

THE ORIGINS OF THE MANCHESTER AND SALFORD REFORMATORY FOR JUVENILE CRIMINALS 1853-1860.

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In the first half of the nineteenth century juvenile delinquency and its causes and treatment were the subject of much debate and the focus of a number of official and voluntary enquiries. Home Office returns, which were introduced in 1805, revealed an apparent rapid rise in the general crime rate and much of this was attributed to an increase in the number of juvenile offenders. May suggests that there was growing awareness that urban areas, in particular, housed large groups of potential delinquents, often children of the streets without either employment or education.¹ In the heavily populated and industrialised areas of the North West juvenile crime rates were the highest in England and Wales outside London. Faucher, quoting criminal statistics for Manchester provided by the Corporation for 1843, indicated that there were 3,571 convictions of which 475 and 76 respectively were boys and girls under the age of fifteen years.² Neale, who undertook a personal survey into the problems of juvenile delinquency in Manchester in 1840, estimated that there were 3,650 homeless children on the streets at that time, many of whom were involved in petty crime.³

From the 1830s onwards, there was increasing public concern, both about the extent of juvenile crime and the effectiveness of the methods used to punish the offender. A number of politicians, magistrates and philanthropists began to lobby for changes in policy and legislation and the solutions which they put forward were based increasingly on separate and specialised correction for young offenders.⁴ By the 1840s, juvenile reformatories - institutions which aimed to reform and rehabilitate young offenders rather than punish them - became the preferred option of a significant group of campaigners. Voluntary groups had already established a number of reformatory type schools in England and Wales. Some judges and magistrates made informal use of them by pardoning young people if they agreed to reside there for a specified period. Some rurally based reformatories, such as Lloyd Baker's Children's Friends School in Gloucestershire, were influenced by the example of Mettray, a French institution based on environmental theories, which was promoted as a paradigm of reformatory science. Following an active campaign by reformers, the Select Committee on Criminal and Destitute Children, which reported in 1853, recommended that juvenile reformatories should become part of the criminal justice system.

In 1854, as a result of the Reformatory School (Youthful Offenders) Act, courts were given the power to send convicted juveniles between ten and sixteen years of age to a reformatory school for a period of two to five years. A fourteen day prison sentence had to be served prior to admission, reflecting the view of some reformers that an element of retribution was an essential component of reformation, if only to act as a deterrent. The legislation also left the future development of juvenile reformatories with the private and voluntary sector, perhaps in recognition of the important role which philanthropists had played in the reform campaign. Schools which wanted to take part in the scheme had to be certified by the Home Secretary in order to receive a per capita grant from the government and they would also be subject to annual inspection from H.M. Inspector of Prisons.

In spite of the lack of financial incentives, fifty-two schools were certified in England and Wales by the end of 1860. Some, such as the Royal Philanthropic Society's Farm School at Redhill, had been in existence for a number of years but others were established in direct response to the Act of 1854. In Lancashire, four reformatories for boys were set up during this period. Two, a reformatory ship and a farm school, were initiated by a group of Liverpool magistrates to provide for children and young people sentenced by local courts. In North Lancashire, William Garnett M.P., a local landowner, opened a reformatory on his country estate in Bleasdale. In the Manchester area, the Home Secretary certified a juvenile reformatory, funded and constructed entirely by voluntary effort, on 28 October 1857. However, this institution, far from being established to provide treatment for juvenile offenders, started life as a ragged school and the managers were "reluctant reformers" who made a pragmatic decision to opt for certified status as a result of unforeseen circumstances and events.⁵

The Angel Meadow District Ragged and Industrial School

On 21 October 1853 a small group of Manchester gentlemen met at the business premises of Joseph Consterdine to discuss the possibility of establishing a ragged and industrial school in the Angel Meadow district, similar to the Manchester Refuge and School of Industry. Consterdine, who appeared to be the prime mover of the scheme, was a cotton manufacturer and merchant who was also a magistrate for the City of Manchester. Others present at the initial meeting included Rev. J.E. Brooke from Strangeways Unitarian Free Church, Rev. J.G. Vance, Edward Hardcastle, a cotton merchant and magistrate for the Lancashire Hundred of Salford (later to become a Conservative Member of Parliament) and Thomas Southam, an attorney. At this meeting it was resolved that a ragged school be established, funded entirely on a voluntary basis, and that a search should commence for suitable premises in the Millers Lane area. It was also suggested that a management committee should be formed of those gentlemen present and "...such of their friends as will be likely to attend the meetings".⁶

Over the next few months, whilst the search for premises continued, a number of further meetings were held, a committee of eighteen members was formally established and funding was organised by inviting subscriptions from local businessmen and gentry. In May 1854 a lease was agreed on rooms in Mayes Street and Mr. Graham, who had experience of working in a ragged school in Edinburgh, was appointed master of the school on a salary of £80 per annum plus house, gas and coal.⁷ School rules were drawn up and a sub-committee was appointed to transact daily business and consider applications for admission. Shortly afterwards, the Angel Meadow Ragged and Industrial School admitted its first pupils.

Widening the Net

Before the school opened, the Committee had emphasised that it was not intended to be a refuge for young offenders and the predominant aim was to provide education and industrial work for children of the lowest class. However, within a few weeks of being operational, it became apparent that it was almost impossible to exclude children who had admitted offences.

Applications for admission were frequently "...cases of boys who had been guilty of theft and were rather fit objects for a reformatory institution than for an ordinary ragged school".⁸ On 9 August 1854 the managers amended their policy to include "...hopeful cases of children not exceeding fourteen years of age, slightly tainted with crime".⁹ Subsequently, more and more juveniles with a criminal background were referred to the school, many of whom lived on the streets. The managers believed that it was their duty as "Christian philanthropists" to say; "Here is the refuge which you want. Come to it and you shall be taught what you need to know, both for your souls and bodies."¹⁰ Consequently, the school also became a refuge and in November 1854 sleeping accommodation was provided for ten children at a cost of £10.

During the next twelve months the school expanded, providing beds for twenty children. The managers were successful in obtaining profitable work for the pupils, including box making for local soap manufacturers. The boys were expected to remain in the school until they could read and write reasonably well and suitable lodgings and employment had been found for them. At this stage, in view of the number of juvenile offenders accommodated in the school, the Committee first discussed the possibility of establishing a juvenile reformatory. They were also made aware of the existence of a legacy of £1,000, the result of the death of a local gentlewoman, Miss Pearce, which was available to any private or voluntary group prepared to set up a reformatory in the Manchester area. Some members were keen to pursue this idea and a sub-committee was established to investigate the matter further. However, the majority were committed to their original aim of helping vagrants and beggars and preferred to concentrate on re-housing the ragged school in purpose built premises. Consequently, a Building Fund was established and an architect was commissioned to draw up the necessary plans.

At this point the Committee's ambitions were thwarted unexpectedly. In October 1855 typhoid fever spread through the Angel Meadow School. Within a few days Mr. Graham, the master, died as a result of the disease and a number of children were also seriously ill and admitted to hospital. Local authority officials, investigating the outbreak, closed the school, declaring that the building was unfit for residential purposes and the thirteen boys who were still living there were transferred to the workhouse. This placed the Committee in a dilemma. They believed that they had a duty to re-house the criminal boys whom they had taken in as soon as possible but they had no premises and little prospect of raising enough money in the short term to build a new school. They were faced with the necessity to start again from scratch and recognised that the time had come to re-examine both their original aims and the role and function of any future institution.

Reluctant Reformers

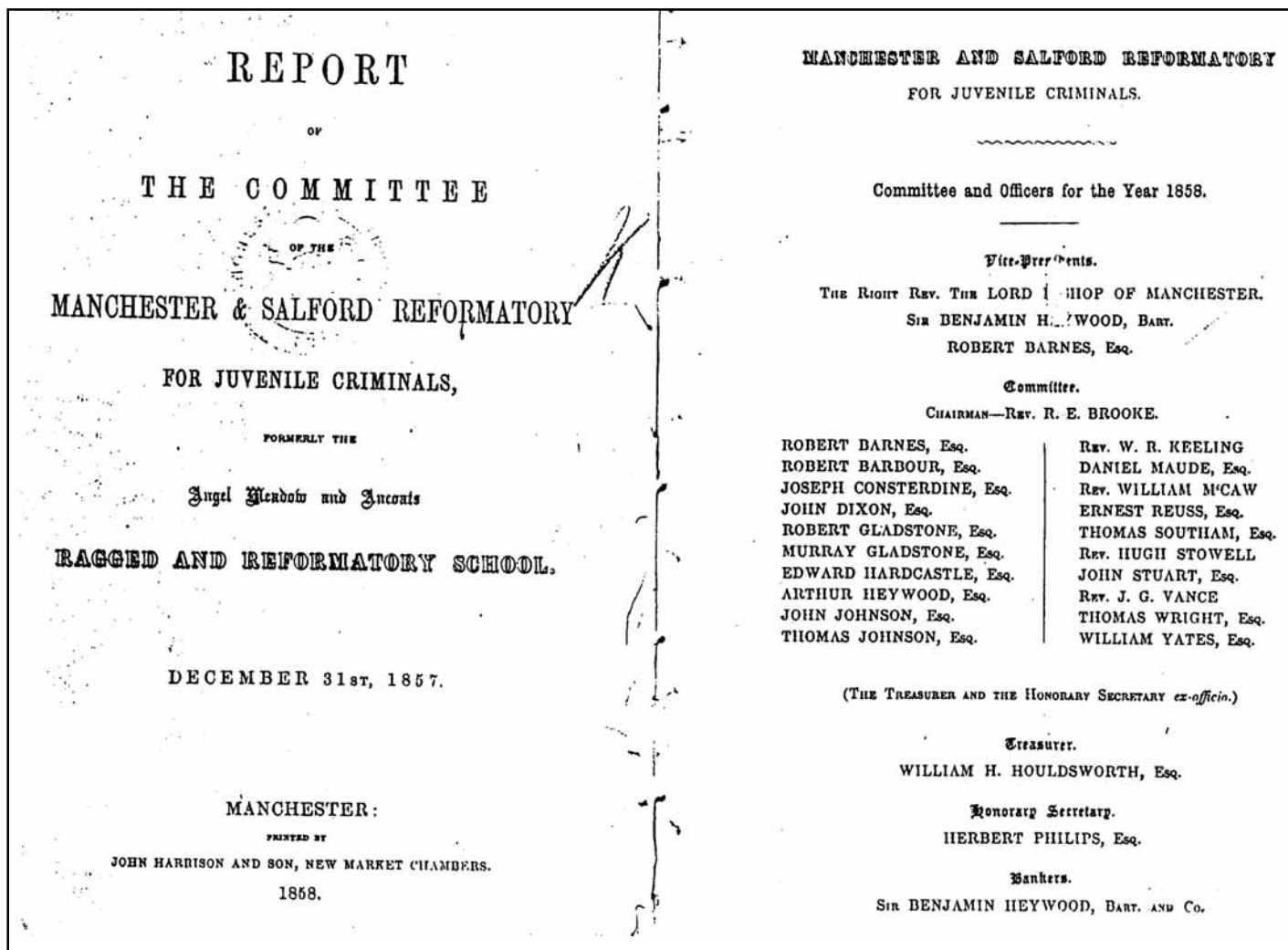
The managers of the ragged school then held a number of meetings to formulate plans and to discuss ways and means of obtaining financial support. At this juncture the legacy of £1,000 to assist in the building of a reformatory school began to look particularly attractive. Additionally, in November 1855, John Fitzgerald, a local landowner and businessman, approached the Committee and offered them a free lease of an acre of land on his estate "beyond the Pendleton turnpike" in order to build a reformatory.¹¹ If the Committee did not wish to lease his land, he was still willing to pay a Governor's salary of £150 per annum for a period of three years, providing the reformatory institution was rurally based.

Three options appeared to be open to the Committee: to build a new ragged school, to open a reformatory institution or to try and combine the two functions in one unit. The majority were of the opinion that the first course of action "...would have been preferable in many respects had they been quite free to choose, unfettered by previous circumstances".¹² However, there was also increasing recognition among the members that "...the road to reform was the road to financial security".¹³ A decision was made finally to go for the reformatory option, although there were reservations about the rural situation, which was surprising since the re-formative value of rural life had been one of the cornerstones of the original movement. On 12 December 1855, after ensuring that the legacy and Governor's salary were still available, the Committee decided to establish a "...voluntary, private, benevolent institution, independent of Government interference" but prepared to receive some boys from the local courts.¹⁴ As an interim measure, the Committee rented other rooms in Mayes Street and reopened the school, initially on a daily basis, restricting admission to boys with a criminal background.

The Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Criminals

In January of the following year, the Manchester and Salford Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Criminals was formally established. A public meeting was held in order to attract subscriptions. Annual subscribers of not less than one guinea and donors of over £10 were given membership of the new association. A Committee of twenty-five elected members was formed to oversee the development of the new institution. Some were members of the original organisation but there were also a number of new recruits. Committee membership reflected the composition of many urban based philanthropic organisations of the mid-nineteenth century. They were upper- or middle-class men whose life-style gave them both the financial means and the necessary free time to become involved in the management of a voluntary institution. The majority were committed Christians, predominantly members of evangelical Anglican or nonconformist churches. A number held municipal office of some description and they were concerned predominantly with local rather than national issues.

Kidd describes the influential Manchester men of that period as "...an urban elite of old merchants, manufacturers and bankers" and the membership of the reformatory Committee supports this view.¹⁵ There were 'gentlemen', such as Herbert Phillips, whose families had made money through trade and industry and who



The first Annual Report of the Manchester and Salford Reformatory.

had retired to work for charity. There were a number of brokers and manufacturers, some of whom were magistrates, including Murray and Robert Gladstone. The professions were represented by bankers and attorneys, such as Arthur Heywood and John Stuart and there was the inevitable sprinkling of clergy, including the Rev. Hugh Stowell, the evangelical Rector of Christ Church, Salford. A number of Committee members were also actively involved with other charitable institutions, as Rose suggested when he expressed the view that a small “active minority” of the elite middle class controlled the majority of voluntary organisations in the city.¹⁶

In the early part of 1856 the Committee drew up a Code of Governance for their new institution and advertised in the local press for a suitable site in a rural location. A number of sites were inspected but they were thought to be too far from town and, eventually, the Committee purchased land at Blackley for the sum of £1,550. There were two adjoining pieces of land, Willey Fields, which measured five acres and Further Barren Hill, which was just over three acres.¹⁷ The architects Cowley and Radford submitted plans, a tender was accepted for the new building at a cost of £1,674 and canvassing began immediately as the Building Fund had not reached the requisite amount. A reformatory Governor, Mr. Antrobus, was appointed and he was to work at the Mayes Street School until the reformatory opened.

The new reformatory was a two-storey building placed on rising ground overlooking the church at Blackley. On the ground floor there was a Governor’s residence, a Committee room, a school/dining room, a probation room for newcomers, two cells for solitary confinement and the usual kitchen and washing facilities. On the upper floor there were three dormitories, staff sleeping quarters, a sick room and a linen room. There were also workshops in the outside yard. The Lord Bishop of Manchester formally opened the institution, the Manchester and Salford Reformatory for Juvenile Criminals, in the presence of two hundred guests, on 6 August 1857. Noted reformers from throughout the country were present, including Lord Shaftesbury, who stated in his address; “The necessity for this work was obvious; the juvenile criminal class existed and could not be ignored and if they were not kept down, they would grow into an ungovernable army.”¹⁸

The Case for Certification

Almost as soon as the institution opened there were problems with both the financial organisation and the daily management of the school. Firstly, it became apparent that the promised annual subscriptions were not sufficient for the institution to be maintained. Roads and fences around the new building had cost an additional £450 and the Committee were forced to ask the bank for a loan in order to pay some staff salaries.¹⁹ The Committee had hoped to be able to start market gardening and

agricultural work but lacked the funds to buy the necessary implements, even such basic necessities as a handcart. Obviously, a further appeal would have to be made to the generosity of the patrons but the Committee were only too well aware that they could not rely on their liberality indefinitely and that other methods of funding had to be explored.

The second problem resulted from the Committee's insistence that residence in the institution should be "...voluntary and that moral restraint should be relied upon for the retention of the inmates until the work of reformation had been affected".²⁰ Antrobus, the Governor, complained that this arrangement was not workable because boys who were admitted on a voluntary basis either absconded or were withdrawn by their parents. He was keen to fill the institution to capacity to alleviate the financial difficulties and he also wanted the inmates to remain long enough for the process of reformation to take place. The Committee, who had always insisted that their institution should be independently financed and house voluntary inmates who were deserving cases, were forced into an almost immediate volte-face. If they changed their stance and accepted boys from the courts who were the subject of a Reformatory School sentence, they had a guarantee that such inmates would stay for a minimum of two years. There was also the very considerable advantage of a weekly per capita payment from the Treasury in respect of each admission. On 9 October 1857 the Committee resolved to apply to the Secretary of State to have the institution certified so that "...it may come within the scope of Lord Palmerston's Acts relating

to reformatories".²¹ The certificate was received on 28 October and fourteen boys under sentence were admitted before the end of the year. Within a very short period voluntary inmates became a thing of the past.

A Period of Consolidation

In spite of the advantages of certification, the troubles at Blackley were not over and these independent Manchester men, who had been so determined to retain their voluntary status and resist any interference from central or local government, were forced to review their situation once again. In 1858 admissions did not increase as expected and both Antrobus and the management sub-committee expressed anxiety about the financial viability of the school. Plans to appoint more staff and expand the educational and industrial experiences of the inmates had to be postponed.

Initially, the Committee had been insistent that their facility should be used only by local boys and, in spite of pressure from the Rev. Sydney Turner (appointed as Inspector of Reformatory and Industrial Schools in 1857), they refused to accept inmates from other areas of the country which lacked reformatory provision. However, when the expected influx from the local courts failed to materialise, the Committee agreed to accept any suitable boy who was referred for a place.²² In the following year boys were admitted from as far afield as Carlisle, Warwick and Derby and for the next twenty years more than half the reformatory population originated from outside the county of Lancashire.²³

RULES.

I.—This Society shall be called "THE MANCHESTER AND SALFORD SOCIETY FOR THE REFORMATION OF JUVENILE CRIMINALS."

II.—All annual Subscribers of not less than One Guinea, and all Donors of £10. and upwards, shall be Members of the Society.

III.—The management of the Institution shall be, in every respect, under the control of a Committee, to be elected annually by the Members, and to consist of a President, Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Secretary, and not more than twenty-five ordinary Members,—power being reserved to the Committee to fill up vacancies at any general meeting, as they may deem advisable.

IV.—Meetings of the Committee shall be held once in every quarter, and oftener if necessary. The power of calling extraordinary meetings shall be vested in the Secretary, who shall be bound to summon an extraordinary meeting whenever requested to do so by three members of the Committee.

V.—At their first meeting the Committee shall elect, from amongst its members, a Chairman, and also a Weekly Board, whose duties shall be,—

- 1.—To inspect the Institution, and regulate its finances, meeting once a week for that purpose.
- 2.—To assign to its several members the special charge of particular departments.
- 3.—To judge of the eligibility of Candidates for admission into the Institution, and to admit such as they may approve.
- 4.—To decide upon the expulsion of any boy whose conduct may be considered to require such a measure.
- 5.—To order the necessary stores, implements, provisions, and payments. No payment to be made by the Treasurer, without a written order from the Chairman of the last Weekly Board.
- 6.—To appoint or suspend Officers, subject to the confirmation of the next meeting of the Committee.

7.—To make a report to each Quarterly Meeting of the Committee, of the state and progress of the Institution; with a detailed account of receipts, expenditure, and liabilities.

VI.—The officers of the Institution shall consist of—

- 1.—A Governor; whose duties shall comprise the teaching in the School, and the general superintendence of all other officers, &c. and of every department of industry and discipline.
- 2.—Such Trade Masters and other Assistants, as the Committee may from time to time appoint.

VII.—The inmates of the Institution shall consist—
First, of boys committed by Magistrates, and approved by the Committee, under the provisions of the several Acts for the Reformation of Juvenile Criminals; and secondly, of those criminal boys who may have applied voluntarily, or on whose behalf their parents may have applied, and who shall have been deemed eligible by the Weekly Board.

VIII.—The following shall be regarded as fundamental Regulations of the Institution.

- 1.—The strictest obedience to every officer of the Institution shall be enforced.
- 2.—A system of rewards and punishments shall be organised; and tabular records shall be kept concerning the history and conduct of each boy.
- 3.—The principal occupation of the boys shall be in industrial employments, especially in spade-husbandry and gardening. But a portion of every day shall be allotted for their being instructed in general and religious knowledge.
- 4.—Each boy shall be clothed and fed at the expense of the Institution. Such food and clothing shall be sufficient in quantity and good in quality, but of the plainest description.
- 5.—The Governor shall assemble all the boys, for the reading of the Scriptures and prayer, every morning and evening.
- 6.—All the boys shall be taken to public worship at least once every Sunday, unless arrangements shall be made for holding service in the School-room of the Institution.
- 7.—The religious instruction given in the Institution shall be of a simple and practical character, and shall be in accordance with those truths which are generally acknowledged by the great majority of Protestant Christians.
- 8.—Each boy who is discharged from the Institution, and placed in a situation, shall receive a certificate signed by the Committee; and no boy shall be authorized to leave without the written sanction of the Committee.

The Role of Central and Local Government

In 1857, in spite of objections from promoters and supporters of existing institutions, the Reformatory Schools Act was passed which enabled local authorities to contribute towards the building or extension of reformatories via the Quarter Sessions in Counties and the Councils of Quarter Sessions Boroughs. The legislation also allowed local authorities to contract with specific reformatories to receive juveniles from their area. Nevertheless, the Manchester managers remained resistant to establishing formal links with any particular courts, preferring to retain the freedom to choose their inmates. However, in 1859, concerned about lack of numbers and the future financial stability of the institution, Herbert Phillips, who was then Secretary, approached the Clerk of the Peace for Lancashire with a view to reaching an agreement to receive boys from the New Bailey Gaol who had been committed from the Hundred of Salford. In November of that year the Court of Annual Session agreed to pay a grant of £500 to extend the building if the Committee would "...bind itself at all times to maintain in the school at Blackley ten additional juvenile offenders ... committed from the Hundred of Salford without any cost beyond the government allowance".²⁴ In addition the reformatory would be inspected from time to time by visiting magistrates. This agreement may have tied the Committee's hands on admission policy to some extent but the grant allowed them to improve their facilities and also ensured a small but steady flow of local admissions.

Although the Committee had accepted that the institution would have to be inspected on an annual basis as a result of their certificated status, they were anxious to avoid any government interference in the daily management of the reformatory. However, in 1860, further problems arose in the school and the managers accepted that the matter would have to be referred to the Home Office for advice and guidance. Charges of immoral conduct were laid against the Governor, Antrobus, by one of the assistant masters. Members of the sub-committee met on five consecutive days with their legal advisors to consider these charges. On 27 August 1860 the Rev. Brooke, reporting on behalf of the sub-committee, indicated that the evidence against Antrobus was contradictory, conflicting and, in some cases, false and they found him innocent of the charges made against him. The General Committee were sympathetic to Antrobus and wanted to retain his services although they conceded that he "...had by his own injudicious conduct laid himself open to charges of a scandalous nature".²⁵ However, when the affair was reported to the Rev. Sydney Turner at the Home Office, he advised them that Antrobus must be dismissed. To add to their ignominy the Committee were unable to agree on a suitable replacement and were forced to accept the Home Office Inspector's recommendation and appoint Henry Arnold who was working at Kingswood Reformatory. He proved, however, to be a popular Governor who gave the Committee little cause for concern and he remained in post until 1887 when he retired due to ill health.

The Road to Success

Initially, in common with the majority of managers of reformatory schools, the Manchester Committee was not enthusiastic about local or central government intervention in the management of their institution. They believed that voluntarism was the most effective method of promoting social and religious objectives,

particularly the reformation of deviant young people. They were also independent men, concerned predominantly with local affairs and issues, and, having given both their time and money to establish the reformatory they were firmly of the opinion that they were the right people to manage it. In addition, Committee members recognised that local authority involvement, which added to the burden of the ratepayer, would be accompanied inevitably by a degree of regulation. They were also resentful of Home Office oversight, although this was minimal, because there was always the suspicion that the annual inspection would call for further costly changes and improvements.

However, once they had accepted that the future success of the school depended upon co-operation with the Home Office and local authorities, the reluctant reformers became a dedicated and enthusiastic group of managers. Members remained heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the school. The sub-committee met at the reformatory on a weekly basis and also interviewed all inmates both on admission and prior to discharge.²⁶ Perhaps this opportunity to work directly with the objects of their charity and to observe at first hand the results of their labour offered a degree of participation and stimulation which was preferable to the endless round of meetings and fund raising events which characterised some other charitable organisations. Whatever the reason, the level of interest remained high and there were few changes on the Committee with some members continuing to serve for almost forty years.

From 1860 onwards the institution continued to thrive. The number of inmates increased, additional land was leased to enable the farm to become a profitable concern and, by 1870, the school no longer needed to rely on voluntary subscriptions and donations. The Manchester and Salford Reformatory for Juvenile Criminals, established by accident rather design, played an increasingly important role in the juvenile justice system and became one of the most successful institutions of its type in the country.

NOTES

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- 8 L.R.O., M.S.J.R., Printed Annual Report 1857, DDX 1791/2/1, p.9.
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- 16 M. E. Rose, 'Culture, Philanthropy and the Manchester Middle Classes', in A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (eds.), *City, Class and Culture: Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 1985), p.113.
- 17 L.R.O., M.S.J.R., Governor's Records. Conveyance of Land, Ashton to Barnes, DDX 1791/3/1, 18 Nov. 1856.
- 18 *Manchester Courier*, 7 Aug. 1857.
- 19 L.R.O., M.S.J.R., Printed Annual Report 1857, DDX 1791/2/1, pp.22-3.
- 20 L.R.O. M.S.J.R., Printed Annual Report 1857, DDX 1791/2/1, p.14.
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- 22 L.R.O., M.S.J.R., General Committee Minute Book, DDX 1791/1/1, 8 April 1859.
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- 26 L.R.O., M.S.J.R., Governors' Sub-committee Minute Books, DDX 1791/1/9 and 1791/1/10, 1856-1857 and 1857-1867, *passim*.