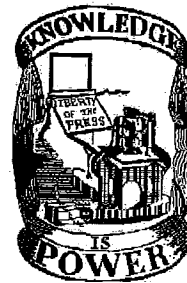


# Shelf Life

The Newsletter of the Working Class Movement Library

Registered Charity No.1115731



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## Heritage Lottery Fund Bid Submitted

Readers will recall that our Autumn edition last year reported that work had commenced on the preparation of a Heritage Lottery bid following on from our previous successful Project Planning Grant application. We can now report that a very comprehensive application has been put together and was submitted to the HLF office in Manchester in the last week in May. We should hear whether we are successful by November.

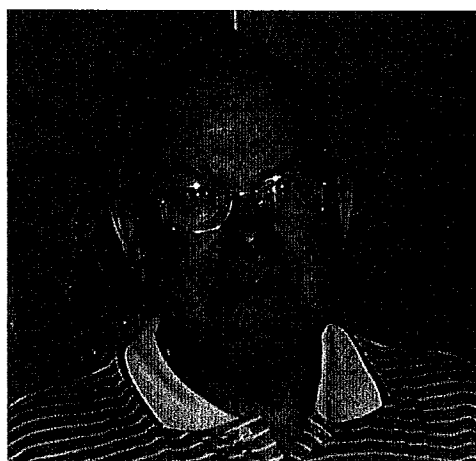
The Trustees are seeking a grant of £287,000 over 3 years to carry out work that will transform the library and make us far more accessible and useable, without losing any of the quiriness that gives us that distinct quality. We are seeking funding to install a new cataloguing system and redesign our website so that information about our holdings will be much more comprehensive and accessing it will be much easier. We want to employ two archivists for three years to set up the new system and put much of our currently hidden

archival gems onto the web. They will also train our volunteers to input so that the system can be maintained after they've gone. Another important aspect of their work will be to establish sound conservation procedure and practices to safeguard the collection long into the future.

We also want to develop our educational work and so are applying for money to employ an Educational Co-ordinator for two years. This person will work with schools and the local education authority to develop on line education packs aimed primarily at key stages 2 and 3 of the core curriculum. We are also entering into a partnership with UNISON and the Workers' Educational Association to do joint working on adult life long learning packs using material from the collection. It is a very ambitious programme but one that will help put the library on the map and enhance the work of promoting working class history and education.

## New Secretary Elected

The May Annual General Meeting regretfully received the resignation of Peter Carter from the post of secretary, after many years of devotion to duty. Peter moved to live in Hull three years ago and has found it increasingly difficult to fulfill the hands on secretary's role. Now that he and his partner Joan have decided to emigrate to the warmer climes of Tenerife later this year it has become impossible. He will continue as a Trustee and, hopefully, with the marvels of the internet continue to play an active role in the library. Our eternal thanks to Peter for his work and long may it continue, albeit from a distance. We wish the pair of them well in their adventure. His place will be taken by Royston Futter who has been a Trustee since 1987. Royston is a former Arts and Leisure



Manager to Salford City Council and was instrumental in bringing the collection to Salford from its old home in Kings Road Stretford. Royston hails originally from Norfolk whose motto is 'do different', which in many ways sums him up. He lives in Salford and, amongst many other activities, is Ruth Frows' unofficial computer technician and handyperson.

## ANNUAL MEETING TIME

Spring is the time for annual meetings around here. The Library Annual Meeting, to which all friends and supporters are invited, was held on Sunday 15th April. The Chairperson of the Trustees, Maggie Cohen, gave a detailed report of developments during the previous 12 months which, as have been reported in 'Shelf Life' have been quite extensive. Dennis Maginn, the Treasurer, reported on the healthy state of the library's finances and Lynette Cawthra gave an up beat first report as our (relatively) new Library Manager. Altogether an encouraging position was reported two weeks into running our own affairs. After the 'business' had been concluded one of our volunteers Cliff Stockton, a historian in his own right, gave an interesting and informative talk on 'Medals of Greater Bolton'.



Lynette Cawthra Addressing the Annual Meeting

This was followed towards the end of May by the Trustees Annual General Meeting. As reported on the front page there has been a change of secretary, but the other two officer posts remain (cont. On page 4)



Unearthed, in Vol 2 of the journal 'Meliora' from 1859, is a fascinating account of 'free public readings' of the time, starting with a description of meetings in Manchester:

Select passages from various authors, and from the current literature of the day, were read, and working men who would prefer having an hour's amusement in this

form to frequenting public houses and beer-shops, 'were earnestly invited', in the words of a handbill, 'to attend, and bring their wives and the grown-up members of their families with them'.

The newspapers stated that in Salford, the adjoining borough, where the experiment appears to have originated, and where it was appropriately prosecuted in the hall of the Mechanics' Institute, a set of rules were adopted, well calculated to preserve the useful simplicity of its character. The meeting appointed its own chairman for the evening, which gave 'a democratic complexion to the entertainment', and lessened any savour of patronage which the quick jealousy of humble life might detect in it 'A necessary proviso was,

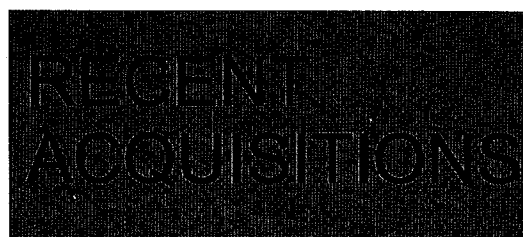
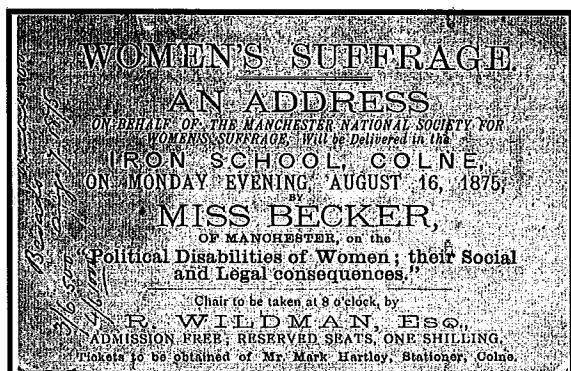
that no subject should be introduced which was connected with party politics or religious controversy'. This did not, however, exclude the news of the day, when of sufficient interest to command a place; and in some instances extracts from the public journals were thought proper contributions to the evening's amusement. No discussion was allowed; but at the close of the reading any suggestion or opinion, addressed to the chairman, might be stated, provided no speaker occupied more than three minutes. In Salford, also, it was the practice to restrict the duration of each reading to twenty minutes, and to devote short intervals to vocal and instrumental music. Now, in these novel experiments, whatever their success, there is embodied a very valuable, though perhaps still crude idea, which earnest and benevolent minds may turn to valuable account in the endeavours to render Mechanics' Institutes useful and popular to the working classes, and especially that large section of them whose illiteracy renders it hopeless to reach them through any other agency'.

We've been honoured to receive some fine donations over the last few months, including Peter Kentfield's library which includes gems such as a biography of South African workers' leader WH Andrews, 'Comrade Bill', inscribed to Harry Pollitt; Peterloo prints and other material from the collection of Harold

Smith; and letters from Tom Mann to a young Jack

Harle which reveal a personal side to the political man.

We've also acquired this lovely notice of an address given in Colne by Lydia Becker, an early campaigner for women's suffrage. Lydia was a founder member of the Manchester Women's Suffrage Committee. She also established and was editor for many years of the 'Women's Suffrage Journal'.



## From Hanky Park to the Unity Flats

Salford resident and former 'Morning Star' journalist Jim Arnison, who has been very involved in the politics of the North of Ireland from the 1970s onwards, has added his papers to the WCML's Irish Collection. On May 21st members of his Salford family were joined by Irish relatives, who flew over from Belfast, for the opening of an exhibition based on the papers which trace the story of his family and its connection to significant events during the time of the Troubles in the six counties. The picture shows Jim, accompanied by Maggie Cohen, Chair to the Trustees, cutting the ribbon to open the exhibition. The exhibition runs until at least the end of June.



The papers are an excellent addition to our already significant Irish collection based on the collections of T.A. Jackson which was deposited by his daughters Stella Hagan and Vivien Morton, Desmond Greaves, deposited by his literary executor, Anthony Coughlin, and Brendan Rourke, given to us by Stuart Walsh.

## librarian's lines

A look at our visitors' book reveals what a wide range of visitors we receive. We have been pleased to welcome lately, for instance, Vu Thi Nhi Vice, Director of the Ho Chi Minh Museum and her colleague Vuong Thi Nguyet Anh who is responsible for education programmes there; colleagues from Bishopsgate Library in London; a teacher from Spain researching the International Brigade; and photographers from Central Salford Urban Regeneration Company and from the BBC.

I have addressed students at Manchester Metropolitan University on the subject 'Is there life after library school?' (I answered in the affirmative...) and have visited the splendours of Chetham's Library. I have also attended a conference, 'Archives for Education and Learning', to glean ideas for getting the library's archival treasures better known by students and teachers.

## Trade Union Support

Congratulations to Unite on its' birth. The new union is going through a transitional stage and so we are still getting donations from the former Amicus and T&GWU branches. It will be some time yet before the old names disappear completely from headed notepaper (we still get the odd AUEW paper). These mergers are taken in the best interests of the members but it does cause the library a little concern. We rely so heavily on donations for our survival, and it is of comfort that our many supporters are happy to give a little each year to help. Our fear is that as unions merge the little will remain the same, but coming in from fewer sources. It is hoped that the new larger unions who support the library are able to consider this when putting together their 'aid' budgets.

Along with the Unite we have also received help in the last quarter from regions or branches of CWU, GMB, NASUWT, NUJ, NUT, UNISON, and four Trades Councils, giving a grand total of £2,340.

We don't normally like to pick out individual unions or refer to amounts given. We appreciate that different organisations have different sized budgets and differing demands, and we are grateful for any support we can get. We would, however, like to make the odd exception when a union comes up with an innovative way of helping the library. On a visit last year, Billy Hayes, General Secretary of the CWU, talked about the possibility of his union 'sponsoring' our postage bill. Rather appropriate don't you think? Billy has come up trumps and we have received a cheque for £1,500 specifically for that purpose. Thanks very much indeed to the CWU.

## Annual Meeting Cont.

the same. Maggie Cohen and Dennis Maginn were re-elected Chairperson and Treasurer respectively. The outgoing secretary, Peter Carter, and Trustee Michael Herbert both submitted discussion papers on ways in which we could improve the organisation to meet our change in circumstances. There was a desire among the Trustees to improve communications between all involved with the library so as to make decision making more inclusive. The Organising Committee, the body responsible for ensuring that policies are implemented have been charged with examining the papers in detail and reporting back to the November Trustees' meeting on how to increase the involvement of friends and volunteers in the activities and decision making processes of the library. The Trustees also looked to increase the number and knowledge base of trustees and it was agreed that certain individuals should be approached.

## Our Man in Japan and Ethel Carnie

We've made friends with an Englishman working in TV and radio in Japan. Chris Lynch hails originally from Great Harwood in Lancashire, and whilst trawling the internet to find out something about his home town discovered Ethel Carnie. Ethel was a working class author and poet born into a radical weaving family in 1886. Many of her works,



including 'The Slavery' depicted the day to day struggles of working class factory women in her native Lancashire. She also worked as a journalist for a while on the 'Clarion' and 'the Woman Worker' for Robert Blatchford. Chris is intrigued to find out more about this 'forgotten' authoress and amongst other things is campaigning for a blue plaque to be installed at her former home.

Anyone who can help Chris should contact the library.

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