are so filthy that it is only in very dry weather that one can reach it without sinking ankle deep at every step". According to Angus Reach, writing in 1847 (p.53), Angel Meadow was, quite simply, "the lowest, most filthy, and most wicked locality in Manchester .... inhabited by prostitutes, their bullies, thieves, cadgers, vagrants, tramps, and, in the very worst sties of filth and darkness, those unhappy wretches, the low Irish".

The census enumerators' returns for 1851 provide a means whereby impressionistic accounts of the district and its Irish inhabitants can be compared with hard facts, though they must be used with care (Higgs, 1989; Lawton, 1978). The area in 1851 recorded a total resident population of 10,995. Of these, only 4,645 (42.2%) were born in Ireland. However, this definition is too narrow. A more useful and realistic definition is to consider as Irish all those born in Ireland, plus all the offspring of two Irish-born parents, where both parents are traceable in the enumerators' returns for the district. When this definition is applied, as it will be hereafter, 807 extra persons are added to the earlier figure to give an Irish total of 5,454 (or 50.4% of the total recorded population of Angel Meadow). The existence



of this small Irish majority stand in marked contrast to the claims or assumptions of some contemporary observers about an overwhelming, or exclusively, Irish presence in the district.

The data can also be used to investigate the hotly debated question of how far the Irish were spatially dispersed or concentrated. One approach is to calculate the percentage of Irish within each of the 89 streets. It was found that 41 streets had a simple Irish majority, and of these no less than 37 were concentrated in a cluster at the eastern end of the district. Furthermore, 82.9% (4,595) of the entire Irish population of Angel Meadow was found to be in these streets. When the degree of Irishness in these streets is further broken down, an even more striking pattern emerges. There is a strongly marked core area of streets containing 75% or more Irish people in the heart of the eastern end of the district (Fig. 4) well back from the main roads and thoroughfares and consisting of a network of interconnecting streets, courts and alleys. The remaining four Irish majority streets not in this cluster are tiny, containing a total of only 18 inhabited houses.

Conversely, if the streets with a non-Irish majority are examined, they also display a marked spatial concentration. They fall into two categories. In the first are those which may be termed the main thoroughfares - Long Millgate, Miller Street, Rochdale Road and Gould Street. All except the last named had less than 25% Irish. In the second, and by far the largest category, are a cluster of streets at the western end of the study area. Here were concentrated the overwhelming majority of the non-Irish streets. Most had less than 25% Irish, and six had no Irish residents at all. At this spatial scale, therefore, the study area demonstrates ethnic polarisation, with Irish and non-Irish concentrated in distinct areas. Moreover, it should be noted that the Irish and non-Irish areas did not differ significantly in social class. The entire area was overwhelmingly populated by low-skilled working-class people. Thus, whilst the two groups shared relative poverty, it would appear they were less prone to share residential space.

A further refinement can be introduced by altering the spatial scale of the study so as to examine the ethnic composition of individual houses. For instance, in Simpson Street, where 235 (75.3%) of all residents were Irish and there were 27 inhabited dwellings given separate numbers by the enumerators, 14 of these were occupied exclusively by Irish people, and a further six had a simple majority of Irish people; five were exclusively non-Irish and two had a simple non-Irish majority. In the nearby Dyche Street (Fig. 5) the situation was more finely balanced. Here, 248 (56.6%) of the resident population were Irish. There were 35 inhabited houses and of these five were inhabited exclusively by Irish and a further 17 had a simple Irish majority. Five were exclusively non-Irish and a further eight had a simple non-Irish majority. Thus some degree of residential separation, but also some mixing more notable in Dyche Street, where the Irish majority was more slender. However, in both streets the picture is modified if the houses are plotted diagrammatically, on the assumption that the system of house numbering was the same as that used in most parts of Manchester by this date: a sequence of odd numbers on one side and even on the other. The result (Fig. 5) reveals that in both streets the Irish houses were not merely clustered in groups next to each other, but largely concentrated on one side of the street.

A particularly sensitive aspatial measure of separation or integration is the degree

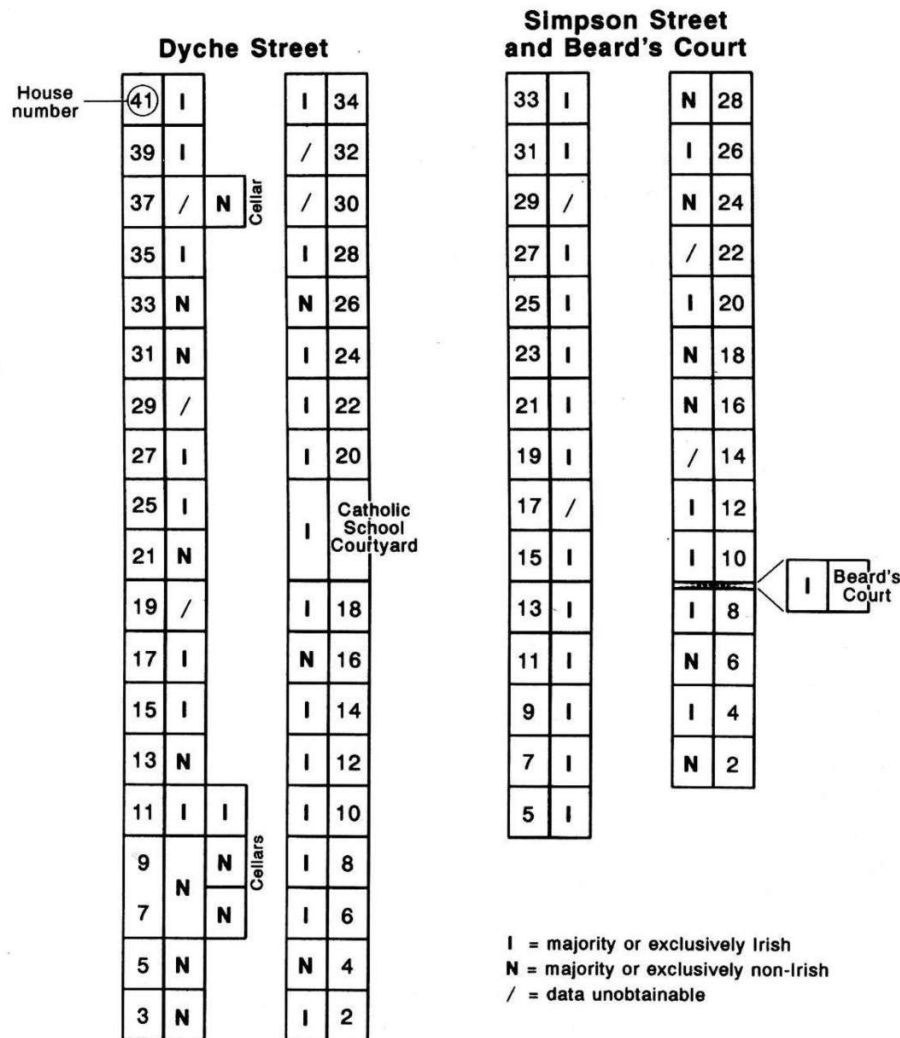


Fig. 5: Dyche Street, Simpson Street & Beard's Court: Composition of Population by Houses, 1851.

to which the Irish married outside their own community. Again, Simpson Street and Dyche Street provide significant evidence. Taken together, these streets recorded 81 marriages in which at least one Irish person was involved and in which both partners could be traced in the census. Of these, 66 (81.5%) were between Irish people, and only 15 (18.5%) were mixed, in the sense that an Irish person married a non-Irish partner. For Angel Meadow as a whole the figures are very similar: only 164 (18.4%) of the 892 marriages involving Irish people were mixed.

Overall, therefore, the suggestion is of a fairly high degree of spatial segregation as reflected in the pattern of Irish dominated streets and houses and of social segregation as demonstrated by the relatively low level of intermarriage. Some caution is necessary, however, even on the basis of findings such as these. Only two streets in Angel Meadow were exclusively Irish, only six exclusively non-Irish. Furthermore, eight of the 27 houses in Simpson Street and of the 35 in Dyche Street contained a mixture of Irish and non-Irish, while 15 of the 81 marriages in the two streets were mixed. One could therefore endorse Laxton's use of the term 'neighbourhood' (Laxton, 1986) and apply to Manchester E.P. Thompson's lapidary comment that "if they were segregated in some towns, the Irish were never pressed back into ghettos" (Thompson, 1968, p.480). Nevertheless, Angel Meadow was clearly one of those places where, as the same author puts it, "the Irish were partially segregated into their own streets and quarters". Such spatial and social patterns may well have been replicated in other parts of Manchester for there were powerful forces at work to encourage and maintain them.

### Encouragement and maintenance of separation

Separation was encouraged both by the attitudes and reactions of the host population to the Irish and by factors within the Irish community itself. Since the days of Queen Mary Tudor there had been a vestigial element of anti-Catholicism within English popular nationalism and circumstances combined to revive this in the first half of the nineteenth century. One factor was undoubtedly the arrival of the Irish in such large numbers, especially in the years immediately after the Famine, thereby considerably boosting the size of the Catholic community. Another was the steady erosion of the last legal disabilities on non-Anglicans, especially after Catholic Emancipation in 1829. The growing assertion of their new found rights by the Catholic populace alarmed some elements amongst native Protestants. This apprehension was reinforced from the early 1830s onwards with the rise of what became known as the "Anglo-Catholic" movement within the Anglican Church. Something of a climax was reached in September 1850 when the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales was reformed for the first time since the Reformation. In some parts of north-west England, anti-Catholic sentiment was exploited as part of a popular Toryism (Kirk, 1980) which, claiming to defend Church, Crown and Constitution, was used to mobilise working-class support, most notably in Liverpool (Neal, 1988). Simple xenophobia undoubtedly played a part, too, in engendering anti-Irish sentiments (Neal, 1991-2).

Such a marked cleavage did not take root in Manchester's local political culture, possibly because of differences in the rate of influx and relative size of its Irish community, differences in the local economic structure and in the outlook of the local civic leadership. However, the progress of the local Catholic community did reflect what was going on elsewhere, and there is evidence that it did provoke adverse reaction. The building of new Catholic churches was perhaps the most obvious outward sign of the growing strength and different beliefs of the expanding Irish communities. Between 1832 and 1847 five new Catholic churches were built in Manchester. In 1850 the Catholic diocese for the Manchester area was established - though it was termed the Diocese of Salford, with St John's, Salford, as its Cathedral Church, to avoid offending Anglican susceptibilities (O'Dea, 1910) - and in the following year Rev. Turner of St. Augustine's, Granby Row, was consecrated as first

bishop. Within the next ten years four more Catholic churches were opened within the city.

Adverse reactions to the growing Irish Catholic presence were apparent from the early years of the century. The first anti-Catholic riot in nineteenth-century Britain took place in Manchester in 1807, by which date there were sufficient lodges of the ultra-Protestant and anti-Catholic Orange Order in the region to justify setting up in Manchester the first County Grand Lodge in England (Neal, 1990-91). Nor was this the last serious sectarian riot. There were outbreaks in 1830 and 1834, and notable signs of tension in 1835 and 1852. Nothing as serious and chronic as the conflicts in Liverpool and Glasgow ever occurred, but it is clear that there was underlying antipathy, and it surfaced even in personal disputes. Thus on 4 February, 1832, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that "St. George's (Rochdale) Road was the scene of two or three wanton assaults", involving the brandishing of pistols, a man attacked in his home, and police having to intervene with cutlasses. The report noted that the victim and his friends "call themselves Protestants, and it was stated that they had been upbraided by their more numerous neighbours, who were Catholics, with being "bloody heretics and orangemen". The latent differences and tensions and incidents such as these must have played some part in encouraging the Irish to settle in distinct neighbourhoods.

A less crudely expressed but nonetheless powerful antipathy towards the Irish was due to the fact that their arrival coincided with mounting concern in establishment circles over the threat presented by the growing numbers of the working-class who were concentrating in the most squalid parts of the new urban-industrial areas. To some observers they represented a danger to the established political and social order, whilst to others they were more of a threat to public health. As the earliest and most prominent of the new manufacturing towns of the industrial revolution, Manchester played a crucial role in the generation of what might be termed a moral panic. The town's overall size and rapid growth, the unprecedented numbers of its industrial workers, and the absence or total inadequacy of normal organs of social control such as lord of the manor, parson, squire, magistrates and local watch, unsettled the more conservatively-minded observers (Briggs, 1968). Their alarm was intensified by local support for parliamentary reform, trades unionism and chartism. In each of these situations the Irish were picked out as a significant element, either because they drew attention to themselves as a somewhat exotic group or because they provided a convenient scapegoat.

That Irish people played a significant role in working-class politics is beyond dispute. Their prominent part in nascent trades unions in the Manchester area is personified by the early nineteenth century exploits of John Doherty, who was born in Donegal, migrated to Manchester and was a leading figure in early organisations amongst the cotton workers (Kirby & Musson, 1975). The role of the Irish in such activities was emphasised by at least one witness who gave evidence to the 1834 parliamentary commission inquiring into the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain. Mr. Peter Ewart, a Manchester cotton spinner and manufacturer, declared that "it often happens that when there is discontent, or a disposition to combination, or turn-outs among the workpeople, the Irish are the leaders; they are the most difficult to reason with, and convince on the subject of wages and regulations in factories" (IPR, p.538). The role of Irish people in the Chartist movement is well documented, too,



though there is evidence that amongst some sections of the public the Irish were believed to be undermining efforts to improve working-class conditions (Thompson, 1982). This view is also well represented in the Manchester evidence given in 1834. Mr. James Taylor, of Newton Heath Silk Mill, was quite blunt: "I could not do without the Irish, because I could not, in brisk times, get sufficient hands to do the work; ... if there were only English hands they would, when there was a brisk demand, turn out and demand such high wages that the trade could not go on. I consider the Irish as a great value as a check on the combination of the English" (IPR, pp. 542-3).

The threat to public health posed by the influx of Irish people became a matter of serious concern. Observers such as Dr. Kay warned that the most densely crowded areas of working-class Irish settlement in Manchester were potential seed beds of infection, only to see their predictions fulfilled by the cholera outbreaks of 1832 and 1849. And the influx of the Irish was often blamed, implicitly or otherwise, for the many outbreaks of infectious fever which accompanied the economic and social distress of the late 1840s. Indeed, in some places the term "Irish Fever" was used, even by qualified medical staff. It is surely significant that when poor harvests, bad weather, high unemployment and disease began to inflict working-class areas of the Manchester from 1846 onwards and arrangements were made to provide relief and medical assistance, the quarterly returns to the Board of Guardians always separated out "Irish Cases" from "English Cases". So severe was the burden on the Manchester Union that in early February, 1847, its officials petitioned the House of Commons. They pointed out that, in addition to their normal burdens, much increased by current distress, "a large amount had been given, for several months past, to the casual and very numerous poor and destitute from Ireland" (MG, 13 Feb 1847). The solution, they argued, was to reform the Irish Poor Law to ensure that Irish paupers were supported in their own country.

At a meeting of the Board of Guardians in mid-February 1847 attention was drawn to the rise in mortality on their premises, which was attributed in the first instance to the rise in numbers of workhouse inmates but also to "a very considerable influx into the town of persons from Ireland, under circumstances of extreme distress" (MG, 13 Feb 1847). Others were equally definite that such arrivals did not merely add their own deaths to the total, but were responsible for infecting the rest of the population: "the vast influx of Irish families into the town, in a state of utter destitution, has added much to the amount of disease, and swelled considerably the rate of mortality" (MG, 11 Dec 1847). One of the prime reasons for the distress in the whole region of south Lancashire and Cheshire was, according to one Union auditor, "the introduction by the Irish immigrants of malignant Typhus fever, scarlet fever, small-pox and measles" (MG, 22 May 1847). This, according to another commentator, was only to be expected from the Irish poor who were "importing with their usual rags and wretchedness, and improvidence, the additional concomitant of a wide-spreading infectious fever, which even now is more malignant and fatal than for some time past" (MG, 11 Dec 1847). Even when there were signs that the infections were ebbing, as in July 1847, the *Manchester Guardian* reported under the heading "Famine Fever" that "on the whole the health of the town, or rather of its Irish immigrants, is greatly improved" (MG, 24 July 1847). The implication is clear: if there ever was any recent ill health to report, this group was to blame.

Economic antipathy towards the Irish was another powerful factor encouraging social and spatial separation. It was widely believed at all levels of English society

that the Irish, requiring few material goods and prepared to accept poorer accommodation and lower wages than the natives, were lowering incomes and living standards for all working-class people. In some cases they were even thought to do this by acting as strike breakers. Not every contemporary observer took this view as is evident from the evidence given to the commission investigating the state of the Irish poor in Great Britain in 1834. Dr Kay, for instance, declared that "the Irish have not directly lowered the general rate of wages in this town, although possibly they may have prevented it from rising" (IPR, p. 533). Others agreed with him, but the weight of opinion favoured a different point of view. Mr. Redman was quite sure that; "by coming over in such hordes, the Irish take away the labour of the English by working at prices for which the English will not work; then the English are ultimately compelled to take the wages. I have no doubt that the Irish have lowered wages in all departments of common labour in Manchester" (IPR, p.523). This view was endorsed by Rev. Crook of St. Augustine's, who observed that the Irish "are more disposed to accept low wages for hard labour than the English" (IPR, p.536). Whatever the objective truth - and modern scholarship suggests that, on balance, the impact of the Irish on wage levels may have been neutral (Williamson, 1989) - the belief that the Irish presence lowered wages for all was widespread, particularly among working-class English.

However powerful the external hostilities may have been, there were also factors within the Irish migrant community itself which encouraged social and spatial segregation. The strong ties of kinship which many contemporary observers noted amongst the migrants were undoubtedly important as a means of attracting would-be migrants to particular cities and existing Irish areas within them. This was certainly the opinion of Mr. James Taylor, silk manufacturer of Newton Heath, who, in 1834, explained how he recruited workers particularly when his English employees were on strike: "I send to Ireland for ten, fifteen or twenty families ... the whole family comes - father, mother and children. I provide them with money ... the communications are generally made through the friends of parties in my employ. I have no agent in Ireland" (IPR, p.68). Such linkages were also noted as a factor in attracting migrants to the Manchester area in Famine years. When, in early January 1847, a proposal was made to establish a soup kitchen to relieve the distress of what a Mr. Fletcher, at a meeting of the Board of Guardians, described as "a very large influx of Irish families within the last few weeks", particular mention was made of the experience of "a poor Irishman, who had his son, son's wife and four children come over from Ireland and place themselves upon the old man" (MG, 6 Jan 1847). In another case a woman with six children, who had arrived in Liverpool two days previously, appeared at the soup kitchen shortly after it had opened. It was found that, having been evicted from a holding in Roscommon and given 25 shillings by the landlord for the passage to England, "she was fain to accept the money, and come over to Manchester, hoping that a married sister who lived there might be able to do something for her" (MG, 21 March 1847). Consequently, "she came, and found her relative and family living in Little Ireland and dependent upon the soup kitchen for support" (MG, 27 March 1847).

The sequence of events was not always as simple as this. There is evidence in the enumerators' returns and elsewhere of stepped migration. The *Manchester Guardian* (16 Jan 1847) reported one case of an Irish family who "having relations in Bolton, who are employed in a factory ... made their way from their native isle thitherto in the hope of getting employment ... not succeeding there, they went to Bury, where

similar adverse fortunes awaited them, and were on the way to Manchester for the same object, when, becoming reduced to pinching necessity, they asked alms from the charitable by the way, and thus became amenable to the law".

Among those with no friends and relations in Manchester, transmission of information about the location of Irish districts, suitable accommodation and employment openings was by other means. The main entry point for new arrivals, the major roads and, later, railways, were close to the major working-class residential districts and indeed many of the major industrial sites where work, and news of work, was to be had. One of the most useful venues for the exchange of information about accommodation and work was the public house which, as well as selling drink, must have played as significant a part in the social and cultural life of Manchester's Irish migrants as it did in Liverpool and London (Lees, 1979, Pooley, 1977). In 1851 there were twelve such establishments in the study area. No doubt casual encounters amongst migrants whilst still travelling was another means of acquiring relevant information; and there is also evidence from at least one contemporary song to suggest that lodging house keepers touted for business at the railway stations:

*"Slap Up Lodgings*

*When first to town I came, and at the railway landed,  
By a fat old dame a card to me was handed,  
Says she I'd have you know, my name is Mrs. Podgings,  
I live down this row, and I let out slap up lodgings."*  
(Axon: Broadside ballads)

Another place where vital information could be picked up was the local Catholic church. Such churches, their personnel and associated institutions offered more than spiritual comfort to the migrant Irish (Lowe, 1976-7). They acted as a focus for the local community, and with the passage of time the build-up of associated infrastructure helped consolidate and extend the Irish character of the local area. In the mid-nineteenth century the Catholics of Angel Meadow were mostly served by St. Patrick's, Livesey Street (opened in 1832) and, despite the consecration of other churches not far away, it acquired a status as the mother church of this part of Catholic Manchester. It quickly accumulated a considerable cluster of institutions: in 1836 a convent of the Presentation Order of nuns was founded in Livesey Street; in 1838 St. Patrick's Boys School was opened; in 1840 St Bridget's Orphanage; and in 1845 the Christian Brothers, an Irish teaching order, left their previous location in Lloyd Street for St. Patrick's (Blundell, 1938). In all, this represented an impressive build up of community infrastructure which helped fix the Catholic and Irish element in the area and, indeed, contributed to its extension by attracting additional migrants.

A final, material reason why the Irish tended to cluster together relates to their relatively low level of economic resources. The traditional economic picture of the Irish was of a group marked by poverty and employed only in the worst paid, most lowly skilled occupations. Subsequent research has shown that in some places their occupational structure was rather more varied. To test the situation in Angel Meadow, two streets were examined. In Angel Street, where over 56% of the residents were Irish, it was possible to identify the place of birth of 15 of the 22 owners

of business premises who appear in both the 1851 enumerators' returns and Slater's Directory of that year. Only two of the 15 were born in Ireland, thus suggesting that the Irish were underrepresented in the retail trade of the street, such as it was. This finding also implies that Irish people were overrepresented in less skilled, less remunerative occupations. And this is borne out by the findings on the occupational structure of Dyche Street, whose population was 56.6% Irish. Of 169 Irish who were economically active, 71 (42%) were in less skilled occupations, as opposed to 39 (32.5%) of the 120 non-Irish population (Busteed, Hodgson & Kennedy, 1992).

Given their meagre economic resources, the Irish attempted to solve the problem of accommodation by multiple-occupancy. The result was that, on average, the density of people in exclusively-Irish and majority-Irish houses in Angel Meadow was 10.0 persons per house, while in non-Irish houses it was only 6.4 persons. This higher density was not caused by lack of accommodation as such, for the census quite frequently records empty houses, including four, for instance, in Angel Street. The problem was one of affordable accommodation. The result of multiple-occupancy is best conveyed by a description of the situation in early 1847: "The population of the district [St. George's] is, to a great extent, composed of the lower of the Irish, who live and lodge together in great numbers in the same house. In one part of the district, called Angel Meadow, it is not uncommon to find 20 or 30 persons living in one house, when there is not accommodation for one-third of that number" (MG, 6 Feb 1847).

As implied in the above quotation, multiple occupancy could sometimes take the form of lodging houses in which not merely rooms but beds might be rented out on a nightly basis. And the likely consequences of this were all too plain to see, as outlined in one of the town's quarterly returns on health and mortality in early 1847: "the mortality amongst the Irish poor has been greater this quarter than last, many of them dying after a few days residence, not from organic or old chronic complaints, but in very many instances from extreme debility, produced, no doubt, by the want of sufficient food, and exposure to the dangerous influence of the low lodging houses to which they are compelled to resort" (MG, 15 May 1847). The members of the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association found a similar situation when they reported in 1853. In Ludgate Street (parallel to and east of Angel Street; Fig. 4), they found "the dwellings generally in a very dirty state, the inhabitants of the lowest order, principally Irish". In the specific instance of no. 9, their phraseology suggest that they were looking at a lodging house, for they described it as "a Cellar about 14 feet square:- 5 bedsteads, with Beds or a substitute for Beds, no ventilation, the Heat quite oppressive and conclude all the beds are full at night" (Report, Manchester & Salford Sanitary Association, 1853, p.3). In other cases of multiple occupancy the houses contained a number of family groups and perhaps few or no lodgers. In the Irish (majority) houses in Angel Meadow, 85% of the people were related to someone else in the house, whilst the figure for non-Irish houses was 87.1%. The difference, though small, might be significant in pointing to the greater tendency of the Irish with poor resources to live in lodging houses or share family accommodation with lodgers.

## Conclusion

The Irish community in Manchester was one of the largest in nineteenth century urban Britain but it had a significance even beyond its considerable numbers because this was the world's first great industrial city and the reactions of both local and outside observers established a stereotype of the Irish migrant. Detailed examination of maps, census enumerators' returns for 1851, local newspapers, Sanitary Association reports, and directories does, however, suggest that some aspects of both the traditional picture and more recent scholarship must be treated with caution. This article has concentrated in particular on the geography of Irish settlement in one working-class district. It has emerged that there was a geographical pattern of separation of the Irish from the host community, with distinct concentrations of Irish streets and houses, and that there was also considerable social separation as indicated by a relatively low level of marriage with the non-Irish working class. In part this segregation was the result of a certain reserve - which occasionally erupted into an open hostility - on the part of the host population, some of whose members regarded the Irish as a religious, political and economic threat; but it was also due, in part, to the Irish wishing or needing to congregate, sometimes as a reaction to hostility, more often because of kinship links, ethnic compatibility and scarce economic resources.

However, these findings on spatial and social separation require careful interpretation. The data also reveal that there was intermixing at street and household level, together with some intermarriage. Common sense would also show that total separation was an impossibility. The Irish would mix with people from other backgrounds as they moved about daily life and work. Any temptation to characterise the working-class Manchester Irish as living in "ghettos" would fail to appreciate the subtle realities of Irish living as portrayed here. It would also fail to encompass the wider reality that the Irish were merely one element in a broader working-class experience and culture made up of people drawn into Manchester from a remarkable variety of regional, social and economic backgrounds in Britain, Ireland and, indeed, beyond.

It must also be noted that studies such as this have certain qualities which may, consciously or otherwise, influence their findings. The degree of separation and segregation discovered can vary with the definition of the group in question, quality of the data, spatial scale of the study and the preconceptions of the researchers involved. In this particular case it must also be pointed out that the study is spatially and temporally specific. It looks only at one part of one district of working-class Manchester in 1851. The experience in other parts of the city both before and after this date may well have been quite different. If resources allow, it is proposed to extend the work to other areas and periods in this, the place where so much of the image of the Irish in nineteenth century urban Britain was first formulated.

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