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# Mapping the Rise and Fall of Ancoats Hall

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## Abstract

A sequence of maps focused on Ancoats Hall is used to chart the fluctuating fortunes of the hall. It had been a 17<sup>th</sup> century building built by the Mosley family, sited in a rural setting facing the River Medlock. Replaced with a new building in the early 1820s by the textile magnate George Murray, the hall was rapidly engulfed by the industrial expansion of Ancoats leaving it hemmed into grim industrial surroundings. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the local philanthropist Thomas Horsfall used it as an art museum which aimed to enrich the lives of the poor, and it was joined by the first university settlement outside London which used both the hall and the nearby Round House to provide accommodation for activities that brought together local residents with university staff and students. Both buildings have now been demolished. Their legacy is the array of maps and plans that plot the hall's history.

## Keywords

Manchester maps, Ancoats, Mosley, Midland Railway, Horsfall, University Settlement

Of the many medieval and post-medieval halls that once existed in Manchester few can be more redolent of the history of the city than Ancoats Hall. It is associated with many of the individuals, the institutions and the buildings that went towards creating and enlivening the city's past. The original hall, first built in 1609, was demolished to be replaced by a new building in the 1820s and this, in its turn, was eventually demolished in the 1960s. In the course of its history the hall was linked to the Mosley family who were lords of the manor, to some of the cotton magnates of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the philanthropists and socially-concerned citizens of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and finally to the railway companies which stamped so firm a mark on the morphology of the city.

This history of the hall is generally well known. However, the degree to which its changing fortunes were faithfully captured by the maps made by the cartographers of the city has never been explored. It is the aim of this brief account to explore how far the various maps of the city effectively portray the sequence of events and changes linked to the hall's history and can offer a valuable visual dimension to the hall and its environs. It also looks briefly at some of the cartographers who produced maps and plans of the city.

The first phase of the hall's existence covers the post-medieval hall which was built by Oswald Mosley on land sold to him by the Byron family who for over 400 years

lived in Clayton Hall, a building which itself embodies significant Manchester history since it was sold in 1620 to George and Humphrey Chetham, the latter being the founder of Chetham's School and Library. The Mosley family was to play a significant role in Manchester's history since Sir Nicholas Mosley, the uncle of Oswald, had bought the lordship of the manor in 1596 and built Hough End Hall in Chorlton-cum-Hardy. John Aikin, in his 1795 history of Manchester, briefly described Ancoats Hall as 'a very ancient building of wood and plaister, but in some parts re-built with brick and stone...' (Aikin, 1795 p.211). He included a view of the hall which has been widely reproduced. However, not to be outdone, the surveyor John Hillkirk (who became agent to the second Baron Mosley) included his own view of the hall as part of his 1804 map of the land owned by the Mosleys (Fig. 1). The best early maps of the hall, however, are the two large-scale 18<sup>th</sup>-century maps of Manchester, by Laurent and Green. Both show the shape of the building's plan, which was built in an L-shape arranged on two side of a lawn and facing onto Ancoats Lane. At the rear was a large formal garden with a view overlooking the River Medlock (Figs. 2 and 3). The Laurent and Green versions of the hall are very similar.<sup>1</sup> So too, indeed, are their two maps as a whole. This reflects the rival claims that, on one hand, Laurent merely plagiarised the surveying work that Green undertook over a period of eight years, or on the other that Laurent's map contains features missing from Green that make it likely that

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1. Comparison of the two maps is made difficult because, while Green's is oriented with north (approximately) to the top, Laurent's is oriented with south-south-east to the top. Here, Laurent's map is shown turned 180 degrees to make it easier to compare with Green.

Laurent did original work of his own so that the two maps should be seen as complementary (Wyke and Robson, 2016). Green's map is the more helpful of the two since it shows the ownership patterns of the surrounding land and makes clear that the area between the hall and the River Medlock (as well as much of the wider area surrounding the hall) was owned by the Mosleys. Indeed, the clear impression is of a bucolic setting with the hall standing proudly isolated from the industrial development that was concentrated in the core of Ancoats. Indeed, Green's plan shows that the large plot of land north of the hall which was owned by the Mosleys was then proposed for 'Gardens or Pleasure Grounds' and that one of the streets laid out for development would be called 'Park Street'. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, except for the pin mill factory bordering the River Medlock, there was little urban development that impinged on the site, and even into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, maps such as those by James Pigot, suggest that the hall was untroubled by the relatively distant industrial development in Ancoats to the north (Fig. 4). As the city began to expand, land owners laid out plots of land – as here – in the hope of attracting developers to build houses or other developments (Chalklin, 1974). Both Green's and Laurent's maps show the two curving arms of the proposed 'Crescent' lying on each side of Ancoats Lane. The southern section did materialize in part, but the northern arc never did. Clearly, as with much of the land on the outskirts of the city, the hope had been to build high-status housing which would have generated larger returns for the land owners than would humbler development. However, the inexorable spread of the industrial development of Ancoats was to put paid to any hopes that the area around Ancoats Hall would become a fashionable residential quarter.

The building's second phase saw the replacement of the old hall with a newer more fashionable building. By the time of Aikin's account in 1795 the hall was lived in by one of Manchester's new wealthy merchants, William Rawlinson (Aikin, 1795 p.211). By the 1820s it had been bought by George Murray, whose eponymous Ancoats textile mill was one of the wonders of Manchester. The complex of Murrays' Mills, built by Adam and George Murray, along with the adjacent McConnel and Kennedy Mill, comprised the earliest of the array of huge mills that fronted onto the Rochdale Canal and which have been described as the finest collection of Georgian mills in the world (Williams and Farnie, 1992). It was Murray who decided to demolish the existing hall and replace it with a new building, opting for the then more fashionable brick Georgian building. Baines,

in his history of Lancashire, noted the many grand houses in the area but commented that, 'Many of those mansions are fallen into decay, and are giving place to more stately edifices, with which the environs of Manchester abound; but they are too numerous and too modern to form the subject of history' (Baines, 1836 ii, p.353). He could well have been thinking of Ancoats Hall. The change from the earlier to the later building is nicely captured by contemporary maps of the city. Pigot, in his 1821 map, shows the earlier building and both he and Swire show its replacement in their 1824 maps.<sup>2</sup> Swire's map, done for Baines's 1824-5 history, has a handsome rendition of the gardens which still stretched towards the River Medlock (Fig. 5). The new hall is shown with its two main bays facing Ancoats Lane, an ornate garden behind the house and an extensive range of stables adjacent to the hall.

However, the timing of the rebuilding was unfortunate since by the 1820s the industrial and urban development of Ancoats had gathered pace. Pigot – who produced an almost continuous series of highly accurate maps of the city to accompany his trade directories during the first 40 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Robson, 2017) – shows the sequence of fast encroaching urban development that was to engulf the hall, surrounding it almost completely by the middle of the century. Every Street, Every Place, Tame Street and others had begun to encroach on land that had been open fields in the Mosley's days. The sequence of Pigot's maps provides a very graphic chronicle of this spread of development. Housing and industry filled the area between the Rochdale and Ashton canals and continued to spread south to envelop Ancoats Hall. Unsurprisingly, most of the housing was of poor quality, as was generally true of Ancoats as it developed into what is regarded as the world's first 'one-class' industrial suburb, with a mixture of textile mills, other industrial premises and hastily thrown-up housing to accommodate the workers (*Manchester Region History Review*, 1993; Rose *et al*, 2011). The heart of Ancoats became crowded with jerry-built housing. Banks's plan of 1832 (Fig. 6) (surveyed by the prolific local cartographer Richard Thornton, about whom surprisingly little is known despite the quality and number of surveys that he did of the city) shows that back-to-back housing on Great Ancoats Street now faced almost directly across from Ancoats Hall (in Camplins Buildings and the long terrace fronting Ancoats Street), and that behind the only partly-completed Crescent lay a further terrace of back-to-backs called Back Crescent. These houses no doubt provided accommodation for workers in the adjacent Taylor

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2. The maps make it clear that the new hall was built by 1824, in contrast to some commentaries that suggest it was built in 1827.

& Chatwell cotton mill. As Kellett noted of Ancoats, 'Here [except for a few shopkeepers and clerks] lived the porters, labourers, hawkers, tramps, hurdy-gurdy men, and people of no definite occupation, sandwiched between the railway sidings, dye works and cotton mills, iron and boiler works, gas and sanitary installations and works making oil and grease' (Kellett, 1969 p.338). By mid-century much of the land that had been owned by the Mosleys had been taken for development so that the hall was hemmed in by Every Street to the north and cut off from the slope down to the River Medlock by Palmerston Street. Simms's large-scale map of 1858 shows this to good effect (Fig. 7). The plot of land that optimistically had been hoped to be converted to gardens was now thickly covered with terraced housing. Even more striking is one of the plates from Joseph Adshead's handsome plans of the city (Fig. 8). Adshead's map is one of the most extraordinary plans of Manchester. It derived from a survey done by the local surveyor Richard Thornton and published by the larger-than-life Adshead who, amongst a wide variety of activities, became Alderman for St. Anne's Ward and campaigned for various public causes in the health sector and in prisons. Since the 23 sheets of the map are divided into wards and each sheet is oriented in different directions it is not easy to use as a map of the whole city, but the individual sheets are handsome detailed portraits of the component parts of the mid-century city (Robson, 2018). Adshead used colour and shading to distinguish five types of land use (including, as seen here, yellow for mills and works, heavy diagonals for warehouses and businesses, and light diagonals for private houses). He shows the hall sitting somewhat forlornly, surrounded by new streets and by iron works and dye works now fronting the curve of the River Medlock (and with adjacent back-to-back housing in Barlows Buildings). In Every Street, the round chapel of Christ Church (which is discussed later) is shown sitting prominently surrounded by its large cemetery.

It was not only housing and industry that impacted on the erstwhile pastoral setting of the hall. Railways inevitably came to play an increasingly significant role. One of Pigot's most interesting maps is for 1836 on which he shows the line of a projected railway, the Manchester and Cheshire Junction, which would have run virtually adjacent to the hall (Fig. 9). While that railway did not then materialize, the proposal was a harbinger of what was to come later in the century. The railway line that was eventually built by the Midland Company to connect Ancoats with the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire line had the most dramatic impact on the hall as a residential environment. When George Murray died in 1855, his wife continued to live in the hall

with one of her sons. However, by 1868 she had left the hall which was bought from the Mosleys by the Midland Railway Company together with an extensive plot of their land in Ancoats to enable the company to build a new goods station. It had gained permission in 1865 to build the new station on a plot of some 70 acres, but only after the Corporation had been persuaded to grant authorization in return for having received a generous grant of £5000 for the streets that would be subsumed by the development (Kellett, 1969 p.163). Ancoats Goods Station was opened in 1870 and Ancoats Hall itself was used by the Midland Railway for offices. The new line from the Ancoats station ran right next to the hall, which by this time was also closely hemmed in on all sides by housing and industry. The impact can be seen in Isaac Slater's maps of the city, which accompanied his trade directories of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His 1871 map is an example (Fig. 10). It shows the line of the railway and the goods station at Ancoats which had opened in the previous year. Slater had been an apprentice to James Pigot and was subsequently made a partner in the business, which then traded as Pigot & Slater. He took over the production of the trade directories after Pigot's death in 1843. The firm remained in the Slater family until Slater's death in 1883, when it was taken over by Kelly's Directories. Slater initially used versions of the Pigot plates, but later produced his own maps which are considerably less informative and less handsome than Pigot's.

The penultimate phase of the hall is perhaps the most interesting period of its tumultuous history. In 1877 the Manchester Art Museum was founded by the wealthy philanthropist Thomas Coglean Horsfall. It was initially housed in Queen's Park in north Manchester but relocated to Ancoats Hall in 1886. The museum reflected Horsfall's fascination with the social philosophy of John Ruskin and his belief in the power of art-socialism and of civic engagement as ways to improve the lives of the poor. The museum stood as a cultural beacon amid the squalor of Ancoats. It opened its rooms in the hall and filled them with paintings, sculpture, architecture and domestic art together with books and pamphlets that provided a chronology of the development of art. It offered craft classes, music, lectures and children's concerts and much besides. Ruskin himself took a personal interest in its development and many of the local socially-concerned organisations and individuals were involved in supporting its activities: including, for example, the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association with which Horsfall was involved, the Manchester Statistical Society, and even professors such as Frederick Tout and Samuel Alexander, at Owens College. Later, an extension to the hall

was built to provide a theatre which could accommodate audiences of up to 600 for theatrical and musical events.

The parallel social development to the establishment of the museum was the foundation of the Manchester University Settlement, inspired by Canon Samuel Barnett who had founded the first university-linked 'settlement' at Toynbee Hall in London's Tower Hamlets. As the first university settlement outside the capital, the Manchester Settlement aimed to create 'cross-class' co-operation by bringing students and staff into contact with the poor to exchange experiences and develop informal education. Horsfall had supported Toynbee Hall financially and it was inevitable that the Manchester Settlement should find one of its homes in Ancoats Hall. It was based in part of the hall in 1895 and formally merged with the museum in 1901. At its outset the settlement was a residential organization with staff and students from what then was Owens College living in Ancoats, working with local people and giving talks and joining in seminars and discussions. From the late 1890s the women lived in Ancoats Hall and the men in number 20 Every Street, which had been a working men's college called Ruskin Hall and which fronted onto the circular-shaped Bible Christian chapel of Christ Church. Refurbished in the 1920s the chapel was christened the Round House and became the second home of settlement activity, alongside Ancoats Hall itself (Stocks, 1945; Rose and Woods, 1995). The original adjoining cemetery was refurbished as a playground and it and the Round House provided space for a wide range of activities and events aimed especially at local children and their families.

The most widely influential of the settlement's early wardens was Thomas Marr who was appointed as men's warden and who came from Outlook Tower in Edinburgh where he had worked with the inspirational maverick pioneering town planner and visionary Patrick Geddes who held displays, organized processions and proselytized his somewhat unfathomable views of social reform (Meller, 1993). Given this background it is not surprising that Marr worked closely with Horsfall, setting up the Citizens' Association for the Improvement of the Unwholesome Dwellings and Surroundings of the People and campaigning for housing reform. Marr's study of the appalling housing conditions in much of Manchester proved highly influential in the housing debate of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which focused on the clearance of slum properties and the building of model suburbs along lines suggested by Ebenezer Howard (Marr, 1904). The Art Museum was taken over by the City in 1918 and the museum and settlement formally separated, although the two continued to work closely together

informally. Much later, in the 1950s the museum was closed and most of its collection was transferred to the Manchester Art Gallery.

Not all the 20<sup>th</sup> century maps of the city identified the establishment of the museum, but some of the national cartographers did refer to it. For example, Bacon's map of 1906 notes 'Museum' (Fig. 11) and, even more strikingly, Kelly's map of 1930, which accompanied one of the firm's directories, notes 'Horsfall Museum'. By this time, as the maps show, Ancoats was virtually completely built-up and the hall stood amid what had become grim surroundings. The railway, which by then had become the London Midland and Scottish, closely hemmed in the hall on its southern border, cut across part of the formal garden and isolated the hall from the River Medlock. The 25" Ordnance Survey map shows this to good effect, naming the building as 'Horsfall Museum' on what had become a very cramped site (Fig. 12). The once handsome gardens had been built over and Palmerston Street hemmed in the house where the gardens had once been. Interestingly, the Ordnance Survey map names the Round House on Every Street as 'University Settlement'.

The final phase of the hall's history was from the 1950s by which time the lease had reverted back into railway company hands. The University Settlement still occupied parts of the building, but it eventually moved out in the early 1960s, partly because of the fall in the demand for residence and partly the increasing dilapidation of the hall itself. The British Transport Commission (BTC) – established in 1948 as part of the rail nationalization programme and responsible for overseeing railways, canals and road freight transport in Britain – was given charge of rail holdings, and its main properties were the assets of the Big Four national regional railway companies including the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. It therefore effectively inherited Ancoats Hall (Fig.13). Initially in the 1950s there were plans to convert the hall into a social and recreational club for rail employees, but the Transport Commission eventually tried to sell the building. When this proved unsuccessful the hall was demolished in the early 1960s. Indeed, BTC itself had run into serious financial difficulties and was generally regarded not to have managed to create the integrated transport system that had been expected of it. It was abolished in 1963 to be replaced by five successor bodies, one of which was the British Railways Board. The cartographic legacy of this sad demise of the hall is the set of detailed plans of proposals that had been drawn up for the refurbishment of the hall (Figs. 14 and 15) which show what had been proposed. While the exterior of Ancoats Hall could hardly claim to

have been a handsome building, the plans give an indication of the impressive internal size of the hall and the number and variety of its rooms. They make it clear how suitable the building had been for the display of art and cultural artefacts by the museum, for large-scale entertainments, and for residence by the University Settlement. The railway company plans show proposals for a bar and darts room and a large dance hall on the ground floor, and billiards and table tennis rooms on the first floor. There were no fewer than 15 rooms on the second floor and 14 basement cellars for beer and wine. One of the hall's most striking features was the auditorium at the rear of the building which had been added on by Horsfall in 1892 to provide space for large-scale concerts and theatrical performances.

Nothing now remains of the hall. Its sister building, the Round House, survived slightly longer. The University Settlement left Ancoats in 1973 as the juggernaut of slum clearance and proposals for a new ring road left Every Street isolated from the wider area. The settlement eventually moved to a new purpose-built building in Beswick in 1983 funded by Greater Manchester Council (GMC) and

a generous donation from the Zochonis Trust (Rose and Woods, 1995). The Round House was owned by GMC from 1983 but was demolished in 1986 (despite its having listed status). What is now left of it as a physical legacy is merely a low circular brick wall that marks out the line of the original chapel. Of Ancoats Hall itself, however, there is now no physical trace whatsoever. Nevertheless, what does remain is the plethora of historic maps and plans that chart so dramatically the rise and fall of one of Manchester's most historic grand houses.

### Acknowledgements

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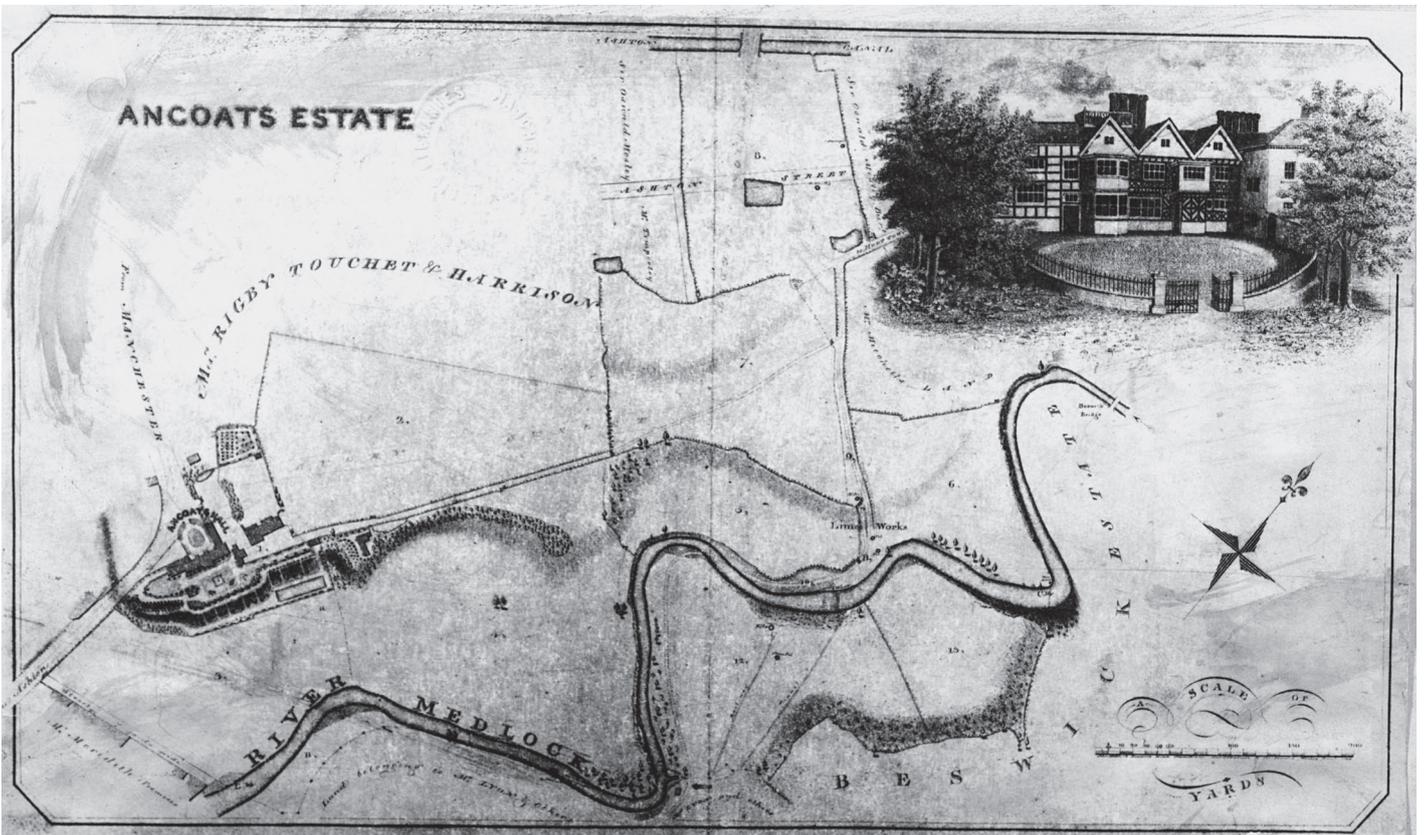


Figure 1: John Hillkirk, Ancoats Estate (1804).



Figure 2: Detail from William Green's Manchester (1794), Ancoats Hall is shown lower right facing onto Ancoats Lane (later called Great Ancoats Street).



Figure 3: Detail from Charles Laurent's Manchester (1793), the map has been rotated by 180 degrees to put north very roughly at the top.



Figure 4: Detail from James Pigot and R. & W. Dean's Manchester (1809).



Figure 5: Detail from William Swire's *Manchester* (1824).



*Figure 6: Detail from Bancks & Co's Manchester (1832).*



Figure 7: Detail from George Simms's *Manchester* (1858).



Figure 8: Joseph Adshead's *Manchester*, sheet 16 (1851), one of the 23 sheets of the Thornton/Adshead map.



Figure 9: Detail from James Pigot's Manchester (1836), the proposed railway is shown running just south of Ancoats Hall.



Figure 10: Detail from Isaac Slater's Manchester (1871).



Figure 11: Detail from George Bacon's Manchester (1907).



Figure 12: Detail from the Ordnance Survey's 25-inch Manchester, originally surveyed 1889 and subsequently revised. The substantive revision was for the version published in 1908. The version used here is a further partial revision for 1932.

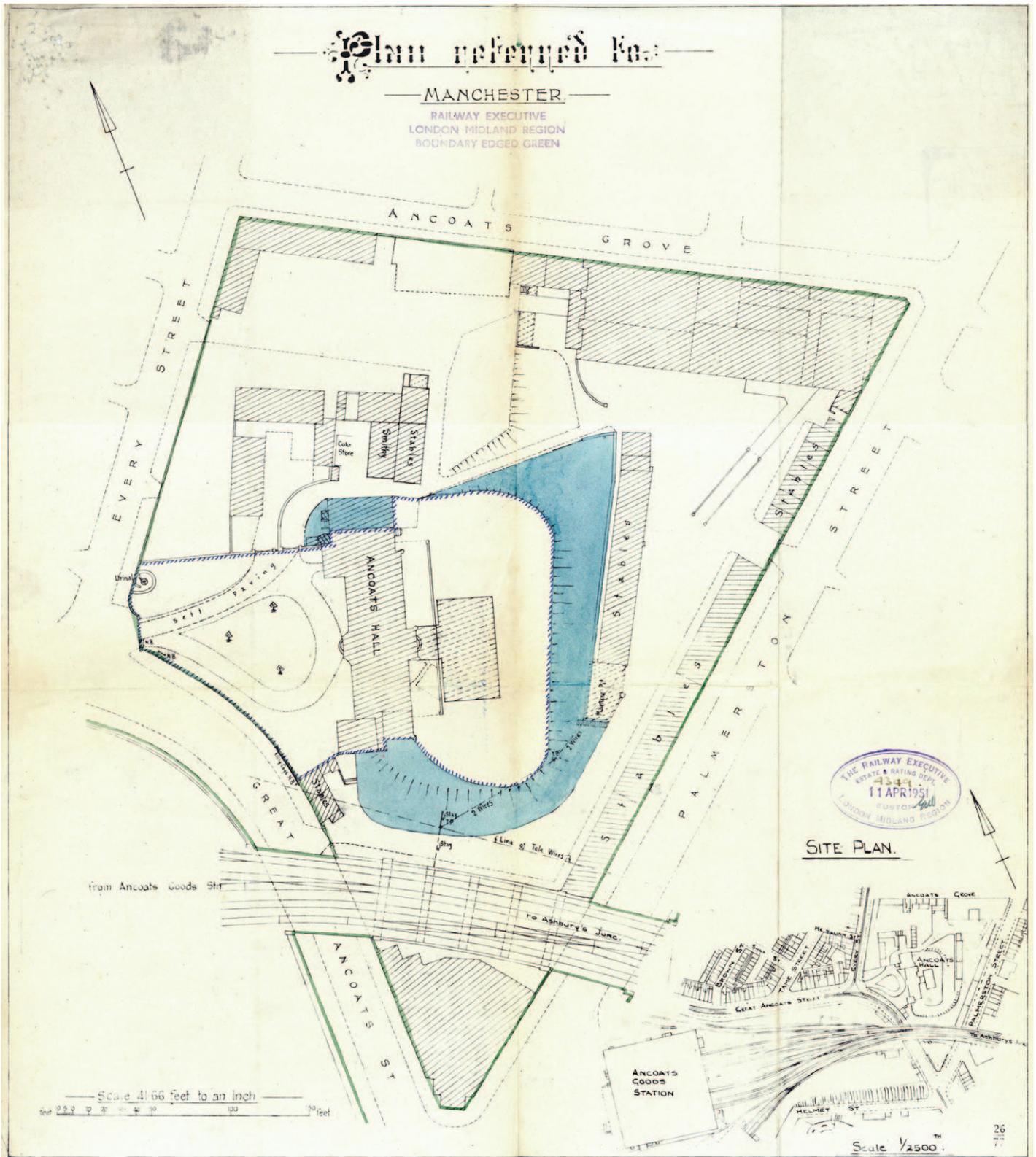
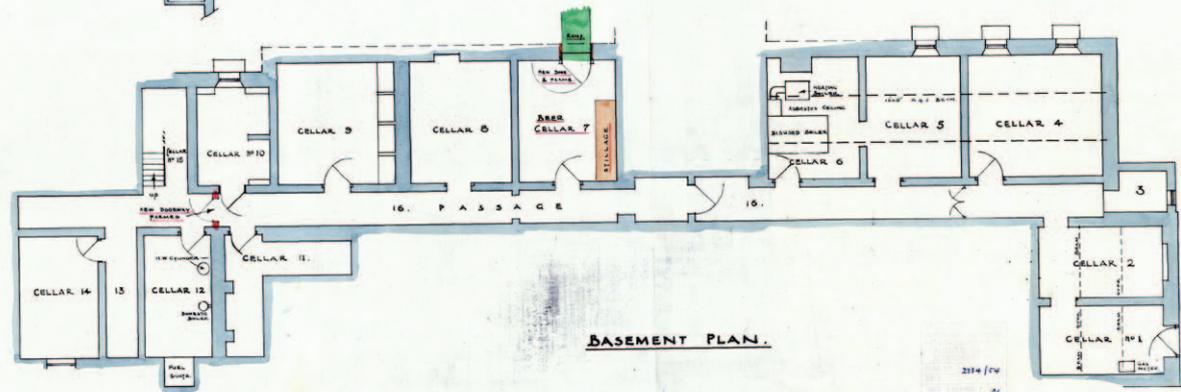
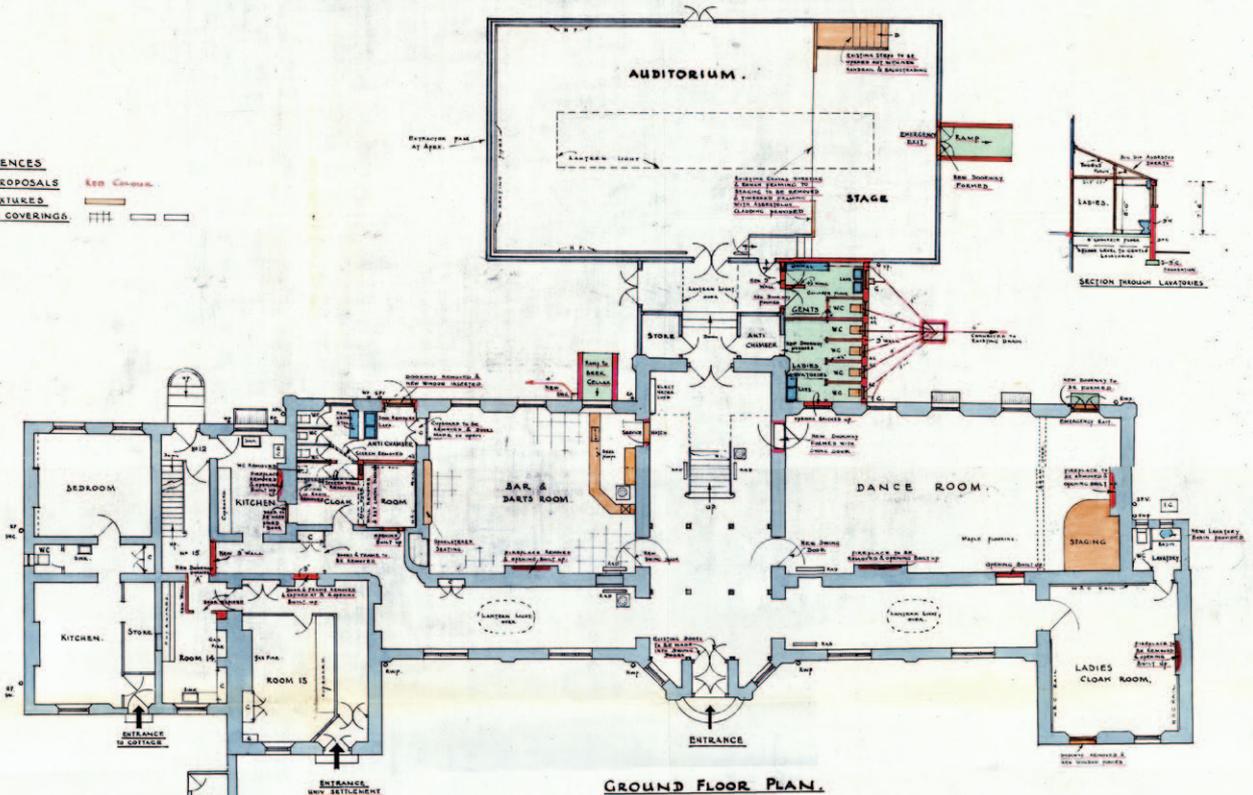


Figure 13: London Midland Region District Estate Office, Ancoats Hall Site Plan (1951).

— MANCHESTER — ANCOATS OLD HALL —  
 PROPOSED SOCIAL CLUB FOR ANCOATS BRANCH L.M.R. STAFF ASSOCIATION.

REFERENCES

- NEW PROPOSALS    — RED COLOUR.
- NEW FIXTURES
- FLOOR COVERINGS



SCALE 8 FEET TO 1 INCH.

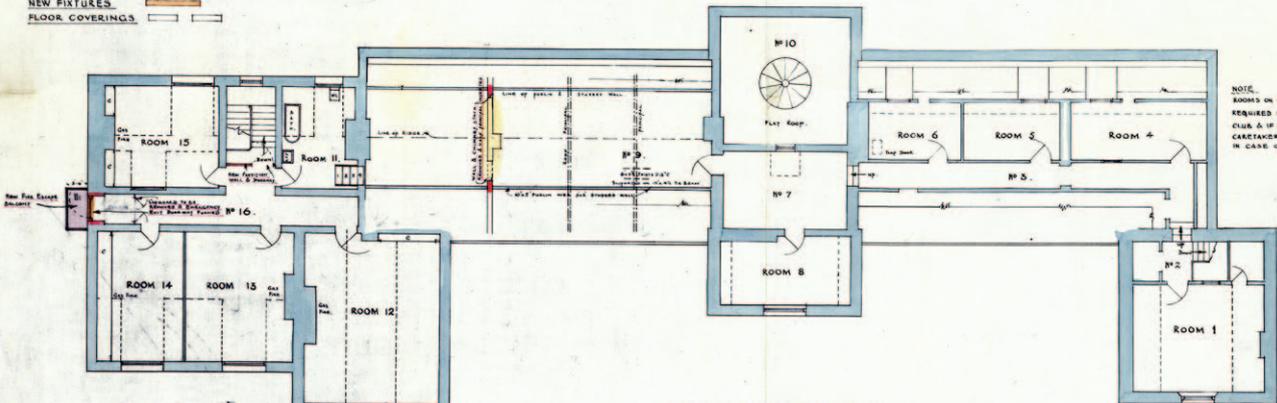
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Figure 14: London Midland Region District Estate Office, Ancoats Hall ground floor (1953).

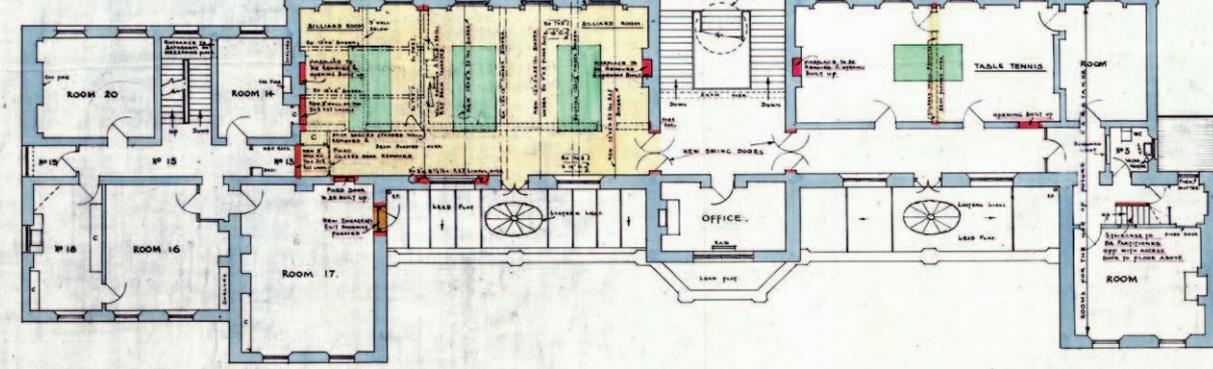
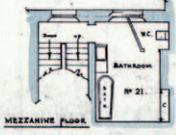
— MANCHESTER — ANCOATS OLD HALL. —  
 PROPOSED SOCIAL CLUB FOR ANCOATS BRANCH L.M.R. STAFF ASSOCIATION.

REFERENCES.  
 NEW PROPOSALS. Red Lines  
 NEW FIXTURES.   
 FLOOR COVERINGS.

NOTE.  
 ROOMS ON SECOND FLOOR NOT  
 REQUIRED FOR USE IN THE SOCIAL  
 CLUB & IF USED BY THE FUTURE  
 CARETAKER, MEANS OF ESCAPE  
 IN CASE OF FIRE TO BE PROVIDED.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN.

SCALE 8 FEET TO 1 INCH.

MANCHESTER DISTRICT OFFICE  
 2780/54  
 93/69

Figure 15: London Midland Region District Estate Office, Ancoats Hall upper floors (1953).