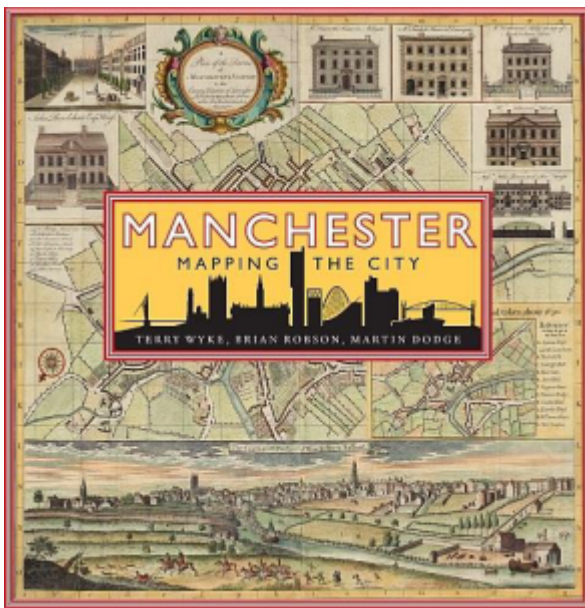




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Wyke, Terry, Brian Robson, and Martin Dodge. *Manchester: Mapping the City*.
Edinburgh, Scotland: Birlinn, 2018. 272 p. £30.00 ISBN: 978-1780275307



Other books in this series cover the cities of
Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Oxford.

Manchester, England is apparently a city of many “firsts”, not the least of which is being recognized as having the first modern canal for transporting local goods and later coal and raw materials (particularly cotton) in to and shipping finished products out of the city, as well as being the first industrialized city in the world. Located in northwestern England, Manchester is bounded by the Pennine Mountains and Cheshire Plain, and sits on the River Irwell, each playing key roles in the city’s life. Reading a history by using a timeline based on maps of the city to pinpoint and expound on geographical, economic, social, governmental/political and other topics was both enjoyable and educational. The authors also did a commendable job of tying Manchester and its prospects to its neighboring communities, nearby cities (especially Liverpool) and London so that the reader can appreciate the context of many of the topics covered.

Published in 2018 by Birlinn Ltd., this tome does an excellent job of using bird’s-eye views, plat maps, and other types of maps to serve as the centerpiece of each chapter’s description of a portion of time in Manchester’s history. It is co-



authored by Terry Wyke, Brian Robson, and Martin Dodge, all of whom are intimately familiar with Manchester because they live and work there. It is obvious that they invested a high degree of research in creating this monograph through their interest and expertise in co-existing disciplines of history, urban planning/policy and geography.

Upon reading the Introduction one comment from the authors struck a chord with me because in my own work I am well aware of what we call “hidden collections”, and thus what I do as a cataloger seeks to bring individual maps into unhidden realms. While the book begins with a map from the early eighteenth century, “Earlier plans of the town appear not to have survived, although there are still faint hopes that the lost survey of Manchester that John Dee engaged Christopher Saxton to produce in 1596 may turn up one day.” While this particular map may never turn up for whatever reason, if I had to guess it is simply a matter of time before earlier maps of Manchester turn up once inquisitive librarians, archivists, researchers or members of the public dig in to collections in Manchester and elsewhere. That is how many “lost” historic items turn up, through an individual carefully working with a group of papers or boxes of materials.

As noted previously, the selection of maps used as our guide date from 1728 at the earliest to very recently, the year 2016. In my opinion the authors made a wise choice in how best to arrange the maps so that they tell a cohesive story over a long period of time. Two “panoramic views” (or aerial, or bird’s-eye views) of the city of Manchester and sister city of Salford across the River Irwell start the progression of maps with accompanying text. Using an expansive view at an oblique angle gives the reader a sense of the “big picture” first, and as one continues reading individual plat maps and then other planimetric maps allow for more explicit relationships between places and objects on the ground and specific topics being discussed. While the authors use another bird’s-eye view of the city center by Henry William Brewer to cover details about the metropolitan area in 1889 soon thereafter, and others later that tend to be more pictorial art in nature, the bulk of the book employs a top-down look at the city’s geography, expansion, and described details.

Along the way the reader will learn about things both specific to the city and more importantly how the city was tied to larger country and even global networks. Perhaps the most important aspect of Manchester’s growth from small community into the first industrial city in the world is its direct ties to cotton – brought in from India primarily – and then its rapid growth due to the manufacturing of finished



textiles that were shipped out to global markets. Of course, the city's change from small market town in the 1700s to conurban metropolis today relied on other factors over its history, and these await the reader's attention.

The authors use historically important events and iconic structures, as well as some of Manchester's most important individuals, as stops along a journey spanning nearly four hundred years. Some examples include a Roman fort called Mamucium that anchors the historic center of the city (now known as Castlefield, "Britain's first urban heritage park"), the rise and importance of cotton and the textile trade in making Manchester an economic powerhouse in the late 18th and 19th centuries, and the early and strong development of a transportation network connecting the city within and to the outside world via canals (i.e., the Bridgewater Canal and Manchester Ship Canal) followed by railroads, trams/subways, airports and highways. Other topics include how air pollution and cholera epidemics impacted the population, the first true "gated" or planned community called Victorian Park, the growth of suburbs such as Burnage and Chorltonville due to population boom and rail and tram expansion, post-World War II effects on city and regional planning, and topics related to the modern city such as urban renewal and expansion (notably the IRA bombing in 1996 and the opportunity it created to "re-do" the core of the city).

While my bias is towards the entire collection of wonderful maps in the book (enjoying the historic over especially those from the 21st century), the strength of the narrative about many aspects of the city's youth, growth, and maturity into a modern metropolis comes from the authors using map as both graphic-at-large and to pinpoint specifics geographically. As the publisher's press release notes, "Manchester is one of the world's most iconic cities. Not only was it the first industrial city, it can claim to be the first post-industrial city. This book uses historic maps and unpublished and original plans to chart the dramatic growth and transformation of Manchester as it grew rich on its cotton trade from the late 18th century, experienced periods of boom and bust through the Victorian period and began its post-industrial transformation in the 20th century."

This book builds on the cartographic history of Great Britain and provides a wealth of detail about the geography and cartography of Manchester that is useful to historians and urban planners. For the undergraduate student it could serve as an excellent case study of the rise and many changes from small town to major city as the text highlights many socio-economic, infrastructural and geographic features involved. I would recommend this book for high school students on up, along with



anyone interested in urban geography, planning, or the history of places and thus high school, public, college and university libraries should consider it an excellent candidate for their collections.

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