

Manchester Geographies

This collection of essays has been produced to mark Paul Hindle's 30 years of service to the Manchester Geographical Society. Paul became a member of the Society's Council in 1983. He was appointed Acting Honorary Secretary in 1986 and Honorary Secretary in 1987. For many years, Paul has taken an interest in the Society's history, and he has written about the two most recent phases (1973-1997 and 1998-2010) in the Society's journals. He was editor of the printed journal *The North West Geographer* from 1981 to 1986, and has edited the on-line journal *North West Geography* since 2001. Paul's work as Honorary Secretary did much to ensure the smooth transition of the Society to a Charitable Trust in 2010. He is one of the Society's ten Trustees and a member of the Academic Committee that, as part of its work, oversees Research Grant and Postgraduate Awards. A regular (and admired) contributor to the Manchester



Geographical Society's open lecture series, Paul continues to provide great service, not least in operating the Society's Registered Office. Beyond the Society, Paul is connected to two other charities, as Chairman of the Manchester Bolton & Bury Canal Society and a committee member of Bolton Choral Union.

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Edited by Wilfred Theakstone



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Contents	Page
Editor's introduction	1
1 <i>MediaCityUK at Salford Quays: A sustainable, transit oriented development</i> Richard Knowles and Andrew Binder	3
2 <i>King Cotton does not live here any more</i> Rod Allman	13
3 <i>Mapping the geographies of Manchester's housing problems and the twentieth century solutions</i> Martin Dodge	19
4 <i>Vestiges of the pre-urban landscape in the suburban geography of South Manchester</i> Keith Sutton	37
5 <i>Barton: Britain's first municipal airport</i> Derek Brumhead	47
6 <i>Greater Manchester's ever changing rivers</i> Ian Douglas	57
7 <i>An armchair view of the geomorphology of the Rossendale Forest: New insights from LIDAR</i> Cathy Delaney	69
8 <i>The story of the Meccano Bridge</i> Liam Curtin	85
9 <i>Building the Meccano Bridge</i> Paul Hindle	91
10 <i>Saddleworth</i> Wilfred Theakstone	95
Contributors to the book	104

Editor's Introduction

The geography of the area we now know as Greater Manchester has seen many changes over the centuries. As road, canal and railway networks were developed, isolated settlements became more closely connected. With the population of the larger settlements increasing and new forms of power being introduced, industrial activity (originally at a local level) became a more pronounced feature of the economy. The growth of the cotton industry saw Manchester develop into a major commercial centre. As the city grew, suburbs developed, gradually spreading out further from the centre. Transport systems capable of moving people between their homes and their place of work expanded. Destruction caused by bombing during the Second World War resulted in changes of Manchester's geography. In the 1970s, the growth of container transport for the shipment of materials saw a decline of the port of Manchester. In recent decades, the geography of Greater Manchester has undergone major changes, and further developments already are under way or are being planned. The essays in this volume reflect some of these geographical changes.

Richard Knowles and Andrew Binder describe how the development of MediaCityUK necessitated a new road network, a tram line and stations, and new cycle routes. Media City is to double in size in the second phase of development, bringing further changes. Within the next few years, the local geography will be affected by the new 5.5 km Trafford Park tram line from Pomona.

Looking further back in time, Rod Allman notes that, in 1860, Manchester and its region were at the centre of the first globally integrated cotton manufacturing complex. However, there have been fundamental alterations in the geography of the cotton textile industry since the major disruption caused by the American Civil War. These reflect the constantly shifting structure of capitalism. Nevertheless, the region is responding successfully to the global challenges of the twenty-first century.

Martin Dodge notes that inequality in housing has been central to the history of Manchester and its changing geography. Overcrowding and poor quality housing remain significant problems. At the start of the twentieth century, Manchester still was a compact city. The Wythenshawe development in the 1920s was intended to create a separate satellite town, with housing surrounded by a green belt. Manchester's housing developments in the 1960s were related to economic decline and social change; people were rehoused with little consultation.

In his review of relationship between urban patterns and the pre-urban cadastre of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Keith Sutton reports that, in 1847, Chorlton was a rural village backwater. Development followed the establishment of the rail connection to Manchester's Central Station in 1880. Commuter railway stations functioned until the 1960s. A short-lived aerodrome that opened in 1918 was used for aircraft assembly, parts being transported by rail from Newton Heath and Stockport. Today, Conservation Area and listed

building measures protect landscape features, providing diversity and character to the suburban setting of the daily lives of many Mancunians.

Derek Brunhead writes about a much longer lived aerodrome than that in Chorlton: Barton Airport, opened in 1930. A 1934 report that it never would fulfil the conditions for commercial flying led directly to Ringway Airport being built. Barton had several UK scheduled services until 1939, when it was requisitioned by the Air Ministry as a maintenance base. Several historic buildings still exist, and the site is described by English Heritage as a unique historical aviation landscape. It remains one of the busiest general aviation airports in the UK, with flying schools for light aircraft, microlights and helicopters.

The physical geography of the Manchester region has changed markedly over time. Rivers which flow through the area date back to the retreat of the last ice sheet. Ian Douglas describes and illustrates alterations of river courses that have occurred in Greater Manchester, some related to natural causes, such as meander migration, and some to human activity. Ian notes that, although some rivers have been improved by better management, rapid changes will result from future extreme events. Alterations of the built-up area mean that future peak flows will be higher than they were a few decades ago; in places, the flood risk remains relatively high.

Cathy Delaney discusses the landforms of the Rossendale Forest area, many of them the result of glaciation. She shows how new remote sensing techniques, specifically LIDAR, permit close examination of the landscape, revealing previously unrecognised features and providing new information about those already known. Digital terrain models enable identification of the area's landforms, particularly landslides which may be potential hazards. Here, too, human activity has had a marked effect on both stream courses and landforms.

Liam Curtis and Paul Hindle write about a relatively recent addition to Manchester's geography, the Meccano Bridge at Nob End. Liam tells how, having been commissioned to make an artwork for Little Lever, it was suggested to him by local councillors that he do something with a heritage theme close to the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal. Paul and other members of the Canal Society became instrumental in the final outcome, suggesting a site at the top of the locks at Nob End. The concept of giant meccano dawned on Liam because the term "like meccano" was being used to describe the assembly. The design did not take long. Liam notes his indebtedness to the very mixed group of locals who were intent upon restoring the canal for helping him realise a modest dream. Paul reports that work on site to build the Meccano Bridge began in October 2012: vegetation was cleared and digging out the lock beneath the bridge site was commenced. By November, the bridge foundations were finished. All the work, except some bricklaying and scaffolding, was done by Canal Society members and local volunteers. The Meccano parts were all made in Bolton. Essentially the bridge was completed in only four days. The 'Grand Opening', in the presence of more than 400 people, was held in April 2013.

I describe aspects of Saddleworth. On the western slopes of the Pennines, it is the easternmost part of the Greater Manchester region. The earliest settlements were well above the marshy valley bottoms. Many of the early houses are in small clusters ('folds'). The cloth industry flourished as water-powered mills were founded and turnpike roads were developed from the 1750s. The Huddersfield Narrow Canal passes through Saddleworth to the Standedge tunnel, opened in 1811. There are many opportunities for walking in the area, much of which is a landscape of enclosure.