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Manchester's Ragged Schools

1847 to c.1890

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of ragged schools in the mid to late nineteenth century, was a response to rapid population growth in urban industrialised areas. The schools, mainly founded by Christian evangelists using meagre resources, were aimed at a class of children considered to be destitute both physically and morally. In Manchester, by the time of the 1870 Elementary Education Act, there were 30 ragged schools, attracting nearly 8,000 children to Sunday school, and about 1,700 to secular evening classes. With the passing of the Act, Lord Shaftesbury, a long standing parliamentary supporter of, and campaigner for, ragged schools, considered that this was the end of them. The secondary sources, on the whole, tend to share this pessimistic view. In contrast to the hostile position adopted by the London Ragged School Union, the evidence from Manchester suggests that ragged schools were supportive of the Education Act, as it removed from them the duty of providing secular education, enabling the schools to focus on a wider range of evangelical and social activity in accordance with their founding mission and principles. This study also suggests, that Manchester ragged school leaders were influenced by the various, city based, campaign movements in support of state funded secular elementary education. The Victorian state and modern historians have tended to measure the success of ragged schools, solely on their ability to teach the three 'R's or secular education. On that measure, with the passing of the Act, there was a retreat on the part of ragged schools, but what gets overlooked, is the success they enjoyed well into the twentieth century as they concentrated on 'whole family' evangelism and social work. This study suggests that it is important to take into account local circumstances when considering how ragged schools, in different parts of the country, responded to, and were impacted by events such as the 1870 Education Act.

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PERSONAL STATEMENT

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work, and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution.

Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to examine how the ragged schools of Manchester changed their purpose and the services they provided as a result of the 1870 Elementary Education Act (herein after referred to as the Act). The period covered is 1847 to c.1890. In 1847 Manchester's first ragged school appeared, and since the objective is to identify the impact of the Act on ragged schools, it is necessary to allow a period of time, following the passing of the Act, to evaluate changes.

During the middle decades of the nineteenth century, Manchester witnessed passionate debates and parliamentary activity on the subject of education for the poorest children, in the lead up to the Act. Lord Shaftsbury considered that with the passing of the Act, ragged schools would disappear. This pessimistic view is echoed in most of the secondary literature and yet for Manchester, there is evidence that the Act was not only welcomed by ragged schools, but that the ragged school movement continued to provide support, to some of the most destitute children, and at a greater scale, well into the twentieth century, in accordance with their original aims.

Generally speaking, the ragged school movement is not widely covered in the secondary literature and when it is, it is usually tangential or covers particular aspects of the movement. For example, Mair covers the relationship between children and their ragged school teachers in the context of evangelicalism¹ (see also Mair's doctoral thesis which forms the basis of the book).² Harold Silver makes the point that 'little historical attention had been paid to' themes such as ragged schools despite the estimate that between the 1840s and 1881, the ragged

¹ Laura, Mair, *Religion and Relationships in Ragged Schools: An Intimate History of Educating the Poor, 1844-1870* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019)

² Laura Mair 'The Only Friend I Have in This World' Ragged School Relationships in England and Scotland, 1844-1870' (unpublished PhD.thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2016)

school movement in London alone had ‘rescued’ 300,000 children.³ In terms of published secondary sources, Silvers observation still holds. A good review of the ragged school movement in England is to be found in Derek Webster’s unpublished doctoral thesis which contains a substantial chapter on Manchester.⁴ An early overview of the ragged school movement is provided by C. J. Montague, although his emphasis is on London, despite the book’s subtitle ‘the ragged school movement in English history’.⁵ Broad overviews of Victorian elementary education are provided by Hurt⁶ and West.⁷ Hurt focuses on the political role of the working class while West takes the controversial view that state intervention during the Victorian period was unhelpful, and that the ‘voluntary’ sector was capable of full educational provision. Gardner argues that prior to the Act there was a substantial working class supported private sector, but that supporters of the Act used its provisions to dismantle this sector.⁸ These secondary sources largely remain silent about ragged schools, but provide national context and dimensions important to a study of this kind. A number of journal articles provide overviews that deal with ragged schools and their relationship with the state, and especially the arrival of the Act. A good example being Schupf’s work.⁹ Specific to the Manchester education debates is the work of Maltby who provides a detailed account of the various positions adopted by key nineteenth century

³ Harold Silver, ‘Aspects of Neglect: The Strange Case of Victorian Popular Education’, *Oxford Review of Education*, 3.1 (1977), 57-69

⁴ Derek Webster . ‘The Ragged School Movement and the Education of the Poor in the Nineteenth Century’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 1973)

⁵ C.J Montague, *Sixty Years in Waifdom or The Ragged School Movement in English History* (London: Chas Murray, 1904; repr. New York: Kelley, 1969)

⁶ John Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860-1918* (London: Routledge, 1979)

⁷ Edwin West, *Education and the State-A Study in Political Economy* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1994)

⁸ Phil Gardner, *The lost elementary schools of England* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984)

⁹ Schupf, H. W., Education for the Neglected: Ragged Schools in Nineteenth-Century England, *History of Education Quarterly* 12. 2 (1972) 162-183

campaigning groups involved in the provision of education in the city culminating with the 1870 Act.¹⁰

The main ragged school primary source consulted are the annual reports of the Charter Street ragged school (1861 to 1892) because of their completeness, and these are therefore frequently referred to, to illustrate general points. For a good part of the research period the Manchester Archives and Local Studies department of the Manchester Central Library was closed. Fortunately, it was possible to access on-line contemporary reports of ragged school annual general meetings in *The Manchester Weekly Times* and *The Manchester Guardian*. In addition, *The Ragged School Union magazine* (1849 to 1887) contains numerous references to the evangelising work of Manchester ragged schools. Use has been made of contemporary pamphlets and reports, for example, John Wakefield Macgill's *Our Ragged School and how it became an Institution* (1885) and the reports of the Manchester Statistical Society's various investigations into education in the city. Parliamentary papers, reports, House of Commons and Select Committee debates have been referred to, especially in chapter 3. Relevant parliamentary papers include the report of the 1861 Newcastle Education Commission but especially Part III *Education of Vagrants and Criminals* where the role of ragged schools is covered.¹¹ A Select Committee report on the education of 'destitute children' contains evidence received and recommendations specific to ragged schools.¹² The report of H.M.I. Rev. D. R. Fearon on education in Manchester provides quantitative context and observations on Manchester ragged schools.¹³

¹⁰ Samuel Maltby, *Manchester and the Movement for National Elementary Education 1800-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1918)

¹¹ Education Commission, *Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of popular education in England – Vol 1* PP.1861, Cmd. 2794-1.

¹² House of Commons Select Committee, *Report from the Select Committee on the education of destitute children; with the proceedings of the committee* PP.1861 Cmd. 460

¹³ Fearon, *Reports on schools for poorer classes in Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester* PP.1870, Cmd. 91

A word about definitions. Throughout this study, reference is made to ‘public’ and ‘private’ schools. In the nineteenth century, the term ‘public’ schools was used to describe schools attended by working class children, and organised mainly by the Church of England and Nonconformists faiths. These schools were also referred to as ‘voluntary’ schools. The term ‘private’ schools, refers to schools run by individuals for which a fee was charged, often referred to as ‘Dame’ schools.

2. THE ORIGINS OF RAGGED SCHOOLS IN MANCHESTER

This chapter provides an overview of the ragged school movement, during mid to late nineteenth century Manchester. There is discussion about what motivated the founders of ragged schools, and the principles upon which the schools were run. The class of people who became involved with the ragged school movement in Manchester is touched upon as well as how the schools were financed. Finally, there is an attempt to gauge the extent of secular teaching that occurred in the schools. Findings in this chapter will be drawn upon in succeeding chapters.

The scale of ragged schooling in Manchester

The 1851 education census (about which, more will be said in Chapter 3) estimated that mid-nineteenth century Manchester had 368 day schools, educating 26,236 children (See Table 2.1). Just short of 62% of children attended public schools, with the remainder attending private schools. Most of these children (15,021 or 57%) were receiving an education in schools supported by religious bodies, and of these, just under half were supported by the Church of England (7,320), and just over 14% (2,127) supported by the Roman Catholic Church. No ragged schools are recorded by the census, even though, as we shall see, there is evidence to suggest they already existed.

Education Census 1851 - Manchester				
Description of School	no of schools	Total no of scholars	Male	Female
Day schools	368	26,236	15,420	10,416
Public Schools	80	16,202	10,061	6,141
Private Schools	288	10,034	5,359	4,675
<i>Classification of public schools</i>				
Class 1 supported by general or local taxation	1	97	48	49
Class 2 supported by endowments	3	482	422	60
Class 3 supported by religious bodies	70	15,021	9,172	5,849
Class 4 other public schools	6	602	419	183
Class 1				
Workhouse schools	1	97	48	49
Class 2				
Collegiate and Grammar Schools	1	402	402	0
Other endowed Schools	2	80	20	60
Class 3				
CoE national	10	2795	1645	1150
CoE Others	23	4525	2028	1897
Free CoE	1	122	0	122
Scots Presbyterians	0	0	0	0
Presb Church in England	2	389	219	170
Presb not defined British				
Presb not defined Other	1	161	84	77
Independents	6	837	535	302
Baptists British	0	0	0	0
Society of Friends	2	286	168	118
Unitarians British	0	0	0	0
Unitarians Other	2	648	412	23
Wes. Methodists British	1	104	81	23
Wes. Methodists Other	5	882	509	373
We. Methodist Association	1	70	61	9
Calvin Methodists British	0	0	0	0
New Church	1	395	265	130
Roman Catholics	9	2127	1421	706
Jews				
Undenominational				
Class 4				
Ragged Schools	0	0	0	0
Orphan Asylum schools	0	0	0	0
Odd fellows Orphan school	1	89	89	0
Infant Ophan school	0	0	0	0
Blind school	0	0	0	0
Deaf and Dumb School	0	0	0	0
Mechanics Institue school	0	0	0	0
Industrial school	1	96	60	36
Penitentiary school	1	50	25	25
Other Subscription schools of no specific character	3	367	245	122

Table 2.1 – Number of schools, school description and numbers of scholars in Manchester 1851¹¹ *Census of Great Britain 1851, Education, England and Wales. Report and tables*, PP 1852-53, Cmd.1692 p. clxii

The high number of day schools recorded is attributable to the fact that many ‘private schools’ were conducted in homes or cellars with attendances of a handful of children as described by Gardner.² The evidence seems fairly strong that Manchester’s first ragged school appeared in 1847.³ This was located in Nelson Street, Angel Meadow. Webster believes it is possible that ragged schools were formed even earlier, perhaps in the early 1840s, based on the words of Robert Lowe, the secretary of the Manchester and Salford City Mission: ‘Very early in its history the Manchester City Mission recognised the value of young life and its missionaries opened ragged schools for elementary education on week-nights and Bible instruction on Sundays’.⁴

Since the Mission was founded in 1837 it is possible that ragged schools were developed in the early 1840s. Certainly, during the 1850s many ragged schools were established, and from Webster’s examination of the membership of the Manchester and Salford Sunday Ragged School Union (M.&S.S.R.S U.) from 1859 to 1885, we can see that at least 38 ragged schools came into existence in Manchester (see Table 2.2).

² Phil, Gardner, *The lost Elementary Schools of England* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984) pp.16-25

³ Webster, p.115.

⁴ Robert Lee, *Tales from Two Cities*, (1927) p.142. cited in D. H. Webster, p.115.

MANCHESTER'S RAGGED SCHOOLS					
Name of Ragged school and location	Membership years	Map ref.	Name of Ragged school and location	Membership years	Map ref.
Ormand Street, Chorlton-on-Medlock *	1859 to 1885	1	Iron Street, Cheetwood	1867 to 1875	20
St Anne's, Queen Street, Deansgate	1859 to 1885	2	Gun Street, Oldham Road	1867 to 1871	21
Sharp Street, Angel Meadow	1859 to 1885	3	Carpenter Hall, Brook Street	1867 to no date	22
Heyrod Street, Ancoats *	1859 to 1885	4	Holland Street, New Islington	1867 to 1885	23
Jackson Street, London Road	1859 to 1885	5	Old Garrett, Prince's Street *	1869 to 1885	24
Queen Street, Hulme	1859 to 1885	6	Charter Street, Angel Meadow	1869 to 1885	25
Junction Street, Oldham Road	1859 to 1885	7	Trumpet Street, Deansgate	1868 to 1878	26
Greaves Street, off Little Peter Street	1859 to no date	8	Jessie Ann Street	1869 to 1877	27
Hayes Street, New Islington	1860 to 1863	9	Newton Heath, Queen Street	1869 to 1879	28
Bridgewater Street, Deansgate	1860 to 1867	10	Percival Street (Chorlton on Medlock??)	1869 to no date	29
Hewitt Street, Knot Mill	1860 to 1875	11	Charlton Street, Collyhurst Street *	1870 to 1885	30
Poland Street, Oldham Road	1860 to 1885	12	Lombard Street	1870 to 1873	31
Nelson Street, Angel Meadow	1863 to 1867	13	Fowler Square, Oldham Road *	1873 to 1885	32
Naylor Street, Oldham Road	1863 to no date	14	St. Mark's, Hulme	1874 to 1885	33
Holt Town, (Tonge Street, Ancoats)	1863 to 1885	15	St. James the Less, Ancoats	1874 to no date	34
Newtown	1863 to 1885	16	Wood Street, Deansgate	1874 to 1877	35
Red Bank, Little Scotland	1863 to 1885	17	Saville Street, Chorlton on Medlock	1877 to 1885	36
Dark lane, Ardwick	1867 to 1885	18	Lower Moss Lane	1879 to 1885	37
George Street, Miles Platting	1867 to 1877	19	Openshaw	1882 to 1885	38

*Denotes school established by the Manchester City Mission ⁵

Table 2.2 Ragged school membership of the M.S.S.R.S.U. between 1859 and 1885 excluding Salford ragged schools.⁶

The map at Figure 2.1 shows the school locations (see references to locations shown in Table 2.2). Also shown on the map are areas identified by certain investigations into the condition

⁵ Webster, p.116.

⁶ Webster, pp.147-148.

of working people and the quality of housing: areas which by definition, were some of the poorest areas of the city. What we see, is that ragged schools tended to be located in areas of high poverty that quite noticeably surround the wealthy commercial centre of the city. The proximity of the ragged schools to areas of poverty suggests that their founders placed them where they could be most effective. The managers of the schools would have been familiar with the streets and families within their reach.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 2.1 Location of ragged schools in Manchester. For name and address of school see map references in Table 2.2 Not all schools appear on the map. Slum districts: blue dotted line for areas A,B,C and E from Thomas Marr.⁷

⁷ Terry Wyke et al, *Manchester, Mapping the City* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2018) pp.128-129

The average ragged school attendances from 1859 to 1885 are shown in Table 2.3. The Sunday schools attracted the greatest number of children, and from 1869 this remained consistent throughout the remainder of the period studied. Teaching on Sundays would have been based on reading the Bible. At week evening schools, teaching was of secular subjects. The evening school and girls sewing classes both show a noticeable fall away in attendance from the early 1870s, attributable to the passing of the Act. Although the early 1880s still show a surprisingly high level of attendance at evening school: this may be attendance by adults.

Statistics relating to the Manchester & Salford Sunday Ragged School Union						
Year	Number of Sunday School Teachers	Average Attendance at Sunday School	Average Attendance at Week Evening School	Average Attendance at Sewing Class	Number of Schools in Union	Total of Subscriptions £ s d
1859	447	3,253	975	555	12	138 17 6
1860	426	3,564	1,916	675	15	222 19 6
1862	557	4,530	1,706	not shown	16	not shown
1863	584	6,238	1,875	not shown	21	221 2 0
1867	652	5,420	1,540	519	25	241 19 6
1869	639	7,398	1,709	567	29	247 0 6
1870	687	7,725	1,740	598	30	242 1 6
1871	693	7,464	1,634	627	30	235 0 0
1873	665	6,931	1,234	499	31	130 11 0
1874	640	7,800	1,289	428	32	184 5 6
1875	718	7,225	1,096	486	32	143 1 6
1876	597	6,342	862	331	30	143 6 6
1877	622	6,508	858	366	30	112 16 6
1878	547	6,453	804	331	28	108 6 6
1879	609	7,081	856	298	29	103 18 6
1881	621	7,236	1,284	254	28	76 7 8
1882	587	7,461	695	300	29	74 8 6
1883	640	7,702	1,136	344	29	63 8 0
1884	660	7,708	1,004	375	29	59 13 6
1885	629	8,142	439	265	29	57 2 6

Table 2.3 Numbers of Teachers, attendances at Sunday School, day School and Sewing class, number of schools in the Union and subscriptions according to the annual reports of the M.&S.S.R.S.U.⁸

⁸ Webster, pp. 121, 124-125.

Motivated by salvation

It has been suggested that a number of concerns expressed by the middle class contributed to the establishment of ragged schools. Victorian social reformers drew attention to the link between crime reduction and the work of ragged schools. There was concern about the protection of private property as reformers ‘feared that children, deprived of proper moral instruction, would become trained as criminals, drunks and debauchers’.⁹ The driving force though for the philanthropists who organised the early ragged schools was evangelical Christianity. Callum Brown argues that ‘by the 1840s and 1850s urban dissenting congregations drew up parts of cities, often quite small ones of a few streets, inhabited by what were deemed alienated working class families which became targeted for intensive evangelisation on a permanent basis’.¹⁰

The main instrument through which these fervent evangelising missionaries operated were the various city missions which sprang up in most large industrial cities. In Manchester, we know that the City Mission was responsible for setting up a number of ragged schools (see Table 2.2). Describing the motivations for the original London ragged schools, Schupf states that ‘the impetus behind the establishment of [ragged] schools was thus Christian missionary zeal and the original goal was not the provision of secular education but the saving of souls’.¹¹

Two influential nineteenth century advocates of ragged schools were Thomas Guthrie and Mary Carpenter. Between them, through their writings, speeches and campaigning they

⁹ Tom Cockburn, ‘From ‘street arabs’ to ‘angels’: working-class children, competence and citizenship, 1850-1914’ in *Welfare, exclusion and political agency* ed. by Batsleer, J. and Humphries, B. (ebookcentral, proquest.com: 1999) pp.22-46 (p. 25).

¹⁰ Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* 2nd. Edn.(Abingdon: Routledge, 2009) p.44

¹¹ H. W. Schupf, Education for the Neglected: Ragged Schools in Nineteenth-Century England, *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 12. No. 2 (1972),162-183 (p. 163)

helped to establish both an awareness of the benefits of ragged schools, and the principles under which they would operate.

Thomas Guthrie (1803-1873), a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, turned his attention to the plight of destitute children, and established three ragged schools in Edinburgh. His thoughts and experiences were captured in the much read *Three pleas* of 1847, 1849 and 1860.¹² Guthrie visited Manchester in 1859, telling his audience, at the Free Trade Hall, that ragged schools were ‘the cheapest, the best, and most efficient instrumentality for curing the social evils under which our cities groaned.’¹³ Guthrie’s *First plea* (1847) advanced the argument that ‘prevention is better than cure’. Guthrie argued, as did all exponents of ragged schools, that as well as garnering souls for Him, the cost of ragged schools per capita was significantly less than the cost of an individual’s journey through the justice system. Mary Carpenter (1807 – 1877) was ‘the leading female advocate of deprived and delinquent children in mid-nineteenth-century England, and one of the first philanthropists to see the need to provide special facilities for their care.’¹⁴ She opened a ragged school in Bristol (1846), and as with Guthrie, wrote a number of influential pamphlets and books such as *Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders* (1851), in which she stated that love ‘draws with ... cords far stronger than chains of iron’.¹⁵ With the publication in 1859 of *The Claims of Ragged Schools to Pecuniary Education Aid* Carpenter set out a political economist’s argument about the need for state aid to support the schools that were dealing with a very specific and unreachable group of children. In more colourful language, Lord Shaftesbury urged ragged school

¹² Ritchie, Lionel Alexander, Guthrie, Thomas (1803–1873), Free Church of Scotland minister and philanthropist *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004)

¹³ North Wales Chronicle, *Dr Guthrie on “Ragged Schools”* Saturday January 1st 1859

¹⁴ Prochaska, Frank, Carpenter, Mary (1807–1877), educationist and penal reformer *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004)

¹⁵ ODNB

managers to ‘stick to the gutter’ as that was where these ‘unreachable’ children were to be found. These early advocates of ragged schools were clear: a key principle was that their schools were for the most destitute children, such as those that Guthrie and Carpenter found wandering the city streets of Edinburgh and Bristol.

Aligned with the thinking of the above reformers the Bishop of Manchester (Dr Lee) set out in 1855 the principles that would guide the Angel Meadow ragged school of which he was patron.

1. To provide a home, education, and protection for those poor juvenile outcasts who have been made friendless by death, abandonment, neglect, or ill-usage of their parents, but who yet, from other circumstances, are not admissible to the workhouse.
2. To assist those parents whose poverty will not allow of their providing an education for their children, in their laudable desire to have them instructed.
3. To attempt the diminution of juvenile crime, by endeavouring to preserve from it those who are in danger of commencing its sad career, and by opening up a way of reclamation for those who are already tainted with it.¹⁶

In addition, it was made clear that, the school was to be run on ‘distinctly Christian principles’ albeit non-denominational. Apart from saving souls the emphasis of the early ragged schools was on providing food, clogs and clothing and practical help to develop trade skills in the hope that children would be rescued from a life of crime, become self-sufficient and lead a virtuous Christian life.

¹⁶ Manchester Ragged Schools, *Ragged School Union magazine* (Jan 1855) 7.73 50-52 (p.51)

What was happening in Manchester and by whom?

The initiators of ragged schools in Manchester, using the principles expounded by the likes of Guthrie and Carpenter, adopted the zeal of missionaries as they set about their work of ‘excavating the heathen’, In 1858

They (a few men in a respectable position) wished to try their hand at the work of home civilisation; or as the late Dr. Chalmers styled it, “excavating the heathen.” They hired an empty tenement and got together as their first pupils a few uncivilised and thoroughly ignorant lads from the streets. But the heathenism of Angel Meadow did not wish to be excavated, and set itself to revenge the missionary intrusion.¹⁷

This ‘missionary intrusion’ was to produce a highly successful ragged school: Charter Street.

A later example of an evangelical Christian carrying out missionary work in the Manchester slums is Alfred Alsop (1844-1892). Alsop, a bookseller, publisher and Methodist, founded Wood Street Mission at the age of 25 in 1869 (Originally this was the Lombard Street ragged school). ‘He was an evangelical Methodist who used a combination of religious zeal, plain speaking and good business connections to launch the charity.’¹⁸ Alsop in his *Ten Years in the Slums*, (1879), describes how he and a few friends made it their business to walk and live among the poorest people living in the slums around Deansgate.¹⁹ The objective of the Mission was to

seek and rescue the destitute and neglected children of our city from a life of poverty and vice... to preach and teach the truths of the Bible to both the old and young of the very poor, criminal and depraved classes of the city.²⁰

¹⁷ Angel Meadow, Manchester, *Ragged School Union magazine* (Aug 1858) 10,116 156-157 (p.156)

¹⁸ Wood Street Mission, *Queues, Glogs and Redemption* (Manchester: WSM, 2016)

< <https://www.woodstreetmission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Queues-Clogs-Redemption-Booklet.pdf> > [accessed 18th June 2020]

¹⁹ Alfred Alsop, *Ten Years in the Slums*, (Manchester: John Heywood, 1879) pp.7-17

²⁰ Wood Street Mission, p.4

According to Kidd, while Alsop provided the ‘evangelical fervour’, the day to day management of the mission was in the hands of ‘the ranks of the manufacturing element, rather than the commercial bourgeoisie’. Their religion tended to be Christian nonconformity and their politics Liberal. Kidd also notes that a number were city councillors and Aldermen.²¹ The early listed officers of Charter Street ragged school seem to similarly reflect the involvement of the ‘manufacturing element’ who ran the school committee as suggested by Kidd. One of the trustees, for 1861, was Mr H. Everton of 29 Lever Street, Manchester who is listed in a commercial directory as a ‘hat and bonnet manufacturer’.²² Another Charter Street trustee is Mr J.B. Rowcliffe of 22, Elizabeth Street, Manchester who is probably the same person mentioned in the *London Gazette* of 30th June 1865 as ‘J.B. Rowcliffe of the city of Manchester’ described as a ‘smallware manufacturer’.²³ Supporting the work of the Wood Street mission, were prominent merchants and wealthy industrialists such as, Edward Tootal Broadhurst, said to be the largest cotton manufacturer and merchant in Manchester, and Charles John Galloway, a successful engineer, whose company built the Furness Railway Iron viaduct. Broadhurst was also, during the 1890s, an honorary secretary to the Charter Street ragged school extension committee at the same time that William J. Crossley, an immensely wealthy industrialist, was Chairman. Crossley, with his brother Frank, founded a very successful engineering firm in Manchester, and William, a nonconformist teetotaler, subsequently became the Liberal MP for Altrincham and was later knighted. Other committee members include Frank Crossley, a sprinkling of Justices of the Peace and the Liberal MP for Manchester North, Mr C. E. Schwann. Shapely has suggested

²¹ Alan Kidd, ‘Outcast Manchester’ Voluntary Charity, Poor Relief and the casual Poor 1860-1905’ in *City, class and culture, Studies of cultural production and social policy in Victorian Manchester* ed. by A.J. Kidd and K.W.Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) p.58

²² *The Commercial Directory of Liverpool, and shippers guide 1875* p.348
<https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/The_Commercial_directory_of_Liverpool> [accessed 18 September 20]

²³ *London Gazette* 30 June 1865 p. 3320
<<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/22985/page/3320/data.pdf>> [accessed 18 September 20]

that in mid to late nineteenth century Manchester, involvement with charitable causes was a way that men with wealth and ‘cultural capital’ could cement their positions as social leaders in the community.²⁴ From the examples given, late Victorian ragged schools were a vehicle for such leadership. Both Charter Street and Wood Street histories suggest that as the early ragged schools became established and expanded their work they attracted the support of highly successful manufacturers, merchants and industrialists: some of them with high social standing in Manchester. Common to all, who were involved with ragged schools, was their Christian nonconformity and, mainly Liberal politics.

Appeals for funds

Initially the budgets of the Manchester ragged schools were small, and the income was mainly derived from voluntary subscriptions. The Charter Street annual accounts (see table 2.4) demonstrate the relatively small amounts needed to run the school, and the principal sources of funds (today £100 is worth approximately £12,000). The M.&S.S.R.S.U. provided grants for the first ten years of the schools existence, but thereafter the school became almost totally dependent on voluntary subscriptions. In the years 1881, 1883, 1889 and 1891 subscriptions account for nearly 100% of the schools income.

²⁴ Peter Shapely, ‘Charity, Status and Leadership: Charitable Image and the Manchester man’ *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1998) 157-177 (p.157)

Charter St Ragged School - Income and Expenditure				
Year	Total Income £ s d	Union Grant £ s d	Subscriptions and Donations £ s d	Total Expenditure £ s d
1861	106 1 3	30 0 0	59 4 9	106 1 3
1863 *				
1864	110 3 9	25 0 0	66 15 9	110 3 9
1865	95 1 1	13 11 0	63 18 7	95 1 1
1866	98 12 1	15 4 0	63 6 6	98 12 1
1867 *				
1868	242 2 3	40 0 0	97 0 6	242 2 3
1869	194 15 11	37 17 1	107 17 1	194 15 11
1870 *				
1871	110 11 3	Nil	92 9 6	110 11 3
1872	124 9 4	Nil	105 19 0	124 9 4
1873 *				
1874 *				
1875 *				
1876	98 18 6	Nil	85 18 6	98 18 6
1877 *				
1878 *				
1879	179 4 4	Nil	107 17 3	179 4 4
1880	171 0 7	Nil	115 10 7	171 0 7
1881	171 9 6	Nil	162 18 4	171 9 6
1882	228 1 11	Nil	164 5 6	228 1 11
1883	264 10 4	Nil	252 3 10	264 10 4
1884 *				
1885	209 15 4	Nil	180 4 2	209 15 4
1886	259 6 6	Nil	225 5 7	259 6 6
1887	225 16 7	Nil	177 18 8	225 16 7
1888 *				
1889	268 12 3	Nil	241 0 1	268 12 3
1890 *				
1891	376 8 3	Nil	348 19 6	376 8 3

Table 2.4 Charter Street ragged school, total income, grants from the M.&S.R.S.U., subscriptions and expenditure for the years 1861 to 1891.²⁵

²⁵ Manchester Archives and Local Studies GB124.G25, *Charter Street Ragged School Annual Reports 1861 – 1891*.

Subscriptions were encouraged by the use of stories which typically told of the salvation of the souls of children. Alsop's books, which specialised in this particular genre, were so popular that his publishers claimed that each volume had sold 30,000 copies.²⁶ The stories had two purposes: raise money for (in this case) the Wood Street Mission, and prick 'middle class consciousness about the plight of street children'²⁷ This was the 'sell' and the response was often generous as we can see from Charter Street 'subscriptions and donations' in Table 2.4.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure. 2.2 Charter Street ragged school Treasurer's Account for 1861 (Source: Manchester Archives and Local History – Manchester Central Library)

²⁶ Cockburn, p.26.

²⁷ Cockburn, p.26.

For the year ended 31st December 1861 Charter Street's total income was £106 1s 2.5p with expenditure equalling this amount. Voluntary subscriptions amounted to nearly 56% of income with just over 28% coming from a M.&S.S.R.S.U. grant. There are 107 named 'subscribers' mainly individuals (there are at least 3 companies listed) with an average subscription of 11s.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure,. 2.3 Charter Street ragged school - list of donors and subscribers for 1861 (Source: Manchester Archives and Local History – Manchester Central Library)

What learning actually occurred in ragged schools?

Laura Mair, who has mined the rich collection of letters written to the Superintendent of the Compton Street ragged school in London, draws attention to the paucity of direct evidence from ragged school scholars of their competence in reading and writing.²⁸ The archive that

²⁸ Laura Mair, A 'Transcript of Their Mind'?; Ragged School Literacy in the Mid-Nineteenth Century, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 2019, Vol.24, No.1, 18-32 (p.18)

Mair draws upon has its limitations which she acknowledges (the correspondents were emigrants supported by the London Ragged School Union, and were chosen because they fulfilled one of the criterion for selection, namely that they were literate) but nevertheless represents, up until now, ‘unheard testimonies of a cohort of ragged school children’.²⁹ Mair points out that despite the movement’s exponential growth prior to the Education Acts, earlier historians such as Webster, have ‘effectively disregarded’ the efforts of ragged schools in encouraging literacy.³⁰

These were scholars, however, who would have had a vital interest in learning to read and write as this would be the only way they could communicate with home as they settled in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. But, if one takes into account Mair’s warning, that ‘the typicality of the letters remains problematic’ they do represent a rare insight into ragged school education.³¹ Webster points out that at its peak, the London Ragged School Union had just over four hundred paid teachers which declined after the Act of 1870.³²

Nevertheless ‘the Union’s criteria were concerned with missionary zeal, a personal religious experience and moral uprightness. By other standards, the paid teachers were usually unqualified, poorly educated and unable to command a very high salary’.³³

If this is correct, then for London ragged school scholars, good and consistent levels of literacy would have been very difficult to attain and more so in Manchester, because paid teachers were very much the exception. Montague’s comment on the quality of education in ragged schools supports Webster’s view when he argues ‘it cannot be claimed that a great number of ragged school masters and mistresses held high certificates. Their work did not

²⁹ Mair, p.24.

³⁰ Mair, p.31.

³¹ Mair, p.24.

³² Webster, p.83.

³³ Webster, p.81.

demand them. The qualities they needed were of a different order than extreme educational proficiency'.³⁴

Montague is surely right when he pointed out that the very rationale of the ragged schools was to reach those whom society had deemed unreachable. Alsop records his attempt to teach some of the most destitute, and apparently, unruly children in one of Manchester's slum areas, Deansgate

Tuesday evening, April 13th, there were 125 scholars; but all the filth, rags, disorder, and dirt, it would fail description. Teaching was out of the question: we made the effort, handing out the slates and pencil, but soon found that we must call them in, for they tried the quality of the slates, and the nature of each other's heads, making it a complete failure for that night.³⁵

Alsop's experience tells us that education was certainly on the agenda, but that on occasions it was an impossible task because of the behaviour of their would be scholars. Caroline Cornwallis, writing in 1851, drew attention to the quite special circumstances of ragged school children when it came to education

It is a great mistake to suppose that because reading, writing, and other usual school knowledge has been withheld, that therefore no education has been given. The mind of the child must receive its bent from the circumstances by which he is surrounded, and the companions among whom he is thrown, and this is education.³⁶

But, the advocates of the Act, and school inspectors did not see it like that. When the Rev. D. R. Fearon undertook an inquiry into the condition of schools for the poorer classes in Manchester, during late 1869, he included one ragged school. The conclusion he drew after examination of a number of uninspected schools (these were schools not in receipt of

³⁴ Montague, pp.188-189.

³⁵ Alfred Alsop, *Lombard Street and How We Got There*, (1870) pp.9-10 cited in Dorothy and Alan Shelston, 'The Industrial City 1820-1870' (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1990) p. 110

³⁶ Caroline Cornwallis, *The Philosophy of Ragged Schools* (London: Pickering 1851; repr. London: Forgotten Books, 2018) pp.114-115.

government grant. Schools in receipt of government grant were obliged to be regularly inspected) when compared to existing reports of inspected schools was that ‘they show that the education given in these school (inspected) is decidedly superior to that given in the uninspected school’.³⁷

The choice of the ‘uninspected’ ragged school that he visited (which is not named) seems odd, as by his own account, it did not appear to be a typical ragged school. The results of his examination are shown in Table 2.5.

³⁷ Fearon, p.146.

Examination of First Class in a Ragged School									
No.	Sex	Age	Occupation of parent	Fee	School previously attended	Std in which examined	Reading	Writing	Arithmetic
1	Girl	8	Nightman	1d	No other school	1	Fail	Fail	Fail
2	Girl	6	Baker	free	Ditto	1	Pass	Pass	Fail
3	Girl	8	Farrier	2d	Ditto	1	Fail	Pass	Pass
4	Girl	7	Bonecutter	2d	Ditto	1	Pass	Pass	Pass
5	Girl	8	Night Watchman	2d	Ditto	1	Fail	Pass	Pass
6	Girl	6	Stonemason (out of work)	1d	S	1	Pass	Pass	Fail
7	Girl	9	(no father)	2d	S&S	1	Pass	Pass	Pass
8	Girl	6	(Sister to No. 7)	2d	Ditto	1	Fail	Pass	Pass
9	Girl	7	Railway Porter	2d	No other school	1	Fail	Pass	Fail
10	Boy	10	Journeyman Sawyer (out of work)	1d	Ditto	1	Fail very bad	Pass	Pass
11	Boy	8	Fustian cutter	1d	Private school	1	Pass	Pass	Pass
12	Boy	10	Striker in a smithy	2d	No other school	1	Fail very bad	Pass	Pass
13	Boy	8	Porter (out of work)	free	S	1	Fail	Pass	Pass
14	Boy	10	(brother to No. 6)	2d	Ditto	1	Fail	Pass	Pass
15	Boy	9	Colour maker of potteries	2d	No other School	1	pass	pass	Pass

Table 2.5 Results of an examination of a class in a Manchester Ragged School undertaken by HMI Rev. Fearon.³⁸

Of this school Fearon wrote

This school is an interesting case, being in a state of transition from the ordinary condition of a ragged school, under an untrained teacher with no very strict discipline or regulations, to the condition of a school under a trained teacher who would endeavour to enforce the usual strict regulations as to order and attendance. I observe that the class of children has evidently

³⁸ Fearon, p.138.

changed, or “improved” as the teacher says, since she took charge. It ought not now to be called “a ragged school” at all. There was not one child without shoes present, when I examined, nor one without a jacket.³⁹

This school was in the category ‘of the best sort of uninspected schools’ but nevertheless, Fearon was not impressed with the children’s performance in the standard 1 test he set them, and considered them to be backwards.⁴⁰ Other points of note from Table 5 are that just over 50% of the children have at least one parent in employment (the occupations of mothers are not recorded) and most pay a weekly school fee. Together with Fearon’s observations about the children’s dress, this is clearly not a typical ragged school. It does seem curious that Fearon included this school as typical of Manchester ragged schools. As we shall see in chapter 4 the advocates of state education were sceptical about the value of ragged schools and considered that ragged school scholars should be directed to ‘ordinary day schools’. Evidently, Fearon considered this ragged school to be in ‘transition’ to a school under ‘a trained teacher’. His judgement of this ragged school was based on how well they taught the three ‘R’s.

Manchester ragged schools did offer secular education, and the ability to read, if not write, would have been a pre-requisite to equipping a child with access to the Bible. But, a rounded and thorough secular education was not the absolute priority for ragged schools. The table below, shows the evening ‘engagements and classes’ available at the Charter Street ragged school for the year 1861.

³⁹ Fearon, pp.137-138.

⁴⁰ Fearon, p.138.

Engagements and Classes		
Sunday	Afternoon School	2.15pm 3.45pm
	Savings bank	3.45pm 4.15pm
	Evening School	6.15 pm 7.45pm
	Prayer meeting and lecture	8.00pm 9.00pm
Monday	Writing Class	8.00pm 9.00pm
Tuesday	Bible class and prayer meeting	7.30pm 9.00pm
	Writing Class	7.30pm 9.00pm
Wednesday	General School	8.00pm 9.00pm
	Savings Bank	9.00pm 9.30pm
Thursday	Reading and Arithmetic Class	8.00pm 9.00pm
	Men's Class	8.00pm 9.30pm
	Sewing Class	7.00pm 9.00pm
Friday	Men's Class	8.00pm 9.30pm
Saturday	Entertainment	7.30pm 9.30pm

Table 2.6 Extract from the Annual Report of Angel Meadow (Charter Street) Ragged School, Manchester 1861

Excluding the 'Men's classes' and assuming that the Sunday 'Evening School' was devoted to religious teaching the total number of hours available for writing was 2.5 hours per week, and for 'reading and arithmetic' a further 1 hour per week. If this is typical of timetables across ragged schools then it is a wonder, given the difficult circumstances that Montague and Webster identify, and the evidence from teachers such as Alsop, that scholars left with any literary skills at all. As Mair points out, and evidence from Manchester suggests, ragged schools did teach secular subjects, but as others have stated, secular education was not the priority in ragged schools. Mair's scholars, because of their emigrant circumstances, were probably among some of the best examples of their kind.

Summary

Ragged schools were established in Manchester as early as the 1840s, but mainly in the 1850s. During the period 1859 to 1885, the M.&S.S.R.S.U. recorded nearly 40 schools within its membership, attracting at its apogee, Sunday school average attendances of 7,800 in 1874, and some secular education for an average attendance of 1,906 children in 1860. The ragged schools tended to be established and built in close proximity to the city's slum districts.

Christian nonconformist evangelicalism was the driving force for those who founded and ran the ragged schools. As ragged schools became established, some were able to attract the support of wealthy manufacturers, merchants and industrialists, some of them prominent in Manchester society. All appear to share the same religious outlook of nonconformity and for many their politics was Liberal. The ragged schools relied heavily on voluntary subscriptions and for some, grants from the M.&S.S.R.S.U., especially during early years. Ragged schools in Manchester did not see their principal role to offer a secular education. The emphasis was on teaching the Bible and Christian scriptures in accordance with the belief that souls must be rescued before it became too late. However, secular subjects were taught, along with sewing for the girls, in order to assist young people to move onto paid employment.

3. THE NATIONAL AND MANCHESTER EDUCATION DEBATES OF THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

The establishment and growth of the ragged school movement in Manchester, during the mid to late-nineteenth century, was against a background of considerable local, and parliamentary debate about the provision of education for working class children. The debate was characterised by two main themes: state funding as provided by a local school rate versus voluntary contributions, and secular versus religious education. The purpose of this chapter is to explore both the national, and Manchester context to the debate, and how ragged schools were perceived by Victorian legislators, and supporters of state intervention in the provision of education for the working classes.

The Education Census of 1851

The Education census was an adjunct to the population census of 1851. The opportunity was taken to cost effectively inquire into education, and religion, since paid enumerators were being engaged, and that it would be another ten years before the opportunity would arise again to obtain ‘information upon two subjects to which the attention of the public, is much directed’.¹ The accompanying report to The Education Census of 1851 was written by Horace Mann (1823 – 1917), and goes straight to the heart of one of the main themes of the education debate of the 1840’s and 1850’s in a margin-heading: ‘Two great parties; one favourable and the other adverse to the intervention of the State’. Mann noted that until recently there had been fairly widespread agreement that ‘a huge proportion of the necessary funds for popular education was a duty appertaining to the State’ However, there was an acknowledgement that a point of controversy was securing ‘an adequate protection for the rights of conscience in the matter of *religious* teaching’.² The report noted that ‘of recent

¹ Census 1851 Education p. ix.

² Census 1851 Education p. lxxx.

years rather a noticeable change had seriously interrupted this agreement'. Speculatively, the report suggests the possibility that the free trade debates had influenced opinion, namely that the State should intervene in education as little as possible, if at all.³ In Manchester this position would have resonated with many opinion formers since it was in that city that the anti-Corn law league and the Free Trade movement had its strongest adherents. Mann noted that 'it is certain that a very considerable number of the earnest friends of education...[believe that education] would be best promoted without any intervention by the State'⁴

The Education Census Report, comments on the role of ragged schools in terms of their objectives and their growth stating that they 'form a very important part of our educational provision; reaching as they do, those very classes of our population whose repeated criminality and gross obtrusive vice provoke the loud demand now heard for further education'.⁵ The report went on to assert that the main role of the ragged schools is to convert 'incipient criminals to Christianity'.⁶ However, in Manchester, according to the evidence provided to the 1852 Select Committee by the Rev. W. McKerrow, (a founder member of the Lancashire Public School Association in 1847 which advocated 'a general system of secular education in the County of Lancaster'.⁷ He was also a Presbyterian member of the first Manchester School Board in 1870), there was only one ragged school in Manchester and he thought that the district needed a further fourteen or fifteen more such schools.⁸ As we have

³ Census 1851 Education p. lxxx.

⁴ Census 1851 Education p. lxxx.

⁵ Census 1851 Education p. lxxv.

⁶ Census 1851 Education p. lxxv.

⁷ Maltby,p.68.

⁸ *Report from the Select Committee on Manchester and Salford Education; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, PP. 1852, Cmd. 499, pp.322-323.

already seen the ragged school movement in Manchester was to grow to at least 27 schools by 1870 (see Table 2.2 in Chapter 2)

The Census provides a quantitative view of educational provision in Manchester (See Table 2.1 in Chapter 2). Mann was optimistic, that during the nineteenth century educational provision had grown very considerably and he demonstrated this with statistics.

Proportion of day scholars to population at each period	
1818	one in 17.25
1833	one in 11.27
1851	one in 8.36

Table 3.1 taken from Education Census 1851 page xx

Table 3.1 demonstrates an improving educational provision as measured by a greater proportion of children attending school when expressed as a ratio to the total population for England and Wales. However, at the 1852 Select Committee, evidence was presented (see Table 3.2 below) suggesting that Manchester had the lowest number of children being educated when compared to other English cities.⁹ The ratio of 1:11.6 for Manchester in 1852 was almost the same as the ratio of 1: 11.27 for England and Wales in 1833, nineteen years previously.

⁹ John Howard Hinton, *The Case of the Manchester educationalists, A review of the evidence taken before the House of Commons in relation to the state of education in Manchester and Salford* (London: Haddon, 1852; repr. Manchester: Morten, 1972) pp. 28-29

Manchester and Salford Compared to other English cities - Child to Adult population Ratios	
Education District	Ratio child:total popn
York	1: 6.39
Leeds	1: 8
Hull	1: 8.6
Liverpool	1: 8.26
Birmingham	1: 9.59
Manchester and Salford	1: 11.6

Table 3.2 – Ratios of children in schools: total population from John Howard Hinton, *The Case of the Manchester Educationalists* (1852)

This finding was supported by the various investigations of the Manchester Statistical Society (M.S.S.). They found, for example, that in the Gaythorn and Knot Mill district the ratio of children attending day school to the population of the district was 1: 12.88 in 1865.¹⁰ In the Deansgate area (see Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2. Area D) the ratio was 1:9.93.¹¹ Hewitt argues that the role of organisations such as the M.S.S. should not be underestimated for the contribution they made to the establishment of the rival movements in Manchester for promoting elementary education.¹² The various inquiries of the M.S.S. revealed large numbers of children in the slum districts receiving no or very little education. These rival

¹⁰ Thomas Wilkinson, *Report upon the Educational and other Conditions of a District at Gaythorn and Knott Mill, Manchester*, (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1868) p.66.

¹¹ H.C.Oats, *Inquiry into the Educational and other Conditions of a District in Deansgate* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1864) p. 9.

¹² Martin Hewitt, *Making Social Knowledge in the Victorian City: The Visiting Mode in Manchester, 1832-1914* (London: Routledge, 2020) p.74

movements put forward their own schemes, one of which was promoted by the Manchester and Salford Education Bill Committee. Their scheme made it to Parliament.

The House of Commons debate of 17th March 1852 on the Manchester and Salford Education Bill

The Manchester and Salford Education Bill, having had its first reading, came to the Commons for its second reading through a motion proposed by Joseph Brotherton, the MP for Salford. The Commons supported a delay in the second reading while a Select Committee was established to inquire into the state of education in Manchester and Salford and whether such a provision should be made.¹³ The remit was agreed on the basis that the use of levying a local rate to support education would also be examined by the Select Committee. The Inquiry was confined to the geography of Manchester and Salford and a few contiguous townships for fear that a national inquiry would be rendered useless because of the huge complexities involved, and the time such an inquiry would take.¹⁴ In this respect, Manchester and Salford were seen as an appropriate ‘case study’ to examine the emerging issues of state versus voluntary education and religious versus secular education. The debate of 17th March was significant for the issues that the Bill raised. Apart from parliamentary concerns that the principle of the State funding education, through the levying of local school rates, should be thoroughly examined there was also concern about the nature of religious teaching in State funded schools. Lord John Russell supported the establishment of a Select Committee and contributed to the debate by saying that he concurred with a system of education that included both religious teaching and secular education but that ‘no child should be obliged to

¹³ House of Commons, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (17 March 1852 vol.119, col.1218) (London: Hansard)

¹⁴ House of Commons, vol.119, col.1199

attend that part of the religious instructions to which the parent might object. With regard to Roman Catholics and Jews, the hardship on them would be great and unjust'.¹⁵

The Select committee first reported on the 6th June 1852, and in its proceedings deployed arguments, that seemed to some, to reflect the entrepreneurial and 'self-help' spirit of early nineteenth century Manchester. Prominent members of the Select Committee included Richard Cobden and John Bright, Members of Parliament for Rochdale and Stockport respectively, and significantly both were leading members of the anti-corn league which was formed in Manchester in 1839. To 'free traders' it seemed that even voluntary contributions to educational provision were an interference.

This onslaught on the voluntary system was made by the advocates of free trade in the Committee, we suppose, because they expected that the friends of voluntary education, they being also, for the most part, free traders, would be somewhat tenderly sensitive to the force of such an argument.¹⁶

On the matter of religious education in schools attention was drawn to McKerrow's comment that in parts of Manchester 'there are a vast number of poor ragged urchins running about the streets and that in one district about 90 per cent of those were Roman-Catholics'¹⁷ The questioner asked whether such children could be expected to attend a secular school as was being proposed and was it not the case that Roman Catholic children were not attending secular schools. McKerrow did not think this was the case, but was then questioned about ragged schools: 'Still, in the ragged schools at Manchester the Bible is read? – Yes' The questioner then asked 'with children of 'that stamp' is it not more important that the Bible is

¹⁵ House of Commons, vol.119, col.1210

¹⁶ Hinton, p.61.

¹⁷ Select Committee, 1852 p.480.

read than with children of a 'higher stamp'? McKerrow responded 'I should at once concede that they are more likely to be destitute of all religious instruction than the other classes'¹⁸

Despite having received large amounts of evidence the Select Committee concluded that whilst making progress they recommended to the House that the Inquiry be resumed at an early period.¹⁹ The Select Committee resumed its work on 11th March 1853, and reported to the House on 6th June 1853. Again, the report made no recommendations despite some 900 pages of evidence.²⁰ The Manchester and Salford Education bill was again submitted to the Commons for a second reading, but defeated on a motion proposed by Thomas Milner-Gibson (a Manchester MP, a prominent free trader, and advocate of secular education) namely that a measure requiring financial support from local rates should not be pursued via a private members bill. It is suggested that Milner-Gibson moved the motion mindful of the fact that the Manchester Town Council had passed a motion 'praying the House not to sanction' an approach to education locally that was not a national measure under central government auspices.²¹ When Cobden, Bright and Milner-Gibson were asked for advice on how to proceed they urged no action on account of national attention to the first year of the Crimean War.²² It is apparent that during the education debates of the 1850s, ragged schools were hardly taken into account, due probably, to their still being in formative years: but this changed as the debates continued in the 1860's.

The Newcastle Commission and the Select Committee on the Education of Destitute Children

¹⁸ Select Committee, 1852 pp. 485-486

¹⁹ Select Committee, 1852 p. iii

²⁰ *Select Committee on State of Education in Manchester and Salford. Report, Proceedings, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, Index* PP. 1853 Cmd 57,1 p.iii

²¹ Maltby, p.88

²² Maltby, p.88

The Duke of Newcastle's Education Commission that reported in 1861, curiously, decided to take no evidence from Manchester as they considered that areas and towns they had selected for their investigation were sufficient examples from which to draw their conclusions.

Gardner points to a lack of precision in the work of the Newcastle commissioners.²³ That lack of precision is clear in the following observation. The Commission reported that the number of scholars attending ragged school evening classes in the whole of England and Wales was 707.²⁴ In Manchester and Salford alone, the comparable figure was 1,916 scholars for the year 1860 (see Table 2.3 in Chapter 2). Lord Shaftesbury was quick to pick up on this point in parliamentary debates arguing that the true number of attendances at ragged school evening classes was omitted from the Commission's report.²⁵ Hurt suggests that the Commissioner's choice of sample areas which omitted large industrial cities obscured the major failings of the Victorian elementary education system arguing that 'the children of the poorest classes – the 'residuum', the 'street Arabs', the 'dangerous and perishing classes', to quote a few contemporary terms – were virtually untouched by the existing state-aided voluntary schools managed by the religious societies'.²⁶

But, despite the statistical omissions, the Commission made recommendations which affected ragged schools. These were based on the findings of Patrick Cumin, an Assistant Commissioner (later to become Secretary to the Education Department) who examined in detail, ragged schools in Bristol with the report noting that 'Mr Cumin examined them [ragged schools] minutely, and formed the opinion which was on the whole, unfavourable to their usefulness as a permanent part of a national system of education'.²⁷

²³ Gardner, p.33.

²⁴ Education Commission, 1861, p. 388.

²⁵ House of Lords, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates: The Official Report* (13 May 1861 Volume 162 Col. 1912 to 1940) (London: Hansard)

²⁶ Hurt, p.4

²⁷ Education Commission, 1861 p. 388.

Cumin's view was based on his finding that many children attending the ragged schools he inspected were of parents who could afford to pay the weekly 'school pence', but chose not to (ragged schools on the whole were free). Such children, he said, should be attending the 'ordinary day schools'.²⁸ Just to make sure his point about the usefulness of ragged schools was rammed home, Cumin reported that in Plymouth, he attended a ragged school which was effectively a training ground for felony, and that despite the claims of reformers, such as Mary Carpenter, juvenile crime had not been checked by ragged schools, but by 'the ordinary day school and the reformatory schools'.²⁹ The Commission came to the view 'that no further allowance should be given to ragged schools'.³⁰ The Select Committee that looked into the education of destitute children and reported in July 1861 similarly came to the conclusion that 'No child should be encouraged to go to a Ragged School, for whose education provision can be made elsewhere'.³¹

The Select Committee's view, about the role of ragged schools is instructive. They pointed out that ragged schools are 'impressed with a missionary and religious character' where instruction (secular education) is 'secondary and subordinate' and that because government inspection is based on 'instruction' then to award grants to ragged schools would divert them from their 'main object'.³² They further suggested that infant schools were more effective at reclaiming a child before it is 'contaminated' than ragged schools and that those destitute children not picked up by industrial schools 'be left to the missionary exertions of the Ragged School Managers'.³³ It is fair to conclude that both the Education Commission and Select

²⁸ Education Commission, 1861 p. 391.

²⁹ Education Commission, 1861 p. 392.

³⁰ Education Commission, 1861 p. 414.

³¹ Select Committee 1861, p.iii

³² Select Committee 1861, p. iv

³³ Select Committee 1861, p. iv

Committee were quite hostile to the inclusion of ragged schools in a national elementary education system.

Summary

Manchester's experience of the Industrial Revolution with an attendant expansion of its population brought about a focus on how best to educate working class children. The early 1850s witnessed an intense development of ideas about how to achieve this through the submission of the Manchester and Salford Education Bill to the House of Commons. The ensuing debate was influenced by a number of principles: economic and political considerations about the role of the market, and State intervention, ideas borrowed from Manchester's free trade movement and the anti-corn law league; the debate also raised issues relating to the role of religion in education. The 1851 Education census recognised a role for ragged schools but by the 1860's government reports were hostile to the contribution that ragged schools could make to elementary educational provision.

4. THE ELEMNTARY EDUCATION ACT 1870, AND ITS IMPACT ON MANCHESTER RAGGED SCHOOLS

In broad terms the 1870 Education Act, allowed for the setting up of directly elected School Boards whose remit was to assess deficiencies in school places for children between the ages of five and 13, and then to take measures to 'fill the gap'. The School Boards had the power to levy a local school rate, and if they so decided, enact local bye-laws making school attendance compulsory. They were also empowered to pay the school fees of children whose parents could not afford them.

William Forster MP (the architect of the Act), speaking in the House of Commons said that he was 'taking the utmost endeavour not to injure existing and efficient schools'.¹ The Act was about 'filling the gaps' by bringing those children not hitherto touched by education into schools.² There is a great deal of secondary literature about the Act and its ramifications but for the purposes of this study the focus is on the impact the Act had on ragged schools and particularly Manchester's ragged schools. Hurt points out, that the Act targeted the poorest children, who received little or no education apart from that at ragged schools and, that these were the least articulate.³ Frank Prochaska suggests that the Act left the ragged schools behind and that the reforms set in place not only undermined the voluntary day schools, but also dealt a devastating blow for ragged schools with their 'distinctive tradition of Christian teaching'.⁴ Schupf, describing the impact of the Act on London's ragged schools leaves us with a clear impression that there was an almost wholesale transfer of ragged schools to the

¹ John Hurt, *Elementary Schooling and the Working Classes 1860 – 1918* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1979) p. 59.

² Hurt, p.59.

³ Hurt, p.4.

⁴ Frank Prochaska, *Christianity and Social Service in Modern Britain: The Disinherited Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2008) pp.52-53

London School Board. By as early as 1875 ‘the merger was nearly complete’ with only two ragged schools remaining by the turn of the century.⁵ Schupf over-states the point as many of London’s ragged schools survived, but 39 out of 72 day schools had transferred to the London School Board by 1874.⁶ Certainly, Lord Shaftesbury was of the view that this meant the end of ragged schools. His concern was that the school boards would supersede the ragged schools and deny them their special work in bringing destitute children to Christ’s teachings in an increasingly secular age.⁷

How did Manchester ragged schools react to the 1870 Education Act and the Manchester School Board?

The reception of the Act by the Manchester ragged school was quite different. The London Ragged School Union (L.R.S.U.) was hostile to the proposed Act, employing ‘aggressive self-defence’. Its arguments were couched in outmoded evangelical terms leaving even those who might be sympathetic to its cause struggling to give due consideration to its arguments.⁸ Webster argues that the ‘prime blunder’ of the L.R.S.U. was a ‘political one’ in that it underestimated the strength of feeling about the desire for a national system of education paid for from local rates. In addition, there was an overestimation of what the voluntary sector was capable of delivering.⁹ As we have already seen, Manchester ragged schools, unlike those of London, employed very few teachers: the emphasis was on voluntary unpaid teachers for both religious and secular education. Webster points out that in the seven year period up to 1870 the London ragged schools were employing an average of 407 day school teachers each year.¹⁰ It is this difference in organisational and financial terms, that helps to explain the

⁵ H. W. Schupf, pp.175-176.

⁶ Webster, p.108

⁷ C. J. Montague, p.308

⁸ Webster, pp.104-105

⁹ Webster, p.105

¹⁰ Webster, p.103

differing reactions of the London and Manchester ragged school movements to the Act, and the following sections will explore this further.

Before the passing of the Act comments from some ragged school supporters were already calling for a national system of compulsory secular education. An example is to be found at the 1867 annual general meeting of Queen Street ragged school in Hulme. This school offered some Friday evening secular education for boys, and sewing for the girls on Thursday evenings probably amounting to no more than two hours. The chairman of the meeting, Councillor T. Schofield, shared his views with those present that he believed that it was necessary to have a national system of education and was reported thus

He was convinced that voluntaryism would never educate the mass of the people in this country. In regards to secular education, he would prefer that the Bible should be read in schools, but he should always defer to the majority, and there were so many difficulties in teaching religion that he would be quite willing to see a system of secular education adopted.¹¹

The same newspaper report quotes McKerrow informing the meeting that a school they planned to open on Jackson Row in Manchester would be run along secular lines, because though they did not wish to disparage the Bible, the reading of the scriptures in the school would have been unacceptable to Roman Catholic children. McKerrow is reported as saying

They knew that to those who had learned to read, every source of information was opened up; and they would be likely to read from little books interesting narratives and scripture stories, and by reading the word of God might thus be made unto wise salvation. It was on this account that they adopted the secular system.¹²

The view that education for the working classes would need to be compulsory was expressed by John A Bremner, the secretary to the Manchester Education Bill Committee (M.E.B.C.),

¹¹ *The Manchester Weekly Times* 16th Nov 1867

¹² *The Manchester Weekly Times* 16th Nov 1867

established in 1866. The M.E.B.C. advocated compulsory education, paid for from local rates under local administration. Bremner was in fact moving reports and the appointment of officers at the annual general meeting of the M.&S.S.R.S.U in 1867, it is therefore safe to assume he had some connection with the ragged school movement.¹³ A strong connection between the movement for secular education and the M.&S.S.R.S.U was also provided by L.R. Le Mare, a wealthy Manchester silk merchant. Le Mare also a member of the M.E.B.C., was by 1870 the treasurer of the M.&S.S.R.S.U., and President of Holland Street ragged school.

Bremner, Le Mare and McKerrow, believed that the Bible was key to personal salvation but took a pragmatic view that universal education was more likely to be successful if a secular approach were taken. As was touched upon in Chapter 3, this enlightened approach from Manchester not only pre-dates the 1870 Education Act but influenced the Acts provisions. There is evidence to suggest that their view was shared by some of the evangelising ragged schools of the late 1860's as evidenced by the reporting of the 1867 annual meeting of Queen Street ragged school. Perhaps peculiar to Manchester, because it was the crucible of ideas and debates on universal elementary education for working class children, ragged schools seemed supportive of state secular education several years before the 1870 Act.

With the passing of the Act, the annual general meetings of the M.&S.S.R.S.U. were supportive of the newly elected Manchester School Board (M.S.B.). For example, in 1871 there was reported applause when a member of the M.S.B. talked about the ambitions of the school board in its efforts to educate poor children. There was more applause when it was suggested that the 690 teachers of the ragged schools could act as 'honorary beadles', working on behalf of the M.S.B., to help identify children who were avoiding secular

¹³ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 13 April 1867

education.¹⁴ The annual general meetings of the M.&S.S.R.S.U very often acknowledged the ‘good work’ of the M.S.B. For example in 1874 it was reported that thanks to the efforts of the M.S.B, ragged school teachers were now noticing ‘that the number of children at present attending the schools who are totally unable to read and write, is not nearly so large as was formerly the case.’¹⁵ By 1882 the M.&S.S.R.S.U. was fulsome in its praise of the work of the M.S.B. when at the annual general meeting it was declared that

from a ragged school point of view it is only fair to say that 12 years ago there were very few of the children in the ragged schools who could read fairly well and vast numbers who scarcely knew the alphabet: now the universal testimony of the ragged school teacher is that the condition of things is reversed.¹⁶

The same reports though, often commented that the school board was still not reaching all the children who ought to be under their care, and special mention was often made about the need for the ragged schools to bring the teachings of Christ to children: ‘religious and moral training is as great as ever and this these poor children would lack were it not for the existence of ragged schools’.¹⁷ By 1881, the annual report of the Charter Street ragged school was able to state ‘that due to the Education Act there was now not the same requirement to teach secular subjects and that the space was to be used instead as a ‘men’s club and gymnasium, which has been, and still remains, a power for good in the neighbourhood’.¹⁸

The teachers at Pendleton ragged school (in the neighbouring borough of Salford) had for some time held the view that a national system of education was needed and in 1879 the school, reviewing its history reported that ‘On the establishment of the school boards, we conceived that this department [secular education] no longer lay within the range of our

¹⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 Mar 1871

¹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian* 23 Nov 1874

¹⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Oct 1882

¹⁷ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 23 Oct 1875

¹⁸ Charter Street Ragged School Annual Report ,1881, p.6.

duty'.¹⁹ Indeed, some ragged schools attempted to hand over their day schools to the newly created M.S.B.. One, Sharp Street, was successful but another, Poland Street, was not on account of the poor condition of its premises.²⁰

Manchester had a special role and place in the development of Victorian state education. As we have seen from Chapter 3, the Manchester education debates were of national significance. Maltby, writing in 1918 said that the 1870 Education Act, embodied ideas that came from Manchester.²¹ It is hardly possible that the ragged school movement in Manchester was not somehow influenced by those same ideas, especially in a city when the shapers of the education system such as McKerrow, Bremner and Le Mare were also associated with the ragged school movement. They provided continuity, as the first two were to serve as elected members of the M.S.B. It is this proximity of people and place that, together with a poorly developed ragged school scheme for delivering secular education, helps to explain the movement's positive reception of the Education Act and the School Board it spawned.

Manchester ragged schools justify their existence

It seems that philosophically there was a wide gap between the aims and objectives of the ragged schools and the educational inspectorate who decided whether a school was 'efficient' or not. But, as we have seen, while Lord Shaftesbury considered that ragged schools were finished in 1870, and some modern historians seemed to agree, this was far from the case in Manchester. As Webster suggests, the cessation of evening and day schools left the ragged schools free to pursue other activities such as Sunday schools and social work.²² Prochaska

¹⁹ Webster, p.132.

²⁰ Webster, p.133.

²¹ Maltby, p.116.

²² Webster, p.133.

supports this view when he observed that many ragged schools following the Act ‘shifted their focus to the care of the handicapped, vocational training and social work’.²³ As we have seen in the case of Charter Street, it also left them with accommodation to be re-purposed. Ragged school reports and articles in the *The Ragged School Union Quarterly Record* often made the point that there was a need to counter the public perception that with the passing of the Act there was no longer a need for ragged schools. Such was the concern that in 1883 a national conference was held in London to raise awareness of the continuing need for the movement. In an article reporting on the conference it was noted that

From the spread of elementary education by means of School Boards, the inference has been drawn that Ragged Schools were no longer necessary. This would imply that their object was merely to impart a knowledge of the three R’s.²⁴

In other words, the ragged school movement was about a lot more than ‘merely’ secular education. At the 1872 annual meeting of Jackson Street ragged school in Manchester, the point was made that when attempting to raise subscriptions, people would comment that surely with the passing of the Act there is no longer a need for ragged schools in Manchester.

The counter argument was reported thus

They, however reminded their friends that while the act provided for secular education of children under 13 years of age, and thus relieved ragged schools from some week day evening work, the great object for which such schools were founded was to bring the thousands of ragged children who filled our streets on Sunday evenings under religious instruction. This was purely the work of Christ’s Church.²⁵

A view, that would have been shared by many ragged school managers. As early as 1866 The Rev. Joseph Nunn (a sceptic of the statistics used to justify the building of rate supported schools, but who was to become a member and ultimately Chairman of the M.S.B.) argued

²³ Frank Prochaska, p. 53.

²⁴ ‘A Ragged Parliament in Session’ *The Ragged School Union Quarterly Record* Jul 1883 p.89

²⁵ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 14 Dec 1872, p.2

that whatever educational system was introduced, there would still remain a need for ragged schools ‘to remove from the streets and lanes the children of the most vicious and degraded’.²⁶ An unsuccessful candidate for the London School Board suggested a tiered system to separate the ‘washed’ from the ‘unwashed’ suggesting that the lowest tier would replace the ragged school so that respectable working class parents would not have to worry about their children sitting next to children ‘picked up in the gutter’.²⁷ Sir William Houldsworth (born into a wealthy mill owning family and Conservative MP for Manchester North West 1883 to 1906) commented, at the opening of a fund raising bazaar for Charter Street ragged school in 1892, that while ‘no doubt education was spreading...there would always be a residuum’ who needed to be found and raised up by Christian men and women.²⁸ The statistics for Manchester suggest that this plea was heard. When the statistics at Table 2.3 in Chapter 2, are averaged for the two periods, pre and post the 1870 Education Act, an interesting picture emerges (See Table 4.1 below).

Statistics relating to the Manchester & Salford Sunday Ragged School Union						
Year	Average Annual Number of Sunday School Teachers	Average Annual Attendance at Sunday School	Average Annual Attendance at Week Evening School	Average Annual Attendance at Sewing Class	Average Number of Schools in Union	Average Annual Total of Subscriptions to nearest pound
1859 to 1870	570	5447	1637	590*	21	£219
Passing of the 1870 Elementary Education Act						
1871 to 1885	632	7235	1014	377	30	£115
* estimated as information for years 1862 and 1863 not provided						

²⁶ Joseph Nunn, *Facts and Fallacies on the condition of popular education in Manchester with reference to the new education bill* (Manchester: Hale and Roworth, 1866)

²⁷ J. S. Hurt, pp.70-71.

²⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, 30 Apr 1892 p.9.

Table 4.1 Averages for the 'pre' and 'post' Education Act 1870

The average attendances for 'week and evening school' and 'sewing class' fell post the Act, but not as sharply as might have been expected: Webster suggests that post the Act it was adults who now sought secular education.²⁹ The average attendance at 'Sunday School', post the Act rose as did the number of 'Sunday school teachers'. The number of schools rose but the average annual subscriptions fell by almost 50%. If one of the original purposes of ragged schools was to teach the Bible to destitute children then clearly this remained a focus and expanded, post the Act. But, these statistics do not reveal the full story about what happened to ragged schools in Manchester following the Act.

Growth and expansion into a wider social action role

Manchester ragged schools appeared to be on a growth trajectory, based on their original principles, and the Act seems to have had no effect on their ambitions. As Grigg points out when reviewing ragged schools in Wales, 'the comparative longevity of ragged schools in the face of considerable odds and their widespread support from all levels of society points to a remarkable achievement.'³⁰ Indeed, a history of the ragged school movement in Manchester records that in the centenary year of 1958 there was a total of 42 affiliated schools with 585 teachers and 4,768 scholars although by the 1960s, many schools closed due to slum clearance programmes, and the consequent movements in population. Perhaps significantly, the history makes no mention whatsoever of the 1870 Education Act. For this modern local historian of the ragged school movement it was not a significant event.³¹ If anything, the ragged schools of Manchester were liberated from the responsibility of providing secular

²⁹ Webster, p.120.

³⁰ Russell Grigg, 'The origins and growth of ragged schools in Wales, 1847-c.1900', *History of Education* 32:3 (2002), 227-243 (p.242)

³¹ Ian Wallace, *A History of the Manchester and Salford Shaftesbury Society* (Manchester: Wallace, 1986) pp.34-35.

education and left free to pursue their original evangelising mission, and support of families in the slum areas. From the 1840s up to 1870s and beyond, the pattern of ragged school development was from small humble beginnings to purpose built accommodation, to cater for their expanding activities in the poorer districts of Manchester. Webster reports the origins of Gay Street ragged school which commenced its work in a cellar in Percival Street, by a City missionary (John Jowitt) after meeting with a few destitute families. The school eventually moved into purpose built accommodation in Gay Street in 1885.³² Charter Street, according to a brief history of the school, progressed from the use of a room in Miller Street in 1850 to a purpose built school in 1868 to be replaced in 1892 and extended in 1900.³³ In 1871, Lombard Street ragged school moved into its newly erected premises. Five years previously, Alfred Alsop had run a school in an adjoining cottage, but this proved too small.³⁴ By 1874 the school had become the 'Wood Street Mission Hall and School' replacing the demolished Lombard Street premises to make way 'for the extension between Liverpool and Manchester of the Cheshire Railway Lines'.³⁵ But as we shall see, these examples from different areas of the city, not only suggest, construction of more suitable purpose built accommodation (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2) but also an expansion of activities. Increasingly a number of the ragged schools were described as institutes.

³² Robert Lee, *Tales from Two Cities*, (1937) p.45. cited in D. H. Webster p.117.

³³ Charter Street Mission Annual Report 1962, pp.2-4

³⁴ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 6 July 1871, p.3.

³⁵ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 18 April 1874, p.6.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 4.1 Wood Street Mission: From humble beginnings to a substantial Institute in purpose built accommodation on an ambitious scale, also clearly shown in the views of Charter Street below. (Source: Manchester Archives and Local Studies – Manchester Central Library)

IMAGES REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 4.2 Charter Street Ragged School after its various extensions and main entrance to the Working Girls Home. (Source: Manchester Archives and Local Studies – Manchester Central Library)

Perhaps the best contemporary explanation of how some ragged schools developed post the Act is provided by John Wakefield Macgill in his pamphlet published in 1886, *'Ragged School Work. Our Ragged School and How it Became an Institute'*. Macgill was, at this time, secretary to both the Manchester City Mission and the M.&S.S.R.S.U., and considered that the various evangelical organisations, which included ragged schools, would be far more effective if they worked more closely together and co-ordinated their activities. He drew a comparison with business when he suggested to a meeting of ragged school teachers, that modern business would not allow ideas and materials to go to waste

Why should we not study out Ragged School machinery with earnest attention? Why should there be no inventions and patents in the Lord's work? ...That is exactly what I wish you to do in connection with your Ragged Schools, and we with our City Mission.³⁶

Macgill's argument was for a holistic approach to the individual which he explained by telling the story of a young girl, that he met on a cold night, whom he recognised as one of his scholars from the ragged school. She was without warm clothing and food, and was subject to a family life presided over by a 'drunken father and mother'. The wasted opportunity for Macgill was that through the girl, he had not thought to approach the parents, and 'save' them, because by doing so, he would improve the prospects for the entire family.³⁷

Macgill made a distinction between a ragged school and a ragged school institute

Allow me to add my own conviction that the development of the Ragged School into a Ragged School Institute can only be accomplished by the gratuitous labours of private Christian's which should not be confined to an hour or two in the week, but should extend to every kind of Christian work *during the whole week*.³⁸

³⁶ John Wakefield Macgill, *Ragged School Work. Our Ragged School and How it Became an Institute* (Manchester:John Heywood, 1886) p.5.

³⁷ Macgill, p.5.

³⁸ Macgill, p.4.

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Fig 4.3. Frontispiece of John Wakefield Macgill's *Our Ragged School and How it Became an Institute* published in 1886. (Source: Cambridge University Library)

In other words, Macgill's scheme was about bringing together, in a co-ordinated fashion, the work of ragged schools with door-to-door visiting temperance societies, adult Bible classes and all the various branches of Christian evangelicalism 'into loving personal contact with a depraved and neglected population' so that 'the wilderness of Manchester might be made to blossom as the rose'.³⁹ He told his audience that he was aware of such an Institute in Manchester, the Heyrod ragged school, in Ancoats. The extent of the work carried out from Heyrod Street was captured in the reporting of their annual meeting for 1881. From an extended school which opened in 1880, at a cost of £2,000 (£245,000 in today's money), 'The edifice now contains a large general classroom, 17 classrooms, an infant school 'and 'a

³⁹ Macgill, pp.4-6.

room for adults'. Some 300 adults attend for lessons and the working men's club had 350 members and it was claimed that 1,000 children attend the school. The school also

IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS

Figure 4.4 The Ragged School Union Tree: this version has been adapted for a Manchester audience. It first appeared in the *Ragged School Union Quarterly Record* in Jan 1885. Note the names of ragged schools in the root system. The metaphor of a tree is used to show a whole system of evangelicalism, with ragged schools as the roots nourished by the Bible, and the various branches to cater for specific groups of people that make up the whole family. (Source: Cambridge University Library)

operated a ‘clothing club’ and a ‘penny savings bank’.⁴⁰ Such an approach was not new and Heyrod Street was not the only ragged school to have considerably extended its work with the community. The earlier pioneers of ragged schools, as we saw in Chapter 2, advocated a holistic approach to child poverty that involved feeding and shelter as well as teaching the Bible, and providing some secular education and sewing classes for the girls. Charter Street, as we have seen, enlarged and built new premises. In 1888 under the chairmanship of Mr W. J. Crossley it was decided to raise the money to extend the school and on 27th June 1891 the corner stones for the extension, and a working girl’s home were laid by local note-worthies including Crossley. At a cost of £7,000 (worth over £900,000 today) the new scheme was designed to include, not only the working girls home but, a mission hall, a men’s club, a boy’s club, a gymnasium and it was hoped, a ‘coffee tavern’.⁴¹ The annual report for 1891 reported that Crossley had purchased ‘the land and cottages adjoining the school at a cost of £1,650 (worth £211,000 today) and ‘had presented same to the Committee’.⁴² In 1892 *The Manchester Guardian* was able to report

A great part of the upper portion of this new school building has been set apart for a “home for working girls.” Nothing of this kind has yet been started in the city.... There is a kitchen with a line of “ranges” big enough to turn out cooked supplies for a family of several hundred,... There are, too, “wash houses” for clothes, with a “steam drier”... The kitchen will enable the workers to provide cheap, wholesome meals for the day school children of the neighbourhood.⁴³

⁴⁰ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 14 May 1881, p.6.

⁴¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, 29 June 1891, p.6.

⁴² Charter Street Annual Report for 1891

⁴³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 20 Apr 1892

This was an ambitious enterprise, requiring significant capital investment, but designed to provide practical support to a poor community and at scale.

The following table, using information from the Charter Street annual reports for 1860 and 1891 lists the various ‘branches’ of its work.

Comparison at two points in a 30 year period of activity at Charter Street ragged school	
Activities and Branches from the 1860 Annual Report	Activities and Branches from the 1891 Annual Report
Sunday afternoon and evening School (average attendance – afternoon 122, evening 191)	Sunday afternoon and evening School (Ave. attendance – afternoon 450, evening summer 469, winter 960)
The Infant Class (attendance 70)	Infants’ Room and Class Rooms (can accommodate 1,200 children)
Fathers Class (average attendance of 16)	Men’s Club (the extended accommodation is designed for 150 men)
Mothers Class (15 mothers in attendance)	No mention of a Mothers class
Week Night Classes (boys and girls, average attendance 77).	Upper and Lower Mixed Schools (attendance 2,000 each Sunday)
Sewing Class for Girls (average attendance 25)	Sewing Class (average weekly attendance 60)
Savings Bank (number of depositors 57)	Penny Savings Bank (number of depositors 270)
Library	Library
Christian Temperance Society (‘on the book’ 75 people)	Total Abstinence Society (for the year 1,934 pledges)
Festivities	Whit-Week and Christmas Festivities
Wider Community Support (in support of economic hardship)	Wider Community Support (food to 1,450 persons Christmas breakfast for 1,100 children. Old Folks Treat 259 in attendance) during year 50,000 meals provided followed by a “short bright service”
	Band of Hope (average attendance 300)
	The Working Girls Home (expected to be completed by March 1892)
	Lads’ Club (designed for a membership of 200).

	Children's trip to Lytham

Table 4.2. Activities and Branches at Charter Street ragged school for 1860 and 1891.

Table 4.2 shows that prior to, and post the Act, similar activities were carried out albeit on different scales. What is clearly demonstrated is the considerable increase, over time, in the numbers of children and adults participating in a wider range of activities: the working girls home being a significant expansion of services. The Charter Street annual report for 1880, reported the work of a 'Sick Visiting Society'. Access was gained by visiting the homes of the ragged school scholars, where visitors came 'face to face with the wretchedness of their dwellings and the depravity of their occupants'.⁴⁴ The response was to provide practical assistance with parcels of clothing and fuel, and attempts to find occupations for 'returned convicts'. Clearly, this is an example of what today would be termed 'outreach work' and accords with Macgill's philosophy of gaining access to the wider family, in their homes, through trust already established with ragged school scholars.

In the Deansgate area of Manchester, there is another example of growth from a modest ragged school to an institution with many branches not dissimilar to those already described. As already noted, the Wood Street Mission was developed following the demolition of Lombard Street ragged school. Its growth was quite phenomenal. At the fifth annual general meeting of the now named 'Wood Street Mission Hall and School' it was reported that the Mission building was now adjoined by a boy's home. A Mothers meeting was attracting 50 women and a 'free library' contained 600 volumes. The Sunday school had an average attendance of 200 but because of a lack of funds 'only 1,000 dinners had been served to

⁴⁴ Charter Street Ragged Schools Annual Report 1880, pp. 9-10.

children during the year. While it was hoped to commence house to house visiting, the meeting heard that

Some 50,000 books and tracts had, however, been given away, during the twelve months, many open-air missionary meetings had been held, numerous situations obtained for those out of employment, clothing and food given away, and a number of unfortunate girls rescued and provided for.⁴⁵

In 1876 the first annual meeting of the 'Wood Street Rescue Society' was held. Presided over by Councillor Livesley, the society was connected to the Wood Street Mission, and its purpose was to 'elevate the people of the neighbourhood 'through the distribution of temperance and religious literature. Alfred Alsop was the President of this society.⁴⁶ The *Manchester Weekly Times* reported in 1878, that '21,000 street children have received help through the children's dinner and breakfast club connected with the Wood Street Boys' Home'.⁴⁷ With its reliance on the cotton manufacture, Manchester, from time to time had to weather economic turbulence. One such period was the late 1870's when the *Manchester Weekly Times* described the distress in Manchester

In a large number of cases, one might say the majority, the distress amounts to actual starvation...the absence of fuel...of necessary clothing. The children of course suffer most and the condition of hundreds and even thousands of them in such districts as those of Ancoats, Deansgate and Angel Meadow is truly pitiable.⁴⁸

Charter Street in Angel Meadow and Heyrod Street in Ancoats would have responded to the plight of people living in those neighbourhoods, and in the case of the Wood Street Mission in Deansgate, 400 destitute children were clothed and provided with a slice of buttered bread

⁴⁵ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 18 Apr 1874, p.6.

⁴⁶ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 15 Jan 1876, p.6.

⁴⁷ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 16 Feb 1878, p.6.

⁴⁸ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 14 Dec 1878, p.3.

and two or three apples, but many had to be turned away. The same report stated that the previous evening ‘several hundreds of children were fed’.⁴⁹

These examples demonstrate that these ‘institutions’, whose genesis can be found in the early ragged schools, catered at a scale that would have been noticeable for the difference they made for the local poor. The physical location, at the heart of poor districts of the city, ensured that the institutions, not only worked to save souls for Him, but understood the impact of economic vagaries on Manchester’s poor and they knew how best to respond.

Summary

There is evidence to suggest that the ragged school movement in Manchester welcomed the 1870 Education Act. The positive reception of the Act is probably due to the fact that unlike London, ragged schools in Manchester, with their volunteer teachers, provided only limited secular education. There is evidence of a strong link between the advocates of state funded compulsory secular education and Manchester’s ragged school movement which probably also contributed to the Act being well received. The ragged school movement felt the need to counter a public perception that, with the passing of the Act, ragged schools were no longer needed. In the period following the Act some ragged schools in Manchester developed into organisations that not only grew their Sunday schools, and evangelising mission among the poor, but also provided a number of services providing practical help to the destitute in accordance with their founding principles and activities. John Wakefield Macgill, in his role as Secretary of both the Manchester City Mission and the M.&S.S.R.S.U explicitly encouraged ragged schools to adopt this approach. This was welfare carried out mainly on a voluntary basis, and at scale.

⁴⁹ *The Manchester Weekly Times*, 14 Dec 1878, p.3

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine how the ragged schools of Manchester changed their purpose and the services they provided as a result of the 1870 Elementary Education Act. The Act was a significant advance of the state in the provision of elementary education, and Lord Shaftesbury considered that the Act meant the end of ragged schools. This pessimistic view is echoed in most of the secondary literature dealing with ragged schools. However, in Manchester, there is evidence to suggest that the Act was welcomed as a way of relieving ragged schools of the task of teaching secular subjects leaving them free to focus on their principal founding tasks of saving souls for Christ. In Manchester, rather than a retreat, there is strong evidence to suggest that in the period post the Act, a number of ragged schools developed into significant institutions providing an expanding range of social services for some of the city's poorest districts.

Ragged schools in Manchester were established in locations designed to best serve the poorest districts in the city which tended to surround the prosperous commercial centre. The positioning of the ragged schools ensured that they were uniquely able to understand their local populations and their needs. The early ragged schools were established by missionaries, and local traders and business people, but as the nineteenth century progressed they were joined by wealthy merchants and businessmen, some with a high social standing in the city.

The overwhelming motivation for those who established ragged schools was evangelical Christianity, and on the whole, ragged schools did not see their main role in providing secular education. In Manchester this is evident on the basis that per week, ragged schools provided only a few hours for secular teaching, and only exceptionally did ragged schools provide for a paid teacher, relying instead on volunteers. Reading would have been viewed as a means to an end: the ability to read the Bible. This was in contrast to the London ragged school

movement that employed about 400 teachers to provide secular education in day schools.

This helps to explain the different receptions to the Education Act experienced in London and Manchester.

Manchester, as a pioneer city of the Industrial Revolution, with huge population expansion, had some of the lowest levels of working class school attendance. Consequently, the 1850s and 1860s witnessed a series of parliamentary debates known as the ‘Manchester Education Debates’. These were highly influential on the shape and design of the 1870 Education Act. The Report accompanying the 1851 Education Census recognised a role for ragged schools, but by the early 1860s government reports were hostile to the contribution that ragged schools could make to elementary educational provision. On the whole, however, the Act was welcomed by managers of Manchester’s ragged schools. The leading lights of the Manchester movements for compulsory secular elementary education such as the Rev. William McKerrow and J. A. Bremner were not only associated with the ragged school movement but were also to take up directly elected positions on the Manchester School Board. This provided continuity during a period of transition as the new school boards played an increasingly large role in the provision of secular elementary education. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the ragged school movement in Manchester was influenced by the thinking of the Manchester educational debates, especially on the subject of secular education.

Following the introduction of the Act, the ragged school movement was keen to point out that while secular education might be the object of the new school boards, their special work of saving children from the gutter and teaching the Bible remained to be done, and in this respect, from the time of their establishment in the 1850s through to the 1890s, the core purpose of Manchester ragged schools did not fundamentally change. The activity of seeking

out the poorest and ragged children with a view to ensuring their familiarity with the basic teachings of Christ did not change, as did not, the provision of basic assistance in gaining employment through the development of skills and self-improvement through facilities such as penny banks and libraries. Some Ragged schools, from quite humble beginnings, grew into significant institutions, raising large sums of money for purpose built facilities, and for the provision of new services, such as residential accommodation for destitute children. There is strong evidence that some ragged schools developed into organisations that not only grew their Sunday schools and evangelising mission among the poor of Manchester but also provided a number of services that aimed to provide practical help to the destitute.

Significantly, the Rev. John Macgill, who during the 1880's concurrently held the post of secretary of the Manchester City Mission and the M.&S.S.R.S.U., set out this vision in his *Our Ragged School and How it became an Institution* (1885). This was a manifesto for holistic welfare carried out on a voluntary basis, and at scale. Most historians have used the provision of secular education or the three 'R's as a measure of ragged school success without sufficiently taking into account the original purpose of the schools, and the work they continued to do post the Act. This seems to perpetuate a tradition established by 'official' Victorian critics of ragged schools, as evidenced by the recommendations of the Newcastle Education Commission and the Select Committee that looked into education of destitute children in the 1860s. Because secular education was never considered a core activity of the Manchester ragged school movement, the Act did not have the impact that was predicted by national figures such as Lord Shaftesbury and subsequent historians. If anything, a number of Manchester's ragged schools probably felt liberated by the Act, and flourished as they pursued and developed their quite unique services.

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