

**Friedrich Engels and Angel Meadow:
The Origin and Development of
Victorian Manchester's
'Hell upon Earth' Slum**

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**Friedrich Engels and Angel Meadow:
The Origin and Development of Victorian
Manchester's 'Hell upon Earth' Slum**

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Dedicated to my Irish ancestor William Kirby (1832–1902) who lived in Angel Meadow for 30 years and died in the workhouse – and to his wife Ellen, daughter Bridget and two-week-old son William, who never made it out.

Abstract

When Friedrich Engels visited Victorian Manchester while writing *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, first published in 1845, he described the district of Angel Meadow as being ‘Hell upon Earth’ and the houses as ‘cattle sheds for human beings’. Using a multi-disciplinary approach with a focus on urban history, archaeology and historical geography, this thesis will retrace Engels’s steps through this corner of the world’s first industrial city to see whether his portrayal of the housing conditions was correct. It will argue that Engels was highly selective in the streets and courts he chose as case studies for *The Condition* to emphasise the lowest-quality housing and that he missed or misinterpreted the more nuanced reality of living conditions in the district.

Using a range of evidence including Manchester’s rate books, census records and trade directories, and unique sources such as early-twentieth century planning applications, archaeology reports and maps, this thesis will show that Angel Meadow in fact had a significant number of larger, relatively higher-status Georgian houses built for merchants and artisans, which continued to dominate the district even after the Industrial Revolution caused it to decline. While Engels wrote that ‘everything which here arouses horror and indignation’ was of ‘recent origin’ and belonged ‘to the industrial epoch’, this thesis will show that these larger houses left over from an earlier phase of development became a hugely significant factor in Angel Meadow’s problems and determined its long-term function as a lodging house district. In reassessing and nuancing the work of Engels in the 180th anniversary year of his first visit to Manchester, this thesis makes a significant and new contribution to the understanding not only of *The Condition*, but also of the history of the world’s first industrial city and the study of the global processes of urbanisation.

A Note on street names

A number of streets in Angel Meadow changed names during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They have been shown below in the order the changes were made:

Blackley Street – Charter Street – Dantzic Street

Dike Street – Diche Street – Dyche Street

Green Lane – Back Lane – Oxford Street – Saint George's Road – Rochdale Road

Long Millgate – Corporation Street

Mill Lane – Miller's Lane – Millers Street – Miller Street

Mosley's Court – Oswald Street – Crown Lane

Mount Street – Old Mount Street

Sion Hill – Stile Street – Style Street

A note on district names

Angel Meadow was originally part of the Saint Michael's district, which later became the Saint George's district. The area known as Gibraltar at the foot of Angel Meadow was originally part of the Collegiate Church district, which later became the Market Street district. Ancoats was part of the New Cross district, which later became the Ancoats district. Between Angel Meadow and Ancoats proper stood an area stretching from Rochdale Road to Oldham Road which is commonly known as New Cross. As Manchester only became a city in 1853, it has been described as a town in this thesis while discussing the period before this date.

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Chapter 1: Debates and approaches

More than two centuries after Victorian Manchester became the first industrial city – the ‘shock city’ of its age – the modern world is still learning how to cope with the socio-economic and environmental challenges of urbanisation and industrialisation.¹

An estimated one billion people currently live in areas described by the United Nations as slums.² The figure is almost equal to the population of the world when Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) travelled to Manchester in 1842 and described workers’ houses as ‘cattle sheds for human beings’ – 180 years prior to the submission of this thesis.³

Officials at the U.N. have warned that the population of the world’s most deprived districts is set to double by 2030, adding that ‘in the absence of effective urban planning, the consequences of this rapid urbanisation will be dramatic’. The intergovernmental body noted that ‘in many places around the world, the effects can already be felt – lack of proper housing and growth of slums, inadequate and out-dated infrastructure... escalating poverty and unemployment, safety and crime problems, pollution and health issues, as well as poorly managed natural or man-made disasters and other catastrophes due to the effects of climate change’.⁴

In recent decades, intergovernmental departments, academics and the world’s media have focused much attention on ‘mega slums’ such as Dharavi in Mumbai, the setting for the 2008 movie *Slumdog Millionaire*, and Orangi Town in

¹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (1963; London: Penguin, 1990), p. 34.

² ‘Urban slum dwellers could double to 2 billion by 2030, U.N. agency says’, U.N. website (1 October 2003), <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2003/10/81152-urban-slum-dwellers-could-double-2-billion-2030-un-agency-says>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

³ Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 23.

⁴ ‘U.N. Habitat at a Glance’, U.N. Habitat website, <<https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-at-a-glance/>> [accessed 25 February 2018].

Karachi, which is said to be the world's largest slum of 2.4 million people.⁵ Mike Davis, in his 2006 book *Planet of Slums*, said there were more than 200,000 slums ranging from a few hundred people to more than a million and the biggest metropolises of South Asia – Karachi, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Dhaka – alone contained 15,000 distinct slum communities of more than 20 million people. Mega slums, he observed, arose when shanty-towns and squatter communities merged in 'continuous belts of informal housing and poverty'.⁶

While poverty on this scale has no equivalent in the U.K., it would be wrong to consider poor housing and income deprivation as a problem only for civic leaders in the developing world. In 2018, Professor Philip Alston, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, found that 14 million British people, a fifth of the U.K. population, were living in poverty – including 1.5 million who were so destitute they were unable to afford basic essentials.⁷ His report followed a 2016 study which found that 620,000 people were living in poverty in Greater Manchester, despite the region having the third highest growth rate for economic output in the UK outside London.⁸ In 2019, *The Observer* newspaper heralded 'the return of Victorian slums'. It said thousands of low-income, private renters were being 'trapped in squalid and slum-like housing while being driven further into poverty by unaffordable rents'. It quoted

⁵ 'The World's Largest Slums', Habitat for Humanity Great Britain website, <<https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2017/12/the-worlds-largest-slums-dharavi-kibera-khayelitsha-neza/>> [accessed 25 November 2018].

⁶ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, p. 26.

⁷ Philip Alston, 'Statement on a Visit to the United Kingdom', United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, London (16 November 2018), <<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23881&LangID=E>> [accessed 18 November 2018].

⁸ Ruth Lupton, Anthony Rafferty and Carl Hughes, *Inclusive Growth Opportunities and Challenges for Greater Manchester*, Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the University of Manchester, 2016, <<https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/over-half-a-million-living-in-poverty-despite-greater-manchesters-economic-success/>> [accessed 25 November 2018].

an analysis by two housing academics who suggested that 90 percent of the 1.4 million households renting on low incomes in England were being ‘put at risk by harmful living conditions or pushed below the poverty line by rents they cannot afford’.⁹

This thesis will deploy previously unused archive material and contemporary accounts, and a new analysis of contemporary Victorian data, to offer a unique insight into the global processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in the place where they began. Manchester in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was, according to Alan Kidd, ‘the first to experience the horrors, as well as the wealth, that mechanised manufacture linked to global trade accompanied by rapid urban growth could bring’.¹⁰ Given Manchester’s role in initiating processes that are continuing around the world today, there remains a need to understand how this city was formed and shaped at such a pivotal moment in urban and social history. As Kidd and Terry Wyke have also said: ‘Manchester vaulted to the centre of world history during the Industrial Revolution. It was then that the modern world began, and Manchester played a part in its creation.... The story of the making of modern Manchester is also the story of the making of the modern world.’¹¹

This thesis will examine the living conditions within Victorian Manchester by carrying out the first academic survey of the development of one of the city’s most notorious working-class districts – Angel Meadow. Engels brought international notoriety to this district, which was home to the Manchester’s first cotton factory,

⁹ Tom Wall, ‘Revealed: The Return of Victorian Slums’, *The Observer* (14 April 2019).

¹⁰ Alan Kidd: *Manchester: A History* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing, 2006), p. ix.

¹¹ Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke, eds, *Manchester, the Making of the Modern City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 1.

when he described it as 'Hell upon Earth' in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*.¹² He wrote the book after travelling to Manchester from Wuppertal in Germany aged 22 in November 1842 to work at his father's cotton mill in Weaste, Salford. His father hoped he would complete his training for a career in the cotton industry. Engels, however, had other ideas. When he left Manchester and returned to Germany two years later, he wrote and published *The Condition* in German in 1845. It would be another 47 years before it was published in English.

By the 1840s, according to Briggs, Manchester was 'a Mecca for everyone who wished to understand what was happening in society and what would happen to it in the future'.¹³ Roy Whitfield said Engels's time in Manchester was marked by dualism – in public he was a middle-class businessman and a member of the Cheshire Hunt while in private he was a revolutionary writer and friend of Karl Marx.¹⁴ It was in Manchester, inspired by the struggles of the Chartists, that Engels pursued his Communist theory by walking the town's streets and observing the working-class up close in the areas where they lived.¹⁵ His book, written primarily for a German audience, has also been described as his 'masterpiece'.¹⁶ Whitfield said *The Condition* 'remains one of the most powerful and influential accounts of British society during the Industrial Revolution in general and Manchester in particular'. Its

¹² Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1845; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³ Asa Briggs, *A Social History of England* (1983; London: Book Club Associates, 1984), p. 267.

¹⁴ Roy Whitfield, 'The Double Life of Friedrich Engels', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 1988), pp. 13–20 (p. 13).

¹⁵ Camilla Royle, *A Rebel's Guide to Engels* (London: Bookmarks, 2020), pp. 6–10.

¹⁶ Terrell Carver, *Engels: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 15.

impact cannot be doubted, and it continues to shape international politics and the everyday lives of millions of people today.

It was on the fringes of Angel Meadow, alongside the River Irk in an area known as Gibraltar, that Engels found his 'cattle sheds'.¹⁷ This was the evidence he needed to support his critique of the Capitalist system. As Briggs wrote in his classic *Victorian Cities* in 1963, Engels's theory might have been very different if he had lived in Birmingham instead of Manchester. 'The fact that Manchester was taken to be the symbol of the age in the 1840s and not Birmingham... was of central political importance in modern world history,' Briggs said.¹⁸ Engels wrote in his preface to the first German edition of *The Condition* that he had taken the opportunity over 21 months to get to know the English working-class, with its 'strivings, its sorrows and its joys' through 'personal observation and personal intercourse'.¹⁹ This thesis will follow Engels into the streets and courts of Angel Meadow for the first time and will, also for the first time, undertake a step-by-step evaluation of whether his observations matched what was happening on the ground.

Locating Angel Meadow

Angel Meadow stood and still stands at the northern edge of Manchester city centre and forms a rough diamond of 33 acres.²⁰ Its boundaries are both natural and man-made. By the late Victorian era, the Irk separated the district of Angel Meadow from

¹⁷ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

¹⁸ Briggs, *A Social History of England*, p. 116.

¹⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 18, quoted in Edmund Frow and Ruth Frow, *Friedrich Engels in Manchester and the Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (Salford: Working-Class Movement Library, 1995), p. 11.

²⁰ Measured using the Google Maps distance measuring tool <<https://google.com>> [accessed 17 May 2019].

Red Bank to the north-west. The great bulk of the Manchester Gas Works formed a boundary at Gould Street to the north-east, while Rochdale Road separated Angel Meadow from New Cross and Ancoats to the south-east. Then as now, Miller Street separated Angel Meadow from Manchester's central commercial district to the south-west. Figure 1.1 shows where the district sits within the modern city relative to Ancoats, the Northern Quarter and Manchester Arndale Centre.

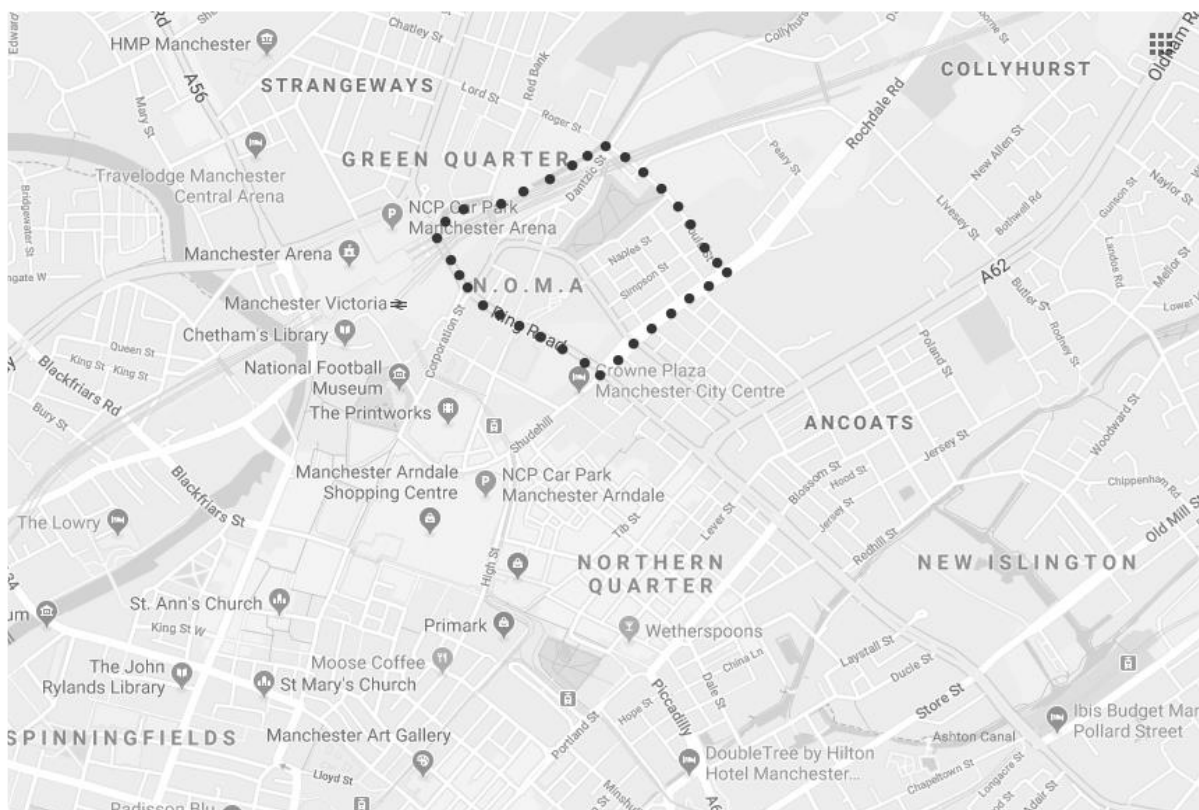


Figure 1.1: Location map of modern-day Angel Meadow. (Source: Google Maps.)

The study area stands less than five minutes' walk from Victoria Station and the main shopping district of Market Street. After the station opened in 1844, a railway line connecting Manchester to Leeds has run on a viaduct along the district's north-western boundary, crossing the Irk three times. While much of Manchester city centre is flat, the study area's topography drops 65 feet from Rochdale Road to the River Irk as the river sweeps into Manchester from the Irk Valley. Figure 1.2, an

annotated map of Manchester's sanitary districts in 1870, shows how Angel Meadow sat within the Victorian city as part of the Saint George's district. As can be seen, Engels's Gibraltar was part of a separate administrative area, the Collegiate Church district, which was later renamed the Market Street district. This enabled Engels to include Gibraltar in his study of Manchester's 'Old Town' while, as will be seen, largely ignoring the rest of Angel Meadow.

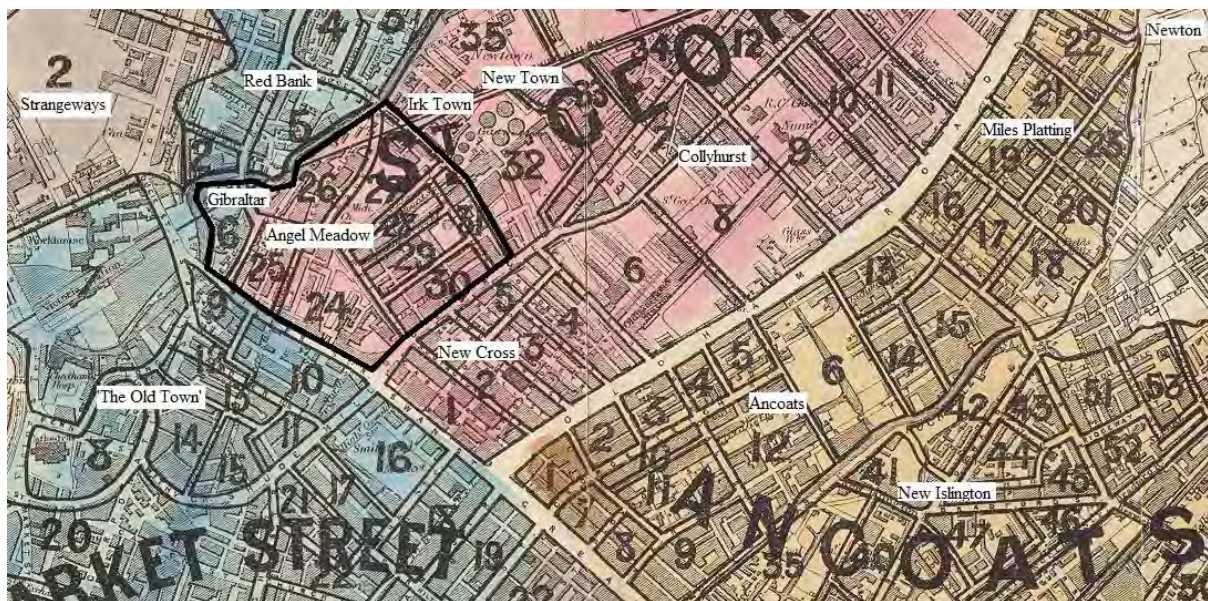


Figure 1.2: Location map showing how Angel Meadow sat within Victorian Manchester. (Source: Map of the Enumeration Districts within the City of Manchester, Census 1871, Report on the Health of the City of Manchester, 1874, University of Manchester, JRL18043961.) The map is in colour and shows the Saint George's district in pink, the Collegiate Church/Market Street district in blue and Ancoats in yellow. In 1871, Angel Meadow was formed by sub-districts 24–31 of the Saint George's district. Gibraltar was sub-district 6 of Market Street. The map does not translate easily into black-and-white.

In Figure 2.1, the boundaries of Angel Meadow have been drawn by hand and other placenames have been added based on local knowledge. The gasworks can be easily identified in sub-district 32 by its four gasometers. It is debatable whether Gibraltar and Irk Town should be included within Angel Meadow. As a sub-district of the Collegiate Church district, Gibraltar was administratively separate from Angel

Meadow. It was not geographically separate, however, as it stood on the same side of the Irk. If Gibraltar is to be included in this thesis, then so perhaps should Irk Town, which was part of sub-district 35 of the Saint George's district, as shown in Figure 1.2. However, Jacqueline Roberts, who studied Irk Town at length, described it as a 'no man's land' that 'lay between New Town and Angel Meadow'.²¹ Unlike Gibraltar, which stood within the same boundary formed by the river, Irk Town and New Town formed an unnatural annex beyond Irk Street and fitted more naturally into the southern fringes of Collyhurst. Including Irk Town would necessitate including the whole of sub-district 35, which stretches some distance away. Irk Town has therefore been excluded from this thesis, while Gibraltar has been included. It is worth noting here that when Engels mentioned 'the New Town' in *The Condition*, his route suggests he was referring to the areas of Angel Meadow nearest to Rochdale Road rather than the New Town marked on the map on the opposite side of the Irk. The route he took through the district will be discussed in detail later in this thesis.

Contemporary descriptions

The history of Angel Meadow and the fact of its Victorian notoriety is largely unknown to younger people living in Manchester in 2022, however it is still known among sections of the population who lived in and around the city centre before large-scale housing clearances took place in the 1960s, as amateur historian Ida Bradshaw recalled: 'My grandparents lived in Lower Broughton, Salford, and my great-grandparents lived in Ardwick. My late mother could remember her mother and

²¹ Jacqueline Roberts, *Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century Manchester: John Street, Irk Town, 1826–1936* (Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1999), pp. 3–5.

grandmother saying, “Well, we may have been poor and lived in Ardwick, but thank goodness we were never that poor that we had to live in Angel Meadow”. Apparently, there was a family who lived in Jubilee Street in Lower Broughton who came from Angel Meadow. My grandmother said more than once that the lady had told her, “Thank God we managed to get out of that place”.²²

During the nineteenth century, Angel Meadow was notorious throughout Manchester and beyond due to its overcrowded living conditions and acute social problems. A range of social observers, visiting before and after Engels, described those conditions in dramatic terms, while official reports and statistics highlighted the impact on people’s health compared with other districts of the city. By 1897, the population density of Angel Meadow was estimated at 192,000 people per square mile compared with 26,350 per square mile for Manchester as a whole and 497 per square mile for England and Wales.²³ The death rate in Angel Meadow’s worst housing was reported in 1904 to be as high as 80 per 1,000 people compared with 20 per 1,000 for the city.²⁴

Angel Meadow was sometimes referred to in mid-century reports as Irish Town because of its large number of Irish, particularly after the Great Famine of the 1840s brought an influx of migrants to Manchester. Including the Manchester-born children of two Irish parents, the Irish were estimated to form half (50.4 percent) of the district’s inhabitants in 1851.²⁵ They were often blamed by English social

²² Dean Kirby email correspondence with Ida Bradshaw (27 December 2017).

²³ John Edward Mercer, *The Conditions of Life in Angel Meadow* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1897), p. 161.

²⁴ [Anonymous], ‘Manchester’, *The British Medical Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2294 (1904), p. 1663.

²⁵ Mervyn Busteed and Rob Hodgson, ‘Irish Migration and Settlement in Early-Nineteenth-Century Manchester, with Special Reference to the Angel Meadow District in 1851’, *Irish Geography*, Vol. 27 (1994), pp. 1–80 (p. 6).

commentators for Manchester's problems. James Phillips Kay (1804–1877) criticised their 'barbarous habits and savage want of economy'.²⁶ Engels reported that 'the Milesian deposits all garbage and filth before his house door here, as he was accustomed to do at home, and so accumulates the pools and dirt heaps which disfigure the working people's quarters and poison the air'.²⁷ Other detractors of the Irish included industrialists such as the Manchester cotton manufacturer Aaron Lees, who said in an 1835 report: 'They are the worst part of the population – usually the first to turn out, the first to commence riot, and, in fact, there is no recklessness of conduct which they do not at times display'.²⁸

It was the graphic nature of the descriptions by journalists, social reformers and theorists such as Engels that cast Angel Meadow, with its large Irish population, as a slum and built the mould in which the district's history is continuously being remade by historians. In descriptions that have now become legendary, the journalist Angus Bethune Reach (1821–1856) described Angel Meadow as 'the lowest, most filthy, most unhealthy, most wicked locality in Manchester' in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849. He said it was 'full of cellars, and inhabited by prostitutes, their bullies, thieves, cadgers, vagrants, tramps, and, in the very worst sties of filth and darkness, by those unhappy wretches the low Irish.' In what Reach described as 'the worst cellar in Manchester' he found a man in bed with a 'well-grown calf' and an 'old body' lying in a 6-feet-long hole 'scooped out through the wall into the earth on the outside of the foundation'. He wrote: 'I turned away and was glad when I found myself

²⁶ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), p. 18.

²⁷ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 103.

²⁸ *Royal Commission into the Condition of the Poorer Classes in Ireland, Appendix G: State of the Irish Poor in England*, 1835, Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 34 (1836), p. 427.

breathing such comparatively fresh air as can be found in Angel Meadow, Manchester.’²⁹

Benjamin Redfern, an Angel Meadow publican, wrote in 1867 that Charter Street, one of the Angel Meadow’s two main thoroughfares (the other being Angel Street) was home to an ‘assortment of hawkers, umbrella menders, bell hangers, knife grinders, ballad singers, criers of murder and prize-fight broadsheets, and tinkers’. He said: ‘There are German bandsmen and foreign musicians of every grade, Highland pipers from Dublin, dog and bird fanciers, beggars, mountebanks, street jugglers, itinerant preachers, Lancashire bell ringers, Tyrolese minstrels and Negro serenaders from Birmingham, and to sum up a general “olla podrida” of odd and paradoxical characters.’³⁰ The *Manchester Guardian* also reported graphically on the conditions in Angel Meadow in 1870:

Doors are torn from their hinges – evidences [sic] of the fierce struggles they once shut in or shut out. Now they are powerless to do either and are simply propped up against their frames and offer no shelter or protection from violence. It is all free fighting here. Even some of the windows do not open, so it is useless to cry for help. Dampness and misery, violence and wrong, have left their handwriting in perfectly legible characters on the walls.³¹

For the *Manchester Evening News*, the district was ‘the headquarters of the thieving fraternity’,³² while the Manchester detective Jerome Caminada (1844–1914)

²⁹ Angus Bethune Reach, in Chris Aspin, ed., *A Cotton Fibre Halo: Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849* (1849; Manchester: Royds Press, 2007), pp. 98–103.

³⁰ Benjamin Redfern, ‘A Journey from Withy Grove to New Town’, *Odds and Ends Literary Magazine* (1867), pp. 372–3, Manchester Archives, GB127.M38/4/2.

³¹ [Anonymous], ‘In the Slums No. 2’, *Manchester Guardian* (23 February 1870).

³² [Anonymous], ‘Criminal Manchester, From a Correspondent’, *Manchester Evening News* (16 October 1874).

described Angel Meadow in graphic detail in his autobiography in 1895 as a ‘modern day Gomorrah – that abscess in the side of a great and wealthy city’. He said Angel Meadow was ‘deeply stained with drunkenness, debauchery, crime and vice in every shape – the prevailing callousness of which it was painful to behold: children of tender years old in crime, hoary-headed debauched systematic trainers of such children, abandoned reckless girls, thieves of all sorts, a few returned convicts and other notorious characters, formed the prevailing population’.³³ Crime was also at the forefront of the mind of a local priest, Canon William Sheehan, the parish priest of Saint Chad’s Church, who said the area was ‘the most densely populated part of town where the poorest, the less educated and the most criminal members of the community live’.³⁴ In 1892, a ragged school teacher also told the *Manchester City News*:

I once went round a score of the Meadow lodging houses in company with a police inspector, from ten at night until three in the morning, and I don’t think I shall ever forget the sights and sounds of that time. They were indescribable. Even [Émile] Zola would not dare to depict them. What can be expected of the offspring of such unwholesome beings as the ordinary beer-sodden Angel Meadow parents but caricatures of humanity. Years of heredity have gifted these animals – for they are as unclean as monkeys and their gestures, and their leering unconsciousness of shame remind me irresistibly of apes – with

³³ Jerome Caminada, *Twenty-Five Years of Detective Life* (1895; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 12.

³⁴ Michael Herbert, *The Wearing of the Green: A Political History of the Irish in Manchester* (London: Irish in Britain Representative Group, 2001), p. 16.

peculiar characteristics which it will take a century of proper treatment to remove.³⁵

Angel Meadow was so notorious that its inhabitants were even caricatured in Victorian theatre productions and the district formed the backdrop to contemporary fictional accounts of Manchester. In an 1877 performance of the *Babes in the Wood* pantomime at Manchester's Prince's Theatre, the wicked Baron had two comic henchmen called 'Bill o' th' Irk' and 'Tommy o' Angel Meadow'.³⁶ In the novel *Mary Barton*, published in 1848, Elizabeth Gaskell (1810–1865) chose Nicholas Street in Angel Meadow for the home of Esther Fergusson, a character who turned to prostitution when she was deserted by her lover.³⁷ Margaret Harkness (1854–1923) also used Angel Meadow as the setting for her novel *A Manchester Shirtmaker*. In this fictional account of the district, the heroine Mary Dillon found: 'Women with bloated features and matted hair, whose language none could understand except the initiated – men besotted with drink, who scarcely spoke at all, who only looked on while the women were talking.' Harkness added: 'Her home lay in Angel Meadow. Why the worst slum in Manchester is called by this name it is not easy to imagine.'³⁸

The real-life occupants of Angel Meadow continued to face difficult living conditions until the housing was eventually demolished in clearances in the twentieth century. In 1931, investigators from the Manchester and Salford Better Housing Council visited the streets of the district to determine whether the houses should be

³⁵ [Anonymous], 'Another View of Life in Angel Meadow by a Ragged School Teacher', *Manchester City News* (24 December 1892).

³⁶ Jill Alexandra Sullivan, *The Politics of the Pantomime: Regional Identity in the Theatre, 1860–1900* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2011), p. 109.

³⁷ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848; London: Vintage Books, London, 2008), p. 299.

³⁸ Mary Harkness, published as John Law, *A Manchester Shirtmaker: A Realistic Story of Today* (London: Authors' Co-operative Publishing, 1890), pp. 5–7.

removed. In Angel Meadow and neighbouring Red Bank, they reported that 580 families were still living in 381 houses and 14 flats – the oldest houses dating back to 1643 – and only four of them had baths.³⁹ The investigators said: ‘Angel Meadow is an extraordinary jumble of factories, warehouses, common lodging houses, closed against habitation but left standing with their empty window frames and in some cases cellars that are a happy home to rats and, in and amongst all these, houses that are still inhabited.’⁴⁰

After the district was bombed during the Manchester Blitz in 1940 and the last houses were pulled down, the remaining families were moved to council estates on the outskirts of Manchester. Angel Meadow became a backwater warehouse district for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, which explains why its history is largely forgotten today. History became myth. Malcolm Lynch described in his fictional account, *The Kid from Angel Meadow*, in 1983 how the district had once been a ‘black, crowded huddle of two-up, two-down houses built during the Crimean War to stable cotton mill workers where the eyes of old houses didn’t want to see the violence of kids.’⁴¹ A 2014 theatre production called *Angel Meadow*, staged in a derelict Ancoats pub, invited audience members to experience an ‘adrenaline-fuelled encounter’. The publicity material described Angel Meadow as ‘a steaming, sordid hell on earth at the centre of the industrial world populated by red-eyed scuttling gangs, girl rippers and the displaced Irish’ in which ‘lost strangers sought solace, sex and the divine’.⁴² A reviewer from *The Guardian* described how

³⁹ Eric Philip, *Angel Meadow and Red Bank* (Manchester: Manchester and Salford Better Housing Council, 1931), pp. 6–7.

⁴⁰ Philip, *Angel Meadow and Red Bank*, p. 5.

⁴¹ Malcolm Lynch, *The Kid from Angel Meadow* (London: Constable Books, 1989), p. 7.

⁴² *Angel Meadow*, ANU Productions, Manchester (10–29 June 2014), <<https://homemcr.org/production/angel-meadow/>> [accessed 12 August 2021].

audience members found themselves ‘hearing dark secrets in bedrooms or urinals, getting intimate with taxidermy’ or ‘wearing a party hat at a desperate Christmas celebration where the smell of despair and burnt toast wafts through the room.’⁴³

In 2022, Angel Meadow is undergoing a £200m redevelopment with new apartment blocks being built around a tree-lined park which previously served as a paupers’ cemetery.⁴⁴ It is part of a £4bn masterplan to build 15,000 homes stretching northwards from Victoria Station to Collyhurst – the so-called Northern Gateway project.⁴⁵ The redevelopment has prompted a groundswell of interest in the district’s history and the planning process has resulted in a series of archaeological excavations. This thesis therefore comes at another pivotal moment in Angel Meadow’s *continuing* history, as its future path is being marked out. There is a real need to place modern Angel Meadow within the context of its real past. As the astrophysicist Carl Sagan once said: ‘You have to understand the past to understand the present.’⁴⁶ This is more than a need for mere understanding. The future of towns and cities that became economic powerhouses in the nineteenth century is by no means certain as they continue to evolve, with Minoru Yasumoto saying that ‘no one can tell’ whether they will ‘live on as a lasting reminder of Victorian industrialisation and astonishing growth.’⁴⁷

⁴³ Lyn Gardner, ‘Angel Meadow review – a show full of brawling energy’, *The Guardian* (13 June 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/jun/13/angel-meadow-review-anu-immersive-theatre> [accessed 17 May 2019].

⁴⁴ Dean Kirby, ‘Battle for the Skies Above Angel Meadow’ (27 August 2017), <<https://inews.co.uk>> [accessed 17 May 2019].

⁴⁵ Aaron Morby, ‘Plans in for £4bn Manchester Northern Gateway First Phase’, *Construction Inquirer* (16 February 2021), <<https://www.constructionenquirer.com/2021/02/16/plans-in-for-phase-one-of-4bn-manchester-northern-gateway/>> [accessed 17 May 2019].

⁴⁶ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (London: Ballantine Books, 2011), p. 62.

⁴⁷ Minoru Yasumoto, *The Rise of a Victorian Ironopolis: Middlesbrough and Regional Industrialisation* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), p. 199.

Studying slums

Studying historic slums is by no means a futile endeavour. H.J. Dyos, the doyen of urban history, explained why the growth of Victorian cities still matters.⁴⁸ He said: 'Our evolving cities are still governed by the ways in which earlier occupants of the ground divided their fields or settled their estates, and the centres of commercial gravity, if not the circumferences, are commonly still fixed where earlier convenience required.'⁴⁹ The long-lasting impact of the decisions made by Victorian planners was also expressed by John Kellett in his study of the development of Britain's railways when he described how cities remained 'super-inscribed by the gigantic geometrical brush-strokes of the engineers' curving approach lines.'⁵⁰

Dyos, writing in 1967 as the new field of urban history was being mapped out, said it was remarkable that there had been so little historical investigation of Victorian slums.⁵¹ 'This half-hidden world will never be fully rediscovered, I suppose,' he wrote, 'but our ignorance of how life went on in the slums ought to goad us a little more'.⁵² He set out a series of questions for investigating these city districts at a time when large-scale clearances of decayed Victorian housing made them a ready target for study: 'Why did this street become a slum and not that one? At what point was its metamorphosis complete? What were its architectural elements? What changes took place among the inhabitants as this happened in terms of numbers, households,

⁴⁸ David Cannadine, 'H.J. Dyos and the Urban Process', in David Cannadine and David Reader, *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. xi.

⁴⁹ Harold J. Dyos, 'The Victorian City in Historical Perspective', in David Cannadine and David Reader, *Exploring the Urban Past*, pp. 3–4.

⁵⁰ John R. Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 2.

⁵¹ Harold J. Dyos, 'The Slums of Victorian London', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (September 1967), pp. 5–40.

⁵² Dyos, *The Slums of Victorian London*, p. 7.

social class, behaviour? At what point was this or that street redeemed, and how did this happen, in terms of general legislation, local initiative, landlord opportunism, charity?’⁵³

Dyos’s concern about the shortage of slum studies was picked up by Anthony S. Wohl a decade later when he drew a line between his own research into housing in London in the second half of the nineteenth century and concerns about housing in the 1970s, when he was writing. Until then, there had been no full-length study of working-class housing in a single British town or city. Wohl pointed out that the making of slum districts hardly ever began within the lifetimes of their current inhabitants. He said: ‘The making of slums is a process that begins long before their ultimate occupants enter possession. They have a history that has seldom been probed and a bearing on the explanation of how cities have evolved that has hardly been examined.’⁵⁴

The starting point for studying slums, however, remains remarkably vague. Their definition has been debated since the word is said to have been first used by James Henry Vaux in his 1812 *Vocabulary of the Flash Language*, when ‘slum’ was synonymous with a ‘racket’ or ‘criminal trade’.⁵⁵ According to Davis, credit for transforming this street slang into a term ‘comfortably used by genteel writers’ is sometimes given to Cardinal Wiseman (1802–1865).⁵⁶ The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the noun as being of unknown early-nineteenth century origin and takes it to mean ‘a squalid and overcrowded urban street or district inhabited by very poor

⁵³ Dyos, *The Slums of Victorian London*, pp. 24–25.

⁵⁴ Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. v.

⁵⁵ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, p. 21.

people' or 'a house or building unfit for human habitation', while the verb 'to slum' means 'to spend time at a lower social level than one's own through curiosity or for charitable purposes'.⁵⁷

Simplistic definitions will always fail to convey the global complexity of urban poverty and the processes by which areas of deprivation are created and develop, let alone how those districts are perceived by their inhabitants. Dyos acknowledged that 'precisely what it ever meant on the ground has never been clear'. He believed this was partly because a technical definition for a slum was never enshrined by an Act of Parliament. The problem was and remains that slums are relative things and the term itself is not fixed. 'Slums are three-dimensional obscenities, whether in bricks and mortar, wattle and mud, timber and corrugated iron, or asbestos – and they have rightly been regarded by the many writers who have dwelt on them as great stains on civilisation,' he wrote. 'Yet there is no definition that is applicable to evidence that can translate this into some handy yardstick.'⁵⁸

This difficulty in describing slums, the reasons why they persist and their function within a given city has sparked research by academics from a range of disciplines including urban, social and working-class historians, geographers, sociologists, economists and archaeologists. As Shane Ewen said, the urban poor have been the most studied group in urban historiography.⁵⁹ Even while Dyos was staking out the boundaries of urban history, he acknowledged that historians were entering territory that had already been claimed by other academic fields. 'Except for the pioneers, they arrived like prospectors late for the gold rush,' he wrote.

⁵⁷ *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com> [accessed 6 June 2021].

⁵⁸ Dyos, *The Slums of Victorian London*, pp. 9–10.

⁵⁹ Shane Ewan, *What is Urban History?* (London: Polity Press, 2016), p. 44.

‘Geographers, sociologists, economists, social pathologists, and civic designers were already out ahead panning for gold.’⁶⁰

Slum theory

The study of slums is a huge multi-disciplinary field that began with a tradition of observation of working-class districts by Victorian writers including Engels and others such as Henry Mayhew and Charles Booth.⁶¹ Academics from some disciplines have gone as far as trying to explain the complexity of slums in a single theory. In 1924, sociologists from the Chicago School led by Ernest Burgess applied theories of ecology in their attempt to explain city expansion in the United States. Their ‘concentric zone’ model became a dominant theory for understanding the development of slums. Burgess said that a city’s expansion could be best illustrated by a series of onion-like rings in which the ‘clear main fact’ of expansion was the ‘tendency of each inner zone to extend its area by the invasion of the next outer zone’. Burgess wrote: ‘This aspect of expansion may be called succession – a process which has been studied in detail in plant ecology.’ Using the example of Chicago and highlighting an area of the city which he called *hobohemia*, Burgess said this process of expansion ‘sifts and sorts and relocates individuals and groups by residence and occupation’. He wrote: ‘In the zone of deterioration encircling the central business section are always to be found the so-called “slums” and the “bad

⁶⁰ H.J. Dyos, ‘Agenda for Urban Historians’ in H.J. Dyos, ed., *The Study of Urban History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), pp. 1–47.

⁶¹ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851; Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2012); Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People of London*, Vol. 1 (1893; London: Hardpress Publishing, 2013).

lands”, with their submerged regions of poverty, degradation, and disease, and their underworlds of vice and crime.’⁶²



Figure 1.3: Thomas Marr’s Manchester housing map. (Source: Thomas Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, Manchester: Sherratt and Hughes, 1904.)

The concentric theory does appear at first glance to have some relevance for Victorian Manchester, with Thomas Marr’s 1904 housing map, shown in Figure 1.3, bearing a similarity with Burgess’s model, highlighting how the city’s grey-coloured central business district appeared to be surrounded by a circle of dark-coloured slums and an outer ring of lighter-coloured suburbs.⁶³ David Harvey argued in 1973

⁶² Ernest W. Burgess, ‘The Growth of the City, in Robert E Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Roderick D. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924), p. 50.

⁶³ Thomas Marr’s Manchester Housing Map, 1904, <<https://manchester.publicprofiler.org/marr/>> [accessed 1 November 2018].

that Engels had also found concentric zoning in Manchester while describing the systematic shutting out of the working-class from the main thoroughfares. 'I cannot help feeling that the liberal manufacturers, the Big Wigs of Manchester, are not so innocent after all, in the matter of this sensitive method of construction,' Engels wrote, implying that this situation was deliberately planned by the bourgeoisie to repress the workers.⁶⁴

Engels was not alone in arguing that urban zoning could be found in the world's first industrial city, as Reach said in 1849: 'Between the dull stacks of warehouses and the snug and airy dwellings of the suburbs – lies the great mass of smoky, dingy, sweltering and toiling Manchester.'⁶⁵ The *Manchester City News* also reported in 1892: 'All around the centre of wealth moans the dark tide of misery and wretchedness.'⁶⁶ Harvey believed Burgess's theory had a critical flaw in that it was essentially a cultural approach, whereas *The Condition* was 'far more consistent with hard economic and social realities'.⁶⁷ Critics, though, have pointed out that the basic zonal model of Burgess – reflected back on to Engels by Harvey – was too simplistic. In 1975, David Ward found 'striking similarities' between Manchester and Chicago, the city on which Burgess's theory was based, but argued that modern changes in the processes of urban growth had rendered Burgess's model obsolete.⁶⁸ Richard Dennis said even the concentric zone model offered by Engels, with the commercial district surrounded by an unmixed working-people's quarter and outer rings of

⁶⁴ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 57–59.

⁶⁵ Reach, *The Cotton Fibre Halo*, pp. 2–3.

⁶⁶ *Manchester City News* (24 December 1892).

⁶⁷ David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), pp. 131–2.

⁶⁸ David Ward, 'Victorian Cities: How Modern?', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1975), pp. 135–151 (p. 136).

middle- and upper-bourgeoise, was little more than a caricature – a ‘bold cartoon that now seems more real than the Manchester from which it was derived’.⁶⁹

Ward and Dennis were correct. While Burgess’s theory, which has since been refined with models such as the sectoral approach of Homer Hoyt, offered a potential starting point for studying the development of early-Victorian Manchester, it was ultimately too simplistic an explanation of the inner workings of the town.⁷⁰ This thesis will contend that Engels, perhaps wilfully to suit his theory, misunderstood this too. The reality of the layout of Victorian British towns and cities is obviously more nuanced. The problem with the all-encompassing concentric zone theory was evidenced by Davis’s discovery in 2006 that, while some developing world cities appear to reproduce US-style urban segregation, with the middle-class fleeing from the centre to gated suburbs, the ‘dominant global pattern is the eviction of the poor from the centre’. He added: ‘The majority of the world’s poor no longer live in inner cities. Since 1970, the larger share of the world urban population growth has been absorbed by slum communities on the periphery of Third World cities.’⁷¹

In 1962, the economist Charles Stokes made another attempt at forming a new ‘complete theory’ of slums by dividing them into ‘slums of hope’ and ‘slums of despair’. Seeking to explain the function of slums in Caracas, Lima and Buenos Aires, he wrote: ‘One is tempted to suggest a possible reason why the elimination of slums has failed is that the explanations are inadequate.’⁷² Stokes argued that the

⁶⁹ Richard Dennis, *English Industrial Cities in the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 84.

⁷⁰ Homer Hoyt, *The Structure and Growth of Residential Areas in American Cities* (Washington: Federal Housing Administration, 1939).

⁷¹ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, p. 37.

⁷² Charles Stokes, ‘A Theory of Slums’, *Land Economics*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (August 1962), p. 187.

function of a slum was to house those who did not directly participate in the economic and social life of the city – a failure to appreciate that even Victorian match-sellers performed an economic role. As Wohl has said, slums served the urban economy as part of the infrastructure needed to sustain a market for casual labour.⁷³

Stokes said his ‘slums of hope’, exemplified by Guayaquil in Ecuador, contained new migrants attracted to the economic opportunities of the city and would eventually disappear as these migrants were integrated into society. The alternative ‘slums of despair’ such as South Boston, ‘where the social residue live’, would remain as permanent fixtures.⁷⁴ Where would Angel Meadow have fitted into Stokes’s theory? With its large population of immigrant Irish, he would have had to class it as a ‘slum of hope’. However, Stokes believed a slum of new migrants would disappear as the migrants were assimilated into society. Angel Meadow easily debunks Stokes’s theory as the district persisted until the 1930s, well over a century after conditions first began to deteriorate. When the Manchester and Salford Better Housing Council made a special recommendation that Angel Meadow be demolished under the 1930 Slum Clearance Act, two in five people – 207 out of 519 families – told the council’s inspectors they wanted to remain in Angel Meadow in spite of the poor living conditions as their livelihoods on the nearby Smithfield Market depended on living nearby.⁷⁵

What Stokes ultimately proved was that any ‘one size fits all’ overarching theory of slums is likely to fail. In reality, the urban experience in Victorian

⁷³ Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, p. v.

⁷⁴ Stokes, *A Theory of Slums*, p. 191.

⁷⁵ Philip, *Angel Meadow and Red Bank*, p. 17.

Manchester was as different from Birmingham as it was from Boston or Guayaquil. There were also, as this thesis will show, differences in living conditions between working-class districts *within* Manchester. As Briggs rightly said: 'The world of Victorian cities was fragmented, intricate, eclectic, messy – and no single approach to their understanding provides us with all the right questions and answers or leads us to all the right available evidence.'⁷⁶ While the leading US historian and sociologist Lewis Mumford had claimed that cities were 'insensate industrial towns' created by the development of cotton, iron and steel, Briggs pointed out their different economic, social and political structures. He added: 'However much the historian talks of common urban problems, he will find that one of his most interesting tasks is to show in what respects cities differed from each other.'⁷⁷ The differences between Manchester and Birmingham were frequently noted by writers such as Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited both places.⁷⁸ Industrial towns had different profiles and were not all Dickens's Coketown with different aliases.⁷⁹

Briggs called for a more nuanced approach – arguing that English cities should be treated as different entities with their own experiences and problems. Following his lead, urban historians have swapped the macro theoretical method of Stokes for micro studies of the inner workings of cities – an approach that will be adopted in this thesis. It is a challenging task. The social historian Stephan Thernstrom, who used census data to study nineteenth-century social mobility in Newburyport, Massachusetts, wrote that his work was at times 'painfully uncertain',

⁷⁶ Asa Briggs, 'The Human Aggregate', in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. 1, 1973), pp. 83–84.

⁷⁷ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, p. 34.

⁷⁸ Dennis, *English Industrial Cities*, p. 16.

⁷⁹ Briggs, *A Social History of England*, pp. 269–70.

but he hoped to 'convince some readers of the potentialities of history from the bottom up.'⁸⁰

Some historians and geographers have debated the extent to which working people formed a single class and if they were segregated from wealthier neighbourhoods – testing the black-and-white urban theory of Engels. In 1975, Ward argued that residential segregation in England was insignificant until late in the nineteenth century for all but the wealthiest groups. Most new sections of early- and mid-nineteenth-century cities housed people of diverse occupations and 'limited but significant differences in remuneration and status', he said. He argued that only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century did socially mobile people move in substantial numbers to residential suburbs.⁸¹

David Cannadine rebutted this argument by contending that the emergence of a middle-class with clearly defined cultural values had led to a clear residential segregation by the middle of the century. He said contemporary writers had little doubt that their largest towns were segregated and argued that the 'combined influences of population growth, landowners' preferences, and middle-class attitudes and actions' created an 'unprecedented degree of residential segregation in mid-nineteenth-century England, which contemporaries noticed and historians have endorsed'.⁸² He said Ward's choice of the town of Chorley in Lancashire as a case study revealed little of the conditions in large Victorian cities and it was 'scarcely adequate' for Ward to dismiss Engels's Manchester as an 'exception to the normal

⁸⁰ Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth-Century City* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 7.

⁸¹ David Ward, 'Victorian Cities: How Modern?', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 1 (1975), pp. 135–151.

⁸² David Cannadine, 'Victorian Cities: How Different?', *Social History*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (January 1977), pp. 460–5.

nineteenth-century pattern'.⁸³ In a sense, both academics were correct. Victorian towns and cities were segregated, but they also were more socially-mixed and less black-and-white than mid-century writers such as Engels claimed. Further exhaustive debates have followed on residential segregation, with Colin Pooley testing whether Irish, Scots and Welsh immigrants in Liverpool formed 'ghettos' or 'ethnic communities'. He found the Irish conformed most closely to a 'ghetto model', where socio-economic factors were a cause of segregation, while the Welsh, and to a lesser extent the Scottish, formed 'ethnic communities', where cultural similarity was the main cohesive force.⁸⁴ While segregation is not the main focus of this thesis, it will examine the issue *en passant* while looking at the first occupants of Angel Meadow and while considering the type of housing occupied by the immigrant Irish.

A multi-disciplinary, empirical approach

This thesis, in fact, takes on a broader challenge. In re-examining *The Condition*, it follows a lineage of recent academic debate that calls for a wholesale re-evaluation of the nature of slums. Some proponents of this micro-analytic, evidenced-based approach have even concluded that the word 'slum', as a catch-all term for areas of deprivation, should be erased from the lexicon of government policy, urban planning and academia. Alan Gilbert warned in 2007 that continued use of this 'old and dangerous term from the habitat vocabulary' perverts the understanding of poverty and distorts policy making.⁸⁵ Gilbert said: 'Generalising about slums fails to

⁸³ Cannadine, *Victorian Cities*, p. 465.

⁸⁴ Colin Pooley, 'The Residential Segregation of Migrant Communities in Mid-Victorian Liverpool', *Transactions of British Geographers*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1977), p. 364.

⁸⁵ Alan Gilbert, 'The Return of the Slum: Does Language Matter?', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (December 2007), p. 697.

recognise the awkward exceptions and tends to reduce the lives of all poor people to the lowest common denominator.⁸⁶ Alan Mayne took those thoughts to their extreme in 2017 when he argued it was time to ‘take the next logical step, and instead of attempting to reform a fundamentally ugly and judgemental word, to drop it entirely from our vocabulary’.⁸⁷ He had earlier warned that framing discussion of poverty in terms of slums reinforced patronising attitudes towards the poor communities and prevented them from improving – and, at worst, would undercut attempts at reform.⁸⁸

Criticism of the term slum is much more than an argument over semantics. It is about deconstructing the choices made by Victorian writers in selecting particular districts to write about and also the language they used to describe them. Dyos was among the first to raise questions about the usefulness of contemporary slum writings in his study of Victorian London. ‘Not surprisingly, they were often a thin camouflage for other things, like the accelerated alarm felt at the approach of dangers such as spiritual and moral destitution or “gore-faced revolution” – they could also merely serve the ends of popular journalism which was fastening just then with such relish on the mysteries of the metropolis,’ he wrote. Even Henry Mayhew, the celebrated writer of London’s poor, ‘provided little more than a panorama of poverty’, according to Dyos.⁸⁹ Alan Mayne and Tim Murray further warned that historians have unwittingly perpetuated the slum myth as they have been ‘mesmerised by the dramatic intensity of the caricatures that remain embedded in the documentary record’ and their tunnel vision has often led to them refusing to

⁸⁶ Alan Gilbert, ‘Extreme Thinking About Slums and Slum Dwellers: A critique’, *SAIS Review*, Vol. 29 (2009), p. 38.

⁸⁷ Alan Mayne, *Slums: The History of a Global Injustice* (London: Reaktion Books, 2017), p. 287.

⁸⁸ Alan Mayne, ‘Beyond Metrics: Reappraising York’s Hungate “Slum”’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol.15 (2011), pp. 556–7.

⁸⁹ Dyos, *The Slums of Victorian London*, pp. 12–13.

engage in cross-disciplinary debates and, critically, ignoring contradictory evidence found by archaeologists.⁹⁰

This thesis does not seek to retrospectively clean up the contemporary Victorian terminology of slums. However, the word slum will be used cautiously in re-examining the Manchester writings of Engels, who used the term seven times in his chapter on the Great Towns. The thesis does, however, follow in the same vein as Gilbert and Mayne in challenging existing notions of what Angel Meadow was and, in seeking to nuance the understanding of the district, looks instead to undertake a multi-disciplinary, evidenced-based approach.

Mayne, an urban historian, said his tribe was awkwardly equipped to interpret the urban past and that some of the most successful readings of towns and cities have been drawn from archaeology, architecture, geography, literary criticism, and cultural anthropology.⁹¹ While all academics can only use the tools available to them, he was right to direct historians towards other disciplines. He praised collaborative work by archaeologists and oral historians in Hungate, York, as an exemplar for how the historical understanding of modern cities could move beyond static categorisations of urban form and social behaviour to ‘grasp the complexities of actual homes, workplaces and neighbourhoods’.⁹²

⁹⁰ Alan Mayne and Tim Murray, ‘The Archaeology of Urban Landscapes: Explorations in Slumland’, in Alan Mayne and Tim Murray, eds, *The Archaeology of Urban Landscapes: Explorations in Slumland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 1.

⁹¹ Alan Mayne, ‘Representing the Slum’, *Urban History Yearbook*, Vol. 17 (May 1990), pp. 66–84 (p. 66).

⁹² Mayne, ‘Beyond Metrics: Reappraising York’s Hungate ‘Slum’’, *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2011), pp. 553–562 (p. 561).

Archaeologists have already carried out a phenomenal amount of work in investigating the industrial archaeology in Manchester, including extensive digs of the cellar remains of Victorian workers' housing. By the end of the 1990s, in the wake of the regeneration that followed the 1996 IRA bomb, Manchester became one of the four most active areas in north-west England for commercially funded archaeology.⁹³ Further major redevelopment since the 2010s – the biggest changes in Manchester's landscape since the mid-nineteenth century – has resulted in even more archaeological work, particularly in the search for the remains of Manchester's industrial heritage. In 2020, during the national UK lockdowns of the coronavirus pandemic, 20 contractors continued digging across the city.⁹⁴ Michael Nevell, the archaeologist who has most extensively researched Manchester workers' housing, said that researchers need to be wary of the real dangers in 'maintaining a separation between the archaeological and architectural evidence and in assuming that nineteenth century and early-twentieth century views of "slum" areas were accurate'.⁹⁵

Other researchers have taken an empirical approach in the quest to find out whether Manchester, and in particular its workers' housing, differed from the descriptions by Engels and other contemporary Victorian writers. Jacqueline Roberts, for example, was part of the Manchester Early Dwellings Research Group (MEDReG) whose members physically measured the last remaining workers'

⁹³ Michael Nevell, *Manchester: The Hidden History* (London: The History Press, 2008), pp. 8–9.

⁹⁴ Michael Nevell, 'Digging up Manchester: Industrial Archaeology and Heritage in the Shock City', Manchester Centre for Public History and Heritage lecture (2 June 2021).

⁹⁵ Michael Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City: Housing Quality, Land Ownership and the Archaeological Evidence from Industrial Manchester, 1740 to 1850', *International Journal of Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2011), pp. 595–606.

cottages in the 1980s. In discussing the findings of this work, Roberts noted how Engels had a vested interest in describing the worst things he saw.⁹⁶ In a landmark study, Mervyn Busteed and Rob Hodgson used 1851 census data from Angel Meadow to test claims by Kay and Engels that the Irish were to blame for their poor living conditions. They discovered, in contrast, that the Irish could be found clustered in the better housing.⁹⁷ Sandra Hayton also found that the Irish were not in the majority in cellar dwellings – the lowest rung of the property ladder – and there was little to differentiate Irish and non-Irish cellars in terms of overcrowding. The discovery suggested, she said, that Kay and Engels had selected their evidence to emphasise the worst, rather than the typical, conditions.⁹⁸ Lee Gregory, who conducted an analysis of archaeological digs in Ancoats, also challenged the perception that his study area was ‘little more than the archetypal slum of the age’.⁹⁹

This thesis will seek to draw together these strands for the first time and take a fresh perspective on Engels and the subsequently entrenched view he created of Angel Meadow as an industrial slum. Briggs argued that the soundest approach for embarking on a historical study was to use qualitative evidence from a range of sources while also gathering and analysing new quantitative evidence. Failing to do this, he said, would lead to a breakdown in interdisciplinary communication.¹⁰⁰ This

⁹⁶ Jacqueline Roberts, ‘Provision of Housing for the Working-classes in Manchester between 1780 and 1914 – an historical and topographical survey’, *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 124 (1984–5), p. 49.

⁹⁷ Busteed and Hodgson, ‘Irish Migration and Settlement’, pp. 1–80 (p. 9).

⁹⁸ Sandra Hayton, ‘A Search for the Underclass: A Comparative Study of Cellar Dwellers in Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Rochdale 1861–1871’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Salford, 1995).

⁹⁹ Lee Gregory, ‘Under Slate Grey Victorian Sky: Housing the Workers of Ancoats. An Archaeological Study into the Housing and Social Development of the World's First Industrial Suburb’ (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 2006), p. 91.

¹⁰⁰ Briggs, *The Human Aggregate*, pp. 83–84.

thesis will therefore take the following approach. It will re-examine the contemporary, qualitative documentary accounts while also using rate books, census records and trade directories, and unique sources such as early-twentieth century planning applications, archaeology reports and maps to work out what was happening on the ground and to understand Angel Meadow's function within the Victorian town. Following in the footsteps of Nevell, Busteed, Roberts, Hayton and Gregory, the key focus will be on housing in Angel Meadow – one of the few persistent factors of the district which can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively and compared with other districts of Manchester.

A study of housing

Any study of Victorian slums needs to focus first and foremost on housing. Marr, writing about Manchester living conditions in 1904, said the housing problem could not be separated from other social problems.¹⁰¹ Dyos shared a similar view, arguing that, apart from the relatively trivial influences helping to settle the precise location of Victorian slums, the major factors could be described in terms of the supply and demand of housing.¹⁰² Marr was correct and, while Dyos over-simplified the causes of slums, he was also right to focus on housing as a major determinant of their origins and persistence. In a symposium on working-class housing in 1971, Stanley Chapman went on to issue a rallying cry for historians to study the housing question with some urgency as the worst Victorian dwellings were being swept away: 'While

¹⁰¹ Thomas Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford, A Report Prepared for the Citizens' Association for the Improvement of the Unwholesome Dwellings and Surroundings of the People with the aid of the Executive Committee* (Manchester: Sherratt and Hughes, 1904), p. 14.

¹⁰² Dyos, *The Slums of Victorian London*, p. 25.

something remains of the first major phase of urbanisation, and the housing situation promises to retain its position as Britain's most retractable social problem, the time is clearly ripe to attempt to study in depth the development of working-class housing in the last two centuries.¹⁰³ Enid Gauldie wrote three years later that there was still a great deal to be learned about urban history and, in particular, about the history of housing. 'It is difficult', she said, 'to detect a pattern in a puzzle from which so many pieces are still missing'.¹⁰⁴

In taking this topic forward, this thesis will therefore seek to answer the following questions:

- What was the reality of Angel Meadow in terms of its housing?
- What were the original intentions of the first house developers and how did Angel Meadow compare with other districts such as Ancoats, Ardwick Green and Saint Paul's?
- How did Angel Meadow develop and what processes were involved in its decline in the early-nineteenth century?
- What were the long-term effects of the district's first housing and did that housing enable slum conditions to persist?
- Was Engels correct in his assumptions about Angel Meadow and, if not, where did he go wrong?

This chapter has sought to set out the main themes and approaches that will be considered in this thesis. Chapter 2 will go straight to the heart of why Angel

¹⁰³ Stanley Chapman, *The History of Working-class Housing: A Symposium* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), pp. 9–10.

¹⁰⁴ Enid Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations: A History of Working-class Housing, 1780–1918* (London: George, Allen and Unwin, 1974), p. 17.

Meadow was so notorious in the nineteenth century by asking whether this notoriety was due to its poorer housing. It will study what Engels said about that housing and what he was trying to achieve. It will then compare the housing in Angel Meadow with the separate district of Ancoats using techniques drawn from historical geography to analyse whether the type of housing in Angel Meadow was different from its nearest neighbour. It will look particularly at the existence of substantial numbers of larger houses built in Angel Meadow in the Georgian period. Sources that will be consulted in analysing the footprint of these houses and their function within the district include Kay's data on Manchester housing conditions in 1832 and maps of Manchester from 1850 and 1888. Property values will be assessed using rate books and the archaeological evidence will also be examined with further reference to Engels, along with early-twentieth-century planning applications and further contemporary evidence from housing statistics.

In Chapter 3, this thesis will look at whether, given the existence of a considerable quantity of larger Georgian housing, Angel Meadow could have been originally designed as a middle-class suburb. It will compare original descriptions of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent by John Aikin and Joseph Aston with descriptions of Angel Meadow and will look at the development of Saint Michael's Church and the existence of the nearby Vauxhall Gardens pleasure grounds. It will also examine theories of Manchester's growth by H.B. Rodgers and Kidd.¹⁰⁵ It will go on to test whether Angel Meadow was more closely related to the Saint Paul's

¹⁰⁵ H.B. Rodgers, 'The Suburban Growth of Victorian Manchester', *Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society* (1962), republished in *North West Geographer Centenary Edition* (Manchester: Manchester Geographical Society, 1984), p. 6; Alan Kidd, 'From Township to Metropolis, Suburbs and the Shaping of the Modern City', in Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke, eds, *Manchester: The Making of the Modern City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), pp. 299–346.

district, parts of which shared similar housing stock, by revisiting research in that district by Nevell, and Simon Taylor and Julian Holder.¹⁰⁶ It will use rate books and maps to examine property prices during the earliest first phase of Angel Meadow's development. It will then look at the status of the district's first inhabitants. It will do this by using trade directories, including the first directories of Manchester by Elizabeth Raffald, to establish the occupations of Angel Meadow's first inhabitants. A technique devised by Jon Stobart will be used to break down these trade directory entries into occupational groups to understand the social and economic status of those first inhabitants.¹⁰⁷

Chapter 4 will look more closely at how Angel Meadow was originally formed. It will use maps including the 1750 and 1751 Plans of Manchester, the 1772 Tinker Map, the 1793 Laurent's map and the 1794 William Green map to understand the contours of, and original field ownership within, the district. It will also use trade directories and the 1798 Land Tax Redemption to examine house ownership in Angel Meadow in its first development phase. This chapter will compare the development with that of other Manchester estates using Jacqueline Roberts's study of the Aytoun and Byrom estates and C.W. Chalklin's work on the Byrom estate.¹⁰⁸ It will then use land sales advertised in the *Manchester Mercury* to focus in on the micro-development of individual plots of land and discuss what the intentions of the

¹⁰⁶ Michael Nevell, 'Excavating Engels: The Archaeological Investigations of Workers' Housing in Manchester and Salford, 2001 to 2017', *Manchester Memoirs*, Vol. 154 (2016); Simon Taylor and Julian Holder, *Manchester's Northern Quarter: The Greatest Meer Village* (London: English Heritage, 2008).

¹⁰⁷ Jon Stobart, 'The Urban System in the Regional Economy in North-West England 1700–60' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1993), appendices 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, pp. 580–591.

¹⁰⁸ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*; C.W. Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns of Georgian England: A Study of the Building Process, 1740–1820* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974).

developers might have been and the impact of this early development on the subsequent history of the district.

Chapter 5 will go on to consider the processes by which Angel Meadow moved from a socially-mixed eighteenth century district to a nineteenth century slum as defined by Engels and others. After considering evidence of the speed of the district's decline, it will explain the major processes that shaped it. It will use maps to show how a diverse landholding pattern impacted the development, including the land use changes that led to the rise of Arkwright's Mill, the creation of the New Burying Ground and the arrival of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. It will explore the rise of back-to-backs and courtyard housing behind the frontages of the larger Georgian properties and will look at how the housing market operated during this period of major population growth up to the time of Engels's visit to Manchester. It will also consider the extent to which the demography of Angel Meadow changed in this period using the baptism and burial records of Saint Michael's Church and trade directories.¹⁰⁹ In particular, it will examine changes in occupational groupings between 1794 and 1841 using the same model devised by Stobart that was deployed in Chapter 3. It will consider whether or not the original inhabitants left the district *en masse*.

Chapter 6 will look definitively at the journey Engels made through Angel Meadow and investigate how and why he selected it while researching *The Condition*. It will look closely at his route and his reliance on Kay's *Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes* before carrying out a line-by-line

¹⁰⁹ Manchester Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1541–1812, Deaths and Burials, 1815–1983, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915, <<https://ancestry.com>> [accessed 9 February 2018].

comparison of the two texts for similarities. It will also compare Engels's and Kay's writings on Little Ireland, which stood on the other side of Manchester, with reference to Busteed's research in that district. Crucially, for the first time, it will follow Engels into the courts he chose to visit alongside the River Irk, looking closely at what he wrote about them and comparing this writing with evidence from the 1851 Census, using a technique used by Busteed and Hodgson. It will examine in particular the number of occupants in these courts and the extent of overcrowding. Focusing in on the riverside district of Gibraltar, it will question whether the housing could rightly be described as 'cattle sheds' or whether, crucially, the district's problems were the result of the 'industrial epoch' or whether elements of larger Georgian housing were a factor.

Chapter 7 will make further extensive use of the 1851 census to compare the riverside area selected by Engels with the housing in the rest of Angel Meadow to see what Engels missed. It will investigate why Engels paid less attention to the upper part of the district which was dominated by larger Georgian housing. It will look in detail at that housing, its use in the nineteenth century and extent to which it enabled the district's persistence as a slum. It will do this by again deploying the 1851 census to examine the occupancy levels in those larger properties and their long-term use as lodging houses and multi-occupancy dwellings. It will also use qualitative evidence from newspaper reports and quantitative evidence from health reports and other statistical documents to examine at the role and impact these houses had within Victorian Manchester. In conclusion and crucially for this thesis, it will ask whether Angel Meadow was different from the district that Engels described.

Chapter 8 will bring together the arguments in the preceding chapters into a discussion and overall conclusions. It will ask, ultimately, whether Engels misunderstood, or wilfully misrepresented, the true nature of the district.

Given the impact that Engels's treatment of Angel Meadow has had in shaping the modern world, it is right that his writings about the district are brought under renewed scrutiny. As his biographer Tristram Hunt has said, Engels's civic gaze has shaped the way generations of sociologists, journalists and activists have approached the urban environment.¹¹⁰ In the 180th anniversary year of Engels's visit to Manchester, it is time for his description of Manchester's 'Hell upon Earth' to be reappraised.

¹¹⁰ Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist: The Life and Times of the Original Champagne Socialist* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 111.

Chapter 2: A classic slum?

The previous chapter set out a theoretical framework for the study of slums and provided an overview of the direction of this thesis. This chapter will establish the thesis's central argument that Angel Meadow's notoriety and depiction as Victorian Manchester's worst slum was in a large part due not to the extent of its poorest housing, as depicted by Engels, but to the existence of a substantial stock of larger housing left over from the Georgian period, which were originally designed to attract higher rents. Better-quality housing, it could be argued, would be an inappropriate term for these properties, although, as will be shown, some houses of this type contained architectural refinements. This chapter will show that, while Angel Meadow did have its enclosed courts and back-to-back houses – two traditional indicators of a Victorian slum – it also had extensive stretches of larger properties that might not be thought typical of slum housing. These houses fronting broad streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street were later subdivided and repurposed into overcrowded lodgings. They added so greatly to the district's health and social problems that they became *the* defining characteristic of Angel Meadow and an overwhelming cause of the district's persistence as a slum into the twentieth century. This is not to say that the conditions in Angel Meadow were *better* than Engels described, but that their causes were not as black-and-white as he implied and a type of housing that was largely ignored by Engels contributed greatly to those conditions.

The housing question

More than a century before Dyos and Chapman called for historians to investigate Victorian housing, a stream of nineteenth-century social reformers, sanitary

inspectors, medical officers, journalists and other observers had already discussed the housing problem at great length in real time as those properties were still housing living occupants. Those contemporary investigators included Engels, who searched Angel Meadow for the evidence he needed for his critique of Capitalism, *The Condition*. Engels made the living conditions in the world's first industrial city internationally infamous when he described a chaotic scene of one-storey, one-roomed huts as he walked into the courts along the River Irk. 'This whole collection of cattle sheds for human beings was surrounded on two sides by houses and a factory, and on the third by the river, and besides the narrow stair up the bank, a narrow doorway alone led out into another almost equally ill-built, ill-kept labyrinth of dwellings,' he wrote.¹¹¹

While Engels did not directly name Angel Meadow, the district played a central role in his theory about Capitalism's failings. A close reading of his descriptions of Manchester's 'Old Town' shows that he walked down Long Millgate (modern day Corporation Street) from what is now Manchester Cathedral, looked down from Ducie Bridge and entered the narrow courts around an area called Gibraltar alongside the Irk before turning uphill on an undefined route past Saint Michael's Church towards Saint George's Road (now Rochdale Road). Engels famously added, in terms that have been taken by many to represent the very essence of Victorian Manchester:

If anyone wishes to see in how little space a human being can move, how little air – and such air! – he can breathe, how little civilisation he may share and yet live, it is only necessary to travel hither. True, this is the Old Town, and the

¹¹¹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

people of Manchester emphasise the fact whenever anyone mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth – but what does that prove? Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the industrial epoch.¹¹²

The case for Engels

The Condition has been the subject of much debate among historians, with Briggs taking the balanced view that, while Engels ‘must be judged sensitively as well as critically’ and can be ‘dismissed as biased, inaccurate, brash, at best a myth-maker, at worst an unsavoury agitator’, his book still ‘says much about the age’.¹¹³ Those in Engels’s corner view the book as a powerful bulwark against the Capitalist system and lionise the writer and his work. Edmund and Ruth Frow assumed that it had become so fashionable for detractors to attack Engels, pinpoint his inaccuracies and doubt the whole book *because* the descriptions were so accurate. Rather, the pair saw *The Condition* as a ringing indictment of Capitalism and a clarion call for socialism.¹¹⁴ Camilla Royle described the book as being, despite its flawed treatment of the Irish and moralistic statements about young women, an ‘impressive example of socialist history’.¹¹⁵ For David McLellan, *The Condition* was a pioneering work in the relatively modern fields of urban geography and sociology, with Engels’s descriptive passages providing its main impact. Acknowledging Engels’s weakness

¹¹² Engels, *The Condition*, p. 65.

¹¹³ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 113–6.

¹¹⁴ Edmund and Ruth Frow, *Friedrich Engels in Manchester and The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (Salford: Working-Class Movement Library, 1995), pp. 14–15.

¹¹⁵ Royle, *A Rebel’s Guide*, p. 10.

in predicting the speedy collapse of society, he said: 'Although it has recently been argued on the basis of statistics that the working-class was increasingly better off during the period Engels was describing, and that therefore his account is biased and unreliable, this view is extremely dubious and Engels's descriptions can be taken, by and large, probably as the best piece of contemporary evidence that we have available to us.'¹¹⁶ According to Mick Jennings, the book will 'forever remain a classic of Socialist literature – as a picture of the conditions of the working-class of the early period of Capitalism it cannot be surpassed'.¹¹⁷ In his appraisal of Engels, John Green called the book a revelation, noting that it exposed the harsh underlying realities behind the enormous creation of wealth that nobody wanted to address. He added, in a direct reference to Victorian Manchester's housing:

The dwellings for the thousands of workers the industrial expansion required were not planned, but thrown up in the most haphazard way, as densely as possible. He describes how he wanders through the labyrinth of filthy back passages, miniscule courtyards, where pigs are kept, stepping through the slime of excrement and garbage. The stench makes him want to retch. The cramped and damp homes are filled with children and adults, clothed in rags, several to a room, with scarcely any furniture. It is easy to get lost here – there are no landmarks or clear pathways.¹¹⁸

Perhaps the staunchest advocate of *The Condition*, writing at the height of the Cold War in the 1970s at a time when Communism was on the march across the

¹¹⁶ David McLellan, *Engels* (London: Fontana Modern Masters, 1977), p. 30.

¹¹⁷ Mick Jennings, *Frederick Engels in Manchester* (Manchester: Lancashire and Cheshire Communist Party, Manchester, 1951), pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁸ John Green, *Engels: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Artery Publications, 2008), pp. 72–4.

world following the Cuban revolution and the war in Vietnam, was Steven Marcus. Marcus said Engels's descriptions of Manchester and the other great towns of England were the single best thing he ever wrote.¹¹⁹ Describing Engels's journey into alleys and courts off Long Millgate in terms reminiscent of Charles Marlow's journey up the Congo in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marcus said:

It is almost as if one were actually penetrating into the heart of darkness. And once he is here, all Engels can do is to mutter, the horror, the horror. It is literally, he says, 'impossible to imagine for oneself' – or to represent – the chaos, confusion, density, cramming and packing that exists in these spaces. Every available inch of ground has been built over – and the blame for this almost inconceivable overcrowding 'is not only to be ascribed to the old buildings surviving from Manchester's earliest periods'. It is in fact only quite recently, in modern times, that the practice has been followed of filling up every scrap of space that the old style of building had left.¹²⁰

The case against Engels

While Marcus concluded that Engels read the city well, Tristram Hunt said Engels was drawn to Manchester *precisely because* it promised to validate his theory and this sense of purpose served to dictate his 'seemingly rambling descriptions of 1840s Manchester'.¹²¹ In his biography of Engels, Hunt said: 'This was not simply a

¹¹⁹ Steven Marcus, *Engels, Manchester and the Working-Class* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co, 1974), p. 145.

¹²⁰ Marcus, *Engels, Manchester*, pp. 181–2.

¹²¹ Steven Marcus, 'Reading the Illegible', in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. 2, 1978), p. 272.

feuilleton or a piece of journalistic slum tourism – it was also a politically persuasive work of subtle Communist propaganda. As such, everything had an ideological role to play: the landscape, people and industry.’ According to Hunt, this was why the working-class never spoke in Engels’s account and there was no sense in the book of the multiple divisions within Manchester’s working population – street cleaners as distinct from cotton spinners for example. ‘The nuances of Manchester’s multiple economies – distribution, services, construction, retail, as well as the cotton mills – are subtly elided for an overarching urban confrontation between solidified labour and capital.’¹²²

In his introduction to the Penguin edition of *The Condition*, Hunt put it another way: ‘*The Condition* was not simply a prima facie response to “Cottonopolis”, but a more carefully crafted text which sought to square the reality of 1840s England with his pre-existing philosophical certainties.’ Hunt added: ‘The *actualité* of Manchester – the complex gradations of the poor, the differentials of places – is sacrificed for a homogenised proletariat in conscious contradistinction to the bourgeoisie.’¹²³

According to David Cannadine, Engels described Manchester ‘as a place so deeply sundered and so antagonistically divided between the profit-obsessed factory owners and the downtrodden and exploited workers that the outcome must eventually be some sort of proletarian revolution’. In Cannadine’s conclusion, ‘Engels was in error in supposing the social structure of Manchester was so deeply divided’.¹²⁴ Briggs also felt that Engels had failed to grasp the whole truth about Manchester, a town where there were more modes of social adaption than a

¹²² Tristram Hunt, *The Frock-Coated Communist*, pp. 113–5.

¹²³ Tristram Hunt, ‘Introduction’, in Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (1845; London: Penguin Classics, 2009), pp. 22–3.

¹²⁴ David Cannadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906* (London: Allen Lane, 2017), pp. 206–7.

simplified diagnosis of society suggested. England was so much more than a society of two camps – the millionaire owners and the wage-slaved.¹²⁵

Comparative mapping study

This thesis will now start the process of analysing the housing in Angel Meadow to see what was happening on the ground at the time of Engels's visit using a technique of historical geography to examine information found in maps of Manchester during the mid-nineteenth century.¹²⁶ Given that Angel Meadow was picked out as a study area by Engels, and that Angus Reach described it as 'the lowest, most filthy, most unhealthy, most wicked locality in Manchester', the task at hand is to see whether it had more slum housing compared with the two neighbouring areas of New Cross and Ancoats. It might be expected, given Engels's descriptions, that the district would have had the smallest, most badly built housing in Manchester.¹²⁷

In Figures 2.1 and 2.2, Plan 24 of the 5 feet to 1 mile Ordnance Survey Map of Manchester and Salford has been annotated to show back-to-back housing and streets named as courts in each of the three districts. This is a useful exercise because each district as presented on the plan is of a similar size – making for easier comparison. It has to be acknowledged, as a caveat, that this mapping method has limitations. It can only, of course, present a snapshot of housing at the time the map was created and relies on the map being accurate. As a historical

¹²⁵ Briggs, *A Social History*, pp. 267–269.

¹²⁶ 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, Plan 24, 1850 (University of Manchester Library, JRL1300074).

¹²⁷ Reach, *The Cotton Fibre Halo*, pp. 98–103.

document, a map can never be more than a one-dimensional representation of the place it purports to represent, no matter how accurate it appears to be. This method also relies on an accurate observation of the map and errors could include simple miscounting, or mistaking houses for industrial premises, although any mistakes in identification are likely to be replicated across all three districts. The odd number of back-to-backs accounts for the fact that, in some cases, a single house in a block had access to an open space at the rear, while in other cases, a single house shared a wall with two houses at the rear. Courts with no names have not been drawn and there may have been more of them in each district than has been counted for this study. However, using only those named as courts, such as Welch's Court in Angel Meadow and Nadin's Court in Ancoats, presents a useful measure for comparison.

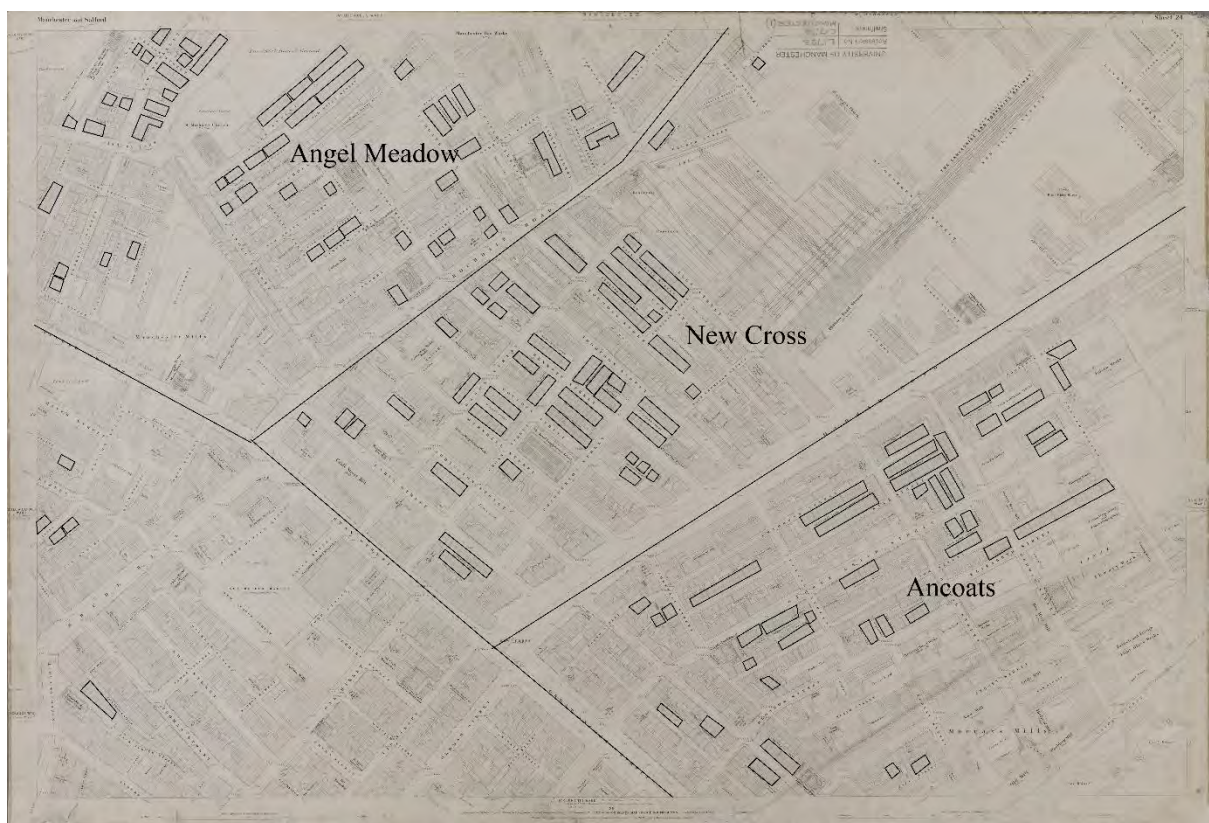


Figure 2.1: Comparative analysis of back-to-back housing in Angel Meadow, New Cross and Ancoats. (Source: 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester and Salford, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, Plan 24, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300074.)

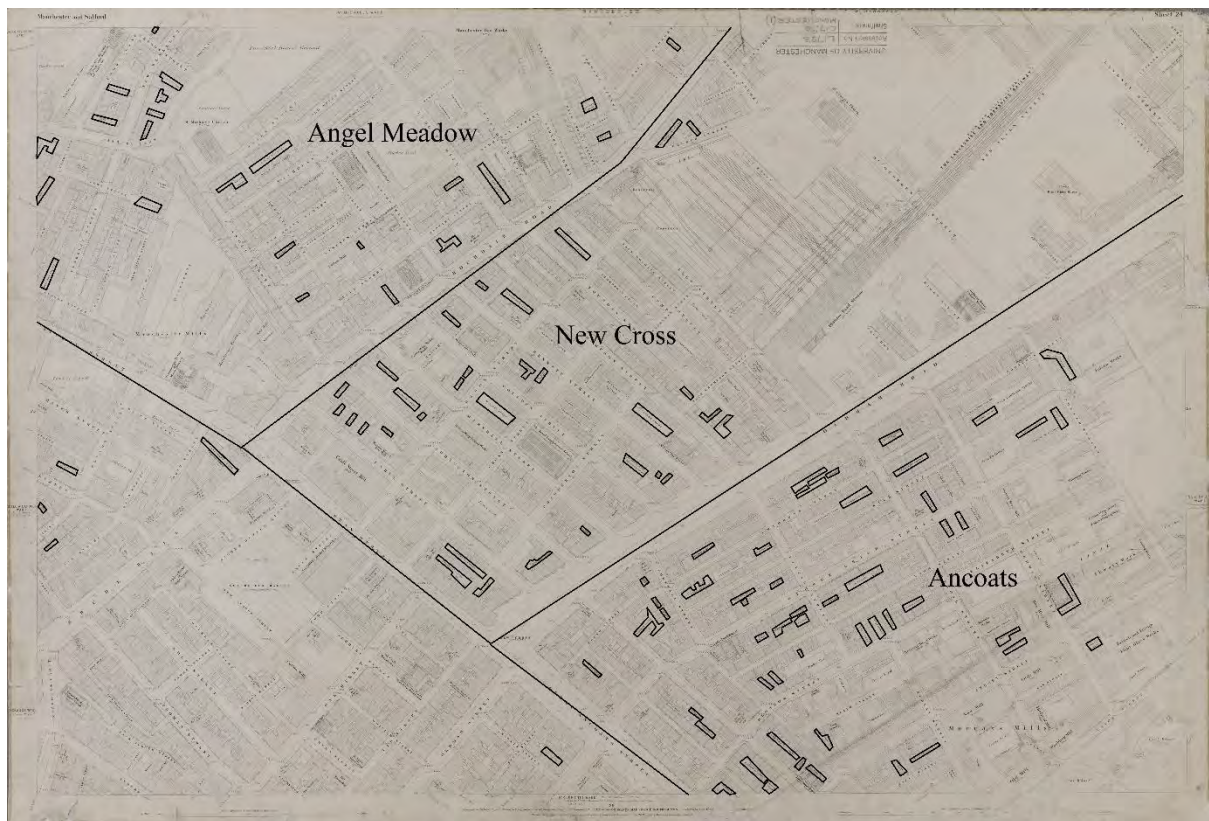


Figure 2.2: Comparative analysis of courts in Angel Meadow, New Cross and Ancoats. (Source: 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, Plan 24, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300074.)

The similarities between these three areas in terms of their back-to-back housing and courts can be seen by direct observation of Figures 2.1 and 2.2. Table 2.1 shows the result of counting them.

	Angel Meadow	New Cross	Ancoats
Named courts	23	31	50
Back-to-backs	405	495	515

Table 2.1: The number of named courts and back-to-backs in Angel Meadow, New Cross and Ancoats in 1843–50 found on Plan 24 of the Five foot to one mile Ordnance Survey map of Manchester and Salford. (Source: 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300074.)

As the map creates an artificial boundary that excludes parts of both Angel Meadow and Ancoats, adjoining maps have also been consulted to test the validity of these results. Checking for courts and back-to-backs on Plans 18 and 23 of the same map series to include areas near the River Irk including Gibraltar adds an extra 10 courts and 63 back-to-back houses to Angel Meadow's count, taking the total to 33 named courts and 468 back-to-backs. This is a significant increase from two small patches of land alongside the River Irk visited by Engels. Including Plan 29 for Ancoats, which stretches down to Union Street and the man-made barrier of the Rochdale Canal, adds an extra six courts and 32 back-to-backs to the Ancoats tally, giving a total of 56 courts and 547 back-to-backs. There is no change to New Cross. The extra courts and back-to-backs for each area have been added in Table 2.2.

	Angel Meadow	New Cross	Ancoats
Named courts	33	31	56
Back-to-backs	468	495	547

Table 2.2: The number of named courts and back-to-backs in Angel Meadow, New Cross and Ancoats in 1843–50 found on Plans 18, 23, 24, and 29 of the 5 feet to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map of Manchester and Salford. (Source: 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, University of Manchester Library, JRL1300074.)

This simple study produces a highly significant result. It shows immediately that all was not equal in relation to the poor-quality housing in so-called slum districts of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester. In fact, despite Engels's apparent discovery of 'cattle sheds' in this 'Hell upon Earth' in the courts alongside the Irk, Angel Meadow as a whole had fewer courts and back-to-backs than the sampled area of Ancoats and only a broadly similar number of courts and fewer back-to-backs than

the New Cross area that stood between them. This immediately raises questions about Engels's interpretation of the Angel Meadow district. If Angel Meadow was so notorious in this era, how could it have fewer slum-type houses than Ancoats based on these two significant indicators? The on-the-ground housing situation in Angel Meadow can be further investigated by interrogating the chief source that Engels used.

Interrogating Engels's key source

Engels explained in *The Condition* that he had made use of James Phillips Kay's 1832 pamphlet, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*.¹²⁸ Studying the document closely however suggests that housing in Angel Meadow had started from a better position – in proportionate terms at least – than in Ancoats. In Table 2.3, three of Manchester's 14 districts have been drawn out from Kay's pamphlet for comparison. Kay's table was based on a survey carried out in the early 1820s by the Manchester Board of Health. The boundaries of the three sampled districts have been established using the 1829 Pigot Directory as a guide.¹²⁹ Angel Meadow was then part of the Saint Michael's district, named after a local church of the same name. According to the directory, Saint Michael's was bounded by 'Oldham Street, Swan Street, Miller Street, part of Long Millgate to Scotland Bridge and along the River Irk'. The Collegiate Church district was bounded by 'Scotland Bridge and part of Long Millgate to and through

¹²⁸ James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), quoted in Engels, *The Condition*, 1845, p. 61.

¹²⁹ J. Pigot and Son, *General Directory of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester: Pigot and Son, 1829), pp. 90–2.

Miller Street, by Shudehill, Hanging Ditch, Cateaton Street, down to Salford Bridge, the River Irwell, and the north side of the said church'. The New Cross district was bounded by 'the New Cross, Great Ancoats Street, Oldham Road and the River Medlock'. New Cross therefore included Ancoats before the district was later renamed Ancoats. These three areas, along with the Saint Clement's and Oxford Street districts, were described by Kay as being those that were 'almost exclusively inhabited by the labouring population'.¹³⁰

District	Houses inspected	Needing whitewash	Needing repair	Soughs wanting repair	Damp	Ill-ventilated	Wanting privies
1/New Cross (Ancoats)	850	399 (47%)	128 (15%)	112 (13%)	177 (21%)	70 (8%)	326 (38%)
2/Saint Michael's (Angel Meadow)	2489	898 (36%)	282 (11%)	145 (6%)	497 (20%)	109 (4%)	755 (30%)
3/Collegiate Church (Old Town)	213	145 (68%)	104 (49%)	41 (19%)	61 (29%)	52 (24%)	96 (45%)

Table 2.3: Housing conditions in three districts of Manchester, 1832. (Source: James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), pp. 18–19.

Table 2.3 shows that while many more houses were inspected and found to be needing improvements in Angel Meadow, they were better in percentage terms on every metric than the houses in the New Cross (Ancoats) district. For example, 36 percent of the 2,489 houses examined in Angel Meadow needed whitewashing, compared with 47 percent in Ancoats and six percent in Angel Meadow need their soughs repairing, compared with 13 percent in Ancoats. This confirms the results of Tables 2.1 and 2.2 and raises further questions about Engels's descriptions. Both

¹³⁰ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, p. 17.

districts though had proportionately better housing than the Collegiate Church district, shown in Figure 1.2.¹³¹ This indicates why Engels picked out the Old Town – the oldest part of Manchester centred on the Collegiate Church (later Manchester Cathedral) – and the Angel Meadow riverside as his main study area. The remainder of Angel Meadow, in a separate administrative district from Gibraltar but only 20 steps across the road from it, had comparatively better housing. The streets of Angel Meadow were also cleaner and better paved compared with Ancoats, although less well ventilated, as also shown in Table 2.4. Collegiate Church had, proportionately, the least well ventilated and dirtiest streets of the three districts – again making it a best candidate for Engels’s visit. It is clear from these figures that not only was Engels undertaking a selection process, but there were differences between these neighbouring areas – a more nuanced picture than *The Condition* presented.

District	Streets inspected	Unpaved	Partially paved	Ill ventilated	Streets with heaps of refuse, stagnant pools, ordure etc.
1/New Cross (Ancoats)	114	63 (55.2%)	13 (11.4%)	7 (6.14%)	64 (56.1%)
2/Saint Michael’s (Angel Meadow)	180	93 (51.6%)	7 (3.88%)	23 (12.7%)	92 (51.1%)
3/Collegiate Church (Old Town)	49	2 (4.08%)	2 (4.08%)	12 (24.4%)	28 (57.1%)

Table 2.4: Street conditions in three districts of Manchester, 1832. (Source: James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), pp. 18–19.

¹³¹ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, pp. 18–19.

Larger housing

Using another map from a later period, the Goad Fire Insurance Plan from 1888, provides a vital clue in establishing more accurately what the housing situation in Angel Meadow was like in the mid-nineteenth century. From about 1885, Charles E. Goad was the main producer of fire insurance plans in Britain. Before then, plans had been produced ad hoc on behalf of individual insurance companies.¹³² The Goad plans are unique because they indicate how particular buildings were used and, using a key, also show how many storeys they had along with the number of windows and the type of materials that were used in the construction of their walls and roofs. In Figure 2.3, buildings marked by Goad as lodging houses and tenements on a section of the 1888 map covering Angel Meadow have been drawn in black, along with the number of storeys in each building.

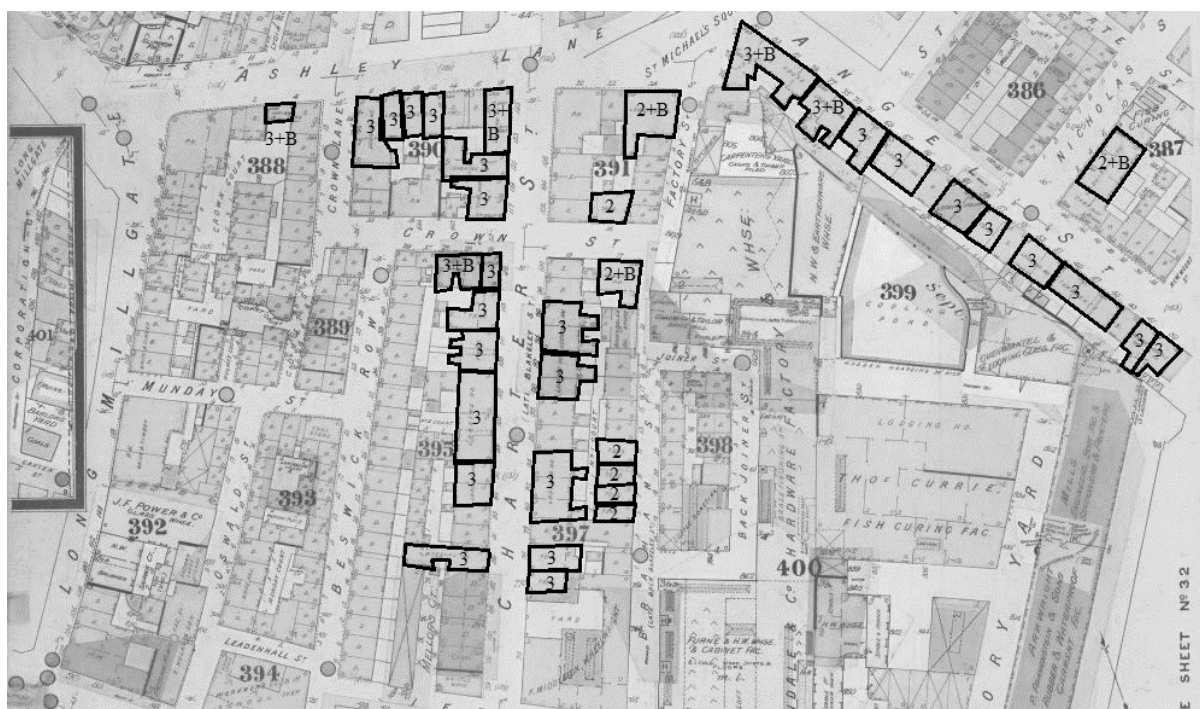


Figure 2.3: Angel Meadow lodging houses and tenements, 1888. (Source: Charles E. Goad, *Fire Insurance Plan of the City of Manchester* (London: Charles E. Goad, Vol. 2, Map 28, 1888) <<https://www.digitalarchives.co.uk>> [accessed 1 June 2019])

¹³² Gwyn Rowley, 'Fire Insurance Plans', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Autumn/Winter 1989/90), p. 31.

This is a crucial piece of evidence. It is clear from this one image that Angel Meadow had a substantial stock of larger housing that, at least by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was being used as lodging housing or was sub-divided into tenements. These houses dominated Angel Meadow's streets, suggesting that the district by then had a function within Manchester as a lodging house district. They were so dominant in fact that they must have had an effect on the health and character of the district beyond their individual four walls. A key detail in Figure 2.3 is that every lodging house and tenement apart from three in Saint Michael's Square, in Nicholas Street, and at the junction of Crown Street and Braham Street (previously Back Blackley Street), plus five tenements in Braham Street and Crown Street, were of three storeys in height.¹³³ The three lodging houses of two storeys did, however, have basements which, at the time the map was drawn, could potentially also have been used as accommodation. Four lodging houses had three storeys *and* a basement – potentially providing four accommodation levels.

More will be said about the effects of these lodging houses later, but the key point to note here is that these larger houses existed in Angel Meadow and they were plentiful. It stands to reason that lodging houses could only exist if suitable properties existed to facilitate them – size mattered as profits came from the number of lodgers who could be accommodated under the roof at night. It must also be remembered that this excerpt from the map only covers part of Angel Meadow. This map, of course, was drawn more than 40 years after the publication of *The Condition*. However, evidence from an unlikely source proves that these larger houses – and the lodgings they contained – existed even at the time of Engels's visit.

¹³³ Charles E. Goad, *Fire Insurance Plan of the City of Manchester* (London: Charles E. Goad, Vol. 2, Map 28, 1888) <<https://www.digitalarchives.co.uk>> [Accessed 1 June 2019]

Kay wrote in 1832 that the churchwardens of Manchester had become so concerned about the need to inspect the town's 'pauper lodging houses' that they had obtained a report of the number in each district.¹³⁴ The figures he cited from the report are shown in Table 2.5.

District	Lodging Houses
1 NEW CROSS DISTRICT: Bounded by the New Cross, Great Ancoats Street, Oldham Road and the River Medlock.	0
2 SAINT MICHAEL'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Oldham Street, Swan Street, Miller Street, part of Long Millgate to Scotland Bridge and along the River Irk.	108
3 COLLEGIATE CHURCH DISTRICT: Bounded by Scotland Bridge and part of Long Millgate, to and through Miller Street, by Shudehill, Hanging Ditch, Cateaton Street, down to Salford Bridge, the River Irwell, and the north side of the said church.	51
4 SAINT CLEMENT'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Great Ancoats Street, Lever Street, Piccadilly and the River Medlock.	0
5 SAINT PAUL'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Lever Street, New Cross, Swan Street, Shudehill, Nicholas Croft, High Street, Market Street and Piccadilly.	6
6 EXCHANGE DISTRICT: Bounded by Market Street, Saint Mary's Gate, Deansgate, Cateaton Street, Hanging Ditch, Withy Grove, Nicholas Croft and High Street.	0
7 MINSHULL DISTRICT: Bounded by Piccadilly, London Road, Portland Street, Brook Street and the River Medlock.	3
8 SAINT JAMES'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Piccadilly, Portland Street, Bond Street and Fountain Street.	0
9 SAINT ANN'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Saint Mary's Gate, Market Street, Fountain Street, Brazenose Street, Princess Street, and Deansgate.	0
10 OXFORD STREET DISTRICT: Bounded by Bond Street, Brook Street, Mosley Street and the River Medlock.	12
11 SAINT PETER'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Mosley Street, the River Medlock, Deansgate, Brazenose Street and Princess Street.	26
12 SAINT MARY'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Old Bridge Street, Deansgate, Bridge Street and the River Irwell.	-
13 OLD QUAY DISTRICT: Bounded by Bridge Street, Deansgate, Quay Street and the River Irwell.	60
14 SAINT JOHN'S DISTRICT: Bounded by Quay Street, Deansgate, the Canal, the River Medlock and the River Irwell.	1
Total	267

Table 2.5: Pauper lodging houses in 14 districts of Manchester. (Source: James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832).

¹³⁴ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, pp. 20–21.

The district names and boundaries have, again, been added using the 1829 Pigot Directory. The table shows that the Saint Michael's district, which included Angel Meadow, had 108 lodging houses in 1832 and claimed two-fifths (40.4 percent) of the 267 lodging houses in the entire town. Angel Meadow had nearly double the number of lodging houses than the second most numerous district, Old Quay, which had 60. Ancoats, named New Cross in the table, had none. John Burnett said a conservative estimate of 20 lodgers a night would suggest more than 5,000 lodging house beds in Manchester at that time, according to Kay's table. Applying his logic to Saint Michael's would give a figure of 2,160 lodgers a night sleeping in Angel Meadow in 1832 (43.2 percent of Manchester's total lodgers).¹³⁵ Engels, having read Kay, *must* have been aware of this.

The existence of these houses in Angel Meadow in the mid-nineteenth century can be confirmed by taking an overview of occupancy rates using the 1851 Census, again using Ancoats for comparison. Nineteen streets have been selected for examination in Ancoats. They are parts or all of Gun Street, Gun Court, Primrose Court, Henry Street, Silk Court, Silk Street, Walker Court, Clegg Yard, Sutcliffe Court, Primrose Street, Spittall Street, George Leigh Street, Sheppard's Court, Mather's Court, Cowel's Court, Cornwall Street, Oldham Road, Bengal Street and Fielding's Court. In each street, the houses were counted and then the occupancy rate was worked out by counting the occupants in the street and dividing them with the number of houses. The number of lodgers was also counted. The same process was repeated in Angel Meadow, where eight streets were sampled. They were part

¹³⁵ John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815–1985* (London: Routledge, second edition, 1986), pp. 58–62.

or all of Factory Street, Factory Yard, Factory Court, Back Blackley Street, Dyche Street, Hesketh Yard, Baptist Street and Angel Street.

Taking a sample of 251 houses in the 19 streets and courts in Ancoats, gives a sampled population in those streets of 1,597 and a housing occupancy rate of 6.36 people per house. Only 31 people are classed as visitors and 177 as lodgers. Together those two groups made up just 13.0 percent of the Ancoats population. Sampling just 137 houses in eight streets in Angel Meadow, by contrast, gives a nearly equivalent population of 1,272 and a housing occupancy rate of 9.28. Some 54 people were classed as visitors and 402 as lodgers. The lodgers formed 35.8 percent of the Angel Meadow occupants – more than double the percentage in Ancoats. The figures have been drawn out for easier comparison in Table 2.6.

District	Ancoats	Angel Meadow
Streets and courts surveyed	19	8
Houses surveyed	251	137
Occupants	1,597	1,272
Occupancy rate	6.36	9.28
Lodgers and visitors	208	456
Lodgers and visitors as % of occupants	13.0	35.8

Table 2.6: Survey of sampled streets in Angel Meadow and Ancoats using the 1851 census, showing the comparatively large number of lodgers in Angel Meadow and the higher occupancy rate of the houses. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Table 2.6 shows that, only shortly after Engels's visit, Angel Meadow had more people living in fewer houses. This was due to the fact that Angel Meadow had substantially larger houses which accommodated a large number of lodgers.

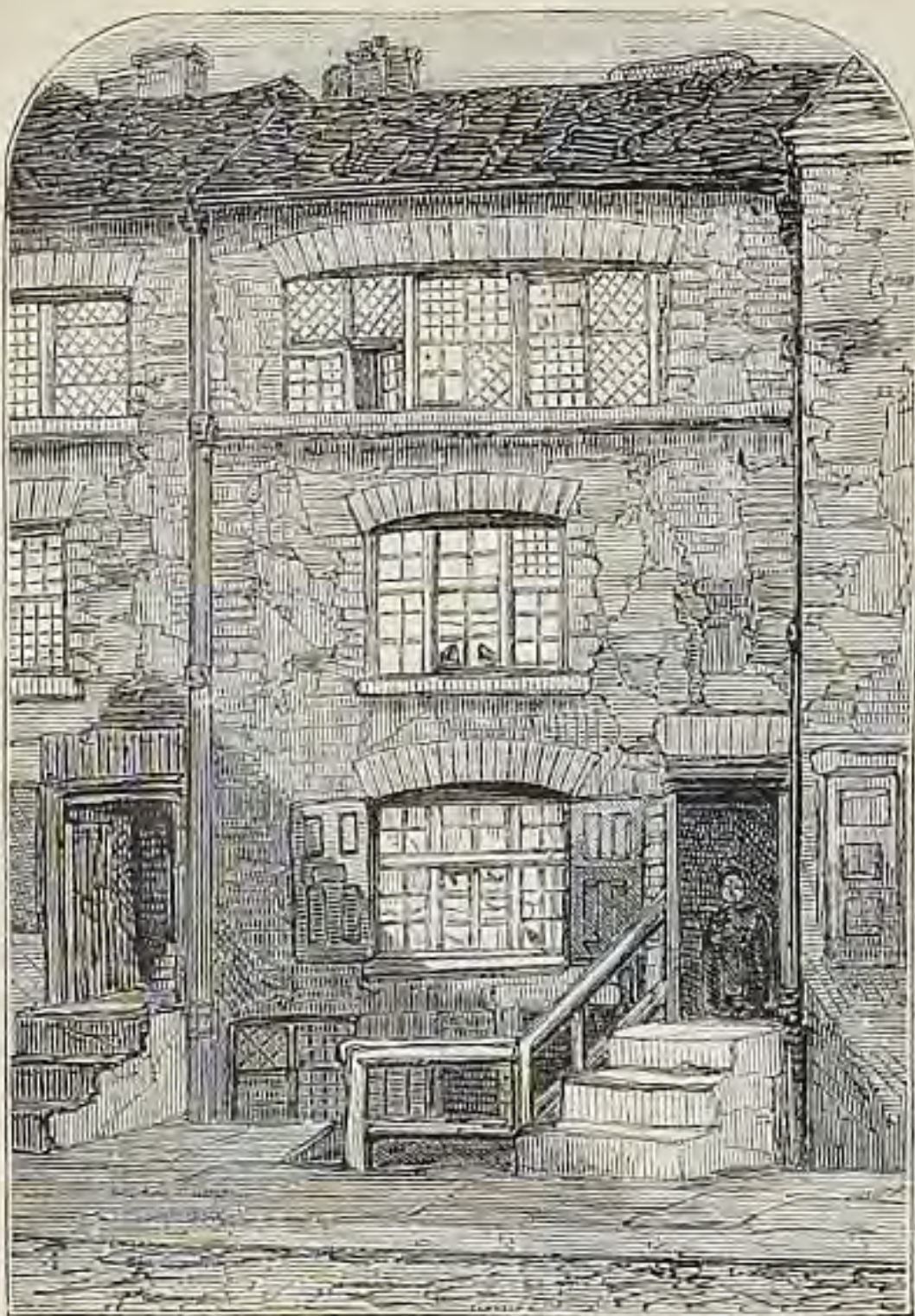
Lodgers and visitors formed a much larger proportion of the occupants in the sampled area of Angel Meadow than they did in Ancoats. A picture is emerging here of Angel Meadow having a different type of housing than Engels presented in *The Condition*. In contrast, Angus Reach, a more acute observer than Engels, went on to write in 1849 that Blackley Street at the foot of Angel Street was ‘entirely composed of lodging houses’ and was ‘well known to the police throughout the kingdom’.¹³⁶ Other observers of sanitary conditions in mid-Victorian Manchester also noted the unexpected existence of larger houses in some working-class districts of Manchester and offered an explanation as to why they were there, as *The Builder* reported in 1862:

In the old parts of this town and in Salford there is a peculiarity in some of the streets which is worthy of notice. These streets are formed of houses which are probably about 150-years-old, which remind us of the dwellings occupied by the silk weavers of Spitalfields. These houses are, for the most part, three stories in height above the cellars. In the upper storeys are large, long windows, some of them glazed in lead, in diamonds and small squares. These were evidently intended for the purpose of lighting workrooms, which were used at the time when the handloom had not been superseded by steam machinery.¹³⁷

The Builder said the difference in the scale of these larger houses, depicted in Figure 2.4, and the more recent industrial era housing was striking.

¹³⁶ Reach, *The Cotton Fibre Halo*, pp. 98–100.

¹³⁷ *The Builder* (29 November 1862), pp. 850–6.



Where the Looms were formerly.

Figure: 2.4: Three-storey workshop dwellings in Manchester as depicted in *The Builder* in 1862. Note the steps leading to the cellar dwelling. (Source: *The Builder* 26 November 1862, p. 856.)

Research into larger workers' housing

Building historians and archaeologists – researchers who have touched and measured Manchester's nineteenth-century houses – have also noted differences between Engels's descriptions of working-class districts and the complex reality of the housing situation on the ground, which has been illustrated in this chapter.

Jacqueline Roberts, a member of the Manchester Early Dwellings Research Group (MEDReG), which recorded and researched surviving examples of Manchester's Georgian and Victorian working-class housing in the 1980s, said that published work on Manchester relied too heavily on nineteenth-century written sources, with Kay and Engels as obvious examples, while 'both of these writers obviously focused their descriptions on the worst things they saw'.¹³⁸ Tim Gausden, another member of MEDReG, explained the difficulties posed by Manchester's varied forms of housing. A back-to-back dwelling in Back Mill Street in Ancoats would be an obvious candidate for a working-class house, he said, but what of a nicely built, three-storey Georgian house with pillared entrance and good quality architectural stonework? 'In these cases we do a little preliminary research using the rate books and census returns,' he said. 'If the house was tenanted by one respectable tradesperson after another, we do not include it. If it did descend to the poor, it is one of ours.'¹³⁹ The group also found three-storey dwellings like this in Southern Street, Liverpool Road, Turner Street and Back Piccadilly.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, p. 49.

¹³⁹ Tim Gausden, 'Manchester Early Dwellings Research Group', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 1988), pp. 37–41.

¹⁴⁰ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, pp. 53–4.

Evidence from archaeological digs, in particular, has thrown a dramatic new light on the housing situation in Angel Meadow and on Engels's descriptions in *The Condition*. As Roberts and Gausden found unexpected results while measuring the standing remains of working-class housing, Nevell also noted a gulf between the below-ground archaeology and the selective nature of the evidence offered by Engels, which showed that not all early-nineteenth-century urban housing was poorly built.¹⁴¹

The grey literature of archaeological digs also provides surprising evidence of varied housing types in Angel Meadow. In 2009, archaeologists Chris Wild and Ian Miller excavated an area of Blackley Street ahead of the construction of the Co-operative's new headquarters at One Angel Square and discovered the cellars and foundations of 75 houses. The majority of them dated from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, with the earliest structure being a cellar from a mid-eighteenth-century town house. Their report noted that most of the workers' housing built in Manchester in this period was erected with little legislative control and without any water supply or sanitation and some of the cellars they discovered in Factory Street in Angel Meadow were only 10 feet square. They were surprised, however, to find that the dwellings associated with the earliest phase of development appeared 'relatively large, and even included elements of architectural embellishment'. They were not built to house the urban poor, a class unknown at the time of their construction in the late-eighteenth century. Instead, they appeared to represent

¹⁴¹ Michael Nevell, *Excavating Engels*, pp. 90–91.

‘good quality accommodation for merchants and artisans in a relatively affluent area in the edge of the town’.¹⁴²

The archaeologists also made another discovery that appeared at odds with Engels, who wrote in *The Condition* he had found houses in Manchester with walls only as wide as the width of half a brick – meaning that the bricks were laid end-to-end in a single line – the implication being that the houses were poorly built as the builders deliberately scrimped on materials. While the archaeologists did find single-skin partition walls within and between properties in Angel Meadow, these thin walls were in surprisingly large artisan houses with large fireplaces and front steps with sandstone dressings. The discovery of these embellishments suggested that the practice of using single brick walls represented a continuation of a vernacular building tradition adopted during the expansion of the town. Houses, warehouses and the first mills were constructed by entrepreneurs with little knowledge of structural engineering – a fact, the archaeologists said, that is often overlooked by social and architectural historians.¹⁴³ Hannah Barker and Jane Hamlett have also made a similar argument, pointing out that it is unlikely such housing was designed by architects, or based on plans from housing books published as guides for builders and buyers from the seventeenth century onwards. ‘Instead, smaller houses appear to have been built according to traditional practices and were representative of a vernacular architecture structurally and formally indebted to timber predecessors that

¹⁴² Chris Wild and Ian Miller, *Co-op Headquarters, Miller Street, Manchester: Archaeological Excavation* (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology North, Issue 2010–11/1135 (March 2011), p. 106.

¹⁴³ Wild and Miller, *Co-op Headquarters*, p. 106.

changed only very slowly between the seventeenth and early-nineteenth centuries.¹⁴⁴

The archaeological evidence is corroborated by Richard Bastow, who wrote in 1883 that the outside walls of houses in Angel Meadow were nine-inches-thick, and that the inside walls were 4½ inches thick – the width of half a brick. Bastow's measurements can be verified by measuring a brick from the archaeological dig in Blackley Street, as shown in Figures 2.5 and 2.6. A nine-inch-thick wall is likely to have been two courses of bricks rather than single bricks laid side by side.



Figure 2.5: A brick from an archaeological dig in Blackley Street, showing its width of 4½ inches. (Source: Dean Kirby collection.)

¹⁴⁴ Hannah Barker and Jane Hamlett, 'Home, Business and Household', in Hannah Barker, *Family and Business During the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 168–9.



Figure 2.6: The same brick shown in Figure 2.5 measured across its length at 9 inches as evidence that Bastow's measurements were correct. (Source: Dean Kirby collection.)

Wild and Miller's report on the Blackley Street dig said:

Many social reformers, most notably Engels, have associated the low quality of nineteenth-century housing construction with a desire solely to minimise cost in order to maximise profit, and with little regard to the structural longevity of the property. However, the excavation has shown that earlier structures, built for yeomen or middle-class workers, are in many respects as poorly constructed, albeit generally to a larger size. While there is undoubtedly some

truth in the accusation, it does also appear that many of the construction techniques could be argued as following the local vernacular tradition.¹⁴⁵

Workshop dwelling surveys

Several studies provide an insight into Manchester's eighteenth century vernacular three-storey workshop dwellings. These dwellings, Nevell said, were characteristic of the proto-industrialisation processes of the early phases of Manchester's growth as a textile town, which relied heavily on hand-manufacturing.¹⁴⁶ The three-storey workshop dwellings identified by *The Builder*, the type shown in Figure 2.4, were designed to include a workshop with a wide window to allow in maximum light on their top floor, with two intermediate levels providing accommodation. They typically had large half-basements, often with separate fireplaces and stone-flagged floors.¹⁴⁷ The wide 'weaving windows' in the top storey were an eighteenth century innovation.¹⁴⁸ Good headroom was needed and could be obtained conveniently on the top floor. A 'cockloft' immediately under the ridge could be used for storage. Timmins said a weaver would have tried to position himself to maximise the amount of daylight on the reed and shuttle as he wove. This could only be achieved, he said, if one side of the loom, as opposed to the front or back, was placed alongside the window. As well as good daylight and storage space, they needed controlled

¹⁴⁵ Wild and Miller, *Co-operative Headquarters*, p. 122.

¹⁴⁶ Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City', pp. 594–606.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Nevell, 'Excavating Hell Upon Earth: Towards a Research Framework for the Archaeological Investigation of Workers' Housing: Case Studies from Manchester, UK', *Industrial Archaeological Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (2017), pp. 85–100.

¹⁴⁸ Anthony Quiney, 'Benevolent Vernacular: Cottages and Workers' Housing', in Neil Burton, ed., *Georgian Vernacular: Papers Given at the Georgian Group Symposium, 1995* (London: The Georgian Group, 1996), p. 48.

ventilation and access for bringing in raw materials sometimes provided by a 'taking in hole' and hoist.¹⁴⁹ Using data from an 1834 select committee report on handloom weavers' petitions from streets on the northern side of Manchester, Timmins found that weavers' houses contained an average of four looms per house at that time, with one containing 10. He said reasonably affluent families in 'polite' town houses could even draw at least some of their income from handloom weaving, although their looms would not have been particularly large.¹⁵⁰ As machinery was light in weight and made of wood and wrought iron, no heavy loads were imposed on the floor, with looms assembled inside and not needing to be carried in one piece upstairs. Cellar workshops were more convenient for heavier metal-working trades, but were also found in textile areas where a damp atmosphere was required. Internal access was not provided, meaning that it was not always easy to distinguish cellar workshops from cellar dwellings.¹⁵¹ Long windows were also a feature of three-storey, stone-built weavers' cottages in West Yorkshire, including some that were built back-to-back.¹⁵²

The frontages of the workshop houses were narrow due to the high price of street-facing land – meaning that they were generally one room wide and either one or two rooms deep. According to Barker and Hamlett, it was likely that around a third to two-thirds of all internal space was originally given over predominantly or entirely

¹⁴⁹ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 81.

¹⁵⁰ Geoffrey Timmins, *Handloom Weavers' Cottages in Central Lancashire: Some Problems of Recognition*, a pamphlet reprinted from *Post Medieval Archaeology*, Vol. 13 (1979), pp. 251–272 (p. 267).

¹⁵¹ R.W. Brunskill, *Houses and Cottages of Britain: Origins and Development of Traditional Buildings*, 1997 (London: Victor Gollancz, 2000), pp. 155–6.

¹⁵² Lucy Caffyn, 'Housing in an Industrial Landscape: A Study of Workers' Housing in West Yorkshire', *World Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1983), pp. 173–183 (p. 174).

to business use and these houses were largely built with their small business occupants in mind. Staircases were generally positioned towards the rear and opposite the front door.¹⁵³ An example of these workshop houses still stands at 33 Thomas Street in the Saint Paul's district – Manchester's modern-day Northern Quarter. It is shown in Figure 2.7. The house was built in the late 1780s 'seemingly with trading occupants in mind, given the form of the upper floor, though with the inclusion of the sort of ornate doorway that might hint at somewhat grander inhabitants', Barker and Hamlett said.¹⁵⁴ On the third floor, wide windows at both front and rear suggested it was built to be used as a workshop in what would have been one large room. The house below had two rooms on each floor, including in the cellar, and a small yard to the rear, with an alleyway leading to a communal privy. Barker and Hamlett said that, in its original form, the house would have been 28 feet deep and 17 feet 1 inch wide. The cellar would originally have had its own entrance from the street and there was evidence that a front window to the cellar was also part of the original design. Fragments of brass found in the remaining ash in the cellar hearth meant that it was probably used for brazing.¹⁵⁵ The address had a high turnover of occupants including a joiner, a clockmaker, a broker and a furniture broker from 1794 to 1830.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, pp. 170–1.

¹⁵⁴ Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, pp. 170–3.

¹⁵⁵ Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁶ Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, pp. 170–3.



Figure 2.7: Numbers 31–37 Thomas Street in the Northern Quarter. Note the stylised, porticoed doorways on 31 and 33 and the third-floor workshop windows on both. (Source: Google Street View, 2018.)

A separate study of 3 and 5 Kelvin Street, around the corner from Thomas Street, found similar-sized houses, which like the Thomas Street properties still survive in 2022.¹⁵⁷ These Grade II-listed, three-storey houses were constructed in Flemish bond brickwork and had two narrow casement windows designed to allow maximum light into what would originally have been a garret workshop, as in Thomas Street. An alleyway provided access to the rear. Inside No. 3, the staircase rose from the rear corner. No. 5 may never have had a staircase, just a series of hatches with ladders. The top floor of No. 5 rose into the roof space and there were shaped corbels on the chimney breast and the south wall that it was presumed supported ceiling timbers, with similar features being used to support a cockloft that acted as a storage space for textiles materials. No windows were visible in the rear wall although it was believed there would have originally been a window. The

¹⁵⁷ [Anonymous], *3&5 Kelvin Street Building Survey*, University of Manchester Archaeological Unit Report (1997).

surveyors estimated the two houses were built in c.1772 or c.1773. They were three-storeys high with cellar dwellings beneath. A conveyance plan of 1892 showed they were more than 21 feet deep – slightly smaller than those on Thomas Street. The report's authors said: 'The census returns tell us that Milk Street (the former name for Kelvin Street) was inhabited by various artisans and trades people. In 1841, these included fustian cutters, silk weavers, cotton spinners and weavers.'

There are other examples in the same district. In 2019, developers applied for permission to demolish a block of three-storey former workshop cottages at 40 to 48 Thomas Street, built at the end of the eighteenth century. A heritage statement submitted on behalf of the developers claimed that evidence from early trade directories of mixed occupation and alterations over time meant they did not meet the standards for listed-building status as they could not be considered a 'particularly significant' example of their type. The report concluded: 'While the group is of considerable historic value, as an expression of the development of Manchester, these buildings are not unusual in the region or even national context.' This was a misunderstanding of both the importance of these buildings and also the rapid pace of development that overtook early modern Manchester. These buildings, which were ultimately saved from demolition, are among the last remaining examples of a time in Manchester's past when change was happening so quickly that building needs were being reshaped as quickly as they were being built and weavers were having to give way to other occupations.¹⁵⁸

Good examples of Georgian workshop housing in their later Victorian form can be seen in Figure 2.8. This photograph of Hanover Street taken by Samuel

¹⁵⁸ 42–50 *Thomas Street: Heritage Statement – Significance and Impact*, Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture Ltd (27 January 2019), pp. 23–6, p. 109.

Coulthurst in 1898 was long thought to be Angel Street after it has been incorrectly captioned.



Figure 2.8: Hanover Street lodging houses built in the late-eighteenth century. Note the porticoed doors and rounded sandstone steps. (Source: Samuel Coulthurst, 1898, Manchester Image Archive, M00195.)

It shows how three-storey former weavers' houses were easily converted into lodgings. Searching poor rate books for J. Haycock, whose name is painted on one of the windows, and cross-referencing with maps, shows that this was in fact Hanover Street, off Withy Grove. Even so, it shows what Angel Street could also have been like, with adjoining houses offering nightly lodgings. With their rounded sandstone steps, gallery windows and porticoed doorways, these were a long way from the 'cattle sheds' described by Engels and from his descriptions of build quality. They are substantial, three-storey buildings with cellars. As this thesis shows, it was these larger houses (relative to the smaller, purpose-built back-to-backs) which were

a central cause of Angel Meadow's problems when they were repurposed as lodging houses or sub-divided into separate tenements.

While their galleried windows strongly suggest purpose-built Georgian artisan housing, such features as porticoed doorways, assuming they were part of the original building process, can be seen in the context of an eighteenth-century culture of politeness described by Stobart, Hann and Morgan. 'What set the eighteenth century town apart was the role it played in promoting the values of and providing a venue for politeness,' they said. Polite status was what might today be called cultural capital and marked a sense of social distinction through discernment and taste. Streets played a part in this as they were the 'front regions' where people acted out their social roles. Symbolism in design and architecture were significant and order was required in the way streets looked. 'The arrangement of buildings along the street was important in creating a setting appropriate for performances of polite sociability and consumption. So too was their individual and collective appearance. This was achieved through the use of classical architectural styles, which conveyed meanings of civilisation and democracy, but also order, harmony and modernity,' they said.¹⁵⁹ Squares, with their uniform façades, formed the same function in wealthier districts. While Angel Meadow's sloping geography meant it had no grand squares to compare with Stevenson's Square in the Northern Quarter, it did have an irregularly-shaped open space which became known as Saint Michael's Square. Samuel Morton, a fustian cutter who lived near Saint Michael's Church in 1819, described how the radical orator Henry Hunt had visited the district in a carriage

¹⁵⁹ Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1801–1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 4–6, 86, 95–6.

ahead of the Peterloo Massacre had addressed a crowd of 1,000 people in this space near the church.¹⁶⁰

Photographic evidence further examined

This thesis will now present photographic evidence proving the existence of three-storey properties in the district, similar to those in the Northern Quarter, as shown in Figures 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13. As these houses have long since been demolished, they have been lost from the public gaze, and Angel Meadow has rarely been thought of in the same way as Thomas Street. However, the same houses stood not just in main streets such as Blackley Street, but also in smaller streets such as Ledger Street, Crown Lane, Irk Street, Factory Street and Ludgate Hill.

¹⁶⁰ [Anonymous], *The Trial of Henry Hunt Esquire* (London, T. Dolby, London, 1820), p38.

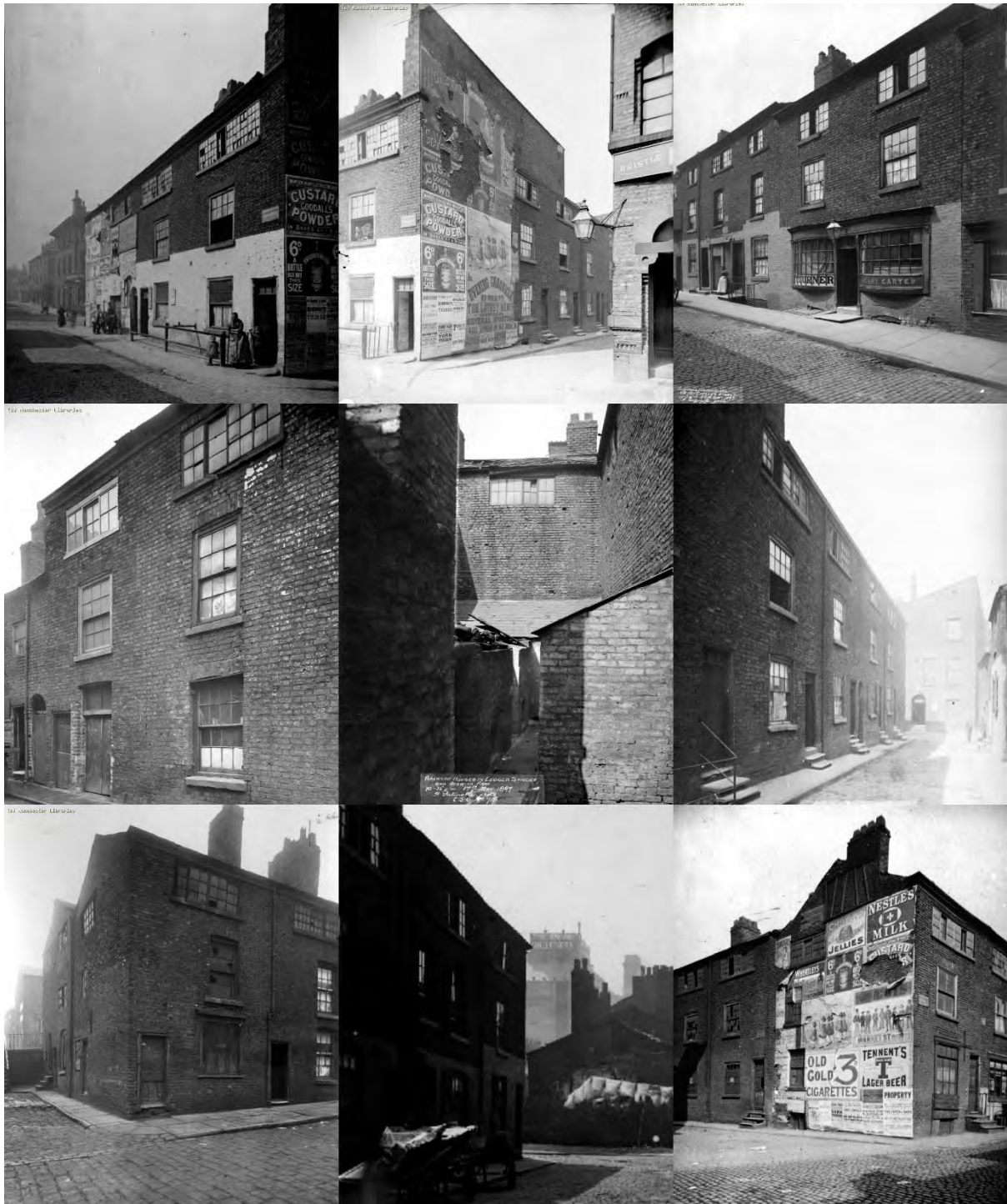
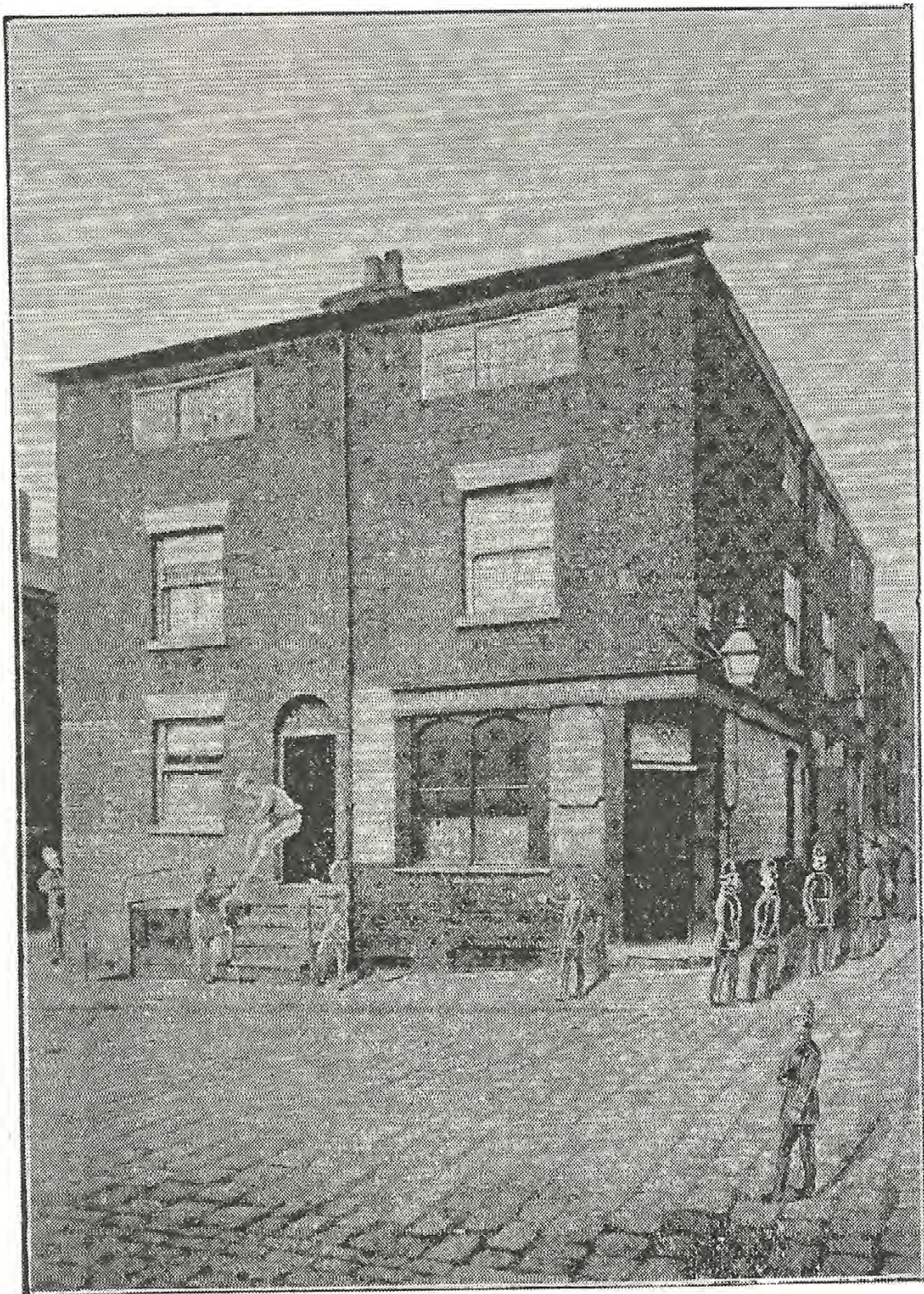


Figure 2.9: Photographic evidence of the dominance of three-storey dwellings in Angel Meadow. Top row (left to right): Blackley Street, the junction of Blackley Street and Ledger Street, Blackley Street. Middle row (left to right): Ledger Street, the rear of Ledger Street, Ledger Street. Bottom row (left to right): Irk Street, Crown Lane, the junction of Blackley Street and Miller Street. (Sources: Manchester Local Image Collection, Manchester Archives and Local Studies. References in order from top left: M00931, M75607, M08362, M02558, M02556, M02557, M08323, M01731, M03351.)



BOB HORRIDGE'S ESCAPE FROM THE HOUSE IN GOULD STREET.

Figure 2.10: Three-storey dwellings in Ludgate Hill, wrongly captioned as Gould Street. The pub on the corner was called the *Exile of Erin*. (Source: Jerome Caminada, *Twenty-Five Years of Detective Life* (1895; Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 251. (Reproduced with permission.)



Figure 2.11: The foot of Angel Street, looking west towards Cheetham Hill, 1880. A three-storey workshop dwelling can be seen on the right next to three large, two-storey houses with steps leading down to cellars. (Source: Manchester Local Image Collection, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M20262.)

AN UNFASHIONABLE SLUM IN MANCHESTER.

ANGEL MEADOW, CHARTER STREET, AND "THE REST."

BY ARTHUR G. SYMONDS, M.A.



THE CENTRE OF THE SLUM DISTRICT.

(St. Michael's Church, Charter Street, and Ashby Lane.)

Figure 2.12: Looking east up towards Angel Street from Ashley Lane, with Saint Michael's Church on the rear left. Note the porticoed doorways and galleried upper windows of the three-story houses in the centre right of the sketch. Late in the nineteenth century, these were among the largest lodging houses in the district. (Source: Arthur G. Symonds, 'An Unfashionable Slum in Manchester', *The Quiver* (January, 1894), p. 723)



Figure 2.13: The same three-storey houses in Figure 2.12 sketched by L.S. Lowry (1887–1976) in 1931. One of the surviving porticoed doorways can still be seen, along with the galleried windows. (© The Estate of L.S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS, 2022.)

Figures 2.12 and 2.13 are notable for the porticoed doorways they depict on the three-storey dwellings, particularly on the cobbler's shop to the right of Figure 2.12, which also shows well-crafted railings above the cellar. Some but not all of the houses depicted have cellars. Build quality differs. The three houses on the right of

Figure 2.11 only have two storeys but are as large and well-appointed as the three-storey workshop dwelling to their left and appear to be solidly built merchants' houses. Some of the house in Figure 2.9 appear to be of a lesser build quality, although it has to be remembered that the photographs were taken around a century after they were built. What is clear from all of these photographs is that these three-storey houses were a dominant feature of the district. Far from the one-storey 'cattle-sheds' of Engels, they were large homes and their original purpose was to attract the highest possible rents.

Planning application evidence

This thesis will now, for the first time, take a look inside these larger properties in Angel Meadow using a planning application that was submitted to Manchester Corporation by a Mr. W. J. Rothwell, a brewer of Oldham Road, to set up a lodging house business in 35 and 37 Angel Street, in 1901. While this is well beyond the time of Engels's visit, these houses had stood there since they were built in the late-eighteenth century. The application was to knock the two houses together and double the number of lodgers to 41. The planning officer noted that the stairs, which, as in Thomas Street and Kelvin Street, were positioned in the corner opposite the door, were not in a satisfactory condition and the floors were also 'not entirely satisfactory'. This is unsurprising given that the houses and their stairs were by then at least 120-years-old. The two houses stood opposite and between Simpson Street and New Mount Street. Angel Street was described on the plans as being 12 yards (36 feet) wide – a broad thoroughfare. A cross-section of the two houses in the plans, shown in Figures 2.14, 2.15 and 2.16, reveal their large size. They had

cellars, a ground floor with a 9 foot high ceiling, two upper floors each of 9 feet high, plus attics, with two fireplaces on each of the three above-ground floors. The scale on the plan suggests the depth of the house is around 27 feet. This would make the houses of a similar footprint to 33 Thomas Street in the Saint Paul's district, which was discussed by Barker and Hamlett.¹⁶¹

The Angel Street plans show the cellar was to be filled up.¹⁶² This matches the findings of an archaeological dig by Channel 4's *Time Team*, whose archaeologists uncovered the remains of what they described as 37 Angel Street in 2005.¹⁶³ However, another archaeological dig in 2012 suggested the house they dug up was No. 39.¹⁶⁴ The house *Time Team* uncovered was built in around 1775 – a half-penny from that date was discovered encased in mortar in a back-filled cellar. They were part of a row of three-storey properties, with cellars and attic workshops. However, the TV programme underplayed the building's original relatively higher status, saying that the cellar 'appeared typical of the many structures that were home to the thousands of workers and families employed in the cotton industry in Manchester'. As this chapter has shown, they were much more substantial houses than those built later for the specific purpose of housing Manchester's factory workers.¹⁶⁵ The 2012 report said that while *Time Team* described the houses as

¹⁶¹ Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, pp. 156–194.

¹⁶² Plan of 35 and 37 Angel Street, Rochdale Road (Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.M900/1/1/2/3/4777).

¹⁶³ The programme aired on 5 February 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Chris Wild, *NOMA Regeneration, Miller Street, Manchester: Archaeological Excavation* (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology North, Issue 2012–13/1365, 2013), p. 57.

¹⁶⁵ [Anonymous], *Arkwright's Mill, NCP Car Park, Miller Street Manchester: Archaeological Evaluation and Assessment of Results* (Salisbury: Wessex Archaeology, Ref. 59471.01, April 2006), p. 22.

'jerry-built workers' housing', they were in fact 'well-built, relatively high-class artisan dwellings in an affluent suburb of the town at the time of their construction'.¹⁶⁶

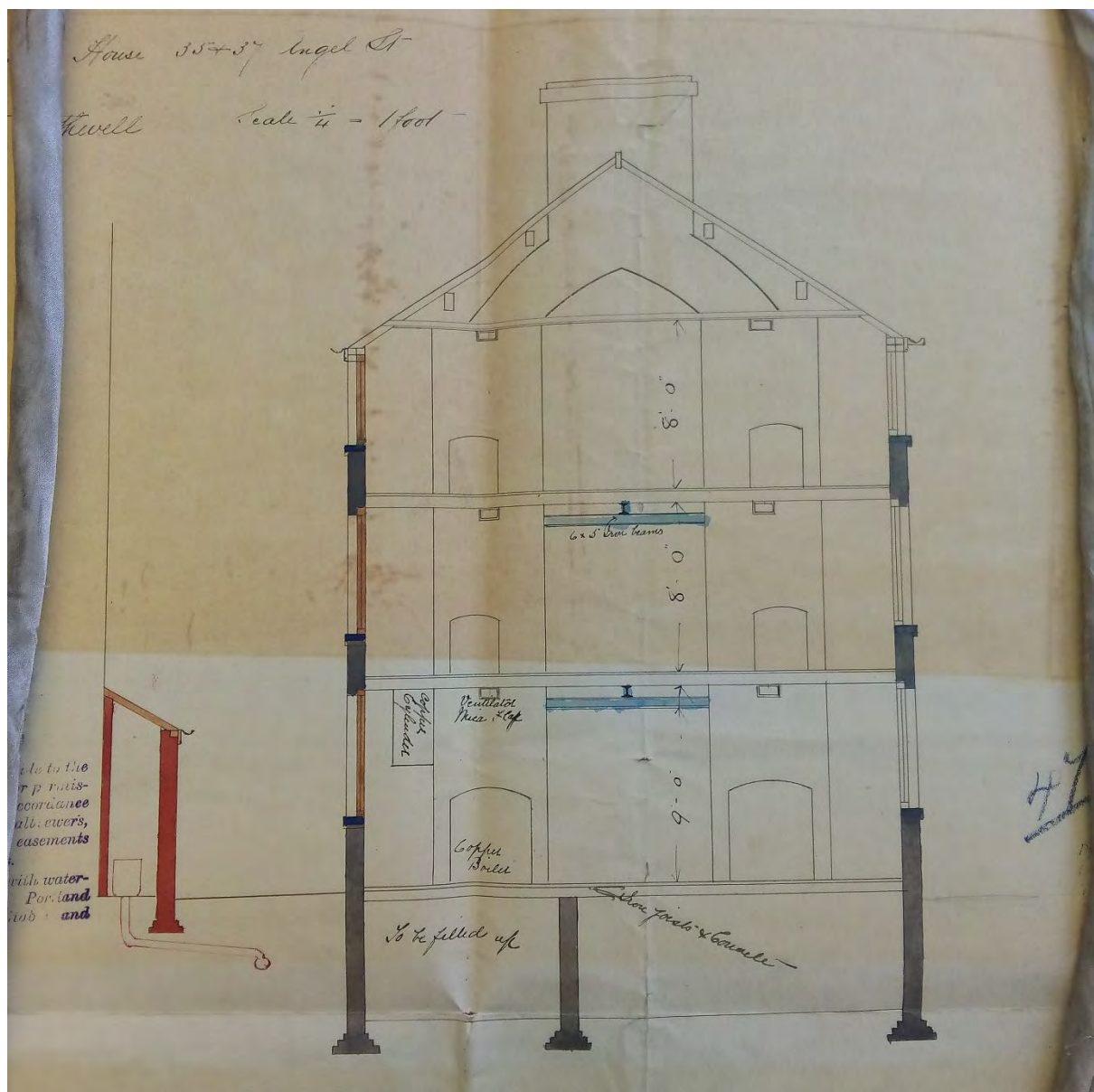


Figure 2.14: Cross section of 35 and 37 Angel Street from a 1901 planning application. (Source: Plan of 35 and 37 Angel Street, Rochdale Road, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, 1901, GB127.M900/1/1/2/3/4777)

The 1901 plan in Figures 2.12, 2.13 and 2.14 also shows how interior walls of No. 35 and No. 37 were to be removed to create a single property. Despite being

¹⁶⁶ Wild, *NOMA Regeneration, Miller Street, Manchester*, p. 57.

35 AND 37. ANGEL STREET

GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR

YARD

BEER HOUSE

PAR. CLOSET

477

City of Manchester.

Approved so far as respects to the
Bye Laws only and subject to the
strengthening or stability of the structure.
The building and work must be executed
in accordance with the Bye Laws in force with re-
spect to New Streets and buildings, &c.
This approval to remain in force only
in case the buildings are commenced
within two years from this date.

Dated this 27th day of March 1901

As at present

Chairman

City Surveyor

35 AND 37 ANGEL STREET
PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR

SECOND FLOOR
City of Manchester.

YARD
See 345 Fall B.

BEERHOUSE YARD

BEERHOUSE YARD

These Premises were Licensed for 41 years to all Males
Incombustible Staircase Solid
Dated 1st day of March 1901
J. M. [Signature] Chairman

J. M. [Signature] City Surveyor.

80

No. 35 Angel Street was originally owned by a tea dealer named Robert Clarke. Studying the census from 1851 to 1901 for these two large properties shows how No. 35 had become a lodging house by 1861, while No. 37 was subdivided into rented rooms by separate families until it became a lodging house by 1881. Together, they housed 42 people by 1861. By 1881, No. 35 provided beds for 17 lodgers, while No. 37 was unoccupied. Both houses were unoccupied by 1901 when the planning application was submitted. This shows beyond doubt how the comparatively large houses of Angel Street, and by implication Blackley Street and a number of other streets, originally designed as single households with workshops and cellars to attract higher rents, later accommodated large numbers of people and had a long and lasting impact on the district. Table 2.7 shows the numbers of people living in 35 and 37 Angel Street in each census year to 1901, including the number of lodgers.

Census year	35 Angel Street: Occupants (Lodgers in brackets)	37 Angel Street: Occupants (Lodgers in brackets)
1851	3 (0)	9 (0)
1861	29 (25)	13 (1)
1871	25 (23)	9 (0)
1881	14 (14)	13 (13)
1891	17 (15)	Unoccupied
1901	Unoccupied	Unoccupied

Table 2.7: Occupants of 35 and 37 Angel Street between 1851 and 1901. Lodgers are in brackets.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown using annotated maps that while Angel Meadow did have enclosed courts and back-to-back housing, it had fewer of these than the

neighbouring district of Ancoats. By analysing Kay's data from 1832, it has also shown that houses in Angel Meadow were in better condition than in Ancoats in the first half of the nineteenth century. By annotating late-century mapping, it has located extensive three-storey properties in streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street and confirmed their use as lodging houses. This evidence is backed up by Kay's 1832 study when the Saint Michael's district had the largest number of lodging houses in Manchester, a statistic that would have been known by Engels. Further, this chapter has shown that, overall, mid-century Angel Meadow had higher occupancy rates and higher numbers of lodgers than Ancoats. By studying contemporary photographs, planning applications and archaeological reports, it has explained these findings. This chapter takes forward the discoveries of Gregory, Roberts, Gausden and Nevell, who all found that the situation on the ground in Manchester was at odds with the writings of Engels. It nuances the understanding of housing in the district and sheds new light on *The Condition* – a work which has long been the paradigm for understanding workers' living conditions in Victorian Manchester. The next chapter will go further by considering whether eighteenth century Angel Meadow even had pretensions of being a more affluent suburb.

Chapter 3: A suburb with higher aspirations?

The previous chapter set out an alternative to the theory that Angel Meadow's mid-Victorian notoriety as a slum was due to 'cattle-shed' workers' housing. It showed, in contrast, that the district contained a proliferation of larger dwellings that enabled it to become a lodging house district – a function that would have been obvious to Engels. Angel Meadow's development and the detrimental impact those houses had on this process will be discussed in detail later. This chapter steps back 50 years from Engels's visit to differentiate the housing in Angel Meadow and Ancoats at the time the first houses were built to examine whether Angel Meadow was in fact originally intended to be a suburb for higher rent-paying inhabitants. It will show that, while eighteenth century Angel Meadow was at a status level below the classic suburbs of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent, it originally shared similarities with both and its first inhabitants included relatively higher-status individuals before the district's rapid deterioration in the formative years of the Industrial Revolution. Ultimately, this chapter will discuss whether the district should, in its original form, be considered as a socially-mixed district of merchants and artisans which compared more favourably with parts of the nearby district of Saint Paul's – Manchester's current day Northern Quarter – than either the working-class district of Ancoats or the true suburbs of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent. This chapter will examine these issues using a variety of methods. It will use poor rate books and maps to compare the property values in Angel Meadow, Ancoats and the Saint Paul's district in the 1790s and will use Google Maps to compare Angel Meadow housing with surviving properties from Georgian Ardwick Green. Latterly, it will examine the status of Angel Meadow's early inhabitants by using trade directories and rate books and by carrying out an analysis of their occupations.

Understanding Georgian Manchester's expansion at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution is one of the keys to unlocking the inner workings of the Victorian city it became. As Alan Kidd said in 2016: 'The key issue in understanding the modern metropolitan area is the relationship of the suburbs to the city.'¹⁶⁷ Kidd described how Manchester grew slowly until the eighteenth century and how, as late as 1800, its streets were never far from fields. 'Yet during the nineteenth century,' he said, 'the town experienced a building boom that saw it burst free of its ancient boundaries and eat up the surrounding countryside at a sometimes-alarming rate, absorbing and remaking existing settlements and creating whole new districts almost from nothing. Suburbanisation had begun earlier in London, but it was in Manchester that 'the process first reshaped the entire urban environment into its modern form'.¹⁶⁸

Rich and poor had lived side by side in the same streets in central Manchester since medieval times, according to Kidd, but a move towards the fringes began in eighteenth century as the town's most prosperous inhabitants began seeking 'modern houses, a cleaner atmosphere and a less congested environment'. This marked the start of a move to lay out streets in fields at the edge of town. However, while Kidd listed Mosley Street, King Street, Princess Street, Quay Street, and Saint John Street as the original patrician quarters of the wealthy and pointed to Ardwick Green as the town's first real suburb, Angel Meadow has never been considered in the same company. This is unsurprising as the occupants of Ardwick Green would go on to include figures such as John Kennedy and James McConnel, partners in the cotton-spinning mills of Ancoats, the engineer William Fairbairn and John Rylands, Manchester's foremost cotton merchant.¹⁶⁹ However, while nobody of

¹⁶⁷ Kidd, 'From Township to Metropolis', p. 342.

¹⁶⁸ Kidd, 'From Township to Metropolis', p. 300.

¹⁶⁹ Kidd, 'From Township to Metropolis', pp. 302–3.

such status lived in Angel Meadow, it is clear that the historiography of the district is so focused on conditions in the nineteenth-century slum, largely due to the writings of Engels, that any original intentions for the district have been forgotten.

As the previous chapter showed, the reality of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester was more nuanced than a solid mass of identical slums often depicted in the city's historiography and there is evidence to suggest Angel Meadow was different in the mid-nineteenth century to its nearest neighbour, Ancoats, in terms of their housing. At the end of the Victorian era, writers who understood Angel Meadow more intimately than Engels showed they knew how the district's larger housing indicated that the area was not originally designed as a slum. The Reverend John Edward Mercer (1857–1922), the rector of the district's Saint Michael's Church and later Bishop of Tasmania, wrote in 1897: 'Angel Meadow, neglected, forgotten, as it is now, has seen better days, of which there are relics still remaining. In [Old] Mount Street there are pillars and dignified flights of steps at the main entrances to the houses, showing that they were built for members of the well-to-do classes.' He added that the top storeys of these houses marked another stage in the history of the district and contained 'the long, narrow windows characteristic of the handloom industry'. At Long Millgate, he observed well-preserved, half-timbered houses which had once overlooked the river.¹⁷⁰ Marr also wrote in his 1904 study of Manchester's housing conditions:

The part of this district investigated [Angel Meadow] has been frequently cited by writers dealing with housing conditions in Manchester as an example of what a district ought not to be. It has been included in this investigation as an

¹⁷⁰ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 161–2.

illustration of a process which may take place in other districts of Manchester. Several streets in the district are lined by houses of considerable age and evidently built for moderately well-to-do families. As the neighbourhood became less desirable, these families have moved to other parts, and the houses have been occupied by poorer families and finally have become lodging houses.¹⁷¹

As discussed in the previous chapter, Miller and Wild also noted in a report following an archaeological dig in 2009, the higher status of the first homes. They said that many of the houses along Blackley Street and Angel Street had been constructed during this period. 'When they were first built, these large houses had a pleasant prospect, on the fringe of Manchester, though still close to the commercial district of the expanding town. Initially, they will have provided accommodation for financially comfortable families, which probably included professionals, merchants and artisan craftsmen, such as handloom weavers,' they added, describing some of the properties as industrial cottages with artisans' workshops on the top floor. 'In broad terms, the style of these properties reflected the Georgian trend of continuous rows of terraced houses, both in the upper-middle-class terraces, typified locally by houses on Saint John Street, off Deansgate, and the short rows of more humble cottages that appeared in many villages at this time.'¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Marr, *Housing Conditions*, p. 60.

¹⁷² Ian Miller and Chris Wild, *Hell Upon Earth: The Archaeology of Angel Meadow* (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology North, Greater Manchester's Past Revealed Series, Vol. 14, 2015), p. 13.

Original differences between Angel Meadow and Ancoats

While the processes that led to Angel Meadow becoming a lodging house district will be discussed later, this chapter will now examine where the district properly sat within the Victorian town while examining the initial phase of its development in the late-eighteenth century. It is useful to compare the relative value of housing in Angel Meadow and Ancoats in the early stages of the Industrial Revolution to assess how the development of these two districts was intended. This can be done by examining Manchester's poor rate books. M.J. Daunton used rate books to understand the housing structure of Cardiff, saying they were a source which permitted detailed analysis of home ownership for investment or owner-occupation.¹⁷³ The same documents survive for Manchester for the period 1706 to 1900 and are a highly valuable and little used historical resource.

Figure 3.1 uses one of Manchester's early maps, the 1794 William Green map, to show the rated assessments of properties in Angel Meadow's streets to illustrate their higher value compared with Ancoats at this pivotal moment in Manchester's history.¹⁷⁴ Using the poor rate books for 1795, a median rateable value has been worked out for the houses in each street. There are two rate books for that year, in which the rateable value for individual properties differs by as much as £1 between the two books due to a revaluation. The book with lower property values for each district has been chosen for this study because the book itself follows a more

¹⁷³ M.J. Daunton, 'House Ownership from Rate Books', *Urban History*, Vol. 3 (May 1976), pp. 21–27.

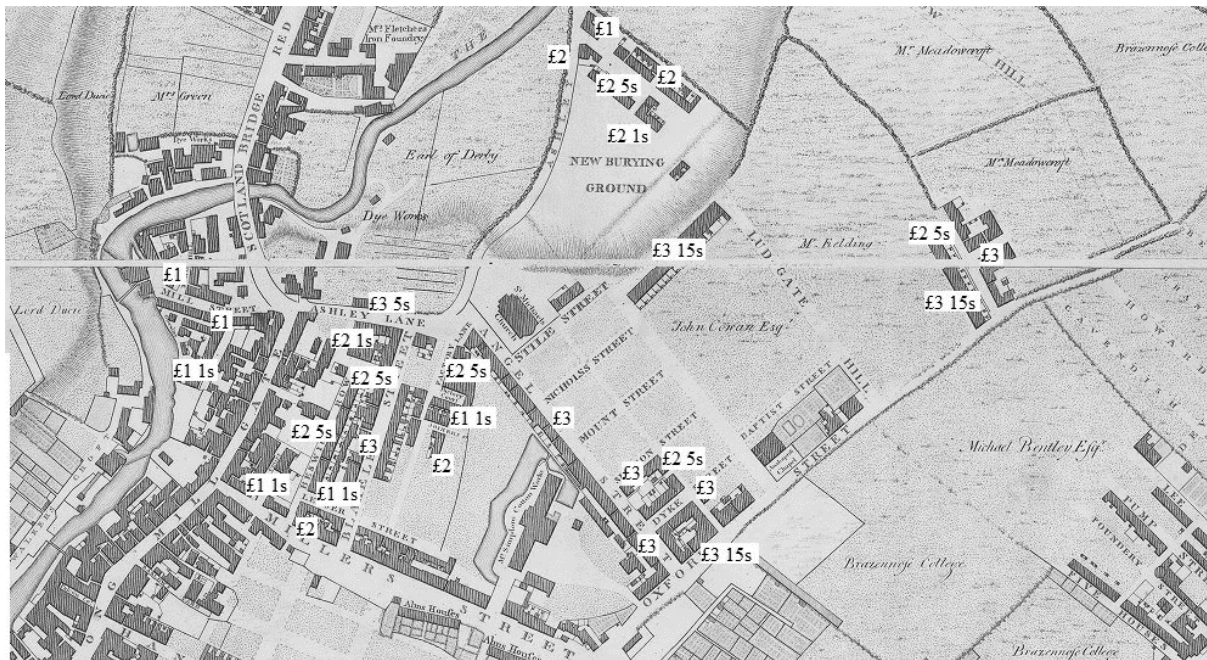
¹⁷⁴ William Green, *A Plan of Manchester and Salford, drawn from an Actual Survey by William Green, Begun in the Year 1787 and Completed in 1794* (University of Manchester Maps Collection, JRL1300190) [accessed: 1 December 2017].

logical pattern, making comparison easier and reducing the risk of errors.¹⁷⁵ The use of these books comes with a caveat. The estimate of a property's value was arbitrary and depended on the opinion of individual assessors.¹⁷⁶

To produce a property value for each street, the rateable value in pounds and shillings in the 'assessment' column of the rate book was noted for each house. The median rateable value for each street was then calculated and drawn on to the map. Using the median is better than using the average as it negates the effect that a single house with a very high value can have on a small street. It also works more easily using pre-decimal currency. In this exercise, the main border streets of Miller Street, Long Millgate, Newton Lane and Great Ancoats Street were excluded, as were properties listed as workshops, warehouses and house-shops. This meant that a number of higher-value workshop-type houses could have been excluded, however it was a cleaner method and ensured that purely industrial or commercial premises were not mistakenly counted as houses. Back houses were included as separate houses and added to the value of the front street they stood behind unless their location was listed as a separate back street, such as Back Blackley Street. In such cases, the median value of that back street was calculated separately from the main street. This lowered the overall value of the front streets, but it was the fairest way to include back properties.

¹⁷⁵ Manchester Rate Books 1760–1900, <<https://findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].

¹⁷⁶ G.B. Hindle, *Provision for the Relief of the Poor in Manchester 1754 to 1826* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975), p. 61.



housing – with 58 houses valued at £3 or above. Just five houses in these two streets were valued below £2, while six were valued at £4 or above. The highest valued properties in Angel Street were assessed at £6 15s and £7 10s. In total, out of 333 houses in Angel Meadow examined in this study, 147 were rated at £3 or above (44.1 percent). The median value was £3 or above in a total of nine streets. In twelve smaller streets, the value was £2 or above – suggesting at least a mid-level standard of property in all but the worst streets. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is evidence of the larger size and higher rateable value of properties in the district. It is, once again, an unexpected finding given how Engels described Angel Meadow as ‘Hell upon Earth’ in the 1840s.

To test the validity of these results, the rateable assessment of properties has also been recorded in the neighbouring district of Ancoats using the same valuation book and the median for each street has again been drawn on the William Green map in Figure 3.2. In total, out of 942 houses assessed in a larger area of Ancoats, excluding the major border streets of Great Ancoats Street and Newton Lane, which stretched beyond the map, only 134 houses were rated at £3 or above (14.2 percent) – a lower numerical and proportional figure than in a smaller sample of housing in Angel Meadow. In only four streets was the median rateable value at £3 or above. Some 338 properties in Ancoats were rated at £1 1s or less, including 39 as low as 15s and under. This compares with Angel Meadow, where only 45 properties were rated at £1 1s or less. For ease of comparison, the results of both exercises are shown in Table 3.1.

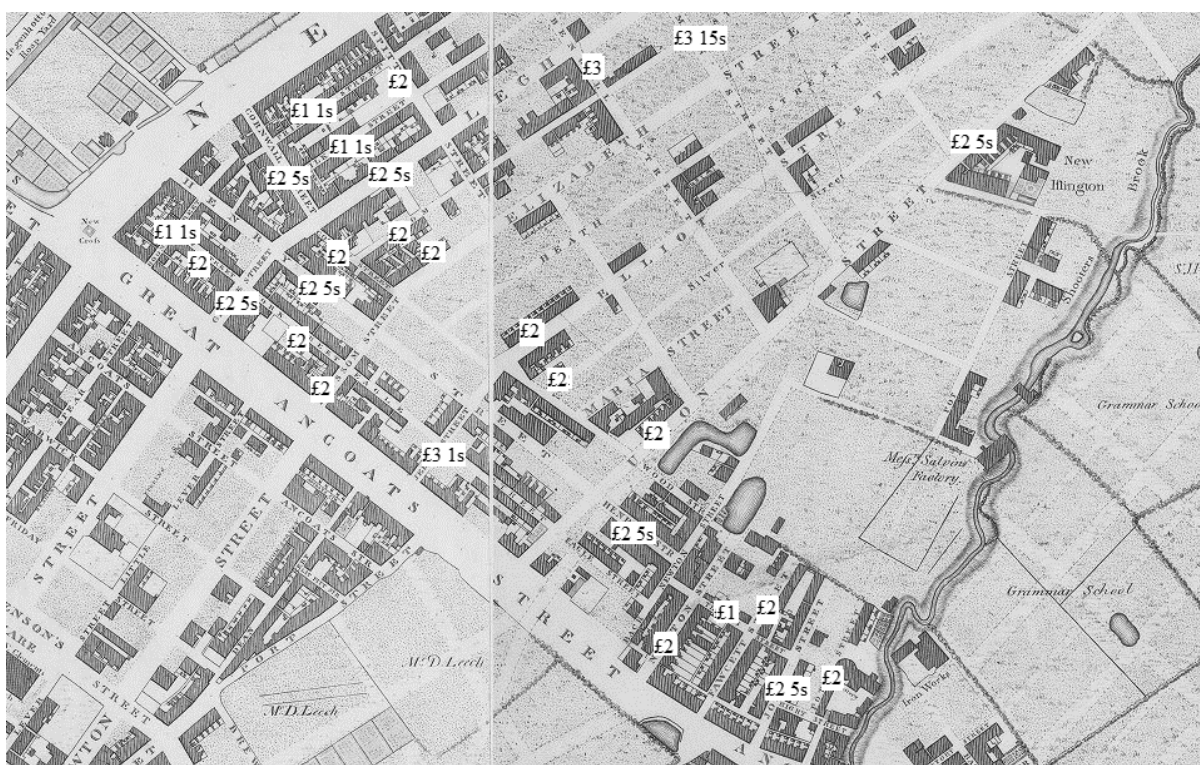


Figure 3.2: Median property values in Ancoats streets in 1795. (Sources: Poor rate assessment books, 1795, <<https://findmypast.co.uk>>, and the William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)

District	Total Acres	Houses sampled	Houses valued at £3 or above	%	Houses valued at £1 1s or below	%	Streets with a median value of £3 or above
Angel Meadow	33	333	147	44.1	45	13.5	9
Ancoats	181	942	134	14.2	338	35.8	4

Table 3.1: Comparison of sampled property values in Angel Meadow and Ancoats. (Sources: Poor rate assessment books, 1795, <<https://findmypast.co.uk>>; William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)

This is not to say that Ancoats originally contained no higher-value housing.

Three streets in Ancoats connected at right angles – Henry Street, Bengal Street and Leigh Street – had 44 houses between them valued at £3 or above. Henry Street had 19 houses valued at £3 or above, including three valued at more than £4.

Bengal Street had 15 houses valued at £3 or above and none below £3, with the largest being valued at £6 15s. Leigh Street had 10 houses above £3 including one valued at £5 5s and another at £6. It is useful to note here that MEDReG made some surprising findings about building materials even in the poorest houses of Ancoats. In Back Mill Street, the group found the cottages were only 12 feet square. However, they had been built in Flemish bond, which Roberts said was costly. Photographic evidence of a pair of one-up, one-down cottages built in Gun Street before 1793 also showed that they were built in Flemish bond, as was a shop around the corner on Blossom Street alongside a court containing a pair of privies with 'stout, nine-inch-thick walls'. In a riposte to Engels, Roberts said: 'Such evidence makes one doubt the contemporary comment that the dwellings of Ancoats were badly built. The dwellings themselves were well constructed.'¹⁷⁷ MEDReG even found three-storey workshop dwellings in Ancoats, such as 5 Little Pitt Street.¹⁷⁸ Gregory noted the presence of Georgian houses in his analysis of archaeological excavations in Ancoats, including larger town houses at the junction of George Leigh and Bengal Streets.¹⁷⁹

The key point here, though, as shown in Table 3.1, is that Angel Meadow contained many more of those larger Georgian properties than the larger district of Ancoats. Unlike the uniform stretch in Angel Street and Blackley Street in Angel Meadow, any higher-value housing in Ancoats was already heavily interspersed by factories and warehousing in 1795, making the district less suitable for a lodging-house function. The longest street, Leigh Street, which later became George Leigh

¹⁷⁷ Jacqueline Roberts, 'A Densely Populated and Unlovely Tract: The Residential Development of Ancoats', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 7 (1993), p. 17.

¹⁷⁸ Gausden, *Manchester Early Dwellings Research Group*, p. 38.

¹⁷⁹ Gregory, 'Under Slate Grey Victorian Sky', p. 36.

Street, had 40 houses but contained four factories and a timber yard in between them in 1795, according to the poor rate books. Bengal Street contained one factory taking up the space of three houses and Henry Street contained four factories, a warehouse and a stable. While these industrial properties were excluded from this study of property values, they indicate that the growing purpose of Ancoats at this time was as an industrial suburb. Crucially, this exercise confirms that Angel Meadow's later role as a lodging-house district originated from this period when the area had larger, higher-value properties covering much of the main streets which were adapted into lodging houses or sub-divided into tenements by the 1830s. It has to be remembered that, as shown in Figure 2.5, Kay's 1832 report found no lodging houses in New Cross/Ancoats compared with 108 in the Saint Michael's district. Geography would have also played its part, with Ancoats being a longer walk from the town centre and more self-contained than Angel Street and Blackley Street.

In her study of Ancoats, Roberts marked out how as, part of the Legh estate, it was developed differently from other large estates in Manchester as 'the first residential district of the modern world intended for occupation by one social class, the new urban working-class'.¹⁸⁰ Crucially, one key aspect of its development was the absence of covenant clauses in some of the deeds to the Legh estate, which would have prevented nuisances, which Roberts said indicated that the 'subsequent mixed industrial and residential development of Ancoats was anticipated and intended'.¹⁸¹ Roger Lloyd-Jones and Merv Lewis also described the outcome of the early development of Ancoats. The number of houses rose from 2,157 to 2,499 in the eight years from 1807 to 1815 – a rise of 15.9 percent. The figures for the Saint

¹⁸⁰ Roberts, 'A Densely Populated and Unlovely Tract', pp. 15–26.

¹⁸¹ Roberts, 'A Densely Populated and Unlovely Tract', p. 16.

Michael's district which included Angel Meadow suggest it tried to catch up from a smaller housing base, increasing in the same period from 1,246 to 1,579 houses – a rise of 26.7 percent but still below the total housing stock of Ancoats in 1815.

Ancoats was able to claim a higher overall rateable value for its housing – rising from £10,548 to £19,850 – a total higher than any other district in the town. This huge increase of 86.6 percent in this period was in contrast to a 36.5 percent increase in Saint Michael's, where the total rateable value increased from £9,339 to £12,759. This was not due to Ancoats having better housing but to having a larger housing stock. Further analysis of these figures shows that the average rateable value per house was below £5 in Ancoats in 1811 compared with more than £7 in Saint Michael's. They were broadly similar by 1815, although, at £8, Saint Michael's remained just above Ancoats. Lloyd-Jones and Lewis put the spectacular valuation rise in Ancoats down to the growing population pressure on the district as it was growing. This could suggest that Angel Meadow was less overcrowded at this time and there was a weaker need for new housing.¹⁸²

What is noticeable about Ancoats is that while the population rose from 11,039 in 1801 to 55,983 in 1861, the housing density fell from 6.8 in 1811 to 5.5 in 1861. According to Roberts, this suggests that the rate of house building more than kept up with demand.¹⁸³ Rushton noted how only one in ten young people lived in lodgings in Ancoats in 1851 to 1871, presumably in the homes of other families as Kay had found no lodging houses in the district. No professional lodging houses were found by Rushton, whose own survey of the district excluded commercial

¹⁸² Roger Lloyd-Jones and Merv Lewis, 'Housing Factory Workers: Ancoats in the Early-Nineteenth Century', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 7 (1993), p. 33.

¹⁸³ Roberts, 'A Densely Populated and Unlovely Tract', p. 16.

premises.¹⁸⁴ All of this indicates a key difference with Angel Meadow, where large, old houses were used for multiple occupancy. The *Manchester Guardian* reported how Ancoats looked in 1871: 'Behind the thin crust of respectability which lines Oldham Street are stowed away from sight an enormous population. Houses are packed together as closely as possible and in them are stowed away from sight an enormous mass of the poorer class of our population.'¹⁸⁵

Georgian suburb?

This study has shown for the first time that Angel Meadow had a different housing mix to Ancoats in the 1790s. It can even be argued that Angel Meadow had surprising similarities with Georgian Manchester's wealthier suburbs. Originally a tract of farmers' fields on a bluff overlooking the River Irk, Angel Meadow shared key geographic characteristics with Ardwick Green and another early suburb, Salford Crescent. The Crescent was laid out and the first leases issued in 1793. Its development therefore came after the first houses were built in Angel Meadow.¹⁸⁶ H.B. Rodgers, writing in 1962, said both the Green and the Crescent were set in 'pleasantly varied country and their sites had – by the standards of the very subdued relief of Manchester – some topical prominence'. In a passage that should be read while thinking of Angel Meadow's similar position rising from the valley of the Irk, he said: 'Ardwick is just above the bluff of the Medlock Valley, while the Crescent stands on a high scar overlooking the bold curve of an Irwell meander. Qualities like these

¹⁸⁴ Peter Rushton, 'Family Survival Strategies in Mid-Victorian Ancoats', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 7 (1993), p. 38.

¹⁸⁵ [Anonymous], 'The Census in the Slums: Our Observer in Ancoats', *Manchester Guardian* (5 April 1871).

¹⁸⁶ Kidd, 'From Township to Metropolis', pp. 302–3.

were to predestine many other districts for middle-class occupancy during the next century.¹⁸⁷

Georgian writers such as Joseph Aston had also noted the same suburb topography. Writing in 1804, he suggested rather naïvely that the Crescent was ‘almost unrivalled for the beautiful and commanding prospect which from the nature of the situation can never be interrupted by buildings’ and how the ‘inhabitants of this charming elevation will always be sure of rich country scenery in view of their front windows’. He also noted that Ardwick Green was ‘perhaps one of the best built and most pleasant suburbs in the kingdom, to which its elegant houses – its expanded green – and the lake in its centre, all contribute’.¹⁸⁸ John Aikin preceded Aston in praising the ‘neatness and elegance’ of Ardwick Green’s housing in 1795, adding that ‘this quarter is principally inhabited by the more opulent classes, so as to resemble, though on a small scale, the West End of the city of London’.¹⁸⁹ Benjamin Love, writing in 1842, said the Crescent still contained ‘a fine range of houses, commanding an extensive prospect’, while Ardwick Green was ‘another pleasing suburb, forming an imposing entrance to the town from the south’ and ‘ornamented with a fine lake’.¹⁹⁰

It would be left to later Victorian writers to describe Angel Meadow’s own pre-industrial characteristics as they sought to strike a contrast with accounts of the contemporary slum. At some distance in time from Aston, the picture they presented

¹⁸⁷ Rodgers, *The Suburban Growth of Victorian Manchester*, pp. 2–4.

¹⁸⁸ Joseph Aston, *The Manchester Guide: A Brief Historical Description of the Towns of Manchester and Salford, the Public Buildings and the Charitable and Literary Institutions* (Manchester: Joseph Aston, 1804), pp. 274–5.

¹⁸⁹ John Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles around Manchester* (Manchester: John Stockdale, 1795), pp. 205–6.

¹⁹⁰ Benjamin Love, *The Handbook of Manchester* (Manchester: Love and Barton, 1842), p. 11.

could be deemed apocryphal, but they remain part of the historical record and show how they thought about the district's past. Their words share commonality with the descriptions of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent. In 1867, the Angel Meadow businessman Benjamin Redfern lamented the loss of the district's once 'heavenly landscape', which he said had overseen 'one of the most beautiful views of vale and river, hill and woodland'.¹⁹¹ A decade later, in 1877, the first chapter of Isabella Banks's *The Manchester Man*, set in 1801, began with a great flood amid the once 'luxuriant hedgerows' and the 'green and undulating uplands' of the Irk valley below Angel Meadow.¹⁹² In 1888, the *Manchester Guardian* also tried to imagine the scenery more than a century earlier: 'Practically the whole of the north-west side of Manchester was then one succession of fields and hedges. The neighbouring Ashley Lane [in Angel Meadow], running through fields towards Ashley Woods and Collyhurst Woods and Common, with the adjoining River Irk, here and there edged with trees – a beautiful, clear stream – formed a picture of pastoral beauty.'¹⁹³ Mercer also noted in 1897 that the walks along the Irk had once been 'among the pleasantest around Manchester'.¹⁹⁴ He was followed two decades later by Thomas Swindells, who wrote in more measured terms about how Rochdale Road once had been 'nothing more than a minor country lane' called Back Lane.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Benjamin Redfern, 'A Journey from Withy Grove to New Town', *Odds and Ends Literary Magazine* (1867), p. 380.

¹⁹² Isabella Banks, *The Manchester Man* (London: James W. Allingham, 1877), pp. 2–3.

¹⁹³ [Anonymous], 'Saint Michael's Church, Angel Meadow', *Manchester Guardian* (28 December 1888).

¹⁹⁴ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 161–2.

¹⁹⁵ Thomas Swindells, *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men* (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1907), p. 136.

However, while Angel Meadow shared similar geographic characteristics to Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent, making it a potentially attractive location for a Georgian suburb, it differed from both districts in one crucial respect – it was located much nearer to the centre of town. While Angel Street stood 900m in a straight line from Saint Ann’s Square, Salford Crescent was 1.4km away and Ardwick Green 1.5km.¹⁹⁶ More significantly, until the 1780s at least, the latter were separated from the built-up extremities of the town by open fields, while Angel Street was less than a five-minute walk from Shudehill. Figure 3.3 shows the relative locations of Salford Crescent, Angel Meadow and Ardwick Green, drawn on the William Green map.

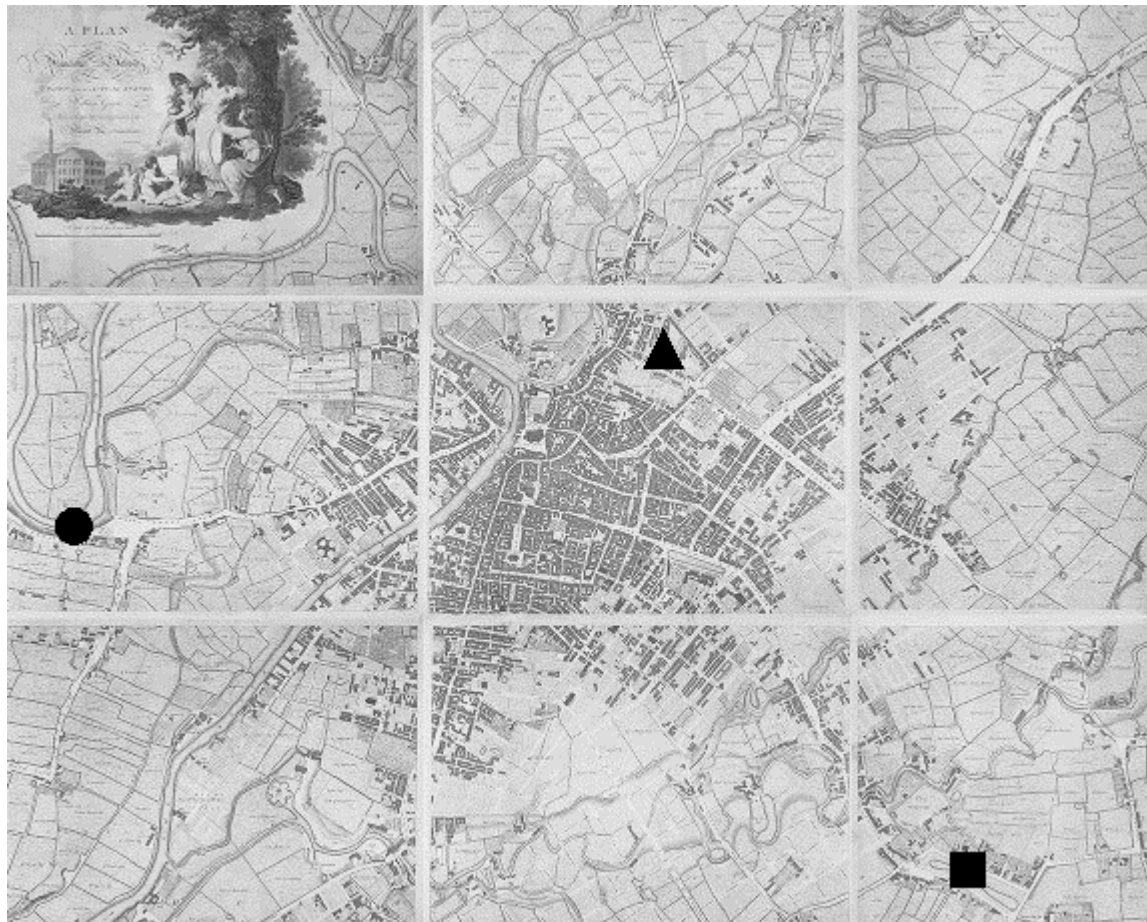


Figure 3.3: Locator map showing the relative locations of Angel Meadow (triangle), Salford Crescent (circle) and Ardwick Green (square) in 1796. (Source: William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)

¹⁹⁶ Distances calculated using the measurement tool on Google Maps [accessed 28 December 2019].

Suburban ambitions

If Angel Meadow was originally intended to be a successful Georgian suburb, it was clearly in the wrong place. As Figure 3.3 shows, its fields were already being eaten up by development in 1794. However, if Angel Meadow was already showing signs of becoming part of Manchester's urban spread at this time, then so was Ardwick Green. John Aikin, writing in 1795, said: 'Some years ago it was regarded as a rural situation, but the buildings of Manchester have extended in that direction so far as completely to connect it to the town.' Aston also noted in 1804 how Ardwick Green 'which 30 years ago was a distant village, is now joined to the town by continued streets'.¹⁹⁷

Defining suburbs in purely geographic terms is, however, problematic. As Dyos said in 1961 in his study of Camberwell, London, a suburb 'is less of a geographical expression than it is an attitude of mind and a species of social as well as economic behaviour'.¹⁹⁸ Evidence of Angel Meadow's ambitions and attitude during its early development can be found in the building of the area's church dedicated to Saint Michael and All Angels in 1789. The church was founded by the Reverend Humphrey Owen (1723–1790), a chaplain of the Collegiate Church (later Manchester Cathedral). Arthur J. Dobbs said in his history of the Manchester Diocese:

The land immediately to the north and east of Manchester had formed such worthy estates as Collyhurst, Ancoats and Strangeways. It was only with considerable reluctance that sprawl yielded up their coveted possession. The

¹⁹⁷ Aikin, *A Description of the Country*, pp. 205–6.

¹⁹⁸ H.J. Dyos, *Victorian Suburb: A Study of the Growth of Camberwell* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961), p. 26.

narrow valley of the Irk was a world apart, a bypass meadow out of view from the main roads and by the last decades of the eighteenth century a quiet respectable retreat for the better-off tradesmen with terraces of three-storey Georgian houses with basements below. At the end of Angel Street was built Saint Michael's to seat just over a thousand people.¹⁹⁹

Saint Michael's was a large church – standing at 78 feet in length excluding its communion recesses. With its side chapels, it was 54 feet wide.²⁰⁰ Raised wooden galleries supported by iron pillars ran around three sides of the interior.²⁰¹ This was a statement of intent. The church even had its own hymn book.²⁰² A large cross was painted on the wall behind the altar in gold.²⁰³ As with the smaller Saint Thomas's Chapel at Ardwick Green, which was erected in 1741, Saint Michael's was brick-built. It had a foundation for a steeple that was yet to be built when Joseph Aston visited in 1804. Aston noted that the interior of Saint Thomas's could 'boast more beauty and fashion in its congregation, than many highly ornamented churches can exhibit'.²⁰⁴ He was, however, in a sign of the relative lower status of Angel Meadow, critical of Saint Michael's. Apart from having 'spacious galleries', the church had 'nothing remarkable in any point, either on the outside or inside, except for some colossal saints, which outrage nature from the communion recess, and which seem as if they had emanated from a painter, who had the fear of breaking the second

¹⁹⁹ Arthur J. Dobbs, *Like a Mighty Tortoise: A History of the Diocese of Manchester* (Littleborough: Upjohn and Bottomley, 1978), p. 147.

²⁰⁰ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, p. 111.

²⁰¹ [Anonymous], 'Extraordinary Accident at Saint Michael's, Angel Meadow', *Manchester Courier* (24 March 1847).

²⁰² [Anonymous], *Select Hymns and Spiritual Songs for the Use of Saint Michael's Church, Manchester* (Manchester: Sowler and Russell, 1798).

²⁰³ [Anonymous], 'Correspondence', *Manchester Guardian* (24 November 1883).

²⁰⁴ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, p. 199.

commandment [banning the worship of false gods] full in his eyes,' he said.²⁰⁵ The *Manchester Guardian* added its own critique in 1888:

Why one of the ugliest buildings in Manchester situated in one of the most crowded and notorious parts of the city should have so long enjoyed the pleasant-sounding name of Saint Michael's, Angel Meadow, is beyond all understanding. Of course, when the good Humphrey Owen built his church there in 1788, dedicated to Saint Michael and All Angels, one could have understood the fitness of the description. Scarcely any stretch of the imagination can realise the fact that the site of the church was as pretty then as it is repellent now.²⁰⁶

In 1897, Edward Mercer, then vicar of Saint Michael's, said: 'There are many living who can remember Saint Michael's as a "carriage church" and now it is practically unknown, at any rate in the fashionable world.'²⁰⁷ Building the church was a personal project for Owen, with the presentation fixed in his name for 60 years before it passed to the warden and fellows of the Collegiate Church.²⁰⁸ For 26 years from 1751, Owen had been the rector at Saint Ann's Church in Saint Ann's Square and also served at Saint Mary's in Parsonage Gardens, which was built in 1756. They were two of Manchester's wealthiest districts. Charles Bardsley's description in 1877 of the earlier development of Saint Mary's could indicate how the process later influenced Owen's thinking when deciding to build Saint Michael's on Manchester's rural fringe.

²⁰⁵ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, p. 111.

²⁰⁶ [Anonymous], 'Saint Michael's Church, Angel Meadow', *Manchester Guardian* (28 December 1888).

²⁰⁷ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 161–2.

²⁰⁸ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, p. 111.

Saint Mary's was 'for a period the fashionable church of the town', according to Bardsley, who said it was 'quickly filled with a fashionable congregation' including several old pew owners from Saint Ann's, which created demands on Owen's time.²⁰⁹ He added: 'The Parsonage and the Parade were occupied by well-to-do residents. The west-end people of Gartside Street and upper Deansgate had but to follow the street to reach the new church. Sedan chairs had a straight course and were less liable to be jostled.' Owen's former parishioners at Saint Ann's included 'some of the best families the neighbourhood' including fustian manufacturers, surgeons, attorneys, wine merchants.'²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Charles Wareing Endsell Bardsley, *Memorials of Saint Ann's Church, Manchester, In the Last Century* (Manchester: Thomas Roworth, 1877), p. 98.

²¹⁰ Bardsley, *Memorials of Saint Ann's Church*, pp. 89–90.



Figure 3.4: Saint Michael's Church, Angel Meadow. (Source: C.W. Clennell, c.1850, Manchester Image Archive, M77153.)

Whether Owen, described by Bardsley as the chief instrument in the creation of Saint Michael's, actively sought to draw some of those people with him to Angel Meadow is not possible to divine, however it is clear that he would have wanted and needed his new church to be a financially successful project. His reputation and legacy depended upon it. However, as with speculative house building, erecting a church came with no guarantee of success. Another church, Saint George's, which was built on open fields between Angel Meadow and Ancoats, was initially a failure, as Aston described: 'Report says it was built as a speculation of profit, that it has

been what all religious speculations should be, a losing concern,' he wrote. It was closed and left half-finished for several years.²¹¹

Church building in itself does not signify a wealthy suburb. At the time Saint Michael's was built, other churches were being erected to support the spiritual welfare of the growing population of Manchester and Salford, the population of which had by then increased to more than 50,000 souls. Bardsley described how 1788 was a remarkable year as the foundations of three churches – Saint Peter's, Saint Michael's and Saint James's – were laid. The collection plate at Saint Michael's reached £35 10s in 1791 – evidence of the church's initial success. It compared favourably with the £24 9s raised at Saint Ann's and the £31 7s raised at the Collegiate Church, but fell behind other churches including Saint Mary's at £49 1s and Saint John's at £50 7s – evidence of the relative status of the districts in which those churches stood. In line with other churches in Manchester, the collection at Saint Michael's declined to £22 6s in 1793.²¹² Owen died in November 1790 without seeing the fruit of his labours. In the event, it was Saint James's in George Street, off Mosley Street, which 'robbed Saint Mary's of the title of being the fashionable church' but it was quickly superseded by Saint Peter's, in Saint Peter's Fields, which became 'the shrine to which the "fashionable sinners" of Mosley Street and Piccadilly turned their steps one day in seven'.²¹³ Manchester's wealthiest churchgoers had migrated south instead of north.

However, late-eighteenth century Angel Meadow also had another draw for middling sorts in the shape of Robert Tinker's grandly named Grape and Compass

²¹¹ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, p. 118.

²¹² Bardsley, *Memorials of Saint Ann's Church*, p. 123.

²¹³ Bardsley, *Memorials of Saint Ann's Church*, pp. 99–123.

Coffee House and Tea Gardens. The gardens, which opened in 1797, stood just to the north of Angel Meadow on the riverside road to Collyhurst. Tinker later renamed them the Elysian Gardens, after the place in Greek mythology in which the souls of the virtuous were laid to rest. Richard Wright Proctor wrote: 'When this flight of fancy seized him [Tinker], he was doubtless seated in one of his leafy arbours, overlooking the then pleasant valley of the Irk.'²¹⁴ Finally, in 1814, Tinker changed the name to Vauxhall Gardens after the most famous pleasure grounds in London. In 1812, in celebration of the Duke of Wellington's victory at Waterloo, Tinker's Gardens was illuminated by 3,000 lamps and popular vocalists entertained crowds, with 1s 6d charged for admission. The entertainment was said to be 'at once intellectual, rural and delightful'.²¹⁵ The gardens were also nationally famous for their cucumbers. One, reported to be more than 7 feet 8 inches long, was sent to the Prince Regent in 1814.²¹⁶ Some of the world's first balloon ascents also took place in the gardens.

Stobart, Hann and Morgan identified pleasure gardens as part of the polite culture of eighteenth-century England, which played a role in making polite society inclusive. They were open to all who could afford to pay and, as entrance prices were fairly low, this including middling sorts and many artisans too. 'Such ventures served to transform both the physical appearance and social character of the town, rendering it a civilised and polite place,' they said.²¹⁷ Tinker's Gardens, viewed in this way, is a window into the reality of early Angel Meadow as a socially-mixed suburb.

²¹⁴ Richard Wright Proctor, *Literary Reminiscences and Gleanings* (Manchester: Thomas Dinham and Co., 1860), p. 91.

²¹⁵ Thomas Swindells, *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men* (Manchester: J.E. Cornish, 1908), pp. 149–53.

²¹⁶ Swindells, *Manchester Streets*, pp. 150–1.

²¹⁷ Jon Stobart, Andrew Hann and Victoria Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption: Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1801–1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 77.

A level below Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent

Georgian Angel Meadow was, in fact, whatever the hopes of Humphrey Owen, at a level below the exclusive and socially-elite suburbs of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent. It was more socially-mixed. Its lower status can be seen quite simply by comparing the greater scale and refinement of the surviving houses in Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent, shown in Figures 3.5 and 3.6, with those shown in Figure 2.9 in Chapter 2. While Angel Meadow did differ from the nearby 'industrial suburb' Ancoats, it also differed from the distant, higher-status suburbs of Ardwick Green and the Crescent. The terraces in those two suburbs are more like the grander Georgian houses that were repurposed in the nineteenth century to create large tenements in Victorian Dublin, albeit in the same process that also occurred in Angel Meadow.



Figure 3.5: Surviving houses in Ardwick Green in 2018. (Source: Google Street View <<https://www.google.co.uk/maps>>.) [accessed 1 November 2020]



Figure 3.6: Surviving houses in Salford Crescent in 2018. Note the porticoed doorways which also stood outside larger houses in Angel Meadow. (Source: Google Street View <<https://www.google.co.uk/maps>>.) [accessed 1 November 2020]

Richard Dennis has made a useful point about Manchester's suburbs through which early Angel Meadow should be viewed. In the early-nineteenth century, the town was much more socially mixed than the black-and-white class divide later depicted by Engels. Dennis said:

Geographically, Manchester retained a high-status core, albeit one of declining residential population. Between 1821 and 1831, the population of four central districts fell by 11 percent while that of the rest of the township increased by 36 percent. It was also a physically dilapidated core reflecting the fact that 'high-status areas' were actually socially mixed: the contrast in Manchester township was not between rich areas and poor areas but between mixed areas and poor areas. Insanitary housing was, if anything,

negatively correlated with inadequately made streets: in the centre, streets were paved but houses were in dreadful condition – farther out streets had not yet been paved but neither had houses yet deteriorated.²¹⁸

Comparison with Saint Paul's

Early Angel Meadow, in fact, bore a closer affinity with another part of Manchester than it did with either Ancoats or Ardwick Green. Ashton Lever's Saint Paul's district, Manchester's modern-day Northern Quarter, was bounded by Lever Street, Great Ancoats Street, Swan Street, Shudehill, Nicholas Croft, High Street, Market Street and Piccadilly. Figure 3.7 shows the relative location of Saint Paul's to Angel Meadow. Aston described Saint Paul's Church, shown in Figure 3.8, in terms as critical as Saint Michael's: 'It is situated at the east end of Turner Street, and in a most disagreeable manner, closed in (without a foot of churchyard) by the surrounding houses.' However, he said the tower and steeple was 'handsome considering its height and dimensions'. Within the expanding central business district, Saint Paul's was consecrated on 28 July 1765 – more than two decades before Saint Michael's.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Dennis, *English Industrial Cities*, pp. 69–72.

²¹⁹ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, pp. 104–105.



Figure 3.7: Map showing the relative locations of Angel Meadow (triangle) and Saint Paul's (diamond). (Source: William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)



Figure 3.8: Saint Paul's Church in Turner Street in the Saint Paul's district. Note the three-storey weavers' houses on the right, with galleried windows above and cellars beneath, which were similar to those in Angel Street and Blackley Street, and the even larger houses on the left. (Source: Saint Paul's Church, 1835, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M71216.)

As shown in Chapter 2, Saint Paul's has been a focus for the study of three-storey workshop housing due to surviving examples in Kelvin Street and Thomas Street. According to Nevell, Saint Paul's contained the largest concentration of three-storey weavers' cottages in eighteenth-century Manchester.²²⁰ The discovery by this thesis of extensive three-storey housing in Angel Meadow suggests the study area was an equal of Saint Paul's in terms of the number of these properties. Nevell's analysis of the 1800 trade directory indicated that Saint Paul's was a mixed residential, commercial and manufacturing area. The largest single occupational grouping was of textile workers and manufacturers. Nevell found that six sets of vernacular workshop dwellings within a block formed by Turner Street, Kelvin Street, Back Turner Street and Brick Street appeared to have been divided into plots and sold to 17 individuals by a merchant, Josiah Nicholls, who may have bought the land from the Lever family. Turner Street was dominated by the houses of manufacturers who had their business elsewhere, whilst the properties on Kelvin Street and Back Turner Street were occupied by craftsmen or tradesmen who lived and worked in the same buildings. Occupations mentioned in the trade directories included timber, flour and tea dealers and sellers, as well as joinery, shoemaking, and textiles. According to Nevell, such vernacular workshop dwellings represented 'on the whole good quality, single-family, artisan housing' when they were built.²²¹ They provided better accommodation than found in the small back-to-back dwellings that accommodated the mill workers and which were built in large numbers in Ancoats and elsewhere in Manchester.²²² Simon Taylor and Julian Holder offered an argument for how the Saint Paul's district developed as a district of higher-status properties, focusing again

²²⁰ Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City', pp. 594–606.

²²¹ Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City', p. 597.

²²² Taylor and Holder, *Manchester's Northern Quarter*, pp. 12–15.

on the three-storey weavers' houses. The increase in yarn production in the late-eighteenth century led to the growth in handloom weaving and Manchester attracted large numbers of weavers, many of them probably accommodated in the Old Town. Where new building took place in the Saint Paul's district, speculators found the construction of housing for weavers an attractive option. Higher rents could then be charged because more space was provided in the form of weaving rooms and because weavers were relatively well paid despite fluctuations in trade.²²³

It is useful to further look at Saint Paul's in comparison with Angel Meadow. While Angel Street and Blackley Street were off the main roads of Saint George's Road and Miller Street, they were relatively wide and would have afforded a similar degree of respectability as some of the streets in Saint Paul's. Studying the 1795 rate book and repeating the exercise in the previous chapter of calculating the median rateable value for Back Turner Street and Kelvin Street provides evidence of how the three-storey properties compared with Blackley Street and Angel Street. The 38 houses in Back Turner Street had a median value of £3, while the smaller Milk Street with just eight houses had a median value of £3 10s. Angel Street, with 50 houses and Blackley Street with 34 also had median values of £3. Angel Street had three properties rated higher than any houses in Back Turner Street and Kelvin Street, at £7 1s, £6 15s and £5 5s. Turner Street itself had a median value of £4 and had 10 houses rated at £5 5s or above, the highest being £9 1s. While the caveat again applies that valuation ratings at this time were arbitrary, these figures do suggest comparable house sizes. If Angel Street had, like Turner Street, also been

²²³ Simon Taylor and Julian Holder, *Manchester's Northern Quarter: The Greatest Meer Village* (London: English Heritage, 2008), pp. 11–12.

inside or at the edge of Manchester's central business district, it is likely it could have had median house values closer to the higher value of £4.

Street	Kelvin Street	Back Turner Street	Angel Street	Blackley Street
Median value	£3 1s	£3	£3	£3

Table 3.2: Median rateable values in Saint Paul's and Angel Meadow compared. (Source: Poor Rate Assessment Books, <<https://findmypast.co.uk>>).

Angel Meadow, however, differed from Saint Paul's in one significant respect. Taylor and Holder noted that Saint Paul's also contained some 'fine houses' in areas such as Lever's Row (now Piccadilly) which were very different in quality and appearance than the purpose-built workshop houses and stood in 'one of the best and most fashionable residential streets.'²²⁴ Throughout the 1770s, Lever had been selling small plots, but most of the property was sold in a few large parcels to developers, including 25 acres sold in 1780 to William Stevenson of Urmston in the area that became the present-day Stevenson Square. The building of the square on the far side of Oldham Street to the east of Thomas and Turner Streets was an aspirational development aimed at pulling it up to the high standard of Lever's Row. So, while the larger housing near the top of Angel Street and other neighbouring streets were at the top of the Angel Meadow property ladder, similar sized houses were lower down the property ladder in Saint Paul's. Chalklin said that development in Saint Paul's was a drawn-out process and, despite a building boom at the end of the 1780s and in the early 1790s, much of the land around Stevenson Square was

²²⁴ Taylor and Holder, *Manchester's Northern Quarter*, pp. 17–18.

still unused by 1794. Nearly all of it was soon under the control of sub-developers in parcels of several acres.²²⁵

Ultimately, like Angel Meadow, Saint Paul's failed to achieve expectations and according to Taylor and Holder, rapidly changing conditions in and around the Stevenson's area led to it having a much more mixed character. The destabilising effect of early years of the Industrial Revolution and the lack of planning regulation saw the area sold off in relatively small parcels of land to individual builders or developers with no restrictions, which made uniformity difficult, they said. 'The construction from the 1780s onwards of a canal corridor and associated cotton-spinning mills in neighbouring Ancoats trapped Stevenson's middle-class housing between an industrial suburb and a crowded town centre, and the Northern Quarter began to lose its attraction as an elegant place of residence.'²²⁶

As the Northern Quarter's domestic weaving industry declined during the first half of the nineteenth century, other, more diverse, ventures thrived. According to Taylor and Holden, many houses no longer generated worthwhile income from rents and were converted to commercial premises. As will be seen, the larger houses of Angel Street and Blackley Street, and other streets in Angel Meadow were repurposed into lodging houses and tenements. Ultimately, Angel Meadow had enough of the right-sized houses for that purpose and was just near enough to the central business district to make it accessible for lodgers seeking work, while also being just too far from the town centre to prevent it developing the commercial function sought by property developers in Saint Paul's.

²²⁵ Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns*, pp. 92–4.

²²⁶ Taylor and Holder, *Manchester's Northern Quarter*, pp. 20–26.

The first inhabitants of Angel Meadow and their status

Having established that Angel Meadow bore similarities with Saint Paul's, this study will now look at the occupations of the first inhabitants of Angel Meadow to firmly establish the area's relative status in the late-eighteenth century. First, it is important to note that Georgian Manchester's middling sorts – a more appropriate term than middle-class – was not a homogenised group. As Craig Horner has said, disagreements remain over what exactly constituted the middling sorts and whether it made sense to lump them together as a coherent collective. He said: 'The people of Manchester recognised and used the vocabulary of the "inhabitant" to describe their society, but had adopted a tripartite terminology of the poor, the "inhabitant" and the "principal inhabitant". Their use of this vocabulary permitted a social differentiation between those who saw themselves as "inhabitants" and the poor, who remained excluded from the ranks of the rate-paying and esteemed. The "principal inhabitants" in turn were... socially differentiated from their "inhabitant" neighbours.'²²⁷

Then as now, a person's choice about where they wanted to live was based on their means. So, while the very wealthiest principal inhabitants of late-eighteenth-century Manchester could afford the best plots on Ardwick Green, the lower ranking professionals and merchant inhabitants below them could not. They would seek out semi-rural plots nearer to the town. As H.B. Rodgers wrote in 1962: 'In their choice of suburban sites, the main mass of Manchester's commercial and professional class could not afford to be so selective. They snatched the crumbs from the rich man's

²²⁷ Craig Horner, 'Proper Persons to Deal With: Identification and Attitudes of Middling Society in Manchester, c.1730–c.1760' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2001), pp. 262–3.

table, colonising any part of the outskirts not already bespoken by the very well-to-do. In their heyday, these districts of more modest housing must have seemed very attractive and certainly they were eminently respectable.’²²⁸

Using trade directories, it is possible to study the first inhabitants of Angel Meadow and their relative status. Trade directories remain an often-neglected source of research into towns’ social structures where sources are limited in the period before 1841. As Gareth Shaw has said, directories have been seen as a stop-gap at best by historical geographers in particular and used in many studies only when absolutely nothing else is available. British directories have been determined too biased in their coverage and to contain too many errors and inaccuracies. For example, the Manchester Directory of 1811 listed around 11,000 names, which represented only 11 percent of the population of Manchester and Salford. However, directories have, fortunately in Shaw’s view, received much more attention from local historians, whose interest in them dates back to the 1930s with the publication of a guide to the directories of London.²²⁹ Trade directories are also an imperfect source because the people listed in them were a self-selecting group and individual inclusion reflected the aims of the compiler and the method of compilation. Shaw found in a study comparing the 1823 Baines directory of Lancashire with the census data for 1821 that the compiler’s motive was to enumerate the important people and businessmen of the community, especially those living and working in the growing industrial towns. ‘It would seem that eighteenth-century directories, when compared with their nineteenth-century counterparts, are much less inclusive since they covered a smaller and often a more select sample of the total population,’ Shaw

²²⁸ Rodgers, *The Suburban Growth of Manchester*, p. 6.

²²⁹ Gareth Shaw, *British Directories as Sources in Historical Geography*, Historical Geography Research Series, No. 8 (April 1982), pp. 5–6, p. 31.

said.²³⁰ Such motives in the compilation of early directories are, however, to the benefit of this thesis. In early Angel Meadow's case, the self-selecting group in the earliest directories are the people being sought out by this chapter – the merchants and traders whose needs were the stimulus for the directories' publication.

The first three directories of Manchester, published by Elizabeth Raffald in 1772, 1773 and 1781, made no reference to Angel Meadow although the 1781 directory listed one person living in the district's Ashley Lane – a fustian dyer named Isaac Jackson.²³¹ Angel Meadow's absence could be because the area was still largely rural in nature, but it could also be explained by the experimental nature of the directories. Raffald's 1772 directory had just 60 pages and the addresses were vague at best.²³² Raffald herself recognised the difficulty of the challenge she faced, saying that finding out 'every inhabitant of the least consequence' was an 'arduous task'. The 'significant citizens' in her first directory numbered only 1,500 men and women in a population of 30,000 – or 5 percent. However, according to P.J. Corfield and Serena Kelly, it was the immediacy of directories – rather than their accuracy – that made them useful to the people reading them and ensured they triumphed over their obvious pitfalls: 'They were not intended as censuses of final record, but as immediate handbooks and research tools.' There were social implications of being listed in a town directory and, while inclusion was by no means consistent, in the first directories it indicated a level of social status with 'tradesmen, merchants, town grandees and other persons of note' listed together.²³³ Apart from references to Long

²³⁰ Shaw, *British Directories*, p. 13, pp. 30–32, p. 43.

²³¹ Suze Appleton, *The Manchester Directories of 1772, 1773 and 1781 by Elizabeth Raffald* (eBook by CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

²³² Appleton, *The Manchester Directories*, p. 7.

²³³ P.J. Corfield and Serena Kelly, 'Giving Directions to the Town: The Early Town Directories', *Urban History Yearbook*, Vol. 11 (1984), pp. 22–35.

Millgate, the district of Angel Meadow was also missing from *Bailey's Northern Directory* of 1781.²³⁴ The 1788 *Lewis Directory of Manchester*, however, listed 19 men and women in the streets of Angel Meadow. As mentioned earlier, this was the year Saint Michael's Church was being built. The names and occupations of the 1781 Angel Meadow directory population are listed in Table 3.3. Lewis's intentions can be seen in how the directory was to include the 'names of the merchants, manufacturers etc'.²³⁵

Name	Occupation	Type
Thomas Aspinwall	Engine Maker	Manufacturing
Edward Blackmore	Baker	Manufacturing
John Boardman	Shuttle Maker	Manufacturing
Ann Brady	Fustian Cutter	Manufacturing
James Cheetham	Print Block Maker	Manufacturing
William Dunbar	Joiner and Cabinet Maker	Manufacturing
John Grey	Muslin Manufacturer	Manufacturing
Simeon Hambleton	Flour Dealer	Dealing
Richard Haworth	Tailor and Habit Maker	Manufacturing
Samuel Haworth	Cotton Spinner	Manufacturing
Sarah Newton	Occupation unlisted	Unlisted
James Newton	Brick Maker	Mining
George Oliver	Flour Dealer	Dealing
Thomas Rawlinson	Tea Dealer	Dealing
Peter Travis	Gentleman	Independent
Edward Turner	Publican (Sign of the Angel)	Dealing
Joshua Warmby	Tea Dealer	Dealing
Thomas Welch	Print Cutter	Manufacturing
William Welch	Print Cutter	Manufacturing

Table 3.3: Angel Meadow inhabitants in 1781, identified in trade directories (Source: *Lewis Directory of Manchester*, 1788 <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>).

²³⁴ W. Bailey, *Bailey's Northern Directory, or Merchant's and Tradesman's Useful Companion for the Year 1781* (Warrington: William Ashton, 1781).

²³⁵ Neil, Richardson, *Manchester and Salford Directory 1788: Based on the 1888 edition published by Lewis's* (1788; Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1984), p. 5.

Local newspaper adverts and the *London Gazette* can be used to confirm the status of some of the original Angel Meadow inhabitants listed in Table 3.3 – further establishing the district’s early aspirations. The engine maker Thomas Aspinwall was listed as a ‘watchmaker and victualler, dealer and chapman’ when he was declared bankrupt in 1794.²³⁶ In 1798, the tea dealer Thomas Rawlinson, was running a business as a pawnbroker from an office at 60 Back Lane, was auctioning a quantity of forfeited pledges at his house in 71 Angel Street consisting of ‘men’s and women’s wearing apparel, silver watches, silver plate etc.’.²³⁷ The shuttle maker John Boardman eventually left Angel Meadow for the more remote district of Smedley. In 1838, he advertised the letting of a house and shop at the junction of Ashley Lane and Angel Street to ‘druggists, grocers, shopkeepers and others’ which he said was ‘eligibly situated for commanding and extensive business’. At that time, he was also selling a bakehouse and adjoining house in Style Street.²³⁸

To further interrogate the status of Angel Meadow’s early inhabitants, an occupational model can be used. There are a number of models for measuring the size of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century occupational groups including John Smith’s 1979 study of Deansgate.²³⁹ However, a model suggested by Jon Stobart, adapted from occupational lists drawn up by W.A. Armstrong, has been used here as it offers a more rigorous way of categorising late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century occupations than Smith’s model.²⁴⁰ Armstrong argued that occupational

²³⁶ *The London Gazette*, Issue 13633 (18 March 1794), p. 251.

²³⁷ *Manchester Mercury* (24 April 1798).

²³⁸ *Manchester Courier and General Advertiser* (19 May 1838).

²³⁹ John Smith, ‘Ten Acres of Deansgate in 1851’, *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, Vol. 80 (1979), pp. 43–59.

²⁴⁰ Jon Stobart, *The Urban System in the Regional Economy in North-West England 1700–60* (unpublished DPhil, Oxford University, 1993), appendices 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, pp. 580–591; W.A. Armstrong, ‘The Use of Information about Occupations’, in E.A. Wrigley, *Nineteenth Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for*

distribution and social class could be studied in a given area to trace the economic contours of a society.²⁴¹ The names of people found with Angel Meadow addresses in the directories of 1788, 1794, 1797 and 1800 have been recorded and their occupations placed into one of eight categories – manufacturing, dealing, building trades, transport and warehousing, independent, mining, domestic service and professional service. Where an Angel Meadow occupation was found that was unlisted in Stobart's study, they have been checked against Armstrong's list, which was based on later census enumerators' books. The results are shown in Tables 3.4 and 3.5. Manufacturing occupations already dominated the district by the 1780s, with 11 occupations (57.9 percent) in 1788, followed by dealing (26.3 percent). Building trades had increased by 1800 – a sign of the district's development. However, it is also notable that the occupants included 13 people in 'public service and professional' in 1794 (16.9 percent). They were a school master, a supervisor of excise, two excise officers, a letter carrier two bookkeepers, a commissioner, a midwife, an overseer of the poor, and the vicar, sexton and clerk of Saint Michael's Church. The 'public service and professional' category was used by Armstrong to classify occupations in the 1861 census.²⁴² While it has been retained here for ease of comparison, it is an awkward term because concepts of professionalism change over time. Rather than professional in the modern sense, they should be considered as a group of respectable inhabitants. Distinct from working operatives, they were minor industrialists, merchants and better-paid artisans. In percentage terms, this

the Study of Social Data (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 191; Charles Booth, 'Occupations of the People in the United Kingdom, 1801–81', in G. Routh, *Occupations of the People of the United Kingdom, 1801–1981* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

²⁴¹ Armstrong, *The Use of Information*, p. 191.

²⁴² Armstrong, *The Use of Information*, pp. 284–312.

group appears to have decreased in the 12 years to 1800. However, Figure 3.5 shows a loss of just four people.

Occupation/year	1788	1794	1797	1800
Manufacturing	57.9	49.4	52.6	58.5
Dealing	26.3	26	23	14.8
Building	0	3.9	5.1	7.4
Transport	0	0	0	1.5
Domestic service	0	0	0	0
Mining	5.3	0	0	0
Independent	5.3	0	1.3	0
Public Service and Professional	0	16.9	16.7	6.6
Unspecified	5.3	3.9	1.3	11.1

Table 3.4: Angel Meadow occupational study showing the percentage of each occupational group between 1788 and 1800. (Sources: Trade directories for 1788, 1794, 1797 and 1800 <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].)

Occupation/year	1788	1794	1797	1800
Manufacturing	11	38	41	79
Dealing	5	20	18	20
Building	5	3	4	10
Transport	0	0	0	2
Domestic service	0	0	0	0
Mining	1	0	0	0
Independent	1	0	1	0
Public Service and Professional	0	13	13	9
Unspecified	1	3	1	15

Table 3.5: Angel Meadow occupational study showing the numbers in each occupational group between 1788 and 1800. (Sources: Trade directories for 1788, 1794, 1797 and 1800 <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].)

Manchester's rate books again provide a useful tool for working out the status of the district's inhabitants.²⁴³ While no rate books have survived for 1788, the next available book of 1795, which was used in Chapter 2, confirms retrospectively the status of the people who were living in Angel Meadow seven years earlier – and the size of the houses they owned – by cross-referencing the directory entries with the names in the rate books for the district. As well as recording the rateable assessment of each house, the rate books also contain a record of the church ley paid by the occupant of each property. As Horner has described, while records identifying the Manchester poor at this time remain fragmentary, it is possible to construct a cohort of middling inhabitants by using the poor ley records.²⁴⁴ The 1795 rate book shows that John Boardman – listed in Table 3.3 from the 1788 trade directory as a shuttle maker – lived at 40 Angel Street. The house was assessed at £6 15s in 1795 and he was paying a church ley of 6s 6d – a rate of roughly one shilling in the pound. He also owned a property two doors away at 42 Angel Street, which was assessed at £3 with a poor ley of 3s 3d. The book indicates he held additional properties in and around the riverside area of Gibraltar – showing that those properties identified by Engels as 'cattle sheds' were originally owned by people who lived locally. In a sign of Boardman's social standing, his wife was described in the *Manchester Mercury* as being 'much respected' when she died in 1810.²⁴⁵ The tea dealer Thomas Rawlinson's house at 71 Angel Street was assessed at £4 10s and he was liable for a ley of 4s 4d. His business in Back Lane was assessed at £2 5s with a ley of 2s 2d. His fellow tea dealer Joshua Warmby's

²⁴³ Manchester Rate Books 1760–1900, <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].

²⁴⁴ Horner, 'Proper Persons', p. 48.

²⁴⁵ *Manchester Mercury* (5 June 1810).

house in Angel Street was assessed at £3 and he was paying a ley of 3s 3d – suggesting he was a man of more modest means than Boardman and Rawlinson. The block maker James Cheetham's house in Blackley Street was assessed at £3 15s, with an associated church ley of 3s 3d. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, 147 houses in Angel Meadow were rated at £3 or above (44.1 percent) in 1795.

This analysis of some of the earliest inhabitants of Angel Meadow provides two retrospective pieces of evidence about the district's status in 1788 – at the time of the building of Saint Michael's Church. Crucially, it confirms that the area *did* contain inhabitants of some status who lived in higher-value properties, including Boardman, whose house was one of the most valuable in Angel Street. However, nearby properties with a lower assessment show that Angel Meadow was originally a socially-mixed district of both professionals and artisans.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the key to understanding Victorian Manchester is to understand its late Georgian expansion – the 'big bang' when the town began to rapidly expand in size at the very beginning of the Industrial Revolution. It has discussed how wealthier inhabitants sought to move towards the edges of town and how suburbs began to be created at Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent. It has shown, however, that Angel Meadow has never been considered as a true suburb because the focus in studying the district has been on the mid-Victorian slum conditions emphasised by Engels.

In establishing Angel Meadow's true place within the geography of Manchester at this pivotal moment in the development of the world's first modern

city, this chapter has looked at what Victorian observers other than Engels said about the housing in the district, including how it had originally housed inhabitants of a higher social standing. While the previous chapter showed how Angel Meadow was different from Ancoats in the mid-nineteenth century, this chapter has shown how the two districts were also different at the point at which they were being built in the Georgian period. This has been established by using poor rate books to illustrate how Angel Meadow had more houses valued at £3 and to show that these houses were concentrated in long rows on streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street, which, as shown in photographic evidence in the previous chapter, were streets that were dominated by three-storey dwellings.

Angel Meadow shared some commonality with Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent in terms of its geography – a raised location overlooking a river – and also in terms of its aspirations as shown in the building of Saint Michael's Church by the Reverend Humphrey Owen, who no doubt had hopes of attracting wealthier inhabitants to the district from the centre of Manchester. However, Angel Meadow's geographical location close to the centre of Manchester ultimately marked it out as different from Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent, which had the advantage of being more distant from the built-up area of the town. Studying the housing in those districts shows it was different in character to the housing in Angel Meadow.

This chapter has shown that Angel Meadow should rightly be considered as an extension to the town and as having shared characteristics with the Saint Paul's district, which is today known as the Northern Quarter. Both Saint Paul's and Angel Meadow had similar types of three-storey housing, but while in Saint Paul's they were at a lower end of the property ladder compared with the highest value homes on Lever Row and around Stevenson's Square, in Angel Meadow they were near the

top of the property ladder compared with the smaller back-to-back workers' dwellings that would later be built in the streets around them. While the three-storey dwellings in Saint Paul's could be adapted into commercial premises because they were within the central business district, Angel Meadow's location beyond the central business district made its three-storey dwellings more suitable for developing a lodging house quarter.

This chapter has looked finally at the original inhabitants of Angel Meadow and has examined their occupations and status at this pivotal moment of housing development. It is clear, using an occupational study devised by Jon Stobart, that manufacturing dominated Angel Meadow early in its development, but it is also clear that the district also originally contained, in addition to the artisans who occupied three-storey workshop dwellings, a group of more respectable inhabitants and men of independent means. Using rate books, it has shown that some of these inhabitants, such as John Boardman, lived in higher-value homes. The next chapter will show how these inhabitants sought to create a prosperous edge-of-town neighbourhood before Angel Meadow declined in the early years of the Industrial Revolution, and in particular how a number of the first property owners were owner-occupiers.

Chapter 4: How Angel Meadow was originally developed

The previous chapter investigated the early status of Angel Meadow by examining the rateable values of the district's houses at the time they were being built in the late-eighteenth century and by comparing them with property values in Ancoats and Saint Paul's. Having determined how Angel Meadow's earliest housing compared with these neighbouring districts and having examined the occupations and status of some of the district's first inhabitants, this thesis will now study the early development of the district before it became known as a slum and will investigate the original inhabitants' early intentions for what they wanted the Angel Meadow to become. It will do this by using maps to show in detail how the district moved from green fields to an extension of Manchester's urban sprawl between 1750 and 1800. It will also use adverts of land and property sales listed in the *Manchester Mercury* to show how the district was initially promoted as a beneficial investment opportunity with houses containing respectable tenants. It will then focus on a number of key land sales in this period before finally using the 1798 Land Tax Redemption to analyse the spread of house ownership in Angel Meadow's first building phase. This chapter will examine the extent of owner-occupation in the early development phase as potential proof that the original property owners were content to live in the district that Engels later described as 'Hell upon Earth'.

The first references to Angel Meadow

Understanding how Angel Meadow came by its name is essential for providing a starting point for the district's development. The name, with its connotations of a rural idyll, is at odds with the later descriptions of a slum. While late Victorian writers

believed the Angel Meadow name came from its pre-industrial pastoral scene, an article in the *Manchester Courier* in 1827 offered another explanation. 'Some persons may suppose that the term Angel Meadow has been ironically given to the part of the town now inhabited by characters of both sexes of the very worst description,' it said. 'The fact is that it was formerly a pasture field, usually held by the occupiers of a public house called the Angel, situate in the present Angel Court in the Market Place, and much frequented by drovers, who put their cattle in this field.'²⁴⁶

While this story has some provenance because of its age – the original ownership of the fields being within a generation of the writer – a search of Manchester's rate books has uncovered no evidence linking a meadow to the Angel public house in Angel Court. There was, however, a public house called the Angel, which stood in Angel Street in the late-eighteenth century, which explains the story and also the name of the street itself. This was not the Angel that currently stands in Angel Street, which was previously named the Wheatsheaf. The Angel originally stood on the opposite, south side of Angel Street, where it remained until at least 1902. There were, incidentally, two other fields named Angel Meadow in eighteenth-century Manchester. One was on the Ducie estate in Cheetham and the other was on the turnpike road from Manchester to Bolton. The name, then, was not unique. Beyond Manchester, Oxford also has an Angel Meadow named after an old

²⁴⁶ 'Reminiscences of Manchester', *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* (13 October 1827).

coaching inn called the Angel. The Angel district of London is said to be named after a seventeenth century coaching inn of the same name.²⁴⁷

The first reference to the name Angel Meadow appeared in an article in the *Manchester Mercury* in May 1788 at the time of the construction of Saint Michael's Church, which said the land on which the church was being built had 'hitherto been called Angel Meadow'.²⁴⁸ While the article implies that the name pre-dated the church, Angel Meadow merited no mention in Manchester's Court Leet until 1824 when a butcher named James Gaskell was fined £10 for keeping a quarter of beef in a 'diseased and unwholesome state'.²⁴⁹ This shows that the name was only used administratively *after* the district was heavily developed. This is significant. While the name may not have been devised as part of the original housing development, the early development certainly gave currency to the name and was picked up and promoted by the first developers. As discussed in the previous chapter, there was no mention of Angel Meadow in the Raffald directories of 1772, 1773 and 1781.²⁵⁰ The 1788 Lewis Directory, however, listed 19 people in Angel Meadow.²⁵¹ The year 1788, then, marks the first recorded mention of the name in Manchester trade directories and the *Manchester Mercury*.

In 1790, a plot of land named Sion Hill, which later became known as Mount Street and even later Old Mount Street, was described as being 'near onto Angel

²⁴⁷ *Deeds: Lands called Yarn Croft, the Great Meadow, Angel Meadow etc., in Cheetham, 1744, The Ducie Muniments* (University of Manchester Library, D3406/T29); *Manchester Mercury* (13 May 1800).

²⁴⁸ *Manchester Mercury* (27 May 1788).

²⁴⁹ J.P. Earwaker, *The Court Leet Records of the Manor of Manchester, from the Year 1552 to the year 1686, and from the Year 1731 to the Year 1846* (Manchester: H. Blacklock and Co., Vol. 11, 1888), p. 117.

²⁵⁰ Appleton, *The Manchester Directories*.

²⁵¹ Neil, Richardson, *Manchester and Salford Directory 1788*.

Meadow'.²⁵² The name Sion, which has religious connotations, hints at the area's rural attractiveness. The neighbouring Style Street, originally Stile Street, also speaks of rural origins. In 1792, a sale of land adjoining Saint Michael's Church was described as being 'about two acres of land, being the remainder unbuilt upon a close of land called the Angel Meadow'.²⁵³ This suggests that the name did originate from a field on or near the site of the church and that this field was significantly greater than two acres. The 'Top of Angel Meadow' was named in the rate book in 1795 as 'being a part of Angel Street'. After 1798, only Angel Street was used in the rate books, suggesting the street's development was by then completed and that the original meadow had been built over.²⁵⁴

The early development of Angel Meadow

Historians have already set out the processes that were taking place more broadly in Manchester during Angel Meadow's formative development phase in the late-eighteenth century. At this time, Manchester was expanding at a rapid pace and land at the edge of town was increasing in value. Across town from Angel Meadow, the Byrom estate off Deansgate and the Aytoun estate off modern-day Portland Street were laid out and sold off in building plots in 1776. Saint John Street on the Byrom estate with its terraced Georgian housing was imposing and was laid out with Saint John's Church framed at one end.²⁵⁵ Jacqueline Roberts said that all of the large estates in Manchester were developed 'in the manner familiar in urban areas all over

²⁵² *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1790).

²⁵³ *Manchester Mercury* (28 August 1792).

²⁵⁴ Manchester Rate Books 1760–1900, <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].

²⁵⁵ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, pp. 50–2

the country, with wide streets laid out with residences for gentlemen, with attic or rear workshops and workers' cottages in narrow back streets'.²⁵⁶ Sir Ashton Lever's estate, which included the Saint Paul's district discussed in Chapter 3, was also being developed.

Eighteenth century plans show how the early development of Angel Meadow progressed. In Figure 4.1, the 1750 plan of Manchester and Salford shows three large, hedge-lined fields, with short rows of houses on Ashley Lane and larger terraces along both sides of Long Millgate, which was then known simply as the Millgate.²⁵⁷ The future paths of Angel Street and Blackley Street were marked by hedgerows – showing that the distinctive 'L shape' the streets later formed was due to the fact that they were laid out along field boundaries. The bottom corner of Mill Lane, later renamed Miller Street, was already developed with houses in 1750. Behind the Long Millgate and Mill Lane houses stood a number of large burgage plots – rental properties that traditionally came with a long, narrow area of land used for growing fruit and vegetables. Two more large fields can be seen to the north of Ashley Lane, along with rows of houses at the junction of Mill Lane and Shudehill.

²⁵⁶ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, p. 50.

²⁵⁷ Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1750 (Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127, photographed by Manchester University, 2012).

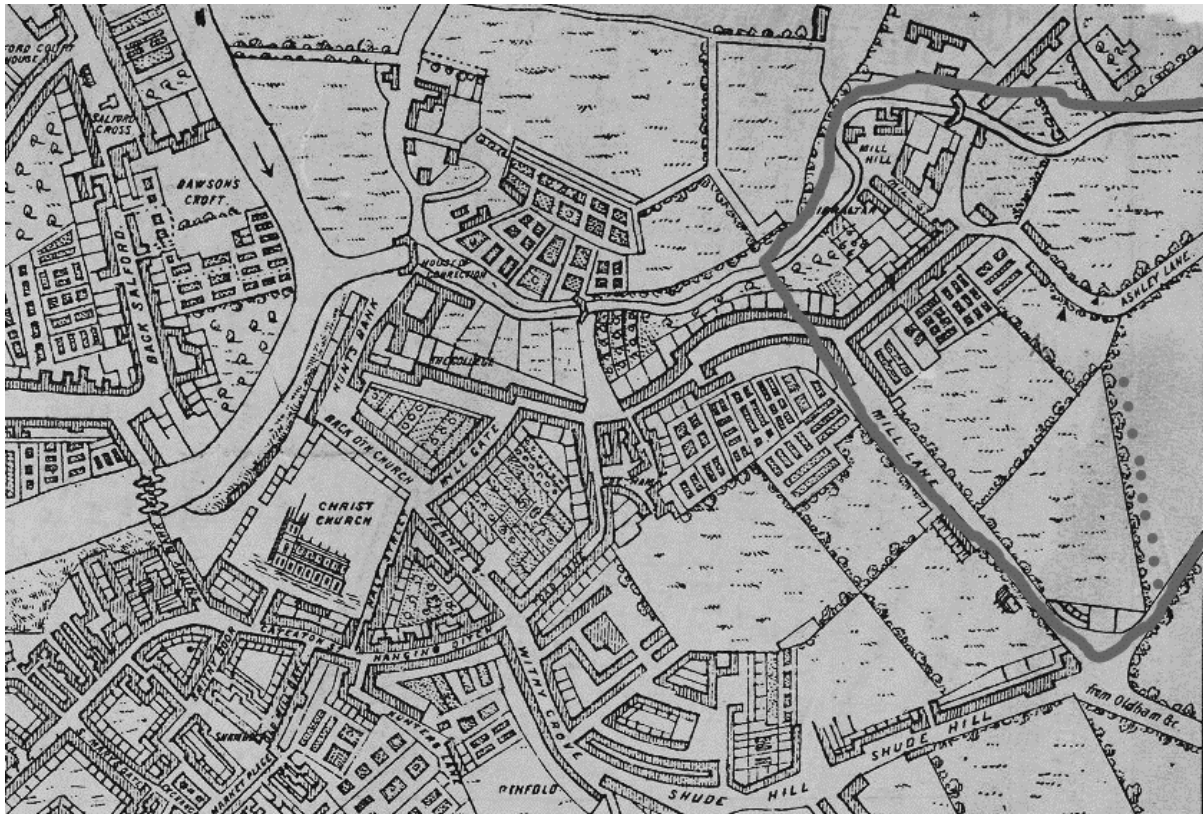


Figure 4.1: The district that later became Angel Meadow is marked on the right of this detailed section of the 1750 plan of Manchester and Salford with a thick line. The path of Angel Street followed a hedgerow separating two fields and is marked with dots. (Source: Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1750, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.)

Angel Meadow was largely untouched by development in the mid-eighteenth century compared with the central area of the town. The extension of Long Millgate into the fields indicates a pattern of ‘ribbon develop’ consistent with the growth of other areas of Manchester, where building was at first confined to major roads leading out of the central area.²⁵⁸ Ribbon development had an effect of creating terraces more regular than previous street alignments.²⁵⁹ More detail can be seen in the Figure 4.2, with Mill Lane shown on the left.



Figure 4.2: The 1751 plan of Manchester. The map is drawn with a different orientation to Figure 4.1. (Source: Longmans and Co 1751 Plan of Manchester and Salford, Manchester Archives and Local Studies Street Map Collection, GB127).

The Hulme Trust archive provides some detail of the early land occupation in Angel Meadow and further highlights the district’s rural nature in this period. Chalklin

²⁵⁸ Wild and Miller, *Co-operative Headquarters*, p. 104.

²⁵⁹ Richard Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780–1914: Class, Capitalism and Construction* (London: MacMillan Education, 1989), p. 30.

suggested that all of the area including Angel Meadow was originally part of the Hulme Trust estate, although a search of the trust's land plans from 1753 only revealed a small area of land at Shudehill, some fields beyond Angel Meadow towards Collyhurst and extensive land in New Cross, between what became Rochdale Road and Oldham Road. Figure 4.3 shows the 1753 plan of the Shudehill plot at the corner of what became Miller Street and Rochdale Road (marked Miller's Lane and Green Lane on the plan). The same location can be found in Figure 4.2.



Figure 4.3: John Smith's and Roger Bradshaw's tenements at Shudehill. Note the size of the houses, their front gardens and outbuildings and the orchard. (Source: William Hulme's Survey of Shudehill, 1753, Hulme Archive, Chethams Library.)

Figure 4.3 shows two substantial houses, with front gardens and outbuildings – tenements in the occupation of John Smith and Roger Bradshaw. A water course

runs behind the houses and there appears to be an orchard on Bradshaw's property, which would have been high-value land.²⁶⁰ The lack of housing in the district up to the third quarter of the eighteenth century is emphasised by the Tinker map of 1772 in Figure 4.4.



Figure 4.4: Detail from the 1772 Tinker Map of Manchester showing that Angel Meadow was still undeveloped, with much of Miller's Lane marked by a hedgerow. (Source: T. Tinker, *A Plan of Manchester and Salford in the County Palatine of Lancaster* (Manchester: J. Fothergill, 1772); GB127. Local Studies Street Map Collection/1772 Tinker, Manchester Archives and Local Studies.)

While sparse in detail, the map in Figure 4.4 shows properties only on Long Millgate at the bottom of Miller's Lane. The 1773 census of Manchester also confirms

²⁶⁰ [Anonymous], *Documents Concerning Land and Property in Shudehill, Newton Lane (later Oldham Road), Swan Street and Rochdale Road* (Hulme/2/3/15, 1–16, Hulme Trust Archive, Chetham's Library).

that Angel Meadow was still rural.²⁶¹ It listed no streets apart from Long Millgate and Miller's Lane. Miller's Lane then contained 66 families in 44 houses – a local population of 251.²⁶² The development began at pace shortly after this. As discussed in Chapter 2, a 1775 half-penny was found encased in the mortar during an archaeological dig in Angel Street.²⁶³

The early development of Angel Meadow can also be determined by once again examining trade directories and rate books, as well as parish registers. As discussed in the previous chapter, 18 people were shown as living in the district in the 1788 Lewis's Directory. Four of them – John Boardman, James Cheetham, Simeon Hambleton and Thomas Rawlinson – were also listed in the 1795 rate book. Assuming they did not move house, their addresses in 1795 confirm retrospectively the existence in 1788 of Angel Street and Blackley Street. The Saint Michael's Church baptism and burial records for 1793 listed addresses in Angel Street, Ashley Lane, Beswick's Row, Blackley Street and Long Millgate, as well as two families giving their address as Angel Meadow.²⁶⁴ The 1794 trade directory provides a more comprehensive record of inhabitants – listing 77 people in 13 streets. It even gives the house numbers of 42 of those inhabitants as shown in Table 4.1. Angel Street and Blackley Street were, clearly, well developed main streets by then.

²⁶¹ T. Tinker, *A Plan of Manchester and Salford in the County Palatine of Lancaster* (Manchester: J. Fothergill, 1772; GB127. Local Studies Street Map Collection/1772 Tinker, Manchester Archives and Local Studies).

²⁶² Thomas Percival and John Whitaker, *An Enumeration of the Houses and Inhabitants of the Town and Parish of Manchester in Three Volumes*, 1773 and 1774 (Chetham's Library, A.4.54–A.4.56).

²⁶³ [Anonymous], *Arkwright's Mill*, p. 22.

²⁶⁴ *Manchester, England, Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1541–1812*, <<https://www.ancestry.com>> [accessed 20 June 2021].

Street	Number of people listed	House numbers listed
Angel Street	18	12, 14, 15, 19, 25, 28, 30, 34, 40, 41, 66, 68, 71
Ashley Lane	4	9
Ashley Street	10	2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12
Back Lane	5	1, 4
Beswick's Row	9	2, 15, 16, 18, 19
Blackley Street	17	3, 8, 9, 15, 18, 24, 30, 31, 41
Cross Street	2	5, 13
Dyche Street	4	6
Green Lane	1	7
Mosley Court	2	
Mount Street	1	6
New Burial Ground	1	
Sion Hill	3	

Table 4.1: Directory listings in the 1794 Scholes's directory divided by each street and showing house numbers listed in each street. Green Lane was another name for Back Lane. Cross Street was later renamed Cross Irk Street. (Source: John Scholes, *Scholes's Manchester and Salford Directory* (Manchester: Sowler and Russell, 1794; <<https://www.specialcollections.le.ac.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018].

While Miller's Lane and Long Millgate were rated in 1794, no attempt was made to assess the properties within Angel Meadow before 1795. By then, the district was already well established, with 415 houses listed in 26 streets in that year's rate book. As shown in Figure 4.2, Angel Street already had at least 54 houses and Blackley Street had 35. However, the house numbering in Figure 4.1 suggests, confusingly, that there may have been at least 71 houses in Angel Street and 41 in Blackley Street.

Street	Houses	Street	Houses
Millers Street	39	Simpson Street	4
Ledger Street	21	Dyche Street	9
Mellor's Court	8	Ludgate Street	3
Blackley Street	35	Back Lane	17
Bk Blackley Street	5	Ashley Street	12
Upper Ashley Lane	7	Back Ashley Street	12
Beswick's Row	22	Streets adjoining	15
Crown Lane	9	Sion Hill	20
Crown Street	13	Burying Ground	15
Joiner Street	4	Irk Street	19
Factory Court	13	Cross Irk Street	7
Factory Lane	5	Ashley Lane	8
Long Millgate	29	Part of Angel Street	7
Angel Street	47	Total houses	415

Table 4.2: Streets and houses in Angel Meadow in 1795. (Source: 1795 rate book, <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>>) [accessed 19 June 2021].

By the mid-1790s, then, Angel Meadow was already well developed. A close inspection at the William Green map of 1794 and the Laurent map of 1793 in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 confirms that one side of Angel Street had already been fully developed. Both sides of Blackley Street had been completed, with several other streets also laid out ready for houses. As shown in the previous chapter, both of these streets contained mainly large, three-storey houses valued at £3 or above. While the backs of houses between Long Millgate and the River Irk appear as a confusion of back

alleys, the higher status of the housing in Angel Street, Blackley Street, (Old) Mount Street and Ashley Street is evidenced by their large, private backyards with small outbuildings, which stand out clearly on the William Green map in Figure 4.5. There was one key difference between Angel Meadow and the Byrom, Aytoun, Lever and Legh estates, as the same map shows. Instead of having a single landowner overseeing the development, Angel Meadow was in the hands of a number of small landholders at this pivotal moment in its development. The impact of this will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

The change in gradient from Back Lane (Saint George's Road/Rochdale Road) down to the River Irk is more noticeable on the Laurent map in Figure 4.6, which offers a clue about the value of the land.²⁶⁵ The flatter, higher fields are likely to have been of higher agricultural value. It is notable that the streets awaiting housing in this top half of Angel Meadow were drawn as wide streets in the Laurent map. In this boom phase of development, new streets were being laid out in a gridiron pattern which mirrored the development in the Byrom and Aytoun estates.²⁶⁶ In 1872, Hippolyte Taine noted that these gridiron streets could be found in some of Manchester's poorer districts: 'The symmetrical streets resemble the skeletons of streets mechanically ranged in motionless rows.'²⁶⁷ According to Rodger, this layout matched original field shapes was a recognised way of increasing rentals because it allowed more houses to be built to the acre as well as simplifying the building process.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Terry Wyke, *Laurent's Map of Manchester (1793; Oxford: Old House Books, 2012)*.

²⁶⁶ Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns*, p. 90.

²⁶⁷ Hippolyte Taine, *Notes on England* (London: Strahan and Co, 1872), p. 304.

²⁶⁸ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 30.

These maps are a cartographic snapshot of Angel Meadow in a state of flux. They also show the arrival of industry in the form of Simpson's Mill, which will be discussed at length in the next chapter. It is enough here to note that while some developers were building larger, three-storey housing, others had different ideas and were using their property to create an industrial base in the district. While the names of some streets – Stile, Dike and Mount – referenced the district's rural past, Factory Lane marked out its future. The existence of the larger housing, however, cannot be denied.



Figure 4.5: Detail from the William Green Plan of Manchester for 1794 showing how streets were being laid out for development. Angel Street and Blackley Street were already well developed with large houses with private backyards, while other streets were laid out in a gridiron pattern. (Source: The William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)



Figure 4.6: Detail from the Laurent map of 1793 showing the broad streets. Note the width of the streets laid out ready for development and how upper and lower Angel Meadow were divided by a slope in the land which led down to the River Irk. (Source: Charles Laurent, a Topographical Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1793, © The University of Manchester, JRL16120709.)

Land and property sales

Using advertisements for Angel Meadow property sales listed in the *Manchester Mercury* from 1780 to 1825, a picture can be built of the housing market in Angel Meadow during the district's initial developmental phase. Some 33 Angel Meadow auctions and private sales have been identified in the newspaper and examined in that period. These sales were split into 55 lots containing 199 dwellings and six other buildings, and 26 acres of land, although in some cases the acreage was not listed. Some of the lots were sold and then resold in the same period. Sales were prompted by investment decisions and also by the death or bankruptcy of the property owner. For the initial period of development between 1788 and 1800, a total of 19 lots were offered for sale containing 56 houses – a quarter of all the houses sold in a longer period stretching to 1825.

Before looking in further detail at how the early housing development progressed, this chapter will focus on the changes in land ownership in two patches of land featured in these adverts – Meadowcroft's Land and Fielding's Land – to understand this early development of the district. Both landholdings can be seen in Figure 4.5. In 1790, five acres known as Meadowcroft's Land came up for sale. The most likely candidate for ownership was Richard Meadowcroft (1756–1830), who in 1770 became a pioneer of dyeing.²⁶⁹ The admission registers of the Manchester School describe Meadowcroft as a 'soap boiler, silk cotton and silk handkerchief dyer, of Long Millgate'.²⁷⁰ According to Aikin, Meadowcroft turned to chemistry and

²⁶⁹ Elizabeth Raffald, *Manchester and Salford Directory* (Manchester: J. Harrop, 1781).

²⁷⁰ Jeremiah Finch Smith, *Admission Registers of the Manchester School, with Some Notices of the Most Distinguished Scholars* (Manchester: Chetham Society, Vol. 1, 1866), p. 141.

‘made experiments till he produced fast colours in different shades of chocolate, and a colour approaching to scarlet, which he long kept to himself and established the article to his own deserved emolument’.²⁷¹ He was also described as having ‘invented a method of mixing the colours in silk handkerchiefs to imitate those bought in India’.²⁷² If Meadowcroft is the right candidate, he is likely to have bought the land to generate more wealth on the back of his financial success. He was a trustee of the House of Recovery in Portland Street, a charity which opened in 1796.²⁷³ He was in distinguished company in this venture, with three notaries of eighteenth-century Manchester: Dr. Thomas Percival, Thomas Butterworth Bayley and Dr. John Ferriar. Meadowcroft was Bayley’s neighbour. All four were members of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society.²⁷⁴

The two fields being sold in 1790 were subject to a small ground rent for a long term to Meadowcroft and to Henry Cornwall Legh (1734–1791) of High Legh, Cheshire, who as previously mentioned also owned a large estate in Ancoats. The Legh estate papers were searched but the lease and any indentures appear not to have survived. The fields in Meadowcroft’s Land were among several lots up for sale in Angel Meadow at the time, including a total of 39 houses. Meadowcroft’s Land went up for sale again in 1791 after it was unsold in 1790. It was mentioned again in the *Manchester Mercury* in 1794, when the representatives of a bankrupt, Richard Mawhood, offered for sale his interest in the site. Also being offered for sale by Mawhood were some tenements in Ashley Lane and chief rents on some land in

²⁷¹ Aikin, *A Description of the Country*, p. 161.

²⁷² Henry Smithers, *Liverpool, its Commerce, Statistics and Institutions with a History of the Cotton Trade* (Liverpool: Thomas Kaye, 1825), p. 123.

²⁷³ Aston, *A Picture of Manchester*, pp. 184–6.

²⁷⁴ Margaret DeLacy, ‘The Manchester House of Recovery: Contagion, Controversy and Communication’ (a conference paper given to the Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine, Manchester, 2013).

Ancoats.²⁷⁵ Mawhood was an attorney, money scrivener, dealer and chapman from Wakefield in Yorkshire and had been involved with a builder named Joshua Reyner in the original sale of Meadowcroft's Land in 1790 as a land developer or promoter. He appears to have taken control of the land for himself.²⁷⁶ A notice in the *London Gazette* in June 1793 said Mawhood and Reyner had both become bankrupt.²⁷⁷ In November of that year, Reyner's creditors held a meeting at the Manchester Arms in Long Millgate to settle their affairs. Reyner's estate included five unnamed fields.²⁷⁸ By 1807, Meadowcroft's Land was in the possession of a Mr. Pilling and others.²⁷⁹ Charles Pilling was a Rusholme gentleman, who also owned land farther down the hill in Ashley Field, near the Irk.²⁸⁰ An Ordnance Survey plan of Manchester shows a street named Pilling Street on what had been Meadowcroft's Land.²⁸¹

In 1807, another substantial plot of two fields next to Meadowcroft's Land came up for sale by auction. Fielding's Land contained 26,019 square yards (5.3 acres) and had been the property of the late John Fielding – a wholesale greengrocer and tea dealer connected to the East India Company. Several promissory half-pennies or condor tokens were issued by Fielding, which offer an insight into his status. Two of these have been shown in Figure 4.7. One issued in 1793 depicts the emblem of the Worshipful Company of Grocers – one of the 110 livery companies of the City of London – and the bale mark of the East India Company. Another from 1792 depicts the company's London headquarters, East

²⁷⁵ *Manchester Mercury* (5 August 1794).

²⁷⁶ *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1790).

²⁷⁷ *London Gazette*, Issue 13540 (22 June 1793), p. 536.

²⁷⁸ *London Gazette*, Issue 13592 (9 November 1793), p. 1007.

²⁷⁹ *Manchester Mercury* (1 December 1807).

²⁸⁰ Roberts, *Working-Class Housing*, p. 9.

²⁸¹ 5 feet to 1 mile (1:1056) Town Plans of Manchester and Salford, Ordnance Survey, c.1843–1850, University of Manchester Library, JRL1300074.)

India House. A third issued in 1793 shows a porter carrying a bale of cotton and the coat of arms of the Duke of Bridgewater with the legend *Success to Navigation*. This is a reference to the Bridgewater Canal, presumably as it played a part in Fielding's trade. The number of Fielding's tokens being sold on eBay in 2022 is testament to their wide circulation at the end of the eighteenth century. His interest in Angel Meadow may have originally been as agricultural land for his grocery business, however it is clear that this land became a good investment as land for development.



Figure 4.7: Condor tokens bearing the name of John Fielding and dated 1793. The token in the two left images shows the emblem of the Worshipful Company of Grocers on one side and the bale mark of the East India Company on the reverse. The token depicted in the two images on the right depicts the coat of arms of the Duke of Bridgewater and the words 'success to navigation' in honour of the building of the Bridgewater Canal. (Source: Dean Kirby collection)

The 1807 sale of Fielding's Land was being conducted by the representatives of John Seel, a fustian manufacturer, dealer and chapman, for £871 19s 1d with annual rents worth £170 5s 6d to be paid jointly to the assignees and heirs of Fielding.²⁸² Seel had also been referenced in the sale of the same land in 1796, when he was listed as a bankrupt.²⁸³ His business affairs had been tumultuous. In 1787, a partnership between John Seel and Samuel Seel, listed as cotton manufacturers, had been dissolved. Another partnership between John Seel and

²⁸² *Manchester Mercury* (1 December 1807).

²⁸³ *Manchester Mercury* (3 May 1796).

Richard Bentley, then cotton spinners, was also dissolved in 1791.²⁸⁴ By 1813, Fielding's Land already contained several houses belonging to Messrs Fryer, Markland and others, and came with yearly rents of £3 14s 8d and £4 3s 2d. It was being sold by the trustees of Fielding's estate, Percival North, a grocer of the City of London, and Richard Downward, a merchant of Bath. They were appointed by Fielding along with the late James Kenyon, a merchant of Liverpool, by indentures of lease and release in May 1793. The *London Gazette* showed that the perpetual yearly rent of £170 5s 6d, a large sum, was reserved to a local property owner and brickmaker named James Newton.²⁸⁵

There are several points to be noted about the sale of Meadowcroft's Land and Fielding's Land and their slow progression from open fields to housing. The *Manchester Mercury* adverts show how this upper part of the Angel Meadow district was being promoted as a beneficial development opportunity to build houses for good, rent-paying tenants and as offering a level of amenity. The 1790 advert for Meadowcroft's Land, for example, said it was 'excellent building land', adding that it contained hidden mineral wealth: 'Many thousand pounds worth of capital brick marl, which will advantage and reduce the land to proper building form by getting, being situated upon a considerable eminence.'²⁸⁶ The Mawhood advert in 1794 reaffirmed that it was 'very valuable building ground'. In 1807, the Seel advert for Fielding's Land also said it was 'capable of being laid out for building land to considerable advantage and from its contiguity to the new turnpike road from Manchester to

²⁸⁴ *Manchester Mercury* (2 April 1791).

²⁸⁵ *London Gazette*, Issue 16769 (31 August 1813), p. 1737.

²⁸⁶ *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1790).

Blackley, is likely to be in considerable demand for that purpose'. This was land intended for substantial housing that would attract the best possible rents.

The turnpike road mentioned in the Seel advert offered more than just the prospect of better transport infrastructure. According to Dan Bogart, turnpike trusts, whose members were typically local landowners and merchants who had a direct interest in the improvement of roads, served to increase property income. Turnpikes were responsible for at least 20 percent of the total growth in land rents between 1690 and 1815. Bogart said they may have contributed to higher property income through the growth in manufacturing as well. Turnpikes were often established in areas that already had manufacturing, but they could have encouraged more firms to locate to a particular district because they offered greater access to markets and lowered the cost of obtaining information. The addition of more manufacturing boosted investment in buildings and housing, which added to property income. It also boosted a district's population, which increased land rents.²⁸⁷

Seel had already built two houses in the suburb of Ardwick Green and therefore knew the value of a good development opportunity.²⁸⁸ His advert for Fielding's Land said: 'The rents now intended to be sold are well secured by dwelling houses, all of which are in the occupation of respectable tenants.'²⁸⁹ A similar advert in 1802 offered two dwelling houses and two plots of land on a plot next to a Baptist chapel on Saint George's Road on or next to Fielding's Land, saying the plots were 'situated in an airy and pleasant place'.²⁹⁰ This was not just about offering a pleasant

²⁸⁷ Dan Bogart, 'Turnpike Trusts and Property Income: New Evidence on the Effects of Transport Improvements and Legislation in Eighteenth-Century England', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (2009), pp. 128–152.

²⁸⁸ *Manchester Mercury* (4 December 1787).

²⁸⁹ *Manchester Mercury* (1 December 1807).

²⁹⁰ *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1802).

place to live, as open and 'airy' or well ventilated spaces were believed to be healthy at a time when it was thought that poor quality air made people sick.²⁹¹ While developers were obviously keen to present their landholdings in the best possible light, these adverts show how Angel Meadow was being marketed as a place where good money could be made from rents, with houses providing a good rental income and the benefits of clean air and improved transport links. Newspaper adverts themselves in the late-eighteenth century played a role in the culture of politeness. According to Stobart, Hann and Morgan, they assumed their readers already understood polite discourse as they appealed to those who were already initiated into polite circles.²⁹² All of the above is at odds with the later conclusions drawn by Engels, who argued that these were propertied classes intent on renting out poor-quality dwellings at high prices 'to plunder the poverty of the workers, to undermine the health of thousands, in order that they alone, the owners, may grow rich.'²⁹³

As can be seen in the adverts, both the sales included the payment of rent to the original landowner. In the case of Meadowcroft's Land, a small rent was owed to the Legh estate. In the case of Fielding's Land, it was owed to James Newton. The original landowner was generally not the builder and sometimes they promoted the land and laid out roads and plots or conveyed it to developers such as Mawhood and Seel. According to Chalklin, developers such as these came from a variety of backgrounds including substantial townsmen, craftsmen builders, bricklayers, carpenters or joiners, while in Manchester they also included people from important trades such as brewing, dyeing, and merchants and attorneys. Investors included

²⁹¹ Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns*, p. 61.

²⁹² Stobart, Hann and Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption*, p. 172.

²⁹³ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 66.

victuallers, grocers, tailors and small manufacturers.²⁹⁴ The Hulme Trust archive gives an insight into what was happening around Angel Meadow – although not within it – at the same time. Sixteen leases can be found from 1789 to 1802 in areas including Swan Street and Newton Lane with rents of between £5 to £63 per annum. All of the leases were for 99 years. Those leasing the Hulme land included a range of occupations. They included property investors, such as a cotton manufacturer, two rope makers, two chapmen and two grocers, and likely builders such as the timber merchant James Wild, the plumber and glazier Isaac Edge, the joiner Thomas Bennett and the stonemason Thomas Jackson. The average rental was around £16 per annum.²⁹⁵ In Angel Meadow, a key figure in property promotion was an attorney named John Owen. On 9 May 1786, an advert appeared for the auction of the Angel public house in Angel Street along with several messuages or dwellings with appurtenances adjoining or nearby in the possession of John Walwork, George Ward, Mrs. Greenhalgh, Joshua Wharmby, John Isherwood and William Ashcroft. The advert said that Owen ‘wants upon very desirable security, the several sums of £200 and £100’.²⁹⁶ On 28 August 1792, the *Manchester Mercury* reported that Owen wished to purchase ‘a leasehold tenement, for lives, situated within 3 or 4 miles from Manchester and comprising 20 acres or thereabouts’. The advert warned people to avoid throwing or laying down ‘any dirt or rubbish upon the land lying near Saint Michael’s Church’.²⁹⁷ On 11 May 1802, Owen’s office was involved in the auction of a large plot of building land adjoining the church and ‘commonly called the Angel

²⁹⁴ Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns*, pp. 57–9.

²⁹⁵ [Anonymous], *Documents Concerning Land and Property in Shudehill, Newton Lane, Swan Street and Rochdale Road* (Hulme/2/3/15/1–16, Hulme Trust Archive, Chethams Library).

²⁹⁶ *Manchester Mercury* (9 May 1786).

²⁹⁷ *Manchester Mercury* (28 August 1792).

Meadow' and several plots adjoining.²⁹⁸ Owen (1759–1831) lived at 29 Gartside Street and was the son of the Reverend Humphrey Owen.²⁹⁹ He would have had an interest in helping produce beneficial development to support his father's church-building project and appears to have been the land promoter. Humphrey Owen was also a beneficiary of some early property sales, which could have helped to fund the building of Saint Michael's Church. On 26 June 1790, 14 houses at the edge of the New Burying Ground were offered for sale, all with tenants already occupying them. Eight of them, fronting the cemetery, which opened in 1789 as will be discussed later, were three storeys in height. Six others were described as 'small backhouses'. They were subject to a ground rent of £9 a year to Humphrey Owen.³⁰⁰

According to Chalklin, this was a period when edge-of-town land was becoming more popular. Living at the outskirts had an advantage because it was conducive to trade. As towns grew, factories and canal wharves were sited on the outskirts. Promotions for the well-to-do were sited on or at the edge of town partly due to the space required and also because of the attractiveness of being away from the central areas. Builders preferred land where water drained away naturally and access to a water supply that could be tapped by wells.³⁰¹ Builders in Manchester paid between 1½d and 5d per square yard between the early 1770s and 1788 on long leases, with prices reaching between 2d and 8d from 1789 to 1800. The main financial attraction for landowners of having better housing built on their land was higher ground rents on leasehold properties or a high price on the sale of the freehold. Landlords and developers were able to influence the character of the

²⁹⁸ *Manchester Mercury* (11 May 1802).

²⁹⁹ Bardsley, *Memorials of Saint Ann's Church*, pp. 91–92.

³⁰⁰ *Manchester Mercury* (26 June 1790).

³⁰¹ Chalklin, *The Provincial Towns*, pp. 65–70.

buildings, including insisting on a leasehold tenure of sufficient length to encourage substantial outlay by the builders. Wide and well-paved roads, good drainage and a church could be an encouragement to the erection of larger and more substantial houses. During a period before planning rules, agreements with the buildings, conveyances and covenants could work to the satisfaction of the landowner or promoter, including clauses about the payment of rents or the control of nuisances.³⁰² There were considerable costs in development, with a cost of around £250 an acre to level the ground, create streets and drainage.³⁰³

In *The Condition*, Engels described how builders never owned the land but leased it ‘according to the English custom, for 20, 30, 40, 50 or 99 years, at the expiration of which time it falls back into the possession of the original holder, who pays nothing in return for improvements upon it’. He said any improvements to the land were ‘calculated by the lessee as to be worth as little as possible at the expiration of their term’ – a system which he claimed resulted in houses being built with minimal expenditure and with little money spent on repairs ‘to avoid diminishing their rent receipts’.³⁰⁴ This was his explanation for the ‘cattle sheds for human beings’ he reported in Angel Meadow.

The Hulme leases detailed above and the fact that the Meadowcroft and Fielding properties had rents payable to Legh and Newton fits this pattern described by Engels. However, the effect of land ownership on development itself was not as clear cut as Engels implied. According to Rodger, a leasehold landowner had an interest in specifying the type and quality of housing to be constructed as it would

³⁰² Chalkin, *The Provincial Towns*, p. 64.

³⁰³ Chalkin, *The Provincial Towns*, pp. 60–62, pp. 143–48.

³⁰⁴ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 70.

affect the subsequent development prospects of his neighbourhood.³⁰⁵ Where landowners did retain the freehold, the effects of their involvement could be limited. Donald J. Olsen said in a study comparing the Eton College estate at Chalcots in Hampstead with the Norfolk estate in Sheffield that the quality of the land management in both cases was unremarkable and produced indifferent results. While the Italianate villas of Chalcots attracted middle-class residents for which they were designed, the houses on Sheffield's Norfolk estate were described by observers of sanitary conditions in 1848 as 'very low, consisting of one or two storeys and... crowded together in the most irregular manner'. Olsen said Eton College ran Chalcots with 'mediocre management,' while the Duke of Norfolk did even less to control or direct the building development on his Sheffield estate. 'In spite of this, both the quantity and quality of working-class housing in Sheffield compared favourably with that of most other English towns,' Olsen said.³⁰⁶ Rodger also noted how poorly drained areas were developed for industrial purposes or working-class housing no matter who owned the land, while freehold-dominated Leeds and overwhelmingly leasehold Birmingham produced almost identical middle-class suburbs.³⁰⁷ Housing deficiencies were not confined to one type of tenure or location. Landowners were trying to get the maximum yield on their asset and the precise form of their estates, their boundaries, width of streets and layout, were ultimately constrained by market forces.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁵ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 13.

³⁰⁶ Donald J. Olsen, 'House upon House' in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. 2, 1978), pp. 337–8.

³⁰⁷ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 23.

³⁰⁸ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, pp. 15–16.

The Angel Meadow property adverts show that bankruptcy, and the changes in property ownership that resulted it, played a major role in the district's early development – a sign of entrepreneurial risk and failure in the dash to speculate on Manchester's industrial expansion having an impact on development. Studying the *Manchester Mercury* adverts as a whole shows that, from 1780 to 1825, ten bankruptcies led to the sale of 85 dwellings which formed part of the business portfolios of their owners. A search of the *London Gazette* reveals the occupations of these bankrupted property owners. In addition to John Seel and Richard Mawhood, they included Edward Fisher, a liquor merchant.³⁰⁹ This suggests newly wealthy merchants were investing part of their profits in Angel Meadow in the hope of speculative income from housebuilding, and the bankruptcies and the land and property sales that resulted had the unintended effect of creating distance between the buyers and the original landowners. The landowners' original intentions for developing the land and any beneficial development they proposed, would have been eroded and any management role depleted even as they continued to claim ground rent.

The first house owners

This chapter will now focus more closely on house ownership in early Angel Meadow. The adverts in the *Manchester Mercury* show more evidence of the efforts to highlight the suggested benefits of buying property in the district. In 1792, a large part of the land around Saint Michael's Church was being offered for sale – featuring properties in Blackley Street, Factory Street, Irk Street and bordering the easterly

³⁰⁹ *Manchester Mercury* (5 August 1794).

and northerly side of the New Burying Ground.³¹⁰ The sale, mentioned earlier in the discussion about the origins of the Angel Meadow name, included two acres of land adjoining Saint Michael's Church. The advert said: 'The above premises are in a very thriving and populous neighbourhood and free from the payment of any chief rent'. In 1795, the fee simple and inheritance were also being sold on three dwellings in Ashley Lane in the occupation of Widow Travis, Andrew Kippax and Catherine Consterdine, subject to a chief rent of £2 2s 1d a year.³¹¹ The sale included 'several other chief rents' amounting to the clear yearly sum of £117 15s 3d 'all perfectly secured and issuing and payable from and out of lands situated in Angel Meadow'. The advert said those plots of land were 'laid out with great convenience and eligibly situated for building upon, containing 20,000 superficial square yards of land or thereabouts'. All of these adverts were intended to convey the impression that Angel Meadow was an affordable investment opportunity that would produce a solid investment income in rents from tenants who paid their dues. Having the right address was particularly important to Georgian businessmen, as Barker and Hamlett described in a study of property advertisements: 'The street location of houses was always mentioned in advertisements for pragmatic reasons: so that they were easy to locate, and since being positioned on a central thoroughfare clearly provided a significant commercial advantage, both in terms of passing trade, and because a fashionable address could indicate a business's status and polite credentials.'³¹²

Three-storey workshop dwellings can be found among the Angel Meadow sales. On 22 June 1790, seven 'well-built houses and nearly finished' were offered for sale in Portland Street, off Ashley Lane, at the northern fringes of lower Angel

³¹⁰ *Manchester Mercury* (28 August 1792).

³¹¹ *Manchester Mercury* (8 September 1795).

³¹² Barker and Hamlett, *Home, Business and Household*, pp. 76–9, pp. 166–7.

Meadow, along with three fronting Water Street, which were 'three-storeys in height, exclusive of cellars'.³¹³ On 22 June 1790, 15 houses at Sion Hill were offered for sale by auction. The properties had been built by James Newton, who had a rental stake in the neighbouring Fielding's Land. He lived in Back Lane and was described in the 1788 directory as being a brick maker. The houses at Sion Hill, later Old Mount Street, were described as: 'Well-built dwelling houses of three storeys, exclusive of cellars (save one) and now all let and most of them tenanted'. The land on which they were built was 30 yards deep exclusive of streets and bounded on the eastern side by an intended new road of 8 yards wide and on the west by another 10 yards wide. The advert said the last houses were to be sold off in five lots and included an added benefit aimed at attracting potential buyers: 'A sufficient property is already sold off to exonerate very nearly the last premises from the original ground rent.'³¹⁴ Newton had built the houses in the second half of the 1780s, speculating that Angel Meadow was a prime investment opportunity. As B.L. Anderson has described in his study of eighteenth-century mortgages in Lancashire there was a 'new departure from real into financial securities' in this period. He said: 'In Lancashire, landholders at many points on the social scale had come to look upon real estate not just as a store of wealth and a symbol of social prestige but as a means of getting more of both.' Small real estate holdings were also invaluable assets for sons moving from the countryside to towns in eighteenth-century Lancashire and could be used for raising mortgage loans.³¹⁵

³¹³ *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1790).

³¹⁴ *Manchester Mercury* (22 June 1790).

³¹⁵ B.L. Anderson, 'Provincial Aspects of the Financial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century', in R.P.T. Davenport-Hines, ed., *Capital, Entrepreneurs and Profits* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), p. 13.

Archaeologists who investigated the south side of Old Mount Street in 2019 discovered the houses that Newton had built. They were substantial. The archaeologists found 17 double-depth dwellings on land marked on the William Green map as having belonged to John Cowan Esq., with yards and privies at the rear. They appeared to have been built in at least two stages. Five houses at the north-eastern end of the dig site were larger than those in the south-west.³¹⁶ They had double-skin external walls made with handmade brick and lime mortar, while the internal walls were of single-skin construction – following the vernacular tradition discussed earlier. The cellars were large, measuring more than 17 feet by more than 12 feet, and had fireplaces and brick flooring.³¹⁷ The archaeologists' report said: 'When built, these properties had a pleasant prospect, with views across the burial ground towards the River Irk, with easy access to the commercial district of Manchester, and it is quite possible that they were not originally designed as low-cost residential buildings. Moreover, based on historic photographs of similar period properties on Angel Street, it is likely that these "higher-status" workers' dwellings were characterised by neo-classical inspired architectural embellishment around the doorways.' The study said these houses were 'certainly larger in size' compared with later back-to-backs and added: 'The photographic evidence indicates that they were three-storeyed, perhaps with loom shops on the top floors, thus functioning as artisan dwellings, whilst the excavated remains revealed that each was provided with a cellar.'³¹⁸

³¹⁶ Richard Gregory and Rachel Newman, *Plots 2, 3 and 5, Angel Meadow, Manchester: Draft 2 Archaeological Excavation Report* (Oxford: Oxford Archaeology North, NGR SJ 844 991, April 2019), pp. 70–71.

³¹⁷ Gregory and Newman, *Angel Meadow, Manchester*, p. 77.

³¹⁸ Gregory and Newman, *Angel Meadow, Manchester*, pp. 97–98.

Land Tax analysis

Having previously examined the status of the original inhabitants of Angel Meadow, this thesis will now look at their ownership of the properties. The 1798 Land Tax Redemption will be analysed to complete the picture of house ownership in Angel Meadow at the pivotal moment in the district's development. By then, there were already 418 houses in 29 streets, including a handful of backstreet courts. The document lists the proprietors and occupiers of each property. In total, including those inhabitants listed the 1788 trade directory, as discussed in Chapter 3, there were 100 owners in Angel Meadow. Remarkably, just 10 people held 166 of the houses (39.7 percent) with holdings of between 10 and 31, while a further 90 held from one to nine houses. Their names have been searched in the trade directories and an index of Lancashire wills to provide details of some of their occupations.

Samuel Hyde had the biggest property portfolio with 31 houses. He may have been Samuel Hyde of Ardwick Hall, who was the grandfather of Samuel Greg of Quarry Bank Mill.³¹⁹ Other prominent house owners included Samuel Beswick, who may have been a brewer, with 21 houses. Sir J.P. Mosley, the Lord of the Manor, had 21 houses; James Newton, the brickmaker, and John Simpson (1758–1802) the cotton manufacturer of Simpson's Mill (formerly Arkwright's Mill), had 16 and 15 houses respectively; John Barton, a dyer, dealer and chapman who was also connected to Angel Meadow's Simpson's Mill, owned 16 houses; John Boardman, the shuttle maker, had 11 houses; Peter Travis, listed in the directory as a gentleman, also owned 11. Peter Boond, the timber merchant who also built and

³¹⁹ J.P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire Past and Present, or A History of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1877), p. 137.

owned extensive property in Ancoats, had nine houses in Angel Meadow; James Hunt, a factory owner had nine houses; and Thomas Rawlinson, the tea dealer and pawnbroker, had seven houses. Smaller owners included Thomas Welch, a print cutter, with four, while a flour dealer named Mary Hamilton, possibly a relative of Simeon Hambleton, owned three. James Cheetham, the print block maker, owned one. Those with five or more properties are listed in Table 4.3. Referring back to Table 3.3 in the previous chapter shows that six of the Angel Meadow occupants listed in the 1788 directory owned multiple properties in the district a decade later. As a group, they owned 50 houses and are could have been responsible for building them. Simpson's Mill and its longer-term impact on the district will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Name	Surname	Houses	Self-occupied?	Occupation	Home address
Samuel	Hyde	31		Merchant?	Quarry Bank?
Samuel	Beswick	23		Brewer?	Hulme?
Sir JP	Mosley	21		Lord of the Manor	
John	Barton	16		Dyer, dealer and chapman	
James	Newton	16	Self	Brick maker	19 Back Lane (House)
John	Simpson and Co	15	Self	Cotton Manufacturer	Simpson's Mill, Miller Street (Warehouse)
Thomas	Tebbutt	12			Alport Street
John	Boardman	11	Self	Shuttle maker and pawnbroker	40 Angel Street (House)
Peter	Travis	11		Gentleman	
	Haslam	10			
Peter	Boond	9		Timber Merchant	Top of Shudehill (Yard) Near St Peter's Church (House)
James	Hunt	9	Self	Factory owner	3 Crown Lane (Factory)
Robert	Scholes	9			
John	Royle	8			
Joseph	Gratrix	7			
Thomas	Rawlinson	7	Self	Pawnbroker	71 Angel Street (House)
John	Burton	6		Collector?	10 Allum Street?
George	Mellor	6	Self		1 Upper End of Ashley Lane (House and Stable)
	Shelmerdine	6			
Richard	Bagshaw	5		Victualler?	Dog and Goose, 57 Shudehill?
John	Hatfield	5		Flour Dealer?	7 Great Newton Street?
Isaac	Jackson	5	Self	Dyer	6 Ashley Lane (House and Dye House)
Mary	Matley	5	Self		91 Long Millgate (House)
	Peden	5			
	Rosthern	5			
	Stansfield	5			
	Wilde and Boardman	5			

Table 4.3: Owners of more than five houses in Angel Meadow in 1789. (Sources: 1798 Land Tax Redemption and trade directories <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018]

The Land Tax Redemption can also be used to show who owned houses in individual streets. Although house numbers are not listed, the document shows how individuals owned rows of properties. In the larger streets, while some people owned single properties, most of the houses were owned by a small group of people. This indicates houses built in blocks of terraced rows. In Old Mount Street, as discussed earlier, James Newton was shown as owning 14 out of the 18 houses in addition to his own house in Back Lane. In Blackley Street, Peter Boond owned nine houses, while a Mr. Peden owned five. Richard Bagshaw, John Barker and a man named Shelmerdine each owned four. This appears to fit with the archaeology. When archaeologists dug up part of Blackley Street, which became one of district's main lodging house streets, they found that the houses appeared to have been built in a single episode of construction. They said this was 'most unusual within Manchester, which was typically constructed in a more piecemeal form by multiple speculators'. In Angel Street, they found cellars of different plan-types, suggesting the houses had been constructed in smaller units, presumably by different builders.³²⁰ The 1798 Land Tax Redemption, however, suggests parts of Angel Street, perhaps as yet unexcavated, were uniform in their ownership at least. Samuel Hyde owned 15 houses in Angel Street and John Boardman eight. J. Porthouse, William Welch and John Simpson each owned four. There were 11 house owners in Angel Street in total, and 15 in Blackley Street as shown in Tables 4.4 and 4.5.

³²⁰ Wild and Miller, *Co-operative Headquarters*, pp. 105–111.

Name	Houses
Samuel Hyde	15
John Boardman	8
J. Porthouse	4
Simpson and Co.	4
William Welch	4
Whitworth	3
Mary Hamilton	3
George Giles	2
Robert Clarke	2
Caleb Johnson	1
Richard Manwaring	1

Table 4.4: Property owners in Angel Street in 1798. (Sources: 1798 Land Tax Redemption <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018]

Name	Houses
Peter Boond	9
Peden	5
Richard Bagshaw	4
Shelmerdine	4
John Barker	4
Joseph Anderson	3
Samuel Hyde	2
Thomas Hatfield	2
George Cotton	2
Peter Royle	2
James Cheetham	1
William Hallsworth	1
James Chadwick	1
Arthur Clegg	1
Peter Whittaker	1

Table 4.5: Property owners in Blackley Street in 1798. (Source: 1798 Land Tax Redemption <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018]

In Beswick's Row, John Beswick owned 20 houses, while in Factory Lane and Court, John Barton, who was connected with Simpson's Mill, owned 16. This suggests Factory Lane and Court could have been built for an occupied by the new breed of factory workers. This raises the question of whether Simpson's houses were built to a better standard than the later back-to-backs. According to Burnett, employer housing was generally of a higher standard than provided by speculative builders particularly because it was designed to attract and retain an industrious, moral labour force.³²¹

Most importantly, the 1798 Land Tax Redemption shows the extent not just of property ownership in Angel Meadow at the end of the eighteenth century but also of proprietor occupation. In total, 20 Angel Meadow proprietors or owners were marked with the word 'self' in the list of occupiers, meaning that they were living at or at least occupying their address, as shown for James Newton in Back Lane in Figure 4.8. The discovery of owner-occupants in Angel Meadow is a significant find. It shows that a substantial number of owners were satisfied enough with the condition of the houses they were building that they were content to live in them. These owner-occupiers are listed in Table 4.6 along with the total properties they owned. Their occupations have been listed, where known, using trade directories. From the list of 20 can be removed two. The properties of cotton manufacturers John Simpson and James Hunt were listed in the trade directories as business premises rather than private homes. Simpson lived at Hart Hill in Eccles.³²²

³²¹ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 82.

³²² Eccles Old Road Heritage Website, <<https://www.ecclesoldroad.uk>> [accessed 14 August 2021].

COUNTY of

PARISH of

114

An Assessment made in Pursuance of an Act of Parliament passed in the 38th Year of His Majesty's
 Reign, for granting an Aid to His Majesty by a Land Tax to be raised in Great Britain, for the
 Service of the Year 1798

1442

No. of Register.	Names of Proprietors.	Names of Occupiers.	Sums Assessed.			Date of Contract
		Thos. Towall	£.	s.	d.	
	Anderson	Jas. Newsham	"	1	2½	
	Wm. Sharpe	Ellis Hughes	"	"	9¾	
	Wm. Sharpe	Jas. Campden	"	"	9¾	
	Thos. Tebbutt		"	2	0½	
	Jas. Newton	Hugh Hargreaves	"	2	6¾	
	Thos. Tebbutt	Ed. Healey	"	"	9¾	
	Brazen Rose College	Howarth	"	2	5¾	
	James Newton	Self	"	2	5¾	

Figure 4.8: James Newton is shown as a 'self' occupant in Back Lane in the 1798 Land Tax Redemption. (Source: 1798 Land Tax Redemption <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>.) [accessed 9 February 2018]

Table 4.6 shows, crucially, that Angel Meadow's first houses were largely built by people who lived in the district. They were not, in this phase at least, the absentee bourgeoisie depicted by Engels. Nor was it the case at this stage, as Leon Faucher would write in 1844, that: 'The rich man spreads his couch amidst the beauties of the surrounding country, and abandons the town to the operatives, publicans, mendicants, thieves and prostitutes.'³²³

³²³ Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844: Its Present Condition and Future Prospects* (Manchester: Abel Heywood, 1844), p. 26.

Name	Address	Occupation	Total properties owned
John Simpson	Simpson's Mill, Miller Street	Factory owner	15
George Lowndes	20 Miller Street		1
John Mather	1 Miller Street (house and shop)	Shopkeeper	1
Joseph Anderson	16 Blackley Street	Flour dealer	3
James Cheetham	8 Blackley Street	Block maker	1
William Hallsworth	19 Blackley Street	Fustian calenderer?	1
George Mellor	1 Upper End of Ashley Lane (house and stable)		6
Richard Williamson	4–5 Upper End of Ashley Lane		1
James Hunt	3 Crown Lane (factory)	Factory owner	9
Mary Matley	91 Long Millgate		5
John Boardman	40 Angel Street	Shuttle maker + pawnbroker	11
Mary Hamilton	29 Angel Street	Flour dealer?	3
Robert Clarke	35 Angel Street	Tea dealer	2
George Giles	20 Angel Street		2
Thomas Rawlinson	71 Top of Angel Meadow (Angel Street - office at 65 Back Lane)	Pawnbroker	7
James Marshall	7 Back Lane	Cotton spinner	2
James Newton	19 Back Lane	Brick maker	16
Ann Owen	19 Back Lane		1
Sam Harwood	Back Ashley Street		1
Isaac Jackson	6 Ashley Lane (house and dyehouse)	Dyer	5

Table 4.6: Angel Meadow owner-occupiers listed in the 1798 Land Tax Redemption. Simpson and Hunt were listed as proprietors of factories rather than residential addresses. (Source: 1798 Land Tax Redemption and trade directories <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018]

In 1795, John Aikin recorded the first evidence of higher-status housing at the fringes of Manchester: 'At each extremity of Manchester are many excellent houses,' he wrote, 'very elegantly fitted up, chiefly occupied by the merchants of the town, which may in some measure be considered as their country residences, being from 1

to 2 miles from their respective warehouses.’³²⁴ Friedrich Engels also serves as an unexpected witness to the quality of some of the original properties. While writing in *The Condition* that Victorian Manchester’s propertied classes were renting out ‘cattle sheds’ at high prices ‘to plunder the poverty of the workers... in order that they alone, the owners, may grow rich’, he did recognise that some of the properties in and around Angel Meadow had previously served a different purpose when he recorded the ‘old fashioned houses’ standing in Long Millgate. ‘These are the remnants of the old pre-manufacturing Manchester,’ he wrote, ‘whose former inhabitants have removed with their descendants into better-class districts, and have left the houses, which were not good enough for them, to a working-class population strongly mixed with Irish blood.’ While he went on to describe how the ‘industrial epoch’ had ‘crammed into them the swarms of workers whom they now shelter’ and ‘built up every spot between these old houses to win a covering for the masses’, the implication was that these older properties were built to provide good quality homes producing good rental income rather than to ‘plunder the poverty’ of the working-classes.³²⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the early development of Angel Meadow and has shown how it moved from green fields to an extension of Manchester’s urban footprint, with streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street already well established by 1800. It has shown how development began to take off around 1788 at the time Saint

³²⁴ Aikin, *A Description of the Country*, pp. 205–6.

³²⁵ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 60–66.

Michael's Church was being built. In the same year, one of the first directories of Manchester listed people as living in Angel Meadow. Development first of all followed the route of Long Millgate in a pattern of 'ribbon development' seen in other parts of Manchester before Angel Street and Blackley Street were laid out along field boundaries. By 1795, rate books show, the district had 415 houses in 26 streets. Using newspaper adverts, this chapter has shown that the district was subjected to a number of land and house sales in this early phase of growth. The fields were sold as 'excellent building land' a short walk to Manchester's central business district. The houses were promoted as well-built properties with respectable tenants in light and airy streets with access to a turnpike road – excellent opportunities for investors looking to earn good income from rents. They included 15 three-storey properties in Sion Hill, later Old Mount Street, which were built by a brick maker named James Newton, who clearly saw them as an investment opportunity. The archaeological evidence shows they were large properties and perhaps had neo-classical inspired architectural embellishments.

Using the 1798 Land Tax Redemption, this chapter has also shown that many of the houses in this period were owned by a small group of people. Crucially, it has shown that, rather than being the absentee bourgeoisie as suggested by Engels, the early house owners included dyers, brick makers, shuttle makers and pawnbrokers, who were content to live in the district they were building. This is a significant discovery. The next chapter will examine how Angel Meadow declined while showing how the larger houses that had already been built in its main streets remained a significant factor in determining the district's long-term future.

Chapter 5: From suburb to slum

While the previous chapter showed how early Angel Meadow was on a rising trajectory, this chapter will show how the district declined in the decades before it was visited by Friedrich Engels. It will briefly set Angel Meadow's development against the wider expansion of Manchester at the start of the Industrial Revolution and will examine indicators for the district's decline, including parish baptisms and burials and occupational data from early Manchester trade directories. It will then examine the extent to which the middling sorts declined in number and whether they left the district. This chapter will also examine factors in Angel Meadow's decline, including land ownership patterns. It will go on to study specific land use changes and their impact, including the opening of the New Burying Ground, the building of Arkwright's Mill and the development of the Manchester to Leeds Railway. It will then examine the later phases of housing development including the creation of back-street courts.

Manchester's expansion

According to Burnett, to believe that a housing problem in England dates only from the nineteenth century 'would be no more defensible than to argue that there were no poor, hungry or badly clothed people before that time'. 'Slums were not new to the nineteenth century, any more than damp floors, rotting walls, leaking roofs and open sewers,' he said. 'But in a real sense the modern housing problem was a creation of the nineteenth century – both because new demographic trends multiplied and exacerbated the inherited problems, and because new social trends

gradually raised housing expectations and produced a climate of opinion in which, for diverse reasons, housing evils came to be regarded as unacceptable.³²⁶

Manchester developed rapidly during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. By 1826, Joseph Aston was able to marvel at how the town, which had a history dating back to at least 1650 of trade in 'woollen frizzes, fustians, sack-cloths, mingled stuffs, caps, inkle and tapes', had grown. 'During the last 50 years, perhaps no town in the United Kingdom has made such rapid improvement as Manchester. Every year has witnessed an increase of buildings,' he said, adding that much of the town including the area of Angel Meadow had been built since 1770. At the time he was writing, the River Irk had 'perhaps more mill seats upon it than any other stream of its length, in the United Kingdom'.³²⁷ In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote of the town in shocking terms: 'From this foul drain, the greatest stream of human industry flows to fertilise the whole world. From this filthy sewer, pure gold flows. Here humanity attains its most complete development and its most brutish – here civilisation works its miracles, and civilised man is turned almost into a savage.'³²⁸ The town went from having no mills in 1780 to becoming the largest mill town in the world, with 108 working mills by 1850, according to Nevell. This phenomenal industrial rise was matched by its spectacular population growth in the first half of the nineteenth century.³²⁹ As Geoffrey Timmins pointed out, sudden changes were taking place across the whole of Manchester, spurred by the growth in cotton

³²⁶ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 3.

³²⁷ Joseph Aston, *A Picture of Manchester* (Manchester: W.P. Aston, third edition, 1826), p. 1.

³²⁸ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys to England and Ireland* (1835; New York: Arno Press, 1979), pp. 107–108.

³²⁹ Michael Nevell, 'Excavating Engels: The Archaeological Investigations of Workers' Housing Manchester and Salford, 2001–2017', *Manchester Memoirs*, Vol. 154 (2016), pp. 72–73.

manufacturing and spreading out from the area around Saint Ann's Church and initially along Deansgate and High Street.³³⁰

The expansion can be seen in changes in Manchester's population. Thomas Percival, writing in 1775, quoted an enumeration of the population of Manchester and Salford at 13,786, with a wider Manchester parish population of 42,937.³³¹ In 1932, Alfred Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann highlighted the difficulty in accurately analysing Manchester's growth in this period as 'the early estimates of the population of Manchester are remarkable for nothing more than their variety', but they estimated that the population of Manchester and Salford doubled between 1660 and 1717, doubled again between 1717 and 1758, rose by a third between 1758 and 1773, and trebled between 1773 and 1801.³³² By 1801, according to the first national census of Britain, there were 81,053 people in Manchester and Salford and 12,649 inhabited houses.³³³ Nevell said Manchester's population nearly doubled again to 126,026 people in 1821 and then more than doubled again by 1851, when there were 303,382 people within the new borough. He said this new population required huge amounts of housing and, between 1773 and 1821, the number of dwellings rose from 3,446 to 17,257. By 1851, it had reached nearly 50,000.³³⁴ According to Richard Rodger, it was not just a matter of building more artisan housing. The unprecedented expansion in the first four decades of the century rendered existing arrangements of urban living wholly inadequate. 'It is not difficult to

³³⁰ Timmins, 'Roots of Industrial Revolution', p. 65.

³³¹ Thomas Percival and John Whitaker, *Enumeration of the Houses and Inhabitants of the Town and Parish of Manchester in Three Volumes, 1773 to 1774* (Chetham's Library, A.4.54–A.4.56).

³³² Alfred P. Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire 1600–1780* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931), pp. 509–11.

³³³ Aston, *A Picture of Manchester*, p. 32.

³³⁴ Nevell, *Excavating Engels*, pp. 72–73.

appreciate why overcrowding developed,' he said.³³⁵ According to Burnett, the most urgent housing problem was that the stock of accommodation had to be expanded at a rate which constantly fell short of need, and which produced many ill-effects on the inhabitants.³³⁶

Evidence of decline

As the population of Manchester was increasing, Angel Meadow was in decline. Whatever Humphrey Owen's intention in building Saint Michael's Church, the district was on a downward trajectory almost as soon as the church opened in 1789. John Marsden, who has researched forgotten burial places in Manchester, said that burials in the Saint Michael's parish cemetery, which stood next to the church and was separate to the public, New Burying Ground, fell to a low of just ten in 1836. The churchwardens placed an advert in the *Manchester Mercury* on 24 February 1838 making burials free 'in order to offer the poor the means of procuring a decent burial place for their relatives', which had the effect of raising annual burials to 88 by 1847.³³⁷ Studying both the burials and baptisms at Saint Michael's Church from 1795 to 1840 highlights the parish's decline in more detail, as shown in Table 5.1. Analysing both the burial and baptism registers shows the full downward trend from 152 burials in 1795 to 11 in 1835.³³⁸ This was not due to running out of burial space. This was a district that was losing its earlier status. Baptisms show a similar

³³⁵ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 1, p. 8.

³³⁶ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 3.

³³⁷ John Marsden, *Forgotten Fields: Looking for Manchester's Old Burying Grounds* (Bright Pen, 2014), pp. 60–62.

³³⁸ Manchester Church of England Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1541–1812, Deaths and Burials, 1815–1983, Births and Baptisms, 1813–1915 <<https://www.ancestry.com>> [accessed 9 February 2018].

but less pronounced decline. From 20 baptisms in 1790, they rose to 35 in 1805 before declining to just one in 1835. Baptisms and burials show a rapid increase from around 1838, when the churchwardens appear to also have opened them up to the poor. Both of these patterns suggest a declining population of middling sorts.

Year	Burials	Baptisms
1790	123	0
1795	152	20
1800	91	15
1805	63	35
1810	45	16
1815	44	11
1820	36	5
1825	25	7
1830	16	3
1835	11	1
1840	49	34

Table 5.1: Burials and baptisms at Saint Michael's Church from 1790 to 1840 showing how they declined before picking up again. (Source: Saint Michael's baptism and burial registers, <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>.) [accessed 1 August 2018]

The changing nature of the demographic in Angel Meadow can also be seen by studying the occupations in the trade directories. The following analysis of Angel Meadow occupations listed in the Manchester trade directories of 1794 and 1841 again uses the model by Jon Stobart, which was first used in Chapter 3.³³⁹ One

³³⁹ Jon Stobart, *The Urban System*, pp. 580–591.

additional caveat to consider here is the number of unspecified occupations in both directories, particularly in 1841, which have a bearing on the results. People living on Miller's Lane and Long Millgate were again excluded from this study as those streets stretch into other districts and could affect the accuracy of the results.

Between 1794 and 1841, the directory population rose from 77 to 593 – an increase of 670 percent. Given that Angel Meadow had a large number of lodging houses and multi-occupancy homes by the 1840s, the district would have contained by then a transient population of lower-income occupants with no settled trades. What the analysis shows is that manufacturing consistently accounted for between 47.2 and 49.4 percent of directory-listed occupations in Angel Meadow between 1794 and 1841. Dealing, the second biggest group which included shopkeepers as well as dealers in textiles, clothing and other goods, was also consistent – accounting for between 22.9 and 26 percent of occupations between the two directory years. From these figures, it can be deduced that the economy of Angel Meadow was dominated by manufacturing from the beginning of its development. Early on, this population would have included both handloom weavers and factory weavers and would have increasingly become dominated by factory weaving.

As will be discussed later, though, it was not a case of Angel Meadow suddenly going from a suburb for the middling sorts to a factory slum. The situation was more nuanced. Using Stobart's model to put occupations into measurable categories provides valuable detail on how the occupational changes between 1794 and 1841 were less clear cut than at first appears. This is shown in Table 5.2. In percentage terms, 'public service and professional' occupations reached a peak in 1794 at 16.9 percent of the directory population. Their numbers included an excise supervisor, a school master, a commissioner, a sexton, textile manufacturers and

spinners, who lived alongside manufacturing artisans including a hat manufacturer, a shuttle maker, a bowstring maker and a mantua maker.³⁴⁰ While the caveats mentioned in Chapter 3 about the precise definition of the term professional remain, those in 'public service and professional' can be seen to have declined to 4.4 percent of the directory population in 1841. Supporters of Engels, and of Burgess's model of 'succession', where middle-classes move outwards from the inner core and are replaced by working-class operatives, would seize on this as evidence of bourgeoisie or middle-class flight. However, the raw numbers present a diverging picture. While there were 13 people in the public service and professional category in 1794, there were 26 in 1841 – an increase of 100 percent. As shown in the numbers (n) columns in Table 5.2, the real issue was not that the better-off inhabitants were leaving, but that the number of people employed in manufacturing increased so steeply over half a century that the professional community was overwhelmed and represented a much smaller proportion of the 1841 directory population.

³⁴⁰ John Scholes, *Scholes's Manchester and Salford Directory* (Manchester: Sowler and Russell, 1794; <<https://www.specialcollections.le.ac.uk>>) [accessed 9 February 2018].

Occupation type	1794 (%)	1841 (%)	1794 (n)	1841 (n)
Manufacturing	49.4	47.2	38	280
Dealing	26.0	22.9	20	136
Building	3.9	3.5	3	21
Transport	0	4.9	0	29
Domestic	0	1.3	0	8
Mining	0	0.2	0	1
Independent	0	0	0	0
Public Service and Professional	16.9	4.4	13	26
Unspecified	3.9	15.5	3	92
Totals	100	100	77	593

Table 5.2: Percentage and number of Angel Meadow directory occupations in 1794 and 1841 compared using Stobart's occupational groupings model. (Source: trade directories <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>.) [accessed 1 September 2018]

The number of professionals and public service workers remaining in the district is a significant discovery. They were still living there in substantial numbers even in the mid-century. In 1841, they included two attorney's clerks, three bookkeepers and three collectors. This study is clear evidence that the social mix in the district was more nuanced than the class-riven society Engels claimed to have found at the time of his visit. Table 5.2 also shows how dealing occupations such as butchers, grocers and flour dealers rose numerically from 20 in 1794 to 136 in 1841. This is a sign of a move towards creating a service economy to support the growing lodging house population of Angel Meadow. Despite being described as a slum by mid-century observers and historians, the district had its own economy and performed a wider economic function within Manchester.

The rising numbers employed in manufacturing shown in Table 5.2 can be further broken down as shown in Table 5.3. Textiles clearly dominated the manufacturing sector in Angel Meadow from the late-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century and supported a rising proportion of jobs in ancillary trades such as working in metal, leather and wood. A breakdown of textile occupations shows that, in 1794, the textile workers in the directory were a diverse group in both rank and occupation – with two cotton manufacturers, seven spinners, nine fustian cutters, one fustian manufacturer and six weavers. Also in the list were two house drapers, who fit less easily under the category. In 1841, all of the textile workers listed in the directory described themselves as weavers. Unfortunately, hand and power loom weavers are not differentiated.

	1794 (%)	1841 (%)	1794 (n)	1841 (n)
Textiles	65.8	46.8	25	131
Food and Drink	7.9	4.6	3	13
General and Hardware	0	0.4	0	1
Manufacture and metals	13.2	16	5	44
Dress and shoes	10.5	15.7	4	46
Leather and wood	2.6	9.3	1	26
Coal and Gas	0	1.1	0	3
Household	0	5	0	14
Unspecified Managers	0	0.7	0	2
Totals	100	100	38	280

Table 5.3: Percentage and number of Angel Meadow manufacturing occupations in 1794 and 1841 compared using Stobart's occupational groupings model. (Source: trade directories <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>.) [accessed 1 September 2018]

Parish baptismal registers provide a further source of occupational data before the 1841 census. From 1813 onwards, all Anglican baptism registers had to comply with a standardised format, which required details of fathers' occupations.³⁴¹ This study has sampled the 193 baptisms at Saint Michael's between 1813 and 1840, which provides the address and occupation of the parents of the children being baptised. One intriguing aspect of the book is how, amid the declining numbers of baptisms in the period to 1838 shown in Table 5.1, families from outside the district were still travelling to the church to baptise their children. The fathers included John Wrigley, a cotton manufacturer of Sackville Street; James Brookes, a silk manufacturer of Macclesfield; Joseph Shaw, a bookkeeper of Chorlton Row; James Livingstone, a general agent of Salford; and Joseph Sutton, a gentleman of Stanley Street, Cheetham. In 1826, the French Consul Thomas Saul baptised four of his children at Saint Michael's. This testifies to the fact that, despite the decline then taking place in Angel Meadow, the church remained a draw for those who could afford to baptise their children in the parish. From 1813, the 15 occupants of Angel Street listed in the baptism register included a mix of occupations including David Frost, a cotton spinner, who was also a special constable; Thomas Lawton, a broker; Joseph Stewart, a portrait painter; and Samuel Naylor, a tailor – again suggesting a mix of professional and artisan occupations. Dealers included James Lees, a grocer and flour dealer; John Cliff, a pawnbroker; and James Harrison, a barber. However, there are also signs of the early subdivision of the houses on the street, with four fathers listed as labourers. The first labourer to be listed in the record, James Chamberton, was listed in 1815. Blackley Street's nine occupants in the parish

³⁴¹ Geoffrey Timmins, *The Last Shift: Decline of Handloom Weaving in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 1993, p. 36.

registers also included a mix of occupations including William Holmes, a cotton spinner, in 1816; and two weavers, Robert Jones in 1815, and James Drew in 1827. As discussed in Chapter 2, Blackley Street had three-storey houses with upper loom shops and it is possible that they were handloom weavers.

While this thesis has shown the situation regarding the professional group in Angel Meadow was more nuanced than previously thought, the manufacturing group was also more nuanced in the extent to which handloom weaving persisted in the district in the first half of the nineteenth century. This is relevant to the existence of the three-storey workshop dwellings. Ten weavers were listed in the Saint Michael's baptism registers in total between 1813 and 1840. They included one in Dyche Street and three in Style Street – two streets that had three-storey dwellings.³⁴² One of these, Daniel Cochrane, could be found at 5 Back Style Street in the 1826 rate book. He was sharing the house with a James Smith. They were each paying a weekly rent of 2s 6d on a property assessed at £3 5s for each household.³⁴³ Eleven weavers can also be found in the Angel Meadow trade directories of 1794 and 1800, as shown in Table 5.4. Referring back to Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 shows that these streets, aside from Mosley's Court and Back Blackley Street, contained the median highest value properties in the district. Any or all of these, potentially, could have been handloom weavers. According to E.P. Thompson, handloom weavers in Manchester shared many of the traditions of the artisans, and even intermarried with them, making the distinction between them less marked.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Saint Michael's Baptism and Burial Registers <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>> [accessed 2 May 2021].

³⁴³ Manchester Rate Books, 1760–1900 <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 2 May 2021].

³⁴⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class* (1963; Penguin Modern Classics, London, 2013), p. 341.

Year	Name	Occupation	Address
1794	John Anderson	Weaver	Dyche Street
1794	Charles Briggs	Weaver	28 Angel Street
1794	Peter Cheetham	Weaver	6 Mount Street
1794	James Howarth	Weaver	3 Ashley Street
1794	John Marsden	Weaver	Mosley's Court
1794	John Maxwell	Weaver	Blackley Street
1800	John Macclesfield	Muslin Weaver	2 Angel Street
1800	James Holt	Silk Weaver	38 Angel Street
1800	Thomas Lingard	Muslin Weaver	Back Blackley Street
1800	John Allcock	Weaver	Dyche Street
1800	Thomas Greenlees	Silk Weaver	30 Ledger Street

Table 5.4: Angel Meadow weavers at the end of the eighteenth century. (Source: Manchester trade directories, 1794 and 1800 <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>>.) [accessed 5 May 2020]

However, this is far from a complete picture of handloom weaving in the district. As Timmins pointed out, the reliance on Anglican baptism registers particularly may distort occupational data if some occupational groups have been drawn towards non-conformity. This is suspected to have been the case for handloom weavers, he said.³⁴⁵ James Phillips Kay, writing in 1832, said Manchester's handloom weavers were chiefly Irish – explaining why they do not appear in the Saint Michael's (Church of England) registers in large numbers.³⁴⁶ Others would have been members of the Baptist Church which stood at the top of

³⁴⁵ Timmins, *The Last Shift*, p. 36.

³⁴⁶ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, pp. 27–8.

Angel Meadow on Saint George's Road. The small numbers in the directory could also account for handloom weavers not advertising their services to the wider public.

An 1834 study of Angel Meadow and Ancoats by the Manchester Statistical Society suggested that handloom weaver numbers were much higher. There was enough concern about the fate of handloom weavers – still an important section of manufacturing in Manchester – for the newly formed society to consider an inquiry. Benjamin Heywood, the society's first president, undertook the expense of employing an agent to go from door to door to collect the information.³⁴⁷ In May and June 1834, the agent, an Irish handloom weaver named Henderson, went to work under the supervision of an official of the District Provident Society and James Phillips Kay. The area selected was the Police Division of Saint Michael's, which according to the 1831 Census then contained 5,400 families and 25,581 people, and that part of the Police Division of New Cross (Ancoats) which lay between Oldham Road and the Rochdale Canal, containing 3,532 families and 16,554 people. This is the same area that was studied in Figure 3.2.

According to Thomas Ashton these two police districts were chosen as they, more than any other, housed the working-class in 1834. However, the districts did not contain uniform groups of factory workers. Among 7,790 people in receipt of wages in the study, 2,066 were found to be handloom weavers (26.5 percent) while 2,181, an almost equal number, were employed in cotton factories (27.9 percent). Another 8 percent, mainly winders, were employed in warehouses. This shows that manufacturing in Angel Meadow did not simply switch straight from hand to factory

³⁴⁷ Thomas S. Ashton, *Economic and Social Investigations in Manchester, 1833 to 1933: A Centenary History of the Manchester Statistical Society* (London: P&S King, 1934), pp. 20–23.

work at the start of the Industrial Revolution. The vast majority of the handloom weavers in the two districts, 2,046, worked on plain cotton. Timmins estimated that the number of weavers in Manchester as a whole in 1834–6 was 2,811 and that they formed 64 percent of the population of the town.³⁴⁸ This would indicate that 73.5 percent of Manchester's handloom weavers lived in either Saint Michael's or Ancoats. Unfortunately, the report does not show a breakdown of these handloom weavers between the two areas. It is likely, given the larger houses described in Angel Meadow, that it held more of them than Ancoats. Out of 4,102 families investigated in both districts in the 1834 study, 1,551 (37.8 percent) were described as being in comfortable accommodation, including 689 which were well furnished, while 2,551 (62.2 percent) were not comfortable. The figure for comfortable families is not insubstantial. Three quarters lived in houses, nearly one-fifth in cellars and a little more than one-twentieth lived in rooms – this latter figure suggesting the subdivision of the houses was yet to be fully developed. Only 55 percent were English, nearly 43 percent Irish, 0.9 percent Welsh and 0.5 percent Scottish.³⁴⁹ According to Michael Herbert, the Irish seemed to have come to work in Manchester mainly as handloom weavers in the 1780s, attracted by the prospect of better wages than could be found at home.³⁵⁰

According to Brunskill, there was considerable investment in property suitable for handloom weavers in Lancashire even after factories appeared to have

³⁴⁸ Timmins, *The Last Shift*, p. 98.

³⁴⁹ [Anonymous], 'Analysis of a Report of an Agent Employed by the Manchester Statistical Society in 1834, to Visit the Dwellings and Ascertain the Condition of the Working Population in Police Division No. 2, and the First Subdivision of Police Division No. 1 of the Town of Manchester, Communicated by the Society', *Report of the Fourth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, held at Edinburgh in 1834* (London: John Murray, 1835), pp. 690–1.

³⁵⁰ Herbert, *The Wearing of the Green*, p. 15.

triumphed – the more optimistic builders erecting cottages that could be adapted to part-industrial use and not all blocked weavers' windows on terraces in the Pennines represented conversion to domestic use, with some being built blocked and never having been opened.³⁵¹ In any event, three-storey workshop houses would not just have contained weavers. Gausden noted that only one house with weavers' windows examined by MEDReG, albeit outside of Angel Meadow, had accommodated a handloom weaver, based on directory information.³⁵² The trade directories for 1794, 1797 and 1800 show that occupants of Angel Street included tailors, shoemakers, calico printers, shuttle makers, fustian cutters and a bowstring maker – all of whom could have benefitted from a workshop. Tenancies could change quickly even in those early days of the district. For example, 34 Angel Street housed Walter Hardy, a letter carrier, in 1794; Samuel Wood, a shoemaker, in 1797; and Thomas Ogden, a calico printer, in 1800. The same was true of 28 Angel Street, which housed a weaver (presumably a handloom weaver) named Charles Briggs in 1794 and a flour dealer named Joseph Hambleton in 1797, while 71 Angel Street was occupied by a fustian cutter named Edward Topping in 1794 followed by the pawnbroker Thomas Rawlinson in 1797 and 1800. The same pattern happened at 47 Blackley Street, which was occupied by the cabinet maker Robert Boothman in 1797 and the fustian cutter William Booth in 1800.³⁵³

However, the rate books also provide evidence of the decline of Angel Meadow almost as soon as the three-storey houses had been built. In 1795, the assessor recorded 94 out of 395 occupants (heads of households) in the district as

³⁵¹ Brunskill, *Houses and Cottages*, p. 156.

³⁵² Gausden, *Manchester Early Dwellings Research Group*, p. 38.

³⁵³ Manchester Trade Directories 1794–1800 <<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>> [accessed 2 May 2021].

being poor – a figure of 23.8 percent. It shows that, even in the larger Georgian houses, the district had occupants who were unable to pay their rent. By then, Angel Meadow was already moving towards a tipping point. In the 1798 book, which missed out four streets, the assessor indicated that 119 out of 235 occupants (50.6 percent) were poor – a doubling on three years earlier. An example is shown in Figure 5.1. In some cases, the assessor even made notes in pencil to explain the reasons for their poverty. Martha Crompton, who lived in Millers Street, was ‘a poor widow with a family’ and Elizabeth Parish was ‘very poor, receiving pay from the town’. Robert Thomas, who lived in Blackley Street, was ‘poor and unable to pay’, while James Scofield’s family, who lived in Crown Street was ‘a very poor, sickly family’. In Factory Lane, Robert Gibson was ‘very poor with six children’. The situation was no different in Angel Street, where 17 people were identified as being poor. By 1806, 298 occupants out of 481 had the letter ‘P’ next to their names (61.9 percent) – an abbreviation for poor or pauper.³⁵⁴

³⁵⁴ Manchester Rate Books 1760–1900 <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed 15 February 2018].

Angel Street				
2.	Rich ^d Roberts	4s.	6d.	8d.
3.	Ann Emmott	"	6d.	8d.
4.	Josh ^a Warmby	"	6d.	8d.
6.	Tho ^s Hinder	"	7d.	10d.
7.	Geo ^s Greaves	"	7d.	10d.
8.	Rich ^d Hulme	"	7d.	10d.
9.	Tho ^s Richardson	"	7d.	10d.
10.	Th ^s Hulme	"	7d.	10d.
11.	Tho ^s Charnley	"	7d.	10d.
12.	Th ^s Pennington	"	7d.	10d.
13.	James Taylor	"	7d.	10d.
14.	W ^m Dutton	"	7d.	10d.
15.	Edw ^d Topping	"	7d.	10d.
16.	Th ^s Rofthorn	"	7d.	10d.
17.	Th ^s Harrison	"	7d.	10d.

Figure 5.1: The 1798 rate book for Angel Street lists several people as being poor. (Source: Manchester rate books <<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> M9/40/2/57). [accessed 1 May 2021]

There were economic issues that increased poverty in the district, particularly for handloom weavers who faced a severe reduction in wages at the turn of the century, followed by further reductions after 1815 and an uninterrupted decline thereafter.³⁵⁵ This would have had a large impact on the district because, according to Timmins, much industrial activity remained small scale. His own estimate found that less than 40 percent of weaving was factory based in Lancashire as late as 1841, which fits with the 1834 Ashton study discussed above. Timmins said: 'In short, a picture is drawn of an economy characterised by low productive growth, with a good deal of manufacturing activity remaining traditional and innovation being far from pervasive.'³⁵⁶ While he pointed to the continuation of handloom weaving into

³⁵⁵ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class*, p. 309.

³⁵⁶ Timmins, *The Last Shift*, p. 9.

the mid-nineteenth century, adding that factory weaving did not become dominant until perhaps the 1830s, Duncan Bythell noted the effects that the change from domestic weaving to factory work had particularly on those who worked by hand. It affected a very large proportion of the working population and changed the organisation and structure of the entire industry while having a profound effect on the life and work of the weavers' families. He said: 'The distress which resulted from the coexistence for many years of hand and power weaving' was 'the biggest blot on the whole history of the Industrial Revolution'.³⁵⁷ In 1808, a large number of handloom weavers gathered on Saint George's Fields close to Angel Meadow to protest after a bid for higher wages had been rejected by Parliament. One weaver was shot and killed when a detachment of dragoons broke up the gathering. Weavers from around Angel Meadow were among those injured in the Peterloo Massacre of 1819. There were also reports in the 1820s of 'miserable looking' weavers being arrested for begging in Manchester.³⁵⁸ Chris Aspin said poverty, misery and distress undoubtedly went hand-in-hand in the long fight for handloom weavers' survival.³⁵⁹

The weavers, however, were not alone in experiencing poverty. In the three years from 1795 to 1798, the rateable assessments of the houses in Angel Street doubled. The tea dealer Joshua Warmby's house, for example, shown in Table 5.2,

³⁵⁷ Duncan Bythell, 'The Handloom Weavers in the English Cotton Industry During the Industrial Revolution: Some Problems', *Economic History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1964), pp. 339–353.

³⁵⁸ Dean Kirby, *Angel Meadow: Victorian Britain's Most Savage Slum* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2016), pp. 19–25.

³⁵⁹ Chris Aspin, *Lancashire: The First Industrial Society* (1969; Carnegie Publishing, 1995), pp. 74–6.

had gone from £3 to £6 and he was now listed as poor. The overall level of poverty in this street and across the district indicates why the larger houses were subdivided.

Causes of the decline

While the wider impact of manufacturing on Angel Meadow will be discussed in more detail shortly, it is useful to take another step back and see how eighteenth-century landowning patterns affected the district's future. Figure 5.2 is adapted from the William Green map of 1794 and highlights one of the key features of Angel Meadow – its multitude of landowners. This landowning pattern had a hugely negative impact on the early development of the district.

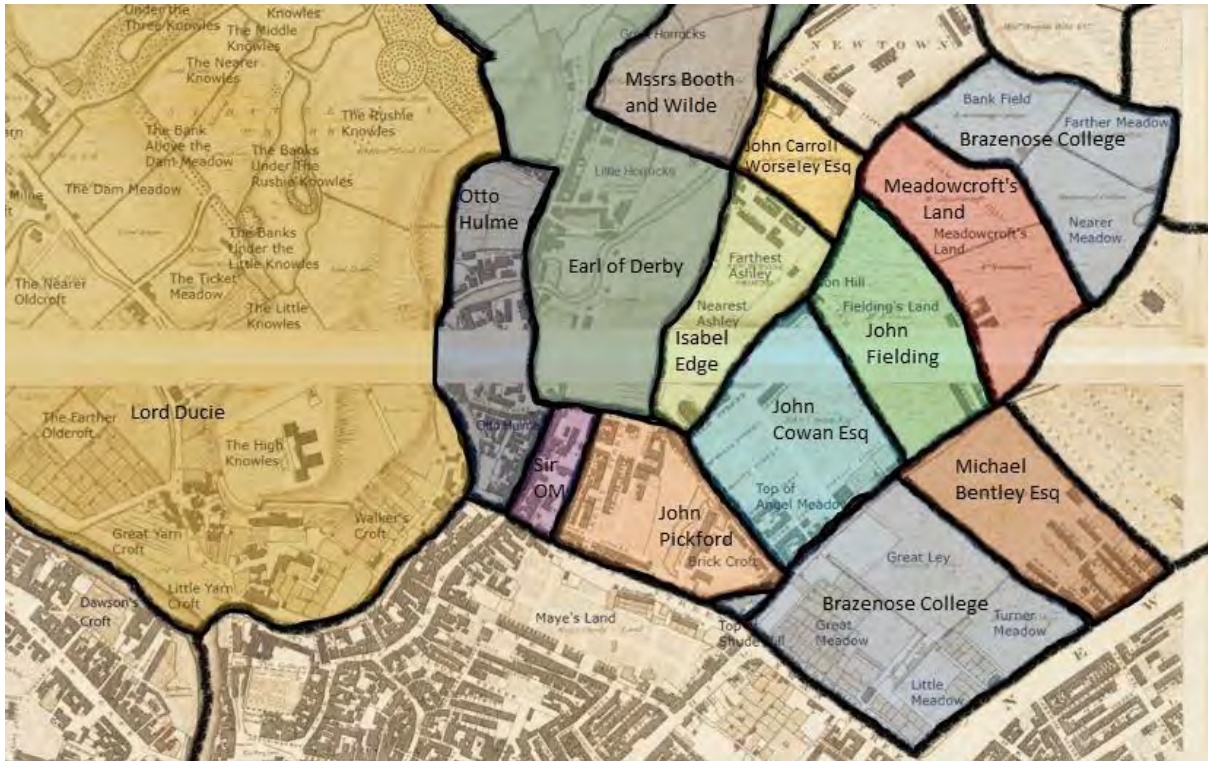


Figure 5.2: Land ownership in Angel Meadow drawn on the 1794 William Green map. A dozen landowners held property in Angel Meadow at this pivotal moment in its development. This map is in colour and does not translate easily into black-and-white. (Source: William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)

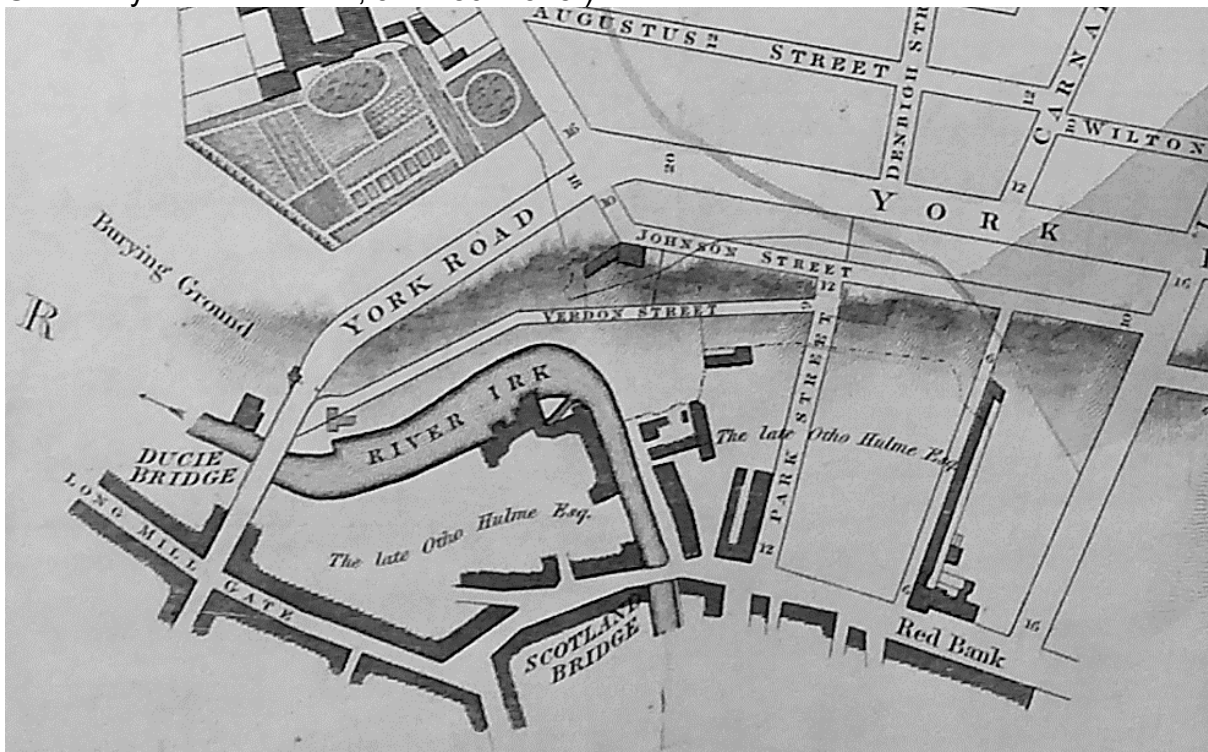


Figure 5.3: In 1823, the area called Gibraltar, between Long Millgate and the River Irk, had been in the possession of the late Otto Hulme Esquire. (Source: *Plan of Land in Strangeways belonging to Lord Ducie, to be Sold for Buildings*, 1823, GB127.MISC/436, Manchester Archives and Local Studies.)

Figure 5.2 has been annotated to show the names of field owners drawn from the William Green map, rate books and the Hulme and Lord Ducie estate plans. The large Ducie estate, which can be seen to the west, stretched northwards into Salford, and the southern edge of the equally large Earl of Derby estate, which stretched up towards Broughton. The Meadowcroft and Fielding lands mentioned in Chapter 4 can also be seen. Sir Oswald Mosley, the Lord of the Manor, also owned a small area (marked Sir O.M.) close to the River Irk next to land which an 1823 map of the Ducie estate shows had been in the occupation of Otto Hulme Esquire.³⁶⁰ This latter holding, crossing the river towards Cheetham, is shown in Figure 5.3. It contained the small number of back street courts around Gibraltar, off Long Millgate, visited by Engels. In 1838, as will be shown in the next chapter, this land was being managed by Elizabeth Hulme, who may have been Otto Hulme's widow as she was guardian to five Hulme children. His death could have been a factor in the area's poor condition at the time of Engels's visit.

This multiple landownership was a key difference between Angel Meadow and the larger estates such as the Byrom, Aytoun and Lever estates, and even the Legh estate in Ancoats. At this pivotal moment in Angel Meadow's development, the district was under the control of a dozen different landowners – with conflicting aims and objectives – rather than a single 'great estate' landlord who could use covenants to dictate how their land was to be developed. This helps to explain why Angel Meadow originally had areas of larger housing compared with the more consistently smaller housing in the factory colony of Ancoats as described by Roberts. It also explains what appears to have been the lack of a single coherent development plan

³⁶⁰ *Plan of Land in Strangeways belonging to Lord Ducie, to be Sold for Buildings* (1823) GB127.MISC/436, Manchester Archives and Local Studies.

as in the case of the Byrom estate. According to Olsen, the values underlying ‘good’ eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century town planning in Bath or Dublin or the New Town in Edinburgh were ‘coherence and uniformity – of façade, of design, of the social status of the occupants’.³⁶¹ Despite the existence of larger houses, there was ultimately little chance of uniformity of housing design in the development of Angel Meadow due to its multiple landowners and its future prospects as a district on the urban fringe were limited from the start.

This chapter will now show how development decisions about individual plots of land had a detrimental impact on Angel Meadow as a whole. The development of two fields in particular detracted sharply from the district and show how the varied ownership of land in Angel Meadow left owners at the mercy of their neighbours. The first of these, early in Angel Meadow’s development, was the creation of a public burial ground next to Saint Michael’s Church’s own, walled cemetery. In 1787, Humphrey Owen signed an agreement with three churchwardens of the Parish of Manchester to create the public burial ground due to the ‘absolute necessity’ for a new cemetery to cope with the ‘very great increasing populousness of the town’.³⁶² Manchester’s main cemetery next to the Collegiate Church (Manchester Cathedral) was already full. Deeds for the new cemetery, including a map shown in Figure 5.4, give the measurements for the plot as 100 yards on the northerly side, 51 yards on the southerly side, 121 yards on the easterly side, and 116 yards in an irregular line on the westerly side. It amounted to 8,000 square yards. The cemetery, which became known as the New Burying Ground, remains an open space in 2022 and, in

³⁶¹ Olsen, ‘House upon House’, p. 339.

³⁶² *Copy of Bargain and Sale between Humphrey Owen, and Churchwardens Jonathan Beaver, Joseph Beeston, John Leaf and John Withington of the Parish of Manchester to create a Parish Burial Ground on Land near Ashley Lane, 23 July 1787* (Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.M3/2/102B).

spite of recent redevelopment, the irregular line of the western boundary can still be seen on modern day Ashley Lane. The Lane is described in the 1787 deed as Ashler Lane. These fields were known as the Asheley, Ashley or Astley Fields, the three Asheleyes or the Nearest Ashley, Middlest Ashley and Furthest Ashley and also the Nearer and Further Meadows. Their name may have derived from the Old English words *aesc* meaning ash and *leah*, a meadow or enclosure. Compared with the absence of Angel Meadow in the Court Leet books until 1824, the Ashley fields appear in the same books more than 20 times after their first mention in 1556 as Asshelle Lawn.³⁶³

The deed says the plot was ‘formerly part of two several closes [enclosures] or parcels of land commonly called the Nearer Meadow and the Further Meadow’, which had been purchased by Humphrey Owen along with other land from Mrs. Isabel Edge. The deed says the plot was bounded on the northerly, easterly and southerly sides by lands which were the property of Owen, and on the westerly side by Ashley Lane and had been ‘fenced out and enclosed on the westerly and part of the northerly side... by a brick wall’. The mention of Owen owning neighbouring lands indicates he had become a significant landowner and how he came to build the houses in mentioned in Chapter 4. In Figure 5.4 can be seen three blocks of large houses in Style Street, formerly Sion Hill, overlooking the cemetery.

³⁶³ J.P. Earwaker, *The Court Leet Records*.

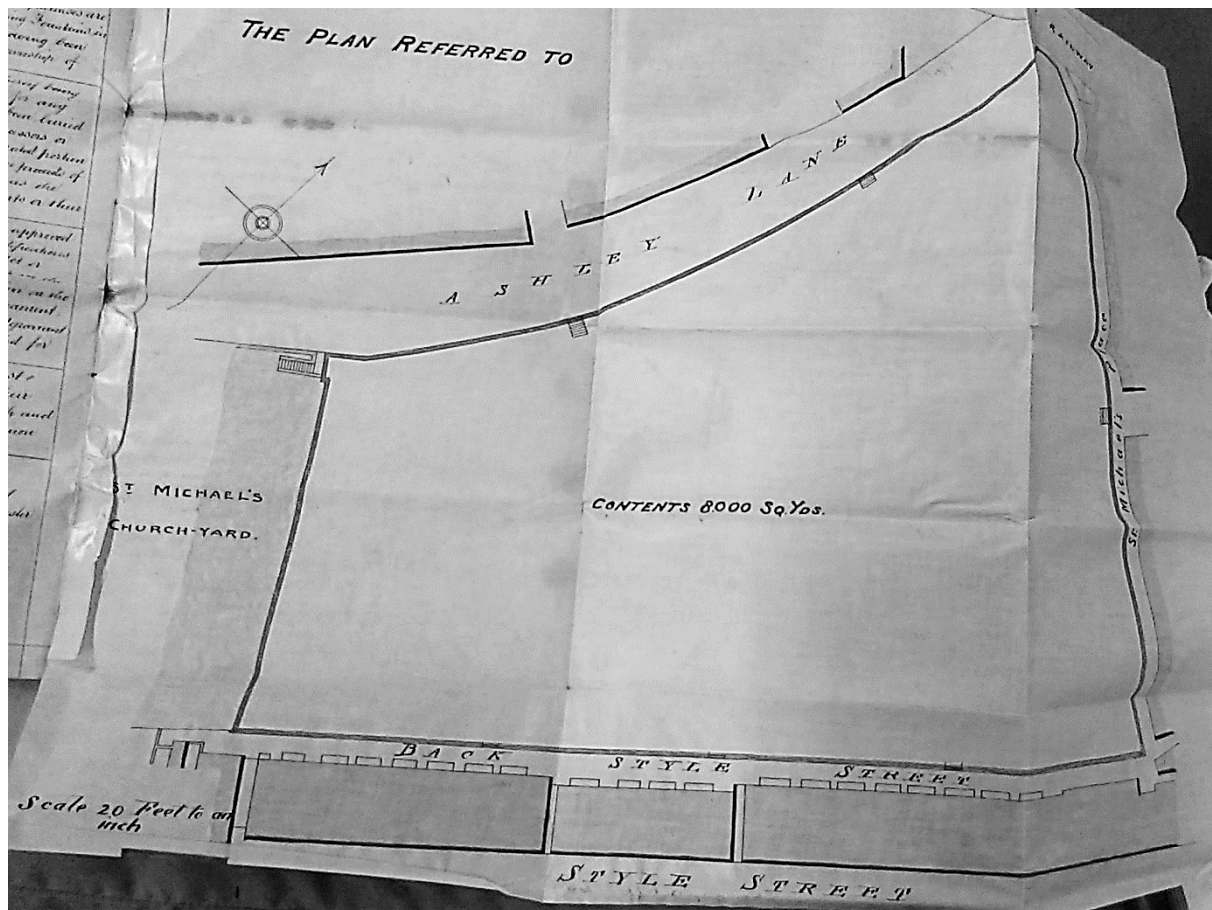


Figure 5.4: The 1787 plan showing the location of the New Burial Ground off Back Style Street. (Source: *Copy of Bargain and Sale Between Humphrey Owen, and Churchwardens Jonathan Beaver, Joseph Beeston, John Leaf and John Withington of the Parish of Manchester to Create a Parish Burial Ground on Land near Ashley Lane, 23 July 1787*, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.M3/2/102B.)

The plot was valued at £416 13s 4d – a large sum. While the cemetery served a necessary function and would have been envisaged as a public good, it was a mistake in terms of the positive development of Angel Meadow and lacked the foresight that Manchester's expansion would overtake the district so quickly. Aston, writing in 1816, the year that the cemetery closed because it was already full, described it as a depot or magazine of the dead as he explained how bodies were buried there: 'A very large pit for the reception of mortality was dug and covered up (when not actually in use for depositing the remains of the dead) with planks, which were locked down in the night until the whole was filled up with coffins piled beside

and upon one another. The cavern of death was then closed and covered up with earth – and another pit was prepared and filled in the same manner.’³⁶⁴

By the time the cemetery closed in 1816, it was reported to contain 40,000 bodies, although John Marsden has argued this is an over-estimation and the figure is likely to be closer to 30,000.³⁶⁵ Original sources testify as to how the cemetery pulled down the district. In 1800, the *Manchester Mercury* reported of an attempt by body snatchers to dig up the body of a pauper. Benjamin Redfern wrote in 1867: ‘Skulls, arms and leg bones very often come to the surface, for there are many thousands of bodies interred here, yet no care is taken to enclose the ground and prevent the fearful desecrations which its levelled walls and open character entails. The mere sight of it is enough to cause nausea to any but angelic stomachs.’ He said: ‘Very often, but especially on Sunday afternoons, drunken fights adjourned by special consent till the principals were sober, have been decided on “th’owd buryin’ ground” as it is called. This used to be a supplementary parish cemetery, and if anyone took the trouble to dig a yard or two into the soil, he would yet come across some relic of mortality.’³⁶⁶ Mr. Cliffe, who in 1854 was described as Angel Meadow’s oldest living resident, although his age is unrecorded, had known the cemetery since 1837. At that time it was covered with a ‘pleasant carpet of grass’ and was ‘duly respected by the inhabitants’. It had since become a ‘serious disgrace’ to Manchester, he said. He recalled: ‘About 1830, the wall began to give way, and ultimately it disappeared altogether, after which deposits of various kinds were made upon the ground. Beds were emptied upon it and, not infrequently, large quantities of mussels were thrown there, the stench of which was dreadful.’ The district’s medical

³⁶⁴ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, pp. 97–98.

³⁶⁵ Marsden, *Forgotten Fields*, p. 29.

³⁶⁶ Redfern, *A Journey from Whithy Grove to New Town*, pp. 382–85.

officer Dr. Edward Meacham wrote to the Government in 1866 urging ministers to intervene. An inspector visited the cemetery with the Earl of Shaftesbury, who was attending a social science congress in Manchester. Meacham told the visitors the cemetery had become a 'disgrace to any civilised community'. He called for the cemetery to be paved over – a wish that was later granted.³⁶⁷

The second development that had an equally detrimental impact on the fate of Angel Meadow was the building of Arkwright's Mill, which is commonly seen as marking the moment that Manchester became the world's first industrial city. In 1780, the manufacturer and inventor Richard Arkwright (1732–1792) answered an advertisement in the *Manchester Mercury* offering the lease of 'all that close or field, situate at the Top of Shudehill, in Manchester, late in the occupation of John Pickford, deceased, containing upwards of two Lancashire acres, and used as a brickyard, in which there is now a fine breast of clay upwards of 2 yards high, and plenty of water.'³⁶⁸ Like John Fielding mentioned in the last chapter, Pickford was a grocer. He had been involved in the building of Saint Paul's Church in the Northern Quarter. According to R.S. Fitton, the lease for the land had been owned by Sir John Parker Mosley, the lord of the manor of Manchester. The Mosley estate papers were searched but a deed was not found.³⁶⁹

The importance of the mill in the industrialisation of Manchester cannot be overstated. Its success in driving forward steam-powered manufacturing has been debated, but archaeologists working for Channel 4's *Time Team*, who investigated the mill in 2006, said it marked the beginning of the industrial urbanisation of the

³⁶⁷ *Manchester City News* (24 November 1866).

³⁶⁸ 'To be Let', *Manchester Mercury* (19 September 1780).

³⁶⁹ R.S. Fitton, *The Arkwrights: Spinners of Fortune* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 63.

city.³⁷⁰ Writers in the 1780s were impressed by the size of the structure, which was 200 feet long and 5 storeys tall, with each floor connected by an external staircase.³⁷¹ James Ogden wrote in 1783: 'On the right hand side [of Miller's Lane] is a firm built and capital engine house, in which the floor beams are all made to spring against their own length and the incumbent weight, by first sawing strong deal baulks through the middle and letting in oak spars to spurn at obtuse angles upward, the divided baulks being then being screwed together with iron pins, so as to resist the pressure above. Here it is that Mr. Arkwright's machines are setting to work by steam engine, for carding and spinning cotton.'³⁷² Arkwright insured the building for £3,000 with the Royal Exchange Assurance in October 1782.³⁷³ He sold it to his son in 1784, who brought in Samuel Simpson and his brother John Simpson as partners and managers.³⁷⁴ They bought out the younger Arkwright in 1786 for £20,640.³⁷⁵ John Simpson owned houses in Angel Meadow, as shown in the previous chapter, and gave his name to Simpson Street.

The mill was also a major factor in determining the future of the district – drawing in workers and ancillary businesses, introducing pollution and acting as an urbanising force that would prove a counter-weight to any efforts to build workshop homes for handloom weavers, whose prospects were becoming increasingly uncertain.³⁷⁶ According to R.J. Johnston, urbanisation and industrialisation are

³⁷⁰ [Anonymous], *Arkwright's Mill*, p. 4.

³⁷¹ *Manchester Guardian* (3 May 1854).

³⁷² James Ogden, *A Description of Manchester by a Native of the Town, from a Curious Edition of 1783* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1860), p. 11.

³⁷³ Fitton, *The Arkwrights*, p. 63.

³⁷⁴ [Anonymous], *Arkwright's Mill*, p. 2.

³⁷⁵ Fitton, *The Arkwrights*, p. 64.

³⁷⁶ See Michael Nevell, 'The Social Archaeology of Industrialisation: The Example of Manchester During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', in Eleanor Conlin Casella and James Symonds, eds, *Industrial Archaeology: Future Directions* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2005), pp. 177–205.

closely associated – operating together as mutually reinforcing variables.³⁷⁷ Turning to the advertisements in the *Manchester Mercury* shows the growing impact that industry was having on the district as companies rose up and collapsed. In 1789, a ‘large, new built warehouse’ in Miller’s Lane was being offered for sale.³⁷⁸ In 1791, an auction was held for a ‘complete set of tools for the entire manufactory of iron rollers for spinning, roving, carding’ near Saint Michael’s Church, along with a pair of bellows, an anvil and ‘hammers, tongues, swages, punches, bolsters complete, one large hot vice... brace, bits etc., a set of screw plates, wrenches etc.’ and a lathe which was ‘7 feet long, 1 foot deep, and 15 inches broad’.³⁷⁹ In 1795, a factory near the Bull’s Head pub at the top of Angel Meadow was also being offered for sale containing: ‘Twenty-three jennies from 90 to 126 spindles each, all in good repair. Likewise, stoves, devil, press, flakes, wheels etc.’³⁸⁰

However, the march of industry was not a straightforward takeover of Angel Meadow by factory work, as described earlier. While Arkwright’s Mill undeniably marked a seismic shift in Manchester’s development, it was not the instant city described by Gunther Barth in his study of the nineteenth-century rise of San Francisco and Denver, rising ‘Athena-like, full blown’.³⁸¹ Thompson noted that ‘from the time of Arkwright through to the Plug Riots and beyond, it is the image of the “dark, Satanic mill” which dominates our visual construction of the Industrial Revolution’ and the cotton industry was the cornerstone of descriptions by Engels and others of the ‘condition of England’. However, while cotton was the pace-making

³⁷⁷ J.R. Johnston, *Urban Residential Patterns* (London: Bell and Sons Ltd., 1971), p. 20.

³⁷⁸ *Manchester Mercury* (11 March 1789).

³⁷⁹ *Manchester Mercury* (28 June 1791).

³⁸⁰ *Manchester Mercury* (14 July 1795).

³⁸¹ Gunter Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanisation and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. xiii.

industry for the Industrial Revolution and pre-eminent model for the factory system, Thompson noted in the same vein as Timmins did later that in the early 1830s, handloom weavers still outnumbered all the men and women in spinning and weaving mills of cotton, wool and silk combined. Thompson said this was important because too much emphasis on the newness of cotton mills can lead to an underestimation of the continuity of political and social traditions in the making of working-class communities. The factory hands, he said, far from being the eldest children of the Industrial Revolution, were late arrivals.³⁸²

The mill itself could even have helped prolong handloom weaving in Angel Meadow. It is arguable that the site could have benefited from the existence of three-storey workshop housing in Angel Street and Blackley Street, and vice versa. According to Timmins the relationship between power and hand weaving, and the finishing trades, was symbiotic. To have one branch located at an appreciable distance from the other would have added to organisational problems and overall costs. Timmins said the location of handloom weaving cottages and early spinning mills on the periphery was a characteristic of Lancashire towns. Being located near handloom shops would have reduced the transport costs of outwork and mill owners may have been able to maintain closer supervision over quality and delivery deadlines. Timmins said: 'Other things being equal, the urban cotton manufacturer could well have achieved useful economies by employing urban rather than rural hand weavers.'³⁸³

The arrival of the Manchester to Leeds Railway line in the lower reaches of Angel Meadow in 1840 also had a major impact on the district. Victoria Station and

³⁸² Thompson, *The Making of the English Working-Class*, pp. 210–11.

³⁸³ Timmins, *The Last Shift*, pp. 57– 64.

the line that stretched north through the district were built where they were due to the nature of the landownership pattern. John Kellett, in his history of the building of the railways in Manchester, said the town was broken into highly fragmented units of ownership at its centre, but was ringed by a dozen or so large estates that lay in the route of the city's outward expansion and its railway approaches. This fact helped to determine the location of railway lines stretching out of the town.³⁸⁴

The proposed building of the Manchester and Leeds line through lower Angel Meadow from Victoria Station was eased due to there being only two landlords, the Earl of Ducie and the Earl of Derby. Kellett said the site of the station and the route out of Manchester was 'able to advance so expeditiously' because of this. The Earl of Ducie had already shown in the mid-1820s his willingness to develop his estate alongside the Irk by laying it out in building lots, and attempting to improve its poor road communications.³⁸⁵ While Angel Meadow's landholding pattern was fragmented, the Earl of Derby's estate included the land along the River Irk shown in Figure 5.6 and Kellett said it was with the earl that the Manchester and Leeds railway company had to negotiate concerning the route.³⁸⁶ Cutting railways through working-class housing was also more economical as compulsory purchases were cheaper and weekly tenants were not entitled to compensation.³⁸⁷ This is another example of how land holding patterns influenced Angel Meadow's development and the district's subsequent decline.

³⁸⁴ John R. Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways on Victorian Cities* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 150.

³⁸⁵ Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways*, p. 153.

³⁸⁶ Kellett, *The Impact of the Railways*, p. 151.

³⁸⁷ Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, p. 37.

Influences on housing

In addition to changing the environmental conditions in Angel Meadow, the three changes of land use discussed above influenced the housing development in various ways. While the cemetery could have negatively impacted house prices on the surrounding streets, the mill had a more direct impact in dictating the need for housing for factory workers, which would be built in the back streets behind the workshop houses. For example, as discussed previously, John Simpson, who took over Arkwright's Mill, owned 15 houses in 1798 and went on to give his name to Simpson Street. John Barton, who was also connected to the mill, owned 16. Other streets such as Factory Street, Factory Yard and Joiner Street are indicators of the industrialisation and urbanisation of the district. According to Yelling, the later arrival of the railways, in this case at least 40 years after Angel Meadow was originally developed, created a housing paradox. He said: 'The great technical achievement which was supposed to stimulate the suburbs and liberate the industrial city of its congestion had the immediate effect of increasing overcrowding in the areas surrounding the demolitions.'³⁸⁸ Dyos noted the huge displacement impact of railways, with 69 separate schemes nationally displacing 76,000 people between 1853 and 1901.³⁸⁹ As well as causing overcrowding, the increased pressure on housing also served to push up rents.³⁹⁰ The flotation of railway shares also reduced

³⁸⁸ J.A. Yelling, *Slums and Slum Clearance in Victorian London* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), p. 15.

³⁸⁹ Harold J. Dyos, 'Railways and Housing in Victorian London', in David Cannadine and David Reeder, eds, *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 104.

³⁹⁰ Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, p. 39.

the funds available for house building and after the 1830s it never again regained its late-eighteenth-century share of investment.³⁹¹

The railway had the secondary effect of isolating the district from outsiders who might now only see it from the window of a passing train – adding to their negative perceptions of the place and also creating a distance between them and the people who lived there. The poet Edwin Waugh (1817–1890) described the view as he travelled on one of these trains over the ‘moral desert’ and ‘swarming hive of ignorance, toil and squalor’ of Angel Meadow in 1855. ‘In a few minutes, we were darting over the tops of that miserable human jungle known by the inappropriate name of Angel Meadow. Here all is mental and moral malaria, and the wild revelry of the place sounds like a forlorn cry for help,’ he said.³⁹²

Friedrich Engels hinted, however, at how the railway *improved* the district by opening up some of the courts: ‘The newly built extension of the Leeds railway, which crosses the Lrk here, has swept away some of these courts and lanes, laying others completely open to view. Immediately under the railway bridge there stands a court, the filth and horrors of which surpass all the others by far, just because it was hitherto so shut off, so secluded that the way to it could not be found without a good deal of trouble, I should never have discovered it myself, without the breaks made by the railway, though I thought I knew this whole region thoroughly.’³⁹³ The late arrival of the railway meant that, rather than causing slum conditions as suggested by Dyos, it only added to a situation that had existed since the turn of century.

³⁹¹ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, pp. 18–19.

³⁹² Edwin Waugh, *Sketches of Lancashire Life and Localities* (London: Whittaker and Co., 1855), p. 161.

³⁹³ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

Phases of development

This thesis will now look more closely at the phases of development in Angel Meadow housing from the Georgian period to the mid-nineteenth century by focusing on the infilling that took place between and behind the older properties. Gregory identified eight developmental phases in Manchester from the eighteenth to the late-twentieth century in his archaeological research in Ancoats. This chapter's focus is on the first three of these phases up to 1848. Later phases focused on sanitary improvements to buildings that had already been erected. The first phase noted by Gregory was the building of good quality Georgian houses. During an archaeological dig in Loom Street, a number of deep cellars were partially uncovered, including 'an impressive column base and pediment mount that would have sat in a pair outside the front door'.³⁹⁴ Only one Georgian town house was dug up, but it was immediately apparent that it was constructed to a better standard than any previously witnessed on the site. It appeared to be a solidly-built, two-skin building with its own drainage system and privy. Gregory described how the house must have once been quite an impressive building and the discovery of a deep internal drain in the corner of the cellar suggested the original architects intended it to have adequate drainage. The second phase coincided with the rise of industrial migration into Manchester, when there started an intense level of development that would characterise the entire district of Ancoats throughout the remaining years of the century. In this phase could be found back-to-back housing as well as the equally poorly-constructed side-backs in what would later be known as Blossoms Court. Gregory identified that the phase-two dwellings included very small two-up-two-downs. While the load-bearing walls were laid two courses thick, the dividing walls were constructed of a single skin.

³⁹⁴ Gregory, 'Under Slate Grey Victorian Sky', pp. 36–51.

Gregory said the third phase, which he examined using a mid-century Ordnance Survey plan, revealed the full impact that the mass migration of workers into Manchester had upon Ancoats and, by this time almost the entire area had been developed to accommodate a new urban workforce. The only exceptions were the tiny communal courtyards that served as access routes and shared toilet facilities.³⁹⁵ These same three phases of development happened in Angel Meadow. Nevell also found, as hand-spinning and then handloom weaving eventually declined, the subdivision of the older, three-storey workshop dwellings of the eighteenth century, which became available for multiple occupancy. The fragmented landholding pattern of eighteenth-century Manchester also enabled and encouraged the conversion of existing housing into tenements, and backyards into courts during the early-nineteenth century as ways of maximising the rental return from small-scale properties. The housing types that emerged in these areas, Nevell said, appeared to have set the pattern for the cellar dwellings, courts, and back-to-back houses from the 1820s to the 1840s – a period of unplanned and unrestricted growth.³⁹⁶

Examining the street listings in trade directories shows the rapid pace of Angel Meadow's development in this period. In the 12 years from 1788 to 1800, the number of streets listed in the trade directories rose from four to 23 – a near sixfold increase. By 1821 there were 98 streets and by 1841 there were 127. By the time of Engels's visit, the development of Angel Meadow with the newly opened railway, was all but complete. This indicates the huge expansion of Angel Meadow in a period Nevell has associated with a marked decline in the quality of workers' housing. This phase coincided with the rise of speculative building on small plots. By

³⁹⁵ Gregory, 'Under Slate Grey Victorian Sky', pp. 37–51.

³⁹⁶ Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City', p. 604

1850, courts had been developed behind the corner of Blackley Street and Angel Street. 'This urban backyard development demonstrates how more and more housing units were packed onto tiny properties held by small landholders,' Nevell said.³⁹⁷

Olsen wrote that building land on the outskirts of Victorian cities was plentiful, cheap and not subject to significant fluctuations in price. Speculative builders needed no specialised skills and little or no capital and there was no shortage of them. 'To an abundance of landowners eager to participate in the unearned increment that urban growth offered them, and an abundance of builders ready to risk their all in covering their land with houses, there was added a complementary abundance of investors, virtually forcing their money on the builders and developers.'³⁹⁸

Jaqueline Roberts also carried out a detailed study of large-scale early maps, title deeds and the rate books, which suggested the builders of Manchester's early workers' dwellings were often 'very small businessmen, working under severe financial constraints, or building for small investors, in ones, twos or threes at a time' rather than a distant bourgeoisie depicted by Engels. While it was not uncommon for groups of workers such as handloom weavers to form building clubs, with Roberts identifying a group of these houses on Oldham Road, only one building club has been found in the district of Angel Meadow in the research for this thesis. The Griffin Building Club was named in the plans for creating the Manchester to Leeds Railway Line in 1840.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁷ Nevell, 'Living in the Industrial City', pp. 594–606.

³⁹⁸ Olsen, 'House Upon House', p. 33–35.

³⁹⁹ Roberts, *Working-Class Housing*, p. 9.

Much criticism has been placed at the door of speculative builders during the second and third phases the town's development. The situation was not helped by the lack of planning control and, according to E.D. Simon, a Manchester Withington M.P., writing in 1929, speculative builders in Manchester were free up to 1868 to build whatever type of housing they thought would command a ready sale – the only limitation being a local act of 1830 which required that all streets and courts should be at least 24 feet wide.⁴⁰⁰ Simon said the speculative builder 'could and did, in the poorest parts, crowd as many houses on the acre as space would hold and when he had built two rows of houses along a narrow street, he could add several courts at intervals along the street, containing still more houses.'⁴⁰¹ In Dyos's view though, the term speculative builder merely described a person who responded to market pressures and opportunities, who bore virtually all the risks and took some, at least, of the profits of meeting the demand for housing.⁴⁰² According to Rodger, speculative building began as a response to economic opportunity, as working between contracts became expedient for builders as demand for housing grew.⁴⁰³ Anthony Quiney said of the outcome though: 'Within a few decades home industry had entirely succumbed to the greater efficiency of the factory, and the local vernacular had succumbed with it.... Speculators found a ready market for their packed rows of terraces, which they laid out on endless grids for the mill workers of Lancashire and Yorkshire. With their thoroughly debased Georgian style, mass-produced bricks, doors, windows and roof timbers, with their imported roof slates, they are evidence

⁴⁰⁰ E.D. Simon, *How to Abolish the Slums* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), p. 20.

⁴⁰¹ E.D. Simon, *How to Abolish the Slums*, p. 20.

⁴⁰² Harold J. Dyos, 'The Speculative Builders and Developers of Victorian London', in David Cannadine and David Reeder, eds, *Exploring the Urban Past: Essays in Urban History by H.J. Dyos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 166.

⁴⁰³ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, pp. 21–22.

enough that the second half of the nineteenth century saw vernacular building well and truly into the grave along with many of its occupants.⁴⁰⁴ Burnett was among those who have been more charitable about speculative builders, saying they were motivated by guesses as to likely profit to be made from building a particular type of housing which could be let at a certain weekly rent. Their guesses could often be wrong because they were subject to cost fluctuations and because construction itself was a lengthy and incalculable process, which could mean completions appearing on the market at inappropriate times.⁴⁰⁵ A major part of the problem was that, after 1815, when house building had a spurt after the Napoleonic Wars, builders faced increased costs for materials.⁴⁰⁶

Beneath the landowner and the developer, the builder would put up the houses and find the occupants for them. In practice though, Dyos said, nothing was clear cut and every function in meeting the demand for housing was a speculative one.⁴⁰⁷ Engels's housebuilding bourgeoisie was therefore, in reality, a diverse group of people involved in a complex enterprise where the risk of failure was high. Roberts noted that multiple people were involved even at the building stage. In one example in Ancoats, Thomas Overton sold one plot of six back-to-backs to Samuel Parsonage, a plumber, and Richard Tetlow, a glazer, for £250. Two other plots containing four partially built back-to-backs were sold to John Mosely, a slater. Within a month, Parsonage and Tetlow sold the six for the same price to Daniel Hulme, a hatter. Mosely then sold his four houses to two yeomen named the

⁴⁰⁴ Anthony Quiney, *Benevolent Vernacular*, p. 48.

⁴⁰⁵ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, pp. 16–17.

⁴⁰⁶ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 21.

⁴⁰⁷ Dyos, *The Speculative Builders*, pp. 155.

Chatterton Brothers for £115, having presumably, according to Roberts, put roofs on all of them.⁴⁰⁸

Workers' housing was not all bad. The worst accommodation, according to Roberts, was the cellar dwelling. However, she said that when they were well lit, dry and spacious, they provided tenants with the privacy of their own front door – a privilege compared with multi-occupancy houses.⁴⁰⁹ William Cobbett, noted in his *Rural Rides* in 1830 that Durham miners were well housed, while Coventry handloom weavers were reported to have lived in 'good, comfortable dwellings – some of them very well furnished'.⁴¹⁰

Rising house sales

From 1800 to 1825, the *Manchester Mercury* adverts show a rising trend for house sales, with 142 properties sold in that time. This was more than just an increase in new build houses. As previously shown, death and bankruptcy played a major role in the sales and marked the start of a second phase of ownership beyond the intentions of the original owners. The adverts also show how blocks of property ownership were being broken up and split between different buyers in this second phase. This happened even in main streets such as Blackley Street as in the case of Horatio Barton, aged 15, the young son of John Barton, who was declared bankrupt in 1809 by default as a result of his father's death. His estate of 29 houses in Factory

⁴⁰⁸ Roberts, 'A Densely Populated and Unlovely Tract', p. 16.

⁴⁰⁹ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, pp. 45–55.

⁴¹⁰ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 56.

Yard, Factory Court, Factory Lane and Blackley Street, was put on the market. The houses had a chief rent of £3 7s, which was also being sold.⁴¹¹

Within 20 years of the first land sale advertised in the *Manchester Mercury*, leases were being sold as single lots. On 28 December 1819, the *Manchester Mercury* was advertising the sale by auction of the ‘inheritance in fee simple’ – the freehold – on eight dwellings in Angel Street. Four of the houses – Nos. 31, 32, 33 and 34 – stood on the front of the street and the remaining four stood behind. They had 11 tenants, suggesting that sub-division was yet to fully take place. The chief rent was described as ‘small’ at £1 11s 10d a year.⁴¹² No land sales were listed in the newspaper beyond 1825, when the land ownership appears to have settled. Such sudden and large turnovers in property ownership, transferring large number of houses away from their original owners, meant that any original intentions for them would have been taken over by events.

Infilling case study

This thesis will now use a small part of the Oswald Mosley property off Long Millgate in Angel Meadow to illustrate how the infilling of land happened in the district by comparing a Mosley estate plan of 1805–8 with the William Green map of 1794 and the Joseph Adshead map of 1850–1. The estate plan offers a snapshot of how small patches of the district were then being infilled, as shown in Figure 5.5. Mosley (1785–1871), the Baronet of Ancoats, owned a rectangular area of land between Millers Street, Beswick’s Row and Long Millgate consisting of 4,244 square yards,

⁴¹¹ *Manchester Mercury* (21 March 1809).

⁴¹² *Manchester Mercury* (28 December 1819).

which was in the process of being developed when the plan was drawn. The plan shows that it was divided into seven lots, whose occupants and lessees are listed in Table 5.5.

Lot	Description	Square yards
1	Premises held in the lease by Charles Sandiford	314
2	A cottage in the occupation of Ralph Hulme	32
3	Premises in the occupation of James Wood	708
4	A cottage in the occupation of John Leigh	50
5	Premises in the occupation of James Kay	624
6	Premises held in lease by John Slack	605
7	Premises held in lease by John Parr	2,244

Table 5.5: Property lots and their occupiers and lessees in the Mosley Plot drawn in 1805–8. (Source: *Plans of Estates of Sir Oswald Mosley prepared by John Hallkirk, 1805–8*, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.BR f 912.4273 H4, Misc/4/1–47, Microcard.)

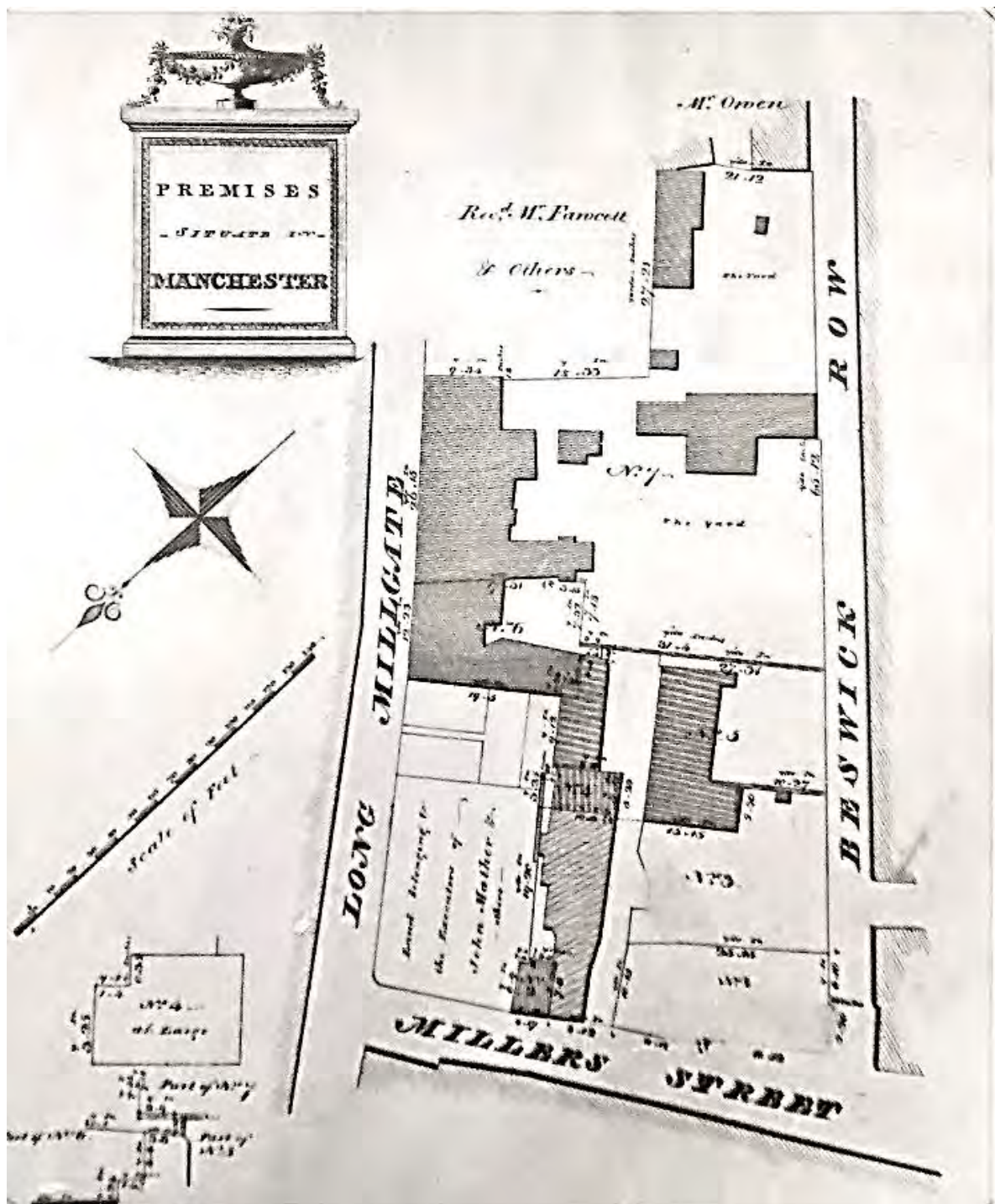


Figure 5.5: A sketch of Mosley's land in Angel Meadow. (Source: *Plans of Estates of Sir Oswald Mosley prepared by John Hallkirk, 1805–8*, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.BR f 912.4273 H4, Misc/4/1–47, Microcard)



Figure 5.6: Mosley's land in 1794 as shown in the William Green map. (Source: William Green Plan of Manchester and Salford, 1794, © The University of Manchester, JRL18011375.)

The lack of planning can be seen in Table 5.5 and Figure 5.5. They show a mixture of properties of different sizes with occupiers and leaseholders. In Figure 5.5 can also be seen two large yards. By 1806, the plot contained seven houses and a

workshop.⁴¹³ The large entry from Millers Street shown in Figure 5.5 was known as Mosley's Court – of the type of courts criticised by Engels. According to Rodger, infill housing would have started behind main road 'ribbon' development in existing shop and inn yards, townhouse gardens and orchards, with cottages built along the line of a garden wall. When cottages were also built around a neighbouring yard, the transition to back-to-backs was almost inevitable. Sufficient land behind principal streets enabled the late-eighteenth-century population to be housed without the need for extending the boundaries of the town.⁴¹⁴ However, the Mosley estate plan suggests that while individual developers were acting in a conscious and deliberate manner, there was probably no grand plan to create Mosley's Court. It emerged from a need to access the backs of buildings erected by leaseholders on separate lots. The William Green map of 1794 in Figure 5.6 confirms that only Mosley's property was included on the Hallkirk plan in Figure 5.5 and that the corner of Millers Street and Long Millgate had already been developed by another owner. The passageways from Long Millgate shown in Figure 5.6, were heavily criticised by Engels. Figure 5.5, however, shows they were needed by Mosley to allow access to his properties already built behind the street. In the area of three-storey housing on Angel Street, however, archaeologists said a passage between Nos. 37 and 39 built in the late-eighteenth century implied 'a degree of town planning or developer co-operation' to create 'mutually conducive access' to a yard behind No. 39. The report said: 'This hints at a form of regulation contradictory to the image of properties being thrown up for maximum profit without concern for the intended tenants.'⁴¹⁵

⁴¹³ *Plans of Estates of Sir Oswald Mosley prepared by John Hallkirk, 1805–08* (Manchester Archives and Local Studies, GB127.BR f 912.4273 H4, Misc/4/1–47 Microcard).

⁴¹⁴ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 30.

⁴¹⁵ Wild, *NOMA Regeneration, Miller Street, Manchester*, p. 57.

The Joseph Adshead map in Figure 5.7 shows how Mosley's land looked just after Engels's visit to Long Millgate. The crooked building shapes on Hallkirk's original plan in Figure 5.5 betray Adshead's neat lines. At least 18 back-to-back houses can be seen. According to Rodger, such housing was a deliberate attempt to pack in as much housing as possible in a limited site. They were built in blocks of six to ten. Their internal plans featured a living room of 10 feet to 15 feet square, with stairs leading to a single room of equal size above. 'Internally and externally, back-to-back housing exhibited numerous features prejudicial to health,' Rodger said. 'Without a back door or through windows, through ventilation was impossible. Confined communal space between the rows of houses may have encouraged socialising, gossip, childcare and games but it adversely affected hygiene since unsupervised and irregularly cleaned communal privies in close proximity to eating, sleeping and playing areas and to a shared water tap assisted the transmission of diseases in the congested maze of housing.'⁴¹⁶ The issue of privies and water taps though was equally an issue in streets of larger houses occupied by more people in districts such as Angel Meadow. Adshead's map also shows a mixture of business, marked with dark hatching, and residential properties. It is interesting to note though that one major improvement had been made since the publication of the William Green map of 1794. Mosley's Court had been opened up to create a new street – bringing with it more ventilation but also perhaps enabling the building of the back-to-

⁴¹⁶ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain, 1780–1914*, pp. 32–34.

backs on either side of it. It is named on the map as Oswald Street after Sir Oswald Mosley.

Figure 5.7: Mosley's Court, shown in 1850–1, had become Oswald Street by the time of Engels's visit to Manchester. (Source: Joseph Adshead, *Twenty-Four Illustrated Maps of the Township of Manchester, 1850–1*, sheet 13, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300178.)

In 1840, for example, the remaining handloom weavers in the three-storey houses Old Mount Street were in a desperate state. They included John Brain, who wove light check. *Bell's Weekly Messenger* described his condition: 'Many a day, duly as the morning came, he has been obliged to pawn his blanket for a shilling, and release it at night, pawning, then, the work he had done during the day – and this exchange of the blanket for the piece of fringe went on successively for months. Thus, out of the shilling which he daily earned, a penny went to the pawnbroker and the remaining eleven pence he and his family were forced to live on for 24 hours. This poor man has been many a week without tasting bread and has lain in bed all Sunday because he has had nothing at all to eat.'⁴¹⁷ Five years later, in the same year *The Condition* was published, John Boardman, one of the original Angel Meadow inhabitants who lived in Angel Street, was prosecuted for neglecting the privies behind his properties in Old Mount Street. The court heard the tenants were 'exceedingly poor'. 'There were only two conveniences for the whole of the tenants of Mr. Boardman's property, in which there resided several hundred inhabitants', the *Manchester and Salford Advertiser* said.⁴¹⁸

Conclusion

While the previous chapter showed that Angel Meadow had initially been on a rising trajectory, with larger houses attracting workers who could afford higher rents, this chapter has shown how the district declined until it became a place that attracted Engels and other commentators to write about the poor living conditions. It has

⁴¹⁷ *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (23 August 1840).

⁴¹⁸ *Manchester and Salford Advertiser* (15 February 1845).

shown how Angel Meadow's development can be seen against the backdrop of the expansion of Manchester during the early years of the Industrial Revolution – a period of mass immigration, industrialisation and urbanisation.

This chapter has sought out indicators for the district's decline. It can be seen in the sharp reduction of fee-paid baptisms and burials at Saint Michael's Church until they were made free in the 1830s when they began to increase once again. This suggests a declining middle-class population, or at least a decline in interest in having their loved ones baptised or buried in the district. Using occupational data, this chapter has shown how manufacturing dominated the district early in its development, with textiles dominating the manufacturing sector. One unexpected finding, however, has been the discovery that professional classes did not quit the district *en masse* and move to the outskirts of Manchester. The true picture was that their physical numbers increased, although the rise was outweighed in percentage terms by the much larger increase in the manufacturing workforce. This chapter has gone on to examine factors in Angel Meadow's decline and has considered how a multitude of landowners with different interests created conflicting property developments, with three-storey houses and back-to-backs mixed together with industry.

Key land use changes discussed in this chapter include the development of the New Burying Ground, the Manchester to Leeds Railway and Arkwright's Mill. However, this study has shown that industrialisation was not a straightforward linear change from hand weaving to factory weaving. In fact, handloom weaving continued in the district for several decades and, this study suggests, may have been to the mill's benefit. This chapter has gone on to examine the changing housing situation in more detail, looking at the phases of housing development property sales to show

how housing was rapidly changing hands in the district. It has then looked more closely at the infilling of courts. Ultimately, this chapter has shown how these changes were, in contrast to what Engels said, more nuanced – the result of many individual decisions about small plots of land. Having now set the scene for Engels's visit to Manchester, the next chapter will look at why he was drawn Angel Meadow and what he found.

Chapter 6: What Engels saw and chose not to see

In the previous chapters, this thesis has shown that all was not equal in working-class districts of Victorian Manchester and that, as well as having back-to-back housing and back street courts, Angel Meadow had streets which were dominated by three-storey Georgian properties which were originally built to attract higher rents from merchants and artisans. As has been shown, a number of owners of those houses originally were owner-occupiers and were content, while the district was being developed at least, to live there and to see the district prosper. It is clear that, as a starting point for understanding Angel Meadow's subsequent decline, the district's origins and development was more nuanced than Engels implied. This chapter will now examine how these mid-century conditions were more nuanced, while also looking at how Engels came to write about Angel Meadow and how he missed a key piece of the picture – the continued existence of the larger, three-storey properties.

While archaeologists have studied the conditions in Angel Meadow by analysing the physical remains of individual houses, this chapter will use data from the 1851 census to examine Engels's route through the district's streets. It will look specifically at the courts on the Irk side of Long Millgate which were among those Engels described, before comparing them, in the next chapter, with the overcrowding in the larger houses only one or two streets away. This thesis will show that, while Engels's courts were undoubtedly in a poor state in the mid-nineteenth century, they mostly contained relatively small numbers of people compared with the larger Georgian houses away from the river, which ultimately had a longer-lasting impact on the overall condition of Angel Meadow and the district's contemporary and future notoriety. The outlier to this argument is a street and court within the riverside area

called Gibraltar, which had occupancy rates on a par with those in the three-storey houses of Blackley Street, but which, surprisingly, has been found by this study to also contain some three-storey housing of its own. Before looking in detail at what Engels found, it is worth examining how he came to select the riverside part of Angel Meadow for his research. It will be suggested that, rather than simply stumbling across it, Engels was searching for a case study that dovetailed with the theory he was developing – a case study he found in Gibraltar.

Deconstructing Engels's route through Manchester

Given the intensity of the debate about Engels's descriptions of Manchester, as shown in Chapter 2, it is surprising that no researchers have thought to carry out a close examination of his route through the town to understand what he was seeing and how he came to the conclusions that he did about Manchester. For the first time, this thesis has done that in reference to Angel Meadow. It will show that Engels's 'Hell upon Earth' was a selective portrayal of a uniquely small area of the town. His route and the locations of his most evocative descriptions are shown in Figure 6.1.

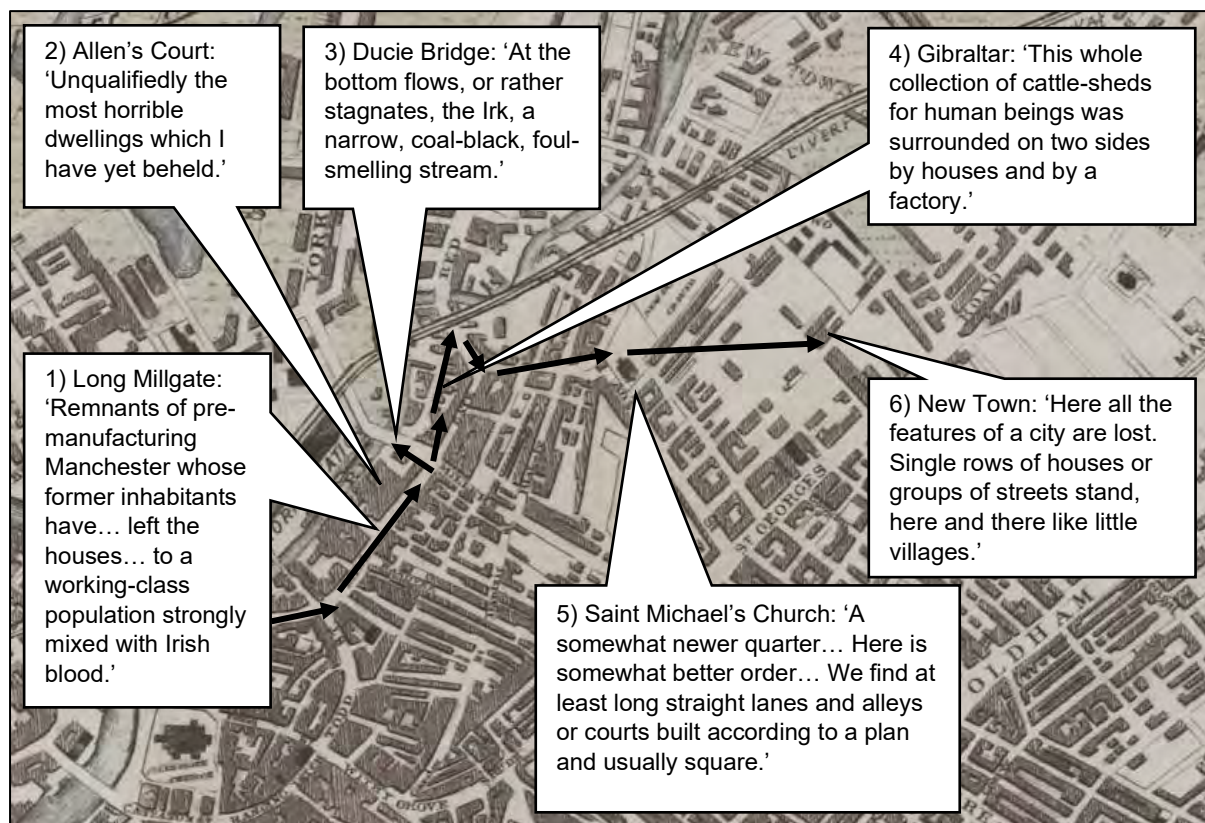


Figure 6.1: Engels's 1844 route through the district marked on a contemporary map of Manchester. (Sources: Engels, *The Condition* and J. Fothergill, *A New Plan of Manchester and Salford with their Vicinities*, 1844, Manchester Local Studies Map Collection, GB127.)

As can be seen, Engels's most highly-charged descriptions in *The Condition* were based on a view of Allen's Court from Ducie Bridge and from entering a handful of courts along the River Irk around the area known as Gibraltar – points one, two, three and four in Figure 6.1. These were mere pinpricks on a map of the 1840s town. What ultimately appears to be a quick, selective, run through of these riverside courts is at odds with Engels's preface to the first edition of *The Condition*, when he wrote that he 'forsook the company and the dinner-parties, the port-wine and champagne of the middle-classes, and devoted my leisure-hours almost exclusively to the intercourse with plain working men'.⁴¹⁹ An idealised portrayal of his visit to

⁴¹⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 9.

Manchester can be seen in Figure 6.2, which shows a Soviet Russian propaganda postcard from the 1970s.



Figure 6.2: A Soviet postcard depicting Engels's visit to Manchester. In fact, the voices of the workers in Manchester are unheard in *The Condition* and it is unlikely Engels interviewed any of them in this way or even entered their homes to this extent. (Source: Dean Kirby collection.)

The courts visited by Engels to the left of Long Millgate can be identified in Figure 6.3 – a plan showing the proposed route of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway ahead of its erection on viaducts prior to Engels’s visit. Engels arrived in the district after the railway was built, noting that it had ‘swept away some of these courts and lanes, laying others completely open to view.’⁴²⁰

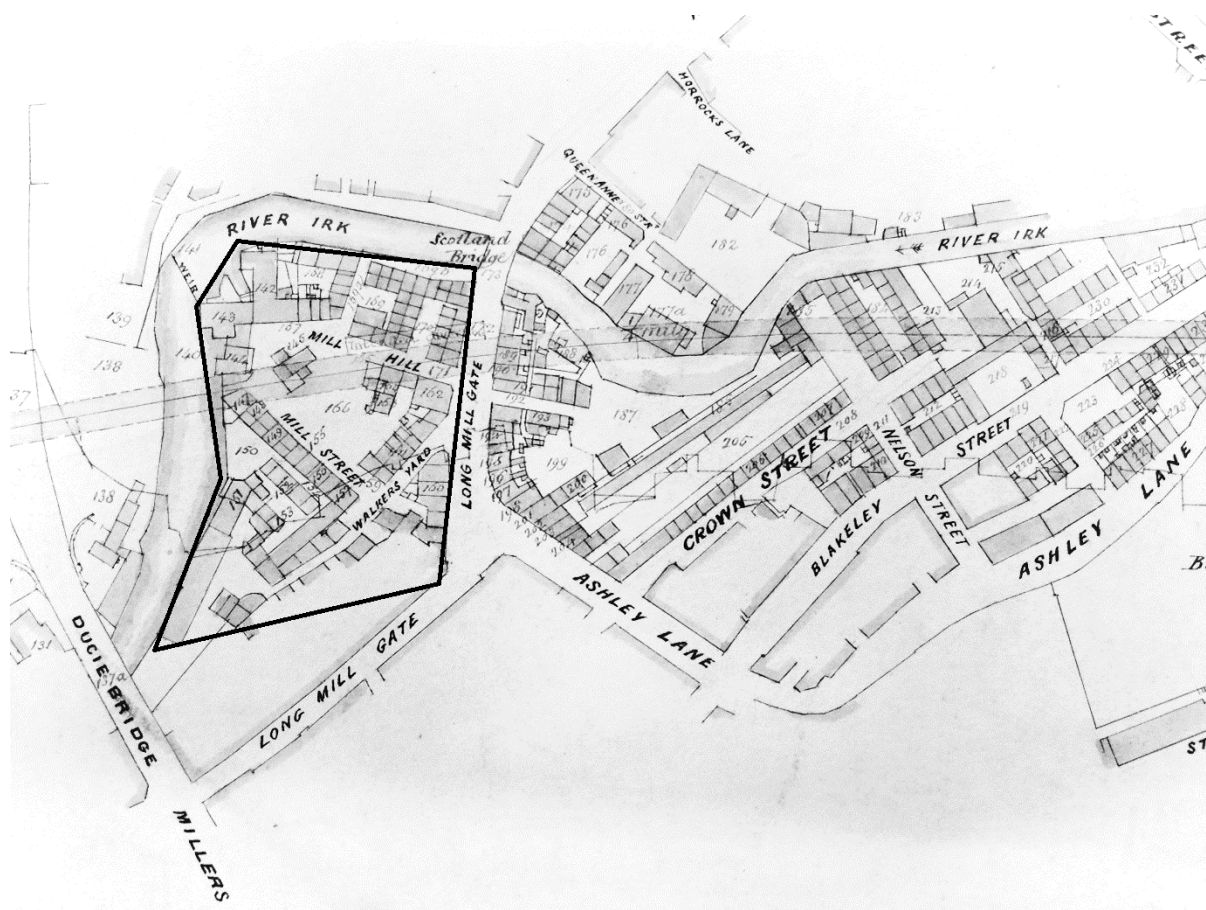


Figure 6.3: A plan drawn as part of the legal procedures for creating the Manchester to Leeds Railway. The marked area was the focal point for Engels’s visit of the district. (Source: *Plans 136, 137, 138, 138a, Deposited Plans, Manchester and Leeds Railway, 1836, and Plan 252, 1839, Parliamentary Archives.*)

Looking at the area highlighted in Figure 6.3, with streets and courts running in different directions, and packed rows of back-to-back housing, it is easy to see why it was chosen by Engels. In addition to a 508-word overview of this corner of the

⁴²⁰ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

town, he devoted no less than 1,680 words to this specific riverside area – a handful of streets which almost entirely came to define his Manchester writings. By implication, it also came to define Manchester itself. When excerpts from *The Condition* are quoted by historians, lecturers and the public, it is these excerpts to which they usually first refer.

The selective nature of Engels's work here can be seen by looking at his limited description of the area up the hill away from the river, a substantially larger area dominated by three-storey housing as previously discussed, just a few streets away from the riverbank, in points five and six of Figure 6.1. Engels described this upper area in just 638 words. Where he mentioned the New Town, his descriptions suggest that he was writing about this upper area of Angel Meadow closer to Saint George's Road rather than the area to the north of the railway marked as New Town in the top right corner of Figure 6.1. Engels, perhaps feeling the uphill areas fitted less closely with his theory, hinted only sparingly at the larger houses found there. He wrote:

Here there is somewhat better order. In place of the chaos of buildings, we find at least long straight lanes and alleys or courts, built according to a plan and usually square.' He caveated this by saying that 'if in the former case, every house was built according to caprice, here each lane and court is so built without reference to the situation of the adjoining ones. The lanes run now in this direction, now in that, while every two minutes the wanderer gets into a blind alley or, on turning a corner, finds himself back where he started

from. Certainly, no-one who has not lived a considerable time in this labyrinth can find a way through it.⁴²¹

Engels went on to further qualify his description of the upper area away from the river as being in 'better order' by saying the ventilation in those streets was 'quite as imperfect' as alongside the Irk, but he added: 'If this quarter may, nevertheless, be said to have some advantage over that of the Irk, the houses being newer and the streets occasionally having gutters, nearly every house has, on the other hand, a cellar dwelling, which is rarely found in the Irk district, by reason of the greater age and more careless construction of the houses.'⁴²² This appears to be an admission that the houses on streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street were built as larger, higher-status properties. That he describes the properties as newer than those along the Irk is also significant.

Engels's selection process

The question of how Engels came to select the riverside area known as Gibraltar can be discovered by a close reading of James Phillips Kay's 1832 work on Manchester's living conditions, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, which Engels confirmed he had read.⁴²³ Engels's most vivid descriptions – the apparently personal observations which Steven Marcus said were 'the best single thing Engels ever wrote' – were almost identical to the descriptions given by Kay more than a decade

⁴²¹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 64.

⁴²² Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 64–5.

⁴²³ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 61, 73, 77.

earlier.⁴²⁴ This fact may have been missed by historians of Engels as there were two versions of Kay's 1832 pamphlet – a shorter version which only mentioned the Irk-side dwellings in a few sentences and a longer version which mentioned them more extensively.⁴²⁵ This longer version of the 1832 document can be found in a volume of Kay's work that was printed in 1862 which included updated notes by Kay, but there is evidence, as will be shown, that everything in it pre-dated Engels's visit. Eleven sections of Kay's longer version have been shown side-by-side with sections of Engels's *The Condition* in Table 6.1.

Kay, <i>The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester</i> , 1832.	Engels, <i>The Condition of the Working-Class in England</i> , 1845.
1. The Irk, black with the refuse of dye-works erected on its banks, receives excrementious matters from some sewers in this portion of the town – the drainage from the gasworks, and filth of the most pernicious character from bone works, tanneries, size manufactories etc.	1. At the bottom flows, or rather stagnates, the Irk, a narrow, coal-black, foul-smelling stream, full of debris and refuse.... Above the bridge are tanneries, bone mills, and gasworks, from which all drains and refuse find their way into the Irk, which receives further the contents of all the neighbouring sewers and privies.
2. The course of the river is here impeded by a weir... the River Irk, whose stream is again impeded, at the distance of one hundred yards by a weir...	2. The stream itself is checked every few paces by high weirs, behind which slime and refuse accumulate and rot in thick masses...
3. A deep hollow between two high banks...	3. ... the south bank of the Irk is very steep here and between 15 and 30 feet high.
4. ... portions of animal matter were decaying in it.	4. ... the stench of animal putrefaction.
5. ... a series of courts, of the most singular and unhealthy character... access is obtained to	5. Right and left a multitude of covered passages lead from the main street into numerous courts,

⁴²⁴ Marcus, *Engels*, p. 145; Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, p. 19.

⁴²⁵ Kay, 'The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working-Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester', *Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846 and 1862 in Papers by Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth Bart.* (London: Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862), pp. 3–84.

these courts through narrow covered entries from Long Millgate... in a state of loathsome filth.	and he who turns in thither gets into a filthy and disgusting grime.
6. ... the explorer descends by stone stairs, and in one instance, by three successive flights of steps to a level with the bed of the river.	6. ... the only entrance to most of the houses is by means of narrow, dirty stairs and over heaps of refuse and filth.
7. A more unhealthy spot than this court it would be difficult to discover... some of the most wretched and dilapidated buildings of the town.	7. ... the equal of which is yet to be found... unqualifiedly the most horrible dwellings which I have yet beheld.
8. ... the physical depression consequent on living in such a situation may be inferred from what ensued on the introduction of cholera here.	8. The first court... was in such a state at the time of cholera... Dr. Kay gives a terrible description of the state of the court at that time.
9. ... this crazy labyrinth of pauper dwellings.	9. ... another almost equally ill-built, ill-kept labyrinth of dwellings.
10. On the other side of this tannery is the parish burial ground, chiefly used as a place of interment for paupers.	10. Here the background embraces the pauper burial-ground.
11. Porkers, who feed pigs in the town, often contract with the inhabitants to pay some small sum for the rent of their area, which is immediately covered with pigsties, and converted into a dung-heap and receptacle of the putrescent garbage upon which the animals are fed, as also of the refuse which is now heedlessly flung into it from all the surrounding dwellings.	11. Another feature most injurious to the cleanliness of the inhabitants, is the multitude of pigs walking about in all the alleys, rooting into the offal heaps, or kept imprisoned in small pens. Here, as in most of the working-men's quarters of Manchester, the pork-raisers rent the courts and build pigpens in them.

Table 6.1: Excerpts from Kay's *Condition of the Working-Classes* and Engels's *Condition of the Working-Class* compared. (Sources: Kay, 1832, 1862; Engels, 1845.)

There are several points to note here in addition to the obvious comparisons.

Kay highlighted not only the conditions in this small area of Manchester but also provided Engels, passing through a decade later, with written directions for finding

this area – naming individual locations including Gibraltar, Ducie Bridge and Allen’s Court, but also highlighting methods of access including the steps down to the riverbank and the narrow passageways into the courts. Engels was also not, incidentally, alone in relying so heavily on Kay. Leon Faucher, who like Engels visited Manchester in 1844, also picked up on Kay’s descriptions of Gibraltar and quoted them verbatim in his own work, which indicates that Kay’s longer version published in 1862 was written before 1844. Faucher’s text also suggests he had met and spoken to Kay.⁴²⁶ However, while Faucher quoted Kay directly as a source in a long paragraph, Engels, while acknowledging Kay in his footnotes, weaved Kay’s own words seamlessly into his own descriptions. This might not matter, but Engels’s apparently fresh observations of the class-divided town were a crucial selling point for the success of his theory. Engels did, it has to be acknowledged, update the picture – noting that Allen’s Court had been ‘partially torn away and rebuilt... with some newer houses’. In other parts he added details of his own to the scene, including describing the impact of the more recently built railway.⁴²⁷

Comparison with descriptions of Little Ireland

Before looking more closely at Engels’s journey alongside the Irk, it is worth also looking at his and Kay’s descriptions of the Manchester district of Little Ireland, along the River Medlock on the other side of town. Busteed has made a strong case for a reappraisal of the two men’s descriptions of that district.⁴²⁸ As with Gibraltar, Engels

⁴²⁶ Leon Faucher, *Manchester in 1844: Its Present Condition and Future Prospects* (Manchester: A. Heywood, 1844), pp. 65–7.

⁴²⁷ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 61–63.

⁴²⁸ Mervyn Busteed, ‘The Most Horrible Spot? The Legend of Manchester’s Little Ireland’, *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Winter 1995–6), pp.12–20.

picked out Little Ireland based on the descriptions of Kay. Both sites were near the centre of town and easily accessible on foot. Gibraltar was just off Long Millgate and Little Ireland was just off Oxford Street. Busteed said Little Ireland became the subject of 'so much sensationalism and polemic that it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the nature of the population and its living conditions' – a task he attempted with maps, censuses and other sources.⁴²⁹ Busteed made a convincing argument that Little Ireland, named after its immigrant Irish population, was 'more of a social construction than a physical reality' – a statement that this thesis suggests can also be applied to the courts described by Engels on the Irk. Busteed said: 'By the 1840s, the popular image of Little Ireland had taken on a life of its own, independent of the objective reality. In the early stages of its notoriety, it had been used as a bogey to goad and frighten the establishment into reform of working-class living conditions, in order to stave off infections such as cholera and insurrection.'⁴³⁰

As a social reformer, Kay was a key figure in broadcasting this image of Little Ireland and according to Busteed used statistics and fear to try to persuade the authorities of the need for social reform. While presented as scientific and value free, his surveys would be focused on the worst and most shocking areas of new cities to imply the threat of political and social revolution.⁴³¹ Busteed said: 'Thanks partly to Kay, from the early 1830s until the late 1840s, Manchester and the industrial system it seemed to represent became almost a national obsession and all roads led to Manchester'. He added that: 'Virtually all of these visitors had read Kay's pamphlet,

⁴²⁹ Busteed, *The Most Horrible Spot*, p. 13.

⁴³⁰ Busteed, *The Most Horrible Spot*, p. 17.

⁴³¹ Busteed, *The Most Horrible Spot*, pp. 15–16.

and many quoted directly from it, whilst in other cases the topics chosen for visit and discussion suggest Kay's influence'.⁴³²

Busteed's own study of Little Ireland using the 1841 census and an Ordnance Survey plan found that, while the low-lying district was obviously polluted and unhealthy, it was such a small area that it accounted for only 3.25 percent of Manchester's Irish population.⁴³³ In fact, despite the prominence given to it by Kay, the district was almost cholera free in 1832, with only four cases among the 200 deaths investigated by Gaulter. While the Board of Health was concerned immediately prior to the pandemic that 'a more suitable soil and situation for the malignant development of cholera could not be found', Gaulter reported afterwards: 'Horrid and insalubrious as this spot is, a large area in the centre hitherto unbuilt upon, and the width of the lower cottage streets admit of a degree of ventilation which considerably diminishes its unhealthiness.'⁴³⁴ The district had disappeared by the mid-1850s. Michael Herbert had a similar opinion on Little Ireland, noting that both Kay and Engels appeared to share a common view of the Irish as little more than scavengers on the margins of society. While Little Ireland has often been taken to be typical of the experience of the Irish in Manchester, he said it was important to note it was only inhabited for a period of 20 to 30 years and by a minority of the Irish population.⁴³⁵

Across town in Angel Meadow, Kay was quite transparent about the comments he had made on Gibraltar and his desire for reform. He wrote after

⁴³² Busteed, *The Most Horrible Spot*, p. 17.

⁴³³ Busteed, *The Most Horrible Spot*, pp. 13–15.

⁴³⁴ Henry Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress of Malignant Cholera in Manchester* (London: Longman, 1833), p. 41

⁴³⁵ Herbert, *The Wearing of the Green*, p. 13.

describing the scene: 'These facts are thus minutely related because we are anxious to direct public attention to the advantage which would accrue from widening this portion of Long Millgate by taking down the whole of the houses on the Irk side of the street, from a factory which projects into it on that side, as far as Ducie Bridge, and thus improving this important entrance to the town, from Bury, and from the north-east of Lancashire.'⁴³⁶

However, even in this lower area of Angel Meadow visited by Engels, all was not what it seemed. In 1880, Richard Wright Proctor depicted an altogether brighter picture of Long Millgate than shown by Engels, writing that an unnamed painter in 1821 had described how this 'place of spirited inhabitants and mirthful good fellowship had not its superior in the town'.⁴³⁷ Wright Proctor also described how a local fustian cutter had written a lyric in praise of the street as late as 1853:

From peril and danger.
This land of the stranger,
May heaven still shield each forthcoming year.
Contentment and pleasure,
Without any measure,
To each gen'rous heart, and true Millgateer.

What Engels found along the Irk

This study will now follow Busteed's lead by using the 1851 census to examine what Engels would have seen in the courts along the River Irk. Studying census returns is a tried and tested method for examining the contours of a community. Richard

⁴³⁶ Kay, *The Origin and Progress*, 1832; 1862, pp. 20–21.

⁴³⁷ Richard Wright Proctor, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester with Glimpses of the Environs* (Manchester: Palmer and Howe, 1880), pp. 137–8.

Lawton said that censuses are basic documents for tackling a great variety of demographic, social and economic questions.⁴³⁸ Edward Higgs said that while censuses are useful for establishing what a community was like, comparison is vital for seeing how it differed from others.⁴³⁹ However, census records are not without their problems as researchers have found. Lawton said they were full of pitfalls for the unwary.⁴⁴⁰ P.M. Tillott highlighted how empty houses may be missing from schedules; houses may be given half or lettered numbers, such as 115a, 115b and 115c; and the addition of houses at the foot of a page can cause counting errors. Other errors can lie in the nature of the 'house'. Tillott said there are countless instances where the division between separate 'houses' – in courts, back-to-back blocks and tenement houses – is impossible to discover from the census pages. While short lines drawn on the page by the enumerator demarcate separate households within a given property, Tillott said that the modern reader can never be fully certain of an individual enumerator's meaning. Their instructions on how demark separate households were ambiguous and the thought process unclear.⁴⁴¹ This was a problem also identified by Armstrong, who said the extent to which census takers adhered to the 'ruling off' regulation varied. People within a household were all treated as lodgers of the family at the head of the schedule and the household was only regarded a shared one if there was at least one identifiable family unit, either a

⁴³⁸ Richard Lawton, ed., *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretive Guide to Nineteenth-Century Censuses for England and Wales* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1978), p. 1.

⁴³⁹ Edward Higgs, *A Clearer Sense of the Census: The Victorian Censuses and Historical Research* (London: H.M.S.O., 1996), p. 150.

⁴⁴⁰ Lawton, *The Census*, p. 2.

⁴⁴¹ P.M. Tillott, 'Sources of Inaccuracies in the 1851 and 1861 Censuses', in E.A. Wrigley, ed., *Nineteenth-Century Society: Essays in the Use of Quantitative Methods for the Study of Social Data* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 93–5.

married couple, or an adult with at least one child among the lodgers.⁴⁴² Other problems abound, including the reliability occupational data, with a tendency to state an occupation in only general terms, to use personal information without reference to the industry or to use colloquial terms.⁴⁴³ In using censuses to re-evaluate Engels's visit to Manchester, it is a case of choosing the census before or after his book was published in 1845. The 1851 census is better than its predecessor, the 1841 census, as new procedures were introduced for taking it.⁴⁴⁴ It also includes information on how people within a household are related to each other and more precise information on where they were born. A unique problem in Manchester is that the 1851 census was badly water-damaged and sections of it are missing.⁴⁴⁵ Luckily, the 1851 pages for Angel Meadow are mostly undamaged and legible.

In this study, data from sampled courts visited by Engels along the Irk has been examined to assess the extent to which the houses were overcrowded, the extent to which they housed lodgers and the extent to which they were occupied by the Irish. The exercise will be repeated in the next chapter to compare those courts with the streets containing three-storey houses. Nationalities have been broken into three categories: English, Irish and 'other'. To this a fourth category has been added to the Irish count – the number of English-born children to two Irish parents. This follows a technique used by Busteed and Hodgson, who found in a research on Angel Meadow that this was a more accurate way of determining the extent of the district's Irish population.⁴⁴⁶ In this study, English-born children of one Irish parent

⁴⁴² W.A. Armstrong, 'The Interpretation of the Census Enumerators' Books for Victorian Towns', in Dyos, *The Study of Urban History*, pp. 77–78.

⁴⁴³ W.A. Armstrong, 'The Census Enumerators' Books', in Lawton, *The Census*, pp. 37–38.

⁴⁴⁴ Lawton, *The Census*, p. 17.

⁴⁴⁵ Gregory, 'Under Slate Grey Victorian Sky', p. 64.

⁴⁴⁶ Busteed and Hodgson, 'Irish Migration and Settlement', pp. 1–13.

have not been counted as Irish, even if the Irish parent was listed as a widow, to avoid the risk of inflating the Irish population. An English-born child of an English parent and Irish parent was counted as English.

Five courts will now be examined starting with Allen's Court, followed by Queen Anne Court, Black Lion Court and Brook's Court, before looking at Gibraltar proper. All of these courts are on the Irk-side of Long Millgate and in the immediate area where Engels discussed entering courts by narrow passageways. Following Engels into these courts proves with the utmost clarity how descriptions of the 'Hell upon Earth' Old Town were based on small pockets of housing which were being rented by relatively small groups of people. This thesis does not seek to suggest that the conditions in those courts were *better* than Engels described. As Gauldie has pointed out, the smell in such courts, let alone the dirt of refuse, must have been nearly intolerable particularly in a time when there was great fear that miasma caused disease – a point that is often missed by modern readers.⁴⁴⁷ What this thesis does argue, however, is that the evidence from occupancy rates and the occupations and nationalities of the inhabitants shows that these conditions were more nuanced. As will be shown, the riverside area as a whole was less overcrowded than the area of larger housing up the hill from the river. Environmental housing conditions up the hill included hazards such as sharing a lodging house garret or even a bed with strangers.

⁴⁴⁷ Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations*, pp. 73–74.

Allen's Court

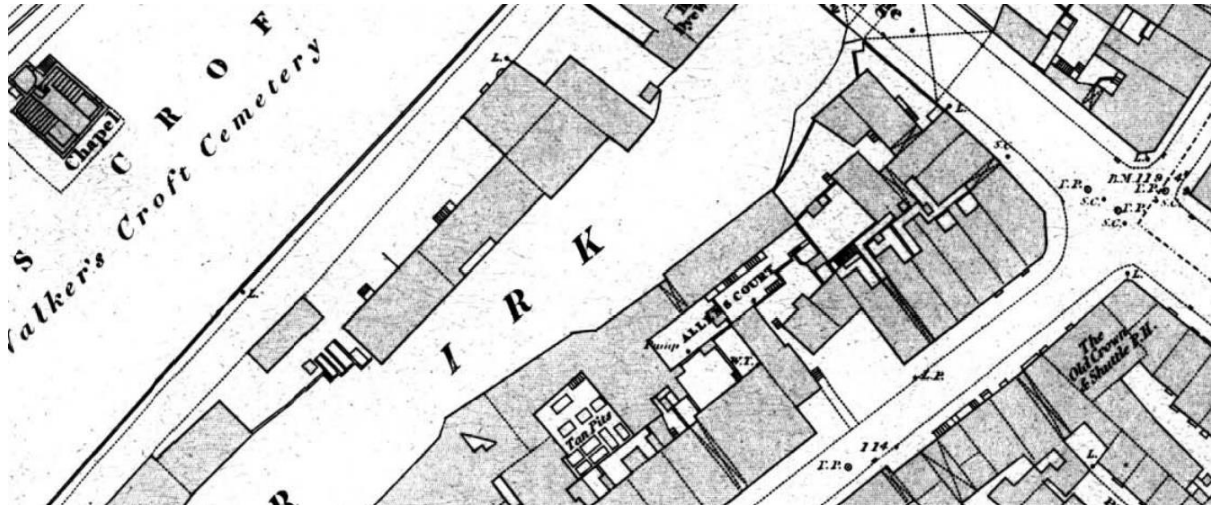


Figure 6.4: Allen's Court in 1850. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, c.1843–1850, sheet 23, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

The 1823 rate book states that Allen's Court, which is shown in Figure 6.4, had 16 houses, which were owned by John Staley and had a median value at that time of £2. The weekly rent in that year was between 3s 3d and 3s 6d. Gaulter, who visited Allen's Court during the 1832 cholera pandemic, said the court was 40 feet below the level of the road and 'suffocated for want of air and half poisoned by the effluvia arising from two conveniences which stand in the centre of the well-like area'.⁴⁴⁸ In 1832, the court housed a tripe boiler's works and a catgut manufactory. At the time of the cholera outbreak, it accommodated 17 people in four adjoining houses – a relatively low occupancy rate of 4.25 per house. Fourteen of them died within 48 hours – earning Allen's Court the nickname 'cholera court'. Gaulter noted, however, that 'the greater number of the sufferers in this court were decent and respectable

⁴⁴⁸ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 44–53.

silk weavers'.⁴⁴⁹ This detail was also noted by Kay, who said that the houses were 'a short time ago chiefly inhabited by fringe, silk, and cotton weavers and winders'.⁴⁵⁰

According to the 1840 rate book, there were 19 houses and the weekly rent had fallen to between 1s 8d and 2s 6d. Engels noted it had been partially demolished and rebuilt since the cholera outbreak. A water tap and pump can be seen in Figure 6.4, although Engels said that pumps and water pipes could be found in 'decent parts of the city alone'.⁴⁵¹ According to Gauldie, it was customary in Manchester for a tenant to rent the pump in a street and keep it locked, taxing his neighbours for using it.⁴⁵² Comparing Figure 6.4 with a hand-drawn 1833 map from Gaulter's book in Figure 6.5 shows the court had been opened up both internally and from Long Millgate.⁴⁵³

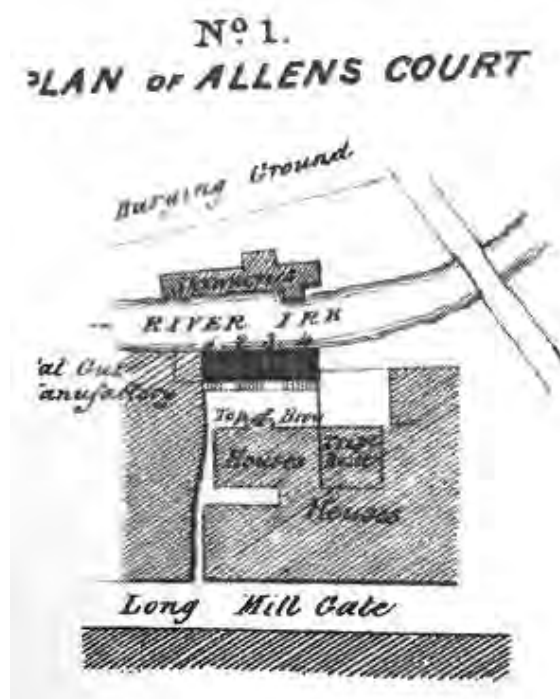


Figure 6.5: An 1833 sketch of Allen's Court. (Source: Henry Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress of Malignant Cholera in Manchester*, 1833, frontispiece.)

⁴⁴⁹ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 47–8.

⁴⁵⁰ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, p. 19.

⁴⁵¹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 64.

⁴⁵² Gauldie, *Cruel Habitations*, p. 77.

⁴⁵³ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 61–62.

The 1851 census, taken seven years after Engels's journey along Long Millgate, shows that Allen's Court was then home to 55 people, as shown in Table 6.2. While Engels had written that houses in this part of Manchester were 'strongly mixed with Irish blood', all of the occupants in this court at the time of the census were English.⁴⁵⁴ Given the lack of house numbers, the population density in 1851 is difficult to calculate. The 55 occupants appear to have been divided into 15 separate households, while the rate book for the same year gives 11 houses. Using both figures gives an average of between 3.3 and 5 occupants per household. Occupancy rates alone will always fail to paint a full picture of the environmental conditions in the low-lying Allen's Court, including the smells from the polluted river and the nearby tanning pits. However, while 55 people was a significant number to be living in what Figure 6.4 suggests was now a network of four or five courts, this represents, as will be seen in the next chapter, a relatively low figure compared with numbers living in rows of three-storey Georgian houses elsewhere in the district.

The heads of each household in Allen's Court in 1851 included three people at the lower end of the economic spectrum – a hawker, a laundress and an unemployed widow. Predominantly, though, the residents worked in textiles. Seven were fustian cutters, including one – a widower named John Podmore – who employed two men and four women. This is a surprising discovery. Other occupants included a cotton winder, a handloom weaver and a cotton spinner, John Cleworth, who lived in the court with his wife and two daughters, aged three and four. Spinners could earn an average net weekly wage of between 18s and 22s in Manchester in 1849, and handloom weavers 15s, compared with the 6s earned by cotton

⁴⁵⁴ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 60.

winders.⁴⁵⁵ This range in occupational status suggests a more nuanced picture of the court in the mid-nineteenth century than was described by Engels, who was writing more than a decade after Kay and Gaultier. There were two visitors but no lodgers.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
1	4	0	0	4	0
5	3	0	0	3	0
-	1	0	0	1	0
-	5	0	0	5	0
-	3	0	0	3	0
-	4	0	0	4	0
-	7	0	0	7	0
-	1	0	0	1	0
-	4	0	0	4	0
7	3	0 (+ 2)	0	3	0
-	4	0	0	4	0
-	6	0	0	6	0
-	4	0	0	4	0
-	2	0	0	2	0
-	4	0	0	4	0
Totals	55	0 (2)	0 (0)	55 (0)	0

Table 6.2: Occupants of Allen's Court in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

⁴⁵⁵ David Chadwick, 'On the Rate of Wages in Manchester and Salford, and the Manufacturing Districts of Lancashire, 1839–59', *Quarterly Journal of the Statistical Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (March 1860), p. 23.

Queen Anne Court, Black Lion Court and Brook's Court

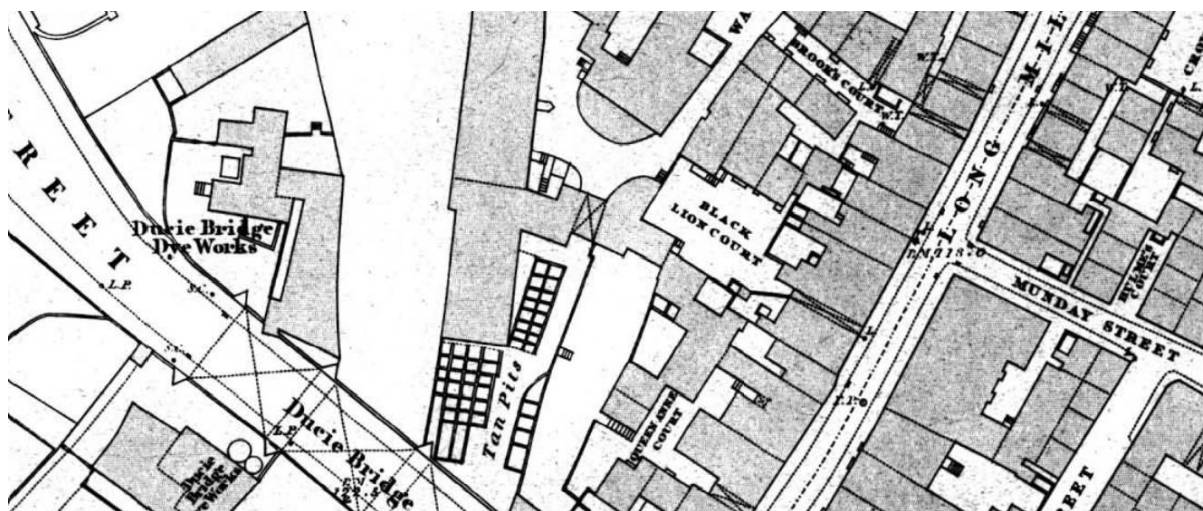


Figure 6.6: Queen Anne Court, Black Lion Court and Brook's Court, shown to the north of Ducie Bridge in 1850. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, sheet 23, c.1843–1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

Heading down Long Millgate beyond Ducie Bridge, Engels went on to describe a 'multitude of narrow passages' leading from the main street into 'numerous courts' containing 'unqualifiedly the most horrible dwellings which I have yet beheld'. These courts and their covered entrances can be seen in Figure 6.6. He described the first of these, the first court above Ducie Bridge, as having 'a privy without a door, so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement'. Mapping his description of the tanneries on the riverbank shows that this was Queen Anne Court.⁴⁵⁶ Engels had easy access from the street and would have needed to stay only briefly to observe it.

As shown in Table 6.3, the 1851 census shows the court contained only 19 people – almost all of them English. The household heads included a widowed former fustian cutter, a porter and a loom dresser. Surprisingly, however, for a court

⁴⁵⁶ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 61.

described as it was by Engels, an ostler named Hugh Evans at No. 6 kept a servant. This may have been connected to an inn that fronted Long Millgate. An average of 4.8 people lived in the court's four houses, which was a similar population density to Allen's Court. There were four lodgers.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
2	4	0	0	4	0
6	3	0 (+1 servant)	1	1	1 (Wales)
5	6	0	0	6	0
4	6	4	0	5	1 (Gibraltar)
Totals	19	4	1 (0)	16 (0)	2

Table 6.3: Occupants of Queen Anne Court in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

It is unclear if Engels entered the next two courts, Black Lion Court and Brook's Court, but his general description of Long Millgate gives the impression that he did, as he wrote: 'He who turns to the left here from the main street, Long Millgate, is lost. He wanders from one court to another, turns countless corners, passes nothing but narrow, filthy nooks and alleys... everywhere heaps of debris, refuse, and offal... standing pools for gutters, and a stench which alone would make it impossible for a human being in any degree civilised to live in such a district.'⁴⁵⁷ Figure 6.7 shows the narrow entrance to Black Lion Court beneath a street lamp on Long Millgate and also confirms the pre-industrial nature of this part of the district. Such houses pre-dated Engels's 'industrial epoch'. Interestingly, a three-storey workshop-type dwelling can be seen to the right of the photograph, showing that they

⁴⁵⁷ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 62–3.

also formed part of the housing arrangement in this lower area of Angel Meadow.

Engels would have walked past it as he followed the road from the left of the picture.



Figure 6.7: Long Millgate in 1870 showing the covered entrance to Black Lion Court beneath the streetlamp in the centre of the picture. (Source: B. Marshall, *Black Lion Court*, 1870, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M02781.)

In Black Lion Court, the houses contained 20 occupants in 1851 – an average density of 6.7 per house – as shown in Table 6.5. They included a marine store dealer, a chairmaker and a master joiner, John Shields, who lived in the court with his wife and four children. A dealer and skilled artisans might not be the type of people that Engels would have expected to find in his survey. There was only one Irishman in the court and there were no lodgers.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
-	8	0	0	8	0
-	6	0	1	5	0
-	6	0	0	6	0
Totals	20	0	1 (0)	19 (0)	0

Table 6.4: Occupants of Black Lion Court in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

The next court along the street, Brook's Court contained more occupants. In 1851, there were 77 people living in 10 properties in this court – an average of 7.7 per house. The court was again dominated by English inhabitants. The household heads included people at the lower end of the income scale: a retired shoemaker, a retired sawyer, a fustian cutter and a labourer. Abraham Levy, a glazier, and his family of six came from Posen, a province in what was then Prussia. House No. 1, not shown in the Table 6.5, was uninhabited.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
-	8	0	0	1	7 (Prussia)
5	14	8 (+1)	7	7	0
7	6	0	0	6	0
9	7	0	1	6	0
4	6	0 (+3)	0	6	0
10	8	4 (+1)	0	8	0
8	9	0	0	9	0
6	7	0	0	7	0
4	5	1	0	5	0
2	7	0	0	7	0
Totals	77	13 (18)	8	62	7

Table 6.5: Occupants of Brook's Court in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

The higher population density was due to the fact that income was being made from 13 lodgers and five visitors – another unexpected discovery. The head of the household in No. 8, Jane Gibson, gave her occupation in the census as a lodging housekeeper. As will be discussed in the next chapter, larger Georgian houses in the main streets which had been repurposed as lodging houses or sub-divided into multi-occupancy dwellings were key focal points for the overcrowding in Angel Meadow. As Figure 6.8 shows, three-storey dwellings could also be found in courts near the Irk. Epsom Court, as shown in the image, is listed in the 1894 rate book next to Black Lion Court, suggesting it was a later name for Brook's Court. This indicates why Brook's Court, which was not named by Engels, had such a large number of occupants in 1851. Figure 6.8 appears to be the back of the three-storey dwellings shown on the right of Figure 6.7 and shows a third-storey weaver's window. The steps and the gutter in the middle of the sketch lead downhill. Arthur Symonds, who entered Epsom Court in 1894 through a dark alley under one of the houses fronting the street, said it formed a narrow cul-de-sac which contained 'half-dozen dilapidated houses on either side, and a wall topped with low railings at the further end'. Only

half of the houses were occupied. A woman who lived in Epsom Court told Symonds: 'We are very select, we are. It ain't everyone as can come and live here [sic]. Oh! he's very pertickler is our landlord [sic].' Symonds believed this accounted for the empty houses. The three-storey houses in Epsom Court are also shown photographed before their demolition in Figure 6.9. Despite being more than a hundred years old, they were still standing.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁸ Arthur, G. Symonds, 'An Unfashionable Slum in Manchester', *The Quiver* (January, 1894), p. 726.

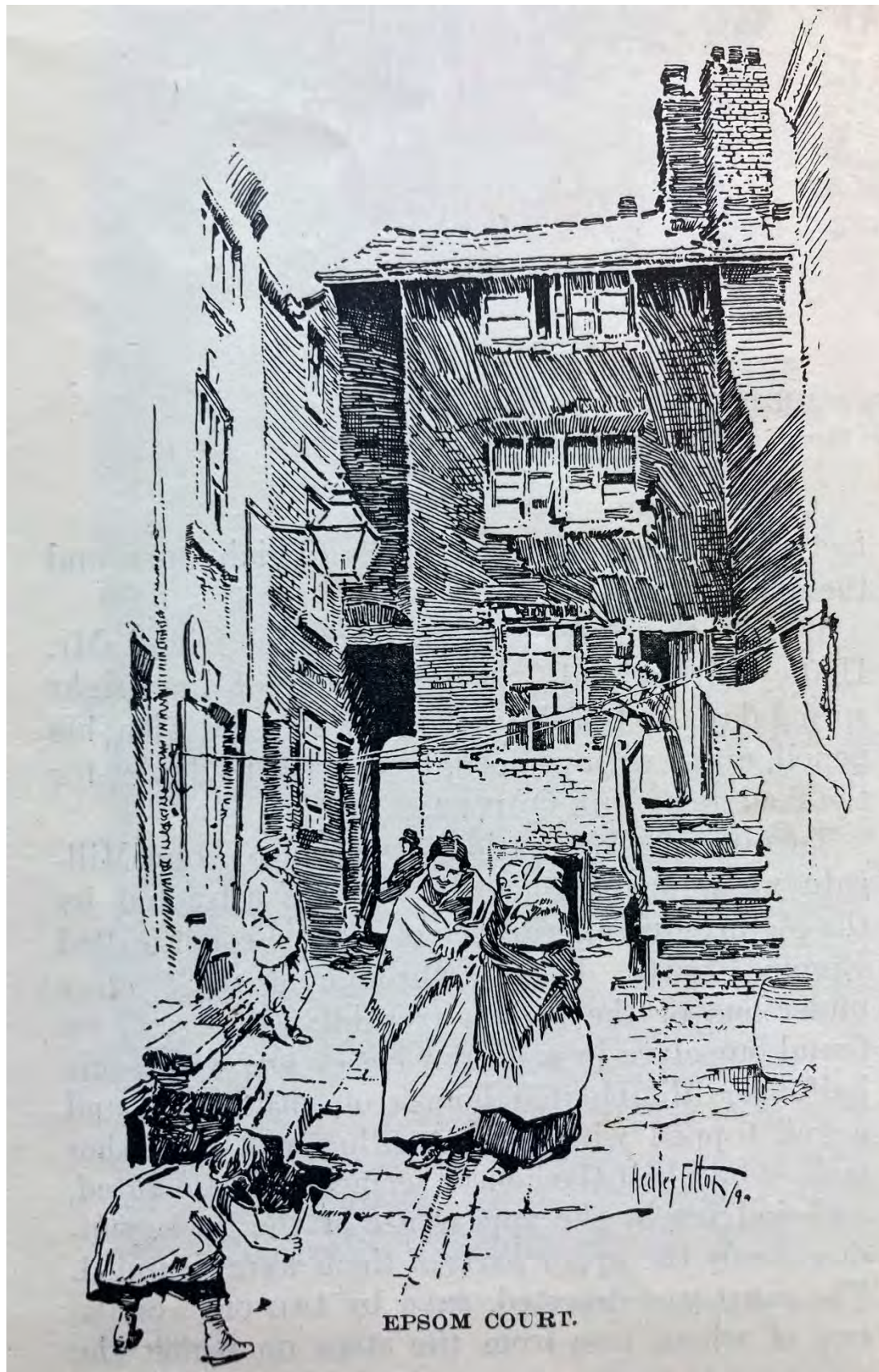


Figure 6.8: Three-storey houses in Epsom Court off Long Millgate in 1899. (Source: Arthur G. Symonds, 'An Unfashionable Slum in Manchester', *The Quiver* (January, 1894), pp. 724–728.)



Figure 6.9: Three-storey houses in Epsom Court in 1902. (Source: A. Bradburn, *Epsom Court*, 17 December 1902, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M02816.)

Gibraltar

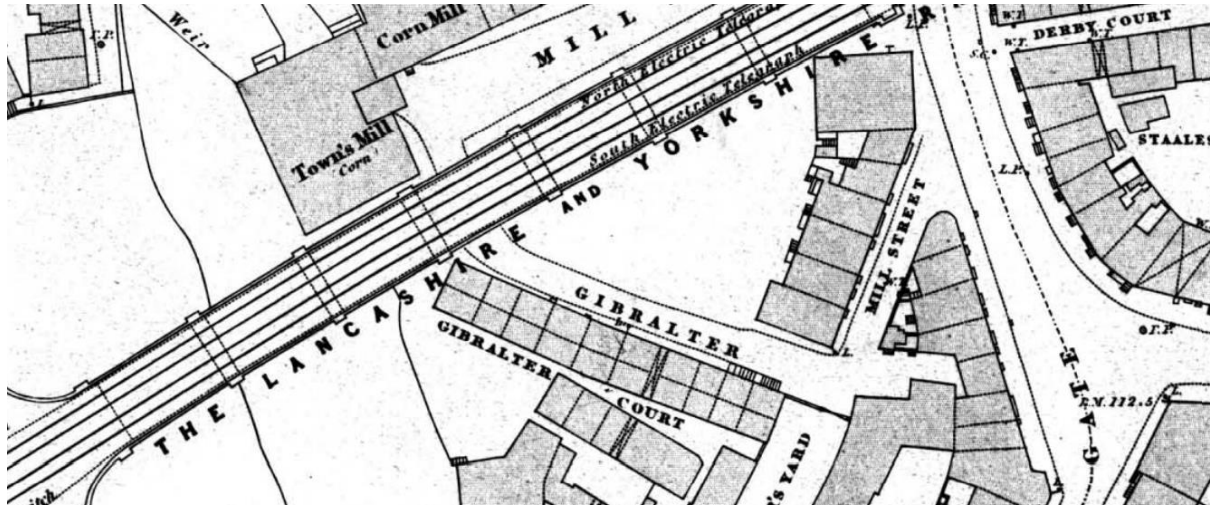


Figure 6.10 Gibraltar, off Long Millgate in 1850. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile plan, Manchester and Salford, sheet 23, c.1843–1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

Engels reserved his most evocative description of Victorian Manchester for another court ‘immediately under the railway bridge – the filth and horrors of which surpass all the others by far’. It was here that Engels found his ‘cattle-sheds for human beings’ – the five most evocative words in *The Condition*.⁴⁵⁹ Engels added:

Passing along a rough bank, among the stakes and washing lines, one penetrates into this chaos of small one-storied, one-roomed huts, in most of which there is no artificial floor – kitchen, living and sleeping room all in one. In such a hole, scarcely 5 feet long by 6 broad, I found two beds – and such bedsteads and beds! – which, with a staircase and chimney-place, exactly filled the room. In several others I found absolutely nothing, while the door stood open, and the inhabitants leaned against it. Everywhere before the

⁴⁵⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

doors refuse and offal – that any sort of pavement lay underneath could not be seen but only felt, here and there, with the feet.⁴⁶⁰

For Steven Marcus, Engels had almost reached the ‘centre and the bottom’ of the heap, where he found that ‘something has happened to the human species’. ‘It is quite impossible to know whether this is an image or reality; that is its point,’ Marcus said.⁴⁶¹ As Engels described area as the point where the railway crossed the Irk, it can only have been Gibraltar Court, shown in Figure 6.10. Gibraltar was the magnet which pulled Engels to the district after it had already been described in such graphic terms by Kay, who said: ‘The course of the river is here impeded by a weir, and a large tannery, eight storeys high (three of which stories are filled with skins exposed to the atmosphere, in some stage of the processes to which they are subjected), towers close to this crazy labyrinth of pauper dwellings. This group of habitations is called “Gibraltar”, and no sight can well be more insalubrious than that on which it is built.’⁴⁶² Joseph Aston, in his 1804 *Manchester Guide*, wrote of these courts in idyllic terms: ‘There is a species of picturesque which does not altogether depend on nature – the whimsical and the antique often afford appropriate gratification. Such as delight in the former would be paid for their trouble if they were to examine that part of Manchester called Gibraltar – a labyrinth of cottages situated on the banks of the River Irk.’⁴⁶³

By 1831, Gibraltar was still being described as an ‘irregular cluster of rural and picturesque cottages’ by Samuel Lewis in his *Typographic Dictionary of*

⁴⁶⁰ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

⁴⁶¹ Marcus, *Engels*, p. 191.

⁴⁶² Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, 1832; 1862, p. 19.

⁴⁶³ Aston, *The Manchester Guide*, pp. 244–5.

England.⁴⁶⁴ However, Gaulter, recording the 1832 death from cholera of one of Gibraltar's residents, Jane Wilde, described her home as 'a group of low wretched dilapidated cabins on the edge of the River Irk, separated by narrow alleys, with gullies of impure water running down them – every angle full of animal and other filth and the vicinity abounding in nuisances of all descriptions. Inhabitants: rag gatherers, *et id genus omne*.'⁴⁶⁵

J. Owen would go on to write in the *Manchester City News* on 3 May 1880, three years after an extension to the railway had cut through Gibraltar: 'The construction of railways, new bridges, new houses, and streets in every direction, have entirely removed every trace of the picturesque. Visiting Gibraltar some years ago, I found it was the haunt of the lowest of the population. The stranger, if he dared venture to explore its intricacies, was sure to be watched with suspicion. On every side could be heard the sound of the axe or the knife, and if he ventured to peer through the open doorways, he would see piles of firewood ready cut for the ragged urchins who perambulate our streets, calling out "Chips let you have a good penn'orth".'⁴⁶⁶

Owen said the earliest mention of Gibraltar was in 1768, when some of the properties were advertised for sale in the *Manchester Mercury*, while another advert in April 1771 offered for sale the fee simple and inheritance on 'four dwelling houses with 140 square yards of land... situated in a place called Gibraltar... with a yearly rent of £7 6s and subject to leys and taxes and a chief rent of 6d only.' Owen said: 'It

⁴⁶⁴ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of England*, Vol. 3 (London, 1831), pp. 238–9.

⁴⁶⁵ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 169.

⁴⁶⁶ John Howard Nodal, ed., *City News Notes and Queries, Reprinted from the Manchester City News* (January to March 1880), pp. 103–4.

is probable that the name was given to the buildings after the first siege of Gibraltar in 1704, in the same way that we have our Waterloos, Almas and Inkermans.’ Wright Proctor, also writing in 1880, knew Gibraltar as ‘The Gib’.⁴⁶⁷

The rate books highlight the poor housing conditions even by the late-eighteenth century. By 1794, there were 42 houses in Gibraltar, suggesting the name then served a wider area than the Gibraltar and Gibraltar Court shown in Figure 6.10. While one house was assessed at £3 or above (at £3 15s) in that year and ten others at £2 or above – decent sums at that time – another 31 were assessed at £1 10s or less. The median value for the street called Gibraltar in 1794, when streets such as Angel Street and Blackley Street reached a median of £3 and above, was £1 10s.

A reference book drawn up as part of the planning for the Manchester and Leeds Railway in November 1838 lists the type of property in Gibraltar at that time and some of the people owning and renting it, as shown in Table 6.6. The numbers can be matched to the map from the same planning documents in Figure 6.3. Together, they show a mixture of dwelling houses, cottages, cellars, outbuildings and chambers – multi-occupancy dwellings or lodgings – and industrial premises including the leather tannery with its boiler and engine houses and drying grounds. Yards, roads, passages and the riverbank complete the scene.

⁴⁶⁷ Proctor, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester*, pp. 137–8.

Number	Owners	Occupiers	Property
147	James Junior Kenyon, Joseph Kay, Marshall Williams and Dr. Durtnall [?]	James Junior Kenyon	Dwelling house outbuildings, yard, land and river
148	James Junior Kenyon, Joseph Kay, Marshall Williams and Dr. Durtnall [?]	Thomas Dodd	Cottage and land
149	John Bradfield	Thomas Whittingham, Robert Simpson, William Tell [?], Thomas Bowker, Mary Sheldon, Thomas Barlow, John Huntingdon	Cottage and land, cottage and land, Chambers, cottage and land, chambers, cottage and land, cottage and land
150	John Bradfield	Thomas Walker	Drying ground, land and outbuildings
151	Elizabeth Hulme as guardian of Otto Hulme, John Hulme, Elizabeth Hulme, Hamlet Hulme and Thomas Hulme, infants	Thomas Walker	Leather manufactory, engine house, boiler house, yards, land, roads, passages, outbuildings and river
152	Joseph Scholes	Robert Schofield, John Cronshaw, Nancy Mucklewain, John Collier, Thomas Walker	Cottage outbuildings, yard and land, ditto, ditto, ditto, drying house and land
153	Joseph Scholes	John Dean and his undertenants, Sarah Davies, Henry Crankshaw	Cottage outbuildings, yard and land, ditto, ditto
154	John Hadfield, Joseph Scholes, Thomas Baldwin and Elizabeth Hulme as guardian as foresaid		Passage
155	Thomas Baldwin	John Collier, James Packer,	Cottage land and passage, cottage and shop and land and passage
156	Jonathan Thompson	Unoccupied, Isaac Owen	cottage and land and passage, ditto
157	Joseph Scholes	William Maxfield, James Holcroft, Thomas Roberts, Mary Lowe, Ann Hudson, Edward Smith, Peter Higginson	Cottage, cellar, cottage and land, cellar, cottage and land, cottage, ditto

Table 6.6: Details of ownership, occupancy and property in Gibraltar recorded in November 1838. Question marks indicate where the spelling in the book is unclear. (Source: *Manchester and Leeds Railway Book of Reference and Plans*, Plan 252, Deposited Plans, 1839, House of Lords Library, pp. 10–12.)

While Engels criticised this system of owners and tenants, there is evidence that the main row of houses in Gibraltar was freehold. In 1841, 13 houses in Gibraltar 'in the occupation of Richard Jones, Mary Flowers, Mary Collier, Henry Cronshaw and others' were offered for sale at auction. The advert said: 'The property belonged to Joseph Scholes, is freehold and free from chief rent and capable of great improvement.'⁴⁶⁸ These appear to be Plot 153 in Table 6.6 and marked with an X in Figure 6.11 which shows the planned route of the Manchester to Leeds railway. Engels, it has to be remembered, had complained in *The Condition*, that *leasehold* property was the leading factor of the poor condition of housing.⁴⁶⁹

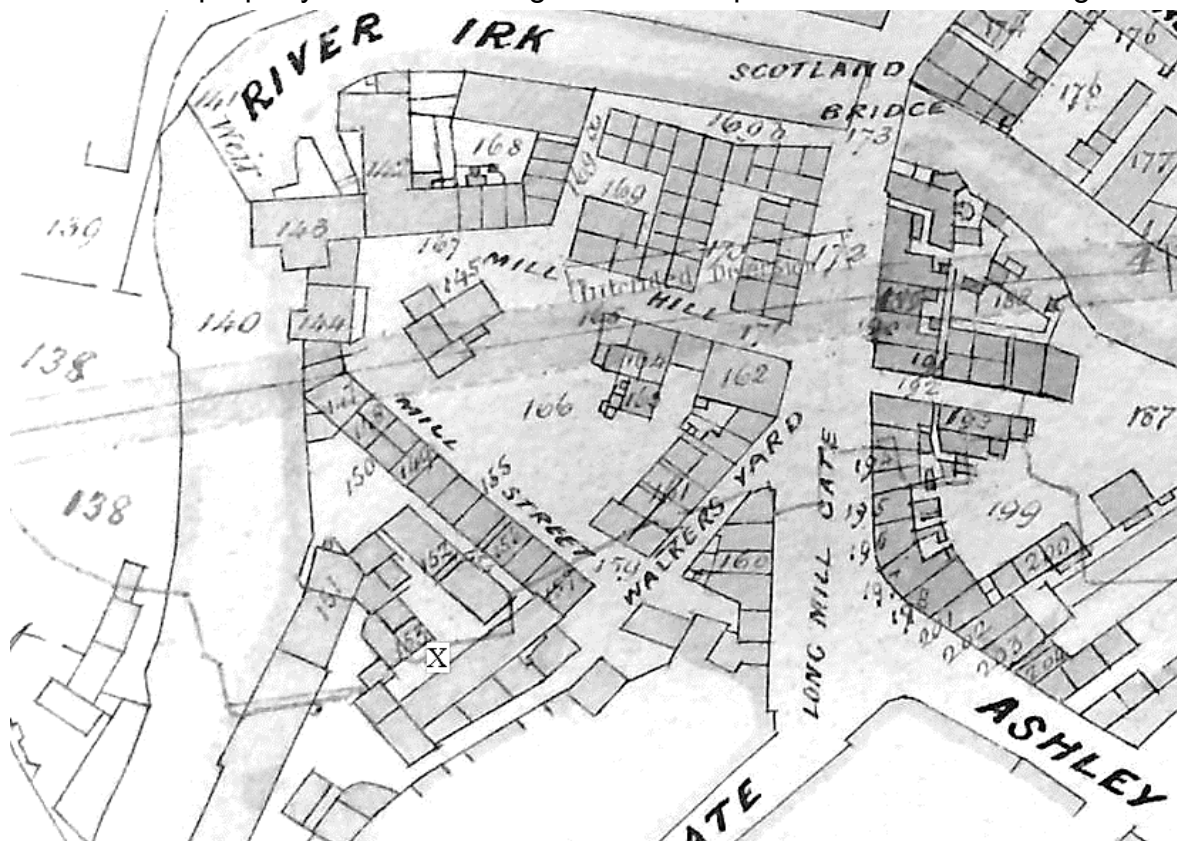


Figure 6.11: Detail from the 1836 plan drawn as part of the legal procedures for creating the Manchester to Leeds Railway showing the plots listed in Table 6.6. X marks the location of plot 153, which was offered for sale freehold by Joseph Scholes in 1841. A larger area of this plan can be seen in Figure 6.3. (Source: *Plans 136, 137, 138, 138a, Deposited Plans, Manchester and Leeds Railway, 1836, and Plan 252, 1839, Parliamentary Archives.*)

⁴⁶⁸ *Manchester Courier* (6 November 1841).

⁴⁶⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 70.

When Engels walked through this part of the district, the railway had already been built overhead. It added hugely to the poor environment, overshadowing the houses and polluting the air, as also did the multi-storey tannery described by Kay, which was the leather factory operated by Thomas Walker shown as Plot 151 in Table 6.6 and Figure 6.11 and described as ‘a leather manufactory with engine boiler house, yards, land, roads, passages, outbuildings and river’.⁴⁷⁰ Wright Proctor, writing in 1880, said the tannery was ‘during many years successfully conducted’ by Walker.⁴⁷¹ Walker also appears to have given his name to the neighbouring Walker’s Yard. Table 6.6 indicates he used some of the yards as drying grounds for his animal hides.

The tannery was the factory that Engels said surrounded one side of the court.⁴⁷² It has also been marked on the maps in Figures 6.12 and 6.13, along with the steps leading down to the river also described by Engels, which indicate that this was the spot he was describing when he wrote: ‘This whole collection of cattle-sheds for human beings was surrounded on two sides by houses and a factory, and on the third by the river, and besides the narrow stair up the bank, a narrow doorway alone led out into another almost equally ill-kept labyrinth of dwellings.’⁴⁷³ Figures 6.12 and 6.13 show that even cartographers were unsure about the district’s layout. While the Ordnance Survey map in Figure 6.12 indicates a series of courts, steps, passages and walls, it shows Gibraltar in front of a row of back-to-back cottages behind which stands Gibraltar Court. The Adshead map in Figure 6.13 greatly simplifies the scene, but also shows Gibraltar as Mill Street, with Gibraltar behind a single row of cottages.

⁴⁷⁰ *Manchester and Leeds Railway Book of Reference and Plans*, Plan 252, Deposited Plans (1839) House of Lords Library.

⁴⁷¹ Wright Proctor, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester*, p. 138.

⁴⁷² Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

⁴⁷³ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

Neither map is likely to offer a full picture of the area. The railway line can be seen to the right of both. An advert in the *Manchester Courier* in 1867 shows that the confusion over the name was long lasting. It listed the properties for sale as being as 'Mill Street or Gibraltar'.⁴⁷⁴

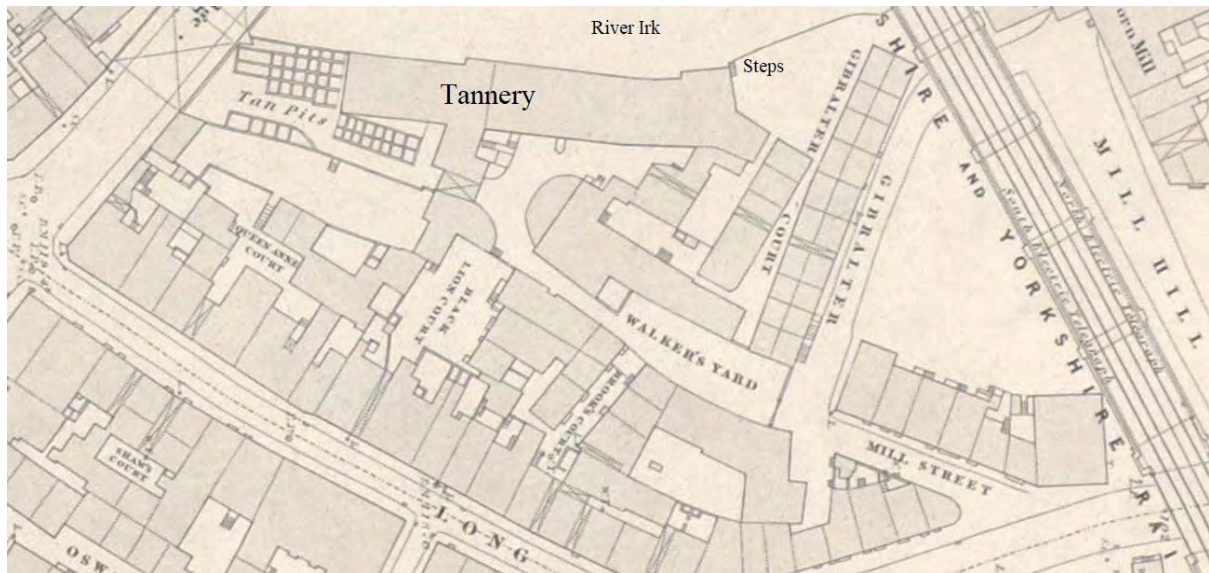


Figure: 6.12: Gibraltar in 1850. This map has been turned for better comparison with Figure 6.13. The tannery, steps and the Irk have been marked. Note how Gibraltar and Gibraltar Court are described on either side of a row of back-to-back houses. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, c.1843–1850, sheet 23, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

⁴⁷⁴ *Manchester Courier* (25 May 1867).

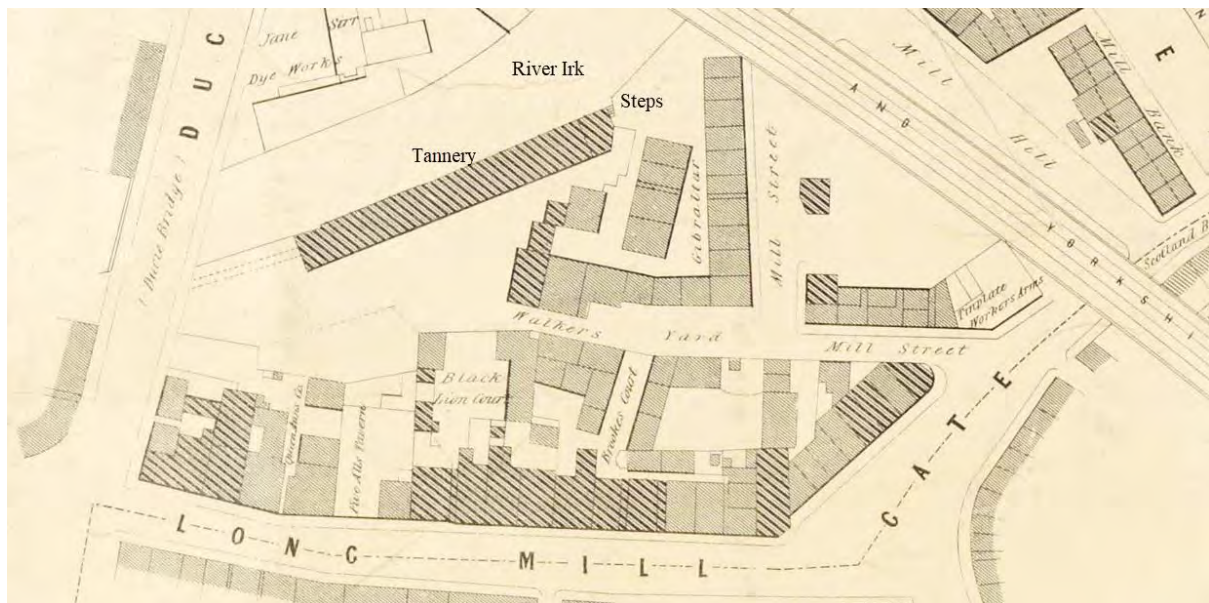


Figure 6.13: Adshead's map shows Gibraltar as Mill Street, with Gibraltar Court behind in 1850–51. A singly row of cottages is depicted. (Source: Joseph Adshead, *Twenty-Four Illustrated Maps of the Township of Manchester, 1850–51*, sheet 12, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300177.)

The house numbering shown in the 1851 census is repetitive and confused and hints at the irregularity of the buildings, which bear little resemblance to the neatly drawn terraces depicted in Figures 6.12 and 6.13. The census taker even noted in the margin 'query, two No. 5s'. In the census pages, the Gibraltar addresses appear in the following order: 4, 1, 9, 3, 3c [cellar], 5, 16, 5, 6, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 9. They have been reordered numerically for clarity in Table 6.7, which shows a snapshot of Gibraltar in 1851.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
1	19	2 (+1)	19	0	0
3	5	1	0	5	0
3	9	3	0	9	0
3c	5	0	0	5	0
4 L. H. K.	15	7 (+2)	15	0	0
5	10	0	9 (+1)	1 (-1)	0
5	16	14	16	0	0
6	17	11	17	0	0
8	20	2	11 (+1)	8 (-1)	1 (Wales)
9	4	2	0	4	0
9	29	17	28 (+1)	1 (-1)	0
9	10	0	1	9	0
10	56	29	51 (+1)	5 (-1)	0
12	18	6	5	13	0
16	7	3	5	2	0
Totals	240	97 (100)	177 (181)	62 (58)	1

Figure 6.7: Occupants of Gibraltar in 1851. L.H.K. identifies a head of household listed as a lodging housekeeper. (Source: 1851 Census.)

In 1851, the properties in Gibraltar were home to 240 people. If individually numbered houses are counted as 15 separate dwellings the average occupancy would be 16 people per house. However, this is less than clear cut as the 1852 rate book shows 13 houses. The nationalities of the occupants are startlingly different to the other courts previously discussed. The Irish dominated Gibraltar, with 177 Irish-born inhabitants (73.7 percent) compared with 62 English (25.8 percent). When the four Manchester-born children of Irish parents are added to the Irish total, it takes that figure to 181 (75.4 percent). Table 6.7 also shows that, despite living in the same street, the Irish and the English were largely segregated into individual houses. The Irish were poor. Out of the 57 hawkers and 17 labourers in the court – including a number of matchstick hawkers later identified by Owen, only five were English.

These courts represented, for Engels, the horrors of the Capitalist industrialisation of the town. Strangely perhaps, as Gibraltar appeared to be his *raison d'être* for visiting the district, Engels failed to directly name it in *The Condition*. It was here, however, that he found exactly what he was searching for. This was the evidence he needed of lowest common denominator living conditions dominated by Irish immigrants that appeared to dovetail perfectly with his theory. His reaction was to elevate Gibraltar and the other courts along the Lrk to such an extent that they came to represent, through *The Condition*, the entirety of working-class slums of the mid-Victorian town. He wrote:

Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, belongs to the *industrial epoch*. The couple of hundred houses, which belong to old Manchester, have been long since abandoned by their original inhabitants; the industrial epoch alone has crammed into them the swarms of workers whom they now shelter; the industrial epoch alone has built up every spot between these old houses to win a covering for the masses whom it has conjured hither from the agricultural districts and from Ireland; the industrial epoch alone enables the owners of these cattle sheds to rent them for high prices to human beings, to plunder the poverty of the workers, to undermine the health of thousands, in order that they *alone*, the owners, may grow rich.⁴⁷⁵

Engels added as a caveat:

True, the original construction of this quarter was bad, little good could have been made out of it; but, have the landowners, has the municipality done

⁴⁷⁵ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 65–66.

anything to improve it when rebuilding? On the contrary, wherever a nook or corner was free, a house has been run up; where a superfluous passage remained, it has been built up; the value of land rose with the blossoming out of manufacture, and the more it rose, the more madly was the work of building up carried on, without reference to the health or comfort of the inhabitants, with sole reference to the highest possible profit on the principle that no hole is so bad but that some poor creature must take it who can pay for nothing better.⁴⁷⁶

In Gibraltar though, nothing was exactly as it seemed. How did Engels's 'cattle-sheds', his 'small one-storied, one roomed huts', accommodate 240 people, including 97 lodgers and three visitors who formed 41.7 percent of the resident population? Three of the houses in Gibraltar contained more than 20 occupants, including No. 10 which had 56 – half of them lodgers. This is a huge number of people in a single dwelling. The large number of lodgers shows that most of the properties were used as lodgings, while most were sub-divided into multiple use by separate family groups, including houses which also contained large numbers of lodgers. No. 10, for example, contained four households and only 29 of the building's 56 occupants were lodgers. However uncomfortable, they were providing shelter for people who had nowhere else to go. The census even shows that three orphans were in the care of an Irish labourer, James Hopkins, who lived with his family of six at No. 10. The 1852 rate book shows that four of the 14 houses were occupied by 'sundry tenants'. This, along with the reference to 'chambers' and 'under tenants' is further proof that these properties served as lodgings and subdivided apartments. The weekly rent ranged from 1s 8d for a single house to 3s 6d for three of the

⁴⁷⁶ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 66.

biggest houses. The lowest value houses had rateable values of £2 10s. However, all of those containing 'sundry tenants' had values of £5 10s, which was comparable with some of the lower values on Angel Street. A man named Froggatt owned 12 of the houses. The others were owned by a Mrs. [?] Wood and the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. The book shows that Nos. 1, 3, 6 and 9 were all valued at £2 10s. No.10, which housed 59 people including 29 lodgers, is one of the £5 10s houses with 'sundry tenants'. The head of the household at No. 4, Anne McTighe, marked in Table 6.7 with the initials L.H.K., was listed in the census as a lodging housekeeper, with 15 lodgers. This is also likely to be one of the £5 10s houses. Rather than being 'one-roomed huts', these were substantial buildings, albeit in a poor state. When the artist F. Wroe depicted Gibraltar in 1880, he found evidence of the great age of the properties and also of their size. The twin-gabled house in his sketch in Figure 6.14 was inscribed with the words 'WAW 1668' and the house to its left had the inscription 'MDCLXXXVI' [1686]. Below the Gibraltar street sign is what appears to be a covered entrance to the rear Gibraltar Court. However, the sketch is noteworthy for another reason. On the right of it stands a three-storey workshop dwelling, with another one or two possibly can be seen on the far left. Three-storey workshop houses could be found here, even in Engels's 'Hell upon Earth' of Gibraltar. They would have been the highest value houses in the street in 1794 and undoubtedly played a role in accommodating the large numbers of people in the 1840s. Engels made no mention of them. The 1851 census shows that six people from two households were listed as handloom weavers at No. 8, suggesting that at least one building still contained a loom shop. Figure 6.15, a photograph by James Mudd showing Gibraltar in 1877, and Figure 6.16, a sketch captioned 1878 but likely to also be 1877, together provide a panorama of the street.



Figure 6.14: Gibraltar, drawn in 1880 when the houses were still standing, with Wroe's note of the inscriptions above the doors. (Source: F. Wroe, 'Gibraltar, off Long Millgate, Manchester 1880', *Bridgewater Scrapbook* 94, Chetham's Library.)



Figure 6.15: Gibraltar in 1877. Note the three-storey workshop dwellings on the right, and the handcart. (Source: James Mudd, *Gibraltar, 1877*, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M01877.)



Figure 6.16: Gibraltar in 1878. Note the handcart. (Source: Gibraltar, 1878, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M01878.)

It is easy to look at Figures 6.14, 6.15 and 6.16 and to recoil at the condition of the houses, but it has to be remembered that the damage to the roofs, windows and walls of the buildings, and the part demolition of one house, was 40 years after Engels's visit. The houses were then at the end of their history – when their occupants had already moved out before a railway branch line was about to cut through Gibraltar. Wright Proctor suggested this happened in 1877.⁴⁷⁷ The viewer's eye instead needs to be drawn to the size of the houses rather than their condition. A better assessment can be made in Figure 6.17. According to the caption, this shows the same houses in 1858. The three-storey house on the right suggests a substantial property, while the carriage adds an air of respectability. The railway appears to have been built directly over another three-storey dwelling.

⁴⁷⁷ Proctor, *Memorials of Bygone Manchester*, p. 138.



Figure 6.17: Gibraltar in 1858. Source: David Harrison, *Old Houses in Gibraltar*, 1858, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M80004.)

Conclusion

This chapter has taken a fresh look at *The Condition* by following, for the first time, the route that Engels took into the courts and back streets of the lower, riverside stretches of Angel Meadow. It has shown that his 'Hell upon Earth' was, in fact, a portrayal of a uniquely small area of the town. These descriptions have become synonymous with the history of Manchester and were used by Engels to develop his theory of Communism, a theory that has had implications for the history of the world.

This chapter has shown that his visit to the riverside area known as Gibraltar was no random discovery but a deliberate and targeted journey to an area that had been identified over a decade earlier by James Phillips Kay as having some of

Manchester's worst housing. What appears to have been a fleeting visit is at odds with Engels's suggestion that he forsook the dinner parties of the middle-classes to converse with the workers, whose voices never appear in his text. In fact, when Engels's descriptions of Gibraltar are placed side-by-side with those of Kay, they bear remarkable similarities with the words of the man who went before him. Engels's selection process in following Kay so closely means that his account of Victorian Manchester was also selective. This study has shown that his description of Manchester as 'Hell upon Earth' and the houses as 'cattle sheds for human beings' was based on a view of a handful of courts. While conditions would have undoubtedly been poor in these low-lying courts near the river, they were home to relatively small groups of people.

The nationalities and occupations of those people living in those courts was also more nuanced than Engels described. Not only were the occupants more likely to be English, but they also included, in 1851 at least, a range of occupations including cotton spinners. Also, in these courts could be found, unexpectedly, the existence of larger houses. Unlike the one-storey 'cattle sheds' described by Engels, the larger houses with their lodgers were the major drivers of overcrowding. Only one court on the river appears to have dovetailed properly with Engels's descriptions and that was Gibraltar, with more than 200 people living in confined conditions overlooked by a tannery on the riverbank. Even here though, this study has found a more nuanced picture than described by Engels, with three-storey houses again causing the greatest overcrowding. It is clear from this that Engels presented a one-sided picture of Manchester. The next chapter will go on to examine what Engels missed.

Chapter 7: Three-storey Georgian houses: What Engels missed

The previous chapter showed how Engels's worst descriptions in *The Condition* were based on a small area of lower Angel Meadow called Gibraltar that he selected because it appeared to fit perfectly the anti-Capitalist theory he was developing. Even in Gibraltar and the streets that surrounded it, there were nuances that would have tempered Engels's theory if he had not chosen to ignore them such as the existence of three-storey houses. There were courts there which, for all the filth described by Engels, had low occupancy rates compared with other parts of the district. There is also evidence that even there, three-storey dwellings built for better-paying occupants had been turned into lodging houses and tenements. Engels ignored them while focusing on a limited number of single-storey 'cattle-sheds'. His turning of a blind eye to these houses is made obvious in Figure 7.1, which depicts three-storey houses in Long Millgate, and 7.2, which according to the caption represents the backs of houses in the same street. The porticoed doorway on the left of Figure 7.1 should be noted, along with the steps leading down to cellar dwellings, which make these in fact four-storey properties. The double doorway on the property with a gallery window in Figure 7.1 marks the entrance to a court and shows how three-storey dwellings were part and parcel of the courtyard problem described by Engels. In Figure 7.2, double doorways can be seen. This is a sign of the subdivision of the houses, or separate access to the cellars. On that side of the houses, the cellar windows are above ground.



Figure 7.1: Three-storey houses in Long Millgate in 1900. (Source: W. Ellis, *Long Millgate*, 1900, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M02814.)



Figure 7.2: Three-storey houses with gallery windows at the back of Long Millgate in 1895. (Source: Samuel Coulthurst, *Long Millgate*, c.1895, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M83851.)

This chapter will now focus in on what Engels ignored in the rest of Angel Meadow – the streets of three-storey dwellings that dominated the whole district and were the reason for its persistent notoriety even as the courts began to be swept away. It will look, crucially, at why those larger houses were such a significant factor in the district and its long-term future. It will also suggest *why* Engels may have ignored them. As discussed in the previous chapter, upper Angel Meadow merited fewer words from Engels in *The Condition*. He described it as ‘the New Town, known also as Irish Town’, which he said ‘stretches up a hill of clay beyond the Old Town, between the Irk and Saint George’s Road’.⁴⁷⁸ The word *new* is deceptive. As has been shown, much of the housing here was built in the late-eighteenth century. Engels wrote:

Here all the features of the city are lost. Single rows of houses or groups of streets stand, here and there, like little villages on the naked, not even grass-grown clay soil; the houses, or rather cottages, are in bad order, never repaired, filthy, with damp, unclean, cellar dwellings; the lanes are neither paved nor supplied with sewers, but harbour numerous colonies of swine penned in small sties or yards or wandering unrestrained through the neighbourhood. The mud in the streets is so deep that there is never a chance, except in the driest weather, of walking without sinking into it ankle deep at every step. In the vicinity of Saint George’s Road, the separate groups of buildings approach each other more closely, ending in a continuation of lanes, blind alleys, back lanes and courts, which grow more and more crowded and irregular the nearer they approach the heart of the town. True, they are here oftener paved or supplied with paved sidewalks and

⁴⁷⁸ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 66–67.

gutters; but the filth, the bad order of the houses, and especially of the cellars, remain the same.⁴⁷⁹

Using the 1851 census and rate books again, the overcrowding in these houses, which it has to be remembered were originally built as larger properties for higher-rent-paying inhabitants, will be examined. This will show how the streets containing these houses were the equal of Gibraltar in terms of their overcrowding, were worse than the wider area that contained Gibraltar, and were at least the equal to and at worst the major cause of the district's health and social problems.

It is worth looking, first of all, at what medical professions were saying about the district just a few years before Engels's visit. It is true that Engels was not alone in highlighting problems in the courts and back streets. In 1840, the House of Commons Select Committee on the Health of Towns heard evidence on the poor housing conditions in Manchester from J. Robertson, a surgeon. He told the committee how the town had no building act and no authorised inspector of dwellings or streets. With the exception of certain central streets overseen by the Police Act, each proprietor 'builds as he pleases' with the authorities unable to interfere. 'New cottages, with or without cellars, huddled together, row behind row, may be seen springing up in many parts,' he said. 'A cottage row may be badly drained, the streets may be full of pits, brim full of stagnant water, the receptacles of dead dogs and cats, yet no one may find fault'. Robertson noted how fever cases had reached 1,207 a year by 1838. The committee also heard complaints about the lack of ventilation in back-to-back houses and streets where there was no paving and which were full of 'a great mass of filth and rubbish' with pools of water, refuse and offal.

⁴⁷⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 64–65.

Another doctor, Neil Arnott, said there would be ‘much less objection’ to court living if the rubbish was removed.⁴⁸⁰ Two years later, however, Dr. Richard Baron Howard (1807–1849) the physician to Ancoats Dispensary, noted another problem which he felt was more pressing even than the back street courts – the town’s common lodging houses. In a long tract on the state of these houses, with six to eight beds crammed into an unventilated room where bed linen went unchanged, and windows were not opened even in the day. He said:

The disgraceful state of these lodging houses I have dwelt upon at some length because I consider their evils of the most serious and extensive nature, and I feel quite satisfied they are the most malignant *foci* of infectious fevers in Manchester. Indeed, it is my decided opinion that the vitiation of the atmosphere by the living is much more injurious to the constitution than its impregnation with the effluvia from dead organic matter and certainly all I have observed in Manchester has induced me to consider the ‘human miasms’ generated in over-crowded and ill-ventilated rooms as a far more frequent and efficient cause of fever than the malaria arising from collections of refuse and wants of drainage. I have been led to this conclusion from having remarked that fever has generally prevailed more extensively in those houses where the greatest numbers are crowded together, and where ventilation was most deficient, although the streets in which they are situated may be well paved, drained and tolerably free from filth and those with less

⁴⁸⁰ [Anonymous], *Report from the Select Committee on the Health of Towns Together with the Minutes Evidence Taken Before Them, and an Appendix and Index*, House of Commons Select Committee on the Health of Towns (1840), pp. x-xi, 35, 68–71.

crowding, notwithstanding their location in the midst of nuisances giving rise to malaria.

Howard pointed to fevers in the Collegiate Church district where he said there were 'a number of crowded lodging houses' as being 'most remarkable'. The problem was so bad, he said, that during a fever epidemic in 1837–8, the Board of the House of Recovery ordered those houses to be inspected and whitewashed, resulting in little improvement. While he also railed against 'filthy streets, confined courts and alleys', he said one problem with living in back houses was that those streets 'received the contents of the privy belonging to the front house, and all the refuse cast out from it'.⁴⁸¹ The larger, front houses with their multiple occupancy were creating a problem for those living behind. This makes sense. When the Manchester Special Board of Health was preparing in the last months of 1831 for the cholera outbreak that was to follow in the coming year, six of the 17 (more than one third) of the streets it ordered to be reported to the scavenging committee for cleaning were in the upper half of Angel Meadow where the larger houses dominated – Dyche Street, New Mount Street, Style Street, Nicholas Street, Ludgate Street and part of Blackley Street. No streets in the lowest part of the district were listed.⁴⁸²

⁴⁸¹ Edwin Chadwick, *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1965), pp. 411–3.

⁴⁸² Alan Kidd and Terry Wyke, ed., *The Challenge of Cholera: Proceedings of the Manchester Special Board of Health, 1831–33* (Lancashire: The Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 2010), p. 8.

Irish clustering in Angel Meadow

Busteed and Hodgson made a surprising discovery when they studied the mid-nineteenth-century Irish population of Angel Meadow – in contrast to contemporary reports of Kay and Engels about their poor living conditions in the district. In 1832, Kay, as discussed earlier, blamed what he called the ‘barbarous habits and savage want of economy’ of the Irish. Busteed and Hodgson noted that Kay played a central role in the final report for the commissioners investigating the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain in 1836 when he went as far as to argue that the Irish were almost solely responsible for the presence of the poorest housing in British cities: ‘I consider the buildings erected in Little Ireland, in Irish Town, and in some other of the worst parts of Manchester, almost entirely owe their existence to the immigration of the Irish. If it had not been for the Irish, there would have been no class of persons, on whose willingness to put up with so small an amount of convenience, and so large a subtraction of comfort, it would have been prudent to speculate.’⁴⁸³ Engels added that Irish families in Angel Meadow would not hesitate to use the wooden parts of their homes as firewood.⁴⁸⁴

Busteed and Hodgson, using the 1851 census and the Ordnance Survey plan, found conversely that 41 out of 89 streets with an Irish majority and 36 of these streets were clustered in the *upper* part of Angel Meadow in the streets branching off Angel Street. The Irish dominated the top part of Angel Meadow, not the bottom. They said:

⁴⁸³ Busteed and Hodgson, ‘Irish Migration and Settlement’, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁴ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 71.

Within this cluster was a notable core of streets, some of which had over 75 percent Irish. Surrounding this was a zone of streets which were 50 to 75 percent Irish. The western and north-western parts of the study area [the lower district towards the River Irk] were a mirror image with an equally striking concentration of non-Irish streets, several with less than ten percent Irish and six with no Irish residents at all. The significance of this pattern is underlined when it is realised that it is drawn on the basis of ethnic origin alone, since the area was almost uniformly working-class.⁴⁸⁵

Not only were the Irish at the top of Angel Meadow, they were also clustered in the larger housing. The west of Angel Street and near the eventual course of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway down by the river were almost devoid of Irish people, as also highlighted in the last chapter of this thesis. The great majority of them lived east of a line along Angel Street and Saint Michael's Burial Ground. This shows that, while Kay and Engels described the Irish as living in the worst housing and being to blame for their conditions, they were more likely to be found in the larger Georgian housing at the top of Angel Meadow. Gibraltar would be the exception to the rule – and explains why it was selected by Engels.

This study will now focus on individual streets lined with three-storey houses in upper Angel Meadow to show how heavily overcrowded they were in the immediate years after Engels visited the district. Starting with Angel Street, with its large houses that can be seen in Figure 7.3, this study will use the same methods as in the previous chapter. Occupants and lodgers will be counted, and a breakdown will be made of nationalities within each house, before establishing an occupancy rate for each street.

⁴⁸⁵ Busteed and Hodgson, 'Irish Migration and Settlement', pp. 1–13.

Angel Street (west side)

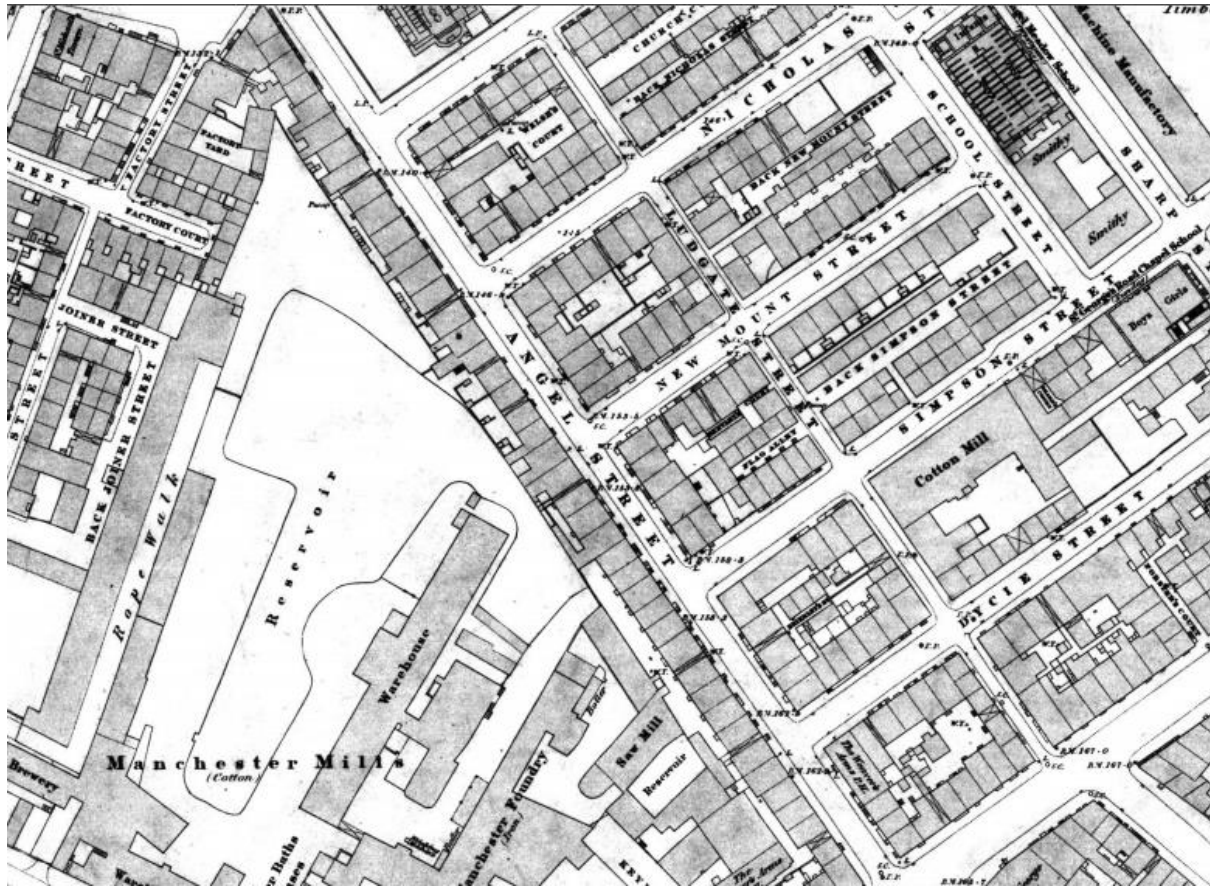


Figure 7.3: Angel Street in 1850 showing the large, three-storey workshop housing on both sides of the street. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, c.1843–1850, sheet 23, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

As seen in Figure 7.3, the west side of Angel Street, numbered from 3 to 81, formed a continuous row which was shown on the William Green map as having been built prior to 1794. The Goad map of 1888, shown previously in Figure 2.3, proves that this side of the street was all built to a height of three-storeys, with two properties near the top of the street reaching four-storeys and including cellars or basements. As previously discussed, the size of these Georgian houses made them perfect for repurposing as lodging houses or subdividing into tenements. The back street, Buckley's Court, has not been counted, although some of the houses in the

court may have been the backs of the Angel Street properties, further adding to the population density of the street. As shown in Table 7.1, the 38 occupied houses in Angel Street accommodated a huge number of 496 people in 1851 – double the number housed in Gibraltar. This is an average density of 13.1 people per house. They included 129 lodgers showing that these properties were being used as lodging houses. However, while the proportion of lodgers was very large at 26.0 percent, they accounted for just a quarter of the total occupants. While greater emphasis has been made in this chapter of the lodging house role, the complex accommodation pattern of mixed lodgings and sub-divided apartments was in itself a key factor in determining the characteristics of the district. No. 33 Angel Street, for example, contained two households with the 10 lodgers divided between them. Both households also each contained a family grouping, with three family members in one household and four in the other. At No. 77, the 35 lodgers were divided between four households headed by family units. While one household was mainly made up of individual lodgers, the others included separate family units of lodgers. In total, there were eight separate families in the house. This pattern was followed in each of the streets of larger houses studied in this chapter. There were more English than Irish on this side of the street. When England-born children of two Irish parents are counted as Irish, the Irish population rises from 177 (35.7 percent) to 213 (42.9 percent). It is clear how these buildings impacted on the street, with single houses containing 46, 39 and 28 people.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
3	5	0	0	5	0
5	5	0	2 (+3)	3 (-3)	0
7	3	1	1	2	0
9	1	0	0	1	0
11	10	0	0	10	0
13	9	0	3	6	0
15	17	5	6 (+1)	11 (-1)	0
17	13	3	10 (+2)	3 (-2)	0
19	2	0	2	0	0
21	6	2	3	3	0
23	15	1	4 (+2)	11 (-2)	0
25	19	0	4 (+11)	15 (-11)	0
27	15	0	4 (+5)	11 (-5)	0
29	16	3	4 (+3)	12 (-3)	0
31	13	3	1	12	0
33	18	10	17	1	0
35	3	0	0	3	0
37	9	0	0	9	0
39	-	Unlisted	-	-	-
41	10	0	0	10	0
43	-	Uninhabited	-	-	-
45	11	0	2 (+1)	9 (-1)	0
47	6	0	0	6	0
49	8	6	3	5	0
51	9	0	1	8	0
53	14	0	4 (+1)	10 (-1)	0
55	13	0	0	13	0
57	11	2	0	11	0
59	39	0	15 (+3)	24 (-3)	0
61	5	0	0	5	0
63	-	Unlisted	-	-	-
65	23	13	5 (+2)	16 (-2 Ire/ -2 Scots)	2 (Scots)
67	28	9	21	7	0
69	-	Unlisted	-	-	-
71	7	1	1	6	0
73	-	Uninhabited	-	-	-
75	16	10	12	4	0
77	46	35	9 (+2)	32 (-2)	5 (4 US/1 Scots)
79	19	2	8	9	2 (Manx - Irish)
81	23	14	17	2	4 (German)
83	9	2	0	9	0
85	5	0	4	1	0
87	15	7	14	1	0
Totals	496	129	177 (213)	306 (268)	13 15)

Table 7.1: Occupants of Angel Street west side, 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Angel Street (east side)

The east side of Angel Street was also a mixture of late-eighteenth-century houses of three storeys and some early-nineteenth-century houses. In total, the 26 houses on this side of the street accommodated 356 people – a density of 13.7 per house. This was a smaller population than the west side of the street but a higher occupancy rate. A total of 231 people born in Ireland lived on this side of the street (65.5 percent) compared with 117 English. However, there were also 46 children born in Manchester to two Irish parents. This takes the total number of Irish to 277 or 77.8 percent. This is interesting as it shows again, as Busteed and Hodgson found, that the Irish were not confined to the worst housing at the bottom of Angel Meadow and lived in the larger, higher-value properties at the top of Angel Meadow. It also shows how they were more likely to congregate on one side of the street. Again, these larger properties were among the most overcrowded lodging houses in the district, with 154 lodgers and visitors (43.3 percent). Eight houses on the street contained 20 or more people. One had 35 occupants and another 28. This shows that the lodging house function was already well established by 1851, even though only one house was described as a lodging house in the census. The numbers are shown in Table 7.2.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
6 Provision shop	18	11	17	1	0
8 Beer house	5	0 (1 servant)	0	4	1 (Italy)
10 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
12 Provision shop	6	0	3	3	0
14	35	27	11	18	6 (not known)
16	20	7	15 (+5)	5 (-5)	0
18	23	9	16 (+6)	7 (-6)	0
20 Marine+3 men	6	0	0	6	0
22	16	0 (+3)	8 (+8)	8 (-8)	0
24	26	6 (+5)	21 (+1)	5 (-1)	0
26	17	3	15 (+2)	2 (-2)	0
28	12	5	9 (+3)	3 (-3)	0
30 Part empty	5	2	5	0	0
32	5	0 (+1)	3 (+2)	2 (-2)	0
34	15	0 (+12)	14 (+1)	1 (-1)	0
36	20	4	20	0	0
38	24	21 (+1)	20	4	0
40	5	0	2 (+3)	3 (-3)	0
42	3	0	1	2	0
44	3	0	1	2	0
46 Fent dealer	7	0 (1 servant)	3 (+3)	4 (-3)	0
48	10	3	4 (+6)	6 (-6)	0
50 Lodging house	22	1 (+14)	14	7	1 (not known)
52	28	6 (+3)	14 (+6)	14 (-6)	0
54 Brewer	5	0 (+1) +1 servant)	0	5	0
56	17	10	15	2	0
58	3	0	0	3	0
Totals	356	115 (154)	231 (277)	117 (71)	8

Table 7.2: Occupants of the east side of Angel Street in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Dyche Street and Simpson Street

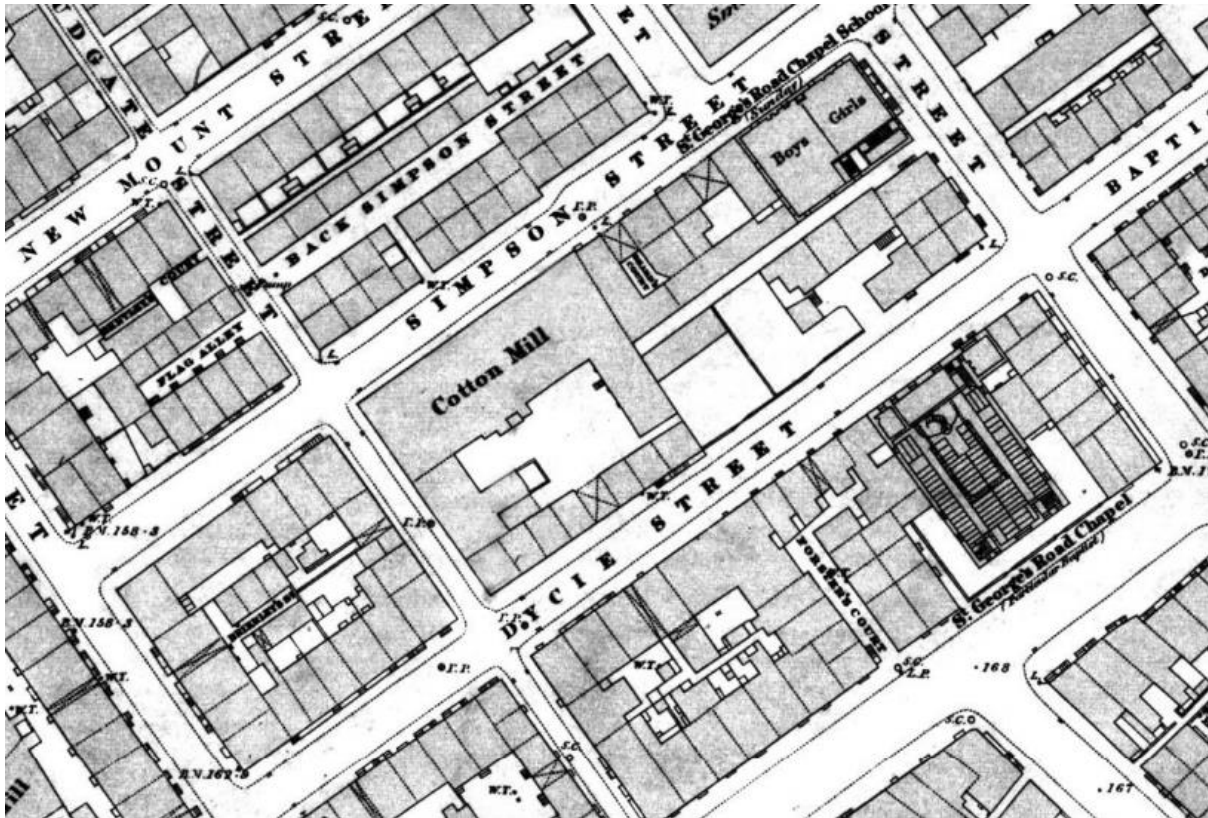


Figure 7.4: Dyche Street (shown here as Dycie Street) and Simpson Street in Angel Meadow in 1850. The hill sloped down from Dyche Street to Simpson Street. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, c.1843–1850, sheet 23, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

At this point, it is worth looking at two other streets that branched off the top of Angel Street. The first two blocks on either side of Dyche Street from Angel Street were three-storey dwellings again built in the late-eighteenth century. In Simpson Street, Busteed and Hodgson found 235 (75.3 percent) of the inhabitants were Irish and 14 of the inhabited houses were exclusively Irish, while six houses had a simple Irish majority, two had a non-Irish majority and four had no Irish residents at all. Dyche Street, which was the higher of the two streets, was more finely balanced, with 248 (56.6 percent) of the resident population Irish. Five of the 35 inhabited houses were exclusively Irish and seventeen had an Irish majority. Busteed and Hodgson's study found that in both Simpson Street and Dyche Street, Irish houses were not just

clustered in groups next to each other but mostly concentrated on one side of the street.⁴⁸⁶ Crucially, Busteed and Hodgson added:

Throughout the study area, a sense of separateness among Irish people was further reinforced by their shared experience of meagre economic resources which, more than for any other group, led them to settle in dwellings occupied by more than one household or family and which sometimes took the form of lodging houses. Their greater propensity for multiple occupancy was reflected in higher density of living: on average there were 10.0 persons per house in houses that were predominantly or exclusively Irish, while for non-Irish houses the figure was 6.3 persons.⁴⁸⁷

Taking this further, another point can be made. Not only were the Irish looking for and needing this type of multi-occupancy occupation, but they also found it in ample numbers at the top of Angel Meadow. This was because, as this thesis has proved, these streets were dominated by three-storey Georgian houses that had been sub-divided or repurposed as lodging houses. Everything that Busteed and Hodgson have said here casts new light on Engels's selection of the lower part of Angel Meadow as a case study.

Hayton, who studied cellar dwellings in Angel Meadow and other parts of Manchester, also noted something unexpected about the Irish. In 1861, they formed 52 percent of the cellar population, declining to 39 percent a decade later. Some of them lived at the same cellar address for many years. It was possible, she said, that

⁴⁸⁶ Busteed and Hodgson, 'Irish Migration and Settlement', pp. 6–7.

⁴⁸⁷ Busteed and Hodgson, 'Irish Migration and Settlement', p. 7.

a cellar under a house that attracted a weekly rent of 5s 9d could provide a weather- and vermin-proof home with an adequate supply of local privies and even access to a standpipe. Hayton said: 'It is possible that cellar dwellers preferred the cellars' hidden qualities, especially the privacy they gave'. Hayton also found that there was little to differentiate Irish cellars from non-Irish cellars in terms of their overcrowding, although cellars in the Saint George's district that included Angel Meadow were marginally more overcrowded than in Ancoats, with 4.4 people in Irish cellars in Saint George's compared with 4.2 in the Irish cellars in Ancoats. She said: 'The perception of Kay and Engels that cellar dwellings, especially those of the Irish, were grossly overcrowded is brought into question by this evidence.... They selected their evidence to emphasise the worst rather than the typical conditions.'⁴⁸⁸ Hayton also found evidence of Irish handloom weavers clustering in the upper part of Angel Meadow in 1861. In Old Mount Street, the cellars included six handloom weavers suggesting they were then using the cellars as loom shops. Within the Saint George's district, 22 streets contained cellars in 1861 and 1871.⁴⁸⁹ This upper part of Angel Meadow had an advantage according to Busteed and Hodgson – its height above the River Irk. They noted there was a drop of about 65 feet from Saint George's Road to the river. On the upper slopes, where most of the Irish lived, this was an asset, as it meant that effluent flowed away downhill. Worse problems were encountered on the lower slopes, where relatively few Irish lived and where the noxious liquids from the upper slopes accumulated. The problem was compounded by dumping waste into the Irk, which periodically flooded into streets and homes.'⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁸⁸ Sandra Hayton, 'The Archetypal Irish Cellar Dweller', *Manchester Region History Review*, Vol. 12 (1998), pp. 66–77.

⁴⁸⁹ Hayton, 'The Archetypal Cellar Dweller', pp. 69–77.

⁴⁹⁰ Busteed and Hodgson, 'Irish Migration and Settlement', p. 9.

Taking another look at the 1851 census for Dyche Street confirms that Busteed and Hodgson were correct. While the English and the Irish lived on both sides of the street, the English were more dominant on the south side and the Irish on the north side. As shown in Tables 7.3 and 7.4, which exclude School Yard in Dyche Street, this study has identified 411 people living in 36 houses – a rate of 11.6 per house. On the south (upper) side, there were 232 people in eight houses, an occupancy rate of 12.9. On the north (lower) side, there were 179 people in 16 houses, an occupancy of 11.2. On the south side, there were 88 Irish (37.9 percent) to 136 English (58.6 percent). However, when the English-born children of Irish parents were included, the Irish figure rose to 108 (46.6 percent). On the north (lower) side of the street, there were 109 Irish (60.8 percent) and 68 English (37.8 percent). When English-born children of Irish parents were counted as Irish, there were 117 Irish residents on that side of the street (65.4 percent).

When both sides of the street were taken together, the Irish and English were almost equal at 47.9 percent and 49.6 percent respectively. However, when the English-born children of Irish parents were counted as Irish, the Irish group increased to 225 (54.7 percent). It is clearly the case that the Irish were drawn to these large houses not only because they allowed them to live with their compatriots but because they provided the affordable accommodation they needed. As in Angel Street, these houses were home to large numbers of people. Occupancy rates were not uniform along these streets. For example, houses 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17, which were three-storey properties built in the eighteenth century, contained a total of 164 people – a density of 20.5 people per house. Nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 opposite contained 90 people – a density of 18.0 per house. The street provided overnight

accommodation to 215 lodgers and visitors, or nearly half (52.3 percent) of the inhabitants.

Dyche Street (south side)

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
3	17	15	2	13	2 Scotland
5 Lodging House	28	22	13	15	0
7&9	46	32	10 (+6)	29 (-6)	5 Scotland, 1 Malta, 1 at sea
11	34	10 (+7)	25 (+3)	9 (-3)	0
13	16	10	1	14	1 Scotland
15	11	8	7 (+1)	4 (-1)	0
17	12	0	4 (+8)	8 (-8)	0
19 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
21	7	0	1	6	0
23 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
25	5	0	3	2	0
27	20	11 (+1)	8	12	0
29 Hesketh Yard	-	Uninhabited	-	-	-
31 Hesketh Yard	2	0	0	4	0
33 Hesketh Yard	2	1	0	2	0
35 Hesketh Yard	8	3 (+3)	5	3	0
37	13	1	1	12	0
39	6	2	4 (+2)	2 (-2)	0
41	5	0	4	1	0
Totals	232	115 (126)	88 (108)	136 (116)	8

Figure 7.3: Occupants of Dyche Street (south side) in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Dyche Street (north side)

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
2	8	0 (+1)	5	3	0
4	6	0	0	6	0
6	18	9	10	8	0
8	21	12	11	8	1 Brazil/ 1 India
10 Lodging house	37	31	27	10	0
12 Hatter	7	2 (1 servant)	4 (+1)	3 (-1)	0
12&14 Marine	4	2	3	1	0
14	6	3	5	1	0
16	19	4	3 (+3)	16 (-3)	0
18 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
20 Lodging house	14	10	12	2	0
22 Tailor	6	0 (1 servant)	5 (+1)	1 (-1)	0
24	3	0	2	1	0
26 Lodging house	7	6	3	4	0
28	10	0	6 (+3)	4 (-3)	0
30 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
32 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
34	13	7	13	0	0
Totals	179	86 (89)	109 (117)	68 (60)	2

Table 7.4: Occupants of Dyche Street (north side) in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

A detailed street map of a section of Chicago, Illinois, showing the layout of several streets and the locations of various businesses. The streets shown include Style Street, Old Mount Street, Back Old Mount Street, and Arch Street. The map also indicates the locations of the 'Card' and 'Timber' businesses, as well as the 'Arch' and 'Mach' businesses. The map is oriented with North at the top.

As discussed previously, Old Mount Street, which is shown in Figure 7.5, was another row of three-story Georgian houses built in the late-eighteenth century. Archaeologists who dug up the cellars found the row appeared to have been built in two phases. The cellars appeared to have been initially used as workshops or stores, with one possibly an early dwelling.⁴⁹¹ Their report found that, as the character of Angel Meadow was transformed and became a dense industrial suburb, many of the pre-existing buildings were divided and used as multiple tenements, a proportion acted as lodging houses, whilst some of the cellars were partitioned to form single-room dwellings. Their own analysis of the 1841 and 1851 censuses found that the

280

houses here were densely occupied by both multiple families and individuals. In their assessment, the average number of occupancy rate in the dwellings on the whole of Old Mount Street was 12.6 in 1841 and 11.7 in 1851. The archaeological evidence also hinted at divisions within some of the properties, specifically through the construction and extension of dividing walls within the cellars during the early-nineteenth century, which was thought to have been linked to the creation of cellar dwellings.⁴⁹²

Taking another look at the 1851 census for the south side of Old Mount Street containing the eighteenth-century houses found by the archaeologists shows that the occupancy rate was higher on that side than it was for the whole street. It highlights how these larger houses added to the district's problems. The 17 houses on the south side of the street were home to 280 people – an occupancy rate of 16.5 per house. This was higher than Gibraltar on the River Irk. Three people on the street were listed as housekeepers and one was listed as a housewife – a sign that the houses were being used as a lodging houses. In all, the 17 houses had 86 lodgers and 27 visitors – a temporary population totalling 113 (40.4 percent) on that side of the street. Again, the Irish were dominant. When adding the English-born sons of two Irish parents, there were 207 Irish or 73.9 percent of the occupants. The numbers are shown in Table 7.5. The large size of the three-storey houses can be seen in an aerial photograph of Angel Meadow taken in 1926, as shown in Figure 7.6.

⁴⁹² Gregory and Newman, *Angel Meadow, Manchester*, p. 100.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
1	4	0	1	3	0
3 Housekeeper	38	18	18 (+4)	20 (-4)	0
5 Housekeeper	21	3	10 (+4)	11 (-4)	0
7	16	14	2	13	1 Wales
9 Shopkeeper	16	12	8 (+5)	8 (-5)	0
11	14	6 (+2)	14	0	0
13	2	0	2	0	0
15	13	0	2 (+4)	7 (-4) (-3 Welsh)	4 Wales (+3)
17	18	6	10 (+8)	8 (-8)	0
19	20	0 (+4)	11 (+8)	9 (-8)	0
21	21	2 (+7)	11 (+9)	10 (-9)	0
23	17	8	12 (+2)	5 (-2)	0
25 Housewife	27	7	16 (+6)	11 (-6)	0
27	5	0 (+2)	3 (+1)	2 (-1)	0
29	21	10	13 (+7)	8 (-7)	0
31	12	1 (+1)	4 (+4)	8 (-4)	0
33 Housekeeper	15	0 (+11)	7 (+1)	8 (-1)	0
Totals	280	86 (113)	144 (207)	131 (65)	5 (8)

Table 7.5: Occupants of Old Mount Street (south side) in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

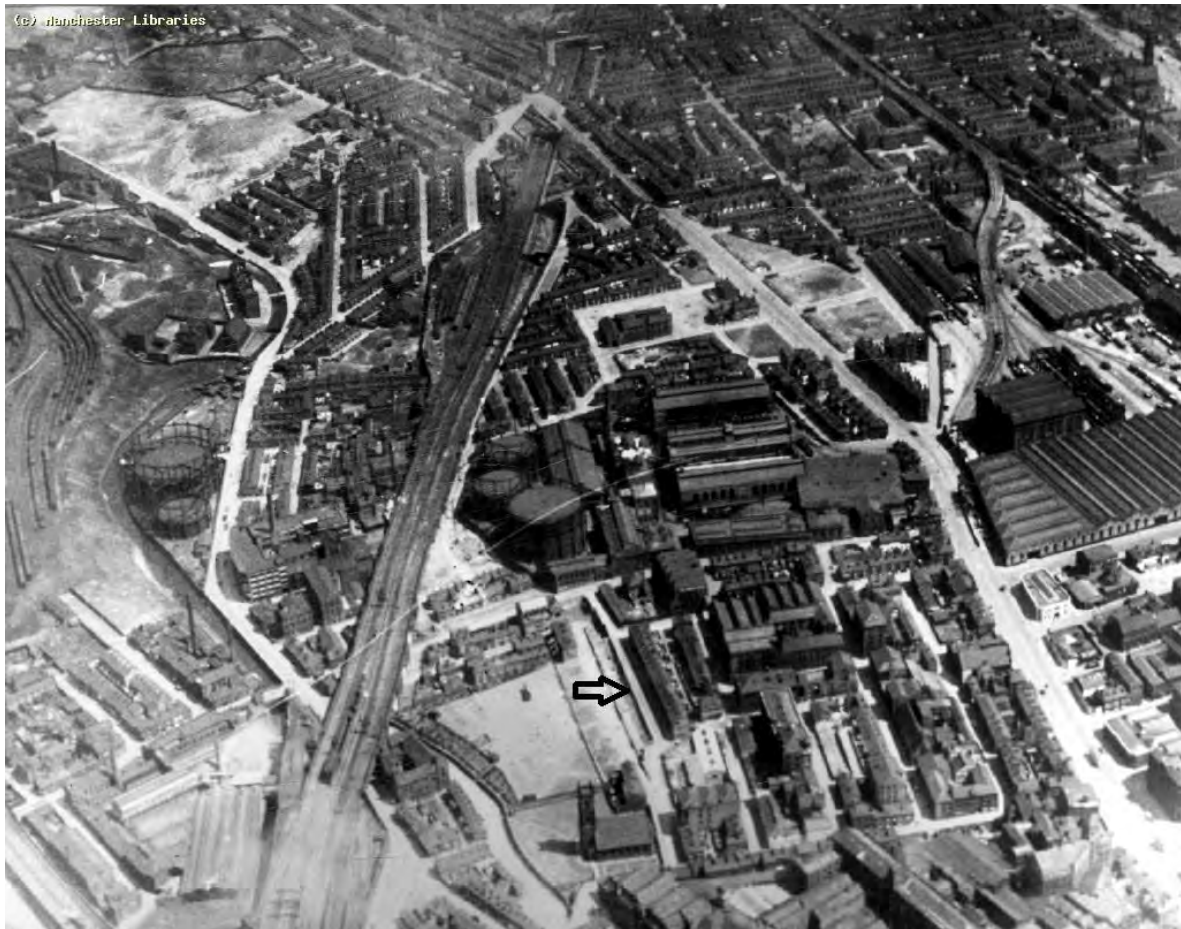


Figure 7.6: The large scale of the Old Mount Street three-storey houses can be seen marked with an arrow in this aerial image taken in 1926. Saint Michael's Church can be seen directly to the south. The open space in front of the houses was the Old Burying Ground. (Source: N.S. Roberts, *Aerial Views, Newtown and Rochdale Road Area*, 1926, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M67592.)

Blackley Street (south side)



Figure 7.7: Blackley Street was also dominated by three-storey houses in 1850. (Source: Ordnance Survey 5 feet to 1 mile, Manchester and Salford, c.1843–1850, sheet 23, 1850, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300073.)

This thesis will now examine Blackley Street, another street of large, eighteenth-century housing which was halfway down the hill of Angel Meadow. It formed one of the district's main thoroughfares, as shown in Figure 7.7. This street – renamed Charter Street in the 1851 Census – was also the subject of an archaeological dig as previously discussed. The archaeologists' 2011 report said that the buildings uncovered appeared to comprise a single phase of construction, with the back wall 'constructed in a single brick width, using handmade, mould-thrown bricks, and was bonded with a pale grey lime and sand mortar, in a slightly irregular English bond, which comprised alternative courses of header and stretcher bricks'.⁴⁹³ This single

⁴⁹³ Wild and Miller, *Co-operative Headquarters*, p. 37.

building phase was most unusual for housing in Manchester, the archaeologists said, with housing typically constructed in a more piecemeal form by multiple speculators. Each property appeared to have originally comprised two rooms at cellar level and both were of reasonable size compared to later back-to-back dwellings, which were generally 10 feet square.⁴⁹⁴

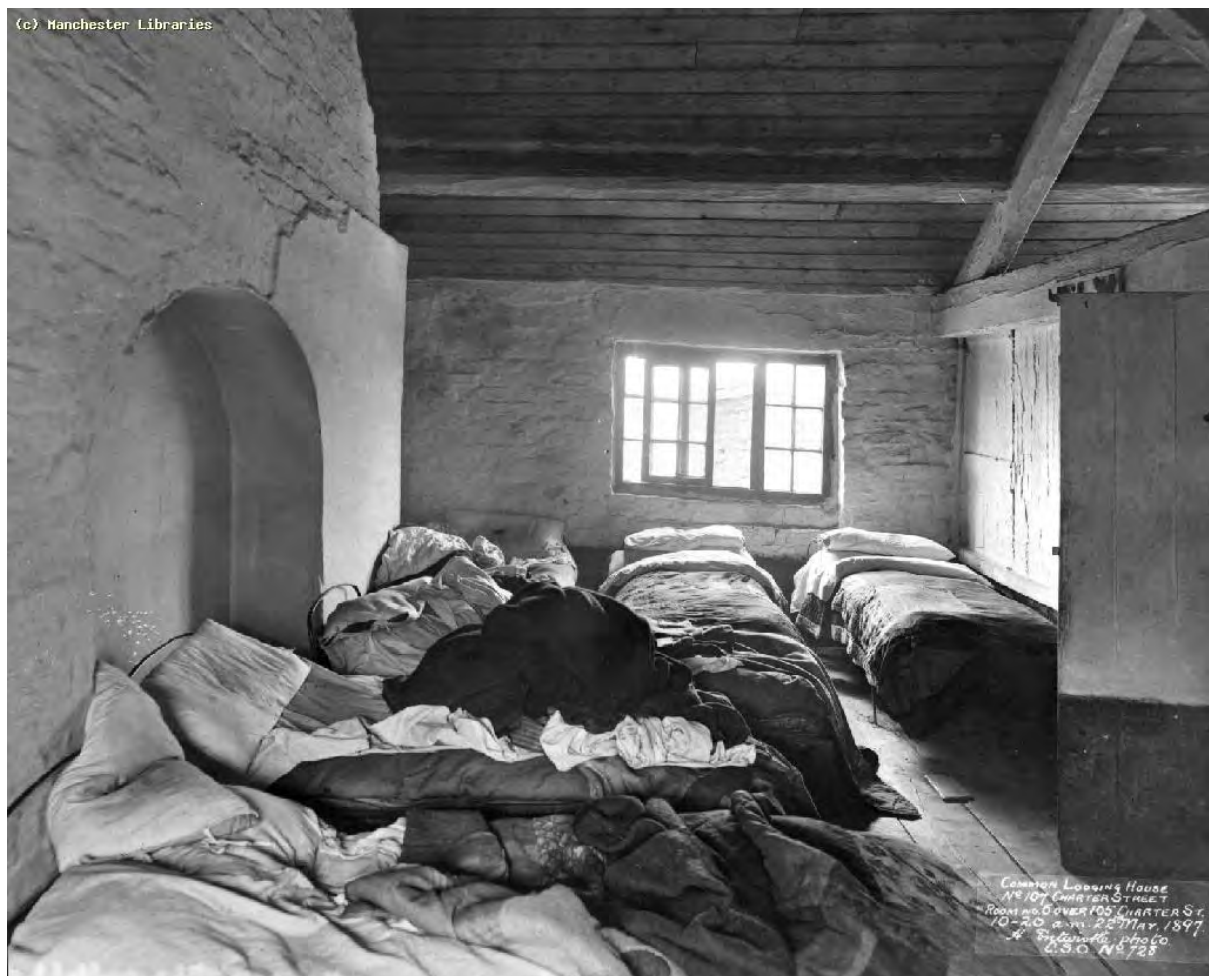


Figure 7.8: An attic room in a three-storey house in Blackley Street, turned into lodging in 1887. Five beds can be seen. The room, a former loom shop, has been partitioned with wooden boards as shown on the right of the picture. (Source: [Anonymous], *Charter Street Common Lodging House*, 1897, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M08363.)

Studying the 1851 census for this part of Blackley Street (Charter Street) shows that the three-storey houses on the south side of the street were once again

⁴⁹⁴ Wild and Miller, *Co-operative Headquarters*, p. 105.

home to large numbers of people, sleeping in rooms such as the attic shown in Figure 7.8. Just 20 houses contained 324 people – an average of 16.2 per house. They included 154 lodgers and one visitor (47.8 percent). Seven houses contained 20 or more people, including one, No. 22, which contained 41. Four houses were listed as lodging houses and one occupier was listed as a housekeeper. Four houses kept servants – presumably to help with the lodging house functions – an unexpected find in Engels's slum.

The nationalities of the inhabitants strikes a contrast with the Irish-dominated Old Mount Street. On this side of Blackley Street were 42 Irish (12.9 percent) compared with 260 English (80.2 percent), plus 22 people (6.7 percent) of other nationalities – born in Scotland, Wales, Jamaica, Kenya and the East Indies. When nine English-born children of two Irish parents are added to the Irish total, their number increases to 51 (15.7 percent). Examining the birthplaces of the English on this side of Blackley Street shows that only 114 out of the 260 (43.8 percent) were born in the township of Manchester. The remainder were English immigrants not only from districts around Manchester, but from as far afield as Bath, Birmingham, Bradford, Coventry, Derby, Durham, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Huddersfield, Hull, Kent, Leeds, Lincolnshire, Liverpool, London, Norfolk, Northampton, North Shields, Nottingham, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Sheffield, Shropshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Wakefield, Worcestershire and Workington. This is evidence that the three-storey houses provided a lodging house function not just for the immigrant Irish but also for immigrant English-born men and women arriving in Manchester from other towns and the countryside in search of work. Such large numbers of people needed accommodation and they found it in the large, eighteenth-century houses of the district, which by 1851 had been subdivided in tenements or turned into lodging

houses. The housing was providing temporary accommodation for economic migrants of all nationalities. The numbers can be seen in Table 7.6.

Blakeley Street (south side)

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2nd gen)	Other
4	7	0 (2 orphans)	0	7	0
6a Yard landing	27	8 (+1)	10 (+1)	16 (-1)	1 Wales
6b Yard landing	9	3	7 (+1)	2 (-1)	0
6c Yard landing	4	0	1	3	0
8	8	4 (+2 servants)	0	7	1 East Indies
10	3	0	1	2	0
12 Lodging house	20	11 (+1 servant)	1	13	2 Scots/1 Wales/ 2 Isle of Man/ 1 NK
14 Lodging house	20	12	0	19	1 Kenya
16 Lodging house	21	13 (+1 servant)	3	15	1 Wales/1 Scot/ 1unlisted
18	25	7	2 (+3)	23 (-3)	0
20	17	4	0	14	3 Scotland
22 Housekeeper	41	36	7	31	2 Wales/1 Scots
24	19	8 (+1 servant)	1	18	0
26 Lodging house	17	5	1	15	1 Scotland
28	16	3	1	15	0
30	28	23	1	25	2 Scotland
32 Bakery	9	0	4 (+4)	5 (-4)	0
34	15	9	1	13	1 Jamaica
36	11	8	1	10	0
38	7	0	0	7	0
Totals	324	154 (155)	42 (51)	260 (251)	22

Table 7.6: Occupants of Blackley Street (south side) in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Blackley Street (north side)

The north side of Blackley Street (Charter Street) was also dominated by English-born occupants, with Irish forming just 13.1 percent of the population compared with 76.8 percent English. Even with Irish sons and daughters added to the total, the Irish population only rose to 42 (14.5 percent). With 289 people living in 22 houses, the occupancy rate on that side of the street was 13.1 per house. The smaller number of occupants reflects the fact that several of premises were being used as businesses – a service economy for the lodging houses across the road. While two of the three-storey buildings housed more than 20 people, this side of the street also included three beer houses, two provision shops and a pawnbroker's shop. There were 72 lodgers and nine visitors on this side of the street (28.0 percent) compared with 155 on the other. The numbers are shown in Table 7.7.

House number	Occupants	Lodgers (+ visitors)	Irish born (+ Irish 2 nd gen)	English born (- Irish 2 nd gen)	Other
1	10	0	0	9	1 Wales
3	11	0	0	11	0
5 Beer house	6	0 (1 servant)	2	4	0
7 Shoemaker	14	0 (+2)	3 (+2)	10 (-2)	1 Gibraltar
9 Brush maker	13	0 (+3)	5	5	3 Scotland
11 Shoemaker	12	0	2 (+1)	10 (-1)	0
13	3	2	0	3	0
15	8	3	1	7	0
17 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
19	18	0	1	17	0
21	27	22	2	25	0
23 Housekeeper	22	21	2	19	1 Poland
25	31	10 (+2)	1	30	0
27	6	5	0	6	0
29 Beer house	16	8 (+2)	2	14	0
31	8	0	0	8	0
33 Shoemaker	11	4	1	9	1 Scotland
35 Beer house	6	0 (1 servant)	0	6	0
37 Provision shop	4	1 (1 servant)	1	2	1 Scotland
39 Provision shop	7	0	1 (+1 Northern Ire)	6 (-1)	0
41	20	9	14	6	0
43	31	10	0	10 (-10 German)	21 (+10) Germany
45 Unlisted	-	-	-	-	-
47 Pawnbroker	5	1	0	5	0
Totals	289	72 (81)	38 (42)	222 (208)	29 (39)

Table 7.7: Occupants of Blackley Street (north side) in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

Tables 7.1 to 7.7 prove beyond doubt the huge numbers of people inhabiting the three-storey Georgian houses in the mid-nineteenth century. There were other streets of three-storey houses not sampled here. Figure 7.9, drawn using the

Adshead map, shows the extent of the development of Angel Meadow in 1850, shortly after Engels's visit. Highlighted are the late-eighteenth-century houses, as depicted on the William Green map of 1794. There were so many of them that they continued to dominate the district even after the back-to-backs and courts were built in between and behind them in the second and third phases of development.

For further comparison between the upper area of Angel Meadow and the lower, Table 7.8 sets out the occupational rates of each of these sampled streets in the upper New Town and the relative size of their Irish populations compared with the courts in the lower part of Angel Meadow visited by Engels. It highlights that while environmental conditions in the courts on the riverbank were undoubtedly bad, the living conditions inside what had originally been well-appointed three-storey houses in upper Angel Meadow were as bad if not worse. The south side of Old Mount Street, with its long row of three-storey workshop dwellings, had the highest occupancy rate of the sampled streets in the district, at 16.5 people per house. Angel Street west, at the top of Angel Meadow, had the highest number of occupants at 496. Together with the opposite side of the street, Angel Street housed 852 people in 64 houses. Gibraltar was an outlier because one large property was occupied by 56 people. That area emphasised by Engels has been shown in this thesis to also have contained at least some three-storey dwellings. If all the courts and streets in and around Gibraltar and alongside the Irk are taken together, the 1851 Census shows they housed 637 people in 78 properties – an occupancy rate of 8.1. This was a lower occupancy rate than the rates in Angel Street and Blackley Street and the other Angel Meadow streets of three-storey houses. The east side of Angel Street had the highest number and percentage of Irish inhabitants, at 277 or 77.8 percent. With the exception of Gibraltar, the Irish congregated in the larger houses at the top

of Angel Meadow. The south side of Dyche Street had the highest proportion of lodgers and visitors, at 54.4 percent.

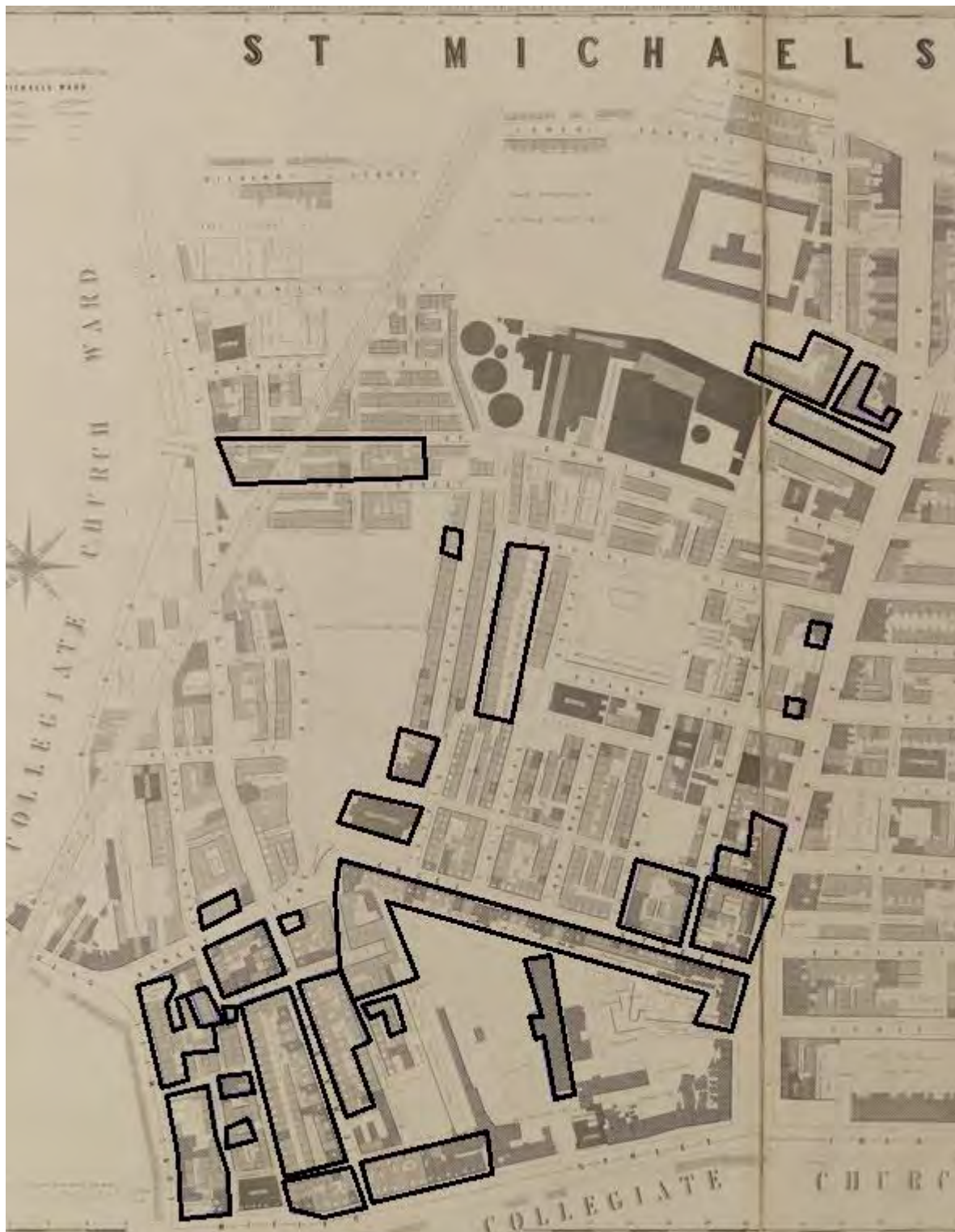


Figure 7.9: Eighteenth-century houses drawn on to the Adshead map of 1850. (Source: Joseph Adshead, *Twenty-Four Illustrated Maps of the Township of Manchester*, 1850–51, sheet 13, © The University of Manchester, JRL1300178.)

Street	Houses	Occupants	Occupancy	Lodgers + visitors	Irish + 2nd gen
Old Mount Street south	17	280	16.5	113 (40.4%)	207 (73.9%)
Blackley Street south	20	324	16.2	155 (47.8)	51 (15.7%)
Gibraltar (court/ street)	15	240	16.0	100 (41.7%)	181 (75.4%)
Angel Street east	26	356	13.7	154 (43.3%)	277 (77.8%)
Blackley Street north	22	289	13.1	81 (28.0%)	42 (14.5%)
Angel Street west	38	496	13.1	129 (26.0%)	213 (42.9%)
Dyche Street south	18	232	12.9	126 (54.3%)	108 (46.6%)
Dyche Street north	16	179	11.2	89 (49.7%)	117 (65.4%)
Brook's Court	10	77	7.7	18 (23.4%)	8 (10.4%)
Black Lion Court	3	20	6.7	0 (0.0%)	1 (5.0%)
Allen's Court	11 – 15	55	3.3 – 5.0	2 (3.6%)	0 (0%)
Queen Anne Court	4	19	4.8	4 (21.0%)	1 (5.2%)

Table 7.8: Occupants of selected streets in Angel Meadow in 1851. (Source: 1851 Census.)

The long-term effects of the three-storey houses

Having established how the larger Georgian properties in streets such as Angel Street, Blackley Street, Dyche Street, Simpson Street, Old Mount Street had become so overcrowded by the mid-nineteenth century, this chapter will now show how they had a dominant effect on the district into the twentieth century. First of all, it can be shown that they had an impact almost as soon as the district began to be developed. While the sub-division of the houses may have had an equally significant, if more hidden, impact on the district, it was the lodging house function that drew the most notoriety.

Roberts said that evidence of multiple occupancy before the 1841 census is scarce, but there were indications of it in the rate books when accommodation was described as ‘rooms’ and the names of tenants are given as, for example, ‘Joseph Smith and sundry tenants.’⁴⁹⁵ There is evidence that it was happening in Angel Meadow from very early in its development. The first census of Manchester in 1773–4 listed 33 lodgers and 74 boarders in its headcount of people living in Long Millgate – the area’s earliest inroad.⁴⁹⁶ Taken together, this group accounted for roughly one in five (21.7 percent) of the town’s total 492 lodgers.⁴⁹⁷ In 1795, John Aikin raised the first concerns about the lodging houses ‘near the extremities of the town’, which he said produced ‘many fevers’ that were caused ‘not only by want of cleanliness and air, but by receiving the most offensive objects into beds, which never seem to

⁴⁹⁵ Roberts, *Provision of Housing*, pp. 53–4.

⁴⁹⁶ Thomas Percival and John Whitaker, *Enumeration of the Houses and Inhabitants of the Town and Parish of Manchester in Three Volumes, 1773 to 1774* (Chetham’s Library, A.4.54–A.4.56).

⁴⁹⁷ Thomas Percival and Dr. Price, ‘Observations on the State of Population in Manchester, and Other Adjacent Places’, *Philosophical Transactions*, Vol. 65 (Royal Society, 1775), pp. 322–335 (Chetham’s Library, A.4.54–A.4.56).

undergo any attempt towards cleaning them, from their first purchase until they rot under their tenants'. He warned: 'The most fatal consequences have resulted from a nest of lodging houses in Brook's Entry, near the bottom of Long Millgate'. This would later become Brook's Court, which has been shown in this thesis to contain three-storey houses. Aikin also described how a range of cellars rented out to lodgers in Blackley Street, which this thesis has shown was also full of three-storey houses, was threatening to 'become a nursery for diseases'. He said: 'They consist of four rooms, communicating with each other, of which the two centre rooms are completely dark. The fourth is very ill-lighted and chiefly ventilated through the others. They contain from four to five beds in each and are already extremely dirty.'⁴⁹⁸

Admittedly, even Kay and Engels wrote about Manchester's lodging houses, albeit in less detail than they wrote about the riverside area at the foot of Angel Meadow. Kay saw them not only as 'fertile sources of disease' but also as places of 'demoralisation' where 'without distinction of age or sex', lodgers were crowded in 'small and wretched apartments – the same bed receiving a succession of tenants until too offensive even for their unfastidious senses'.⁴⁹⁹ As with Gibraltar, Engels followed Kay in the same vein by referring, although very briefly, to Kay's figure of 267 common lodging houses and adding that they 'must have increased greatly since then'. He wrote less than Kay on the issue, mustering only 228 words on Manchester lodgings, although he briefly mentioned those in London, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow elsewhere in *The Condition*. Picking up on Kay's worries about the mixing of the sexes in lodging house beds, Engels wrote of the

⁴⁹⁸ Aikin, *A Description of the County*, pp. 193–194.

⁴⁹⁹ Kay, *The Moral and Physical*, 1832, 1862, pp. 20–21.

Manchester houses: 'Five to seven beds in each room lie on the floor – without bedsteads, and on these sleep, mixed indiscriminately, as many persons as apply. What physical and moral atmosphere reigns in these holes I need not state. Each of these houses is a focus of crime, the scene of deeds against which human nature revolts, which would perhaps never have been executed but for this forced centralisation of vice.'⁵⁰⁰

Others picked up on the lodging houses too. Johann Georg Kohl, in 1844, noted how 'there existed in Manchester 160 houses for the reception of stolen goods, 103 houses for the resort of thieves, 109 lodging houses where the sexes sleep indiscriminately together, 91 mendicant lodging houses, 1,267 beer houses and public houses.'⁵⁰¹ Leon Faucher, wrote more than Engels on the issue, pointing to Manchester Statistical Society figures, which stated that in 1836, out of 169,000 inhabitants of Manchester and Salford, 12,500 lived in lodging houses. He said: 'This is not all. In these places they meet with beggars, thieves, and prostitutes, and thus these dwelling places are equally dangerous for their morals and their health.' Faucher described how the overcrowding in these houses was a major cause of fever and diseases, adding that Dr. Richard Baron Howard, whose work was discussed earlier in this chapter, had noted that the fever raged more in the winter when the lodging houses were at their busiest. 'In 1832, the cholera ravaged most virulently in these thickly peopled houses. Out of eighteen in a single house, eight were victims to it,' he wrote.⁵⁰² Quoting directly from Dr. Howard's report, he said:

⁵⁰⁰ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 77.

⁵⁰¹ Johann Georg Kohl, *Ireland, Scotland and England*, Vol. 1 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1844), p. 117.

⁵⁰² Faucher, *Manchester in 1844*, p. 65.

The scene which these places present at night is one of the most lamentable description; the crowded state of the beds, filled promiscuously with men, women, and children – the floor covered over with the filthy and ragged clothing they have just put off, and with their various bundles and packages, containing all the property they possess, mark the depraved and blunted state of their feelings, and the moral and social disorder which exists. The suffocating stench and heat of the atmosphere are almost intolerable to a person coming from the open air, and plainly indicate its insalubrity.⁵⁰³

Angus Bethune Reach, a more acute observer than Engels who went into the lodging houses of Blackley Street in 1849, described Angel Meadow as the ‘lowest, most filthy, most wicked locality in Manchester’. Describing the interior of one room, which at 14 feet wide signified a relatively large house, he wrote:

The beds upstairs were broken and rickety, and bedclothes were bundles of brown rags. These couches were placed so close that you could only just make your way between them. The regular charge was four pence a bed. The landlady stoutly asserted that only two were allowed to sleep in each bed, but as to the sexes she was ‘no ways particular – lodgers was lodgers whether they was men or women’. In the room, which might be about 14 feet by 12, more than a score of filthy vagrants often pigged together, dressed and undressed, sick and well, sober and drunk.⁵⁰⁴

Downstairs, eight or ten men and women sat on stools around a large fire – another sign of a large house. Reach described how the rules on bed limits were

⁵⁰³ Faucher, *Manchester in 1844*, pp. 64, 99.

⁵⁰⁴ Reach, *The Cotton Fibre Halo*, pp. 98–99.

continuously broken, with three or four people crammed into a bed and temporary beds made of straw and sacking called 'shakedown' placed on the floor to accommodate extra lodgers. Reach said Blackley Street was 'entirely composed of lodging houses' and was 'well known to the police throughout the kingdom'. In every house he visited with a sub-inspector of the police he found the bedrooms alike: 'They consist simply of filthy unscoured chambers, with stained and discoloured walls, scribbled over with names and foul expressions. Sometimes the plaster has fallen and lay in heaps in the corners. There was no article of furniture other than the beds – not even, as far as I saw, a chest. Still the worst of these places is quite weather-tight.' Reach noted there were few or no Irish in the houses he visited, which fits the data in Table 7.8. In a cellar beneath another house on the street, which had beds 'huddled in every corner', Reach found a man asleep in bed beside 'a well-grown calf' and another sleeping 'in a sort of hole or shallow cave, about 6 feet long, 2 deep, and a little more than 1 high [that] had been scooped out through the wall into the earth on the outside of the foundation'. The man's face was only two inches below the top of the hole.⁵⁰⁵

All of the above reports represent not just a concern about poverty and the poor quality of people's accommodation. They also highlight Victorian fears about communal living and dormitory sleeping.⁵⁰⁶ Much of the notoriety of the district was a product of these concerns. Observers writing about Angel Meadow lodging houses were expressing alarm about the exposure of children to immorality and criminality as much as about the state of the houses.⁵⁰⁷ Mayne, as discussed in Chapter 1, was highly critical of such descriptions, arguing that slums were and are myths or

⁵⁰⁵ Reach, *The Cotton Fibre Halo*, pp. 100–1.

⁵⁰⁶ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 31.

⁵⁰⁷ Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain*, p. 31.

constructions of the imagination. Charity workers, sanitarians, housing reformers and urban planners all identified slums as 'spatial and social abominations', goaded by the 'chief vehicle of slum sensationalism – the city press'. He said: 'The term slum, encoded with the meanings of a dominant bourgeois culture, in fact obscured and distorted the varied spatial forms and social conditions to which it was applied.'⁵⁰⁸ Tom Crook, who investigated London lodging houses, acknowledged that none of the contemporary opinions of them can be considered neutral representations. He said that, rather than depict the whole of a city, social investigators preferred to focus on notorious districts, where common lodging houses could be found in abundance. Crook said these descriptions were written 'from a particular perspective and designed to bring about certain effects (public outrage, greater legislative actions).' But he added, significantly: 'Nor can they be considered "imaginative constructions", conjured up by their authors: that they came into being was only because of the various powers and forces (smells and noises, bodies and actions, words and gestures) concentrated in common lodging houses.'⁵⁰⁹

However, concern about lodging houses was much more than a bourgeois fear of moral depravity and sexual deviancy in this pell-mell multi-occupancy environment. One significant problem was that people and families could end up staying in them a long time – the house becoming a permanent home and almost indistinguishable from a tenement.⁵¹⁰ While overcrowding did not have a precise definition in law during this study period, and remained a hazy and subjective

⁵⁰⁸ Alan Mayne, *The Imagined Slum: Newspaper Representation in Three Cities 1870–1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1993), p. 1–2.

⁵⁰⁹ Tom Crook, 'Accommodating the outcast: Common lodging houses and the limits of urban governance in Victorian and Edwardian London', *Urban History*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2008), pp. 414–5.

⁵¹⁰ Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, pp. 58–62.

concept into which middle-class moral and medical assumptions were fitted, it was understood to enable the spread of disease and later moved from a concept to a social policy.⁵¹¹ Like Aiken before him, who identified a risk of fever, Gaultier found lodging houses in Angel Street and Blackley Street were breeding grounds for cholera.⁵¹² The map from his book in Figure 7.10 shows that, while the lower half of Angel Meadow was an epicentre for the disease, so were the larger houses on Blackley Street and Angel Street in the upper area of Angel Meadow. Around Dyche Street, there were three cases, compared with only one in Gibraltar. Back Irk Street, which was also a cholera black spot, stood behind a row of three-storey houses.

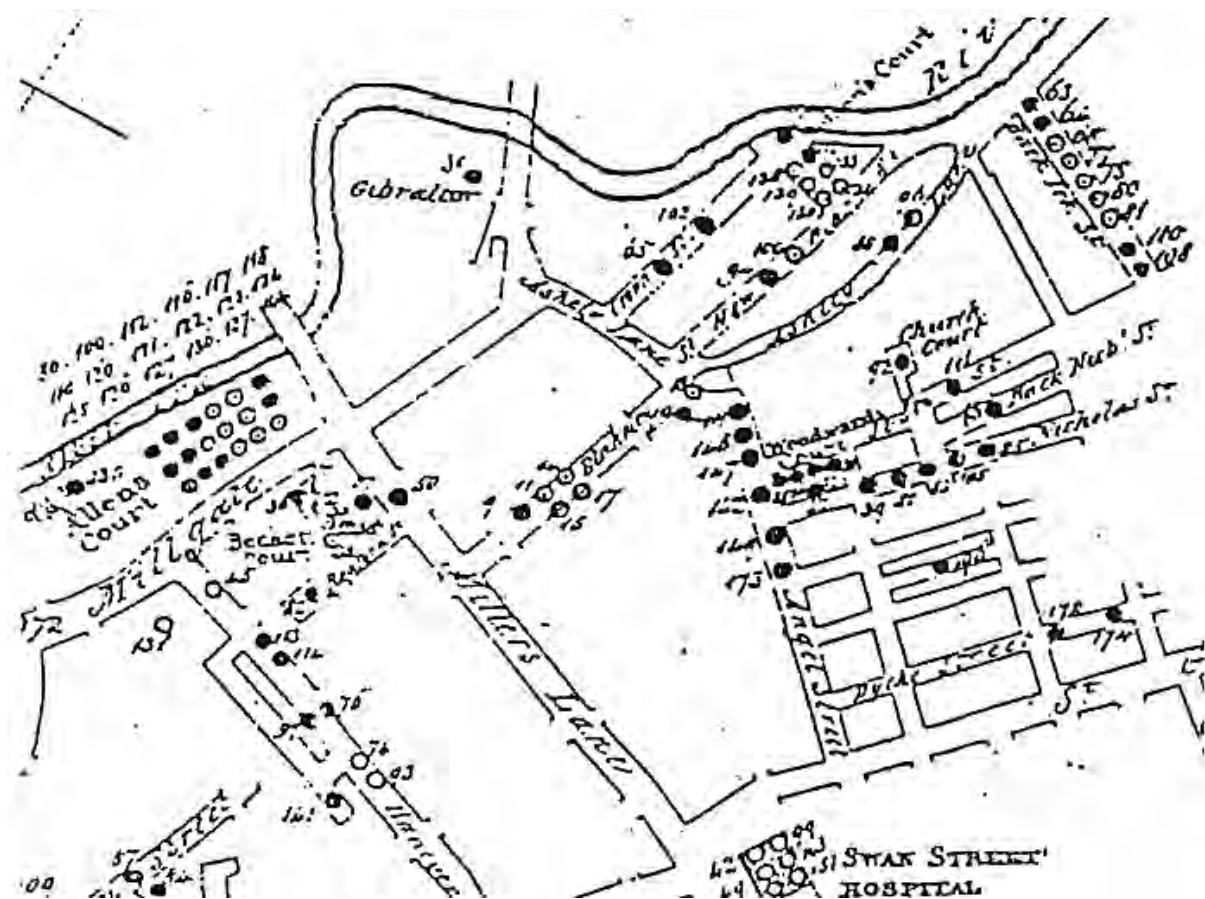


Figure 7.10: Detail from a copy of the original map in Henry Gaultier's book of 1833 showing cholera cases in and around Angel Meadow. (Source: Mervyn Busted and Paul Hindle, *Angel Meadow: The Irish and Cholera in Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester Geographical Society, 1998), p. 3.

⁵¹¹ Wohl, *The Eternal Slum*, p. xv.

⁵¹² Gaultier, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 41.

The cases in Angel Meadow lodging houses are worth looking at in more detail. It is likely that the infected inhabitants shared drinking water or food contaminated with the bacteria rather than being infected due to the overcrowded conditions. Large numbers of people were made vulnerable by sharing the same unhygienic facilities. Gaulter identified 23 cases in Angel Street and 17 in Blackley Street, where the streets, he said, were 'in a tolerably good state both as to repairs and cleanliness' although overall the locality was one of 'crowding, filth etc'.⁵¹³ He noted an 'extraordinary outbreak of the disease' at 12 Blackley Street, a lodging house with beds for between 16 and 20 people whom Gaulter described as trampers or vagabonds, sleeping in a garret of seven beds – likely to be a former loom shop. Eighteen were in the house when the outbreak began. Ten were attacked and eight died.⁵¹⁴ He described Blackley Street as 'tolerably wide and open' but 'full of lodging houses of the worst description'. No. 12 had an 'insufferable, loaded convenience close to the back door'. He suggested the garret was 'well ventilated by windows at either end running the length of the wall' – a suggestion of weavers' windows.⁵¹⁵ Other cases occurred in the middle storey of a three-storey house at 81 Angel Street and also at 79 Angel Street – 'a cleanish lodging house near the bottom of the street'.⁵¹⁶ Gaulter said the street itself was 'swarming with low lodging houses on a descent' and it was 'filthy and strewn with refuse'. In another case described as 29 Angel Meadow, which is likely to be 29 Angel Street, Gaulter found the house 'cleanish, with no nuisance except in the street itself'. Mixed in with 'filthy, loathsome' courts were other large houses where there were cases.⁵¹⁷ Gaulter described 2

⁵¹³ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 111.

⁵¹⁴ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 42–3.

⁵¹⁵ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 162–3.

⁵¹⁶ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 195–6.

⁵¹⁷ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 200.

Ashley Street at the top of Angel Meadow as a 'clean house, on an eminence, to the front very open and airy', but to the rear it had a 'dark, narrow yard with a convenience opening into a large cess-pool – the receptacle of three others'.⁵¹⁸ Only four people lived there at the time including a Mr. Kenyon, who collected rents. Back Style Street consisted of an 'elevated, open row of houses'. John Read, a 42-year-old painter who lived there with three other people, occupied a 'cleanish' house, although nearly opposite was a 'very abominable' convenience.⁵¹⁹ In the case of Martha Aspinall at 12 Dyche Street, the road was 'very filthy, badly paved and full of stagnant pools strewn with vegetable and animal matter', but the house itself was a 'moderately wide house' and clean, despite being occupied by 12 people. Gaulter also said 5 Dyche Street, which contained seven people had 'no nuisance near except the street'.⁵²⁰ Conditions in these larger houses had yet to fully deteriorate.

Further concern about the impact of lodging houses followed. In 1841, according to Benjamin Love, the house of recovery in Aytoun Street, which was built for patients suffering from fever, treated 848 people. Angel Meadow topped the list of cases with 211, followed by Ancoats with 201, London Road with 167 and Deansgate with 114, followed by the 'Middle District' with 110 and Salford with 45.⁵²¹ Love described the interiors of Manchester's lodging houses: 'Imagine that the temperature of this room is at a fever heat, owing to the total absence of all means of ventilation, and in consequence of so many persons breathing and being crowded together in so small a space.' The beds, he said, were 'visibly infested with all

⁵¹⁸ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 163.

⁵¹⁹ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, p. 102.

⁵²⁰ Gaulter, *The Origin and Progress*, pp. 200–1.

⁵²¹ Love, *The Handbook of Manchester*, pp. 121–2.

manner of vermin' in the 'horrible spectacle presented, not by one, but by many hundred lodging houses in Manchester'.⁵²²

Three-storey houses and Angel Meadow's slum persistence

In the eyes of modern historians and experts in international development, it is always the 'hand-me-down' slums that are the worst. According to Dyos and Reeder, writing in 1978: 'It was no accident that the worst slums were generally found in places where large houses were vacated by the middle-classes in their trek to the further suburbs. Such property could only be occupied economically by lower classes by being turned into tenements, but the rent for the whole floor or even a whole room was often too much for those eventually in possession, and the subdivision of space that followed usually meant deterioration in living conditions.'⁵²³ Davis also noted that 'hand-me-down' housing in the shape of former colonial mansions and Victorian villas is quite common in Latin America and some Asian cities, including the *palomares* of Guatemala City, the *avenidas* of Rio and the *zamindar* mansions of Kolkata.⁵²⁴

Engels must have seen the larger 'hand-me-down' merchant and artisan housing in Angel Meadow. This suggests two possible outcomes: either he chose to ignore them because they did not appear to be sufficiently dilapidated for his theory, or he ignored them because they presented a theoretical problem for him. Larger and built for a better-class of worker, and by the mid-nineteenth century operated by

⁵²² Love, *The Handbook of Manchester*, pp. 104–105.

⁵²³ Harold J. Dyos, and D.A. Reeder, 'Slums and Suburbs', in H.J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, eds, *The Victorian City: Images and Realities* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Vol. 2, 1978), p. 361.

⁵²⁴ Davis, *Planet of Slums*, pp. 31–32.

working-class lodging housekeepers acting as middlemen for their owners, they could have muddled his theory of class divide and, on external appearance at least, would have appeared at odds with his description of the 'cattle-sheds' by the river. The biggest problem though comes in Engels's descriptions of housing build quality, as identified in the review of the archaeological evidence in Chapter 2. Engels did note how, in Manchester, 'one front is formed of cottages of the best class, so fortunate as to possess a back door and a small court, and these command the highest rent' but for him the action was all in the back street where the cottages commanded the least rents and were 'most neglected'. Comparatively good ventilation could be obtained in the front houses, which he said were built for 'fleecing better-paid workers through the higher rents' but he added nothing more about them – missing the overcrowding and other intransigent problems that they caused.⁵²⁵

Engels also faced a second problem in that, for his theory to work, the problems caused by the Capitalist system had to be unending. In 1872, he sought to resolve this problem while recognising that 'the construction of railways through the centre of town, the laying out of new streets, and the erection of great public and private buildings have broken through, laid bare and improved some of the worst districts'. Engels had to admit that Little Ireland had disappeared and on its site now stood a railway station, but he said: 'The bourgeoisie printed with pride to the happy and final abolition of Little Ireland as to a great triumph... and it was then revealed that Little Ireland had not been abolished at all, but had simply been shifted from the south side of Oxford Road to the north side, and that it still continued to flourish.' He added: 'This is a striking example of how the bourgeoisie solves the housing

⁵²⁵ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 68–71.

question in practice. The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the Capitalist mode of production confined our workers night after night, are not abolished – they are merely shifted elsewhere!’⁵²⁶

However, just as Little Ireland ceased to exist in the 1840s, the courts at the bottom of Angel Meadow were also gradually swept away. Queen Anne Court last appears in the rate books in 1846 and Allen’s Court in 1855. Gibraltar persisted for a few more decades. In 1854, the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association’s inspector described it as being ‘in a most dilapidated and wretched condition’ and said the houses were ‘inhabited by persons of the very lowest order and overcrowded with lodgers of the worst class’. He said: ‘The inferiority and unwholesomeness of this place is very great. As to drainage, privy accommodation, dampness, cleanliness, light and ventilation, all is in the worst possible condition... it should be altogether pulled down.’⁵²⁷ Gibraltar’s occupants were finally moved out in 1870 ahead of the building of the railway branch line discussed in the previous chapter. In other cases it took a while longer. Three houses in Black Lion Court, Nos. 2, 4 and 6, persisted until 1900. Brook’s Court with its three-storey houses, as previously discussed, continued under the name Epsom Court until it also vanished from the rate book 1894.

While courts such as Gibraltar were cleared away and improved, however, another type of property did continue to persist. The three-storey lodging houses and sub-divided tenements that were all but ignored by Engels remained the dominant

⁵²⁶ Friedrich Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), pp. 71–74.

⁵²⁷ [Anonymous], *Visiting Committee’s Report: Rochdale Road District*, Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association (1854). (Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M126/2/6/10), p. 4.

factor in Angel Meadow's notoriety into the twentieth century. Arthur Symonds noted in 1894 how they still dominated the district. He said: 'From end to end, on both sides, Charter Street is composed of lodging houses. Beds are advertised in every window and on every wall, in print manuscript, in colour, in black and white, at varying prices.'⁵²⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* even noted how 'two or three houses' were 'often thrown into one so as to accommodate 40, or even more lodgers'. It said: 'When this is the case, the garrets form a strange-looking gallery of sleeping apartments, divided from each other by rough partitions of wood.'⁵²⁹

Looking at the census records for Angel Street from 1851 to 1901 shows how the existence of these 'hand-me-down' eighteenth-century dwellings enabled Angel Meadow's lodging house function to develop. The houses and the economic function they provided persisted throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Table 7.9 looks at Angel Street as a whole, so the occupancy rate in 1851 is slightly lower than the figures shown earlier for each side of the street. At the peak of the lodging house function in 1891, there were 932 people staying in the street, including 815 lodgers. By 1901, in this one Manchester street alone, lodgers and boarders accounted for 87 percent of the 704 occupants of 42 houses – a density of 16.7.

⁵²⁸ Symonds, 'An Unfashionable Slum in Manchester', p. 726.

⁵²⁹ [Anonymous], 'The Census in the Slums', *Manchester Guardian* (6 April 1871), p. 5.

Year	Houses occupied	Total occupants	Average occupants per house	Houses with visitors, boarders or lodgers	Percentage of houses with visitors, boarders or lodgers.	Visitors	Boarders	Lodgers	Total visitors, boarders or lodgers	Visitors, boarders or lodgers as percentage of all	Largest number of visitors, boarders or lodgers in one house
1851	65	841	12.9	41	63	38	0	245	283	33.6	35
1861	69	771	11.7	38	55	0	161	94	255	33	35
1871	66	657	9.9	34	51.5	2	4	354	360	54.7	41
1881	56	512	9.1	34	60.7	1	26	327	354	69.1	26
1891	60	932	15.5	42	70	1	10	804	815	87.4	328
1901	42	704	16.7	25	59.5	0	213	418	613	87	350

Table 7.9: Analysis of Angel Street lodging houses and multi-occupancy property through time using census records. (Sources: 1851–1901 Censuses.)

One house, Michael Kane's at 9 Angel Street, was shown on the Goad map in 1888 as having been knocked through into a former brewery. By 1901, it was providing shelter for 350 men. This could only have happened because the lodging house function provided by the eighteenth-century housing around it was so entrenched. Two photographs of Kane's taken in 1893 show both phases of the house's development. Figure 7.11 shows the view from the interior of the former loom shop of the original eighteenth-century house. Six beds can be seen. Figure 7.12 shows the extension into the brewery. It appears orderly, with the lodging house rules on the walls of both rooms.

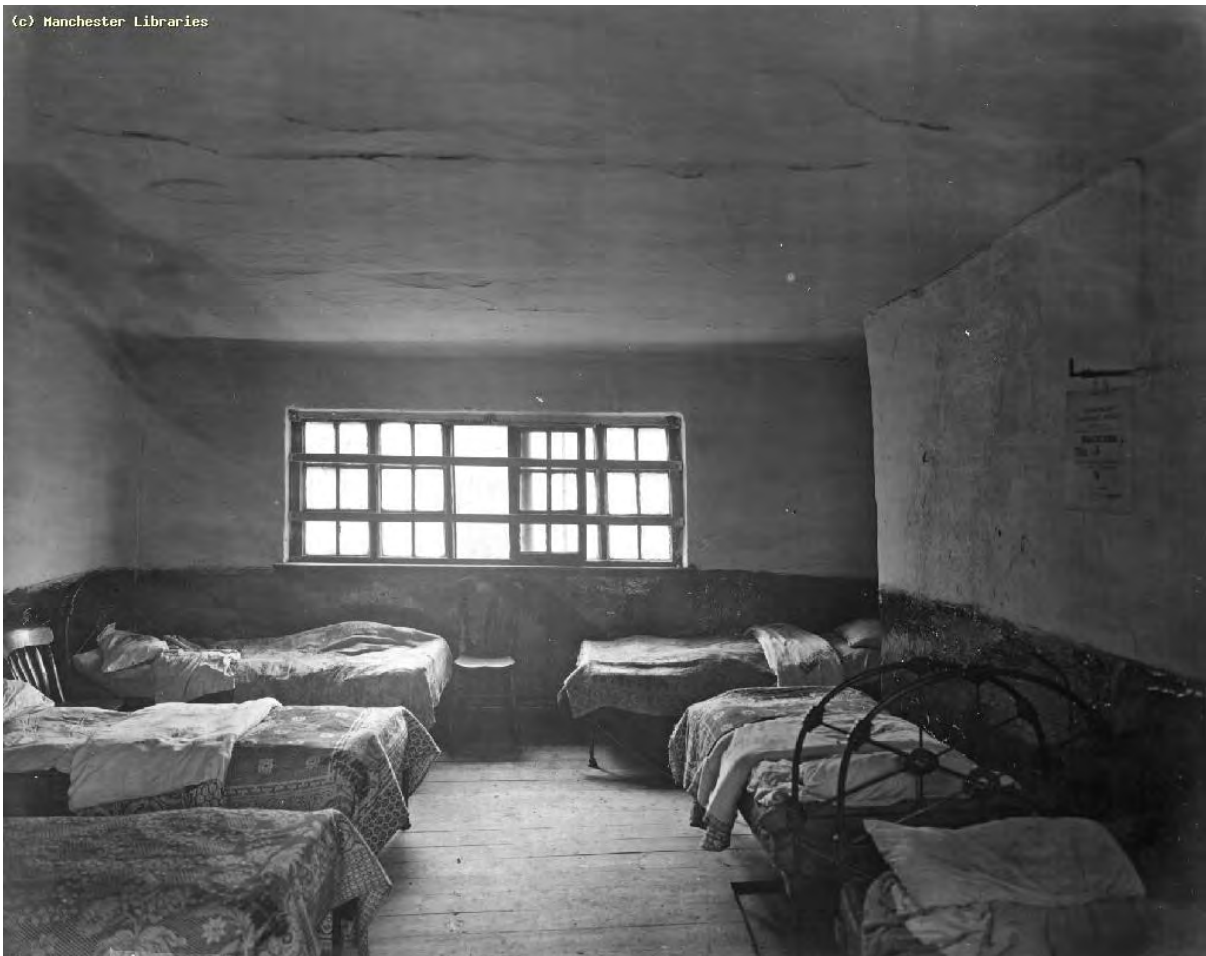


Figure 7.11: Interior of the front three-storey room of Kane's lodging house at 9 Angel Street looking towards the loom shop window in 1898. (Source: H. Entwistle, *Common Lodging House*, 1898, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M08348.)



Figure 7.12: Kane's Lodging House in Angel Street, pictured in 1898, was extended into a former brewery to the rear. (Source: H. Entwistle, *Common Lodging House*, 1898, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M08338.)

Despite its great size, Kane's was not the largest lodging in Angel Meadow. That title went to the Rest, which stood in a converted factory in Factory Yard, off Blackley Street (Charter Street). On the night of the census on Sunday, 5 April 1891, the Rest was treated as a public institution by the census taker who charged the manager Thomas Farrell and his wife Ellen Farrell, the house matron, a fee of £12 7s for the 'due satisfactory performance of all his census duties'. The Rest accommodated 375 lodgers and took up no fewer than 16 pages of the enumeration book. The staff included a provision shop man, two kitchen men, a whitewasher, a

bed maker and three cleaners, as well as a watchman whose job was to keep the peace.⁵³⁰ This facility was only able to exist because it stood in a district with an already developed lodging house function created by the larger Georgian houses. One of the rooms at The Rest, which appears more like a hospital ward than a lodging house, and is clearly the floor of a former factory, can be seen in Figure 7.13.



Figure 7.13: The Rest Lodging House in Factory Yard, Angel Meadow, c.1900. (Source: [Anonymous], *Common Lodging House, The Rest, Factory Yard, Manchester*, 1900, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M60171.)

These lodging houses continued to bring Angel Meadow notoriety throughout the century. The Manchester detective Jerome Caminada described in his memoirs, published in 1895, how one of Angel Meadow's lodging houses was a fair specimen of those throughout the district – with 'tattered garments, crowns of old hats, brown

⁵³⁰ Census (RG12/3250, 1891), pp. 127–129.

paper, and paper rendered brown by exposure' pressed into holes in the windows to keep out the wind and rain. Describing a room upstairs with four wooden pallets posing as beds, he said: 'There lie old and young – grey-headed convict, wizened hag, infant and child of tender years – presenting a sickening picture of moral depravity – the atmosphere being nothing but a foetid composition of pestilential vapour emitted from filthy beds, dirty clothing, foul breath and, worse than all, the presence of offensive matter in the room.'⁵³¹

However, other authors writing in a more rounded way about the same houses indicated that some such as Kane's were well run despite their size. Philip Wentworth, writing in the *East Lancashire Review* in September 1890, said after a visit to Kane's that its beds were ranged along each side of the wall in vast lime-washed rooms. The bedframes were iron and only large enough for one person. 'The bedding is by no means scant, and nobody who is well or tolerably well fed, could complain of being cold in bed on the coldest day in winter. The ventilation is good, and the floors are kept remarkably clean. The best proof of the prevailing cleanliness and of the sufficient ventilation is the absence of disagreeable smells,' he wrote. Lodgers could pay threepence for a bed in an open room or sixpence for a bed enclosed in a sort of hoarding which gave them some privacy. Wentworth added, showing how the lodgers were socially mixed: 'The aristocratic lodgers who pay sixpence are men who for the most part have been better off and have not quite lost their self-respect.' He indicated that some were tradesmen in search of work, some were labours or hawkers, and some were 'broken-down tradesmen who have regular

⁵³¹ Caminada, *Twenty-Five Years of Detective Life*, pp. 9–11.

jobs but poor pay and no homes'. Wentworth also marvelled at the substantial deal dinner tables in the kitchen of the house.⁵³²

One major late-Victorian study of Angel Meadow came not from a journalist but from the Reverend John Edward Mercer, the vicar of Saint Michael's Church, who wrote in 1897 that the 'great mass' of property in the district was then 'old, dilapidated, insanitary and infested with vermin'. In spite of improvements, the main blocks of property were 'nearly as bad as ever'.⁵³³ Pointing clearly to the three-storey lodging houses as the key source of the district's problems, Mercer said: 'There are, among these, 180 lodging houses [in Angel Meadow] registered under the Sanitary Department, and 77 registered under the Police Department. Taking the 88 lodging houses designated as "common" in 1894, we find they had in that year an aggregate of more than 2,500 beds, or an accommodation for one in three of the residents, the beds in which can be had at various prices ranging from threepence to a shilling a night.'⁵³⁴

The continuing effect on Angel Meadow of these Georgian houses can clearly be seen in Mercer's study. He estimated that the district bounded by Rochdale Road, Miller Street, Cheetham Hill Road, and Gould Street (therefore including the Red Bank side of the River Irk) contained around 7,000 people.⁵³⁵ Studying Mercer's estimates shows that 35.7 percent of Angel Meadow's inhabitants were nightly lodgers. Such a large, itinerant population of lodgers living alongside more settled inhabitants could only have been a significant factor in the area's social problems. Mercer went on to quote from an article in the *Manchester City News* dated 10

⁵³² Phillip Wentworth, *East Lancashire Review* (September 1890), p. 205.

⁵³³ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 164–6.

⁵³⁴ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, p. 165–6.

⁵³⁵ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, p. 161.

October 1896, where the author interviewed a lodging house occupant who had tramped around England and described those in Angel Meadow as ‘the very worst houses of this kind’. The interviewee had often complained of this overcrowding, but with no result, the report said. Six inches only often separated the beds instead of the standard 12.⁵³⁶ Mercer said it was astonishing that there were 110 deaths from phthisis in lodging houses under municipal inspection between 1893–5, giving a death rate of 20.09 per thousand compared with a Manchester rate of only 2.06 from the same cause. He reported that the overall death rate in the district for 1888–90 was 50.9 per thousand per annum, compared with an all-England average of less than 19.

Mercer pointed to these lodging houses as causing wider social problems including prostitution, with his own estimation that, out of 42 streets of his parish, only 18 could be said to be free of the problem and many of those 18 were doubtful. Out of 54 houses in Angel Street, only eight were ‘quite free’, along with only 21 out of 79 houses in Charter Street (Blackley Street). They included 15 lodging houses which were ‘practically quite given up’ to it.⁵³⁷ One factor, according to Mercer, was the furnished-room system in which a landlord ‘took a house or a block of houses, putting into each room an old bed, a table, and a chair or two’ before letting each room separately, at an average of 8d per night to anyone who may apply. He reported that a woman of 18 had let a whole row of houses in this way to other young men and women. This evaded the laws on brothels, as well as many of those laws affecting lodging houses, such as using them for sleeping accommodation by day as well as night. Mercer remarked that rescue workers from London who spent

⁵³⁶ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 166–7.

⁵³⁷ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, p. 172.

time in Angel Meadow said the situation in the district was worse than in the direst parts of Whitechapel.⁵³⁸

Using statistics published in 1894 by the Relief Department of the Manchester Board of Guardians, he also went on to highlight how the lodging houses were a source of pauperism. The figures showed that 2,207 out of 2,687 paupers in Manchester lived in common lodging houses. Some 1,483 of the total number of paupers had lived in the city for over 12 months – suggesting that many were deeply entrenched in lodging house accommodation.⁵³⁹ The average rate of pauperism in England and Wales was 54 per thousand, according to Mercer. In Angel Meadow it was one in three of the population, or 394 per thousand. ‘It is here worth noting that each of the 2,500 common lodging houses beds in Angel Meadow produces one pauper per bed, at an annual cost of £2 14s to the township for each such bed,’ he said. He estimated that one in six of the inmates of the workhouse at Crumpsall had been lodging in the district.⁵⁴⁰ Figure 7.14 shows a lodging house room in Crown Lane in 1898, a year after Mercer published his report. It shows the attic of a three-storey house with a high ceiling that suggests a former loom shop.

⁵³⁸ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, pp. 172–3.

⁵³⁹ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, p. 174.

⁵⁴⁰ Mercer, *The Conditions of Life*, p. 175.



Figure 7.14: An attic lodging house room for 12 lodgers in Crown Lane in 1898. (Source: [Anonymous], *Charter Street Lodging House*, 1898, Manchester Image Archive, Manchester Archives and Local Studies, M08340.)

Further evidence of the health problems caused by Angel Meadow's three-storey houses can be found in medical reports. In 1895, the Medical Officer of Health for Manchester James Niven (1851–1925) compared lodging houses in Angel Meadow with back-to-back housing.⁵⁴¹ Niven, who was instrumental in the demolition of 23,000 unfit houses and in converting 85,000 pail closets to water closets, created

⁵⁴¹ James Niven, 'On Back-to-Back Housing', *The Journal of the Sanitary Institute*, Vol. 15, Part 2 (1895), pp. 254–273.

a table comparing the death rate in back-to-backs with the rate in all houses in selected sub-districts of Manchester from 1891 to 1894.⁵⁴²

Niven found that back-to-back houses were mainly in the older parts of the city and many were 'dilapidated with defective roofs, walls, floors, windows and doors' and often contained in closed courts or 'in narrow and confined streets and overshadowed, perhaps, by lofty buildings, with pail closets underneath the bedrooms.'⁵⁴³ When Niven redistributed the deaths in each district to exclude those who died in institutions such as the workhouse, he found that the mortality rate was higher in back-to-backs than in the 'all houses' category in 12 out of 17 sub-districts. Remarkably, however, in five sub-districts the death rate was higher in the 'all houses' category. Two of these sub-districts were in Angel Meadow (sub-districts 6a and 6b) which Niven noted contained a large lodging house element. At 49.7, the mortality rate in sub-district 6a of Angel Meadow was the highest of any of the 'all houses' figures and compared with a rate of 32.5 in the area's back-to-backs. In sub-district 6b of Angel Meadow, the 'all houses' mortality rate was 40.8 compared with 38.5 in the back-to-back houses. In a sign of Angel Meadow's notoriety as a lodging house district, these were the only sub-districts Niven named. In all other cases he used only the sub-district's number.⁵⁴⁴ Niven estimated the 'all houses' population in these two sub-districts of Angel Meadow to be 9,655 compared with a back-to-back population of just 2,562 – an indication that Angel Meadow's situation was different to neighbouring districts and of how the larger Georgian houses were still playing a

⁵⁴² Willis J. Elwood and Ann Félicité Tuxford, *Some Manchester Doctors: A Biographical Collection to Mark the 150th Anniversary of the Manchester Medical Society 1834–1984* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 99.

⁵⁴³ Niven, *On Back-to-Back Housing*, p. 257.

⁵⁴⁴ Niven, *On Back-to-Back Housing*, pp. 259–8.

role in the district's persistence as a slum. Niven's data for the two sub-districts of Angel Meadow is shown in Table 7.10.

Sub-District	All houses				Back-to-back houses			
	Population	Death rate after distribution	Death rate without distribution	Difference	Population	Death rate after distribution	Death rate without distribution	Difference
6a *	2159	49.7	17.1	32.6	354	32.5	26.2	6.3
6b *	7496	40.8	22.9	17.9	2208	38.5	28.0	10.5

Table 7.10: Death rates in different housing types in Angel Meadow in 1895. Those marked * by Niven contained 'a large lodging house element'. (Source: James Niven, 'On Back-to-Back Housing', *The Journal of the Sanitary Institute*, Vol. 15, Part 2 (1895), pp. 254–273.

Thomas Marr also found 23 cases of one-room dwellings in Angel Meadow at rents of up to 5s 2d in his own study of Manchester housing in 1902. 'The part of this district investigated has been frequently cited by writers dealing with housing conditions in Manchester, as an example of what a district ought not to be,' he said. By then, the district was in a backward state, but the three-storey Georgian houses with their small backyards were still occupied. 'Most of the houses are old,' Marr added. 'In many instances they are in want of structural repair, and they are frequently damp. Where there are yards, they are small and gloomy, and used as receptacles for refuse.' Marr found that 40 houses in one street shared a water tap and in several streets the toilets were entered directly from the street. The doors stand open and frequently display a reeking, filthy, and sickening accumulation which reflects not only on the dwellers in the district, but on the citizens at large who

allow such things to exist.⁵⁴⁵ While the back-to-backs were swept away, substantial three-storey houses such as those in Style Street pictured in Figure 7.15 before their demolition in 1939, continued to survive into the mid-twentieth century.



Figure 7.15: [Anonymous], *Demolition in Style Street, Corner of Irk Street in 1939*. (Source: Jacqueline Roberts, *Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century Manchester: John Street, Irk Town, 1826 to 1936* (Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1983), p. 45.

⁵⁴⁵ Marr, *Housing Conditions*, pp. 60–63.

Conclusion

While the previous chapter shined a new light on Engels's discoveries in Angel Meadow, this chapter has sought to highlight what he missed. While Engels described Angel Meadow as 'a chaos of small one-storied, one-roomed huts', the streets were actually lined with three-storey houses that had been built for a different purpose than he described – to house merchants and artisans including weavers who could use the upper floors with their galleried windows as loom shops.⁵⁴⁶ Using the 1851 census and rate books, this chapter has taken forward and updated a study by Busteed and Hodgson, who showed that the Irish were more likely to be found in the larger houses in the upper area of Angel Meadow away from the riverbank, where Engels had suggested they congregated. They were in fact, as this thesis has also shown, congregating in larger houses, albeit houses which had been subdivided or had becoming lodgings. This chapter has shown that these houses were a major cause of the district's problems not only in the mid-nineteenth century but throughout the rest of the century after Engels's visit and beyond to the mid-twentieth century. They were hugely overcrowded, with single streets containing hundreds of people. They provided Angel Meadow with a lodging house function that became so entrenched that lodgers were eventually being accommodated in former factories. However, these houses would have presented a theoretical problem for Engels – they were certainly not built as 'cattle sheds' designed to suppress the workers. This critical problem will now be discussed and conclusions will be drawn in the final chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁴⁶ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Exactly 180 years after Friedrich Engels arrived in Manchester in 1842, his descriptions of Angel Meadow as ‘Hell upon Earth’ in *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* have become firmly entrenched within the historiography of the world’s first industrial city. Still regarded by many as *the* primary document for understanding Victorian Manchester, Engels’s book is the prism through which historians and their students most often look when researching nineteenth-century city’s living conditions and the first modern slums.

Engels’s account is also recognised by Mancunians as reflecting the modern origins of the city where they live and work. A statue of Engels has stood in Manchester’s Tony Wilson Place since 2017 after it was transported on the back of a lorry to Manchester from post-Soviet Ukraine, where it had been found dismantled and unceremoniously dumped in a rubbish tip on a farm.⁵⁴⁷ The statue itself has become a symbol of how Engels’s descriptions of Manchester, and the Communist theory he went on to develop with Karl Marx, have had a profound impact on the way millions of people have lived and continue to live their lives across the world. It also honours the supposed truth of Engels’s descriptions of Manchester – his shining of a spotlight on the living conditions of the Victorian city’s workers.

It is, however, high time for Engels’s work to be reappraised. There is, most critically, a need to re-evaluate Victorian cities as they are being reshaped by development. Manchester itself is undergoing a twenty-first-century development boom, with more than 15,000 homes expected to be built in an area stretching

⁵⁴⁷ Charlotte Higgins, ‘Phil Collins: Why I took a Soviet Statue of Engels across Europe to Manchester’, *The Guardian* (30 June 2017).

northwards from Angel Meadow in a move that will see the district become heavily populated once more.

This thesis has reappraised *The Condition* by carrying out the first full academic study of the housing development in Angel Meadow, which Engels famously described as ‘cattle sheds for human beings’, to test whether his assumptions about this district of Manchester were correct and to nuance the understanding of the district.⁵⁴⁸ Taking on this challenge has been no easy task. In the first German edition of this book, Engels threw down a gauntlet to those who might seek to follow in his footsteps: ‘I know equally well I may be proved wrong in some particular of no importance,’ he wrote, ‘but without a moment’s hesitation I challenge the English bourgeoisie to prove that even in a single instance of any consequence for the exposition of my point of view as a whole I have been guilty of any inaccuracy and to prove it by data as authentic as mine.’⁵⁴⁹

This thesis began by showing that the starting point for the academic study of districts described as slums remains remarkably vague. Historians and academics from other disciplines including geographers and sociologists have been arguing since the publication of *The Condition* about how modern cities should best be analysed and interpreted. Some have followed Engels’s lead by seeking to codify slums in overarching theories about urban growth and decay, while others have undertaken detailed analyses of the extent to which working people formed a single class or the extent to which they formed a cohesive social group. More recently, historians and sociologists have argued that the term slum should be removed completely from the language of international development, saying it serves to

⁵⁴⁸ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 63.

⁵⁴⁹ Engels, *The Condition*, pp. 12–13.

stereotype urban districts and their inhabitants and leads to a failure to really see and understand those people and to properly help them.

While this thesis has not responded to the call for the removal of the term slums – the word retains a value in helping understand how people viewed these urban spaces in the past – this thesis has taken on board the associated plea by the same academics that such districts should not be taken at face value and that pre-existing notions of them should be challenged. The only possible way to do this is to imaginatively walk those same streets as Engels did and re-evaluate his words against hard, empirical evidence. This thesis has done just that by studying a wealth of documentation including census records, rate books, planning documents, photographs and maps as well as examining the real, on the ground evidence from recent archaeological digs.

In doing so, this thesis has answered five key questions posed in the introduction: What was the reality of Angel Meadow in terms of its housing? What were the original intentions of the first housebuilders and how did the district compare with other districts such as Ancoats? How did Angel Meadow develop and what processes were involved in its decline in the early-nineteenth century, and what were the long-term effects of the district's housing and did that housing enable slum conditions to persist? It has also answered the ultimate question: Was Friedrich Engels correct in his assumptions about Angel Meadow? This conclusion will now summarise the answers to each of these questions in turn.

This thesis has shown that the reality of the housing mix in Angel Meadow was much more diverse than the 'cattle sheds' that Engels pointed out along the River Irk. While the district did have the enclosed courts and back-to-backs that were

notoriously related to poor living conditions in the nineteenth century, it had fewer of these than the neighbouring district of Ancoats. In fact, the main streets of Angel Street and Blackley Street, and other streets such as Old Mount Street and Dyche Street, and even some of back streets such as Ledger Street and Crown Lane, had stretches of larger housing that was clearly at odds with Engels's descriptions. These houses were built in the Georgian era with three storeys and had attic workshops on the top floor and often had cellars beneath. They stretched up to heights of 30 feet from the floor to the eaves. While sharing some of the vernacular building features of some of the back-to-backs, such as single skin interior walls and no running water either inside or in their backyards, some of these larger properties were imbued with architectural details shared with wealthier homes such as porticoed windows and rounded, sandstone steps, as well as the galleried upper windows that allowed maximum light into their attic workshops. They were originally built to house a better paid worker, such as handloom weavers and artisan shoemakers, who could use the workshop and provide the house's owner with a higher rental income. Their higher value has been proven by mapping rateable incomes across the district. Ornamentation and substantial internal accommodation were an explicit proclamation of status.⁵⁵⁰

The fact that Angel Meadow contained these houses shows, crucially, that Victorian slums were not all created equal and any attempt to lump them together as a single mass of poor housing fails, as does any lazy attempt to stereotype individual people who inhabited them. Rather, Manchester was a place where property values and accommodation standards differed from house to house and from street to street. It is clear from the maps analysed in this thesis that the type of housing in

⁵⁵⁰ Rodger, *On Back-to-Back Housing*, p. 28.

Angel Meadow marked it out as different from neighbouring Ancoats, which can be regarded as a purpose-built factory district in its design.

Standing on a bluff overlooking a river, Angel Meadow even originally shared geographical similarities with the wealthier suburbs of Ardwick Green and Salford Crescent. The building of Saint Michael's Church by the Reverend Humphrey Owen, who had previously served the wealthy pewholders of Saint Mary's and Saint Ann's, hints at aspirations that were missing from Engels's view of a class-divided city. This thesis has also shown that the first inhabitants of Angel Meadow were from the middling sorts. A number of them were owner-occupiers – people who were happy at least initially to live in the district – who marketed the properties they sold as being in a light and airy position, with good transport links and offering homes for respectable, hard-working and rent-paying tenants. Ultimately, though, Angel Meadow was as different from Ardwick Green as it was from Ancoats. In spite of its original semi-rural nature, it could more accurately be described as an extension of the city rather than separate suburb and was more akin in its development to the Saint Paul's district in the modern-day Northern Quarter. Saint Paul's, as has been shown, also contained numbers of larger workshop housing. However, these two districts had two key differences. Firstly, in Angel Meadow the three-storey housing marked the upper end of a property market later shared with back-to-back dwellings, in Saint Paul's the same three-storey houses were at the lower end of the scale and stood next to the even larger Georgian properties around Stevenson's Square and in Lever Row. Secondly, the location of Saint Paul's within Manchester's central business district meant that the workshop houses on streets such as Thomas Street could be adapted into commercial premises. In Angel Meadow, which stood at a greater distance from the central business district and lacked the same commercial focus,

the only option was to subdivide the three-storey properties or to turn them into lodging houses.

The reality was that Angel Meadow was a district where larger housing was ultimately built in the wrong place. The explosion in Manchester's development in the latter years of the eighteenth and early years of the nineteenth century meant that the district was quickly overrun by the expanding urban zone. In the very moment when the world's first industrial city was being born, Angel Meadow was being torn in two by conflicting development decisions that were aided by a complex landholding pattern and a lack of planning control. On the one hand, developers were still building workshop housing for traditional piecemeal industries such as handloom weaving. On the other hand, Angel Meadow was becoming home to a new beast in the shape of Arkwright's Mill. The new breed of factory workers who came to the district in the following years needed housing and this led to the failings identified by Engels – the infilling of spaces to create more housing and the development of back-street courts. Other developments such as the building of the New Burying Ground, the Rochdale Road Gas Works and the later development of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, as well as the seeding of ancillary industries to support the textiles industry, also dragged down Angel Meadow's living conditions to an extent where Engels felt confident in describing the district as 'Hell upon Earth'.

However, the key mistake by historians and academics from other disciplines has been to treat in isolation the situation Engels claimed to have discovered. Perhaps because his book is such a mainstay within the historiography, readers of his descriptions of the poor housing fail to realise or forget that Manchester's better Georgian housing had not disappeared and was still being used by the mid-nineteenth century. In fact, the larger, higher-value, late-eighteenth century

properties of Angel Meadow were still being used in the mid-twentieth century, albeit in a very dilapidated state.

This thesis has gone on to show the huge impact that these large properties had on Angel Meadow after they were sub-divided or adapted into lodgings. By 1832, the Saint Michael's district had 108 lodging houses whose inhabitants, numbering 20 to 30 in each house, suffered badly in that year's cholera pandemic. Victorian observers, including journalists and social reformers, described throughout the nineteenth century how these houses and their ever-changing population of temporary occupants were responsible for some of the worst social problems in Manchester. While their accounts must be treated with the same caution as Engels's *The Condition*, the problems they reported are reflected in official statistics. James Niven, Manchester's Medical Officer for Health, as discussed in this thesis, found in 1894 that the mortality rate for all houses in sub-districts 6a and 6b of Angel Meadow was higher than in the district's back-to-backs – with Niven noting they contained a large 'lodging house element'. They were two of only five sub-districts in the city where mortality was not worse in the back-to-backs.

This fact alone suggests that Engels had missed a crucial, defining element of Angel Meadow when he visited the district half a century earlier. This thesis has gone on to show exactly how he missed it. Engels did not chance upon Angel Meadow, the 'ground zero' of the theory he was developing in *The Condition*. Rather than an accidental discovery, it was a carefully planned excursion to find the evidence he wanted to make his theory work. Engels followed, directly, a path identified by James Phillips Kay from the direction of Chetham's Library towards the River Irk at the foot of Angel Meadow. His argument about Manchester's living conditions was based mainly on the view of a handful of courts near the river. The

words he produced mirrored closely the words of Kay – both in the choice of the subject matter and in the descriptive points that were highlighted.

But what of the wider district of Angel Meadow, with its sections of larger housing? These were ignored by Engels, even though his route suggests he must have walked past and observed them. Inside, he would have found, as this thesis has shown, conditions that were even more overcrowded than those near the river. However, they created a theoretical problem for Engels and for the black-and-white, class-divided city he hoped to paint. These were not of the ‘industrial epoch’ and nor were they built specifically to ‘plunder the poverty of the workers, to undermine the health of thousands, in order that they *alone*, the owners, may grow rich’.⁵⁵¹ They were built to a larger-scale with space for workshops by owners who wanted to maximise rents from higher-paid workers, and who were content themselves to live in the district at the point that they built those houses. The ultimate conclusion is that Engels largely ignored these houses – which as lodgings would have been managed by working-class landladies – to neatly sidestep this theoretical problem. In this specific way, *The Condition* was clearly a one-sided portrayal of what was a much more nuanced picture of poverty in this corner of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester. The origins and causes of the social conditions here were different to what Engels maintained.

Is it right though for a historian, writing 180 years after Engels arrived in Manchester, to be so critical of a contemporary Victorian writer who was, after all, walking those streets and seeing the conditions with his own eyes? As Terrell Carver has observed, to point out that Engels’s book was biased and politically impartial is

⁵⁵¹ Engels, *The Condition*, p. 66.

perhaps to miss the point. Engels made his moral and philosophical leanings clear. It was a targeted and unflattering account of the 'possessing class', written in a tumultuous period just before revolutions swept Europe in 1848. According to Carver: 'It is not surprising that Engels's use of sources was highly selective. He chose reports, sometimes sensational ones, from socialist newspapers, which emphasised the worst cases of poverty, degradation and suffering.'⁵⁵² Carver added:

It was not Engels's purpose to draw out evidence contrary to the cause he was promoting, for his account of the situation was not intended to be a mere reflection of the circumstances but was designed to assist certain developments in society and discourage others. While his work was avowedly partial to what he took to be working-class interests, critics today must be careful before dismissing it for failing to be impartial, neutral and non-engaged. What should an impartial account of misery be? Should one be neutral about suffering? What is the point of research and theorising if it does not help to alter the structure of an imperfect world?⁵⁵³

This is correct up to a point. Engels does need to be judged in the context of the time he was living and in what he was trying to achieve. However, his work is still so relevant today and its impact so central to how people still live their lives that it *is* important to keep reassessing *The Condition* as a source. In the context of international efforts to deal with the world's slums, it also remains important to continue to try to nuance the understanding of living conditions in the world's first industrial city – the place where the modern world began.

⁵⁵² Terrell Carver, *Engels: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 18.

⁵⁵³ Carver, *Engels*, p. 24.

This thesis therefore ends with a call for further research into the working-class housing conditions in Manchester and other Victorian cities. Three-storey Georgian houses that survive in the Northern Quarter and other areas such as Liverpool Road remain ripe for research by historians. The cellars of others lie underground waiting to be dug up and explored by archaeologists. In other cities too, larger properties originally built for a better class of occupant played a lasting and major role in how districts and cities developed and were perceived. An obvious example is Dublin, where the impact of Georgian housing is celebrated by a tenement museum, but what also of the Victorian lodging house districts of Liverpool and London? Only by continuing to ask questions of earlier writers such as Engels, using objective research, can the structure of an imperfect world be truly altered.

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