

Co-operative Heritage Newsletter

Issue Five – August 2011

ROCHDALE Project

Activity on the Heritage Lottery Fund supported ROCHDALE (Renewing Our Co-operative Heritage, Developing the Archive and Learning Experiences) Project is now well under way.

Builders have been on site at the Rochdale Pioneers Museum in Toad Lane, which is being refurbished and modernised since the beginning of March.

Work inside the building started with the cleaning of the brickwork and concrete frame and stripping of the modern partitions and staircase. This was followed by the installation of the framework for the reinstated second floor. This floor will give the Museum a valuable education space that will be used by school and community groups and by international visitors.

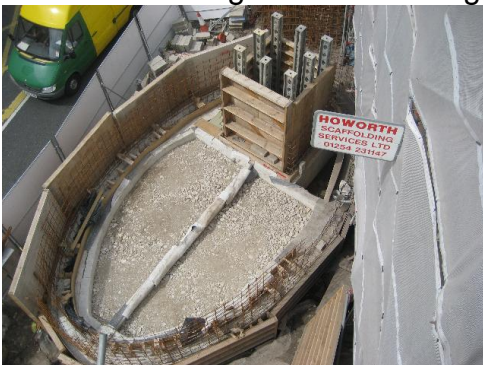


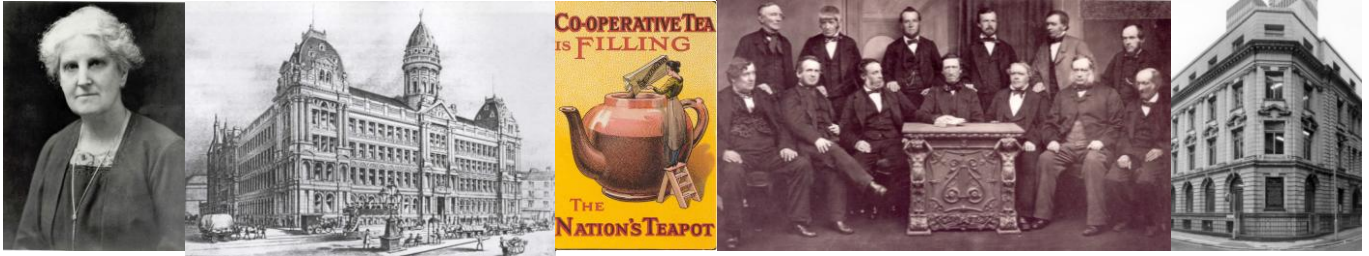
Outside the Museum, the paving stones outside the Museum have been lifted (and numbered so they can easily be put back again when the time comes!) and the base of the access tower and lift have been prepared ready for the construction of the new access tower.

During July, the stone tiles on the roof were removed and new structure and roof lights installed. The tiles will be reinstalled in August.

Museum designers are working on the new exhibitions

for the Museum, these will include a temporary exhibition space, enabling a wide range of themes to be explored.





Outreach work on the ROCHDALE Project

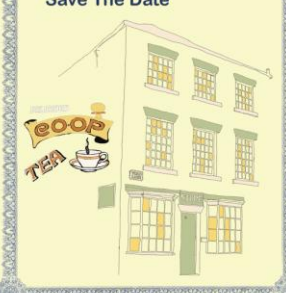
Since coming into post the Outreach Officers have been looking at ways of telling the story of the co-operative movement to as many people as possible. Lesley, Eve and Nancy have been using documents from the Archive and artefacts to develop projects and exhibitions with community and school groups to provide artistic and learning opportunities in Rochdale and the North West region for people to get involved in the Archive and the Museum when it re-opens.

Work with community groups in the Rochdale area are leading to the development of resources and activities that will be available for use by co-operative, education and community groups through the heritage websites.

In 2012, the Outreach officers will be running a series of half day and full day events for co-operative society members using the new education space. Members will not only be introduced to the reopened Museum, but also will take part in activities developed using the Museum and Archive collections.

**We are lifting the lid off
Toad Lane...**

Save The Date



please tick...

1. Which of the following themes interests you?

- .Food
- .International co-operation
- .History of co-operation
- .Historical objects and artwork
- .Business of co-operation
- .Values of co-operation

2. Where do you live?
.....

3. What would make you visit the Rochdale Pioneers Museum?.....

4. What might prevent you visiting?
eg. access.....

5. Would you be interested in volunteering?
Yes..... No.....

6. Would you be interested in our education space and learning programme? Yes...No...

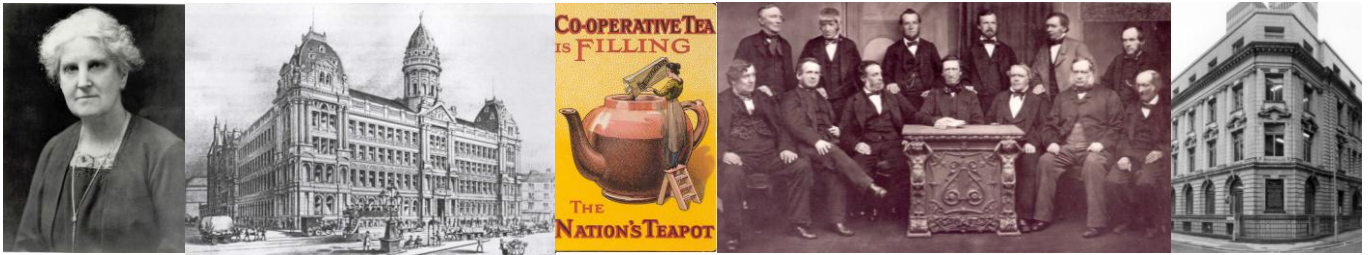
7. Could we contact you about future events? Yes... No...
Preferred Contact Details
(address, email, telephone...)
.....

Work with community groups over the Summer of 2011 is developing resources on:

- Co-operative Films, with materials that can be used by groups planning film screenings.
- A recipe book to use in co-operative cookery sessions, with recipes and images from the Archive – developed as part of a project with Link4Life, the Rochdale organisation for arts and health, and Rochdale and District Mind.
- Activities on the games children played in the past to inspire intergenerational creative writing – a project working with Cartwheel Arts who are developing a book from the project.
- Talks, debates and discussions for co-operative and community groups on aspects of the co-operative movement.
- Creative activities from co-operative challenges. Initial work is being carried out with students in Manchester, the results will be used in virtual exhibitions on the website.

The Outreach team would be pleased to hear from anyone who would like to become involved in the activities, volunteers, whether in the Manchester/Rochdale area or elsewhere would be welcomed.

More information about the activities, and work in progress, can be seen on the Outreach Facebook page and Blog – see <http://rochdalepioneers.blogspot.com/> for more details, or contact the Outreach team at outreach@co-op.ac.uk or telephone 0161 246 2925.



Conservation Work

The Archive and Museum collections have benefited from the advice of a paper conservator as part of the ROCHDALE Project. Items that had been on display at the Museum were the first to be assessed, then the Archive collections. Advice on cleaning items and carrying out inhouse conservation work including repackaging in acid free materials has been invaluable to the Archive's staff and volunteers. A priority list for external conservation work is being compiled following the assessment. One collection, which was found to have particular conservation needs is the Stockport Great Moor Society collection, which dates from 1831 onwards. Some of the items in this collection are currently being conserved and the images are the 'before' and 'after' pictures of a poster in the collection.



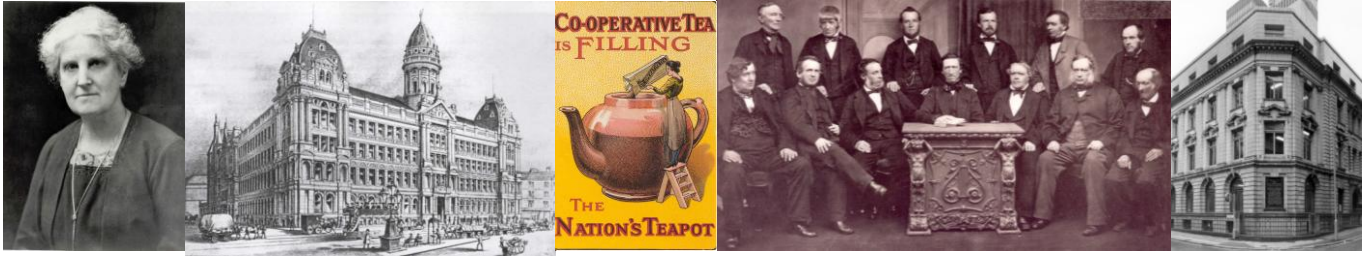
Robert Owen Project

Simon Sheppard has joined the National Co-operative Archive as Project Archivist working on the Robert Owen Correspondence Collection, which consists of about 3,000 letters to and from Robert Owen, the nineteenth century pioneer of social reform whose work and ideas inspired the co-operative movement. The post is funded for a year by the National Cataloguing Grants Programme, and Simon will be cataloguing the collection to item level,



which involves describing each of the letters, the catalogue will be on the Archives Hub, a website which links the catalogues of many archives in the UK making sure it is accessible all over the world.

He will also be looking out for interesting items for outreach work and repackaging the letters in archival envelopes with the help of volunteers and a preservation expert. He explained: "The letters are over 150 years old. They will have a much longer life if they are put in acid-free



envelopes for preservation. We are safeguarding them for the future so they last for another 150 years!”

Simon’s personal passion is modern history. He explained: “I’m interested in the gritty, industrial era and Victorian times. You can get a sense of who you are from that.” He is looking forward into digging into the details of Owen’s correspondence, enthusing: “Letters are fantastic sources because they aren’t edited – you get writers’ real emotions. It’s not like reading reports – you never know what is going to be in the next one! Owen spoke to a range of people all across Europe. I’m looking forward to reading those letters in detail and finding out what they were talking about.”

He admitted: “It is difficult to read letters as everyone has different handwriting but it’s a skill I learned at university. I enjoy reading old handwriting and you soon get used to it!”

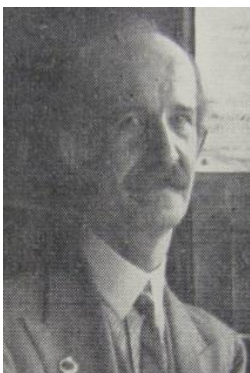
Volunteer focus

The National Co-operative Archive continues to work with volunteers and would always welcome more. In 2010 we had 19 volunteers working the Archive who for a total of 159 days. This valuable work included cataloguing the collections, helping answer enquiries, carrying out research and helping with packaging the Museum collections for storage during the building work. Please contact the Archive if you would like to discuss opportunities.

Cataloguing focus

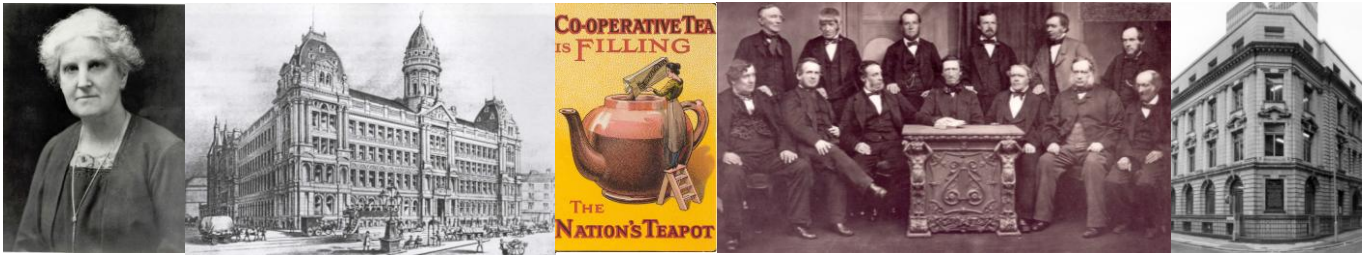
Several collections have recently been catalogued and are available to view on the Archives Hub at www.archiveshub.ac.uk. These include:

TWM - Papers of Thomas Mercer (1884-1947)



Mercer is most noted for his journalistic endeavours which include acting as editor of the Co-operative Review, the *Millgate*, *Co-operative Official* and *Guildman* and southern correspondent for the *Co-operative News*. He also wrote a number of pamphlets and books, his most famous being *Co-operative Commonwealth* and *Co-operations Prophet: The Life and Letters of Dr William King of Brighton*. Mercer was also involved with Plymouth Co-operative Society, Reigate Co-operative Society and the Co-operative College.

The collection includes Mercer’s detailed research papers into prominent co-operators such as Robert Owen, Dr William King, John Ludlow, E V Neale and William Pare. It also includes his correspondence and the manuscript papers of his book on Dr William King. The collection will be of great interest to researchers looking at early co-operators and the early co-operative movement.



LBC- Lothian and Borders Co-operative Society



In January 2010 a collection of records of the societies that merged to form Lothian and Borders Co-operative Society were transferred to the Archive. A year later, a student from the Liverpool University Masters of Archive and Records Management course catalogued the collection while on placement in the Archive.

The collection covers the period 1840-1944 and includes a wide range of records including photographs, correspondence, balance sheets, minutes and building records. One of the most interesting items is a poster (left) advertising the opening of a second shop at Galashiels in June 1845 only six months after the Rochdale Pioneers opened their first store.

SGM- Stockport Great Moor Co-operative Society

As early as 1831 a group of men in Stockport were working together in a co-operative enterprise. They had grouped together to buy items in bulk, such as meat, flour, butter, treacle and sugar, and then divided the items out amongst themselves. Two groups like this developed. One of the groups became so large that they began renting the front room of a cottage on Buxton Road to use as a shop. Shortly afterwards in 1844, the other group joined up with them. The group was then named Stockport Great Moor Co-operative.

This collection consists of early records of the Stockport Great Moor Co-operative Society. The records include Managing Committee minute books, general purposes minute books, receipts, stock lists, account books and rule books.

Staff Who's Who and Making an Enquiry

Museum

The Museum is currently closed for refurbishment. Outreach Officers Nancy Brown, Lesley Farris and Eve Broadhurst will be carrying out various projects, activities, events and workshops throughout the year.

Enquiries should be directed to outreach@co-op.ac.uk

Archive

The Archive is operated by Gillian Lonergan, Sophie Stewart, Adam Shaw and Simon Sheppard. The Archive is open to researchers by appointment Monday to Friday 10am to 5pm.

All Archive enquiries should be directed to archive@co-op.ac.uk or by telephone to 0161 246 2937 and 0161 246 2945.



Front Row: Simon, Nancy, Eve
Back Row: Gillian, Sophie, Lesley, Adam