


**Please cite the Published Version**

Danks, CJ  (2016) Historians at the heart of the city: Manchester Metropolitan University. , 2016 (16). pp. 235-248. ISSN 2227-3824

**Publisher:** St Petersburg State University

**Version:** Accepted Version

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/163/>

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## Historians at the heart of the city: Manchester Metropolitan University.

### Welcome to Manchester

Ask most people what they know about Manchester and the answer will be: “Football”. Sport and leisure are certainly important parts of Manchester’s social life and economy, but there’s more to Manchester than football. Manchester has a very long history, it grew from a small settlement, to become a Roman fort, but it is to the late C18th and C19th that we must look for the explosion in Manchester’s growth. Steam power, enabled mechanisation and Manchester became the world’s first centre of mass production; so important was cotton weaving to Manchester that it acquired the name *Cottonopolis* – Cotton city<sup>i</sup>. Manchester also developed as a transport hub for the region, linking the North West not just to the rest of the country but through its port to the world. These global connections also boosted its status as a manufacturing, financial and commercial centre. Old industries have gone and in the C20th Manchester has re-invented itself as a leisure city, high-technology has replaced the old smoke-stack industries and new creative industries are one of the most dynamic areas of the economy. So, this is Manchester, with deep roots as a dynamic regional centre but also outward looking; a global city that actively engages with the rest of the world. Education is at the heart of Manchester’s growth and dynamism and is a vital part of its economy. The number of students studying in Manchester contributes to the city’s very young, energetic feel and to its constant renewal and innovation.

### Internationalisation

Manchester Metropolitan University is fully committed to the Bologna process and is actively pursuing a policy of internationalisation. Each year MMU welcomes 3,000 students from over 120 countries to study on full-time courses alongside UK students and this number is set to grow. MMU’s *Language Centre* provides *British Council* accredited pre-sessional English language courses for future MMU students, but these courses are also open to those who just want to spend the summer in Manchester improving their English<sup>ii</sup>. The *Faculty of Humanities, Languages and Social Science* (HLSS) also organises a three-week summer school<sup>iii</sup>, combining a social and educational programme. It provides international students with the opportunity to study English and the humanities. International students are also welcome to apply for admission onto our undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and it is also possible to join our BA programmes for just one year. The internationalisation agenda is also reflected in our eagerness to work with international partners to organise staff and student exchanges; submit joint funding applications; to design and deliver joint MAs and to offer joint MPhil and PhD supervisions.

Internationalisation also means that we have examined our curricula to ensure that all students, even those only studying in Manchester have as international experience as possible. Within History at MMU, students are able to study not just the history of Great Britain and Western Europe, but also the history of East and Central Europe, Russia and the USSR, South East Asia, and the Americas. Students are also encouraged to travel and schemes are already in

place for students to study in Australia and the USA. The student-led *History Society* also organises on-week trips, in 2015 to Krakow and Auschwitz and a trip to Prague is planned for 2016.

### **History and Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)**

Manchester Metropolitan University is ranked in the top three percent of global universities. It is one of the largest and most diverse universities in the United Kingdom, with over 38,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, studying on its Manchester and Cheshire campuses. History at MMU is located in the *Department of History, Politics and Philosophy*, (HPP) in the Humanities, Languages and Social Science Faculty (HLSS), which is one of the oldest humanities faculties in the North West of England. History at MMU emphasises a student-centred approach to learning and we take pride in our research-led teaching, the range of our undergraduate and postgraduate offerings, and the opportunities for students to work with academics at the forefront of their discipline. All MMU history staff are research active, publish monographs and articles in academic journals, and give papers at national and international conferences. Each unit (or module) has its own website, using Moodle software. These sites are organised on a week-by-week basis and typically include a notice board, lecture notes and podcasts, primary source materials and links to relevant websites and secondary materials. As is typical in England a Bachelor's degree (with Honours) takes three years full-time and six years part-time study. MMU History is one of the largest History sections in the UK and this means that we are able to provide a wide range of specialisms and student choice. Most students enrol on the BA History programme and during their first year are introduced to a wide range of historical periods and themes. The degree offers a good deal of flexibility and choice, so in years two and three students choose from a wide number of optional units, some students decide to focus on a particular period or geographical area, while many decide to pursue a broad programme of study. History may also be studied on the *Combined Honours* programme with one of the following subjects: Politics, International Politics, Philosophy, Social History, Sociology and English.

Students may also enrol on a more specialised History programmes. The *BA American History* helps them to understand why the United States rose from humble beginnings to become one of the most influential superpowers on earth in less than two hundred years. It explores big themes such as democracy, immigration, race and imperialism which define our world today. It also examines the dark side of America's past: the stories of slavery and the Civil war that ended it, as well as the treatment of Native Americans. The *BA Ancient History* explores the world of Classical Antiquity, focusing particularly on Ancient Greece and Republican and Imperial Rome. On this programme students come to understand how these distinctive and dynamic societies bequeathed an immense legacy to the modern world: democracy, philosophy, law, history, comedy, tragedy. However, Greco-Roman history is not just a history of stunning intellectual achievements it also harnessed humanity's darkest and most destructive impulses, expressed in war and conquest. The *BA War and Society*, examines the centrality of war to the human story over the last two thousand years. This programmes starts with the warrior societies of ancient Greece and moves on through the crusader states of

medieval Europe to the 'total' wars of the C20th. It examines how human societies have persistently organised themselves to deliver – and resist- violence from within and without. The *BA Ancient and Medieval* offers the opportunity to study the history of Greece and Rome in Classical Antiquity and how that world developed into the Medieval period. Ancient History is a fundamental area of study on this programme; its politics, events and development lie behind our understanding of many aspects of historical societies and, indeed, our own culture. Medieval history shows a world transformed from its archaic predecessor, but a world whose history and consequences are still very much with us today. The *BA Medieval and Early Modern History*, focuses on the period that saw the rise of religious terrorism; the evolution of Islamic-Christian relations in the Crusades; the discovery of the Americas; the Protestant reformation; and the revolutions in Britain, France and America; that paved the way for modern democracies. It is also a period of major artistic and intellectual development, with writers from Augustine to Descartes still shaping the way we think about the world around us. Finally, the *BA Modern History* examines crucial developments in politics, society and culture and enables students to achieve a greater understanding of phenomena such as the rise of nationalism, globalisation, mass migration and multiculturalism. It also introduces students to the contested concepts of modernity and post modernity and by engaging with these debates they gain a better understanding of the world in which we live.

### **Postgraduate History at MMU**

At Postgraduate level MMU History offers three taught MA programmes, MPHILs, PHDs and discrete short courses. An MA takes one-year full time or two-years part-time. There are three MA routes. The *MA History* enables students to develop their historical skills and subject knowledge via a selection of units in Medieval, Early Modern and Modern history. The *MA History (Local and Regional)* offers a chronologically broad range of units on local and regional themes and the *MA History (Public History and Heritage)* features units examining the politics of cultural memory, the ethics of public history, and professional heritage practice. All three MA routes culminate in a dissertation, an extended piece of personal research.

Discrete one-off short courses are delivered by a range of experts in their respective areas. These currently include: *Britain, Ireland and the Crusades*; *Britain and World Politics Since 1918*; *Aspects of British Foreign Policy*; *Case Studies in Controversy: History and Memory in Public*; *Northern Identities and Victorian Culture*; *Professional Heritage Practice*; *From Historical Fact to Contemporary Fiction* and *Whose History is it Anyway?* Three units are also available to distance learning students via the internet, these are *A Good War? America's World War II at Home and Abroad, c. 1938-47*; *Historical Skills and Research Methods*, and *Nobles, States and Society: The Transformation of European Elites, 1400-1800*.

MMU Historians have a strong record of research and publication which encompasses a broad range of areas of expertise, including; Ancient History, Medieval History, Early Modern History, American History post-1860, Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British and European History, Community History, Public History and Heritage. This means we are able to offer MA, MPhil and PhD research degrees, on a full or part-time basis. Areas of supervision include:

- Ancient Greek History culture, socio-military history, the psychology of combat
- Medieval Welsh History, c.1000-1500; The Welsh March in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; The Crusades; Medieval England, c.1066-1300
- The Elizabethan Church; Connections between the European and English Reformations; Relations between Catholics, Puritans and the Elizabethan regime.
- France, Britain or Europe from the Renaissance and Reformation to the French Revolution, especially courts and nobles, women and families, diplomacy, and intellectual history
- Modern Jewish History in Europe and the United States, particularly Jewish-Gentile Relations and Anti-Semitism in the Late and Early Twentieth Century.
- 20th Century Germany; German occupation of the Channel Islands
- History of Childhood and Youth; British and German Youth Cultures
- British Industrial Relations 1900-1930; Urban Politics 1900-1939; Co-operators and Politics 1900-1939; Ethnicity and Nationalism, Class as Social Movements, Citizenship
- Cultural History of Modern War; European and American Military History, 1450-1920; Genocide & Persecution.
- Retailing, Leisure and Consumption in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries
- Twentieth-century American cultural history
- Transatlantic cultural relations
- Memory, Memorials and Commemoration; Regional Identities and Sense of Place; Working-Class Communities; Urban History and Heritage
- Imperial Russia, USSR and Post-Communist Russia,
- Women's and gender History
- History of South and Southeast Asia; Buddhist Studies

### **MMU Historians**

The standard approach to the study of History in the C19th and C20th was the study of kings and queens and of elites. In the 1970s, some historians began to challenge this 'history from above' and championed 'history from below', looking at the lives and roles of ordinary men and women. Historians at Manchester Polytechnic (the forerunner of MMU) were at the forefront of this revolution in historical research and teaching. *Manchester Studies* introduced onto the curriculum in the 1970s was a pioneering initiative in 'history below'. For example, academic

staff and students pursued the then new fields of oral history and in collecting and analysing photographs<sup>iv</sup>. The latter now make up the *Documentary Photography Archive* located in Greater Manchester Archives (see below). While maintaining high standards in academic research, history at MMU has never been conducted in an ivory tower or divorced from our city. MMU historians regularly give free public talks, contribute to the popular *Manchester Histories Festival*<sup>v</sup> and work with local archives and museums. In 2015, a MMU historian who specialises in Burmese history identified a mystery item in local archives as a manual for Buddhist monks. The manual was written on palm leaves, which were treated with oil to make them pliable, an examination of the leaves suggests the document is 150 years-old, it was acquired by the archive around 1900<sup>vi</sup>. A group of MMU staff are participating in a prestigious national project on World War I funded by the *Arts and Humanities Research Council*. The project requires academic research combined with public impact. One outcome of this project will be an exhibition of photographs, posters and ephemera about Russia during World War I, together with public talks and workshops for school children. Universities undergo a periodic research evaluation exercise, for the last exercise in 2014, the public impact of MMU's history research was judged to be greater than that of Oxford and Cambridge universities.

This approach to history was reflected in the Polytechnic's- MMU's *Manchester Region History Centre*, its MA programme in *Manchester Regional History* and its *Manchester Region History Review*, which was founded in 1986 and is one the longest established of the regional history journals. MMU historians have recently taken the decision to broaden out this focus on regional history to *Public History and Heritage*. This is reflected in the establishment of a new *Centre for Public History and Heritage*, the new *MA in Public History and Heritage* and a new journal on *Public History and Heritage*.

### **Student Employability**

One of the great buzz-words of British higher education at the moment is 'employability'. A good degree is no longer a guarantee of a good job on graduation and so MMU History strives to broaden our graduates' range of skills, to help them have that 'extra something' that will get them noticed. For some students this may be being an active member of the *History Society*, a student-led organisation that organises trips, visiting speakers - most recently a survivor of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, social events and charity fund raisers. Through these activities students learn a wide range of practical skills: writing and designing publicity materials, event organisation, and liaising with the general public. For students, both as organisers and participants such activities also enhance their experience of student life, helps to promote a sense of a student community and takes them out of the lecture theatre and seminar room.

Historians at MMU have also responded to the employability agenda by embedding employability-related activities in our curriculum. A number of our individual units include placements and/or project work. For example, for the *Reel Histories* unit, students make documentaries on a history-related theme. In addition to undertaking historical research the students arrange oral history interviews, direct, present, film and edit documentaries. For the *History in Practice* unit students have the opportunity to gain work experience in a history or

heritage-related industry; these include placements in museums, archives, libraries, or working on a project for an external client. In 2012, the Manchester- St. Petersburg Friendship Society was one such client. Two second-year students interviewed members and curated an exhibition using photographs from the archive of the *British-Soviet Friendship Society*. The exhibition was part of the celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Manchester-St. Petersburg city partnership, it was opened by the Lord Mayor of Manchester and was attended by visiting dignitaries from St. Petersburg. There is a similar unit on MMU's *MA Public History and Heritage*, whose curriculum is primarily centred on employability in the public heritage sector. These MA students also have the opportunity to conduct their dissertation research via a hands-on placement with a heritage sector organisation. All final year *BA History* students are required to submit an independent project this may take the form of a traditional dissertation, requiring them to undertake independent archival research. The other possibility is to undertake a project, MMU archaeology students for example may participate in a dig and then submit a documentary about their work. Most recently, a number of students worked on the Oakington Dig, which made national headlines for the rare find of the remains of a high-status Anglo-Saxon woman<sup>vii</sup>. Another example of a non-traditional independent project is the website entitled *The Development of the Police Station in Manchester 1838-1901* created by a final year BA student on behalf of the Manchester Police Museum<sup>viii</sup>. In order to create the website the student undertook research at the *Manchester Police Museum and Archives* where he was already a volunteer; the *Greater Manchester Country Records Office Archives* and MMU's *North West Film Archive*.

### **Manchester Libraries and Archives**

One of the great advantages of studying or researching history in Manchester is the wealth of not just regionally and nationally important museums, archives and libraries, but also those of international standing. The newly refurbished *Manchester Central Library*, holds the county records for Greater Manchester and the Manchester local history archives<sup>ix</sup>. The holdings are so large that they cannot all be housed at the library itself and many are stored in salt mines in the neighbouring county of Cheshire, where the dry atmosphere and constant temperature is ideal for their safe preservation. In addition to the local archives the library is home to special collections including the *Theatre Collection*, the *Gaskell Collection* and the *Broadside Ballads*. The special collections also includes the *Bataillard Gypsy Collection* of pamphlets and manuscripts many in French or German on the history, language and customs of gypsies in Europe. These materials were collected by Paul Bataillard and bought by Manchester libraries committee in 1895. The *Nazi Collection* comprises books, pamphlets, documents and maps about the 1930s Nazi preparations for war. They are mainly in German and were acquired by a member of the library staff while on active service in Germany with the Royal Airforce after WWII.

*Manchester Central Library* also houses MMU's *North West Film Archive*. The archive was set up in 1977, to preserve moving images made in or about England's northwest: Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside and Cumbria<sup>x</sup>. The NWFA has also holds films of visits by British tourists to the USSR, of the first Manchester Civic delegation to Leningrad and Moscow in 1956 and also of Yury Gagarin's visit to Manchester in July 1961. As well a resource

for researchers the NWFA also developed the first ever smart phone app that merges archive film with GPS to create a street level tour of Manchester. The user of the *Manchester Time Machine* app can stand in different locations in the city centre and see how that same location appeared in film at different times in the course of the C20th. This free app makes rare archival film available to Mancunians and visitors and is an example of the fusing of archives, heritage and modern technology<sup>xi</sup>. The archive has recently acquired the North West Sound Archive, but this is not yet been digitised.

The NWFA is one of MMU's special collections, the rest of MMU's special collections are located in the main university library on the central All Saints campus. Many of these collections are from the archives of the *Manchester School of Art*, which was founded in 1853 and now is a faculty of MMU. MMU's special collections include Artists' Books, C20th century international poster collections; the *Schmoller Collection of Decorated Papers*; C19th and C20th children's books, the library of the *Manchester Society of Architects* and Victorian ephemera featuring 19th century albums and scrapbooks<sup>xii</sup>.

Manchester is home to the oldest free library in Europe. *Chetham's Library*<sup>xiii</sup> in the heart of the city centre was founded in 1653 under the will of Humphrey Chetham (1580-1653), a prosperous Manchester textile merchant, banker and landowner. At that time there was no facility for independent study in the north of England, and so the 24 governors appointed by Humphrey Chetham set out to acquire a major collection of books and manuscripts with the specific aim of rivalling the college libraries of Oxford and Cambridge. The Library began acquiring books in August 1655 and since then has been adding to its collections, which now include early printed books, ephemera, manuscript diaries, letters and deeds, prints, paintings and glass lantern slides. Humphrey Chetham also specified that the library that bears his name should be free for scholars, a requirement that has been maintained for over 350 years. One such scholar was Friedrich Engels who arrived in Manchester in 1842 to work for his family's firm of *Ermen and Engels*. It was while in Manchester that Engels began researching his, *The condition of the working class in England*. During the summer of 1845 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels worked together in Chetham's library and visitors today can still see the very books that Mark and Engels consulted in the library. Chetham's is still expanding its collections and in 2008 acquired the C19th diaries of the Leech family, this donation presented a fantastic opportunity for MMU history students to work on behalf of Chetham's to produce an interactive resource<sup>xiv</sup>. This is an ongoing project and the resource now includes transcriptions of the diaries, explanatory materials and photographs. It provides an insight into life in C19th Manchester, including the usually hidden life of Victorian middle-class women and children.

The *John Rylands Library*<sup>xv</sup> on Deansgate, one of the main thoroughfares of central Manchester, was founded by Enriqueta Rylands in memory of her businessman husband John Rylands. It was opened to public readers on 1st January 1900 and is now the third largest academic library in the United Kingdom with over 250,000 printed volumes, and well over a million manuscripts and archival items. It is also one of the UK's five national research libraries.



Manchester's radical political history is well represented by the *Working Class Movement Library*<sup>xvi</sup>, which was created by Edmund Frow and Ruth Frow<sup>xvii</sup>. Eddie and Ruth were members of the *Communist Party of Great Britain* (CPGB) and Eddie had visited Moscow in 1930 with other leading communists, including Harry Pollitt and Willie Gallagher. Ruth and Eddie were active in the communist, trade union and peace movements and shared a love of books, in their free time they travelled the country collecting books pamphlets, posters and memorabilia, and the trade union banners of the British Labour Movement. Under a charitable trust established in 1959 the collections cannot be broken up. At first, the library was housed in their own home but in 1987, the Labour-controlled Salford Council provided premises for the collections. The library focuses on the story of the British working classes from the time of Tom Paine, William Cobbett and of industrialisation through to the present day. The collection continues to grow as individuals, campaigners, activist groups and trade unions donate their archives to the safekeeping of the library.

Manchester is also home to national collections. The *National Co-operative Archive*<sup>xviii</sup> holds a wide selection of records relating to the history of the worldwide co-operative movement. The collections include rare books, periodicals, manuscripts, films, photographs and oral histories, and provide researchers with an unrivalled resource for the development of the co-operative movement, from the initial C18th ideas to the present day. The nearby *Museum of People's History*<sup>xix</sup> as well as a museum also holds the UK's *National Labour History Archive and Study Centre*. It is the UK's national centre for the collection, conservation, interpretation and study of material relating to the history of working people in the UK. The *People's History Museum* holds one of the largest collection of political material in Britain, beginning with the early 19th century and focusing on the history of democracy. The collection includes printed material including over 2,000 posters focused on elections and political campaigns, over 300 political cartoons, physical objects such as over 7,000 trade union badges and tokens and with over 95,000 photographs celebrating the lives of ordinary people at work, rest and play. The *People's History Museum's* collection of over 400 trade union and political banners is the largest in the world. The *Labour History Archive and Study Centre*, is an important archive of material relating to the history of working people in Britain. Its collections include the archives of the *Labour Party*, the former *Communist Party of Great Britain*, the *Co-operative Movement* and the *Department for Work and Pensions*. It also contains documents relating to Chartism, General Elections, the First World War, Women's Suffrage and the 1984-1985 Miners' Strike.

**And finally,**

The people of Manchester, known as Mancunians, are rightly proud of our city. As the number of cranes in the city centre graphically show, it is constantly changing. Through this process of renewal and reinvention, Manchester maintains its traditions and holds on to what is good from the past, but embraces change and new ideas. It is a great city in which to be an historian: we have our archives and a rich history, but also the modern technologies to help us in our work and to reach a wider audience with our teaching and research.

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Chair of the Manchester St. Petersburg Friendship Society

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- <sup>xiii</sup> Chetham's Library // <http://www.chethams.org.uk/index.html>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Leech Family Diaries // <http://www.leechdiaries.com/>.
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