

CHARLES ROWLEY AND THE ANCOATS RECREATION MOVEMENT, 1876-1914

Audrey Kay

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the virtual completion of the exodus, which had spanned sixty years, of the rich from their homes in the centre of Manchester. As the middle classes fled the foul air of the city to the purer atmosphere of the suburbs and beyond, their superior town residencies were converted into commercial premises.¹ In consequence, most middle-class citizens had never ventured into the labyrinth of mean streets within Manchester's working-class dormitories. But out of sight did not necessarily mean out of mind. There was fear among the more comfortable classes that disease might spread from these hidden working-class quarters into the tree-lined seclusion of suburbia. The fear was, also, that the residential segregation which had taken place had removed the civilising influence of the wealthy from the experience of the poor.² One consequence was that much cultural missionary work was undertaken by a small band of Manchester's middle-class. This was based on the belief that the urban poor could be civilised through various forms of education.³ The Ancoats Recreation Movement was the first to put into practice the belief that the teaching power of art and music would civilise the inhabitants of 'roughdom'.

By the 1870s Ancoats was recognised as one of the worst slums in Manchester. Appalling housing conditions, a high death rate and widespread drunkenness and poverty made Ancoats seem to embody all that was immoral, degrading and threatening in the late Victorian city.⁴ Due to its notoriety, which was far more potent than that of Hulme, Miles Platting and other more recently developed working-class districts

near to Manchester's centre, Ancoats, like its London counterpart Bethnal Green, attracted more than its share of cultural evangelism. The whole enterprise pre-supposed middle-class leadership and working-class subordination.

Some of the most influential citizens of the Manchester region were among those who supported the Recreation Movement's work. These included Herbert Phillips and T.R. Wilkinson of the Sunday Lecture Society; James Heywood the bookseller; W.E.A. Axon the polymath; William Mather, founder of Mather and Platt, the large engineering works; Gustav Behrens, the wealthy German merchant; the daughters of Elizabeth Gaskell; and C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian. Together with Charles Rowley and Thomas Coglean Horsfall of the Manchester Art Museum these worthies provided the nucleus of Ancoats subscription lists during the last quarter of the century.

Apart from Horsfall, who was an Anglican, those of the above influential Mancunians who had religious affiliations were dissenters. For example, Mather had a puritan background, the Gaskells were Unitarians and Axon was a Bible Christian. In political terms these were Liberals: Mather was the Liberal Member of Parliament for Salford North in the years of the formation of the Ancoats Movement. Charles Rowley, who called himself a socialist, was a member of the Liberal Party and his club was the Reform Club in Manchester. This was also the meeting place of the other male members of the group. There is no evidence that any of these people, apart from Rowley and Horsfall, had any proclivity towards the teaching power of art. All were, however, the cultured type of middle-class Mancunian – far removed from Matthew Arnold's Philistines. They were all interested in the furtherance of education for the poor and in the substitution of rational recreation for the hedonistic and boisterous pursuits of slum life.

The purpose of this article is to examine the role played by the Recreation Movement in Ancoats and to evaluate how far it was successful in supplanting urban, working-class culture by imposing in its place the values of the 'cultured' well-to-do.

Charles Rowley

Although in the first instance, the egocentric, flamboyant figure of Charles Rowley was one among several instigators of the Ancoats Movement, he soon became the main focus for its affairs. Unlike many of the other supporters of the cause, Rowley's roots were in Ancoats and his zest for organisation and his enthusiasm and aesthetic approach to social problems became essential ingredients in the Movement's willingness to continue and to experiment with programmes.

Rowley had been born in Ancoats in 1839. His father, Charles senior, was a radical of the old school and had been present at Peterloo. Rowley the elder had been a personal friend of Abel and



Charles Rowley, a portrait by Ford Madox Brown.



Charles Rowley as 'Hope', drawn by E. Gertrude Thompson.

John Heywood, the book and stationery producers and distributors. All three were devoted to the education of themselves and the enlightenment of others. Rowley, senior, had received much of his education at Miles Platting Mechanics' Institution and he and John Heywood became directors of this vigorous organisation in the 1850s.⁵

The younger Charles was one of thirteen children and was equally devoted to learning as was his father. His delicate health caused him to remain at home for most of his childhood and he was largely self-taught, mainly by reading under the guidance of his father. Rowley later acknowledged that Bennett Street Sunday School had also been a great influence, both in his childhood and as a young man.⁶ When he reached the aged of fourteen, Rowley started work as a picture frame maker in the family business where a useful educational experience was obtained. In his memoirs he wrote:

The workshop had grown to be a very big one, and for its day was well equipped, the best of its kind. If modern, technical instruction had been available, much more might have been done. As it was, we depended on our mother — wit and nimble fingers. From framing samples galore, marriage-lines, Forester and Oddfellows' emblems, we rose to the enrichment of the pictures of the middle and upper class. We saw their minds in what they admired and brought to us. Our constant reflection was, 'Plenty of taste, and most of it bad'.⁷

The result of the Rowley family's craftsmanship was that they achieved fame in artistic circles as picture-framers whose skill could greatly enhance paintings. From a commercial angle, Rowley's prices were much cheaper than artists could obtain in London. The elaborate frame of a painting was at that time a most important feature which could make the difference between its success or failure in the eyes of art patrons. There must have been, nonetheless, more than this cash nexus in the relationships which Rowley formed with artists over fifty or more years.

At the age of 25 Rowley escaped from the putrid air of Ancoats following a series of nervous collapses. He moved to Moston, then a rural area, four miles from the city centre.⁸ By 1876 Rowley had become involved in local politics and was serving as a councillor for the New Cross ward in Ancoats.⁹

In politics, Rowley always described himself as a socialist, but his socialism took a hybrid form: Fabian collectivism was mixed with utopian communism. In philosophy, to complicate matters further, there were in Rowley aspects of elitism coloured by romanticism, what Lukacs has called a romantic anti-capitalist.

Rowley's energies on the Manchester City Council were directed towards the provision of public baths and wash-houses for the residents of Ancoats to counteract the grime of the district. He also waged a campaign for new sewerage schemes. Subsequently he campaigned for a public meeting place for the people of Ancoats. This was realised when in 1877 the New Islington Hall was built on Islington Street.¹⁰ The 'gas and water socialism' inherent in Rowley's actions reflected the belief of all Fabians that a perfect civic environment would make perfect citizens.

In his utopian communism, however, Rowley's antipathy was towards industrialism. Like his friend William Morris, Rowley's dislike was not so much due to the industrial system's exploitation of workers in the Marxist sense, but was due to industrialisation being a creator of urban squalor. He believed that the captains of industry should themselves repair the ugliness that their activities had produced. As a craftsman himself, Rowley had a great affinity with Morris. Both claimed to dislike modern machinery but eventually used it in their work. Both thought that everything in life should be unconstrained and natural. To undertake only pleasant tasks, to develop ones own specialism in idyllic surroundings were particular goals of both men.

Accompanying his professed socialistic tendencies there was in Rowley a strong element of elitism. Once the Ancoats

SUBSCRIPTIONS.		£ s. d.	
Mr. William McConnell	10 0 0	Forward	£ 250 15 0
Herbert Phillips	10 0 0	Mr. and Mrs. C. Schlein	1 10 0
James Worthington	10 0 0	K. P. Goldschmidt	1 10 0
Scoville Clegg	10 0 0	E. Gubins	1 10 0
E. Taylor	10 0 0	S. A. Felix	1 10 0
C. P. Scott	10 0 0	Louis Bebra & Sons	1 10 0
W. H. Crabtree	10 0 0	S. K. Strauss	1 10 0
T. E. Horsfall	10 0 0	Miss Peck	1 10 0
Thomas Ashton	10 0 0	Mr. W. R. Gemmill	1 10 0
James Jardine	10 0 0	S. L. Helm	1 10 0
F. M. Stead	10 0 0	James St. Council	1 10 0
Charles Rowley, jun.	10 0 0	W. Hoop	1 10 0
W. L. Galloway	10 0 0	John Oliver	1 10 0
James Chadwick	10 0 0	E. Oliver	1 10 0
H. Wilde	10 0 0	Alfred Lewis	1 10 0
H. Boddington, jun.	10 0 0	Thomas Dreddell	1 10 0
R. Charlwood	10 0 0	George Hable	1 10 0
Manchester and Salford Equitable	10 0 0	T. C. Abbott	1 10 0
W. H. Houldsworth, W.P.	10 0 0	Mr. T. C. Abbott	1 10 0
Charles Hughes	10 0 0	Misses, Myerhoff & Nathoff	1 10 0
Charles E. Schwann	10 0 0	Mr. Charles Hable	1 10 0
S. Oppenheim	10 0 0	J. Heyman	1 10 0
Gustav Behrens	10 0 0	Professor I. N. Teller	1 10 0
K. Farber Carpenter	10 0 0	Mr. H. S. Wilkinson	1 10 0
Susmann, Simon, & Co.	10 0 0	Mr. F. M. Spencer	1 10 0
Miss Gaskell	10 0 0	John Hildfeld	1 10 0
Mr. K. Koip	10 0 0	Bonnet	1 10 0
Arthur MacDonall	10 0 0	L. Aron	1 10 0
E. G. Francis	10 0 0	M. Lipman	1 10 0
Edward Dooney	10 0 0	A. Dus	1 10 0
J. H. Greenwood	10 0 0	Mr. Norbury	1 10 0
Mr. P. W. Graham	10 0 0	Mr. B. Sternberg	1 10 0
Mr. Henry Coffey	10 0 0	James Heilbous	1 10 0
S. Coher	10 0 0	Balance received from Mr. Brandram's	117 5 0
Miss W. Atkinson	10 0 0	Shahperan Receipts during Jan.	1 0 0
A. Friend	10 0 0	and Feb., 1885	1 0 0
			119 5 0

List of subscribers to the Ancoats Recreation Committee in 1885.

Movement's activities got underway, Rowley purchased a cottage on the outskirts of Ancoats at 78, Canning Street. After the Sunday afternoon meetings in the large hall, it became customary for about 25 people, hand-picked by himself, to gather at this sanctum away from the common herd. A salon was created at Canning Street which admitted only those gifted people whose artistic or literary talents had

If a man does anything good, the world always finds it out, sooner or later; and if he doesn't, why, the world finds THAT out too—and ought.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 28th, 1886.

THE ANCOATS RECREATION COMMITTEE

AND FRIENDS

“AT HOME”

TO MEET

SIR HENRY AND LADY ROSCOE.

MUSIC BY

MISS NANCY WILKINSON

AND FRIENDS.

All critics on earth cannot crush with their ban
One word that's in tune with the nature of man.

An Invitation Card to an 'At Home'.

brought fame. He deliberately kept this intimate company for his own, favoured clique. A glance through Rowley's autobiography reveals, also, that he was an inveterate name-dropper.¹¹

Ancoats Recreation Committee

Initially, the Ancoats Movement had strong ties with the Sunday Lecture Society. Similarly, the Lecture Society had links with the Royal Manchester Institution. The middle-class leaders of each organisation were either the same people or were from a network of people who operated in the same social milieu. Equally, links between the Manchester Literary Club, the Ruskin Society, the Whitworth Institute, the Manchester Art Gallery were reinforced by the intermixing of patrons at Conversaciones, 'At Homes', soirees, concerts and other social events of Manchester's cultural scene.

In 1878 the Sunday Lecture Society had succeeded in getting the Manchester City Council to open its free libraries and museums on Sundays. Sabbatarians were so enraged by this development that they threatened to petition the Council for Sabbath breaking by its use of municipal buildings. Members of the Sunday Lecture Society sought to avoid such difficulties by creating a private Sunday Movement in which activities could be enjoyed unheeded of worrying thoughts of litigation. A private body, on its own premises, would be free to hold

functions on any day it thought fit. Thus, the Ancoats Recreation Committee came into being in 1882.¹² The strong middle-class backing of the earlier Ancoats Movement remained a feature of the Committee.

The public meeting place which Rowley had campaigned for, the New Islington Hall, became the base for the Ancoats Recreation Committee's functions. The Committee became the significant recreational force in Ancoats from 1882 until 1889 when the Brotherhood was formed. During this time the whole movement was aimed unequivocally at the reform of Ancoats by bringing cultural improvement into the lives of the inhabitants. Art and music together, it was believed, would not only reform working-class taste, but would counteract the hold which alcohol had on the majority of the poor. Rowley wrote:

*Art is the way to elevate human nature and will point the way towards the intelligent enjoyment of the teeming wonders of the world.*¹³

Music was always provided at the art exhibitions in New Islington Hall. Soon music came to be provided with the Sunday lectures also, and this innovation differed from the Sunday Lecture Society, where music was expressly forbidden. At events organised by the Ancoats Recreation Committee, initially, music only preceded the lecture, but later music both preceded and followed it. The situation at lectures prompted G.B. Shaw to declare:

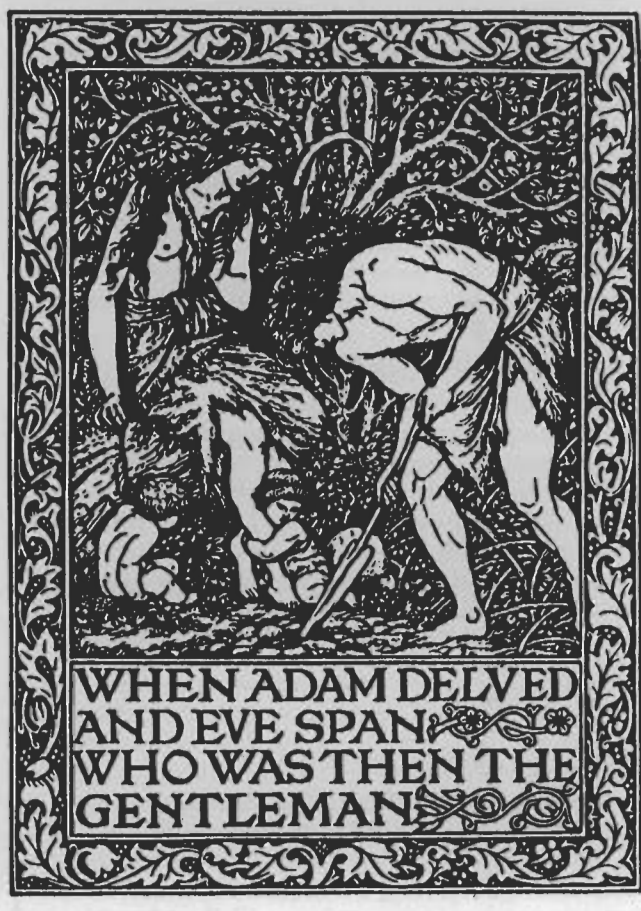
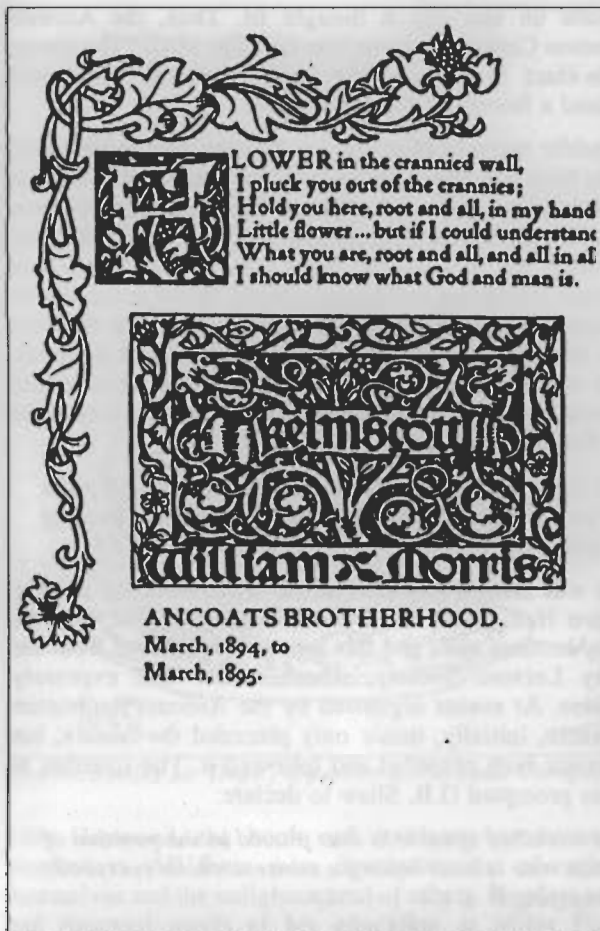
*The wretched speaker is thus placed in the position of a man who is interrupting a concert which everybody is enjoying.*¹⁴

The Sunday afternoon lectures which began during the winter of 1882-3 were on a variety of subjects but mainly, apart from the first, on the general subject of the arts. Early lectures included those by Professor H.E. Roscoe from the Victoria University on coal mining. T.R. Wilkinson, spoke on 'Pictures in the Hall', Charles Sutton, the City Librarian, lectured on 'Treasures in Free Libraries'; and Thomas Horsfall spoke about 'Pictures and How to Look at Them'. Ford Madox Brown who had come to Manchester in 1878 to paint the twelve murals of the history of Manchester in the new Town Hall lectured on 'Aesthetic Possibilities in Manchester'.¹⁵

All the Sunday lectures started at 3.00 p.m. followed by a selection of music ending at 4.30 p.m. Lord Derby's message to the audience on the opening afternoon neatly captured the elevating aims of the Committee.

*Industry should strenuously exert itself to repair the mischief that industry has produced. If we cannot take the people to brighter regions, then we may at least give them the chance of seeing something that is not sordid and squalid . . . I say it is our duty to counterwork those temptations created by monotony of employment and to introduce such elements of a higher civilisation that may soften and refine undeveloped natures.*¹⁶

In October, the Committee held its first art exhibition in furtherance of its view of the transmission of 'good taste'. The actual content of this exhibition was rather limited. There were several watercolours of Oxford and Cambridge by William Hull; drawings of Seville by Bancroft; a painting by Madox Brown, 'Wycliffe Reading his Translation of the Bible', and several woodcuts, again of Oxford and Cambridge. Most of the exhibits were lent by T.R. Wilkinson. A small admission fee of one penny was charged. This might have been sufficient to exclude local 'roughs'. 'Music was, as usual, planned to give added attraction to the event.'¹⁷ Although



Front and back of a Brotherhood Programme by Walter Crane.

the catalogue of this first exhibition does not disclose what music was to be played, later programmes make clear that the best of local amateur and professional musicians performed. For example, in 1889 the name of Charles Hallé is to be found in several programmes while Charles Fuchs and the Brodsky Quartet played regularly at Ancoats Recreation events until the First World War.

The first page of the exhibition catalogue offered Rowley's diagnosis of late Victorian urban society:

It is not money that the intelligent worker envies in his richer neighbour but the culture and value of life that his money can give. No great nation can exist if people are poor in health, intelligence and patriotism. The best things are, not as the animals enjoy, but as reasonably intelligent people should be taught to enjoy... this is the hope... that people in our crowded district shall enjoy as many good pictures, beautiful flowers, soul stirring music and noble books as is possible.¹⁸

In such passages Rowley offered the view that it was not money but culture that an intelligent worker envied in his wealthier acquaintances. As Bourdieu has argued, however, one can be the means of acquiring the other.¹⁹ To become familiar with art requires free time, and those who labour long hours for others do not necessarily have this commodity. Therefore, to be unable to acquire high levels of consumption time for appreciation of the arts is a state of being that markedly reinforces class divisions. The leisured class might linger for weeks over paintings at galleries in British, and more importantly, in foreign cities; workers had to make do with catalogues, perhaps borrowed from the library, in order

to see at second hand what were considered to be great works of art. In the 1880s, the long working hours in the factory or workshop meant that many working-class people were labelled ignorant or philistine, while all they lacked was the cultural capital which could be acquired by economic capital. In the same way economic capital might be the goal of the self-improvers who, by burning midnight oil, strove to acquire cultural capital. The two are interchangeable.

In the Committee's formative years between 1882 and 1885, those features which were to become the main pillars of its work were instituted. Sunday lectures, concerts, art exhibitions, 'At Homes' and the University Extension Lectures were initiated. A bookstall was started which for many years supplied 'good' cheap literature to the people of Ancoats. More short-lived were activities like the singing classes, cookery lessons for women and story-telling aimed at the young.²⁰

The 'At Homes' were socially a great success but financially something of a disaster. There was no admission fee. At seven o'clock on Sunday evenings Rowley and his friends received their guests at the door. Refreshments of biscuits, cakes, tea and fruit were provided. After partaking of refreshment, the company would go upstairs for an hour or so of listening to music and the reciting of poetry. Often famous guests like William Morris, George Bernard Shaw and G.K. Chesterton would be present. The illustrious guests would mingle with the residents of Ancoats to discuss topics of the day. Each of the first six 'At Homes' were attended by some 800 people and the costs of refreshments became too heavy a burden on funds. Eventually, the Committee was forced to reduce the liberal supply of victuals; attendances dropped in subsequent weeks.²¹

Nevertheless at the end of the first season, Rowley reported that the Committee had successfully held two flower shows and held band concerts on Summer evenings. Throughout 1882, thirteen band concerts and five vocal open-air concerts had been given. Rowley solicited financial aid for these from his wealthy friends. It was illegal to charge for admission to Sunday lectures but at each meeting collections were taken and these defrayed expenses to a certain extent.

For the University Extension Lectures which were held during the course of the week, the Committee were able to charge an admission fee, but this was never enough to cover the cost.²² University Extension Lectures started about 8.30 p.m. which, it was thought, would give people working ten hours a day time to get home and change into suitable clothing. The first lecture course in 1885, from Oxford University was entitled 'The Present and the Future of the Working Classes and How to Better Their Position'.

A year later, the first course of lectures started from the Victoria University of Manchester when Professor A. Milnes-Marshall lectured on political economy. Most of the lecture courses, differing from the Sunday afternoon lectures, were followed by an examination. A certificate was awarded to successful candidates by the university concerned.²³

As none of the universities paid salaries to outside lecturers, such matters were left to the organisers, who had to rely on the sale of tickets and syllabuses to defray expenses. In the 1885-6 season the fee for each course was fixed at one shilling and the courses ran usually for between six and eight sessions. Single admission tickets, for those who could not afford the outlay of a shilling, were threepence. An examination of the general cash account reveals that twelve Extension lectures in October and November had costs over £73. (In comparison the costs of 26 Sunday lectures unconnected with the university amounted to £50). At least

800 students would have to be in attendance at the Extension lectures in order to cover expenses. This was never the case, although the audience did reach 700 on several occasions.²⁴

Ancoats Brotherhood

In 1889, seven years after the first Sunday lectures had been organised by the Ancoats Committee, the Ancoats Brotherhood was launched. Between 1882-1889, from 400 to one thousand people had been attending the Sunday lectures in the Winter months. Now Rowley suggested that a Brotherhood be formed which would meet all the year round at fortnightly intervals in Summer and weekly in Winter. Lectures on art and politics would be the main items on the agenda. There was to be no falling out among initiates on the subjects of religion or politics. This was to be ensured by the Brethren following Matthew Arnold's advice, and taking a vow that each morning everything should newly be considered an open question.²⁵

The idea of a Brotherhood was discussed and the motion passed by a show of hands at a meeting of some 200 members of the Ancoats Committee on 4 March 1889.²⁶ Although Rowley emphasised the mystic, fraternal aims of the Brotherhood, it is clear that its creation had a practical purpose.²⁷ By 1889 the Recreation Committee was in severe financial straits, as it had maintained its method of not charging for admission to meetings in order to ensure that working-class members could attend. Rowley assumed that the Brotherhood's initiates would be those who could afford membership fees and further charges as particular activities required. Profits from the Brotherhood's 'At Homes', dances and meetings would not only make the Brotherhood self-sufficient but would subsidise the Ancoats Recreations Movements' other work. Worthy local causes like Ancoats Hospital were also to benefit.²⁸

Thus the Ancoats Brotherhood was formed: a fair mixture of pragmatism was included among its avowed aesthetic aims. Although essentially the whole organisation can now be regarded as hierarchical and patriarchal in composition, Rowley and his friends always firmly declared that democratic impulses were manifested in the Brotherhood's work. The name Brotherhood was evocative not only of mystical Brotherhoods in eighteenth-century France, but also of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood whose work was much admired by Rowley. It is interesting also that some of the Ancoats Brotherhood's first members were 'The Jacobs', nine youths from Bennett Street schools who had joined Charles Rowley in forming a secret Brotherhood in the 1840s.²⁹

The Brotherhood flourished. After being operative for just one year, it had nearly 600 members. There were very few women among these although a monthly dance was held at New Islington Hall by the Brotherhood and it is likely that men did not dance with each other. The Rambling Section included some women but it is probable that these females were girlfriends, wives and sisters of *bona fide* members. By and large, the Sunday and Wednesday night gatherings consisted mainly of men.³⁰

It is difficult to discover the identities of the new members of the Ancoats Brotherhood. No official record was kept of initiates, in keeping, according to Rowley, with what he regarded as the free spirit of the Brotherhood. He wrote that membership consisted chiefly of artisans – mechanics, printers, joiners, and cotton spinners – the labour aristocrats. Rowley also lists artists, journalists, editors, and parsons, one poet, several members of Parliament and a multitude of municipal worthies and J.P.s.³¹ Many of these had been drawn

ANCOATS RECREATION.

MR. SADLER'S LECTURES,

Oxford University Extension Lectures.

Examination in Political Economy.

NOVEMBER 24th, 1888.

- 1.—What were craft guilds? State their objects and rules.
- 2.—What is capital? How does it help industrial operations?
- 3.—How comes there to be rent? What is Henry George's plan about the land?
- 4.—What effect have sanitary improvements on a man's *real* wages?
- 5.—What is distributive co-operation? Is a co-operative store a good thing for working men in your opinion?
- 6.—What is interest? Is it justifiable to take interest?
- 7.—What did Malthus say about population? Do you think he was right? Is over-population a danger to working people?
- 8.—Would you like to see a return to protective duties on corn or manufactures? If not, state your reasons.
- 9.—Who was Robert Owen?
- 10.—What trades in your opinion are suitable for making a start in productive co-operation?
- 11.—What, in your view, are the dangers—1st, of piece-work? 2nd, of division of labour?

University Extension Examination Paper of the 1880s.

to the Brotherhood by the magnet of the earlier Sunday lectures.

The huge popularity of the newly formed Brotherhood rested on the fact that it appealed to a much wider section of Manchester society than had the Ancoats Recreation Committee. By 1889 experience had shown the Ancoats reformers that the teaching power of art and music had little effect on the township as a whole: 'Outcast Ancoats' still had the same poverty, disease, infant mortality, drunkenness and dirt.

Ever since the Sunday Afternoon Lecture Society's creation in the 1870s, all activities of a cultural reforming nature had depended ultimately on middle-class subscriptions in Ancoats. Work at Ancoats was still seriously underfunded in the late 1880s and could not be extended without widening the perimeters of membership to include more of the comfortably-off who could be appealed to for funds.

Rowley and his Committee decided to make attacks on the rigid social divisions in society, both from the above financial angle and also from the philosophical desire to replace competition by cooperation between various sections of the community. The whole emphasis of the work at Ancoats, from 1889, thus shifted from an aim to reform one section — the poor, to a wish to integrate all sections in fraternity. This two-fold purpose came to be reflected in all Brotherhood

ANCOATS BROTHERHOOD

AND
RAMBLING CLUB.

Indoor Programme for 1890.

Sunday Morning, 2nd March.—ANNUAL MEETING. Report, etc. Lecture by Mrs. ALEXANDER IRELAND: "Browning as a Teacher."
Wednesday, 5th March.—Lecture by Rev. HUDSON SHAW, M.A.: "The History of Florence."
Sunday Morning, 9th March.—Lecture by COUNSELLOR NEWTON: "William the Silent."
Wednesday, 12th March.—Lecture by Rev. HUDSON SHAW, M.A.: "The History of Florence: Savonarola."
Sunday Morning, 16th March.—Address by Mr. W. E. HOYLE, M.A., Keeper of the Owens College Museum: "Deep Sea Explorations." With Lantern Illustrations.
Wednesday, 19th March.—Lecture by Rev. HUDSON SHAW, M.A.: "The History of Florence: Savonarola."
Saturday Afternoon, 22nd March.—Visit Town Hall, 6 o'clock. Leader, Mr. RINDO. Organ Recital by Mr. J. KENDRICK PYNE.
Sunday Morning, 23rd March.—Familiar Talk by Mr. C. ROWLEY: "Notes on a Visit to the Eastern States of America."
Wednesday, 26th March.—Lecture by Rev. HUDSON SHAW, M.A.: "The History of Florence: Machiavelli."
Sunday Morning, 30th March.—Mr. J. E. PHYTHIAN: "The Art Museum in Ancoats Old Hall: its Treasures and its Lessons."
Wednesday, 3rd April.—Lecture by Rev. HUDSON SHAW, M.A.: "The History of Florence: Michael Angelo and the Fall of the Republic."
Sunday Morning, 7th April.—Lecture by Mr. W. BURNAY, J.P.: "Experiences among Mahomedans."
Sunday Morning, 14th April.—Lecture by Mr. J. W. GRATHAM, M.A.: "Pennsylvania, a Political Experiment."
Wednesday, 17th April: Shakespeare's Birthday and Death day.
Sunday Morning, 21st April.—Festival of Spring Flowers. Address by Rev. JOSEPH FRESTON. (The flowers shown to be presented to the patients in the Ancoats Hospital.)

The groundfame of the crocus breaks the mould,
Full Spring, glad hither of the Southern sea,
Weaves on her skin stem the snowdrop cold
That trembles not to kisses of the breeze
Gone Spring, far now from all the dripping eaves
The spear of ice has wept itself away.

RAMBLES, ETC.

Book suggested for pocket companion, WHITE'S SELBORNE,
paper 18d, cloth 14d.

Sunday, 4th May.—Train to Bowden. Ashley, Rotherne, Dunham Park. Leader, Mr. ROGERS.
Saturday, 10th May.—Train to Hadfield. Visit Waterworks. Leader, Sir JOHN HARWOOD, Chairman of the Waterworks Committee.
Sunday, 18th May.—Train to Stockport. Cheshire Hallme, etc. Leader, Mr. WILLIAM SIMPSON.
Sunday, 15th June.—Train to Moston Lane.—Bogart Ho' Clough, etc. Leader, Mr. J. PLANT.
June 1st, 2nd, 3rd.—Three Days in Wales. Leader, Mr. C. ROWLEY.
Sunday, 19th June.—Train to Levenshamite. Burnage, Fallowfield, etc. Leader, COUNTESS SOUTHERN, J.P.
Saturday, 5th July.—Irlam, Ship Canal, Carrington Mills, etc. Leader, Mr. HENRY WILLEY.
Sunday, 13th July.—Train to Stalybridge.
Saturday, 19th July.—Smoke Abatement Party. Bolton. Leader, Mr. HERBERT FLETCHER.
Sunday, 27th July.—Train to Monsall Dale. All day ramble in Derbyshire.
Saturday, 21st August.—Visit to Oxford. Summer Meeting.
Sunday, 27th August.—Last Rumble.

The Sunday Morning Meetings will be held in the New Infirmary Hall, except on 30th March. The meetings will be called for business at 10-30. Address at 11 o'clock. Close of meeting, not later than 12-30. N.B.: The Book Stall will be open.

Up traps the lark, gone wild to welcome her,
About her games the lark, and shrill the joy,
Before her skirts the lark, and shrill the joy,
The lark's downy down at her feet,
With round her legs in woodland color fits,
Watching her large light eyes and gretious looks,
And in her open gate a halcyon fits,
Patient—the secret splendour of the breeze,
Frangent.

activities. However, the middle classes who came to Ancoats from other parts of Manchester to concerts and lectures seem to have out-numbered the local residents from this time. Dean Wilson who came to Ancoats to lecture in 1891 expressed surprise at finding his audience so 'well-heeled'.³²

In her research into Mechanics Institutes, Mabel Tylecote found a similar state of affairs. Most institutes were not proletarian in the sense that they appealed to the vast mass of the workforce. In Yorkshire which had the largest number of institutes to the size of population than any other district, less than two per cent of the population attended and of these only one in 115 were from the labouring classes.³³

After 1893 Rowley chose to make a charge for the programmes of Brotherhood events rather than have paid-for reserved seats.³⁴ These programmes, beautifully designed, were full of uplifting mottoes, quotations from Plato, Shakespeare, Milton, Carlyle and, it must be said, often from Rowley himself. A typical example is from a translation of Plato's Republic:

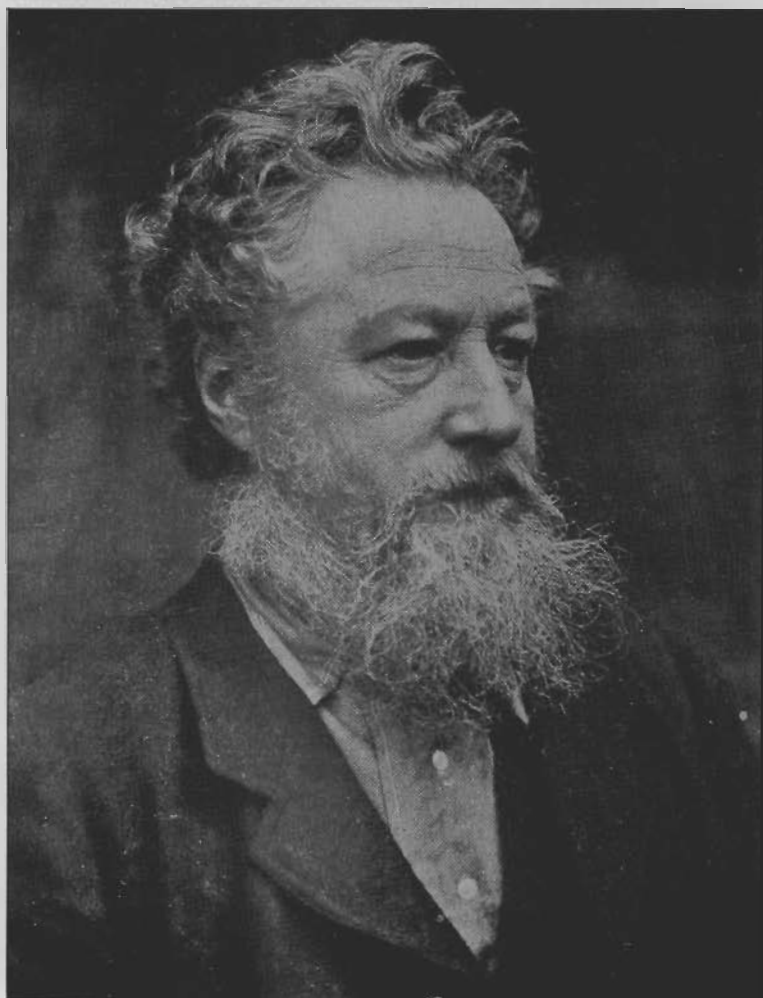
*The young citizens must not be allowed to grow up among images of evil, lest their souls assimilate the ugliness of their surroundings. Rather they should be like men living in a beautiful and healthy place: from everything that they see and hear, loveliness, like a breeze should pass into their souls.*³⁵

Somewhat less well expressed was the offering from Rowley himself, which was also Platonic in form and meaning:

*If a man does anything good, the world always finds out, sooner or later; and if he doesn't, why the world finds THAT out too — and ought.*³⁶

For many years the front of the annual programme of the Ancoats Recreation Committee bore Rowley's words:

If you shall raise, not the roofs of the houses, but the souls of the citizens; for it is better that great



William Morris

souls should dwell in small houses rather than for mean slaves to lurk in great houses.

From the outset the pamphlets, syllabuses and advertisements published by the Committee had been decorative. Although, ostensibly, these productions announced future events they were also tools of propaganda for the Ancoats Recreation Movement. Work by William Morris and Sir E Burne-Jones, was a popular feature of catalogue design and of other advertising media. Usually printed at Morris's Kelmscott Press, the pamphlets contained couplets of heroic and classical quotations. These reflected, by the sophistication of the techniques which were used, the anti-industrial attitudes which Rowley and his fellow Committee members shared with William Morris.

After the Ancoats Brotherhood was created, each year a membership card designed by Rowley's artist friends was issued. Humorous work by Walter Crane, cherubic figures by Frederic Shields, all, at one time or another, embellished the membership cards. In later years the emergence of the Annual Ancoats Recreation Programme was an elegant attempt to overcome financial problems. These were sold commercially in a pack which contained a specially designed card, a book of poems, *Brotherhood With Nature*, as well as a full programme of rambles 'All this for the price of one shilling'!³⁷

There was not only intellectual activity within the Brotherhood. Rambles in Derbyshire and Cheshire were organised, weekends in Wales and the Lake District for a pound a head were frequent. Every year a five-day Continental trip to Belgium, Holland and France was planned, and enjoyed by as many Brethren as could raise the fee. All these latter activities would, in the 1880s, have been financially beyond the means of the vast majority of Ancoats's workers. In later years a cycling section was organised within the



Brotherhood. Cycling was encouraged as a vigorous exercise to take one's mind away from more fleshly pursuits as well as a cheap method of enjoying the countryside around Manchester. Yet it was clear that for the majority of the Ancoats' poor a bicycle was a luxury commodity, well beyond the reach of their fluctuating wage packets.

Years of Decline

Ancoats Recreation's chief work was done in the years up to the mid-1890s. After 1896 the band concerts, the flower shows and the art exhibitions played a less prominent part in the proceedings. After 1896 all University Extension work was handed over to the newly founded University Settlement at Ancoats Hall. By the time of the First World War Rowley ceased to defend the Committee as an organisation intended for the working class of the district. For a series of concerts to be held at New Islington Hall in the 1912 season, posters advertising the venue as 'ten minutes from Piccadilly' virtually admitted the intentions of attracting mobile strangers to Ancoats.³⁸

As a means of civilising the denizen of the Ancoats slum, the projection of art culture was an activity which encountered too much competition from other sources. The efforts of Charles Rowley and his Committee failed to wean the majority of the working class of Ancoats away from the attractions of the pub and other commercially-based providers of working-class leisure. For, as well as local activities initiated by the chapels and churches of the township, which were themselves a counter attraction to Rowley's events, a new world of leisure evolved in the 1880s, which was to become the basis of twentieth-century mass consumption.³⁹ This popular leisure activity was based on the Victorian city, and Ancoats was only a stone's throw away from the centre of Manchester.

Therefore, although the Ancoats Recreation Movement modified its original programmes in order to meet the demands of the working class for entertainment as well as education, it could not compete with the growing commercialisation of urban leisure. This latter was to become a more effective mechanism of social control in the following years than anything that the Recreation Committee could have organised.

Interest in 'good' art, music and literature was the benchmark of middle class and upper class status. Frequently high-minded idealism on the part of middle-class reformers, however well meaning, served to illuminate their lack of practical knowledge of the working class. For example, Charles Rowley boasted of his cheap weekend outings; yet, one pound, which Rowley called inexpensive, was the weekly wage earned by the majority of skilled men in the 1880s.⁴⁰ And this sort of fee for excursions effectively ousted the poorer worker from taking part in the activities of the Brotherhood, apart from attendance at lectures. In other words, the fun which Rowley often spoke about was only available to the more comfortably off.

Equally, Rowley imagined that, by taking working people on visits to the grand homes of some of the wealthy members of the Movement, workers would return with an urge to achieve similar homes for themselves by further hard work and enterprise. As there was no chance of this in most cases, envy rather than admiring emulation was the emotion which was frequently engendered.⁴¹ Thus the poor started to drop out of events organised by Ancoats Recreation. They felt more at ease among people as unfashionably dressed as themselves.



The Brotherhood Cycling Club.

Secretary:
Mr. EDWARD WESTWOOD,
1, Bradford Street,
MANCHESTER.

LIST OF RUNS - - 1915.

SATURDAY RUNS.

Date.	Destination.	Miles.	Time of starting.
March 27.	Bollington	20	2.30 p.m.
April 2.	(Friday) Pickmere	34	10.0 a.m.
" 3.	Easter Tour.		
" 10.	Styal	26	2.30 p.m.
" 17.	Mobberley	30	" "
" 24.	Lymm	30	" "
May 1.	Knutsford	32	" "
" 8.	Hough (Wilmslow)	20	" "
" 15.	Millington	20	" "
" 22.	Whit Week Tour	20	" "
" 29.	" "		
June 5.	Prestbury	20	" "
" 12.	Castle Mill	24	" "
" 19.	Keridge	32	" "
" 26.	Lymm	30	" "
July 3.	Alderley	27	" "
" 10.	Arley	32	" "
" 17.	Mottram St. Andrews	32	" "
" 24.	Knutsford	32	" "
" 31.	Week-end Tour.		
August 7.	Styal	20	" "
" 14.	Bollington	20	" "
" 21.	Castleton (Week-end).		
" 28.	Millington	20	" "
Sept. 4.	Prestbury	20	" "
" 11.	Mobberley	30	" "
" 18.	Mottram St. Andrews	32	" "
" 25.	Week-end (Open).		

The Membership about 100.

The 1880s were the most fruitful period at Ancoats Recreation as far as the attempts at disseminating cultural values which were unequivocally aimed at the reform of Ancoats were concerned. After the formation of the Brotherhood in 1889, it is clear that Rowley himself became depressed about progress in this direction. He gave up ideas of local social reform and applied himself to the provision of entertainment and fun for a more wide-ranging audience.

It was not, after all, the feckless inebriate, but the earnest self-improver that the Recreation Movement eventually reached out to and held firmly. Despite it being a drain on the Movement's funds, the University Extension Movement's presence in Ancoats' was its most important legacy to the industrious working class. The cooperation between the Ancoats Movement and those from the University at Manchester who taught on Extension courses was exceedingly close. Three features of Extension teaching, which ever afterwards, became characteristic, were initially put into practice by Professor Roscoe at one of the first taught lectures of Ancoats: the printed syllabus, written work, and the discussion period. The syllabus grew into a very elaborate document which was distributed in advance to students as an aid to understanding the lecture. Of course, the printing of these syllabuses was not cheap. The discussion period was permanently incorporated into the session after the lecture. It remains a distinctive feature of the University Extension approach to teaching today.⁴³

Furthermore, the chief historic contribution of Charles Rowley was to adult education generally, not specifically to the civilising of the slum dweller, which he had initially seen as his objective. Rowley, whilst attending a meeting of the Committee of the University Extension Movement at Oxford, made the suggestion that

Much was achieved by the Ancoats Recreation Movement, but this was always within a limited framework. Ancoats Recreation events were attended increasingly by upwardly mobile working-class males together with the middle classes. All of these latter probably would have found their way to alternative sites for art exhibitions, slide shows and musical evenings anyway.

It could be argued that many who attended events from outside Ancoats were drawn towards the township because the admission fees were so cheap. The Ancoats 'roughs', those very members of society whom the Committee had sought to civilise, remained steadfastly outside New Islington Hall. Drunkenness was still considered to be a significant problem in the area at the turn of the century.⁴² The Brodsky Quartet was no counter-attraction to beer and skittles.

Summer schools for Extension attenders should be set up when full-time students were on vacation. Rowley's friend, Michael Sadler the Oxford Extension Secretary, seized upon the idea and it was put into practice.⁴⁴ Again it is a paramount feature of University Extra-Mural work today.

It was while attending the Oxford University Extension Summer School in 1899, that Albert Mansbridge, of the Cooperative Movement and another friend of Rowley's, publicly expressed an argument which was to alter the whole tenor of adult education in Britain. In a paper entitled 'Cooperation and Education in Citizenship', Mansbridge argued that it was not enough for workers merely to provide ready-made audiences for University lectures. They must have some say in the quality and direction of the education provided. Mansbridge advocated that the Trade Unions and

LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!!



RECREATION IN ANCOATS.

Thirty-Seventh Year.

The Brodsky Quartet

Dr. BRODSKY, Mr. C. RAWDON BRIGGS, Mr. SIMON SPEELMAN, Mr. CARL FUCHS.

No. 1

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14th, 1914.

Quartets by Haydn, Schubert, and Beethoven.

Programme Notes by Mr. WILLIAM ELLER.

Next Concert of this Series, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21st,

Mozart, Tschaikevsky, Schumann.

NOTICES.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 18th.—Mr. J. C. MAXWELL GARNETT, M.A., will Lecture, Subject—Social Physiology: Many Members, but One Body. Music by Miss Heled Brown and friends.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 30th.—BROTHERHOOD "AT HOME."

the Cooperative Movement should join to provide a working-class side of University Extension. Thus, the Workers Educational Association was instituted. Rowley's original proposal for Summer schools at Oxford had far reaching consequences.⁴⁵

In 1895 Charles Rowley and T C Horsfall of the Manchester Art Museum were consulted by the Principal of Manchester University as to the feasibility of setting up a University Settlement in Ancoats. Due to their vast experience of the locality, both men were elected onto the first Committee of the Settlement. Horsfall invited the University to share Ancoats Hall on Every Street with his art museum. E. Phythian and George Milner, both of whom were active in other social reforming organisations in Ancoats, also served on the Settlement's first Committee. By 1895, the intellectual climate which in the 1880s had favoured the creation of cultural institutions as a civilising medium was fading. The University Settlement at Ancoats came more to grips with giving practical help and advice to the poor of the neighbourhood and, unlike the activities at Ancoats Recreation which were male dominated, the Settlement's terms of reference encompassed the whole family.⁴⁶

A generation of more literate working-class people was growing up in the late 1890s. Not only were these young men and women more accustomed to urban life than their parents had been, but they also felt little need for middle-class guidance in institutions. This new generation had received an elementary education which carried with it a modicum of social training; these young citizens had more

confidence and articulation and were far more likely to oppose middle-class activity which they found boring, paternalistic or too hierarchical. Once these people set up homes of their own, away from parental control, they were likely to use their leisure hours in ways which were not enforcedly sanctioned by the middle classes.⁴⁷

By the turn of the century, the idea that the civilising influence of 'good' art, literature and music would be a means of banishing poverty and squalor was comprehensively undermined by the revelations of Booth and Rowntree.⁴⁸ Concepts of paternalism, voluntarism, aestheticism still lingered on under the umbrella of Liberal Culture, but had no substance in the face of low wages, ill health and widowhood. Indeed the later years of the nineteenth century were a watershed in the history of social theory generally, particularly in regard to the poor.⁴⁹

After 1900, the Edwardians started to wake up to the fact that these latter social manifestations must be, somehow, alleviated before the secondary strata of civilising influences could be brought to bear. All the diverse activities of Charles Rowley and his friends failed to even out inequalities in any significant way; art culture had given enjoyment to a number of people, but could not rectify the squalor of the Ancoats environment.⁵⁰

It started to become clear to uneasy consciences that the appalling slums of districts such as Ancoats could not be remedied by philanthropic social reformers alone, necessary as some of these agencies might be as adjuncts to some other socially responsible organisation. This must be rooted firmly in the structure of the community and the nation. Above all, the issue of poverty would have been dealt with in the impending twentieth century. As Simon and Inman later argued, the problem of the slums was always one of low wages; there were always plenty of well-built houses in Victorian Manchester, if only a family could afford the rent.⁵¹



Cover of a Brotherhood membership card, designed by Walter Crane.

NOTES

1. T. Swindells, *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men*, 2nd edn. 1907
2. Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, Penguin edn. 1982, p.89
3. See Alan J. Kidd, 'Introduction: The Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century Manchester' in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts, *City, Class and Culture*, Manchester 1985, and Michael E. Rose, 'Culture, Philanthropy and the Manchester Middle Class' *ibid*
4. Michael Harrison, 'Art and Philanthropy' in Kidd and Roberts, *op cit* p.127
5. Charles Rowley, *Fifty Years of Work Without Wages*, 1911 p.8
6. *ibid* pp.31-34
7. *ibid* p.36
8. *ibid* p.50
9. *ibid*
10. *ibid* pp.47-67
11. In 1890 Rowley was made chairman of the Manchester School of Art. In 1895 he served on the first committee of the Manchester University Settlement in Ancoats. So much was he the cornerstone of the Ancoats Movement that when he retired in 1924 there was no one with sufficient drive to organise events. Rowley died at his home in Handforth, Cheshire in 1933 at the age of 94. *Manchester Guardian*, 7 September 1933
12. Ancoats Recreation Committee Proceedings (hereafter A.R.C.P.) September 1882
13. Preamble to the *Catalogue of the First Exhibition of Works of Art*, October 1882
14. G.B. Shaw, 'The Tyranny of Ancoats' *Ancoats Brotherhood Programme*, March 1912
15. Ancoats Sunday Concert Programmes, 1882-4, Box 512, MCRL
16. *ibid*
17. Art Exhibition Catalogue, 1882
18. *ibid*
19. Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Aristocracy of Culture', *Media, Culture and Society*, 2 1980
20. ARCP 1882-86
21. Quoted in J.I. Rushton, *Charles Rowley and the Ancoats Recreation Committee*, Unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University of Manchester, 1959. Throughout this article I am indebted to Rushton who in 1958 interviewed elderly participants in Ancoats Recreation events. These frequently offer a different perspective of occasions than Rowley's autobiography.
22. Over the next decade, middle-class supporters of the Recreation Movement were frequently called upon to bolster up its finances. In 1888 the Whitworth legatees gave £500. In 1895 Mrs. Mary Worthington gave £100. Smaller sums were given by others in an effort to get the Movement onto a stable financial base. ARCP, 1895-6
23. ARCP, 1886-7 All Volumes of the ARCP contain examples of how lectures were financed. Income never met expenditure.
24. *ibid*
25. 'Recreation in Ancoats' *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 16 April 1912
26. 'The Formation of the Ancoats Brotherhood' *Manchester Guardian*, 5 March 1889
27. Rowley, 1911, *op cit*, pp.211-13
28. Rushton, *op cit* 1959 Chapter VII
29. Rowley's childhood membership of 'The Jacobs' is recounted by him in *Fifty Years of Ancoats — Loss and Gain*, a paper read before the Toynbee Debating Society in 1899. Michael Sadler of the University Extension Movement, a friend of Rowley's and an initiate of the Brotherhood had also been a member of a secret Brotherhood in his youth. See M. Sadler, *Sir Michael Sadler*, 1949, p.49
30. Rowley wrote, 'We get together from five to nine hundred people, mostly men' *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 16 April 1912
31. Charles Rowley, 'The Ancoats Brotherhood, 1890', Paper deposited in Box 512, MCRL Local History Section. It is likely that the poet was Charles Swain.
32. Quoted by Rushton, *op cit*, 1959, Chapter VII
33. Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851*, Manchester 1957, p.260
34. Rowley, *op cit*, 1911, p.211
35. Catalogue to the Fifth Exhibition 20 September — 20 October, 1884
36. At Home card, Sunday 28 November 1886
37. Rowley, *op cit*, 1911 p.205
38. Rushton, 1959, *op cit*, Ch. IV
39. Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England, 1830-1885*, 1978, Ch. 4
40. Rowley, 1911, *op cit*, p.204
41. Rushton 1959 *op cit*, p.298
42. *Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1903
43. T. Kelly, *A History of Adult Education in Britain*, 1961, pp.220-
44. A.R.C.P., Vol. 1889-90
45. Mary Stocks, *The Workers Educational Association: The First Fifty Years*, 1953, Ch. 1
46. Mary Stocks, *Fifty Years in Every Street*, 1945 Introduction
47. Caroline Reid, 'Middle Class Values and Working Class Culture in Nineteen Century Sheffield', in S. Pollard and C. Holmes, *Essays in Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire*, 1976
48. Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 1889, and B.S. Rowntree, *Poverty, A Study of Town Life*, 1901.
49. E.P. Hennock, 'Poverty and Social Theory in England: The Experience of the 1880s', *Social History*, 1967, p.67
50. T.R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, 1904.
51. E.D. Simon and J. Inman, *The Rebuilding of Manchester*, 1935, p.3.