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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND ECONOMIC HISTORY

MA IN THE HISTORY OF THE MANCHESTER REGION

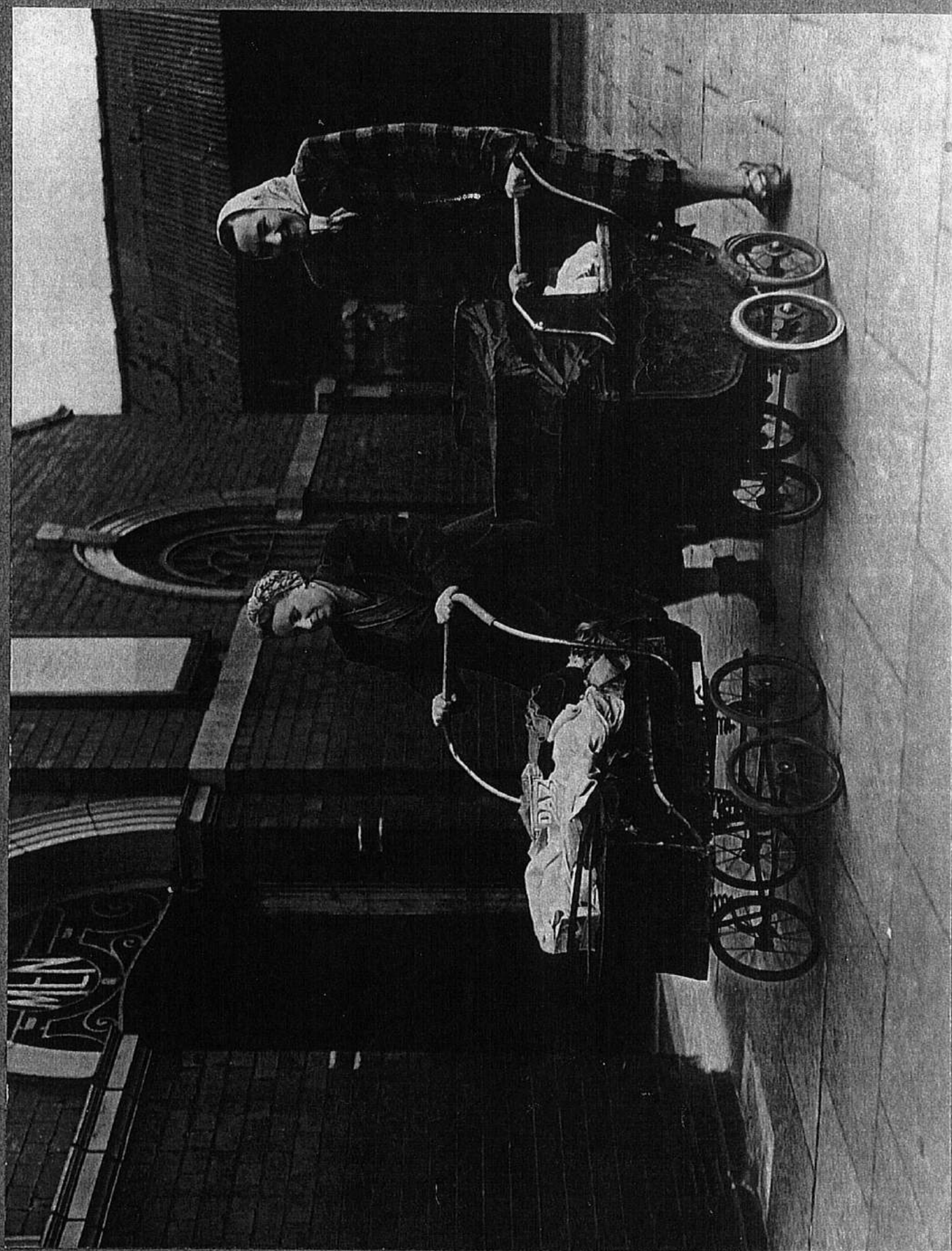
THE DISSERTATION

THE PUBLIC WASH HOUSE IN MANCHESTER 1850-1980

AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR WORKING CLASS WOMEN

FRANCES M. WORSLEY

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Photographs are from four sources.

The Local Studies Department of the Central Reference Library, Manchester.
 The Documentary Photography Archive, c/o Manchester Metropolitan University.
 Salford Local History Library, Peel Park, Salford.
 The author's own collection.

ABSTRACT

The social impact of the Industrial Revolution in the early decades of the nineteenth century changed the lifestyle and living conditions for an increasingly urbanised population. Rural traditions in domestic life, such as applied to the washing of clothes, became untenable in the industrial areas of cities like Manchester.

Recognising the lack of domestic facilities for the bulk of working class people to maintain personal cleanliness, and strongly influenced from the 1830s onwards by the sanitary movement and the fear of disease, middle class philanthropists and reformers endorsed a campaign for the provision of public baths and wash houses in urban areas.

Starting in Liverpool in the 1830s and spreading to many large towns and cities in the 1840s, the movement came late to Manchester. There had been privately run bathing establishments in the city for some time but these catered for the more affluent classes and not for the bulk of the urban poor (see figure 1). Nor did these establishments provide a public laundry service. The first wash houses in Manchester were charitable institutions (1846 and 1849) which were to be followed in the 1850s by those of a joint stock company.

The growing trend towards public services under the new local authorities and the rapidly improving provision of water and drainage led to the gradual establishment of municipal baths and wash houses across Manchester from the 1870s.

Some buildings of the decades 1890 to 1910 were of a grand style, reflecting an emergent civic pride, but later establishments were of a much more functional appearance. The highest number of wash houses in Manchester (in the 1920s and 1930s) was twenty-four, and the

facilities in the wash houses were constantly upgraded until the gradual decline in their use began in the late 1960s.

This study traces the growth of the movement for the provision of wash houses with particular reference to Manchester and considers the importance of themes such as municipal reform, collective responsibility and civic pride. Public health concerns emerge as the strongest basis for the development of baths and wash houses. Class, gender and community spirit are other themes which were identified in interviews with people who had used the wash houses before their closure in the 1970s and 1980s.

Some reasons for the eventual decline of the public wash house are also considered in the context of social change, for example slum clearance and the increasing demand for consumer goods. The contribution of the interviewees plays a large part in the evaluation of the growth and decline of the wash house in Manchester.

Conclusions to be drawn are that the social aspects of the public wash house were valued by most, but not all of the wash house users. For some of these users that aspect has never been replaced, whilst others say it was over-stated. The practical benefits have been superseded by modern domestic technology, about which many women expressed some ambivalence. However, there was general agreement that for many women their domestic roles have permanently changed, but perhaps not as much as is sometimes claimed.

An advertisement for city baths

This can be found in the advertisement section at the back of Slater's Manchester Directory for 1850, page 19.

HOLLAND'S CITY BATHS,

93, GREAT JACKSON STREET,
HULME, MANCHESTER,

(Next Door but One to the Town's Offices.)

MRS. HOLLAND begs to announce, that this large and commodious Establishment is now open. It is fitted up in a style of superior comfort; and visitors will find that the arrangements are such as to ensure unqualified satisfaction.

IMPROVED HYDRO-VAPOUR & MEDICATED BATHS, GENERAL AND LOCAL. SHOWER AND LOUNGE BATHS OF ALL KINDS. MEDICAL GALVANISM, JUDICIOUSLY ADMINISTERED WITH HALSE'S IMPROVED APPARATUS.

MEDICAL GALVANISM AND THE VAPOUR BATH

Are most effectual in Asthma, recent cases of Consumption, Nervous Debility, and all kinds of Nervous Disorders, Tic Doloieux, Paralysis, Spinal Complaint, Rheumatism, Stiff Joints, Dimness of Sight, Deafness, Sciatica, Liver Complaint, Indigestion, Palpitation of the Heart, General Debility, &c.

"Galvanism is a thousand medicines in one."—John Wesley.

"The Bath may be ranked among the foremost of the necessities of Life."—Erasmus Wilson.

"The Vapour Bath is second to no remedy now in use."—Dr. A. Combe.

LIST OF PRICES.

	EACH.		DOZEN.
	s.	d.	s.
Hydro-Vapour Bath (General and Local)	1	0	10
Warm Lounge Bath (Shower 3d. extra)	1	0	10
Cold ditto	0	9	8
Warm Hip, or Shower Bath	0	9	8
Cold ditto ditto	0	8	7
Any of the above with Galvanism	1	6	15
Galvanism alone	1	0	10

TEA, COFFEE OR COCOA ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.

Baths ready from 7 A.M. to 10 P.M.—Sunday Morning to 9.30.

SUBSCRIPTION TICKETS ARE TRANSFERABLE.

Families may Contract by the Pair or Quarter, on very Advantageous Terms.

SEPARATE WAITING ROOMS FOR LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

CERTAIN OF THE BATH ROOMS ALSO EXCLUSIVELY APPROPRIATED TO LADIES.

SEPARATE ROOMS FOR INVALIDS.

MALE AND FEMALE ATTENDANTS.

N. B.—Parties bringing Directions from their Medical Advisers will have them Faithfully attended to.
Respectable References if required.

INTRODUCTION

The initial prompt to pursue a study of public wash houses in the Manchester area was the continued existence of a few imposing civic buildings erected at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as combined public baths and wash houses and now at risk of vandalism and demolition. The state of these buildings raised questions about their origins, their purpose and their apparent decline, and this study aims to address these three points. The boundaries of the study have proved difficult to define in terms of period and geography, but limitations have been imposed of necessity by the scale of the subject. In terms of dates, the study has its origins around the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but has two main points of focus. These are the mid nineteenth century (when baths and wash houses began to be built on a wide scale) and the mid twentieth century (as remembered by people interviewed for this research). The period of the study comes to an end with the decline and closure of the wash houses in the 1970s and 1980s.

Geographical boundaries were originally intended to include Salford and Stockport, as well as the City of Manchester, and reference will be made occasionally to Manchester's neighbours where relevant.¹ However, the study will be limited mainly to Manchester itself in order to keep the scope of the research within manageable bounds. This has proved necessary when so many of the primary sources have come from municipal records.

Initial research revealed that the City of Manchester had a maximum of twenty seven establishments managed by the Baths and Wash Houses Committee during the period between the two world wars, but of these only eight remain standing, and only one of the

early buildings is still in use.² At the beginning of the twenty first century none of the public wash houses in Manchester are operational.

The focus of this study will be the public wash house rather than the private baths, swimming pools and other facilities which were usually part of the same building. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, the public wash house, as a concept and as a practical service developed in the 1840s and then declined from the 1960s. This raises questions therefore about the reasons for its rise and fall. Secondly, use of the wash house is linked to changes in the role of women, a major factor in social change during the twentieth century and both of these reasons may prove to be closely connected.

The basic questions to be addressed are (1) why, how and when did the provision of public wash houses first develop? (2) what need was met by this service and in what way was that achieved ? (3) why is that need no longer perceived to exist?

In order to explain the need for any such provision, some reference will be made in chapter one to the practical circumstances surrounding household laundry prior to the existence of the wash house from the mid nineteenth century. The work of Caroline Davidson (1982),³ among others, will be drawn upon to trace the history of housework, and washing in particular, in order to portray the actual conditions faced by women prior to the movement for public wash houses.

Chapter two traces the origins of the campaign for baths and wash houses to the crusade in the early nineteenth century for cleanliness associated with health, and reference will be made to the influence of campaigners like J.P.Kay-Shuttleworth and Edwin Chadwick. Secondary material from the twentieth century places the development of this provision

within the context of public health reforms and water supply, for example Wohl (1983) on public health⁴, and Hassan (1984 and 1998) on water.⁵ The focus of much literature on public health matters appears to be on the medical and engineering aspects, rather than the domestic needs of women, indicating a male perspective on women's history. Very little material has been found which gives the woman's story, despite the fact that women formed the vast majority of the wash house users.

Information about the early development of baths and wash houses in chapter three comes from two main sources. Articles from contemporary newspapers, political tracts and the papers of philanthropic organisations document the arguments in the 1840s and 1850s in favour of providing wash houses for the working classes of Manchester. The archives of the Central Library (Local Studies) have proved a valuable source in this respect. Plans and drawings of the earliest wash houses in the area, drawn up by Thomas Worthington,⁶ the Manchester architect, provide the detail about the exact facilities provided in the first establishments. Contemporary maps locate these and later establishments in the working class areas of the city.

City Council minutes and the annual reports of the Baths and Wash houses Committee document the gradual extension of the service in the latter part of the nineteenth century, as described in chapter four. This period led up to the grand era of municipal buildings around the turn of the century. Two major contributions to the literature come from the early years of the twentieth century when the movement was possibly reaching its peak. A.W. Cross (1906)⁷ was an architect whose work on the design of baths and wash houses provides a detailed description of the latest facilities and also sheds some light on the attitudes of those providing the service towards those using it. Contemporary attitudes towards social class can also be found in Agnes Campbell's report of 1918.⁸ On behalf of the Carnegie Trust she

surveyed the provision of baths and wash houses across the whole of the United Kingdom, and drew her own conclusions about the value of such facilities. In this instance we have a woman's point of view, although Miss Campbell was probably a class apart from the women whose interests she advocated.

In contrast to the advice from A.W.Cross and Agnes Campbell, which recommended the use of the public wash house to the mass of people in urban areas, some of the literature from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encourages women to wash at home, seeing virtue in domestic privacy. Mrs Beeton's⁹ advice was aimed at those who could afford the domestic laundry facilities and staff necessary to maintain their separation from the masses. Perhaps of more interest are those educational tracts and instructions aimed at working class women but which assumed that there was something 'common' (therefore undesirable) about communal behaviour for women, in a way which did not apply to men.

In order to test out some of these arguments as a part of this research, it was decided to consult the women who used the wash house. Several of the themes outlined above were taken up in the final chapter through interviews with women who have used the public wash houses of Manchester, and with some of the staff. (Full details of the interviews and correspondence are given in appendix 4). The material from these interviews provides two perspectives on the nature of the wash house service, as seen by the providers and the users. Whereas the employees referred mainly to the practical benefits of the wash house, the women who used them spoke also about the social benefits. Of particular interest in this study will be the theme of community spirit and mutual support engendered by this communal facility. The work of more recent women writers on womens' history (for example Oakley 1974,¹⁰ Roberts 1984¹¹ and Tebbutt 1995¹²) will be used extensively to help interpret the material gained in these interviews. Some of this material, such as Hughes

and Hunt(1992)¹³, is directly relevant to the Manchester area. From the interviews and the literature it may also be possible to identify some of the reasons for the decline of the public wash house as an institution.

Statistical information from the Baths and Wash Houses Committee minutes and annual reports will be used to illustrate trends in the use of the wash house. Newspaper articles have proved informative, especially relating to the threats of closures and the public response. Diagrams, maps, architectural drawings and photographs will also be used to convey what words often fail to do.

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¹ For example in comparative figures and personal recollections.

² See details in appendix 1

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⁵ John Hassan 'The Impact and Development of Water Supply in Manchester 1568-1882 in Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire 1984 Vol. 133 pp25-45
John Hassan A History of Water Manchester University Press Manchester 1998

⁶ Anthony J. Pass Thomas Worthington: Victorian Architecture and Social Purpose The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society Manchester 1988

⁷ A.W.S.Cross Public Baths and Wash Houses: A Treatise on their Planning, Design, Arrangement and Fitting Batsford London 1906

⁸ Agnes Campbell Report on Public Baths and Wash Houses in the United Kingdom University Press Edinburgh 1918

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¹² Melanie Tebbutt Women's Talk. A Social History of Gossip in Working Class Neighbourhoods 1880-1960 Scholar Press 1995

¹³ Ann Hughes and Karen Hunt 'A Culture Transformed? Women's Lives in Wythenshawe in the 1930s' in A. Davies and S.Fielding (Editors) Workers Worlds – Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939 Manchester University Press Manchester 1992

Chapter One

WASHING BEFORE THE WASH HOUSE

In order to understand why the need for public wash houses was felt so strongly in the 1840s and 1850s it is necessary to consider how the task of washing was actually carried out before that period. This chapter will examine the practicalities of the task in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and relies heavily on the work of Caroline Davidson (1982)¹ and Doreen Yarwood (1981)². It is intended that two themes will emerge from this chapter: one is that laundry has always been an arduous task carried out mainly by women, and the second is the disparity between social classes relating to this task, which was exacerbated by the onset of the industrial revolution.

In her chapter on laundry, Yarwood suggests that before the development of new washable fabrics in the eighteenth century, (for example fustian, cotton and linen), fewer clothes were ever washed. Many fabrics were not considered washable and so it was personal undergarments and domestic linen which were subject to this process, rather than outer garments. Ironically, it was the more expensive fabrics worn by the middle and upper classes which were washed least, whereas cheaper fabrics needed washing more often. Inevitably, the clothes of labourers and factory operatives became dirty more quickly than those of people who led a cleaner lifestyle.

Where no alternative facilities existed, women took their laundry to the nearest supply of water, possibly a river, pond or pump, and literally beat the dirt out of the clothes. Yarwood and Davidson agree that this technique was common in rural areas, villages and towns before the growth of intensive urban development. A later chapter will show how this ceased to be an option in heavily industrialised areas. It was no less arduous for women to carry water

from the supply to their homes, even supposing that there was space within the home to carry out this task. Davidson argues that the supply of water dictated a family's washing habits and personal cleanliness.

... thus the spread of piped water was very significant in changing the locus of several household activities and encouraging women to stay at home³

The next chapter of this study will trace the links between the spread of piped water and the building of wash houses in the mid-nineteenth century.

For those privileged to have a domestic water supply and the means of heating the water, mainly middle class households, the task could be carried out more efficiently, although with no less effort. Those who could afford to have a large stock of linen might only have a wash day every six weeks or so. Davidson describes this as the norm among the upper classes and rural middle classes from the seventeenth century⁴ and the custom appears as late as the 1890s in Lark Rise to Candleford,⁵ but only in the middle class home of the genteel post mistress. The more affluent household would either employ their own servants to do the laundry, or use the services of an itinerant, professional washerwoman who would visit the home on a regular basis. The full time washerwoman would often stay at the house for a day or two to complete the task or might take the laundry away to her own premises.

Little information can be found about the women who travelled from one home to another for the sole purpose of doing the washing. More is known about the women who took washing into their own homes in order to supplement the family income. Patricia Malcolmson (1981 and 1986) uncovered a hidden army of women home washers operating in the early decades of the nineteenth century⁶, many of whom had gone into debt in order

to purchase the minimum of laundry equipment, sometimes just a mangle. Malcolmson states that '...there is strong evidence to confirm that labour at the washtub, mangle or ironing board sustained life in many working class families'.⁷ There were practical advantages to taking in washing where there were small children at home, and where a woman with children was unsupported, this may have been the only way to achieve subsistence. The home washers, according to Malcolmson, were mainly the poorest working class women who washed for the more affluent working class or lower middle class, and could be described as semi-professional.⁸

Some of these women pooled their resources, becoming more fully professional, and they set up small 'hand' or 'workshop' laundries in populated areas, particularly in port towns like Glasgow and Liverpool, partly because of the shipping trade.⁹ These laundries offered long hours of work and continued to be exempt from regulation long after the application of the Factory Acts to other industries, despite employing mainly women. Like the smaller laundry and the individual washerwoman, the livelihood of the larger commercial laundry was put at risk by the potential implications of the Baths and Wash Houses Act, 1846.¹⁰ However, the public wash house did not simply replace earlier methods, but extended the habit of washing clothes to a class of people previously denied the opportunity. Many individual washerwomen continued their trade by using the facilities of the public wash house, but met with a mixed response. How the authorities dealt with the 'professionals' will be considered in later chapters.

The communal aspects of laundry on a domestic scale, which predate the public wash house but which became an important feature of the new facilities, are described by both Davidson and Yarwood in similar terms. To share was to make the best use of resources, and rural

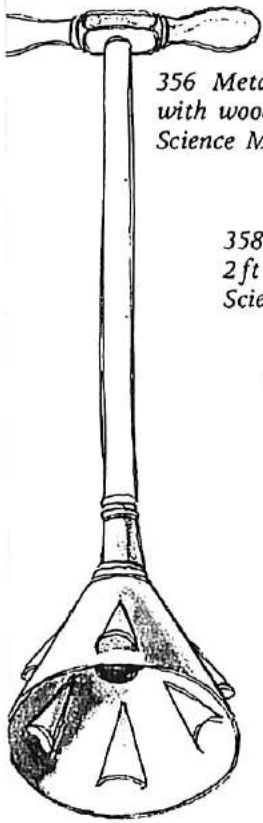
habits were transferred to urban life in the form of a cauldron or copper placed over a fire in a communal area.

...gradually this area became enclosed and roofed so the cauldron or copper was built into the wash house.¹¹

Davidson and Yarwood state that this custom continued in rural areas from the eighteenth century until the late nineteenth century, but in the urban context led to the earliest wash house development in Liverpool in the 1830s.¹² This communal approach relied upon supplies of fuel and water as well as a level of social co-operation more commonly associated with rural life. In the rapidly industrialised and over populated areas of cities like Manchester, extremes of poverty, a lack of basic utilities and the daily struggle for existence may have caused the three essentials above to be in short supply.

This did not present a problem for the upper classes or the rising middle classes of the early nineteenth century. The large country house or the town villa would have had a special area for laundry provided from the late eighteenth century. This might consist of a separate building in a rear courtyard, with two rooms. One had fires and boilers, the other had mangles and drying racks. The laundry would be undertaken by a visiting washerwoman or by one of the servants, preferably, as recommended by Mrs Beeton¹³, a permanent full time laundry maid.

State of the art laundry equipment in the early nineteenth century might consist of wooden tubs, dolly sticks (or dolly pegs), posers, wicker baskets and primitive mangles (see figure 2). Dolly sticks and posers were simple implements for agitating the clothes in the water, and remained in use until the mid twentieth century. Ridged wash boards were not introduced until later in the century, when the technique of making ridged metal was also

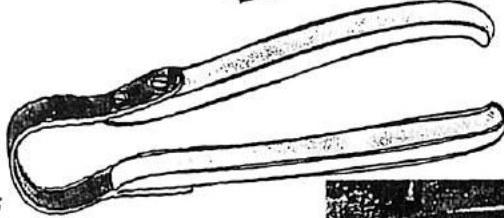
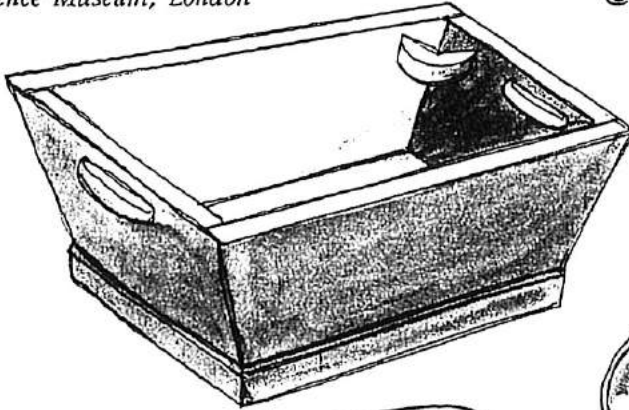


356 Metal conical posser with wooden handle, c. 1880. Science Museum, London

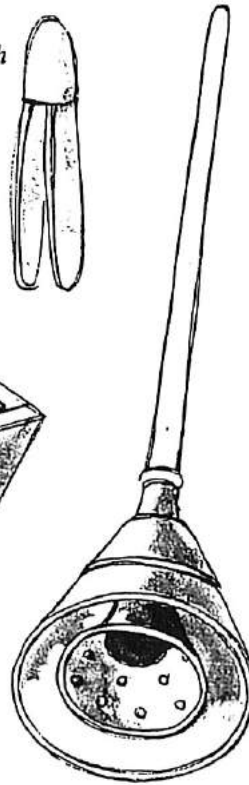
357 Homemade clothes peg. Ipswich Museum



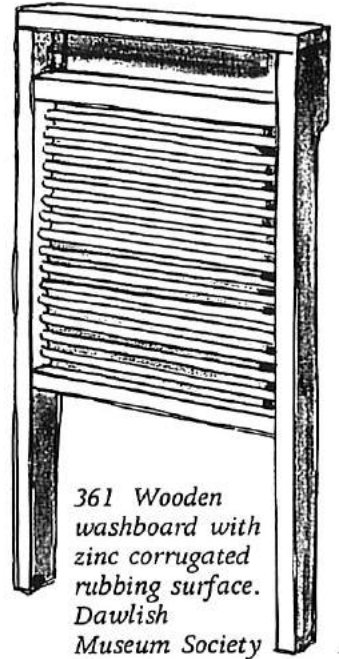
358 Wooden laundry tray, c. 1880. 2 ft 6 in. long. Soap holder. Science Museum, London



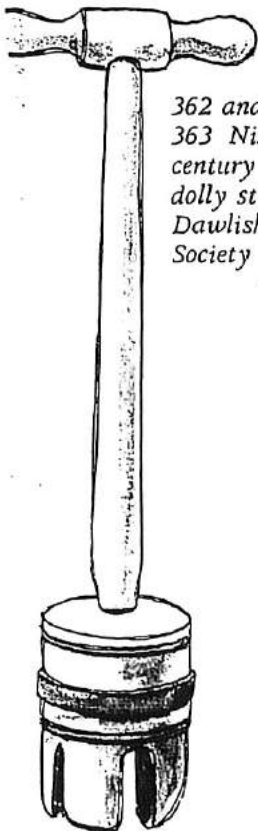
360 Washing tongs of wood and iron. Dawlish Museum Society



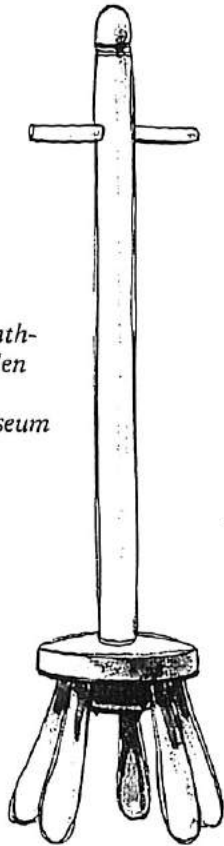
359 Copper 'Swiftsure' posser with wooden handle. British Vacuum Washer Co., 1921. Science Museum, London



361 Wooden washboard with zinc corrugated rubbing surface. Dawlish Museum Society



362 and 363 Nineteenth-century wooden dolly sticks. Dawlish Museum Society



364 Cast-iron Scottish wash boiler. Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie

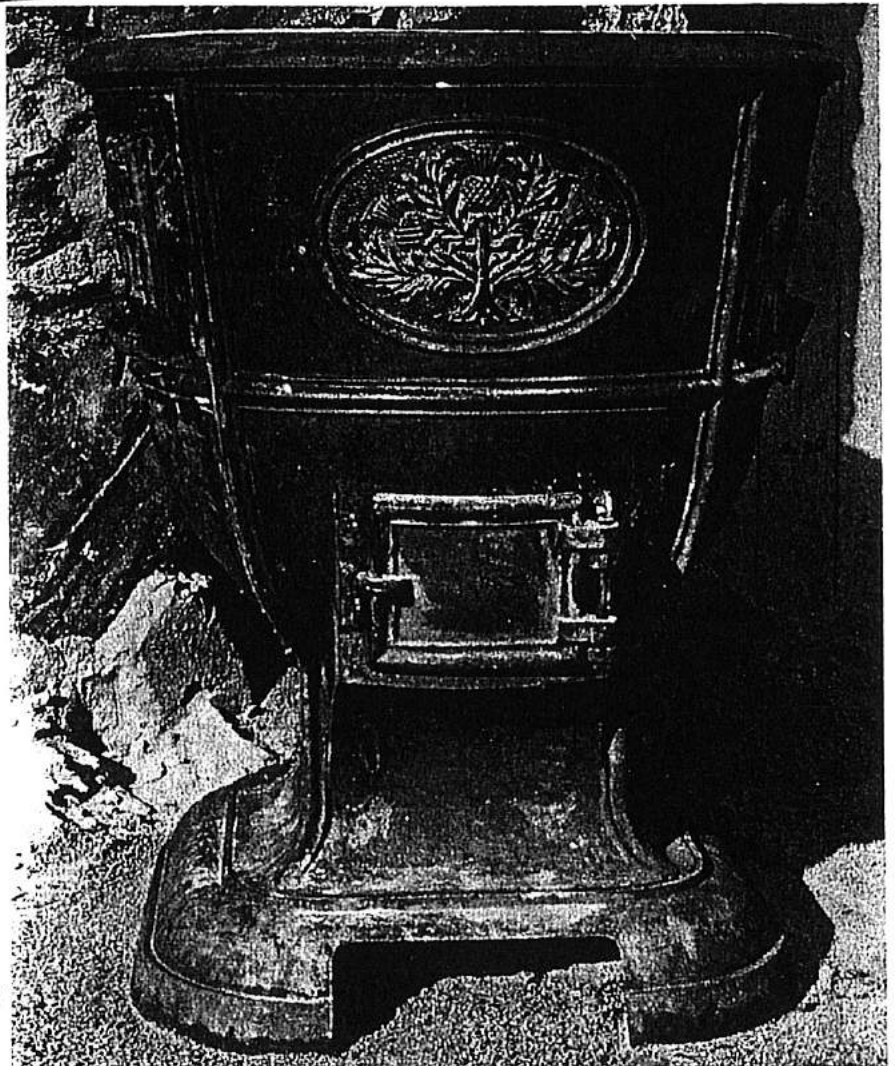


FIGURE 2

employed to make dolly tubs, replacing the earlier wooden tubs. Linen presses were owned only by the wealthy, and the very poorest families may have owned none of the above, just a multi-purpose bowl, bucket or tub.

Hand powered washing machines had been invented in the late eighteenth century, but were few and far between. They were large wooden contraptions of a size quite unsuited to a domestic setting. Washing machines of a more manageable scale did not appear until the late nineteenth century, (many from the works of Thomas Bradford of Cathedral Steps, Manchester), but were always relatively expensive. It was not until the mid-twentieth century that ownership of a domestic washing machine became common, but not universal. Irons of various types and sizes were in use from about 1800, with the most common being the small 'sad' iron, heated at the fire.

Cleansing agents as well as washing equipment were relatively expensive. Soap was scarce and heavily taxed, so women continued to use the old methods of making 'lye', an alkaline mixture based on wood ash. To make a soapy solution, oils and animal fats were added to the alkaline mixture and the clothes were then soaked in this strange smelling substance. Urine was another common cleansing ingredient because of its bleaching capacity. As chemical knowledge increased concerning the interaction of fats and alkaline, the quality of soap improved, but its availability was still restricted by cost until the repeal of the soap tax in 1853. After that, soap became cheaper and much more commonly used, later being mass-produced for the domestic market (figure3).

Although facilities and equipment improved to some extent for the middle classes, Davidson argues that the main improvements in laundry work in the early nineteenth century resulted from advances in public health, rather than technology. She claims that technical innovations over the whole period of her study (1650 to 1950) were surprisingly few, and often only

viable on a large scale, for example the application of steam power. The inventors and innovators of the pre-industrial and early industrial era were men, working in an increasingly competitive culture, who applied their expertise to the public sphere, a man's world, rather than the private, domestic world of women.

The advances in public health referred to by Davidson did not benefit all classes equally. For example in Manchester the provision of water and sewers came first to the new suburban villas of Victoria Park rather than the slums of Angel Meadow. Neither the improvements in public health nor the limited improvements in laundry equipment were of much benefit to the mass of people living in unplanned, overcrowded homes without facilities, which were thrown up to shelter the factory workers in the industrial areas. The growing divisions of social class in a city like Manchester were exacerbated by the pressures of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. The 1820s and 1830s saw many of the poorest workers under pressure to work very long hours for low wages in housing conditions which were declining rather than improving. At the other end of the scale, those who had benefited from the factory system were able to move out of the central areas of city to the healthier and more comfortable suburbs.

In her chapter on laundry, Davidson identifies a decline in domestic conditions for the urban poor in the short term as urbanisation changed the nature and locus of household tasks, and the factory system changed the role of women within the family. The expectation that washing was women's work, either in the public, private or professional sphere, seems not to have been challenged despite (or because of) changes to family life brought about by the industrial revolution.¹⁴ Davidson refers to a widely held view that there was a pre-ordained gender division of labour and an 'ordered hierarchy of roles'.¹⁵ Neil Smelser (1959) argues that gender divisions within the home became more pronounced as a result of the

increasingly defined male and female roles within employment outside the home.¹⁶ However this increased separation of roles appears to have led to a marginalisation of what has traditionally been viewed as women's work. Malcolmson states that '...modern labour historians have accorded laundry work little attention',¹⁷ implying that this is because laundry is women's work and labour history is only about men's labour. (It may be noted that the most recent study of gender roles within the laundry industry¹⁸ is by a woman labour historian, Arwen P. Mohun.) Similarly, Oakley (1974) describes her objective 'to look at housework as a job, seeing it as work, analogous to any other kind of work'¹⁹ on the grounds that housework in general has been ignored by historians and sociologists as a worthwhile subject of study.

Expectations of women's performance in the domestic sphere were rising from the late eighteenth century in a society which placed increasing value on cleanliness. For most working class women, however, the practical means to achieve these expectations did not exist, even if they had the aspiration. Even for the more affluent, the technology which helped the industrial revolution to take off, lagged way behind in its domestic application.

If it is accepted that washing in the domestic environment was, (and still is), nearly always carried out by women, then it is hardly surprising that little attention was paid to the nature of the work by early nineteenth century inventors or late twentieth century historians. However, a movement began in the 1830s which was to change the nature of the task for many women. The following chapter will look at the origins of that movement within the context of public health and sanitary reform.

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- ² Doreen Yarwood The British Kitchen: Housewifery from Roman Times Batsford London 1981
- ³ Caroline Davidson Op. Cit. p.20
- ⁴ Caroline Davidson Op. Cit. chapter 7
- ⁵ Flora Thompson Lark Rise to Candleford Oxford University Press Oxford 1941 pp 564-567
- ⁶ Patricia Malcolmson 'Laundresses and the Laundry Trade in Victorian England' in Victorian Studies 1981 vol.24 pp 439-462
- Patricia Malcolmson English Laundresses: A Social History 1850-1930 University of Illinois 1986
- ⁷ Malcolmson 1981 Op. Cit. p 448
- ⁸ It is not within the remit of this study to consider in more detail the role of the professional laundress: this has been covered comprehensively in Malcolmson's work. However, it may be noted that 3,410 women over the age of 20 years, living in Manchester and Salford, gave their occupation as 'washer woman' in the census of 1851, a figure only exceeded by housewives (31,852), domestic servants (10,791) and cotton textile workers (14,303).
- ⁹ It has been suggested that Chinese immigrants to busy ports like Liverpool set up Chinese laundries as one of the few forms of employment open to them.
- See also Paul C.P.Siu The Chinese Laundryman: A Study of Social Isolation New York University Press 1987
- ¹⁰ See chapter three, The Legacy of Kitty Wilkinson.
- ¹¹ Yarwood Op. Cit. p.143
- ¹² See chapter three
- ¹³ Isabella Beeton The Book of the Laundry Ward, Lock and Tyler London 1886
- ¹⁴ This may be culturally defined, as the workers in the Chinese laundries were mainly men.
- ¹⁵ Davidson Op. Cit. chapter 10
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PUBLIC HEALTH.

THE SANITARY WASHING OF LINEN.

Dirt harbours Germs of Disease.

The source of Danger removed by Washing everything with

HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP.

Dirt cannot exist where HUDSON'S SOAP is used for all Domestic Washing, Cleaning and Scouring.

CLOTHES WHITE AS SNOW. SWEET AS ROSES. FRESH AS SEA BREEZES.

Fine Laces to Heavy Blankets. No rotting by Bleaching Chemicals. No hard Rubbing! No Scrubbing! No Brushing! No Straining! The Dirt Slips away! saving Labour, saving Firing, saving Wear and Tear. HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP is a pure Dry Soap—Rapidly Soluble—Makes a Foaming Lather—Softens all Waters.



Anything Washed with HUDSON'S SOAP is thoroughly washed, therefore remains longer clean. Hudson's Leaves NO Smell.

Sold in Quarter-Pound Packets in Dozens and Half-Dozens for Family Use.

Home, Sweet Home! The Sweetest, Healthiest Homes are those where HUDSON'S EXTRACT OF SOAP is in Daily use.

4. A Hudson's soap advertisement. The policeman, with his lantern casting light on darkness was a popular symbol for health reformers. Here *public* health is associated with *domestic* cleanliness.

Source: *The Graphic*, 1 August 1891

FIGURE 3

Chapter Two

CLEANLINESS IS NEXT TO GODLINESS

The previous chapter has indicated the increasing divergence between the social classes in the circumstances in which the domestic chore of washing was carried out. As the middle class family added a laundry building or adapted a scullery, in preference to sending out the washing, their needs were met by private facilities. Others of more limited means continued to patronise the professional laundry or semi-professional washerwoman. For the mass of the urban population, however, neither of these options was realistic and so clothes as well as bodies remained unwashed. To many middle class people this was unacceptable and unnecessary, and the impetus to change this situation became one of many themes in the movement towards social reform in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

The arguments in favour of providing public bathing and washing facilities for the poor were an integral part of the paternalistic and philanthropic reform movement of the early nineteenth century, in which Manchester played such an important role. The middle class conscience was troubled by many of the side effects of the unregulated, unplanned and very rapid process of industrial and urban development. The basic infrastructure of water supply, drains, transport and housing which had served a small medieval town, was unable to cope with the increase of population over a relatively short period.¹ The medieval public administration of Manchester in the early nineteenth century struggled to keep pace with the city's status as the first industrial city in the world. The political culture of the age, that of *laissez faire*, tended to see the by-products of intensive industrial and urban development as the responsibility of others, or of no-one, or of the victims themselves. Enid Gauldie (1974) says 'the discomfort of the poor was not in itself of national importance and so could not

command government interference'², and she quotes the Home Secretary of 1840 as saying that the condition of the working class was not a political issue. Even as late as 1869 this attitude prevailed, as in the comments of a Manchester City Councillor that '...ill health is caused by the nature and character of the population and from their filthy and dissolute habits'.³

Middle class conscience was clearly selective, but apart from the councillor who expressed the attitude above, there were people with more empathy who felt they could, and should, improve the circumstances of the poorest class. The motivation for this may have varied from the altruistic to the pragmatic, but there appeared to be a common evangelical approach to the 'condition of England' problem, in which the crusade for cleanliness played a major part. In the North West of England the values of non-conformity were an important influence in much philanthropic work, as can be seen from a study of the individuals and the organisations involved.

Of the many descriptions of urban squalor in the Manchester of the 1830s and 1840s, possibly the most vivid are those of J.P.Kay Shuttleworth (1832)⁴ and F.Engels (1844)⁵. (There are also those from novels, notably Mrs Gaskell, Dickens and Disraeli). Although Kay Shuttleworth and Engels used their observations to reach different conclusions, they have a common imagery which describes a destitute section of the population living in damp cellars with severe overcrowding, and a lack of ventilation, water or sanitation. In such conditions cleanliness of body or clothing was impossible to achieve. It is not the purpose of this study to analyse the causes of this level of poverty at that point in time, but to look at the response to the situation and in particular the sanitary movement and public health reforms.

Initially, reform appeared to concentrate on the symptoms, rather than the cause of the problem. Those symptoms were bad housing, malnutrition, dirt, disease and overwork, or insufficient work. It is easy, nearly two hundred years later, to give the root cause of these symptoms as poverty, resulting from low wages, but it should be remembered that the problem was seen at the time within a culture of individual, rather than collective responsibility. For some reformers it was their own individual responsibility as Christians which motivated their efforts to bring about change in social conditions. Others were influenced by the developing concept of the scientific study of society, based to some extent upon a medical model of society as an organism, and also by the ideas of the moral philosophy known as Utilitarianism. Some of the well known activists in the public health movement were themselves medical men, for example Kay Shuttleworth and Southwood Smith, whereas Edwin Chadwick, was personally much influenced by Jeremy Bentham, the Utilitarian.

The subjects of their concerns were the inhabitants of the poorest housing who, if they were employed, were likely to have the dirtiest and worst paid jobs in dye works, tanneries, slaughterhouses or the dirtiest work in the cotton mills. Their homes had none of the facilities for washing as described in the previous chapter, but these families were unable to return to earlier rural practices of washing clothes in the local pond or stream. By the 1830s the ponds, rivers and streams of Manchester were too polluted by industrial, domestic and human waste to improve the cleanliness of clothes made dirty by the same causes. Water supply was inadequate and the cost of soap prohibitive.

The crusade for cleanliness was carried forward on both a moral and a practical level. Whilst exhorting the poor to lift themselves up from the degradation he describes in his report of

1832⁶, Kay Shuttleworth also offers some practical solutions. In 1833 he presented a paper to the newly founded Manchester Statistical Society which had been created as a forum for the presentation of information concerning the social conditions of Manchester. In this paper, Kay Shuttleworth is believed to have recommended the creation of communal washing facilities for the poor⁷ and this is possibly the earliest Manchester reference to wash houses. Further evidence about the nature of living conditions in Manchester was presented to the Statistical Society in a series of papers 1834-37,⁸ which revealed the concentration of the worst housing in the central areas of the city, such as Ancoats, Angel Meadow and Deansgate.

Due to the prevalence of disease in the poorest areas, notably cholera and typhoid, the association between dirt and disease gradually came to be seen as that of cause and effect. Hassan (1998)⁹ states that the precise cause of cholera and typhoid was not fully understood until the 1850s when evidence from the epidemics of 1848 and 1853 substantiated the belief that these diseases were water borne. People who lived in dirty conditions were seen as the cause, as well as the victims of fatal diseases. Consequently '...the poor were repeatedly exhorted to keep clean',¹⁰ not just for their own benefit, but to prevent the spread of infection to others, particularly the middle classes.

Enormous moral pressure was placed upon the working man to keep his clothing and his person clean, although it was left to the working woman to work out how this might be done. The arguments were not only those of aesthetics or even health, strong though these were. There was also the pragmatic, or utilitarian reasoning that a clean and healthy workforce would be more productive, therefore benefiting the individual and the community as a whole.

A landmark in the sanitary movement was Chadwick's report of 1842¹¹, based on the detailed findings of Poor Law Guardians and medical officers. The conclusion was that the private and public health of a large proportion of the population could not be left to market forces only. The following year saw the Report into the Health of Towns, and other reports by concerned individuals were published in the 1840s which specifically looked at problems in the cotton districts.¹² The scale of the problem may have been beyond the imagination of those opposed in principle to any intervention by the state, but the provision of facilities for bathing and washing might have appeared to be a modest and manageable first step. In a paper presented to the first Social Science Congress in Manchester in 1866, A.P. Stewart reminded his fellow social scientists that the first legislation to follow Chadwick's reports of 1842 and 1843 was that concerning the provision of baths and wash houses in 1846¹³, - legislation which preceded the Public Health Act of 1848¹⁴.

However, few of the recommendations in any of the above reports could be carried through without action on the major problem of water supply, a source of disease as well as frustration in Manchester for the first half of the nineteenth century. An Act of 1809 (49th Geo.iii) recognised in its preamble that the towns of Manchester and Salford '...have of late years become very populous' and that 'the ancient waterworks [are] incapable of affording a sufficient supply of water'.

Hassan (1984)¹⁵ reports a continuing struggle to make the responsibility of water supply a public, rather than private concern. This campaign was carried on through the Manchester press and public meetings on the grounds that water was '...the indispensable component of sanitary reform'¹⁶, to be seen differently to market commodities because it is essential to life.

However, this campaign was lost to the greater influence of economic liberalism and private enterprise in the form of The Manchester and Salford Waterworks Company, whose poor service to the district from 1809 to 1851 is chronicled by J.F.Bateman¹⁷. There was little evidence of any significant improvement in Manchester's water supply in the century preceding the Act of 1809, during which time the population increased tenfold. According to Bateman, the period 1809 to 1851 saw equally poor investment during an approximate doubling of the population. The Waterworks Company invested in very few capital works to improve supply and their policy was described as 'make do and mend'. Many supplies, drawn directly from rivers and canals were contaminated, and in the period 1830 to 1850 the actual quantity of water supplied by the company decreased.

The Health in Towns Report of 1843 had placed Manchester's mortality rate at the second highest in the country. As the link between disease and water became better understood, the Manchester and Salford Waterworks Company was seen to be failing the local population in terms of both quality and quantity, and the new Corporation of Manchester decided to act.

Manchester had been incorporated as a borough in 1838, although the Court Leet (the previous medieval administration) nominally existed until 1846. The powers of the Court Leet had been gradually eroded over centuries and many responsibilities had passed to the Police Commissioners in 1792. Arthur Redford (1939)¹⁸ claimed that the Police Commissioners had not acted on their powers in relation to public health because of continued resistance to the concept of intervention. Those powers were now invested in the Borough following the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 and from the early 1840s the new Corporation began the task of taking over the supply of water to the district. Legislation to achieve this was passed in the years 1845-47 and the first large-scale capital plan, the

building of the Longdendale reservoirs, was begun in 1848 before the full legal transfer of the Waterworks in 1851.

Hassan describes this as not only a statement of civic pride and public responsibility but also a conscious move towards creating a healthier population, a more efficient workforce, more productive industry and a cleaner city. A cleaner city included cleaner citizens wearing cleaner clothes and this was now more of a practical possibility. It is, of course, no coincidence that the decade which saw the first effective local government and the beginnings of a comprehensive water supply, also saw the establishment in Manchester of its first public wash house. Having begun to address the practical difficulties, then began the campaign to put John Wesley's strictures¹⁹ into practice. Not only was 'cleanliness next to godliness', but possibly more important than godliness, as missionary work among the poor inculcated the new religion.

During these years [1840s] the notion of cleanliness began to encompass the moral and social order. Fastidious upper and middle class improvers carried the gospel of cleanliness to the dangerously insalubrious classes.²⁰

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AN ACT TO ENCOURAGE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PUBLIC
BATHS AND WASH-HOUSES [26th August 1846].

WHEREAS it is desirable for the Health, Comfort, and Welfare of the Inhabitants of Towns and populous Districts to encourage the Establishment therein of public Baths and Wash-houses and open Bathing Places: Be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That this Act may be adopted for any incorporated Borough in *England* which is regulated under an Act passed in the Sixth Year of the Reign of His late Majesty, to provide for the Regulation of Municipal Corporations, or any Charter granted in pursuance of the said Act, or any Act passed for the Amendment thereof, and also, with the Approval of One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, for any Parish in *England* not within any such incorporated Borough.

Act may be
adopted in
certain
Boroughs
and Parishes

II. And be it enacted, That in this Act the following Words and Expressions shall have the several Meanings hereby assigned to them, unless there be something in the Subject or Context repugnant to such Construction; that is to say,

Interpreta-
tion of Act.

"Parish" shall mean every Place having separate Overseers of the Poor, and separately maintaining its own Poor:

"Borough" shall mean City, Borough, Port, Cinque Port, or Town Corporate:

"Rate-payers" shall mean such of the Persons for the Time being assessed to and paying Rates for the Relief of the Poor of the Parish as for the Time being shall be duly qualified to vote for the Election of Overseers for the Parish:

"Churchwardens" shall mean also Chapelwardens, or other Persons discharging the Duties of Churchwardens:

"Overseers" shall mean also any Persons authorised and required

Chapter Three

THE LEGACY OF KITTY WILKINSON

The previous chapter has set the scene for developments and improvements in public health in the early to mid nineteenth century, especially those affecting the urban poor. The contribution to this cause by the social reformers and philanthropists of Manchester has been acknowledged. However, it was not the men of Manchester who created the first public wash house, but an ordinary woman from Liverpool.

Kitty Wilkinson is believed to have been a labourer's wife, no wealthier than her neighbours, but she had the benefit of a large copper or boiler in an outhouse in her back yard. During the serious cholera epidemic of 1832, when rich and poor alike were being exhorted to wash their linen, Kitty Wilkinson realised she could help her neighbours by allowing them to use her boiler for a charge of one penny. The yard was used for drying and this was extended when demand increased. The washing and drying facilities were increased further when a group of charitable, middle class women of Liverpool gave some financial support. This is believed to have been the first public wash house of its type in the country.

Reference to this enterprise is found in a report published in 1846 by the Liverpool Health Committee¹. By this date there were two municipal wash houses in the city, at Frederick Street and Paul Street, built by the Liverpool Corporation. Referring to the origins of the first establishment, the report stated,

With regard to the washing of clothes there was no public provision existing either in this or any other town in the country, and it is believed that Liverpool has the merit of setting the example to other large towns throughout the Empire.²

Credit was given by the authors of this report to the efforts of a 'labourer's wife', but Kitty Wilkinson was not named, and much was made of the financial and moral support of certain benevolent women and the generosity of the District Provident Society. The main credit however went to the Corporation of Liverpool who took up this worthwhile cause after it had proved itself for ten years.

A work of 1853 by two architects, Ashpitel and Whichcord,³ who were in the business of designing and building baths and wash houses, also referred to the origins of the first wash house in the efforts of this anonymous labourer's wife and her supporters,

... directed and assisted by these kind ladies, no less than eighty five families were relieved from the nuisance and unhealthiness of washing in their own crowded apartments⁴

Ashpitel and Whichcord appear inclined to credit the benevolent women of Liverpool with instigating the movement, rather than the Corporation, as in the Health Committee Report of 1846. Nevertheless, the architects' work seems very derivative of the Report (which they failed to mention) because of the wide-scale use of the same phraseology and outdated statistics from 1846.

A more recent account of the origins of baths and wash houses is given by Anthony Pass in his work on the Manchester architect Thomas Worthington.⁵ Giving the background to Worthington's involvement in the baths and wash houses of Manchester, Pass credits Kitty Wilkinson by name with creating the first ever wash house in Liverpool in 1832. Also named are the Rathbones, one of the Unitarian families of the region who gave financial help. According to Pass, the Corporation of Liverpool was responding to pressure from

influential people like the Rathbones, as well as to the public health needs of a seafaring population, when it built the first municipal wash house in 1842.

The details of the facilities provided in the first municipal wash houses were given in the Health Committee's Report of 1846. Firstly, the Corporation's policy was stated as follows,

Wash houses are only intended for the poor and preference is given to those occupying a cellar room only and those with the largest families and smallest means of living⁶.

The building at Frederick Street where Kitty Wilkinson was appointed as superintendent, had a small swimming pool, male and female private baths and a wash house in the rear basement. This had twenty-one wash tubs, two boilers and a large 'drying closet'. In addition there was a small, detached building for the washing of laundry from infected or verminous homes. The wash house was open from 6.0 am to 9.0pm (10.0pm on Saturdays) and the charge in 1842 was one penny for a maximum of six hours. Families suffering from infectious diseases could have their washing done without charge upon production of a medical note, but they had to prove that they were co-operating with medical treatment. Any infected washing had to be closely supervised by the 'matron', who was authorised to appoint an assistant for 2d per day in times of epidemic.

Liverpool's second wash house, opened in Paul Street in 1843, was bigger than Frederick Street and built on a different design. The wash cubicles were arranged around a courtyard and each had a separate entrance⁷: again there was an isolated area for infected washing. Paul Street had living accommodation for the superintendent over the entrance to the baths at the front of the building and there was also the 'apparatus house' with boilers and

machinery. The details of these two first municipal wash houses are given in order to indicate the type of provision which was generally to be the model for those which followed.

1842 and 1843 saw the publication of the reports on Sanitary Conditions and Health in Towns, (see chapter 2), and this may have been a contributory factor in the baths and wash house movement gaining support in London. A group of London based health reformers called a public meeting on the subject, held at the Mansion House on 14th October 1844. This meeting saw the foundation of The Association for Promoting the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses, which gained the endorsement of the Lord Mayor of London. Kitty Wilkinson's self help efforts in the poor district of Liverpool had become a cause celebre amongst the public health reformers and sanitarians in the City of London. The first wash house in London was built by public subscription in 1845 at Glasshouse Yard, Smithfield and the newly formed London Baths Committee planned several others in the poorest districts.

In the same year a private company was formed in Bolton for the purpose of building a small baths and laundry, which was completed in Bridge Street , Bolton in 1846. In Manchester, however, progress was slow. A Grand Fancy Dress Ball had been held in the first temporary Free Trade Hall, in 1845, in order to raise funds for this cause. The movement gained much encouragement from The Manchester Guardian.

*Washing works must wash for the poor. It requires a certain scale of operations for machinery to be properly employed, below which it is wasteful...
...the only method of avoiding the existing evils appears to be the establishment of public wash houses and it is unlikely that this can be done by the efforts of private individuals. We very much approve of a measure which will empower Town Councils to do what is so much required at the public expense.⁸*

The measure referred to by The Manchester Guardian, proposing powers for local councils, was the Bill passing through Parliament at the time, sponsored by Sir Henry Dukinfield and Sir George Gray who were both patrons of the Association for Promoting the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses. This Bill, often later called Dukinfield's Act, became the Act to Encourage the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses, and received the Royal Assent on the 28th August 1846. As can be seen from the title of the Act, (see figure 4), this was a permissive, not mandatory piece of legislation, and although in keeping with the culture of the times, this fact was a source of frustration to those who saw public health reforms as something more than optional.

In Manchester, the voluntary group known as the Baths and Wash Houses Committee⁹ had raised enough funds to adapt an existing building into a wash house. Manchester's first wash house was converted from a workshop on Miller Street and opened on a trial basis on the 7th September 1846. Despite its experimental and temporary nature, the Miller Street wash house was to be overwhelmed by demand from the surrounding districts of Ancoats, New Cross and Irk Town. The facilities included twenty-six washing compartments, a small number of baths but no swimming pool. Washing was charged at 1d for four hours.

Such was the popularity of the Miller Street wash house that one of the patrons, Sir Benjamin Heywood, decided to build another at his own expense on land he owned on Sycamore Street, Miles Platting. This was larger than Miller Street and was purpose built on the design of the earlier wash houses in Liverpool. Facilities included private baths (often known as slipper baths), a plunge pool and forty-eight wash compartments. The Miles Platting wash house opened on the 1st July 1850, and together with that at Miller Street, continued as charitable concerns and both managed to cover their running costs. The

Corporation of Manchester, however, still held back from implementing the Act of 1846, despite pressure upon them to do so.

Resistance to the permissive legislation on a national level is described in emotive terms by Ashpitel and Whichcord¹⁰, and they put forward strong arguments for its implementation on social, health and economic grounds. First of all they state that the poor are motivated towards personal and domestic cleanliness but experience great difficulty in achieving this for reasons beyond their control. It had become impossible to use rivers and ponds in urban areas for either bathing or washing because the increase in industry and in population had polluted the water. Less space was available inside and outside the homes of the poor because of the overcrowding and density of building. The cost of fuel, water, and washing tools were beyond the means of the majority, and the number of smoking chimneys created 'the blacks and smuts which are the dreaded enemy of every housewife'.¹¹ In support of their case they quote extensively from The Times, for example,

*It is a libel upon any section of human beings to say that they love dirt for dirt's sake. It is the want of occasion and the want of means which may induce people to acquiesce in personal uncleanness.*¹²

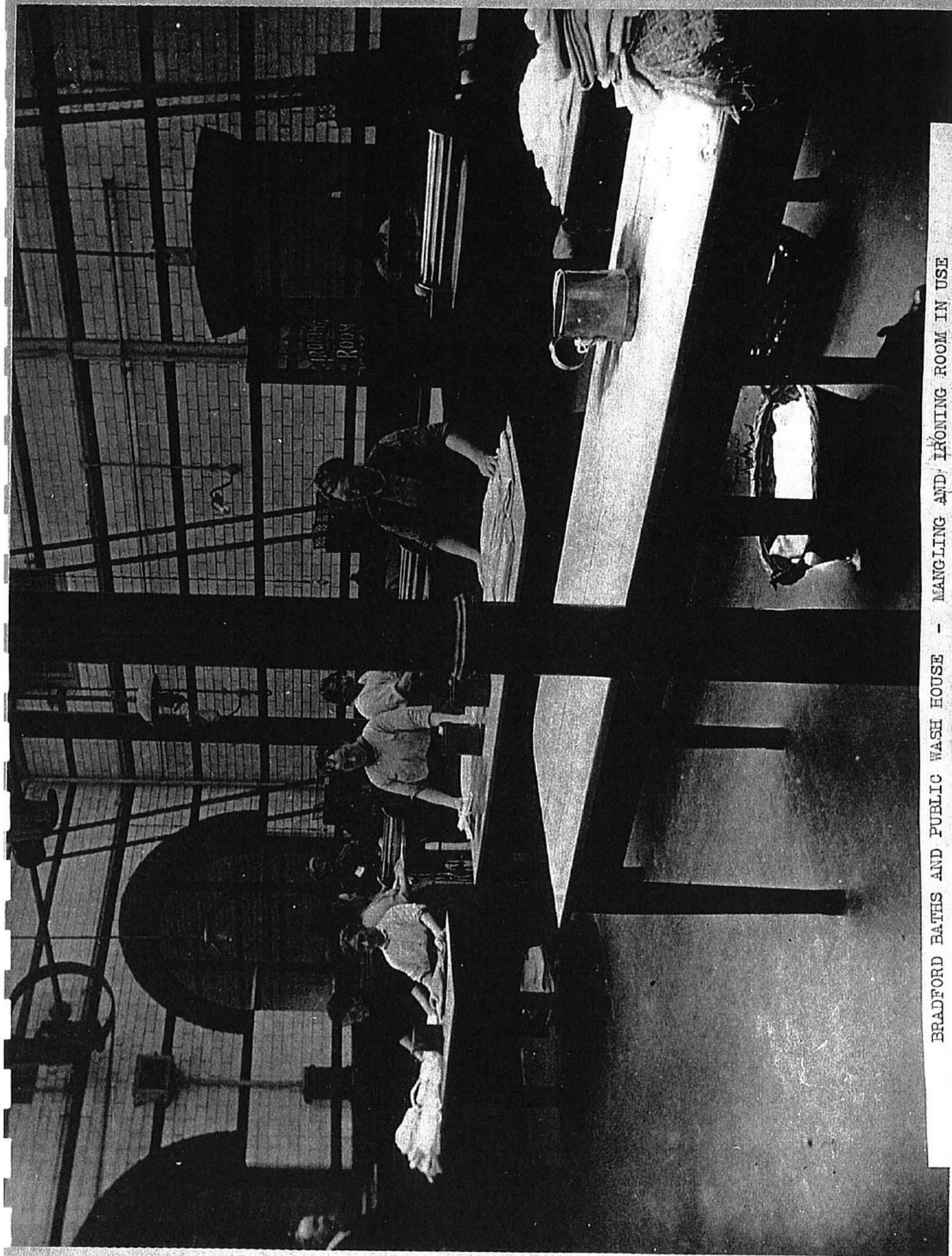
Ashpitel and Whichcord say it is the duty of the philanthropist and the engineer to provide those means, which in most cases have proved to be financially self-supporting. As well as economy, another strong argument for the implementation of the 1846 Act was the eradication of disease, which may have its origins with the poor but which equally affects all classes of society. The supposed resistance of the poor themselves to the notion of washing dirty linen in public, is answered by Ashpitel and Whichcord by their designs which provided an enclosed compartment for each washer. Each compartment should have its own

wash tub, boiler, rinsing tub, wringing board and access to a dryer. Privacy was very important and the communal areas of the first Liverpool wash houses should be avoided.

It is necessary to seek arrangements that shall prevent the necessity of congregating any number together in a rendezvous for gossip and lounging¹³

Ashpitel and Whichcord were strongly opposed to the provision of facilities for mangling and ironing. They state that such facilities, when provided, were not used and in any case women should iron at home. 'Mangling is a small source of living to many poor persons', they say sympathetically, but their wash house designs usually included a large mangle. A close inspection of facilities in later wash houses in Manchester indicates that this inconsistency continued for some time, with most establishments having mangles (or their more modern successors), but only a few having ironing facilities. (See figure 5).

One aspect of design as recommended by Ashpitel and Whichcord and maintained for at least half a century or more, was to have a separate entrance to the wash house where it formed a part of a larger public baths building. This was not merely a practical necessity but a conscious desire to separate the classes and the sexes. A more innovative design feature was their plan to include a supervised room for infants in the new wash house in Lambeth. Child-care difficulties, they believed, and anxieties about the dangers from machinery, were keeping away a great many potential customers who had young children, but provision of a nursery does not seem to have become standard practice at any time. Ashpitel and Whichcord end their work with a moral argument. Much money had been spent on the necessary evils of workhouses, asylums and prisons: why then, was there such reluctance to provide the baths and wash houses which would benefit all classes of society?



BRADFORD BATHS AND PUBLIC WASH HOUSE - MANGLING AND IRONING ROOM IN USE

FIGURE 5

In Manchester, this reluctance of the part of the Corporation, began to attract much criticism. Strong pressure came from the members of the Manchester Statistical Society, whose meetings had heard many papers on the subject of poverty and public health during the 1830s and 1840s. One of the very first of such papers had been given in 1833 by J.P.Kay-Shuttleworth and was entitled 'Plans and Estimates for Public Swimming Baths for the use of the Operative Population'. Anthony Pass¹⁴ states that this paper included proposals for communal wash houses but it has not proved possible to verify this from the original source. Neither the municipal government nor the public water supply was adequate in 1833 for any public initiative and this may explain why these proposals lay dormant for some years.

Twenty years later, similar proposals based on the Act of 1846 were to receive strong support at meetings of the Statistical Society. On the 15th June 1854 E.T.Bellhouse presented his paper entitled 'On Baths and Wash Houses for the People'.¹⁵ He began by saying

Much of the virulent infectious disease...has in great degree been owing to the prevalence of filthiness of clothes and person among the very poor.

The answer to this problem would be the provision of baths and wash houses on the familiar grounds of cleanliness, eradication of disease, the low cost and the convenience to the users. Bellhouse gave his audience a history of baths and wash houses with due credit to Kitty Wilkinson, the Liverpool Corporation and the Association for Promoting the Establishment of Public Baths and Wash Houses. In the year 1854, he said, there were several private bathing establishments in Manchester but all were beyond the reach of the poorer classes. The two wash houses at that time were both charitable concerns and quite inadequate for the demands of an increasing population. Bellhouse was critical of the Manchester Corporation

for having lost an opportunity in 1848 when the matter was discussed by the Council but deferred to 'some more convenient season'. Mr Bellhouse could not imagine a more convenient season than 1848 for improving the conditions of the urban poor.

Conceding that the Corporation was under pressure to introduce many improvements in public health, Bellhouse argued that this was one particular cause unsuitable for private undertaking because it would be dependent upon water supply and drains, which were both a public concern. Referring to the Longdendale reservoirs then under construction, Bellhouse said 'As we speak the great water undertaking is nearly complete' and argued that there was no more opportune time for the implementation of the 1846 Baths and Wash houses Act. His paper ends,

I trust that Manchester may shortly retrieve the dishonourable position in which it has been placed by the neglect of this important duty.

In the same year (1854), the Borough Treasurer of neighbouring Salford, a Mr David Chadwick, was in correspondence with one of the town's best known benefactors, E.R.Langworthy Esq. It would appear from one of these letters¹⁶ that Mr Langworthy had requested background information about the baths and wash houses movement, to which request Chadwick responded with a full history, beginning,

The establishment of public wash houses is of recent date, having originated in the laudable endeavours of a poor woman, Mrs Catherine Wilkinson, in Liverpool in 1832, during the prevalence of the cholera.

Chadwick continues with the familiar history of the movement in Liverpool, London and elsewhere, listing twenty-four wash houses recently built, before expressing his own opinions on the matter. He places less emphasis on health and cleanliness than did

Bellhouse, and concentrates upon the practical advantages of the public wash house for the poor.

Washing can be done in half the usual time... at a cost very much less than if it was done at home with all the accompanying evils.

According to Chadwick the charge in 1854 was 1d for one hour but 3d for two hours, perhaps an attempt to speed up the turnover of washers in the face of great demand. He describes the washing facilities in identical terms to those used by Ashpitel and Whichcord, and by the Liverpool Health Committee. He also permits himself a moral point when he states that

The inconvenience caused to a poor family on washing day is proverbial... no wonder that the husband be induced to seek a more comfortable fireside away from his own home.

Having put forward the case for public baths and wash houses, Chadwick points out that Salford has no 'adequate provision for these purposes', and recommends the Borough to implement the Act of 1846. Should the Corporation not choose to do so, then the other options would be to set up a public subscription or a joint stock company. Chadwick ends his letter to Langworthy by advising him to read the work by Ashpitel and Whichcord.

Neither of the two Corporations of Manchester or Salford could be persuaded to implement the 1846 Act at this stage, although the public health reformers continued to press for this option. Faced by the indecision of the authorities, several supporters of the cause called a public meeting on the 13th December 1854, at the Town Hall, King Street, Manchester. The success of the establishments at Miller Street and Miles Platting was used as evidence to

support action on the part of the public authorities, but the view of the Corporation's representatives was that no public funding was necessary where such establishments could run at a profit. The result of the meeting was that a Joint Stock Company was formed, and three days later the prospectus of the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company was issued. £20,000 was raised in two weeks, and the Company felt confident in promising to build five establishments in five years. It is interesting to note that the Chairman of the Directors was Benjamin Nicholls, Mayor of Manchester, the deputy chairman was E.R.Langworthy and the Company auditor was David Chadwick, Borough Treasurer of Salford.

Another supporter of the baths and wash houses movement in Manchester was Thomas Worthington, the architect. Coming from one of the liberal, non-conformist families who attended the Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, Worthington had been influenced by the work of the Reverend and Mrs Gaskell, and by J.P. Kay-Shuttleworth. He had become an active member of the Manchester Statistical Society, the Literary and Philosophical Society and the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association. He was a personal friend of E.T.Bellhouse and acquainted with the directors of the new Baths and Laundries Company through years of active involvement in the public health movement. It was no surprise therefore when he was appointed architect to the new company early in 1855.

Two sites were purchased in densely populated areas: the first on Collier Street, Greengate, Salford and the second on Stove Street, Mayfield, just off London Road. Worthington's Italianate building in Greengate (figure 6) was the first of the Company's baths and wash houses to be opened in the Manchester area on the 27th August 1856. Two swimming pools (men's 1st and 2nd class), bathrooms for men and women, offices, a boiler house and a wash

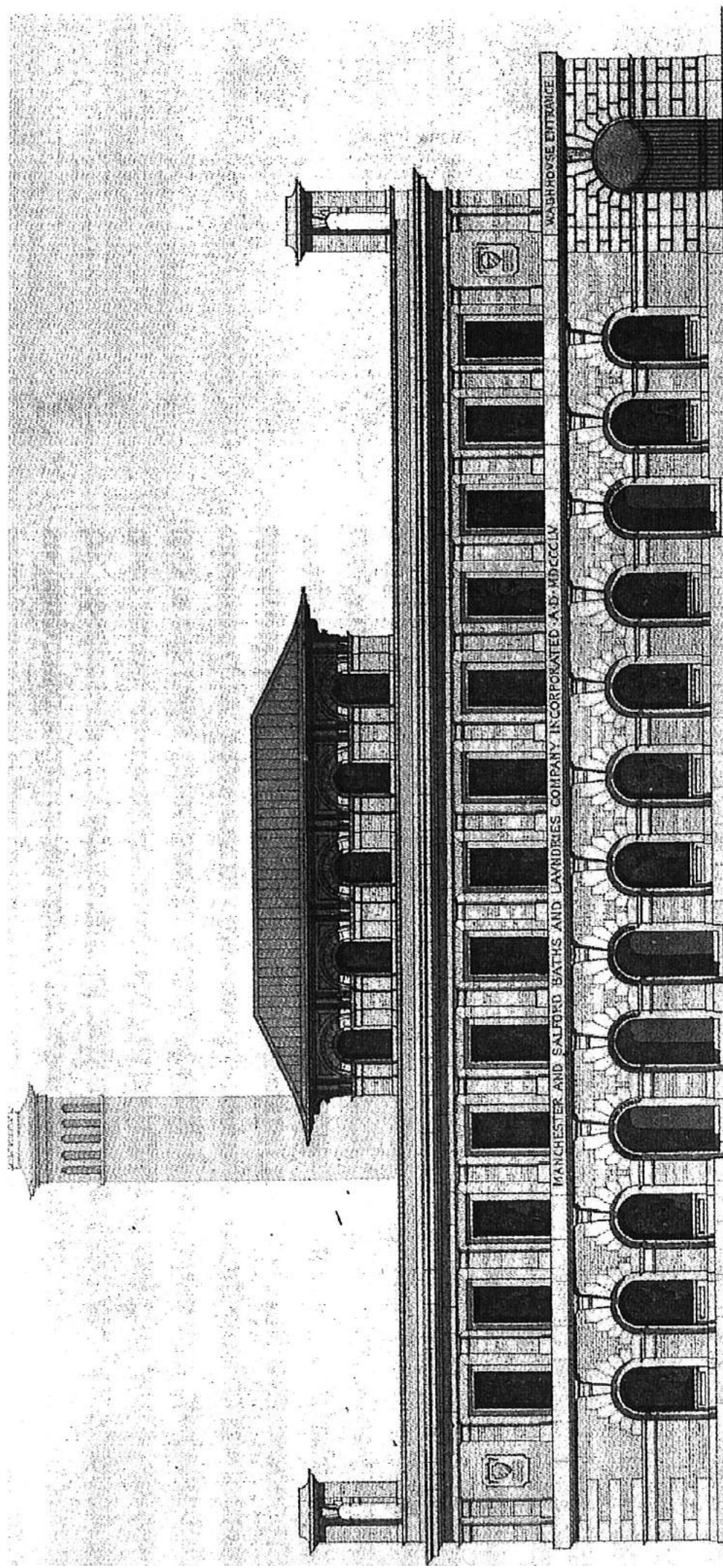


FIGURE 6

house were concealed behind an ornate frontage with its commanding chimney stack. The second establishment at Mayfield was opened in 1857, and according to the proceedings of the Second Annual General Meeting of shareholders in 1858,¹⁷ both of the Company's establishments were operating at a profit within the first year of opening. (The point was made, perhaps unnecessarily, that some of the Liverpool wash houses were then operating at a loss.) The meeting also heard plans for a third and even grander establishment to be built in Leaf Street, Hulme, which would serve the areas of Chorlton-on-Medlock, Knott Mill and Hulme itself. This building (figure 7) opened in June 1860 and was much influenced by Worthington's second visit to Italy. The chimney at Leaf Street, which towered 100 feet over the humble streets of Hulme, was unashamedly modelled on the great campanile of Verona. This was indeed architecture with a purpose, and with a message.

Of the three establishments built by the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company, only one remains in existence. The building in Greengate, Salford, stands semi-derelict despite its listed status (grade 2*). Mayfield was damaged in World War II and then closed and demolished. Leaf Street was also damaged during the war, but re-opened soon afterwards. However, the building was found to have structural damage in the 1960s and was also affected by plans for new roads. The building closed in 1968.

At their height in the 1860s each of these establishments catered for 50,000 users per annum in all departments. The Company was able to take over the running of the two charitable concerns at Miller Street (in 1862) and Miles Platting (in 1864) so that they achieved their promise of five establishments. All of Manchester's baths and wash houses remained under the control of the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company until 1876, when the City Council took them over under the powers of the 1846 Act, (sections 24-27) which

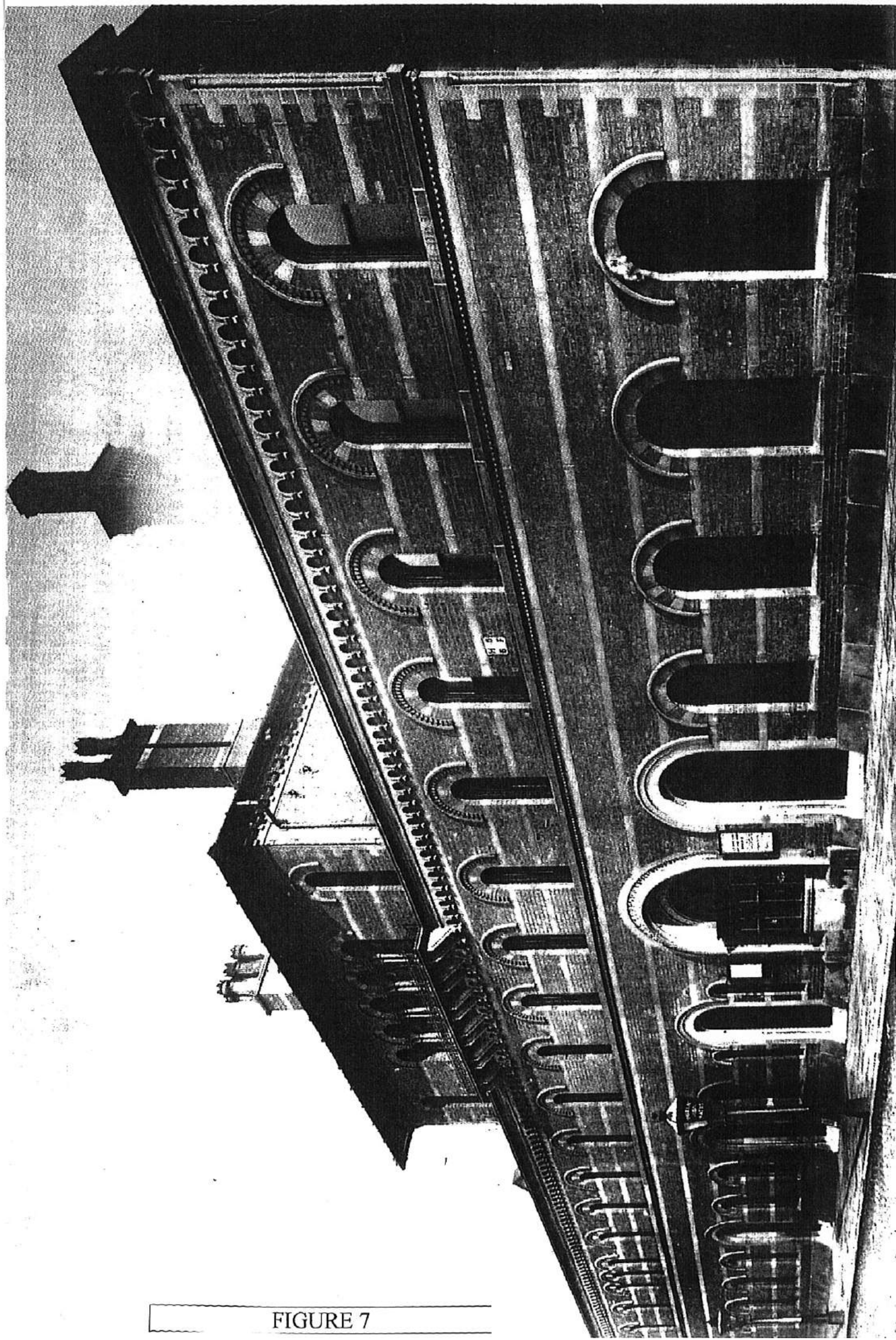


FIGURE 7

enabled the local authority to purchase baths and wash houses in private or charitable ownership. This transfer of ownership was to see the beginning of another era in the history of the wash house.

REFERENCES

- ¹ A Description of the Baths and Wash houses belonging to the Corporation of Liverpool
Published by the Liverpool Health Committee Liverpool 1846 John Rylands Memorial Library,
Deansgate, Manchester.
- ² Ibid page 3
- ³ The title page of this work reads exactly as follows
Baths and Wash Houses, an account of their History, an abstract of the Acts of Parliament relating thereto, their applicability and advantage to provincial towns and a Description of those erected under the superintendence of the authors, (to which is prefixed an account of the Baths of the Ancients) as written for the Architectural Publication Society, and printed by T. Richards of Lincoln's Inn in 1853 for Arthur Ashpitel and John Whichcord
John Rylands Memorial Library, Deansgate, Manchester.
- ⁴ Ibid page 34
- ⁵ Anthony J.Pass Thomas Worthington: Victorian Architecture and Social Purpose
The Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society Manchester 1988
- ⁶ Op. Cit. page 12
- ⁷ This plan of cubicles with separate external entrances appears never to have become a standard design for wash houses in the British Isles.
- ⁸ Manchester Guardian 8th August 1846
- ⁹ E. T. Bellhouse is thought to have been a prominent member of this group.
- ¹⁰ Op.Cit. page 32-33

¹¹ Ibid page 33

¹² The Times 29th January 1853

¹³ Ashpitel and Whichcord page 48

¹⁴ Op. Cit. page 73

¹⁵ It is likely that he used the Report of 1846 by the Liverpool Health Committee in the preparation of his own paper as the copy of that report in the John Rylands Memorial Library appears to have been Mr Bellhouse's own personal copy.

¹⁶ Letter from David Chadwick to E.R.Langworthy Esq., on the subject of public baths and wash houses, written in 1854 and printed by J.Roberts of 156 Chapel Street, Salford. Manchester Central Reference Library.

¹⁷ Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company.
Report of the Proceedings of the 2nd Annual General Meeting, held at the Town Hall on 5th March 1858. Manchester Central Reference Library.

Chapter Four

MUNICIPAL WASH PALACES

Manchester had become a city in 1853 at the height of the pressure to implement the Baths and Wash houses Act of 1846. The previous year, 1852, had seen the completion of the major water supply undertakings from the Longdendale Valley. This might have appeared to be the opportune time for the City to start building its own baths and wash houses, but a breathing space had been granted by the formation of the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company and the building by them of three new establishments. It was not until 1876 that the first Baths and Wash Houses Committee of the City Council was formed and negotiations began for the purchase of two establishments within the City boundary, Mayfield and Leaf Street. The third baths and wash house, in Greengate, was of course in Salford, and remained a private concern. No record has been found of Greengate, or the charitable establishments on Miller Street and in Miles Platting, being taken over by their respective local authorities.

The first meeting of the Baths and Wash Houses Committee¹ acknowledged that the City should take over responsibility for Mayfield and Leaf Street, and a price for the purchase was agreed at £19,000, to include all the fittings. The Committee also studied a survey presented to them by John Leigh, the Medical Officer of Health, which showed conditions in some of Manchester's poorest districts. This enabled the Committee to target the area in greatest need for the building of the next baths and wash house and a site was chosen in New Islington, Ancoats. In July 1877, architects were invited to submit designs to include 1st and 2nd class swimming pools for men only, 1st and 2nd class private baths for both sexes, a public steam laundry, boilers and engine room, two public rooms for meetings and a

residence for the superintendent. 'The designs must be plain and free from any elaborate ornament'.² The judge for the best design was Thomas Worthington, former architect for the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company. In August 1877, the Committee formally agreed to the implementation of the Baths and Wash Houses Act of 1846, in order to carry out their proposals. The decision to build the first of the City Council's Baths and Wash houses in the Ancoats area did not meet with unanimous approval. Ben Brierley addressed a public meeting in Collyhurst in October 1879 and stirred up local rivalries by stating that his own ward of St. Michael's should have been the first, as it was the dirtiest.³

When the new establishment in Ancoats opened with great ceremony on the 30th April 1880, the wash house had yet to be built and was not completed until 1902. The decision to delay building the wash house was possibly influenced by the recent decline in the number of washers at Mayfield and Leaf Street. Although numbers of washers had increased in the year 1877-1878, the figures at both establishments had shown an increase in bathers but a decrease in washers in the subsequent two years. Perhaps hastily the conclusion was drawn,

*...that in the opinion of this Committee, it is desirable that the public wash house existing at Leaf Street should be closed and that a ladies swimming pool should be erected in lieu thereof.*⁴

It seems strange that in 1880 the Council should consider swimming a greater need for the women of Hulme than washing the family's clothes. No rationale appears in the minutes at the time, but speaking in 1902 at the opening ceremony of the New Islington wash house, Alderman Bax, the chairman of the Baths and Wash Houses Committee, suggested that the wash houses of the 1870s had failed because they had been taken over by the professionals, who were all rough women, and 'many of them thieves.'⁵ Later Annual Reports of the Committee say that the original wash houses at Mayfield and Leaf Street were 'dispensed with' following their purchase in 1877.

The second baths and wash house building erected by the City Council was that in Osborne Street, Collyhurst, which opened in 1883.⁶ Although designed to include a public wash house, this was not added until forty years later. In 1890 the two Urban Districts of Gorton and Openshaw were incorporated into the City of Manchester, and their newly built public baths on Hyde Road and Ashton Old Road⁷ respectively, were taken over by the city's Baths and Wash Houses Committee. In 1891 the same was to happen to the baths in Wellock Street, Newton Heath, making a total of seven establishments with pools and private baths, but apparently no wash houses. Over the next twenty years, between 1891 and 1911, the City Council opened a further nine establishments, some as baths only, and others with baths and wash houses, making a total of sixteen in operation by 1912. Public baths were opened on Cheetham Hill in 1894, and at Red Bank in 1896, both without wash house facilities. The wash house at New Islington was completed in 1902 and had twenty wash stalls, whilst a further twenty were provided by a new establishment opened in 1904 on Pryme Street, Hulme.⁸ The tables and maps (see appendix 1) show the dates of opening, the location and facilities provided in these various premises.

The buildings became more and more ornate around the turn of the century and 'began to rival town halls in their size and magnificence'.⁹ In Manchester the trend towards municipal grandeur reached a peak in 1906 with the opening of the Moss Side Baths on Broadfield Road and the Victoria Baths in Chorlton on Medlock. At the opening ceremony, the Lord Mayor was reported by The Manchester Guardian¹⁰ to have described the Victoria Baths (figure 8) as a great 'water palace'. Anthony Wohl¹¹ makes comparisons between the grand neo Gothic churches of the late Victorian era, as monuments to spiritual purity, and the public baths and wash houses as churches of a similarly pious crusade of cleanliness. The

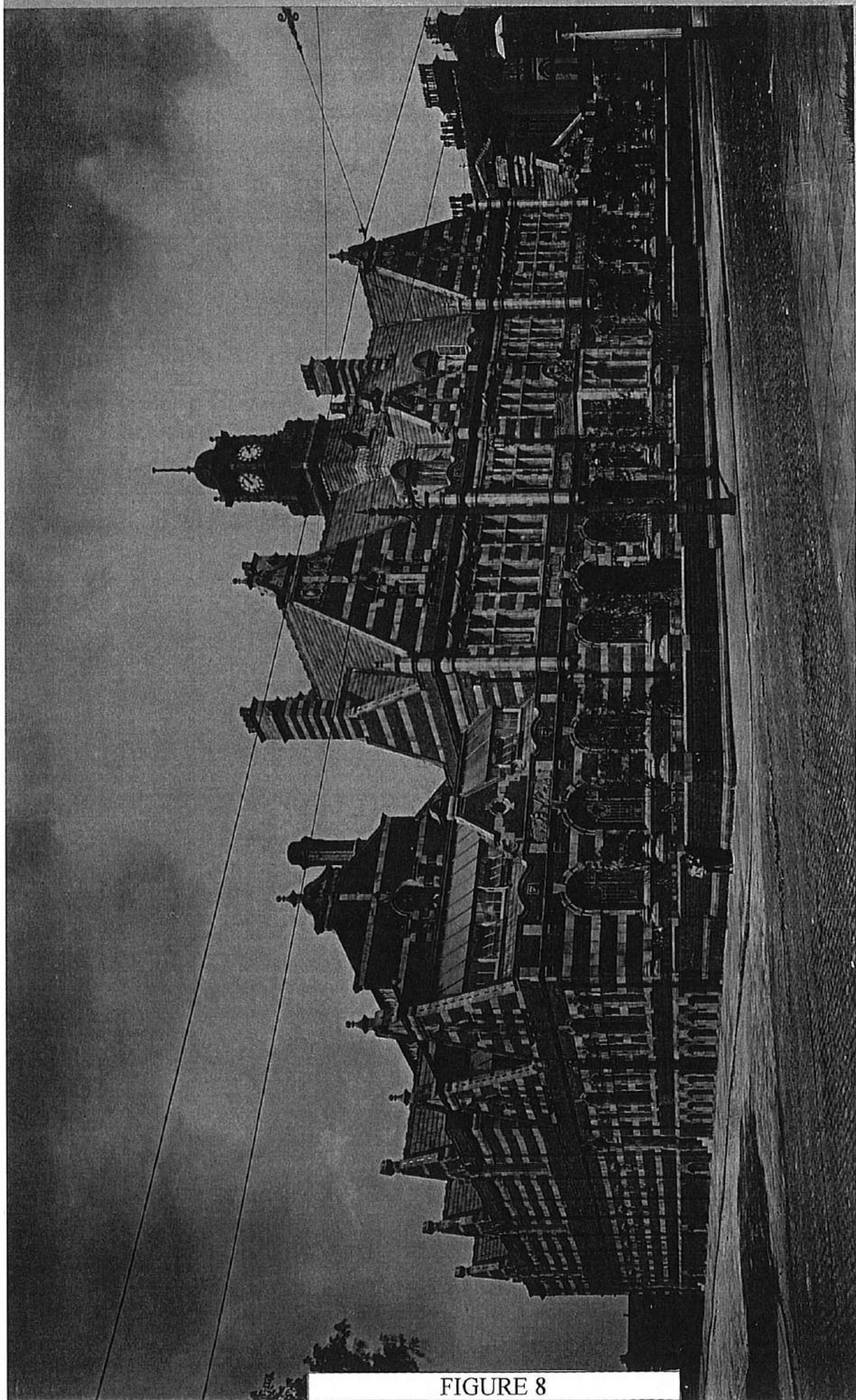


FIGURE 8

Manchester Corporation. Victoria Baths.

Victoria Baths, (now a grade II* listed building), was not built with a public wash house, only a laundry for the establishment, but this building, with its elaborate style, ornate detail and expensive materials, symbolises the height of a particular style of public architecture.

The Baths and Wash Houses Committee had stipulated in 1877¹² that the designs for the first municipal establishment in Ancoats should be plain, but in less than twenty years the buildings had become palatial monuments to the sanitary ideal. Another statement made by these buildings was the importance of the municipal ideal, of civic pride and the patronage of the Corporation towards the poorer classes. Further insight into the reasoning behind this grandeur is to be found in the work of an architect, A.W.S.Cross¹³, whose book encompasses a philosophical reflection on public buildings as an art form, as well as the more mundane matters relating to a 'state of the art' baths and wash house building.

Writing in 1906, Alfred Cross quotes Christopher Wren ('architecture should possess the attribute of the eternal') and John Ruskin ('when we build let us think that we build forever'), in support of the very best in municipal architecture. He is rather contemptuous of the quality of buildings erected by 'a nation of shopkeepers', claiming that most municipal buildings are designed on the cheap by council employees with no expertise or artistic originality¹⁴, advocating instead such designs as that for the Chelsea Baths (figure 9). His was a principled, if rather pompous view of what public architecture was about: he claimed that his purpose was to ameliorate the difficulties faced by the poor, but demonstrates no evidence that he ever ascertained the views of the people actually using the buildings.

A more populist opinion on the matter is expressed by E.J.Wakeling, who was the Chairman of the Shoreditch Baths and Wash Houses Committee.¹⁵ Wakeling agreed with Cross about

PUBLIC BATHS CHIESEA:

COMPETITIVE DESIGN: PLACED FIRST BY THE ASSESSOR.

VILIS AND ANDERSON, ARCHT^S

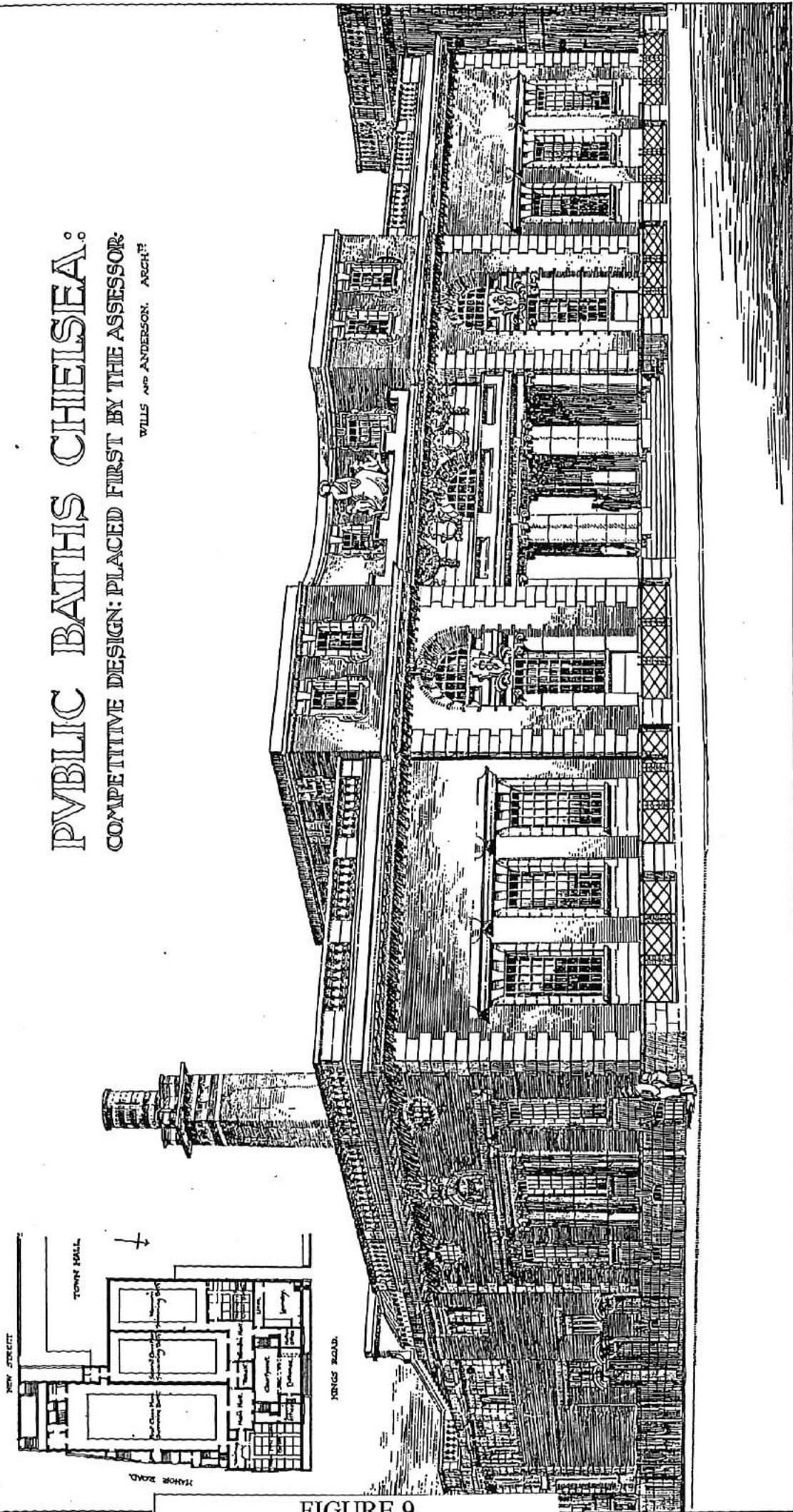


FIGURE 9

the use of good quality materials as a long term investment, but believed that the designs of baths and wash houses could be simplified and made more economical to run. If this service was for the benefit of the poor then there was no need for 1st and 2nd class, male and female of every facility. Economies could be made by ceasing to provide any ironing facilities, which would help to keep out the professional washerwomen, who, it was claimed, were resented by the other wash house users.

In short, if the greatest vigilance be not exercised by the management, the professional launderess will put in an appearance so often as to exclude from the department those persons of the very class in whose interests the Baths and Wash Houses Act was framed.¹⁶

Both Cross and Wakeling had firm views on the need for strong disciplinarians to be employed in the public baths and wash house, especially in the latter, as

...the frequenters of the public wash house often cause a considerable amount of trouble... so discipline must be rigorously maintained and the regulations strictly enforced¹⁷

E.J.Wakeling recommends employing a man and wife as Superintendent and Matron, with the wife having sole charge of all the female aspects of the operations, including the wash house. He suggests 'a woman who has had some experience in a factory or warehouse where the employees are drawn from a rough class of the community'.¹⁸ In his opinion tact and sound judgement were more important than qualifications, just as good planning was more important than the outward appearance of the building.

A.W.S.Cross describes the 'state of the art' public baths and wash house in 1906 as having the following facilities. There should be separate male and female entrances, and ideally separate 1st and 2nd class entrances also. These should be situated at the front of the building with a central ticket office. There would be 1st and 2nd class private baths for men and for

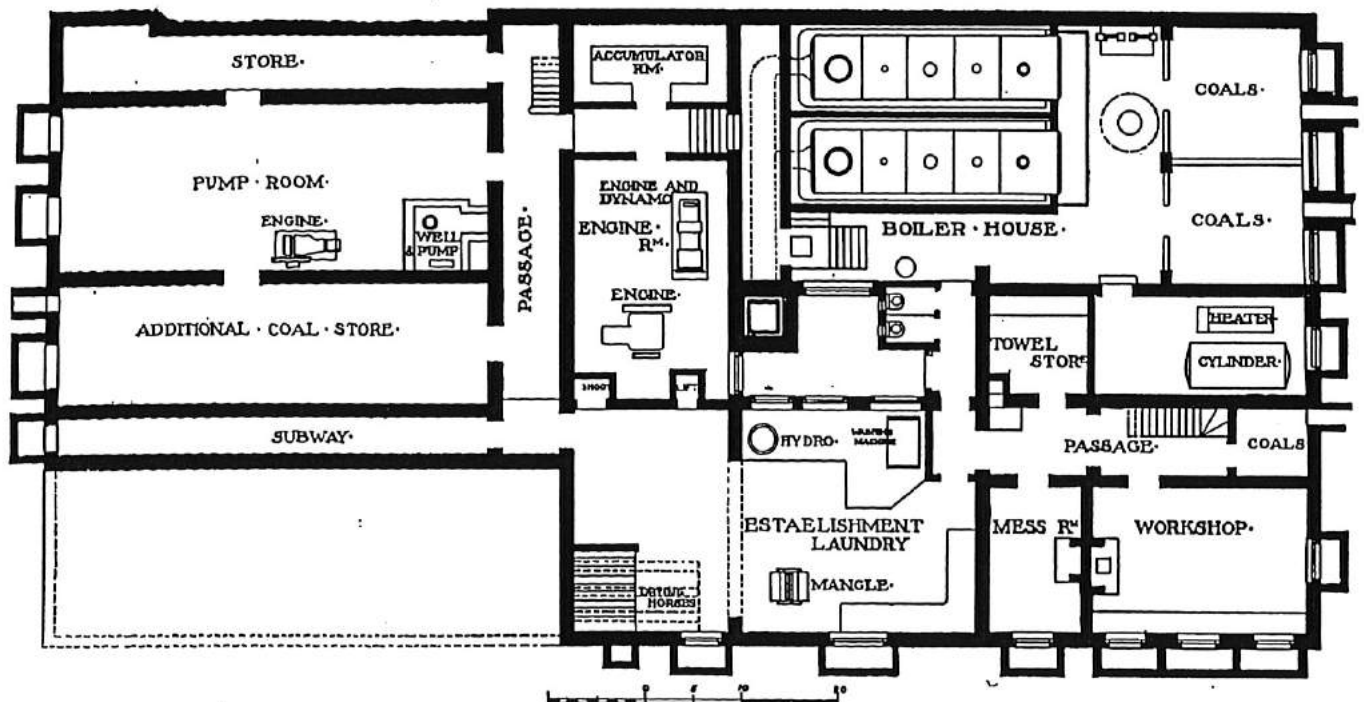
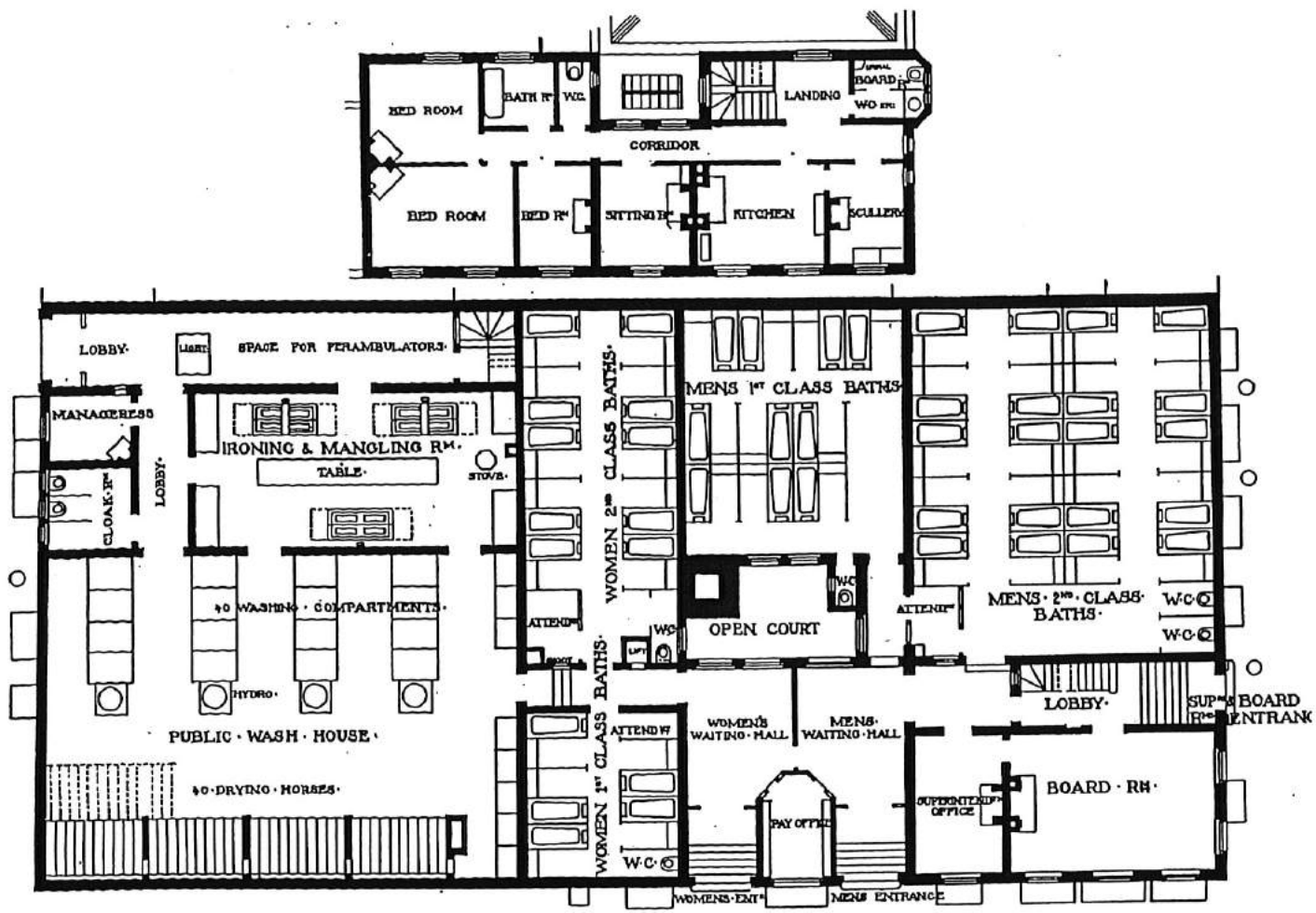


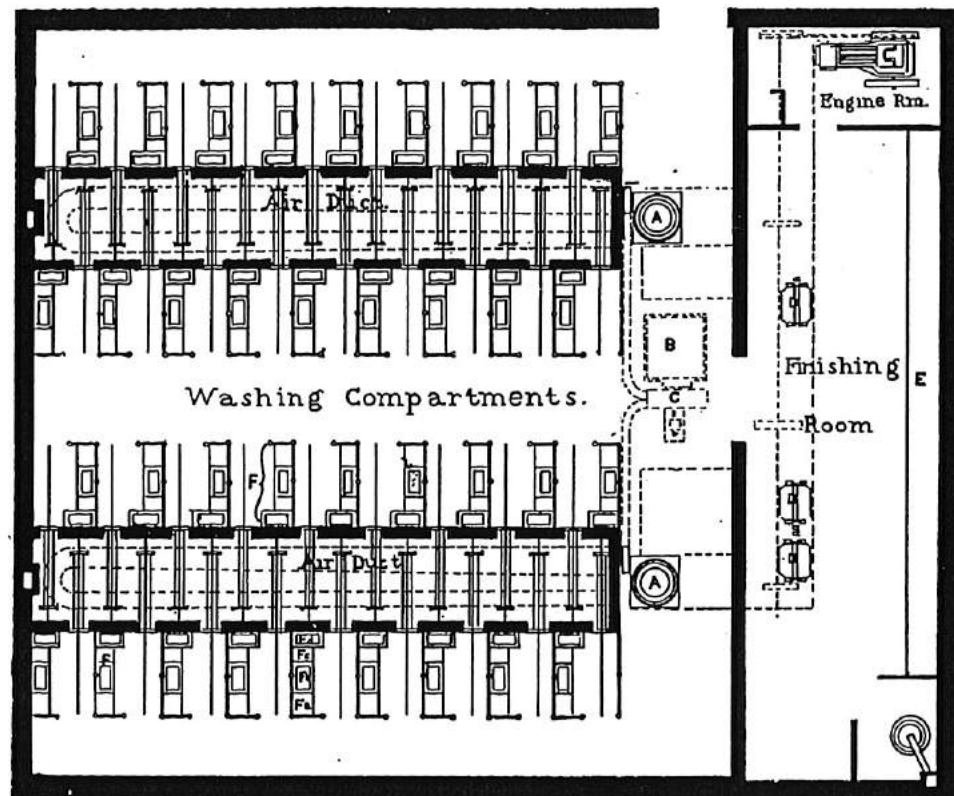
FIGURE 10 BETHNAL GREEN BATHS.

R. Stephen Ayling, Architect.

women, with 1st and 2nd class swimming pools for men only. The building would include cloakrooms, stores, offices, a staff mess room, a Board Room, the superintendent's accommodation, the boiler room, engine room and establishment laundry. Although a part of the same building, and of necessity sharing the same source of power, the public wash house must be quite separate from the other facilities, with its entrance in a side street or round the back of the building (Cross uses the word 'isolated').(See figure 10)

The ideal wash house should contain fifty wash compartments or stalls, fifty drying horses or racks, and six hydro-extractors or centrifugal wringers. (Figures 10 and 11). (These large spin dryers became familiarly known in Manchester as 'whizzers'). A separate room might accommodate mangles and irons if required.(At this stage the cylindrical rollers known as 'calenders' had not yet been introduced into the ironing process.) A cloakroom, waiting room, matron's office and space for baskets and perambulators would also be needed, plus a room for a creche if at all possible. All machinery would be driven by belt from a steam engine fired by two Lancashire boilers, which also provided the hot water. Cross recommended machinery by Thos. Bradford of Manchester, who had patented several domestic washing machines (see chapter one). A.W.S.Cross was very much based and employed in the London area, and not involved to any extent in the building of public wash houses in Manchester. However, the provision of facilities inside wash houses, as described above, appears to have been similar across the country, with differences mainly those of scale and outward appearance.

When Agnes Campbell came to produce her national survey of baths and wash houses in 1918,¹⁹ she was able to report six establishments in Manchester which had public laundry facilities. Recent years had seen the opening of the Bradford Baths and Wash house (1909) and similar establishments at Harpurhey (1910) (Figure 12), Armitage Street, off Hyde



REFERENCES.

- A. Hydro-extractors.
- B. Heater.
- C. Blower.
- D. Mangles.
- E. Ironing board.
- F. Washing compartments
- F a. Scrubbing board.
- F b. Wash trough.
- F c. Soap tray.
- F d. Boiling trough.

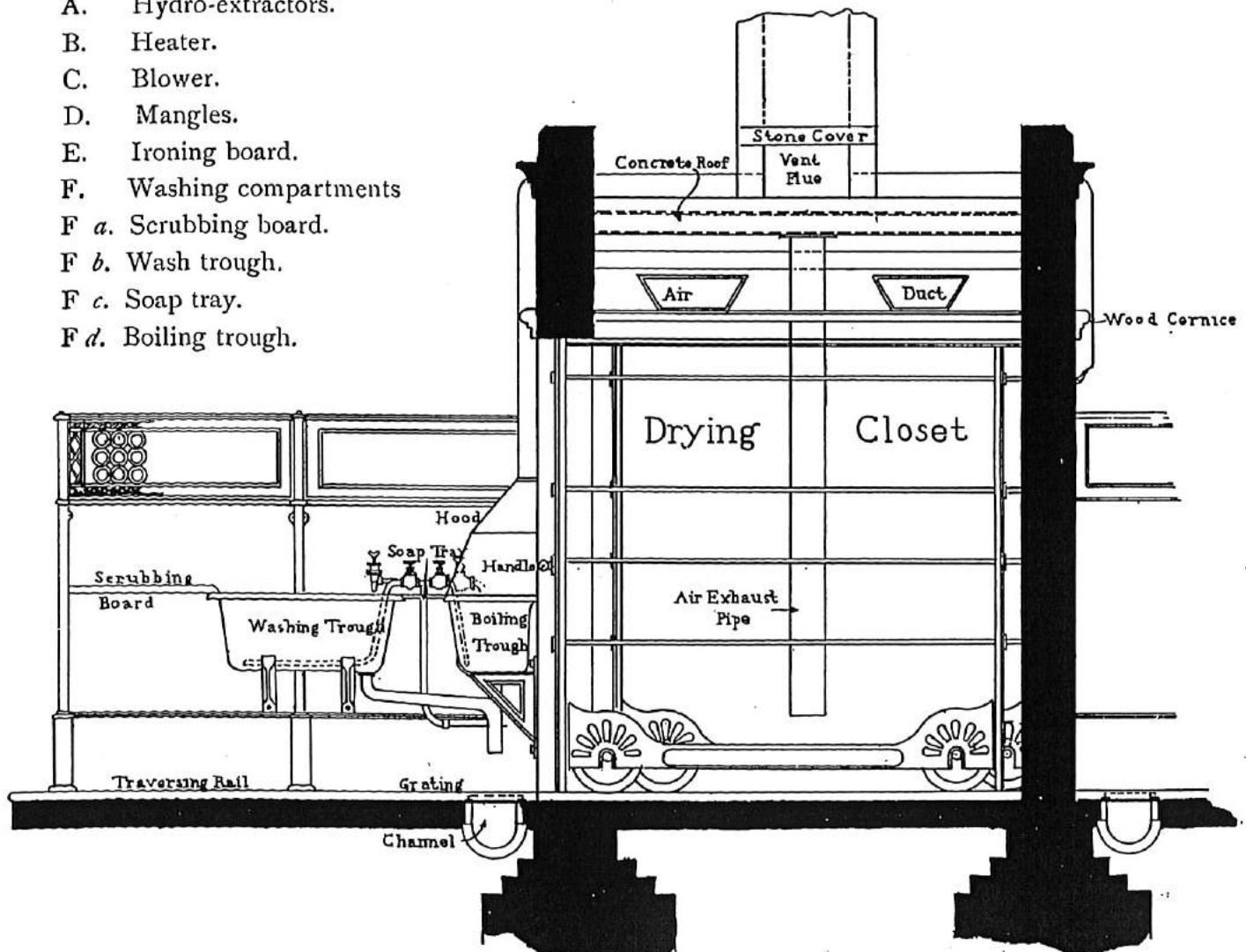


FIGURE 11 COMBINED FITTINGS FOR A PUBLIC LAUNDRY.

Road, (1911), and at Miles Platting (1911). No mention was made in this survey of 1918 regarding the New Quay Street Baths and Wash house, built in 1914 according to the City Council records. The survey was commissioned by the Carnegie Trust with the purpose of ascertaining whether or not Trust funds could be used to finance public baths and wash houses, as was the case with some public libraries.

The survey begins with a historical summary of the growth of baths and wash houses. Although acknowledging the practical efforts of the Liverpool women, and the pressure exerted by the 'Mansion House' movement, Agnes Campbell thought that the major impetus was Edwin Chadwick's report of 1842 on sanitary conditions. She writes sympathetically of the struggle to keep body and clothes clean for those without the funds to do so, and is critical of those who place high expectations of cleanliness upon the poor whilst remaining oblivious to the cost. Where most houses had very limited space, water and heat, alternative facilities had sometimes been provided, such as a communal outbuilding to each block of terraced housing or tenement flats.²⁰ Agnes Campbell claimed these were a failure because this communal area was no-one's responsibility: shared facilities only work, she said, if there is a supervisor, otherwise chaos ensues.

The advantages of the public wash house to the women of the urban poor were all of a practical nature. It was more convenient, more efficient, and was economical with both time and money. Use of the wash house would keep the kitchen and home tidy and free from damp washing, '...an argument to appeal with especial force to their husbands'.²¹ The disadvantages were based within expectations of gender and class. There was bound to be some embarrassment in taking laundry through the streets and letting the world see one's 'small family effects'. There were risks attached to the mixing of the sexes and different

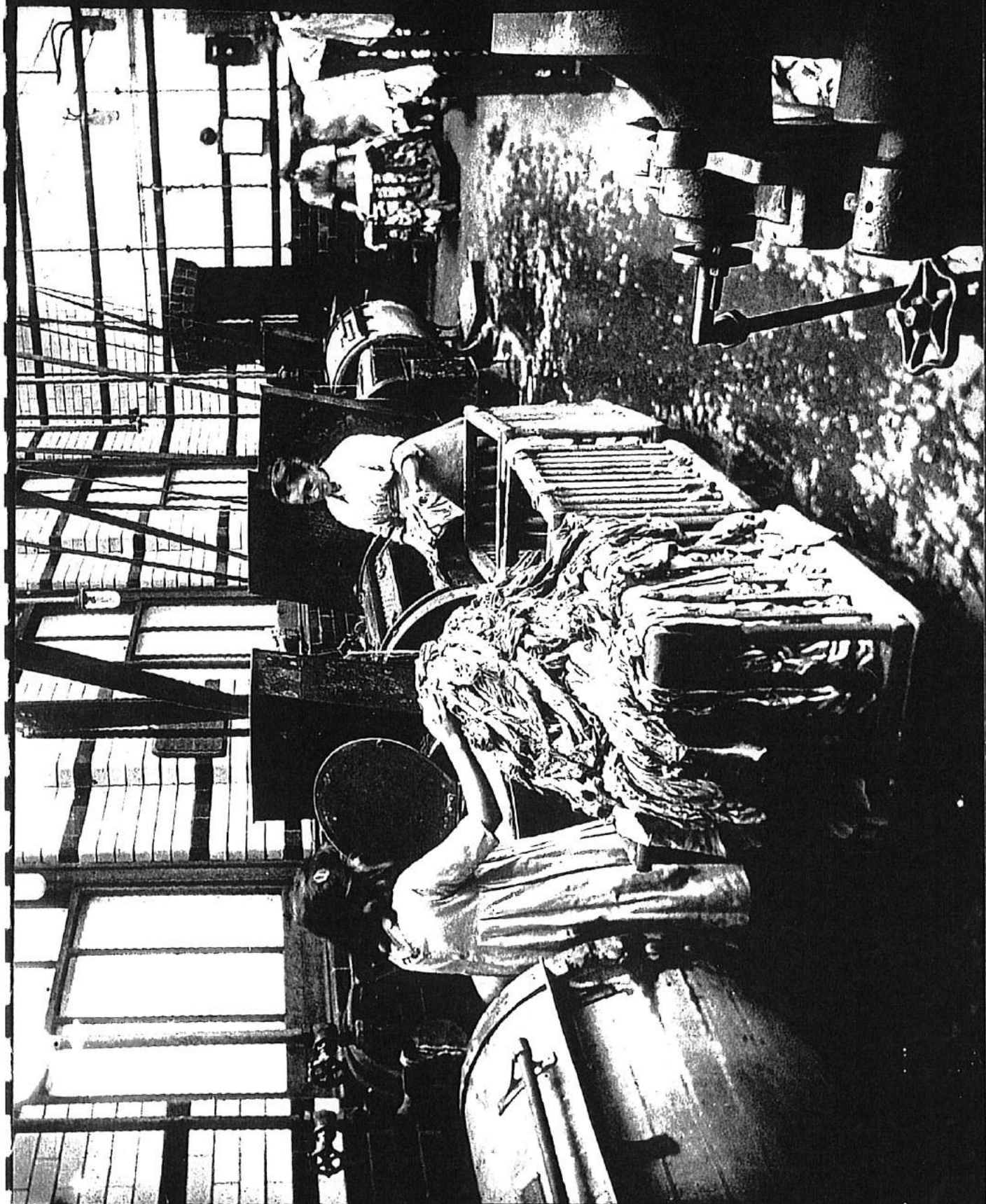


FIGURE 12

classes, as undesirable friendships might develop, '...whatever takes a woman out of her house may have far reaching and undesirable results'.²² There was also the practical difficulty of child-care.

Miss Campbell had the answers to these problems. There should be more privacy built into the wash houses and more women staff. Closer supervision of proceedings would alleviate disputes and theft, and would minimise the influence of the 'rougher' class of women. Smaller but more numerous wash houses across the poorest districts of towns and cities would reduce the distance from home, and a creche with a suitably qualified attendant, should be provided. There is little evidence that these recommendations were carried out to any large extent, presumably due to the cost.

Given all the previous comments about discouraging the professional washerwoman, it is interesting to note Agnes Campbell's defence of this maligned group of women. She felt that these women were often washing for those who were unable to manage themselves through illness or infirmity, and who would otherwise attend the wash house. This was an essential public service and any over use of the wash house should be resolved by extra facilities. As regards 'any lingering prejudice' against the public wash house, then the solution was to introduce respectability through the appointment of more respectable women employees and through greater efficiency. Despite her enthusiasm for the practical advantages of the wash house, much is revealed about attitudes to respectability in Agnes Campbell's remark that for women to go out of their homes might have undesirable results. This theme will be considered further in the final chapter of this study.

Included as a massive appendix to this report of 1918, are sets of statistics, which detail the provision of baths and wash houses across the whole of the British Isles. Some discrepancies noted in the figures relating to Manchester suggest that the statistics may have dated from the outbreak of war in 1914, and that wartime conditions caused difficulties in obtaining up-to-date figures. This would explain the baths and wash house on New Quay Street (1914) being overlooked. The various establishments in Manchester at this time were listed as follows:

New Islington Baths and Wash house, Ancoats.....	20 wash stalls.
Bradford Baths and Wash house, Barmouth Street, Beswick.....	38 wash stalls.
Harpurhey Baths and Wash house, Rochdale Road.....	40 wash stalls.
Pryme Street Baths and Wash house, Hulme.....	20 wash stalls.
Armitage Street Baths and Wash house, Hyde Road.....	31 wash stalls.
Miles Platting Baths and Wash house, Rhodes Street.....	34 wash stalls.

This made a total of 183 wash stalls, used by 127,876 washers in the last recorded year (given as 1918, but this seems unlikely). It is of interest to note the comparative figures for Liverpool at the same date as 391 stalls and 323,464 washers. The remaining establishments in Manchester at that time were listed as having pools and private baths, but no public laundries. They were:

Mayfield Baths, New Store Street, off London Road.
 Leaf Street Baths, Hulme.
 Osborne Street Baths, Rochdale Road, Collyhurst.
 Newton Heath Baths, Wellock Street, Oldham Road.
 Gorton Baths, Hyde Road.
 Whitworth Baths, Ashton Old Road, Openshaw.
 Cheetham Baths, Cheetham Hill Road.
 Moss Side Baths, Broadfield Road.
 Red Bank Baths, Axle Street
 Victoria Baths, Chorlton-upon-Medlock.
 Withington Baths, Burton Road.

The survey of 1918 does not list any public wash houses in Salford or Stockport, although both towns had public baths. In Salford the first establishment built by the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company, on Greengate, had remained in private hands when the other two had been purchased by Manchester City Council, and the status of Greengate in 1918 is not known.

Salford appears to have concentrated on building baths rather than wash houses, and four were built over a short period. They were Blackfriars (1880), Pendleton (1885), Broughton (1891) and Regent Road (1892). Annual reports of the Baths Committee in Salford make no reference to the building on Greengate, but each report from 1904 to 1919 states that 'There are no public wash houses in the Borough'.²³ The report of 1907 records that the Committee received a deputation from the Ladies Public Health Society of Salford who pressed the case for public wash houses in the poorer areas of the town. Despite receiving a similar deputation for several consecutive years, the Committee was unable to support this cause until the minutes of 18th October 1922 record the first discussion of proposals to build a public wash house. These discussions did not come to fruition until Salford's first municipal wash house was opened on Hodge Lane on the 18th January 1928. (Figure 13). (This building was demolished in 1979 for the M602 motorway²⁴).

The 1920s also saw continued development in the City of Manchester. A new wash house had already been built in 1918 to replace the original at Leaf Street in Hulme (too late to be included in Agnes Campbell's survey). In 1921 a new baths and wash house was built on Barlow Road Levenshulme, in a much plainer architectural style than the pre-war buildings. In 1923 wash houses were added to the existing baths at Osborne Street, Collyhurst, Hyde Road, Gorton and Wellock Street, Newton Heath. The following year saw a new wash house

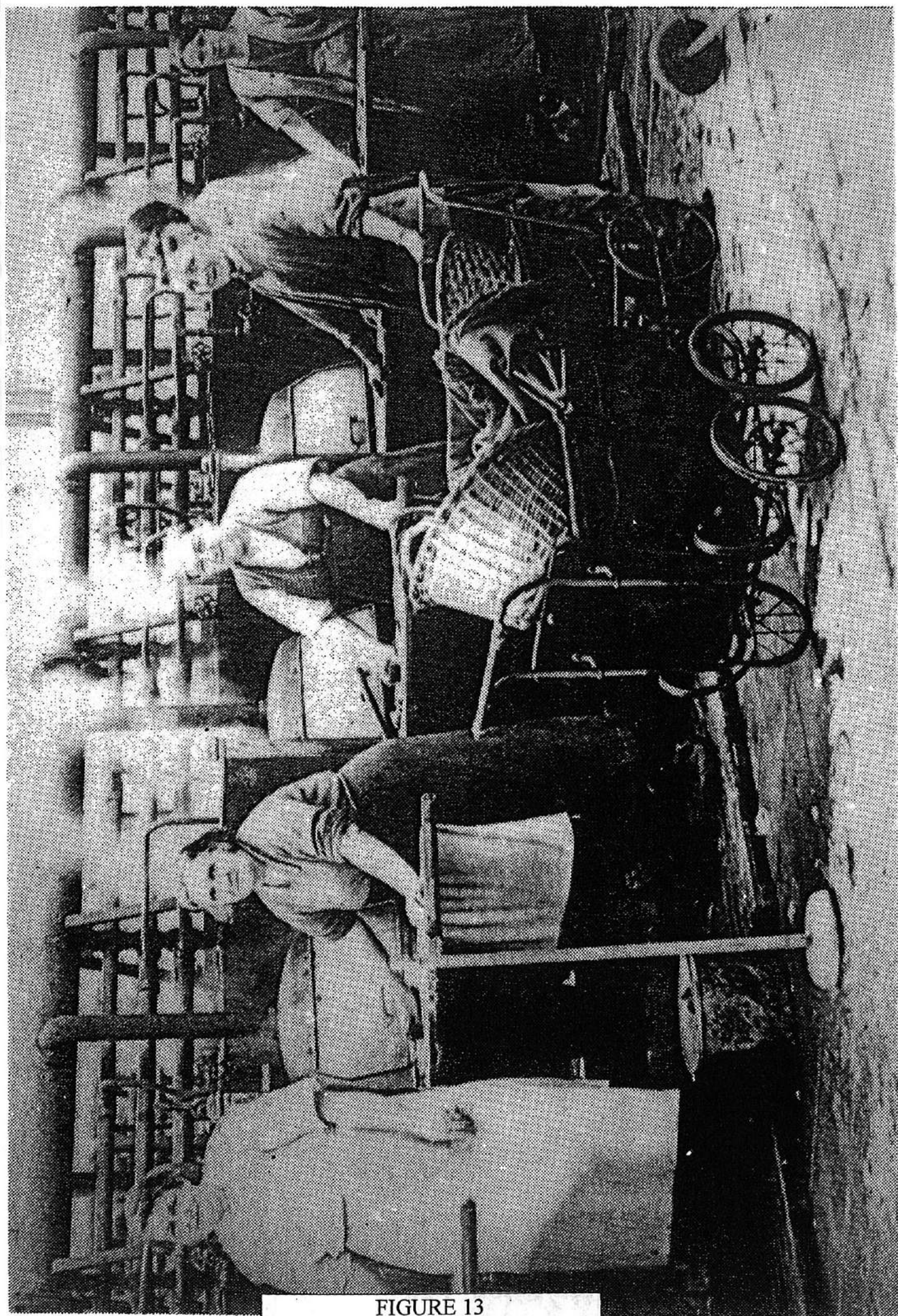


FIGURE 13

added to the Mayfield establishment, (figure 14), to replace that closed in or around 1880, and in 1925 the existing wash house at New Islington was enlarged. The first wash house to be built without a pool or baths was opened in 1925 off Chancellor Lane, Ardwick, - (sometimes listed as Birch Street and sometimes as Dainton Street.) A completely new baths and wash house was opened in 1927 on Dean Lane, Moston , (figure 15), reflecting the gradual move out of the city centre as early as the twenties. In 1931 a wash house was added to the existing baths at Broadfield Road, Moss Side and a former police station on South Street, Longsight was converted to a wash house, without baths or pool. Also in 1931 two new baths and wash house complexes were opened on Workesleigh Street, Newton Heath and on Bank Street in the Clayton area. The last wash house to be built in Manchester was that on Herbert Street, Cheetham which opened in March 1932, although of course swimming baths have continued to be built up to the present day. The first full closure of an establishment was that of Red Bank Baths in 1934 due to the poor condition of the building. (For full details of all of the above, see appendix 1).

The more modern buildings of the twenties and thirties were of a much more functional design and could not be described as palatial in any sense. A more representative Council, with members such as Hannah Mitchell²⁵ who served twelve years on the Baths and Wash Houses Committee, perhaps did not see grand patronage as a relevant part of their role. Greater accountability and the power of the ballot box possibly made the practical needs of the population a greater priority than opulent statements about civic pride.

During the night of 22nd-23rd December 1940, both Mayfield and Leaf Street were damaged by bombs, and the Baths and Wash Houses Committee decided not to attempt repairs to the Mayfield establishment. Apart from the serious bomb damage, Mayfield had been

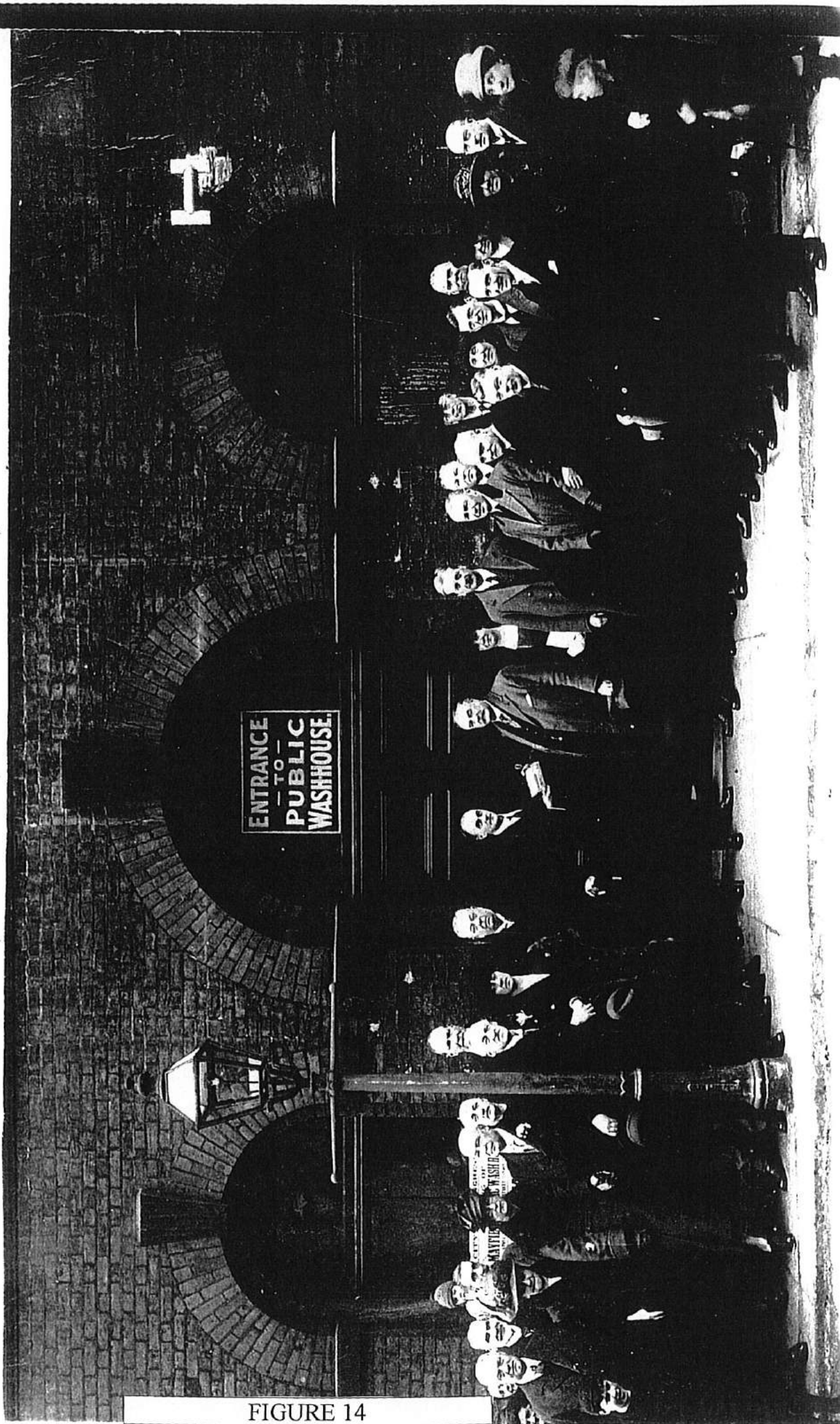


FIGURE 14

experiencing a decline in usage due to demographic changes.²⁶ The building was closed, leased temporarily to a dairy, and eventually demolished in 1944, whilst Leaf Street was repaired and re-opened also in 1944. Wartime difficulties appear not to have affected the demand for wash house facilities in Manchester, although the Salford Committee reported a decline in daytime use during the war as more men were away, children were evacuated and women were increasingly employed. In Manchester the war years saw continued demand at a time of staff shortages, and there were many complaints that it was impossible to book a place in the wash house. A recurring problem was again that of the professionals taking over, for example the Committee was told that five persons were known to use the Moss Side wash house every day of the week.²⁷ Extended opening hours and an advance booking system did not fully resolve the pressure.

Despite continued demand for wash house facilities during the war, the then General Superintendent of the Baths and Wash Houses Department, Mr A. Teasdale, had put before the Committee a radical set of proposals which involved widescale closures. He recommended the closure of the New Quay Street premises because 85% of users were from Salford. Eight²⁸ others of the older establishments should be demolished and replaced by new swimming baths in six districts of the City: other establishments should be modernised, but no new wash houses need be built: no provision need be made which would benefit 'persons residing outside the city boundaries'.²⁹ Mr Teasdale assumed that all post war housing would have domestic facilities for laundry, or communal facilities in the case of flats. This was the case for many new properties but large areas of old housing were to remain across Manchester for another twenty years after the war. The Committee discussed these drastic proposals during the war years until Teasdale's retirement brought about a complete reversal of policy.

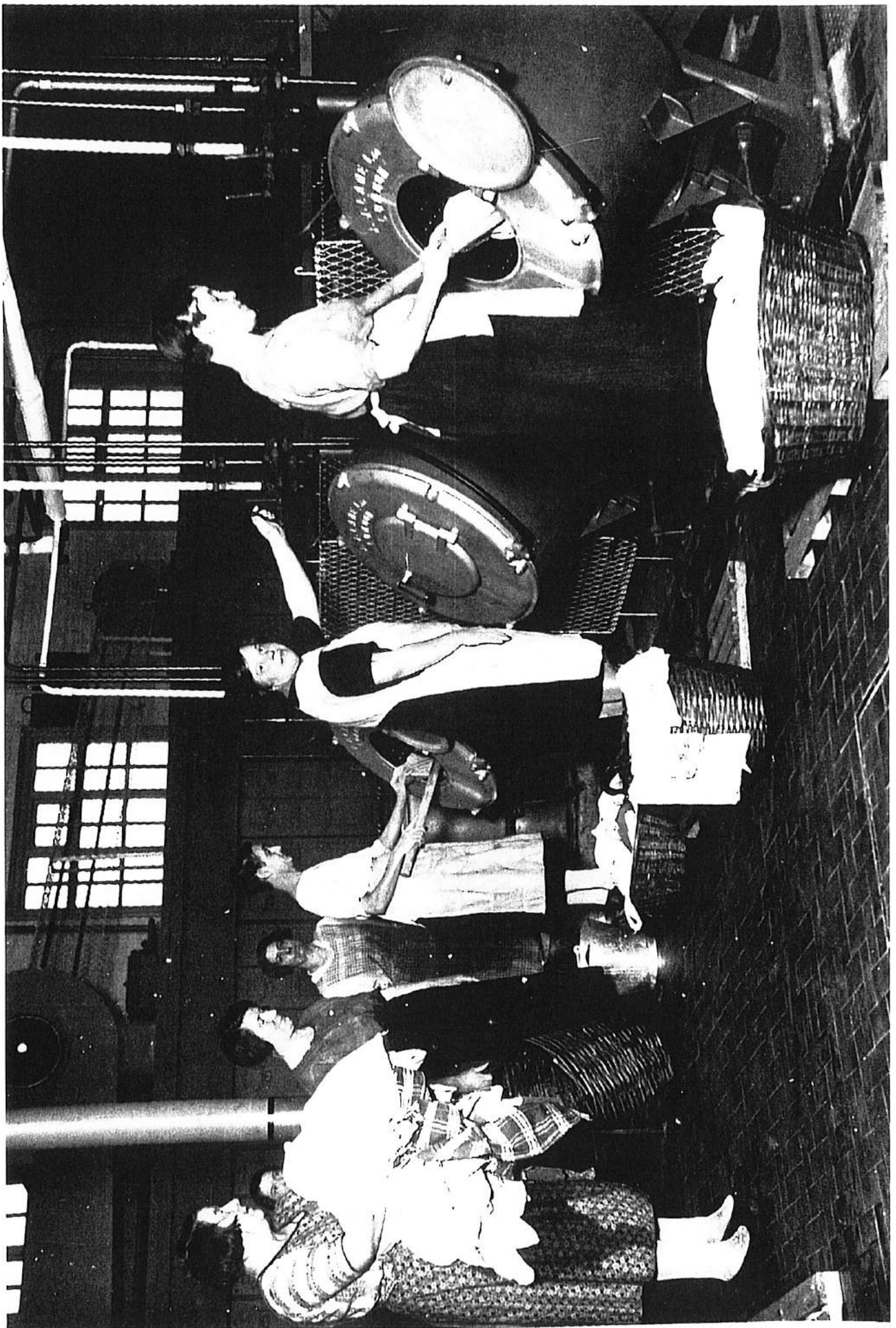


FIGURE 15

The new General Superintendent, a Mr F.Botham, inherited twenty six establishments when he took office in 1945. Far from considering closures, he introduced a policy of expansion with thirteen new wash houses proposed and modernisation plans for existing ones. A laundry collection and delivery service was introduced in January 1947 at a cost of 9d per bag. (This service continued into the 1960s and averaged 1000 customers per week during the 1950s.) Mr Botham was sufficiently confident in the future of the wash houses that he dismissed the new Bendix Launderettes as presenting 'no threat' to the department.³⁰ The 1950s saw a programme of modernisation of wash house facilities, (see figure 16), and by 1959 fifteen of the eighteen had been modernised. The thirteen new wash houses proposed in 1945 never did materialise as circumstances changed, but one new laundry was added to the premises at the Whitworth Baths in 1956,³¹ replacing a redundant second swimming pool. The establishment then became known as the Whitworth Baths and Openshaw Laundry.

From the 1960s the wash houses in Manchester, like many other services, began to be affected by rapid changes within society. It could be argued that the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s had their greatest impact on working class women. Re-housing policies took many families out of central Manchester and into the suburbs, where the new launderettes were more responsive to the trend but the large public facilities were not. Increased affluence brought the purchase of a domestic washing machine within the reach of many more families and attitudes towards women's domestic role and to housework were also changing.

These changes are within living memory for many Manchester women, and their implications will be considered in the final chapter of this study, which is based on a series of interviews with people who used or worked in the city's public wash houses.

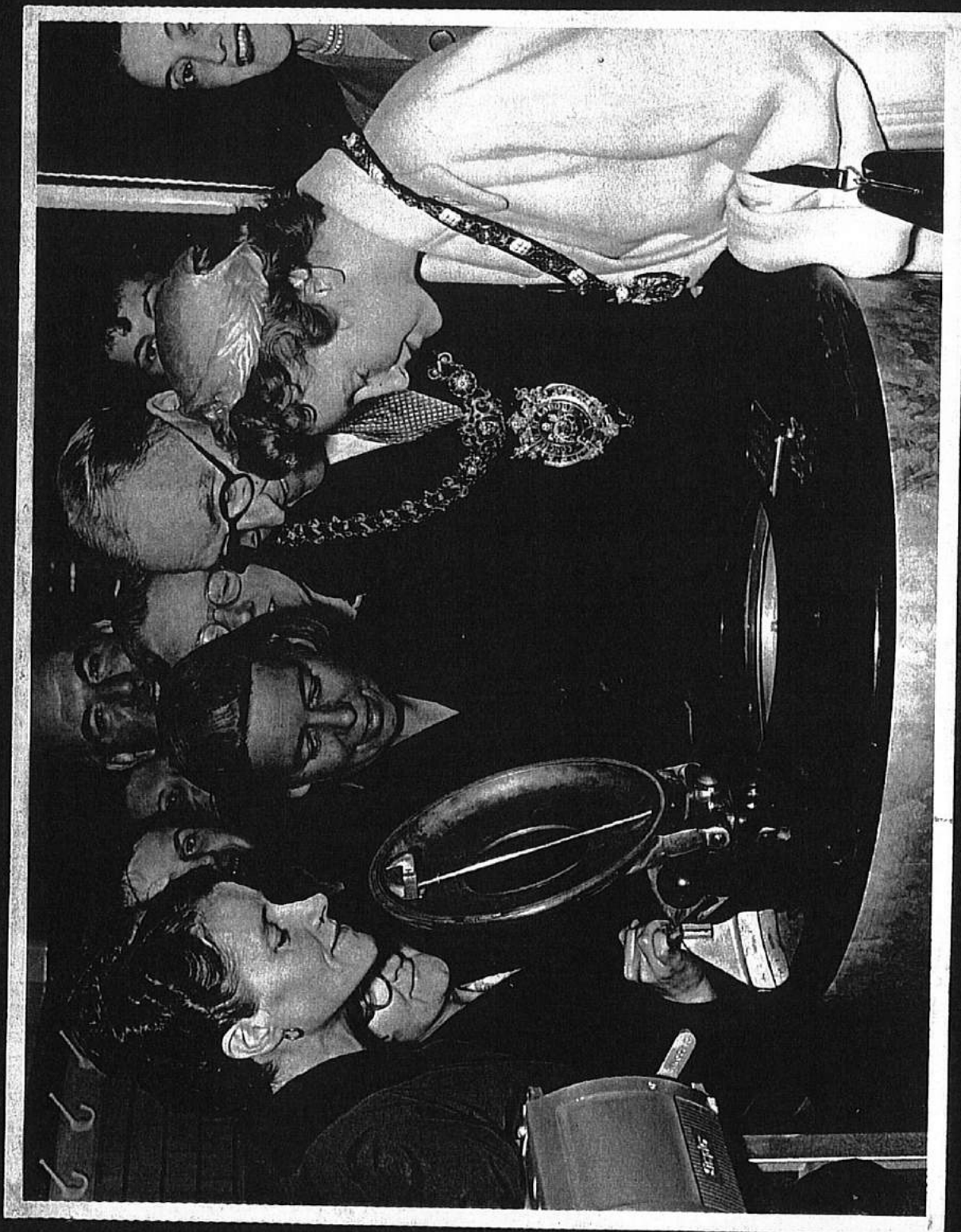


FIGURE 16

REFERENCES

- ¹ Meeting held on the 17th August 1876. Minutes held at the Town Hall, City of Manchester.
- ² Meeting held on the 20th July 1877. Minutes held at the Town Hall.
- ³ Ben Brierley's speech is recorded in Historical Tracts (reference number H8 37/6) Manchester Central Reference Library.
- ⁴ Meeting held on the 2nd July 1880. Minutes held at the Town Hall.
- ⁵ Manchester Guardian 30th March 1902
- ⁶ The Baths and Wash Houses Committee were criticised by Joseph Scott (a 'citizen's auditor') in the Manchester City News, October 1884 for their lavish celebration of the opening of the Osborne Street Baths, held at the Queens Hotel, Piccadilly, at a cost of £2.10s per guest or £4.7s per Committee member.
- ⁷ The establishment on Ashton Old Road, Openshaw was a bequest from Joseph Whitworth, and consequently always known as the Whitworth Baths.
- ⁸ The building on Pryme Street was described in the City News of 24th December 1904 as being modest in appearance. The architect was Henry Price who also designed the Moss Side and Victoria Baths, which both opened in 1906 and were built in a very different style.
- ⁹ Anthony Wohl Endangered Lives Dent and Sons London 1983 page 75
- ¹⁰ Manchester Guardian 8th September 1906
- ¹¹ Anthony Wohl Op. Cit. Chapter 3
- ¹² Meeting held on 20th July 1877. Minutes held at the Town Hall.
- ¹³ A.W.S.Cross Public Baths and Wash Houses: A Treatise on their Planning, Design, Arrangement and Fitting Batsford London 1906.
- ¹⁴ Ibid Chapter 1
- ¹⁵ E.J.Wakeling was the author of chapter XIII in A.W.S.Cross, above.
- ¹⁶ Ibid page 196
- ¹⁷ Ibid page 103
- ¹⁸ Ibid page 197
- ¹⁹ Agnes Campbell Report on Public Baths and Wash Houses in the United Kingdom University Press Edinburgh 1918
- ²⁰ Carl Chinn refers to the existence of these in Birmingham in They Worked all their Lives : Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880-1939 Manchester University Press Manchester 1988 page 110
- ²¹ Agnes Campbell Op. Cit. page 50.
- ²² Ibid page 51.

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- ²³ Annual reports of the Salford Baths Committee, held at the Salford Local History Library.
- ²⁴ As reported in the Salford City Reporter 5th October 1979
- ²⁵ For an account of her experiences see Hannah Mitchell The Hard Way Up Virago London 1977
- ²⁶ Capacity at Mayfield had gone down to 28% in 1941 as opposed to that of nearby Birch Street /Dainton Street which remained a constant 95%.
- ²⁷ From minutes of Committee meeting held on 8th May 1944.
- ²⁸ Proposed for closure were Leaf Street, Osborne Street, New Islington, Whitworth, Cheetham, Newton Heath, Gorton and Moss Side. For some reason Mr Teasdale was of the opinion that Thomas Worthington's 1860 Italianate building at Leaf Street was 'originally a Poor Law institution converted at great cost by the Manchester and Salford Baths and Laundries Company.' *
- ²⁹ Report put before the Committee on 8th September 1943. Minutes held at the Town Hall.
- ³⁰ From minutes of Committee meeting held on 3rd February 1949.
- ³¹ According to the Evening Chronicle of 30th September 1949, Councillor Swan of Openshaw was campaigning from the 1940s for a wash house to be built in that area.

* Possibly confused with Collier St Baths
to wash house, built on the site of
the old Salford Work House?

Chapter Five

THE TALK OF THE WASH HOUSE

In the previous four chapters several themes have emerged in the wider context of the growth of public wash houses. These include philanthropy and collective responsibility: civic pride and municipal buildings: social class, poverty and respectability: community spirit and social interdependence: cleanliness as a virtue and an obligation: women's domestic role and attitudes to housework. In this final chapter some of these threads will be drawn together and will be illustrated by reference to a series of interviews and correspondence with people in Manchester who have used the wash houses or were connected to them in other ways. An analysis of the interviewees and correspondents is given as an appendix and so a brief explanation only will be provided here.

Following some preliminary correspondence twelve individuals were selected for interview and in addition three group sessions were held in day centres for older people in the North, East and South of Manchester. A total of thirty-three elderly people were enabled to make a contribution, and the opinions of all correspondents and interviewees had much in common, with the exception of the two male members of members of staff whose slightly different perspective will become apparent later in this chapter. Most of the interviewees were looking back to the war years and the 1950s, but a small number of the more elderly described their experiences from the 1930s.

A major theme to emerge from the literature and from the correspondents and interviewees was the association of the public wash house with concerns about respectability and social class. A remark of Agnes Campbell's in the previous chapter, '... whatever takes a woman

out of her house may have far reaching and undesirable results',¹ is resonant of sentiments found in contemporary literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as well as in the more recent correspondence and interviews. Although Agnes Campbell acknowledged that it was not respectable for a woman to leave her home in order to attend the wash house, she believed that for the urban poor this was the best option, and that any disadvantages could be ameliorated in order to introduce some respectability to the wash house.

In contrast Mrs Beeton² did not consider the wash house an option at all. Writing for the middle classes in the 1880s and 1890s she said, 'In washing at home we escape the risks of having our sheets washed with others taken from a fever or a smallpox patient'.³ She did not say if this undesirable, communal washing took place at a wash house, at a professional launderess or a commercial laundry, but she went on to recommend a quantity of equipment which was almost on a commercial scale. She advised the purchase of machinery from Thos. Bradford of Manchester, saying with confidence that '... in the North of England, where it is considered a mark of poverty to send washing out, washing machines are now in general use.'⁴ This suggests that the contrast in laundry habits between the classes was becoming ever wider towards the end of the nineteenth century.

If habits varied, there was more agreement about the ideal, and not only the upper middle classes were urged to wash at home and avoid this 'mark of poverty'. The ethos of the late Victorian era was to idealise the role of the home based wife and mother, or 'the angel of the house', in all classes of society. Neil Smelser (1959) has argued that economic factors as much as cultural factors brought about a more rigid gender division of roles, especially in the textile districts⁵. A consequence of this idealised image of the mother at home was perhaps to elevate the nature of the tasks she had to perform into an art or a science. A degree of

scientific method was the theme of a booklet issued to celebrate the Empire Exhibition in Blackpool, 1898.⁶ Three pages were devoted to techniques of hanging washing on the line, eleven pages on ironing and a further three on how to fold underwear. Such an approach elevated laundry to a level of expertise which would justify a woman staying at home of necessity.

Of more widespread influence among working class women was the introduction of laundry as an essential part of the domestic science⁷ curriculum for girls. The Teachers' Manual of Elementary Laundry for 1899⁸ assumed that girls at elementary school were being taught to be wives and mothers who would do the family washing at home, and so '...all appliances and methods employed in teaching laundry work should be those which are possible in the homes of working people'.⁹ It was also assumed that most homes would have access to a mangle and an iron but nothing more. Teachers were reminded about the importance of thrift in their teaching methods, as poorer classes of women were more likely to follow advice if shown how to do so cheaply. There was no mention in this text of the public wash house as an alternative, and although the advice was practical and 'down to earth', there was an underlying assumption that the respectable woman, however poor, stayed at home. Agnes Campbell was right in assuming 'a lingering prejudice' twenty years later.

This prejudice may have lingered on for a century, as the concept of what was, or was not respectable for women came across very strongly from the interviews recently held for the purposes of this study. (No mention was made of any criteria for respectability in men's behaviour). The word 'common' was used by several correspondents and interviewees. Mrs J.P.¹⁰ from Levenshulme said it was considered common to attend the public wash house during the 1950s, and Mrs I.B. from Withington said her two daughters refused to go with

her out of embarrassment. Mrs W.I. from Hazel Grove went even further and described it as a humiliation, although she could justify using the wash house on practical grounds. Mrs E.F. from Longsight became distressed at the memory of her father and her husband ordering her not to attend the South Street washhouse because of its associations. 'It's for the poor', they told her, 'and we ain't poor'. With an increasing family and an inadequate kitchen, Mrs E.F. persisted in using the wash house until her husband bought her a washing machine. However, she continued to use the wash house because it was more efficient, more convenient and much less trouble. When her husband left her, Mrs E.F. said she sold the machine and continued her wash house habits.

Many of the correspondents and interviewees described their memories of the wash house in the context of extreme poverty. There were several references to taking in washing and to pawning bundles of washing. Mrs E.G. was brought up near London Road Station and remembered that her mother 'took in washing for the more well to do, and used the wash house off Baring Street (Mayfield) every day.' This would have been in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Mrs M.W., originally from Ardwick, thought that only the most desperate would take in washing, but women did not judge each other harshly because of it. Mrs S.D. remembered her mother wearing out a succession of prams going to the 'Gorton Tub' with other peoples washing several days a week. Her mother would go at 6.30am and return at 8.30 in time to see nine children off to school. It was Mrs S.D.'s job to have a 'brew' ready for her mother's return. A group of women interviewed in Wythenshawe, who had mostly moved there from central Manchester in the 1950s and 1960s, thought that using the wash house was itself an admission of poverty, so nobody would admit to washing other peoples clothes. This group was possibly representative of the 'respectable working class' (or their successors) who were the original pioneers in the new housing in Wythenshawe.¹¹

Elizabeth Roberts (1984) used an interview with Mrs Stott of Lancaster, whose mother 'worked hard and took in washing for all the big bugs', ¹² as an illustration of rural poverty affecting several generations. Mrs Stott herself took in washing as a young woman, '...I used to get 2 shillings for doing all the bloomin' wash, sheets and everything'.¹³ The view is repeatedly expressed in many sources that this was the worst paid job that a woman could take on, and reflects the value placed on this essential task by the rest of society.

Writing of the urban poor, Carl Chinn (1988) says that a widow or deserted wife would only take in washing as a last resort, as it was so badly paid.¹⁴ He writes of women in Birmingham who washed for others in their own homes or communal wash rooms attached to blocks of houses or tenements. Chinn's lack of reference to public wash houses confirms the wide national variation in provision which was highlighted in Agnes Campbell's report of 1918.

Mr H.M. from Stockport, one of the few male correspondents in this study, described the regular routine of pushing a pram of dirty washing for his grandmother to the wash house in the Portwood area every Monday. When dry and ironed she would wrap it in a parcel and send him with it to the pawnbrokers on Heaton Lane, to be redeemed when grandad paid over his wages on a Saturday. Mr H.M. described this as a weekly ritual for about eight years of his childhood in the 1930s. Miss K.H. worked from 1934 to 1961 as an office clerk in many of Manchester's public wash houses. It was her opinion that the family wash often went straight to the pawnbrokers and it was sometimes other peoples' washing, either done legitimately or sometimes 'borrowed.' Miss K.H. withheld judgement on this practice 'when the mothers had so many mouths to feed'. Melanie Tebbutt (1983), details the weekly cycle of pledges at the pawnbrokers¹⁵, with Tuesday as the day washing came in. The

'professionals' regarded pawning other families' laundry as a matter of course and as a common source of income with no shame attached. The trade in washing, both clean and dirty, was part and parcel (literally) of the cash economy for the urban poor.

Similar levels of poverty are conveyed in a long letter from Mrs L.D. who was brought up in the Ancoats area. She started married life in 1934 in two rooms with no inside water supply, just a cold tap in the yard.¹⁶ She pawned her wedding ring to pay the tram fare to the hospital when her first child was due. Unable to cope with the baby's washing, she went with a neighbour to the wash house in Ancoats, and 'what a blessing it turned out to be'. Time at the wash house was not all fun and games, - there were frequent thefts and arguments, caused mainly by poverty thought Mrs L.D. The clerk in the office (always a woman) would have to sort things out, and it was no use calling on the male machine attendants. A relief from drudgery was provided when women brought tea and the occasional cigarette. Mrs L.D. was one of twelve children, had seven of her own and used the wash houses in Ancoats, Collyhurst and Longsight during her lifetime.

All of the interviewees were asked how they would describe themselves and the other users of the wash houses. Consistently the answer was 'working class' or just 'the poor', given as a matter of fact, without inhibition. Only two interviewees would qualify for the description 'middle class', and they were the former general manager (male) and former office clerk (female). Despite her different status, the clerk, Miss K.H., showed considerable empathy with the women users, possibly because she too was a woman and possibly because her daily work inside the wash house brought her into much closer contact with the women than that of the general manager. Miss K.H. said she had known a few smarter, middle class women

use the wash house. Some of these had fallen upon hard times, but others she thought 'you had to watch, because they were a bit devious'.

No matter how 'common' it was to use the public wash house, all the correspondents and interviewees were unanimous in the opinion that no other method of washing produced such clean clothes. Mrs M.W., originally from Ardwick, was reluctant to continue her courtship with her future husband in the early 1950s until his mother agreed to patronise the local wash house and spruce up his appearance. Even after leaving the area Mrs M.W. took her washing from Dukinfield to the wash house on Birch Street/ Dainton Street, Ardwick until it closed down around 1970. Mrs D.H., who had moved from Longsight to Wythenshawe, felt able to scoff at the less than white laundry of those who looked down on her for using the wash house. She complained that there had been no wash houses built on the new Wythenshawe estate because she thought they were regarded as old fashioned,¹⁷ although some of the 1960s blocks of flats had small communal laundry rooms. (Similar provision was made in the blocks at Smedley Point Collyhurst, and Eden Close, Hulme.) Mrs D.H. was not impressed with these and minutes of the Baths and Laundries Committee throughout the 1960s¹⁸ indicate that they were never well used and always made a financial loss. Writing in 1988 about the 1960s, Mary Turner¹⁹ said the flat dwellers came to the big wash houses in preference to the basement laundries in the blocks, because the former had better facilities.

The convenience, economy and the quality of the washing were repeatedly given as reasons for using the public wash house in the face of disapproval. The same phrases crop up again and again, for example, 'It was a godsend', 'It was such a relief', 'It made such a difference' and 'I don't know what I would have done without the wash house.' At least three women continued to use the wash house after they had acquired washing machines because they

thought the clothes were better washed. Mary Turner²⁰ said that 'The laundry system was so good then, and very cheap, that I never considered getting a machine for washing.' Apart from a superior wash, there were the practical constraints which no aspirations to respectability could overcome. Mrs I.B. and Mrs L.D. were among several women who started married life without access to hot water. Three other interviewees specifically mentioned a lack of space for washing or drying as their main problem. The wash house enthusiasts were also aware that the service was the cheapest option. Commercial laundries were much more expensive, and a relative costing presented to the Baths and Wash Houses Committee in the early 1960s was 2/6 for a family wash in the public wash house as opposed to 20/- in a commercial laundry. When launderettes spread from the 1950s onwards, they were regarded as more expensive, even if more convenient.

By far the most frequently quoted advantage of the wash house was not the cost, but the degree of cleanliness. However, the women users of the wash house were getting mixed messages. Both cleanliness and respectability were the duty of every wife and mother, but these were apparently not compatible when it came to using the public facilities of the wash house. In the case of those interviewed, the practical benefits overcame all other considerations, but of course this point of view came from a self-selecting group.

The previously quoted Teacher's Manual of 1899²¹ stated that the purpose of washing was health (both public and personal) rather than appearance and the need to boil certain items of laundry for health reasons has lingered on into recent memory as far as some interviewees were concerned. There were many references in the interviews to the procedure whereby the male attendant would stop the machine half way through and anything unsuitable for boiling would be removed; the rest would then be boiled. All the original wash stalls in the earliest wash houses had access to a boiler. The association between boiling and hygiene was

revealed by a remark from E, in the group from east Manchester, '...my mother took in washing and she got T.B. through not boiling it'. Several women in the same group nodded agreement and said they had boiled handkerchiefs and underwear until recent times. Christine Zmroczek (1992) interviewed a number of women in Brighton in the late 1980s and found a similar view of boiling.

*Boiling was considered essential for getting the wash really clean and germ-free. Indeed, this was so important that some of the women interviewed still believe that things aren't properly clean without it.*²²

The moral judgement about clean washing seems to be deeply ingrained in many women's thinking. Joanna Bourke (1994) says,

*The whiteness of curtains revealed the kind of woman inside. The shade of a family's underclothing on the line was noted and the judgement passed concerned the housewife's morals as much as her skills at the wash tub.*²³

Carl Chinn argues that these standards of cleanliness were a part of the defensive role adopted by many working class women.²⁴ These women were defending their families, and children in particular, against the criticisms of their peers and their betters. Keeping the home and the children spotlessly clean was an expression of the 'ceaseless fight' waged by working class women. Only one of the recent interviewees articulated this in terms of class conflict rather than class identity. Mrs L.D.'s perception of her life experience was entirely politicised, to the extent of ascribing political motives to the middle class men who provided a wash house rather than decent housing for all.

Judgement by other women seems to have influenced their peers. Ann Oakley (1974) describes the pride felt by a manager's wife in the nice clean washing on the line,²⁵ and goes on to discuss the association of whiteness and the moral obligation of the housewife. Some of Oakley's interviewees explain how 'they anticipate the silent admiration of neighbours at

this visible though short-lived achievement.²⁶ Oakley interprets the housewives' criticisms of launderettes as 'ideological statements', because '... the housewife's place is in the home, washing and hanging out her own clothes, and not in the launderette having it processed for her'.²⁷ The personal and moral obligation of the housewife in respect of the family laundry is seen by Caroline Davidson (1982)²⁸ as a significant reason for women not using the wash house, commercial laundry or launderette. Of course the provision of such facilities was never uniform across the country, but it was not just lack of access which dictated women's choice. She says,

This reluctance on the part of women to let their laundry out of the house is puzzling, given the fact that so many of them positively hated the process of washing and ironing. It certainly cannot be explained away in terms of cost, because public and commercial laundries were keenly priced.... No, the explanation is a moral one. If cleanliness was indeed next to godliness, then women wanted to create that moral worth with their own hands, ... or at least in their own homes.²⁹

The results of the interviews in Manchester suggest that the moral worth of doing the family wash is not always in the location, but in the degree of cleanliness obtained. The sense of moral obligation concerning housework is inseparable from notions of respectability and lifestyle. In their study of women's lives in the Wythenshawe of the 1930s, Hughes and Hunt³⁰ identify high domestic standards and increasing family privacy as consequences of new housing policies.

It seems that there was much that was lost in the move from inner city communities of terraced houses and corner shops where women were close neighbours, to a new estate built around the concept of privacy.³¹

Much has been written about the sense of community and self-help which, it is claimed, was characteristic of the old urban villages from which many working class families were displaced. The evidence from the interviews is inconsistent, as was that gained by Hughes and Hunt. Some interviewees in the 1950s and also in 1999 complained of loneliness while others were pleased to have better housing conditions and adopted a new life style willingly.

Hughes and Hunt warn against making sweeping generalisations about the 'good old days', based upon nostalgia.

Close examination of the letters and taped interviews reveal much language which may appear nostalgic. The phrases 'vivid memories', 'happy memories' and 'happy times' crop up frequently. Mrs M.S. thought going to the wash house was 'as much a social gathering as one for laundering'. With the pre-booking system, women were likely to meet the same people every week and so lasting friendships were formed. Mrs D.H. recalled how she and a friend would park their prams of washing outside the ^{MIDWAY} ~~Halfway~~ House in Levenshulme and pop in for a shandy on the way home. Mrs I.L. said it became routine for a few friends to call at the fish and chip shop after their visit to the wash house. Little parties and celebrations at the wash house were common and women often saved for a Christmas treat. The word 'laughter' was frequently used, with the clerk, Miss K.H. describing some of her regulars as 'a bunch of comics'.

These recollections are not necessarily the romanticised view of the past which Hughes and Hunt warn against. The full conversations on tape reveal women looking back with pride and affection to a creative period in their lives, - building a home, bringing up children and making friends, - a period upon which they placed great value. Memories of the wash house had become symbolic of very meaningful aspects of their lives. Sharing what little they had and helping each other out were frequently quoted aspects of an earlier lifestyle associated with the public wash house, and some interviewees regretted the decline of these customs.

Social isolation was an aspect of home washing mentioned by a few interviewees. Mrs M.S. 'felt isolated at home doing the washing on my own', after she had become used to the wash

house. Mrs M.W. and Mrs E.F. both gave the need for company as one of the reasons for patronising the wash house when they had machines of their own. This is reflected in Ann Oakley's comment, '...loneliness is an occupational hazard for the modern housewife who is often cut off, not only from community life but even from family life.'³² Women looked forward to a 'good gossip' (Mrs I.L. and Mrs M.S.) or even a 'good row' (Mrs I.L. again), but according to Mrs A.B. 'heaven help the woman who is the talk of the wash house'.

Carl Chinn writes of the parochial and matriarchal urban communities where 'the talk of neighbours was an expressive and effective means of social control'.³³ In this respect the local wash house became the equivalent of the parish pump. Another view of wash house gossip is given by Tebbutt (1995).³⁴ The closed system of urban working class communities, with its clear separation of roles by gender, brought about a level of women's talk which could be socially binding. The nature of women's communication skills could maintain or possibly disrupt the equilibrium of a small community, and the wash house provided the social space in which this gossip could take place. Some of the women interviewed were equally ambivalent about the role of gossip in the creation of a sense of community. Mrs E.B. from Fallowfield remembered many who had no time or inclination to gossip. Annie from Wythenshawe saw cause and effect in reverse: as the working class had a communal way of life 'forced upon them' in the old areas of the city, then 'you may as well muck in and have a laugh'. However, Mary Turner described the gossip and the relationships as 'supportive but undemanding',³⁵ which must have met a need for many women. An article in The Manchester Guardian³⁶ in 1959 featured the Bradford wash house on Barmouth Street, and described a very business-like atmosphere with no time for gossip. This was 'not a social centre, but an efficient laundry'. This is in contrast to an earlier article in 1956, which referred to the weekly wash as a social occasion, marked by tea and sandwiches.³⁷ No

generalisations should therefore be made about the way in which working class women used the wash house: each had their own needs and would use the wash house accordingly.

A very different theme of this study has been the significance of the grand municipal architecture which prompted the initial interest into the purpose of the baths and wash house buildings. However, this aspect of the wash house seems to have had no significance whatever for the majority of correspondents and interviewees. The women from east Manchester were interviewed in a day centre in the West End area of Ashton, just a stone's throw from the Italian Romanesque baths and wash house built in the 1870s by local industrialist and philanthropist Hugh Mason.³⁸ Few of those present had even noticed the building. Their allegiance was to the wash houses of Manchester and their interest was in their function, not their appearance. Annie from Wythenshawe didn't think that the 'bigwigs at the Town Hall were trying to impress us lot, - perhaps they were trying to impress the other bigwigs in the next town'. Mrs A.D. thought it was a 'daft question' because all the council was interested in was saving money, not spending it. Of course most of these comments refer to post war years and not to the era of an opulent architectural style. The grand wash palaces of an earlier chapter had been built before World War I whereas those built since then have been of a much plainer design. (Compare figure 17, Holland Street Salford, 1956, with figures 8 and 9, Victoria Baths, 1906, and Chelsea Baths, 1905).

It may be of significance that the men interviewed did express some interest in this aspect of Manchester's baths and wash houses. The two former employees, Mr H.H., General Manager and Mr A.H., superintendent and engineer, both spoke at length about the architectural and engineering principles which dictated the exterior and interior design of the

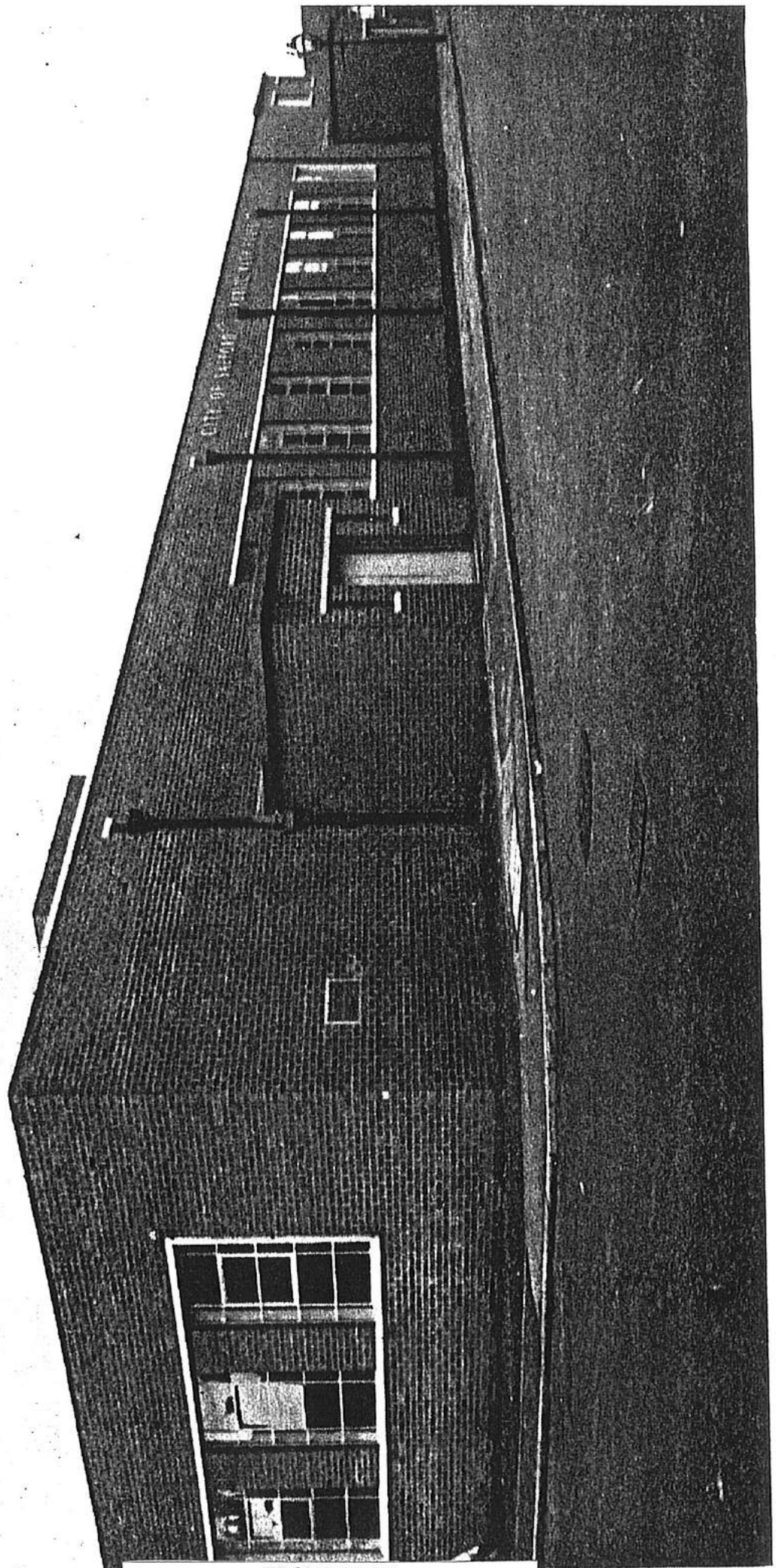


FIGURE 17

HOLLAND STREET PUBLIC WASH-HOUSE (Exterior View).

buildings. The husband of one woman interviewee (Mrs D.S.) had an interest in architecture as an expression of civic or corporate identity. Mr S had worked all his life for Manchester City Council and had a strong commitment to the principles of collective responsibility. Some of his comments on this subject were resonant of the meetings of the Statistical Society in the 1850s.

Differences of perception may be rooted in class and gender. The 'founding fathers' of the city who chose to build in the grand style, were themselves men of importance and social standing in industry and philanthropy in the late nineteenth century. Members of the Baths and Wash Houses Committee who approved the plain buildings of the inter-war period were possibly more representative of those who might use the wash house. There were three women councillors on the Committee between the wars, including the formidable Hannah Mitchell who served from 1923 to 1935. Committee minutes from this period and into World War II reveal how women members were frequently approached by women users of the wash house with various grievances. The fact that the Committee was more representative of users in terms of class and gender, as well as more approachable, is perhaps one of the reasons for a change in priorities from the grand to the functional.

Gender differences within the wash house went unquestioned by the women washers. The managers, engineers, boilermen and machine attendants were male but the office clerks and washers were female. The women did not regard the wash house as a man's place: a man's place was at work and the men in the wash house were working, not washing. Mary Turner said 'Occasionally a husband would arrive in his wife's place, but they were like fish out of soapy water.'³⁹ The women of east Manchester referred to the men 'doing the works', in other words, attending to all the machinery. The gradual transfer of control from women to

men in commercial laundries is one of the main themes of Arwen Mohun's recent study.⁴⁰ Looking at commercial steam laundries she shows how the washerwoman of the 1840s was superseded by the male technician of the twentieth century as new technology evolved. (There are echoes here of technological change in the textile industry in the Manchester region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.) Such gender divisions were accepted as the norm by the women interviewees who had mostly been young married women in the late 1940s and 1950s when male employment was high and it was the norm for women with children to be at home. A notable feature of the interviews was that the manager and the engineer always used the word 'laundry' whilst the women users said 'wash house', or quite often 'wash place.' This reflects the change in name to the Baths and Laundries Department in 1960, because, presumably, this was seen as a more respectable term.

The question of race was not originally expected to be a controversial issue in this study. All of the interviewees were white, and the remaining correspondence suggested a predominantly white, working class group. Several interviewees raised the issue of race in similar terminology: Mrs M.W., Mrs D.S. and Mrs D.H. all said that things went downhill from the late 1960s when 'the Asians arrived and took over the wash house'. This was reported with some sense of grievance, but could not be substantiated with any evidence about cause and effect. Mary Turner thought the problem with the 'Asian immigrant women' was that they couldn't grasp the idea that there were rules in the wash house, and so they must have come from a background where it was 'every woman for herself'.⁴¹ Miss K.H. said that people moved into Moss Side (where she worked as the wash house clerk) from all over the world, and they were glad to use the wash house. They 'soon got the hang of it' if someone would take the trouble to show them, and she thought their arrival temporarily

revived the gradual decline in the public wash house. Whereas some women suggested that the arrival of minority ethnic groups in the wash house caused the original users to leave, Miss K.H. thought that attendance had already started to go down before these groups arrived.

There was a general consensus amongst the interviewees regarding the main reasons for that decline. The process had begun before World War II when the vast new housing developments in Blackley, Fallowfield and Wythenshawe introduced new standards of accommodation. Despite arguments to the contrary from people like Councillor Hannah Mitchell, the City Council chose not to provide wash houses for the residents of the new estates. Each cottage style home would have adequate facilities for home laundry in the new 'respectable' way behind closed doors. Mrs E.B., Mr A.H., Mrs I.L. and Mr H.H. all gave slum clearance as the main reason for change. Mrs I.B. recalled being re-housed in a new council house after being bombed out of Hulme during the war. The new house had two W.C.s and an integral wash house attached to the scullery. She never used the public wash house again.

For many others still living in older properties, the new 'shop' launderettes from the late 1950s and early 1960s provided a more convenient alternative to the wash house. Mrs D.H. and Mrs M.W. both said the launderettes were nearer and quicker to use, but not as cheap or as clean and Mary Turner described them as barren places with no conversation. Miss K.H. was scathing about the 'amateurs' who opened launderettes in corner shops and 'put up against us'. The Baths and Laundries Committee had recognised the existence of the 'shop' launderettes from the 1950s onwards, but had not taken them seriously until the General

Manager reported to them in June 1961⁴² that there were at least three 'overseas organisations' running launderettes across the city.

The General Manager identified other causes for the decline in use of the wash house, and suggested that the main reason was a cultural one. Younger women were put off by the institutional appearance of the large municipal wash house and there remained a degree of social stigma attached to queuing up for this communal activity. More women were working and it became easier for families to purchase their own domestic washing machines as hire purchase controls were lifted. Ownership of washing machines in Britain had always been far behind that in the United States, and the reason, according to Zmroczek,⁴³ was mainly that of cost. Relative to income, washing machines were much more expensive in Britain and there was also some cultural resistance to technology in the domestic sphere. The 1960s saw a marked increase in ownership when cheaper machines in the shape of twin-tubs came on the market. Caroline Davidson⁴⁴ quotes the following figures on the ownership of washing machines.

1948 – 3% of households
1958 – 29% of households
1969 – 64% of households
1980 – 77% of households

Another factor in the declining need for the facilities of the wash house was the rapid increase in the use of artificial fibres, or as it was quaintly put in 1969, 'The development of man-made materials has changed laundry for the housewife'.⁴⁵

All of these trends presented a threat to the municipal wash houses and were reported to the Baths and Laundries Committee by the General Manager throughout the 1960s and noted in

the minutes. These minutes are reflected in contemporary newspaper reports, especially the Manchester Evening News, which monitored the threatened closures. The first service to be closed in 1962/3 was the home delivery service, which had been running at a loss for some years. The General Manager recommended a radical programme of full automation in the wash houses and the introduction of music and drinks machines. The provision of a juke box at the Bradford Wash House was reported (with pictures) by the Manchester Evening News in February 1968, but this was a light relief from other reports of protests against closures.⁴⁶ The manager advised the Committee to approve the removal of all steam power and hand washing: this would allow for modern décor and possibly attract some women back to the wash house. However the closures began in the early 1960s and continued despite the protests, petitions and the personal intervention of Nobby Stiles' mother who was a regular at the Osborne Street Wash House. The funereal details of all the closures can be found in the appendix to this study.

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- ² Mrs Beeton The Book of the Laundry Ward, Lock and Tyler London 1886
- ³ Ibid p.9
- ⁴ Ibid p.23
- ⁵ Neil Smelser Social Change in the Industrial Revolution Routledge, Kegan, Paul London 1959
- ⁶ The Home Laundry and Hints on Washing Day at Home Roberts and Leete Ltd. Blackpool 1898
- ⁷ It is interesting to note that all sources on this subject in the Hollings annexe of Manchester Metropolitan University are stamped 'Manchester Municipal Training College of Domestic Economy.'
- ⁸ Fanny Calder A Teachers Manual of Elementary Laundry Longmans, Green and Co. London 1899
- ⁹ Ibid p.vii
- ¹⁰ For full details of the correspondence, interviews and interviewees see appendix four.

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- ¹¹ See Ann Hughes and Karen Hunt, 'A Culture Transformed? Women's lives in Wythenshawe in the 1930s'. In A.Davies and S.Fielding (Editors) Workers Worlds – Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939 Manchester University Press Manchester 1992
- ¹² Elizabeth Roberts A Woman's Place. An Oral History of Working Class Women 1890-1940 Blackwell Oxford 1984
- ¹³ Ibid p.140
- ¹⁴ Carl Chinn They Worked all their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England 1880-1939 Manchester University Press Manchester 1988
- ¹⁵ Melanie Tebbutt Making Ends Meet Leicester University Press Leicester 1983
- ¹⁶ It is estimated that by 1947 only 55% of homes in Britain had a hot water supply. Figures from The British Household Government Social Survey Central Office of Information 1947
- ¹⁷ See Hughes and Hunt Op. Cit. concerning Wythenshawe
- ¹⁸ See Committee minutes 1961-1970, held in the Town Hall Manchester
- ¹⁹ Mary Turner The Wash House Unpublished paper 1988
- ²⁰ Ibid p.1
- ²¹ Fanny Calder Op. Cit.
- ²² Christine Zmroczek Dirty Linen: Women, Class and Washing Machines, 1920s-1960s in Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 15 no 2 1992 pp173-185
- ²³ Joanna Bourke Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960 Routledge London 1994
- ²⁴ Carl Chinn Op. Cit. pp.20-22
- ²⁵ Ann Oakley The Sociology of Housework Blackwell Oxford 1974
- ²⁶ Ibid p.54
- ²⁷ Ibid p.55
- ²⁸ Caroline Davidson A Woman's Work is Never Done: A History of Housework in the British Isles 1650-1950 Chatto and Windus London 1982
- ²⁹ Ibid p.163
- ³⁰ Hughes and Hunt Op. Cit.
- ³¹ Ibid p.89
- ³² Ann Oakley Op. Cit. p.88
- ³³ Carl Chinn Op. Cit. p.42
- ³⁴ Melanie Tebbutt Womens' Talk. A Social History of Gossip in Working Class Neighbourhoods 1880-1960 Scholar Press 1995
- ³⁵ Mary Turner Op. Cit. 1988 p. 1

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- ³⁶ Manchester Guardian 17th September 1959
- ³⁷ Manchester Guardian 26th October 1956
- ³⁸ This Grade II* listed building is described in the Sites and Monuments Record as a 'Notable example of late 19th century municipal architecture.'
- ³⁹ Mary Turner Op. Cit. 1988 p.1
- ⁴⁰ Arwen P. Mohun Steam Laundries: Gender, Technology and Work in the United States and Great Britain 1880-1940 John Hopkins University Press 1999
- ⁴¹ Mary Turner Op. Cit. 1988 p.2
- ⁴² Minutes of the Baths and Laundries Committee, 14th June 1961, Town Hall, Manchester. The Manager was possibly referring to firms like Bendix and Laundromat, both American owned.
- ⁴³ Christine Zmroczek Op. Cit. 1992
- ⁴⁴ Caroline Davidson Op. Cit. Chapter 7
- ⁴⁵ K.J.Mills Washing Wisdom Forbes Publications London 1969
- ⁴⁶ See articles about the threatened closures in the Manchester Evening News of 1st February 1967, 19th November 1967 and 29th December 1970

CONCLUSION

One aspect of this debate which can be set aside as having little relevance to the users of the wash houses, is that of the outward appearance and architectural style of the buildings. This subject may be of interest to building historians, architects and industrial archaeologists, (the majority of whom are probably middle class men), but it proved to have no significance for the working class women washers of Manchester. The proposed links between civic pride, social class and the design of public buildings seem not to have inspired the recipients of public service, at least not from the limited evidence of this study. The women's concern with the buildings was entirely functional. Only the male interviewees showed any interest in this subject, and the explanation for this could be a class and gender bias in those aspects of history which are of significance for people. Another, less sophisticated reason might be the different priorities of women overwhelmed by drudgery.

The causes of the initial growth of the movement for baths and wash houses in the mid-nineteenth century should have become clear. This was seen as a practical and morally worth-while public service, created within a culture of health and cleanliness and one which met the needs of those too poor to have the necessary facilities in their own homes. This practical benefit continued to be the main 'raison d'être' for the public wash house but it also came to meet some other needs for many women. Mary Turner thought that she and many others continued to use the wash house long after they really needed it for practical purposes,

Talking over the years, I never met anybody who used the wash house for the reasons they were originally started,- lack of hot water and sinks and so on at home. Everybody had the basics and a lot had electric washers, so really one cannot blame the council if they had to cut down on these facilities.¹

This need for something other than the practical was very much borne out by the correspondents and interviewees whose experiences are described in the previous chapter. The wash house provided companionship and an outlet for humour for many who felt isolated. It also provided the location for a sense of belonging, or a sense of class identity, which brought feelings of comfort and solidarity. This need has become less as class distinctions have become blurred. However, social needs alone were not seen as a sufficient reason for a loss making service to continue. As the service gradually declined from the late 1960s through to the 1980s, women turned to different means of meeting their needs for social contact.

Other more measurable social and demographic trends contributed to the decline in the use of the public wash house. Massive slum clearance programmes in the 1960s had a permanent effect on usage: more women were in paid employment and more families bought their own domestic washing machines. Less easy to quantify as a reason for the end of the public wash houses is the trend from public to private and its association with moving up the social scale. The Departmental Manager of Baths and Laundries had made the point in 1961² that the old wash houses were seen by younger people as out-dated public institutions, similar to the work house and having the same stigma attached.

Other aspects of life, leisure activities in particular, have become more family based and less community based. Hughes, Hunt and Tebbutt have all referred to the increasing privatisation of family life with greater affluence and fluidity of social class. The social space provided by the public wash house was no longer required, as women met these needs in different ways, - having perhaps less time for these communal activities and their partners having more time to share with the family. The women's world of the wash house has been neutralised by

technology and by class changes and is now focussed on another example of consumer goods, lined up in the kitchen, buttons at the ready.

REFERENCES

¹ Mary Turner The Wash House Unpublished paper 1982 p.4

² Minutes of the Baths and Laundries Committee, 14th June 1961. Town Hall, Manchester.

POST SCRIPT

The final chapter in the history of Manchester's public wash houses is one of a slow and lingering demise. The Committee, now named Baths and Laundries as from 1960, closed the laundry on New Quay Street in the same year, having long met the needs of neighbouring Salford. It was decided in 1964 to end the collection and delivery service which had been running since 1947 but was rapidly losing money. The Pryme Street Laundry closed in 1965 and Osborne Street in 1967, on the grounds that they were both very old buildings in slum clearance areas, and consequently unsuitable for modernisation. Pryme Street was also threatened by plans for the new Mancunian Way which contributed to the fate of Leaf Street Laundry in 1968.

Anticipating the trend, the General Manager proposed that year¹ that the Baths and Laundries Department build small laundries in all the new housing blocks, with a view to phasing out the old laundries in time. When the 1969 figures for annual attendance showed a drop of 27,000 in 12 months, the General Manager proposed a 'crash automation' scheme to arrest this decline.² The other two options he presented to the Committee were to hand everything over to the Housing Department or to private enterprise. The Committee went for the fourth option, which was to do nothing.

From 1970 the Department came under the Recreation Committee, as Baths and Laundries were merged with Parks and Gardens and from this point the Committee minutes became completely different in their content and style. Agendas were very long with up to forty appendices, but with few references to the laundries. In 1971 the attendance figures were down 25,000 on the previous year and the Birch Street/Dainton Street laundry eventually

closed after many protests and delays. Meanwhile, however, a new baths and laundry was proposed for Miles Platting to replace Osborne Street, New Islington and the old Miles Platting wash house on Rhodes Street. There were tensions between the Laundries and the Housing Departments as the latter built new housing developments with small shopping precincts and began renting out shop units to private launderettes. The Housing Department also had over seventy small laundries of their own across Manchester but many of these were closing because of a lack of demand.

In 1973 the General Manager of the Baths and Laundries pressed for a resolution to this state of affairs, but the various departments were 're-organised' and he found himself redundant, leaving in January 1974. From March 1974 the department was a part of Recreational Services and the laundries no longer feature in the minutes of Committee meetings. Meetings over the following three years feature parks, playing fields, landscaping, fairs, circuses, allotments, cemeteries, sports events, fishing, swimming, museums, listed buildings, local radio, the Manchester Show, the RAC Rally, dog shows, dolphin displays and 'It's a Knockout' as agenda items. The regular facts and figures from the public laundries no longer appear.

From 1980, however, the laundries re-appear with a catalogue of breakdowns, accidents and unplanned closures. The New Islington Laundry had closed in 1978, the Gorton establishment closed in 1980 and the one at Armitage Street appears to have closed in 1981. Those which remained open were experiencing great difficulties due to staffing problems, fuel shortages, industrial action and a lack of investment or planning.

A report to the Committee in 1982 concerning the future of the Laundry Service³ presented many familiar social and demographic reasons for its decline. The service had remained unchanged since 1965: the facilities were outdated and the machinery had a limited life. The report recommended that Manchester should follow Salford's lead in closing its large public wash houses and opening small, council owned launderettes in neighbourhood shopping areas. According to the same minutes some women councillors protested at these proposals but their nostalgia for the old wash houses was no substitute for long overdue investment.

Before any long-term decision had been made on this radical proposal, Recreational Services were subsumed into Leisure Services (1984) and it is not clear from subsequent minutes whether the remaining laundries were closed as part of a plan or whether they were allowed to fade away.

¹ See minutes of Committee meetings, November and December 1968. Manchester Town Hall.

² Meeting of the Baths and Laundries Committee, 9th April 1969

³ Meeting of the Recreational Services Committee, 30th March 1982

FIGURE 18

18a

The oldest and newest purpose built
baths and wash house buildings in
the region.

Right: 18a Greengate, Salford.

Below: 18b Herbert Street, Cheetham.



18b



18c Whitworth Baths and Openshaw Laundry



18d Harpurhey Baths



APPENDICES

1. DETAILS OF THE BATHS AND WASH HOUSE ESTABLISHMENTS IN MANCHESTER

2. MAP TO SHOW LOCATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS

3. ATTENDANCE FIGURES AT PUBLIC WASH HOUSES 1918-1968

4. INFORMATION ABOUT CORRESPONDENCE AND INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX 1

Baths And Wash Houses In Manchester: Their Location And Relevant Dates.

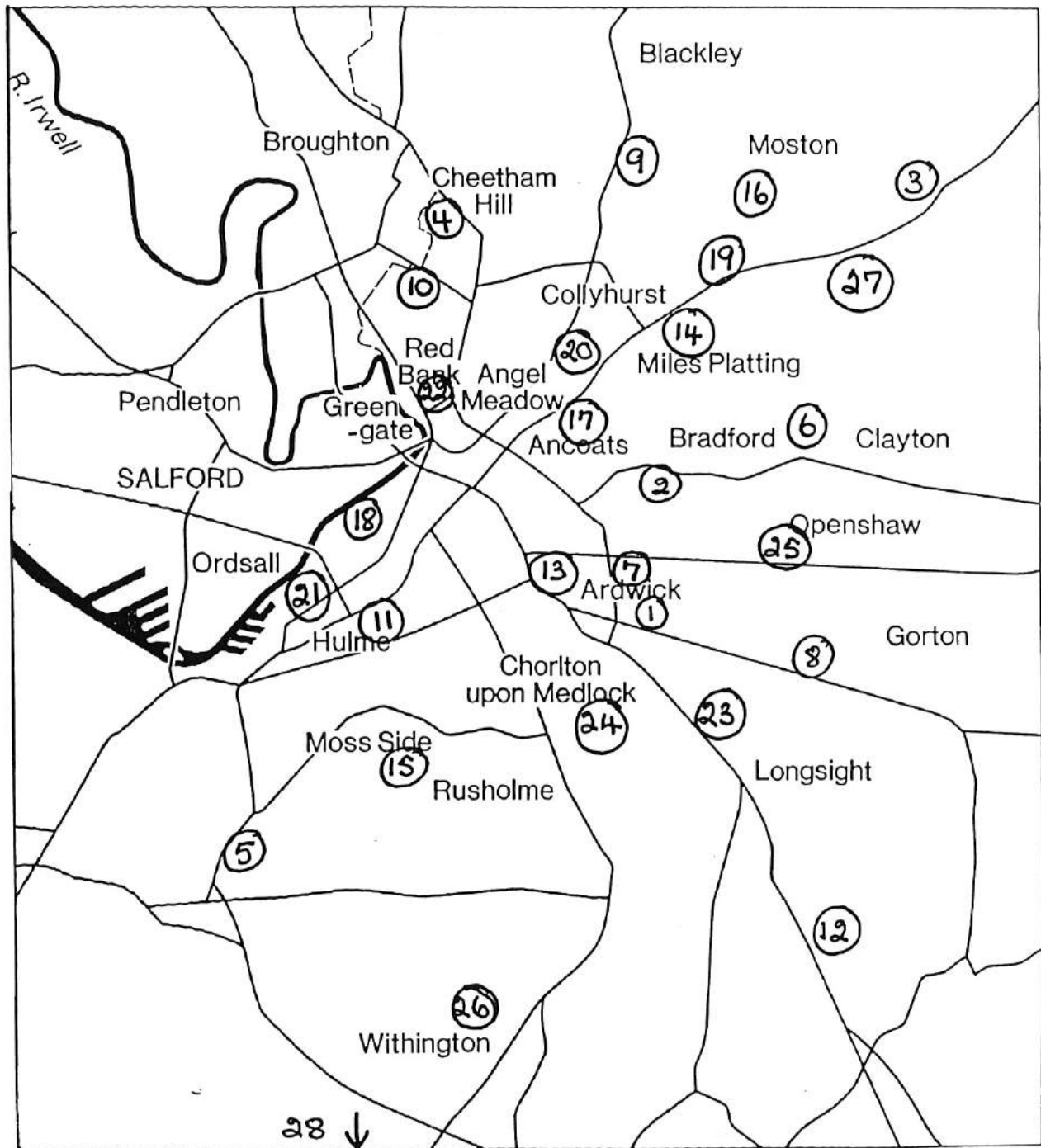
No	Establishment	Address	Date of opening	Date of closure
1	Armitage St. Baths & Wash House	Hyde Rd. Ardwick	1911	1981 1982
2	Bradford Baths & Wash House	Barmouth St. Beswick	1909	From 1982
3	Broadway Baths *	New Moston	1932	1981
4	Cheetham Baths*	Cheetham Hill Rd.	1894	1978
5	Chorlton Baths*	Manchester Rd. Chorlton cum Hardy	1929	
6	Clayton Baths & Wash House	Bank St. Clayton	1931	1987?
7	Dainton St. (no baths) Wash House	Chancellor Lane Ardwick	1925	1972
8	Gorton Baths & Wash House	Hyde Rd. Gorton	1890	1980
9	Harpurhey Baths & Wash House	Rochdale Rd. Harpurhey	1910	Pool still open W/hse clsd 1987 ?
10	Herbert St. Baths & Wash House	Herbert St. Cheetham	1932	1987?
11	Leaf St. Baths & Wash House	Off Stretford Rd. Hulme	1860	1968
12	Levenshulme Baths & Wash House	Barlow Rd. Levenshulme	1921	Pool still open W/h clsd 1987?
13	Mayfield Baths & Wash House	Stove St. Off London Rd.	1856	1944
14	Miles Platting Baths & Wash House	Rhodes St. Miles Platting	1911	1987?
15	Moss Side Baths & Wash House	Broadfield Rd. Moss Side	1906	1987?
16	Moston Baths & Wash House	Dean Lane Moston	1927	1987?
17	New Islington Baths & Wash House	Baker St. Ancoats	1880	1978
18	New Quay St. Baths & Wash House	Deansgate	1914	1960

19	Newton Heath Baths & Wash House	Wellock St. Oldham Rd.	1891	1981
20	Osborne St. Baths & Wash House	Rochdale Rd. Collyhurst	1883	1967
21	Pryme St. Baths & Wash House	Off Chester Rd. Hulme	1904	1965
22	Red Bank Baths*	Axle St. Red Bank	1896	1934
23	South St. Wash House (no baths)	South St. Longsight	1931	1981
24	Victoria Baths*	Hathersage Rd. Chorlton on Medlock	1906	1993
25	Whitworth Baths & Openshaw Laundry	Ashton Old Rd. Openshaw	1890	1987?
26	Withington Baths*	Burton Rd. Withington	1913	
27	Workesleigh St. Baths & Wash House	Culceth Newton Heath	1931	1987?
28	Wythenshawe Pool*	Altrincham Rd. Sharston	1961	
* Establishment with baths only – no public wash house				

N.B. The numbers in the left-hand column correspond with the numbers on the map overleaf.

APPENDIX 2

Map to show location of all establishments. Numbers correspond to those in appendix 1.



APPENDIX 3

Annual attendance at public wash houses in Manchester 1918 to 1968.

The figures which follow should be regarded with caution as discrepancies and inconsistencies have been noted. For over a century the appropriate committee of the City Council has frequently changed the method of presenting facts and figures relating to the public wash houses. In later years the amount of information given in minutes and reports has declined. Some additional figures and information are also attached from the annual reports of 1938 and 1968.

ANNUAL ATTENDANCE		1918-1968					
		1918	1928	1938	1948	1958	1968
1	Armitage St.	37380	33808	29880	34715	47186	24721
2	Bradford	42485	45135	51832	58097	69208	60250
3	Birch St./Dainton St.	-	49024	41005	62611	46528	27886
4	Clayton	-	-	34676	49884	34985	30233
5	Gorton	-	39034	44355	56959	64836	47365
6	Harpurhey	43434	40544	45176	53874	66729	50617
7	Herbert St.	-	-	32974	52153	47086	43357
8	Leaf St.	32158	30954	32239	41864	37408	8527*
9	Levenshulme	-	19055	21392	34242	35728	27961
10	Mayfield	-	46771	30640	-	-	-
11	Moss Side	-	-	27315	51153	60942	29516
12	Moston	-	13561	29844	53200	45734	41912
13	Miles Platting	38153	30988	36036	54271	52846	28293
14	New Islington	20524	48085	37210	37897	32780	14679
15	Newton Heath	-	34515	21779	34093	31092	25001
16	New Quay St.	17047	16436	23043	25383	18348	-
17	Osborne St.	-	62669	47543	62629	70878	2406*
18	Pryme St.	26768	26154	40576	46705	37315	-
19	South St.	-	-	31290	50968	36965	23324
20	Whitworth/ Openshaw	-	-	-	-	64749	44972
21	Workesleigh St.	-	-	28228	43090	49303	37825
	ANNUAL TOTALS	257, 949	536, 733	687, 033	903, 788	950, 646	568, 844
* Leaf St. and Osborne St. closed in the period 1967/8							

Collection and Delivery Service

1948	1958	1968
51,035	49,956	Discontinued

All figures are from the Annual Reports of the Baths and Wash Houses Committee 1918-1968. The following have been omitted as they were baths only:
Broadway, Cheetham, Chorlton, Red Bank, Victoria, Withington.

MANCHESTER CORPORATION BATHS AND WASH-HOUSES

Bathers, Washers, etc., and Income for Year ending March 31st, 1938

PUBLIC BATHS			PUBLIC WASH-HOUSES		
	Bathers	Income £ s. d.		Washers	Hours Worked
Armitage Street	25,093	317 3 9	Armitage Street	29,880	55,052
Bradford	175,214	1,406 4 0	Birch Street	41,005	72,498½
Broadway	69,451	564 3 4	Bradford	51,832	102,774½
Cheetham	74,955	632 7 2	Clayton	34,676	51,538
Chorlton	63,621	847 12 4	Gorton	44,355	80,936
Clayton	6,478	89 7 9	Harpurhey	45,176	83,510½
Gorton	125,525	892 5 2	Herbert Street	32,974	51,487½
Harpurhey	137,349	1,245 5 5	Leaf Street	32,239	38,848½
Herbert Street	22,740	333 14 4	Levenshulme	21,392	37,585
Leaf Street	157,019	1,329 7 7	Mayfield	30,640	55,712½
Levenshulme	74,684	587 5 9	Miles Platting	36,036	60,344½
Mayfield	87,516	561 13 8	Moss Side	27,315	47,242
Miles Platting	19,917	267 17 2	Moston	29,844	60,668½
Moss Side	32,562	186 15 5	New Islington	37,210	68,818
Moston	6,239	89 15 9	New Quay Street	23,043	41,286
New Islington	104,783	645 11 5	Newton Heath	21,779	36,998
New Quay Street	19,284	196 15 5	Osborne Street	47,543	67,561½
Newton Heath	63,564	423 6 4	Pryme Street	40,576	52,142
Osborne Street	128,633	820 9 1	South Street	31,290	46,820
Pryme Street	28,227	258 2 5	Workesleigh Street	28,228	44,110
Victoria	171,112	2,307 12 11			
Whitworth	69,678	704 13 10			
Whittington	70,014	587 6 1			
Workesleigh Street	7,519	100 12 5			
	1,741,177	£15,395 8 6		687,033	1,155,933½
					24,746 15 6

Summary

Attendances		Income	
Bathers	...	£	s. d.
Washers	...	15,395	8 6
		24,746	15 6
		£40,142	4 0

Accounts for the Year

The complete accounts for the year are given in the City Treasurer's Abstract of Accounts.

On Capital Account

Assets of Land, Buildings, Machinery, etc. at 31st March 1968, amounted to £1,346,759. The loans outstanding were £413,610, and the surplus of Assets over Liabilities is £933,149.

Revenue Account

The result of the year's working on the Revenue Account is as follows:—

Baths and Laundries:—	£	£
Running Costs	462,916	
Loans Charges	43,384	
Renewals Fund Contribution—Plant	14,710	
Special Works	20,217	
Catering—Wythenshawe Cafe	541,227	
Administration	5,931	
Central Establishment Laundry*	26,936	
	31,217	
Total Expenditure		605,311
Less Income:—		
Baths—Bathing Income	84,722	
Laundries—Income from Users	134,767	
Hire of Baths (Gals, etc.)	219,489	
Hire of Hall	2,975	
Indoor Bowls	208	
From Coin operated Machines:—	124	
Hair Cream	44	
Weighing	186	
Drinks Vending (Bradford, Gorton, Whitworth and Withington)	833	
Plastic Bags (Bradford and Gorton)	42	
Hair Dryers (Wythenshawe)	38	
Phonographs (Bradford, Gorton and Wythenshawe)	218	
Rents	224,157	
	2,311	
Catering—Wythenshawe Cafe (including Vending)	226,468	
Central Establishment Laundry	6,699	
Laundering Services for Other Departments*	29,199	
General—Sales of Scrap Metal and Miscellaneous	1,650	
Total Income		264,016
Net Expenditure		341,295

On behalf of the Baths and Laundries Committee,

F. R. BUTLER,
Chairman.

Town Hall, Manchester. 2.

11th September, 1968.

*Central Laundry. The running costs include Expenditure incurred on the department's own laundering, but the income depicts only the payments received from other departments. Income derived from goods laundered for hire at establishments, is credited to the establishments concerned.

LAUNDRY ESTABLISHMENTS.

Name and Location and Phone No.	Date of Opening	General Remarks
Arncliffe Street Baths and Laundry, Hyde Road, Ardwick, Manchester 12. EAS. 0190	5-5-1911	Laundry modernised and re-opened 3-10-55. "Automatic" Boiler 9-8-56.
Bradford Baths and Laundry, Barnmouth Street, Manchester, 11. EAS 0050	20-8-1909	Laundry modernised and re-opened 20-11-50. Indoor Crown Green Bowls opened 1-11-55. Laundry converted to automatic service from 10-4-1955.
Broadway Baths, New Moston, Manchester, 10. FAL 1060	13-7-1932	Private Baths closed from 1-11-65.
Cheetham Baths, Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester, 8. CHE. 1037	4-4-1894	New females baths suite 1-5-53. New Males bath suite 1-12-57. Large Pool modernised 1-3-59. Small Pool closed due to leakage 31-7-61.
Chorlton Baths, Manchester Road, Manchester, 21. CHL. 2130	10-9-1929	Turkish Baths taken over for Civil Defence purposes 15-9-38 and subsequently closed. Private Baths closed from 1-11-65.
Clayton Baths and Laundry, Bank Street, Manchester, 11. EAS. 0553	17-12-1931	Steam received from adjacent Stuart Street Electricity Power Station. Laundry modernised and re-opened 5-10-59. Private Baths closed from 1-11-65.
Dainton Street Laundry, Chancellor Lane, Ardwick, Manchester, 12. AKD. 2756	5-1-1925	Modernised and re-opened 14-10-57.
Gorton Baths and Laundry, Hyde Road, Gorton, Manchester, 18. EAS. 0553	20-6-1890	Public laundry opened 3-1-23. Modernised and re-opened 1-6-53. Private Baths extension opened 29-12-30. Males Private Baths modernised and re-opened 31-3-60. Public Laundry re-equipped with automatic service and re-opened 7-12-64. "Automatic" boilers commissioned 20-3-67. Laundry modernised and re-opened 28-2-52.
Harpurley Baths and Laundry, Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, 9. COL. 2013	29-10-1910	Laundry modernised and re-opened 22-9-58
Herbert Street Baths and Laundry, Cheetham, Manchester, 8. BLO. 1347	23-3-1932	Acquired from private company. Establishment closed due to War damage 23-12-40 to 11-12-44. (Laundry re-opened). Baths partially re-opened 14-12-53. Laundry modernised and re-opened 23-7-57.
Leaf Street Baths and Laundry, Stretford Road, Hulme, Manchester, 15. CEN. 6131	1860	Swimming Baths and private baths added 25-6-31. Laundry modernised and re-opened 27-10-58. Private Baths closed from 1-11-65.
Levenshulme Baths and Laundry, Barlow Road, Levenshulme, Manchester, 19. RUS. 4370	10-10-1921	Laundry modernised and re-opened 12-3-56. Private Baths closed from 1-11-65. Tumbler dryers installed. Laundry re-opened 1-5-67.
Miles Platting Baths and Laundry, Grant Street, Hulme Hall Lane, Manchester, 10. COL. 2334	5-5-1911	Laundry added 16-9-31. Part of premises used for Civil Defence 1938-48. Laundry modernised and re-opened 26-6-54. One unit of Private Baths closed 1-11-65. "Automatic" boilers commissioned 4-9-67.
Moss Side Baths and Laundry, Broadfield Road, Manchester, 14. MOS. 2546	10-9-1906	Laundry modernised and re-opened 2-3-59. Private Baths closed from 1-11-65.
Moston Baths and Laundry, Dean Lane, Manchester, 10. FAL 1449	13-10-1927	First establishment erected by Corporation. First Corporation laundry opened 7-6-02. Partially modernised 19-4-54. One suite of Private Baths closed 1-11-65.
New Telington Baths and Laundry, Baker Street, Manchester, 4. COL. 2564	1-5-1880	Laundry opened 26-3-23. Part of establishment used for Civil Defence from 15-9-38. Private Baths modernised and re-opened 1-12-49 and laundry on 2-11-59.
Newton Heath Baths and Laundry, Wellock Street, Oldham Road, Manchester, 10. COL. 2569	21-4-1891	Modernised and re-opened 1-12-53.
South Street Laundry, Longsight, Manchester 12. ARD. 4032	30-9-1931	First municipal Aeratone Bath (in England) opened 3-7-52. Indoor Crown Green Bowls rink opened 22-11-67. "Automatic" boilers commissioned 10-10-57. Sauna Bath opened 9-10-67.
Victoria Baths, Hathernage Road, Chorlton-on-Medlock, Manchester, 13. RUS. 4541	10-9-1906	Swimming pools and private baths and Turkish Suite, used for Civil Defence 15-8-38. Partially re-opened 28-3-43. New Public Laundry opened on former site of second pool, 4-6-56. Baths modernised. Private Baths re-opening 30th November 1953, and the Swimming Pool on 23rd March 1964.
Whitworth Baths and Laundry, Whitworth, Athlton Old Road, Manchester, 11. EAS. 0532	1-5-1913	Taken for Civil Defence from 15-9-38. Re-opened 1-8-47. Private Baths closed 1-11-65.
Withington Baths, Burton Road, Manchester, 20. DID. 1046	17-12-1931	Laundry modernised and re-opened 29-10-56. Private Baths closed 1-11-65.
Worksley, Street Baths and Laundry, Chichester, Newton Heath, Manchester, 10. FAL 1562	11-3-1961	First post war swimming pool.
Wythenshawe Swimming Pool, Altrincham Road, Sharston, Manchester, 22. WYT. 4132	14-2-1931	
Central Laundry, Caythorpe Street, Manchester, 14. MOS. 2546		

(a) The Central Laundry

The Central Laundry at the Moss Side establishment carries out the work of laundering for any of the baths department's establishments not equipped with their own laundries and also for 24 other Corporation Departments. During the past five years the department has been progressively modernised and income has risen from £8,195 in 1962 to £29,199 in the year under review. The rise in income is, however, no real guide to the growth of work as many of the charges are now far below commercial rates, having been left unadjusted to meet rising costs, pending implementation of recommendations on charging methods arising from an organisation and methods review of the Council's laundering arrangements.

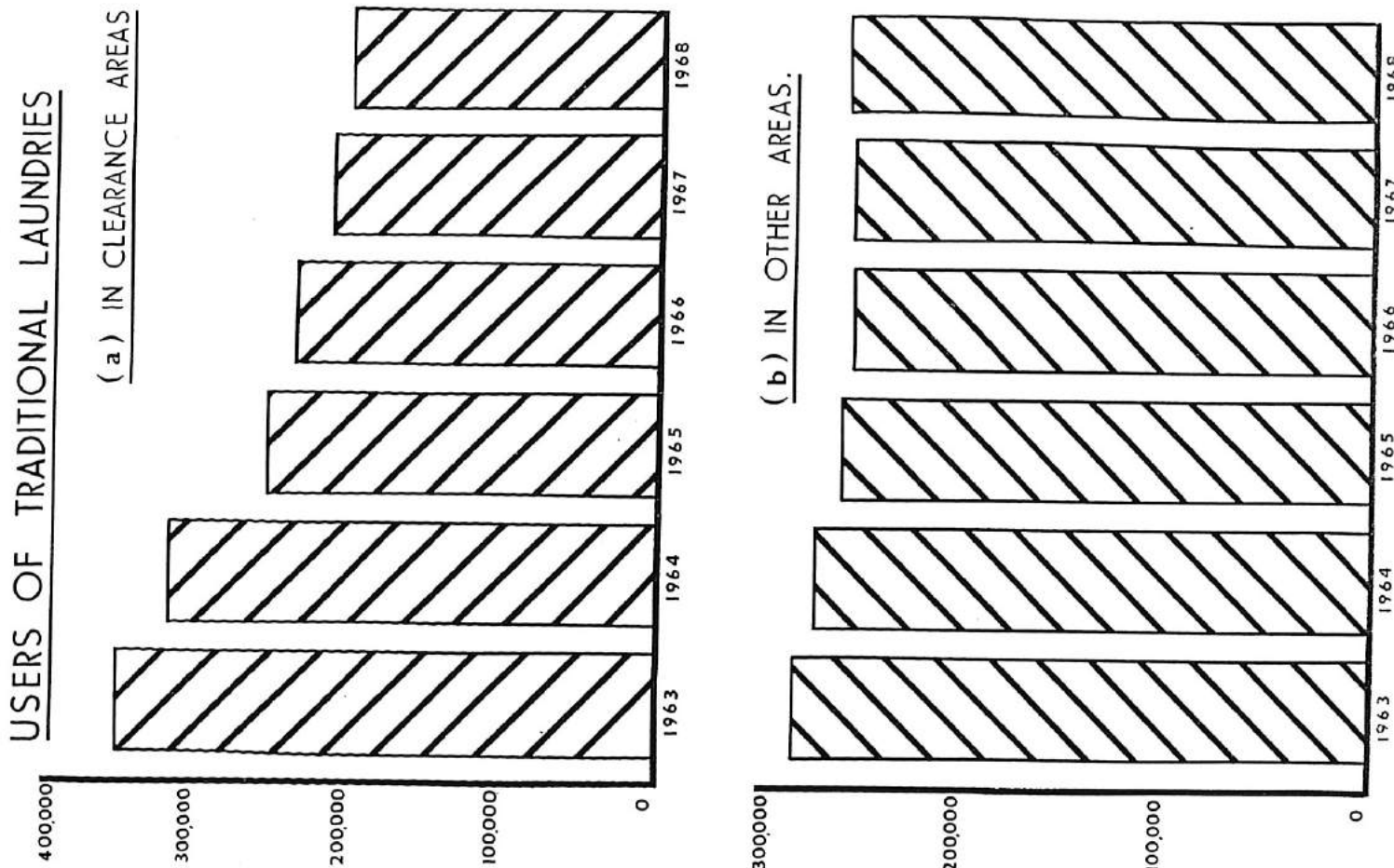
The work of installing new, fully automatic, oil fired boilers in a new boiler house was completed during the year and the Laundry's operating costs have been reduced and its potential working capacity has been increased, due to the greater steam capacity, thereby enabling more work to be undertaken.

(b) The Public Laundries

The public laundry service forms an important part of the Committee's work, although attendances have been diminished by the accelerated rate of slum clearance and the city's decline in population, and it is anticipated that a downward trend will continue for a few years until the new type of laundry service now offered at the Gorton and Bradford establishments is extended in conjunction with the Housing Department in future redevelopment areas. Reference to the appropriate graph on the opposing page shows the effect of slum clearance in the most heavily affected areas. The graph on page 20 shows that despite the overall effects of a declining population and the widespread development of shop launderettes, there is a real demand for a modern, complete public laundering service. In the old fashioned laundries there is now considerable excess capacity between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., due to the high percentage of housewives now engaged in clerical and industrial work. In the two automated laundries, however, there is very little spare capacity even during these hours, and in the evenings and on Saturday it is frequently impossible to meet the full demand.

Attendances for the last six years are set out below and do indicate that the downward trend has almost halted:—

Year ending 31st March	Attendances	Receipts £
1963	741,626	176,100
1964	688,690	164,337
1965	582,249	138,420
1966	581,157	133,299
1967	573,257	131,564
1968	568,749	134,767



APPENDIX 4

In order to access the experiences of people who have used the public wash houses of Manchester, a letter was sent in October 1999 to seven newspapers which circulate in the Manchester area. Readers who had recollections of the public wash house were invited to write in with their memories. Sixty-three letters and two telephone calls were received in response. From the correspondence, fifteen interviews were arranged but only twelve were carried out. The main criteria for selecting correspondents for interview was based on an attempt to gain information about as many different wash houses as possible.

Of the twelve people interviewed, nine were former users (all women), and three were former staff (one woman and two men).

Three group sessions were also held in three day centres for elderly people in the north, east and south of the city. The group sessions were very informal and participants did not give their full names or addresses. A total of twenty one people took part in these sessions and were all female with the exception of one male ex-laundry worker.

The group from south Manchester met on the 16th November 1999 and consisted of six women aged 75-85 who had all moved in the 1950s and 1960s from central Manchester to Wythenshawe. They recalled using the wash houses in Hulme, Moss Side, Longsight and Levenshulme. The group from north Manchester (seven women in their eighties who met on the 17th November 1999), had mostly lived all their lives in Harpurhey, Miles Platting, Beswick or Newton Heath and their memories related to wash houses in these areas. The east Manchester group of seven women and one man, aged 70-85, (also meeting on the 17th November 1999) had originally lived in Clayton, Openshaw and Droylsden, and had used the wash houses of Clayton, Beswick and Openshaw. The male participant had been employed in a commercial laundry in Denton.

Details of the individual correspondents and interviewees are as follows:

Correspondents only

1. Anonymous 'pensioner', no address given, who had lived in West Gorton and had used the Armitage Street wash house throughout the 1950s.
2. Mrs A.B. aged 87, wrote from Stockport . She attended the wash house in South Street, Longsight from the 1930s to 1950.
3. Mrs I.B. wrote from Wythenshawe. She had used the wash house in Pryme Street, Hulme until its closure in 1965.
4. Mrs J.B. wrote from Withington about her wash house experiences, but did not identify those she had used.
5. Mrs P.B. wrote from Cheadle and described using the South Street wash house.
6. Mrs J.C. wrote from Sale, having lived in Gorton in the 1940s and used the Gorton wash house on Hyde Road.
7. Mr J.C. wrote from Hazel Grove and remembered going to the South Street wash house with his mother through the late 1940s and 1950s.
8. Mrs A.D. wrote from Gorton where she used the wash house until its closure in 1980.
9. Mrs B.D. wrote from Sheffield, having previously lived in Ardwick where she attended the wash house on Armitage Street.
10. Mrs S.D. wrote from Wythenshawe but did not identify the wash house she attended.
11. Mrs G.F. wrote from Sale. She had previously lived in Hulme and attended the wash house on Leaf Street until its closure in 1968.
12. Mrs E.G. wrote from Stockport, having lived as a child near London Road, Manchester. She had gone with her mother to the Mayfield wash house in the 1930s.
13. Mrs L.K. wrote from Chorlton-cum-Hardy. She had previously lived in Gorton and used the Gorton wash house.
14. Mrs E.H. wrote from Burnage. She had used the Levenshulme wash house in the 1950s.
15. Mrs I.H. wrote from Old Trafford. She had used the Pryme Street wash house in the 1950s.
16. Mrs E.J. wrote from Chorlton-cum Hardy. As a child she had gone with her aunt and grandmother to the Bradford wash house in Beswick.
17. Mrs W.I. wrote from High Lane but did not identify the wash house she had used.

18. Mrs I.K. wrote from Didsbury but did not identify any specific wash house.
19. Mrs I.L. wrote from Stockport with memories of the wash house on Bann Street, Stockport.
20. Mr H.M. wrote from Stockport and also remembered the Bann Street wash house in the 1930s and 1940s.
21. Mrs L.M. wrote from Urmston. She had lived as a child opposite the wash house on Herbert Street, Cheetham but never went in.
22. Mrs J.P. wrote from Cheadle. She had previously lived in Levenshulme where both she and her mother had used the wash house.
23. Miss M.R. wrote from Newton Heath and recalled her mother using the wash house on Workesleigh Street.
24. Mrs R.R. wrote from Stockport about the 'wash place' on Bann Street, Stockport.
25. Mrs M.S. wrote from Gorton and described using a wash house in the Trafford Park area in the 1950s.
26. Mrs J.Wa. wrote from Cheadle having used the Bann Street wash house in the 1950s.
27. Mrs J.Wi. wrote from Devon. She had previously lived in Droylsden and had used the wash house in Openshaw in the 1960s.
28. Mrs J.S. wrote from Stockport and had used the Bann Street wash house in the 1950s.
29. Mrs D.H. wrote from Stockport about the Bann Street wash house in the 1950s and 1960s.
30. 'Margaret' wrote from Blackley having used the wash house at Harpurhey in the 1950s and 1960s.

Interviewees

1. Mrs I.B. aged 87 years and living in Withington. She had previously lived in Hulme and had used the wash houses in Hulme and Moss Side from 1930 to 1947.

Interviewed on 8th December 1999.

2. Mrs E.B. aged 72 years and living in Fallowfield. She had previously lived in Salford and attended the Hodge Lane wash house in the 1950s.

Interviewed on 24th January 2000.

3. Mrs L.D. aged 86 and living in Longsight. She had previously lived in Ancoats and Ardwick and used the wash houses in Ancoats, Collyhurst, Ardwick and Longsight from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Interviewed on the 24th January 2000.

4. Mrs S.D. aged 87 and living in Marple. She had lived for many years in Gorton and had used the Gorton wash house from the 1930s to the 1960s.

Interviewed on the 16th February 2000.

5. Mrs E.F. aged 76 years and had always lived in Longsight. She had used the wash houses in Longsight and Levenshulme in the 1950s and 1960s.

Interviewed on the 1st February 2000.

6. Mrs D.H. aged 83 years and living in Wythenshawe. She had previously lived in Longsight and used the wash house on South Street from 1946 to 1960.

Interviewed on the 1st December 1999.

7. Mr and Mrs D.S. aged 70 and 68, living in Wilmslow. They had previously lived in Moss Side and used the Moss Side wash house in the 1950s and 1960s.

Interviewed on the 1st December 1999.

8. Mrs M.W (1) aged 67 years and living in Dukinfield. She had previously lived in Ardwick and used the wash house on Birch Street/Dainton Street in the 1960s.

Interviewed on the 25th November 1999.

9. Mrs M.W. (2) aged 68 years and living in Cheadle. She had previously lived in Newton Heath and had used the wash houses on Wellock Street and Workesleigh Street.

Interviewed on 15th December 1999.

10. Miss K.H. aged 86 years and living in Withington. From 1934 to 1961 she had worked as an office clerk in many of the baths and wash houses in Manchester, mainly Moss Side.

Interviewed on the 8th December 1999.

11. Mr A.H. in his mid sixties and living in Hattersley. He had worked as an engineer in most of the baths and wash houses from 1957 to 1990, mainly at the Victoria Baths.

Interviewed on the 9th December 1999.

12. Mr H.H. aged 81 years and living in Altrincham. He had been the General Manager of the Baths and Laundries Department, Manchester from 1961 to 1974.

Interviewed on the 17th January 2000.

Of the total of sixty-three letters, thirty contained useful information and another twelve led to interviews. Of the remaining twenty-one letters, many were anonymous and contained little information, or were from previous correspondents.

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BATHS AND WASH HOUSES IN MANCHESTER

P = Pool

SB = Slipper Baths

WH = Public Wash house

PHILANTHROPIC ESTABLISHMENTS

ADDRESS	ARCHITECT	OPENED	CLOSED	DEMOLISHED
24 Miller Street	ET Bellhouse SB WH (no pool)	1846	1875	1876
Sycamore St Miles Platting	Marmaduke Bunnell P SB WH	1849	1870?	Date N/K

MANCHESTER AND SALFORD BATHS AND LAUNDRIES COMPANY

Collier St Greengate	Thomas Worthington P SB WH	1856	1880?	Still stands listed II*
Mayfield London Rd	Thomas Worthington P SB WH	1857	1940	1944
Leaf St Hulme	Thomas Worthington P SB WH	1860	1968	1976

MANCHESTER CORPORATION BATHS AND WASH HOUSES

New Islington Ancoats	John Johnson P SB WH	1880	1978	1979
Osborne St Collyhurst	JNO Gibbons P SB WH	1883	1967	early 80s
Gorton Hyde Rd	TH Maybury P SB WH	1890 (Gorton UDC)	1980	Burned down 2005
Whitworth Baths Ashton Old Rd	JW & RF Beaumont P SB (WH 1956) (Openshaw UDC previously Whitworth Trustees)	1890	1982	Derelict

ADDRESS	ARCHITECT	OPENED	CLOSED	DEMOLISHED
Newton Heath Wellock St	Booth & Chadwick P SB WH	1891 (Newton Heath UDC)	1980	Date N/K
Cheetham Hill	Booth & Chadwick P SB (no wash house)	1894	1978	1979
Red Bank	JNO Gibbons P SB (no wash house)	1896	1934	1934
Pryme St Hulme	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1904	1965	early 70s
Victoria Baths High St	Henry Price P SB (no wash house)	1906	1993	listed II*
Moss Side Broadfield Rd	Henry Price P SB WH	1906	1982?	Date N/K
Bradford Barmouth St	Henry Price P SB WH	1909	1982	late 80s
Harpurhey Rochdale Rd	Henry Price P SB WH	1910	2003	listed II
Miles Platting Rhodes St	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1911	1981?	1982
Armitage St Hyde Rd	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1911	1981?	1982
Withington Baths Burton Rd	Henry Price P SB (no wash house)	1913	pool still open	

ADDRESS	ARCHITECT	OPENED	CLOSED	DEMOLISHED
New Quay St Deansgate	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1914	1960	early 60s
Levenshulme Barlow Rd	Henry Price P SB WH	1921	pool still open	
Dainton St (Birch St) Ardwick	Henry Price WH only	1925	1972	1970s
Moston Dean Lane	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1927	dates N/K	
Chorlton Baths	Henry Price P SB (no wash house)	1929	pool still open	
Clayton Bank St	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1931	1981	1980s
South St Longsight	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1931	1981	1980s
Workesleigh St Newton Heath	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1931	1981	1980s
Broadway Baths New Moston	Henry Price P SB (no wash house)	1932	pool still open	
Herbert St Cheetham	Henry Price SB WH (no pool)	1932	1981	still stands

Frances Worsley 2005