

THE GREATER MANCHESTER COUNTY RECORD OFFICE

Maureen Patch and Vincent McKernan

The creation, short life, and abolition of the Greater Manchester Metropolitan County Council (generally known as GMC) was the result of the 1972 and 1985 Local Government Acts. It is however important to remember that the County created in 1974 is still alive and well, with a supportive Lord Lieutenant who is very conscious of his position as *Custos Rotulorum* [Keeper of the Rolls], and a number of county-wide units administered by lead authorities on behalf of the ten metropolitan district councils who act together as the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). The 1972 Act extended the powers of the existing shire counties, in respect of the provision of an archive service, to the new metropolitan counties. In 1976 the GM Concurrent Functions Committee, on which the County and District Councils within Greater Manchester were represented, agreed to the establishment of a County Record Office. In a brand new County there was no tradition of caring for quarter sessions and other administrative records, but it was accepted that the wider remit of a County Record Office could complement the district archive services, which would continue to be responsible for records relating mainly to their own areas.

The 1976 agreement was ratified in 1985 and still represents the collections policy of the local authority archive services in the County, whereby (the Greater Manchester County Records Office (GMCRO) assumed responsibility for archives of wider significance than any single district. Not surprisingly these tend to be the larger, bulkier (and generally dirtier) records of the industrial revolution. Manchester City Archive Service remains the Manchester Diocesan Record Office; other arrangements were not changed, and a gentleman's agreement with the Lancashire Record Office left the holdings there almost untouched; the small territorial overlaps with Cheshire, Derbyshire and West Yorkshire were less likely to cause difficulties.

When the Greater Manchester County Record Office was established as part

of the County Legal Officer's department, a County Archivist was appointed with no additional staff, a room in County Hall shared with the Librarian, a strongroom shared with the Muniments Section of the Legal Department, but without any archival inheritance of administrative, or deposited family, estate, and business records. The first archivist was Michael Willis Fear, who lost no time in making sure that everyone knew that they now had a County Record Office. Before his retirement in 1984 he had overseen the development of a very respectable County Record Office, with its own premises in a converted warehouse in Marshall Street housing substantial deposits, with a microfilm unit and well equipped conservation department and, on 31 March 1986, fourteen members of staff.

The emphasis in GMCRO has been on developing this important archival resource, and the facilities necessary to preserve it, and make it known and available to a wide spectrum of researchers. Since 1986 GMCRO has been financed by the archive authorities established under the 1985 Act; the metropolitan districts, GM Residuary

Body, and the joint boards for Police, Passenger Transport, Fire and Civil Defence, and Waste Disposal, uniquely, by equal shares. Public spending policies have left GMCRO, along with the other county-wide units, vulnerable to reductions in funding levels as participating authorities struggle to avoid capping. Whilst the ongoing discussions about Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are important for the future of the service, they do not lend themselves to an easy summary.

Lateral thinking and a more capitalistic approach have become a way of life. Because the SLA is an agreement for actual service provision, common ground has to be found as to what that service should be; in our case, storage of records. Once we had established the cost of providing storage to official standards (BS 5454) for records deposited with us and held on behalf of districts, we were in a position to utilise our limited spare capacity by offering a commercial storage and records management service. Consultancy and service provision by all sections of the office including reprographics and conservation was a logical next step. So far, no charge is made for the use of



GMCRO, exterior. Photo David Brearley.



GMCRO, the public searchroom. Photo David Brearley.

the public searchroom, but sadly this is also under consideration.

Records held by GMCRO

GMCRO'S greatest strength is those records which reflect the area's industrial heritage. By far the largest archive is that of Manchester Ship Canal Company, which occupies over 2,500 linear feet of shelving. The records, although by no means fully catalogued, are a goldmine of information for historians of all kinds.

To take just one class of records as an example, the Shareholders' Address Books 1898-1964, reflect the enormous interest which the Ship Canal created. Each of these volumes contain the names, addresses and occupations or status of approximately 38,000 people. Among the more interesting aspects of these records is the large proportion of women who bought shares, as well as the wide variety of professions mentioned — joiners, jewellers, clerks, solicitors, machine printers, gardeners, plumbers, bricklayers, and blacksmiths — are just a handful of those represented. It would appear that the notion of a share-owning population so dear to the present government's heart was anticipated by the Ship Canal Company nearly 100 years ago.

In addition to the comprehensive written records of the Ship Canal, comprising committee minute books, secretary's department files, journals, ledgers, cash

books, and printed acts of Parliament, GMCRO also holds the photographic archive, which is currently being catalogued. Containing 20,000 prints, 35 albums, 15,000 35 mm negatives, 2,000 contact prints, 2,000 glass negatives and lantern slides, and 4,000 35mm slides, this archive offers a complete photographic record of the building and subsequent evolution of the Canal, with every major event being recorded. It is not available for consultation, until the cataloguing is completed. It is anticipated that the finished catalogue will run to 1,000 pages.

The other large canal archive housed at GMCRO is that of the Rochdale Canal Company. This is not as large as that of the Manchester Ship Canal, but occupies nevertheless over 700 linear feet, and is older, with the earliest records dating from 1791. The archive contains minute books, share records, financial records and nearly 1,000 letter books (incoming and outgoing) as well as a particularly good set of some 350 maps and plans relating to the canal, including the HH Fishwick's *Plans & Property belonging to the Company of Proprietors of the Rochdale Canal Navigation, 1838-1840*. The thirty-nine plans in the book cover the whole course of the canal from Duke's Lock at Castlefield to Sowerby Bridge in West Yorkshire.

Unsurprisingly, textile records feature quite heavily among the Office's holdings. Companies which have deposited their records include the

Milnrow Spinning Company, D & H Malleliou Woollen Manufacturers of Delph, B & S Astartjan Cotton Exporters, and the Courtaulds Spinning Group. GMCRO also holds the records of the British Textile Employers' Association, which include its predecessors such as the Cotton Spinners' & Manufacturers' Association, the Rayon Weaving Association, the UK Textile Manufacturers' Association, the Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' Association, and the Federation of Calico Printers. The records consist of minute books, letter books, ledgers, cash books, annual reports and newspaper cuttings. They have recently been used for research into industrial relations.

For those researchers who wish to view industrial relations from the other side of the negotiating table, twelve trade unions have deposited their records in the County Record Office. The largest of these are APEX, the Union of Construction & Allied Trades, the Union of Textile & Allied Workers, and the Amalgamated Union of the Engineering Workers. The bulk of these records consist of minute books, correspondence, financial records, membership records, and rules and regulations. It is important to note that there is a 30 year closure on some trades union records.

Manchester Ship Canal

At the Weekly Meeting of the Provisional Committee for the promotion of this undertaking held in the N^o 14 Committee Room, Star Street, Manchester on Friday the 10th day of November 1882.

Present W. Adamson

Mayor of Salford

M^r Ald. Watson

" Becho

" Apple

" Buckley

" W. Johnson

" John Spence

" Frank Spence

" Samuel Becho

" Bidderley

" Goldsmith

also M^r G. Leeder, Hollingsworth & Co

Mess^{rs} James Sanson, Hindley

and Sonnets - Solicitors.

and M^r Lawrence, Organiser

Wm. Adamson Esq^r as the Chair.

The Minutes of the Empowering Committee

and of the Provisional Committee of the

5th of November were read.

Resolved

That they be approved confirmed

Manchester Ship Canal Company.
Minutes of the Provisional Committee 10
November 1882 (ref GMCRO/B10/1/11).

December the 17th 1674
 Memorandum; That Richard Nutt
 the Elder of Middleton in the County of Lancashire
 husbandman and Mary Nutt my now wife
 of the said day and year above written, and
 and delivered into the Lady Assheton of Middleton
 aforesaid widow, one cow with a brown back and
 brown ears for a consideration of the Summe of
 three pound thirtene shillings and four pence
 of Current money of England, already received by the
 said Lady Assheton into the one of the said
 before the delivery of the said cow the receipt
 whereof was the said Richard Nutt and Mary Nutt
 do hereby acknowledge, Confesse, and our selves
 consent to lawfully satisfied for the said cow,
 And whereas the said Lady Assheton is pleased
 to lett to the said Richard Nutt and Mary Nutt have
 her said cow from the said day of the date above
 written for one year upon the following, to wit the
 said Richard Nutt and Mary Nutt or the one of or our
 Executors and Assignes or some of them shall pay unto
 the said Lady Assheton for the hire of the said cow
 during the said year aforesaid the Summe of four
 shillings of Current Lawfull money of England, and
 the said cow always and upon condition that the said
 said Richard Nutt and Mary Nutt our Executors and
 Assignes or some of them shall and do keep the
 said cow in till such time as shee shall come to
 the same place where shee was now resident heretofore
 (which is about twenty shent from the town of
 Walmsley) in witness whereof the said Richard
 Nutt and Mary Nutt have hereunto set their hands
 the said day and year above written.
 With the hand of
 Richard Nutt
 Mary Nutt
 James Blaxall
 Robert Chaderton

Assheton of Middleton. Memorandum dated 17 December 1674, between Richard Nutt the elder of Middleton, husbandman and Mary his wife, and Lady Anne Assheton, widow. Richard Nutt will hire for one year, for a consideration of 10/-, the cow with a brown back and ears, that he and his wife has sold to Lady Anne for £3 13s 4d (ref GMCRO/E7/217).

GMCRO also has significant holdings of family and estate papers, three of which are worth particular mention here. The papers of the Egerton family of Heaton Hall, Earls of Wilton, date from 1304, and cover large parts of the north Manchester area, including Heaton, Blackley, Crumpsall, Prestwich and Radcliffe. The usual title deeds are complemented by an excellent set of tenants' rentals for most areas from the 1740s to the 1950s, as well as papers arising from the family's dealings with

the coal mining and railway companies. Sir Thomas Egerton was Lieutenant Colonel Commandant of the Royal Lancashire Volunteers 1778-1784, and many of the regiment's papers have survived. These include recruit registers, volunteers certificates, brigade orders, accounts, and courts martial records. The latter record punishments for offences, which were relentlessly draconian: being absent without leave could result in anything from 100 to 800 lashes, being drunk on duty could

be punished by 50 to 500 lashes, and the man who stole a cheese was sentenced to 600 lashes.

The earliest document in the Assheton family of Middleton archive is an agreement between William de Radcliffe and Roger de Middleton dated 1 June 1197. The bulk of the records comprise title deeds for the areas of Middleton, Radcliffe, Thornham, Birtle, Pilsforth and Ainsworth. Many of these fall into the medieval or early modern period, and are consequently written in Latin. The court rolls for Middleton Manor have survived for the years 1515 to 1760, including the papers of the steward of the court, and there are rentals from 1654 to 1837. A book dating from the 1670s gives the pedigrees of over 100 Lancashire families, and there is a set of architectural plans of Middleton Market House and Market Cross by George Steuart dated 1791.

The papers of the Legh Family of Lyme Hall reflect the family's sizeable property holdings in various parts of the county such as Stockport, Haydock, Golborne, Newton, Lowton and Norbury, as well as Disley and Poynton just outside the county boundaries. Most of the papers cover the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and include such records as workmen's wages, tenants' rentals, coal-mining leases, personal correspondence (dating from the 1650s), and a large set of some 520 maps and plans; OS maps, tithe maps, railway plans, and maps and plans relating to coal mines.

As an approved place of deposit under the Public Records Acts, GMCRO holds almost 3,000 linear feet of Public Records. Many are closed by statute for either 30, 75, or 100 years (for example, Petty Sessions, Coroners' and Hospital records), but those open to public access include the 1910-1911 Inland Revenue Land Tax Valuations, Charity Commissioners' Accounts, Non-conformist Marriage Registers, Motor Vehicle Licensing Records for Oldham, Stockport and Rochdale, and railway records. The latter comprise two separate deposits: the staff records of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Works at Horwich, 1898-1980, which include staff history cards, accident registers and related correspondence; and the plans and engineering drawings of various railway companies, such as the Lancashire & Yorkshire, London, Midland & Scottish, Cheshire Lines Committee, and the Northern Union. These plans, of all parts of Greater Manchester, span the years 1829 to 1955.

Saturday

Janu

Name	Condition	Age	Occupation	Mother's Maiden Name	Place of Birth	Present Residence	Whether Housekeeper, Lodger, or, one of the Family.	
William Thorpe	Married	53	Weaver	Bridget	Kersall Moor	Parish of - Prestwich	Housekeeper	
Henry Downey	Single	19	Bookbinder	Farrall	Manchester	3 Broadley Court Bark Lane	Lodger	
John Caldwell	do.	15	Servant	Caldwell	Lynn	Glostock		
Dothie James	do.	23	do.	Dothie	Lincolnshire	23 Bresecant		
Peter Hornby	Married	79	Greaser	Manifold	Christine Christine	New Solington	Housekeeper	
Martha Gleave	do.	52	Keeler	Bentley	Eccles	1 Broughton St Salford	do.	
Francis Gardner	do.	56	Carter	Procter	n. Lancaster	79 B. Piccadilly	do.	
Charles Hildren	do.	32	Weaver	Naylor	Barton	Highly Bridge n. Bolton	do.	
Matthew Lowe	Single	27	Spinner	Hill	Bayfield	Staley Bridge	Lodger	
Jeffery Wright	do.	42	Brewer	Downing	Minwick	Three Crowns Salford		
Samuel Wright	do.	58	Weaver	Horton	Ashton	Marigold Salford	Housekeeper	
Harriet Bolton	do.	35	Servant		Manchester	Sale n. Man		
Alice Cowburn	do.	32	do.		n. Middleton	do.		
Edna Taylor	Married	73	Weaver	Marg' Boyle	Davy Hulme	Clayton Stapfield Lane	Housekeeper	
Harriet Miller	do.	55	Butcher		Atterley	Belhusda Chapel Prestwich	do.	
Job Royle	do.	50	Weaver		Barlow	Fleeton	do.	
William Bott	do.	40	Sailor		Kent	Morsley Davy Hulme	do.	
Elizabeth Thompson	Single	12			Bootham	Prestwich R. St. John's Row	Family	
Thomas Smudley	Married	50	Weaver		Farlow	Morsley Derby Fallowfield n. Withington	Housekeeper	
Richard Wilson	Single	10			Coulthard	Manchester	Family	
Susan Smith	do.	13			Bootham	Manchester	Family	

Manchester and Salford Savings Bank. A page from the Register of New Depositors 4 January 1823 (ref GMCRO/B/TSB/03/1/1).

Finally, the Office holds over 200 small or single-item archives. These vary enormously in form and content, from letters and deeds, to posters and photographs. For example, *Manchester 1847-1897: A paper read at the Conference of Surveyors' Institution* by John Holden: this is a scrapbook with the full text of the lecture given, as well as many photographs of places in Manchester which are no longer in existence. There is also a contemporary narrative of the Peterloo Massacre, which details the proceedings of the inquest on John Lees of Oldham, and lists the names and addresses of people wounded or killed. *The Crab Recorder: The Organ of the Methodist New Connexion Literary Society, Higher Blackley, 1902-1905*, is a set of three handwritten volumes of what was a kind of church magazine, with articles, photographs, correspondence, and even a problem page. Among the deposits of photographs is a set depicting employees, and old trams and buses of Manchester Corporation, 1880-1950.

In short, this is a major archive for all those interested in the history of the

region. The collection continues to expand.

The audit of holdings at 1 October 1992 (a useful exercise linked to the SLA concept) revealed that 9,358 linear feet or 423 cu metres of the deposited records are deemed to be county-wide, 5,003 linear feet are the responsibility of specific districts, and 21 per cent of the total comprises the GMC and Residuary Body archive. There is some room for expansion, but major increases in holdings would require an imaginative building project, like restoring the roof to its original height.

Users

New demands are constantly being made on a record repository. The move from academic to genealogical and demographic research is well documented. Labour and feminist historians have forced us to look more closely at our holdings, and the ethnic communities are increasingly conscious of the need to research, and to preserve the records of, their activities. The scrapbook of the Medical Women's Federation is full of the battles of the

early lady doctors to establish their right to practice freely.

As archivists, we are again learning to look more deeply at the archival collections. A doctor's papers include files arising from her concern about the provision of medical facilities for Asian women; the uncatalogued papers of a former Emergency Planning Officer reflect his concern for the plight of the Ugandan Asian refugees, and there must be other examples waiting to be discovered and exploited.

GMCRO holds the 1909 Land Valuation Survey (Domesday) for much of the County, and we are interested to learn that from this important, and under-used archive it has been possible, in other parts of the country, to locate rights-of-way. However here it appears that similar information was not recorded, despite the fact that the intention was to include all plots and parcels of land.

In 1992 over 5,500 user visits were recorded, mainly by genealogists consulting the Principal Probate Registry *Index* to 1942, and the

microfilms of the Register General's St Catherine's House index to 1927. Perhaps because of its location, GMCRO is under-used by academic and professional researchers, who may not be sufficiently aware of the potential of the Wilton, Assheton, Legh and Entwistle family and estate papers, and of the major sources of the Rochdale Canal, Manchester Ship Canal, British textile employers, and the earlier parts of the TSB (more recent records are not available for research) archives.

Like the records of the older estates, business archives and particularly those with a mobile, or navy, workforce, tend to reflect the activities of the owners, rather than of individual employees. For the Rochdale Canal Company it is possible, through the receipt books and the sparse labourers' wages books to identify some of those involved in constructing and operating the canal. For the Ship Canal, one accident book survives. It is possible, however, possible to identify a large number of local shareholders in the Ship Canal Company, a topic which would seem to offer a project for the social or economic historian. Depositors with the Manchester and Salford Savings Bank would also repay study. Unfortunately there is much less

stability in business than in landed estates, and records are lost or destroyed when a firm closes or is taken over.

Location

GMCRO, in New Cross, to the north east of Piccadilly, is within a fifteen minute walk of Victoria and Piccadilly Stations. This area developed rapidly early in the nineteenth century as a speculative venture, anticipating the construction of the Rochdale Canal and the resulting demand for warehouses, and other business premises and supporting amenities. It is hoped that the Ancoats Conservation Area will be extended to include New Cross, between Oldham and Rochdale Roads, Swan and Thompson Streets. Its historical value lies in the continuation of the original street pattern, now recognised as one of the few remaining examples of a planned industrial suburb, which also retains some of the notably small scale buildings — characteristic of early-nineteenth-century communities.

The area fell into decline almost as quickly as it developed. Today, only a handful of the original buildings are left, earmarked for listing. The remainder are of poor quality, and suffer from disrepair. Some have been completely demolished and are only

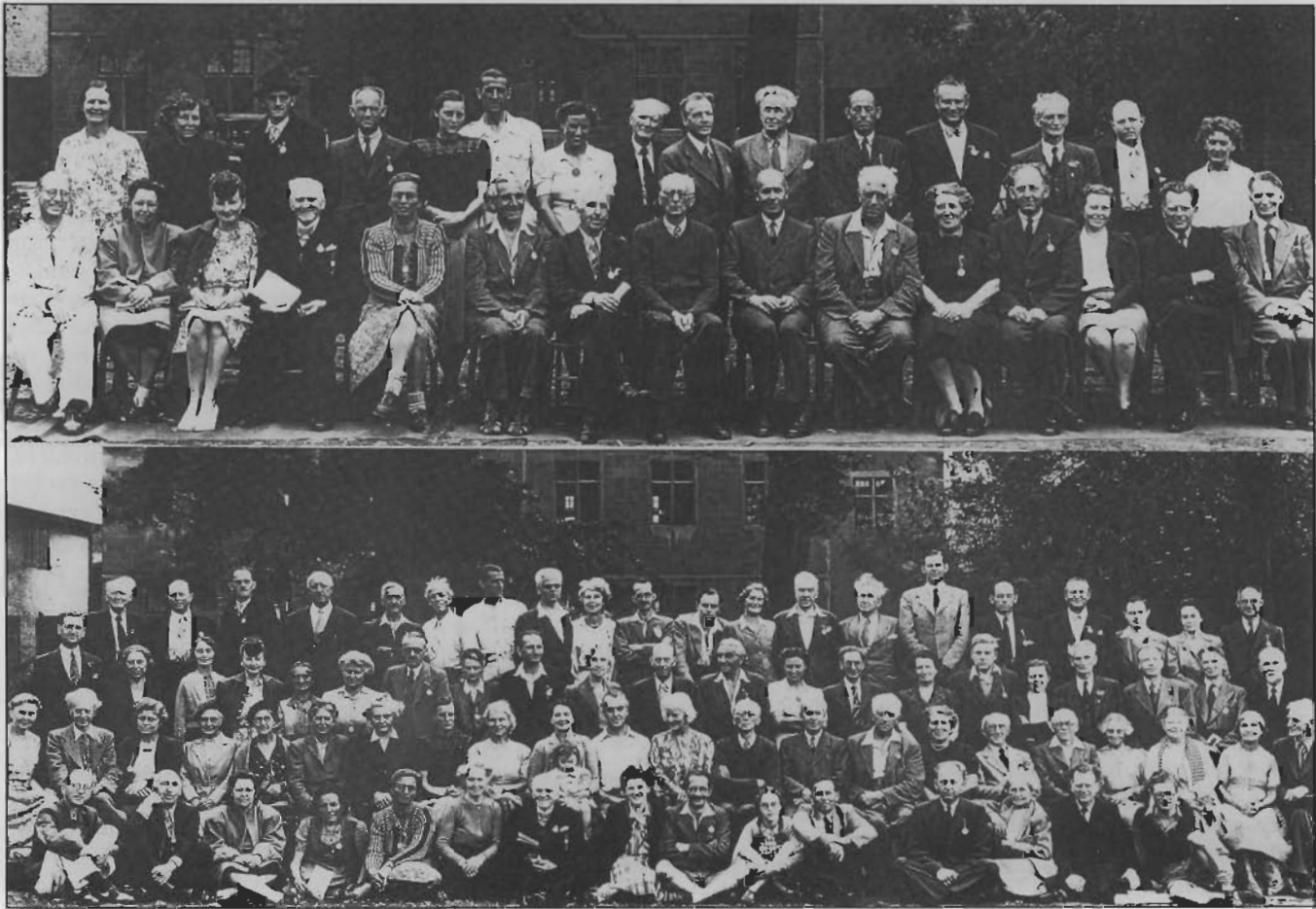
used as fringe car parking. Yet others have been replaced by a mixture of industrial sheds, and modern, low rise sheltered accommodation. Further degradation has resulted from the use of the streets by impatient motorists as a 'rat run' between the two main roads, creating a hostile, uninviting and often dangerous environment for the occupiers, and the general public. However, improvements are being made to individual buildings, and this forgotten area of Manchester may yet live again, as more people realise its importance.

Car parking continues to be a problem, but of users who responded to a survey in November, 1992, 55 per cent had travelled by public transport. Some 49 percent of users surveyed were retired, so it is sad, but not surprising, that about eight per cent of the total complained of difficulties in reaching the public searchroom, which is on the first floor. Unfortunately, with a typical semi-basement style of building, there are steps either up or down to the lift. This is a problem which we are powerless to do anything about, without major capital expenditure.

GMCRO operates the Record Office Research Network readers' ticket system (CARN), but the only formality

Date of Registration	NAME	Age	Date of Birth	Occupation	Period of Abstinence	Address (in full)	Date of Declaration	Progressive Number of Members	Members dead
	Arthur Fieldhouse							4097	
	A.C. Thomson							9	
	Thomas Wyles	63		Schoolmaster	50 yrs 1849	The College, Buxton	Jan. 1.02	9	
	Frank Brannan	37		Salesman	= 9	77, Cornbrook St. Old Trafford, M16	Nov. 11.02	2726	
	John A. Hanley	20		Book-keeper	5. 0	44B, Queen's Gate, Bury	Nov. 18.02	4164	
	Gilbert	15		Student	2	"	"	4402	
	Hugh, Mrs. Mapleton	31		Confectioner	13-0	108, Moor Lane East, M6	Dec. 2	-3	
	Miss Lily Shepherd	37			1. 0	12, Collyer Road, Chorley & Harsley	1. 15	4	
	Sandra Lil Aldworth			Student	Life	2 A.V. College, Lahore	" 16	5	
	F. W. Giddens			Reverend	26	Parsons, Brook, Abbeville, Canada	" 20	6	
	John B. Hamilton	39		Insurance Inspector	2-8	27, Westbank, Shettleston, Glasgow	" 15	7	
	Harry Dean	28		Chemist	1-2	21, Greenhall Road, Huddersfield	" 17	8	
	Miss Ruth E. W. Wardale	48				62, First Terrace, Barill Road, New Forest Hill	" 18	9	
	Miss Mary L. Stokes	27		Teacher	Life	School House, Eardish, Marlborough, Wilts.	26 Feb. 03	4110	
	J. W. Hunter	42		Cashier	14.10	5 Hillside St. Edinburgh	22. Dec. 2	-1	
	Miss Ada Messer	17				Worley St. N. Stafford	1. May	2	
	Peter McShort	35		Doctor of Science	- 6	99, Raby St. Moss Side	3	3	
	Mrs. M. Scott	46			1- 9	Finghiesh, Warrington	5	4	
	John D. Gifford	30		Artist	6	Grain of Corn, British, Drigly	1. July	5	
	Miss Sarah A. Ridgway	48		Weaver	6-0	12, Mount St. Paulston	3. May	6	
	Henry Gordon Palmer	28		Bank Clerk	2-1	8, Richmond Hill, Rathfriland, Dublin	5 June	7	
	Miss Minnie C. Holbrook	43			14-0	105A, Walnut St. Newton Heath, D. Man. 21	14	8	
	James Wyles	22		Drapery Warehouseman	- 10	7, Princes St. Glasgow	16	9	

The Vegetarian Society. Register of Members 1902 (ref GMCRO/G24/31).



The Vegetarian Society. Two group photographs. nd. (ref GMCRO/G24/). Reproduced by permission of the Vegetarian Society.

is to provide acceptable proof of identity. Opening hours are Monday 1.00 — 5.00pm, Tuesday — Friday 9.00am — 5.00pm, and the second and fourth Saturday 9.00am — 4.00pm. No booking is needed, except for the St Catherine's House microfilms, but advance notice is expected for documents to be used on Saturdays. Our address is Greater Manchester

County Record Office, 56 Marshall Street, New Cross, Manchester M4 5FU. Tel. No. 061-832 5284.

A leaflet, *Record Repositories in Greater Manchester*, gives a brief guide to the location of archives in the County. The *Guide to GMCRO* (1992) provides a more detailed list of the documents available in GMCRO.

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