

TOWN GOVERNMENT IN THE SIXTEENTH
CENTURY

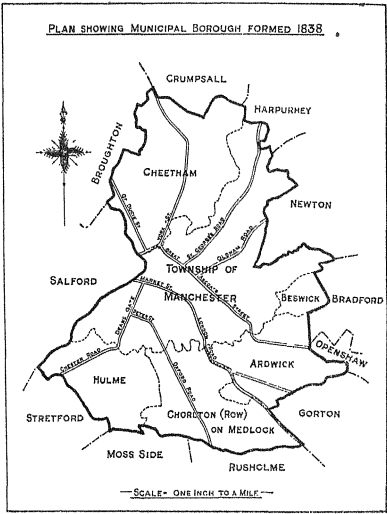
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THE GOVERNMENT AND MINGOVERNMENT
OF TONDON

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A CENTURY OF CITY GOVERNMENT
MANCHESTER 1838-1938

PLAN SHOWING MUNICIPAL BOROUGH FORMED 1838



MANCHESTER IN 1838

A. CENTURY OF CITY
GOVERNMENT

MANCHESTER 1838-1938

by

SHENA D. SIMON, M.A.

LONDON
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TO
MRS. SIDNEY WEBB
(BEATRICE POTTER)

grand-niece of the first Mayor of Manchester
who, in partnership with her husband,
laid the foundations of a
science of local
government.

PREFACE

THIS book, in spite of its title, is not a history but an interpretation. I am not an historian, but I have been a member of the Manchester City Council for nine years,¹ and, in the light of that experience, I have tried to describe how the Council of to-day has evolved from that of 1838.

Local Government has, in the years that have passed since 1835, become so complicated that it seems to me that the day has gone by when it can be treated as one subject, except superficially. There are two ways in which it can be studied, the horizontal and the vertical. Problems such as areas, the municipal civil service, the relation between the central and local government, the respective functions of elected councillors and officials, the control of public utilities, etc., can be studied over the country as a whole—this I call the horizontal method. Or separate units can be taken, county boroughs, county councils, urban district councils, etc., and their development studied, so that it may be possible to reach conclusions about the different forms of government.

Before either method can be applied, many individual studies will be necessary. The Sidney Webbs, in their monumental volumes on local government between 1889 and 1895, based their conclusions on the study of innumerable local units. Students of local government since 1895 seem to have abandoned this method in favour of general descriptive studies of public health, education, housing, etc. But because of the peculiar nature of local government in England, an Act of Parliament means something different in almost every area—and then there are all the local Acts which make local differences, and often lead the way to general legislation.

I have tried to describe the development of local government in Manchester from the date of the charter to the present day, its reaction to general legislation, and the chief points of its local legislation. I am fully conscious of the book's shortcomings, but I hope that it will be followed by similar studies of other local

¹ During that time I served as Deputy-Chairman and Chairman of the Education Committee and of the Wytchenshawe Special Committee, and I was also a member of the Finance and the Cleansing Committees.

government units. If so, the material will be available from which the future Mr. and Mrs. Webb—if indeed nature can be expected to reproduce so unique a combination—can draw conclusions from the experience of the hundred years since the Municipal Corporations Act.

There are many gaps. Space has prevented me from dealing with all the departments of the Corporation, or with all the activities of each department. Baths and washhouses have had to be left out, also sanitary inspection, shops and workshops inspection, adulteration of food, paving, blind persons' welfare, the fire brigade, airport, etc. I have tried to choose those sides of municipal work that best illustrate the development of the last hundred years. Neither have I attempted to give a description of the present position of the services. Those are excellently presented in the annual publication, *The City of Manchester*.

Only occasionally have I made comparisons between Manchester and other cities, and my aim has been to show her in a truthful rather than in a particularly favourable light. With all her faults—and the worst are those that leap to the eye—I am so passionately convinced that there is no other city in the country that is her equal, that to suggest that she needs whitewashing—except literally!—would seem a sheer impertinence.

I have many to thank for help with this book. All the officials to whom I applied for help, from the Town Clerk to the men who carried up the heavy rate books from the cellars in Princess Street, have given it most generously, although I must often have bothered them at inopportune moments. It is, I suppose, hardly necessary to say that I alone am responsible for any and all of the opinions that I have so freely expressed and that, as I have not submitted all my facts for verification, I am responsible for any mistakes.

To the Libraries Committee I want to express my deep gratitude. For comfort and convenience, the separate rooms at the disposal of research students in the Central Library are excellent, and the staff, whether in the Special Collections Section or in the General Reference Library, have spared no pains during the last three years to hunt for the books, papers and pamphlets they knew that I wanted, and to suggest others that might throw light on my problems.

Mr. A. P. Wadsworth, Dr. Radford, Mrs. Barbara Hammond, Dr. Ivor Jennings, and Mr. A. W. Balmer (a member of the Central

Valuation Committee) have given me valuable advice and most welcome encouragement. Members of the staff of the Economics Department at Manchester University have helped me with special problems, and friends and acquaintances, members of the council, and retired officials, have ransacked their memories and their family archives for my benefit.

I wish to thank Mr. E. C. E. Leadbitter of the Privy Council Office for his courtesy in facilitating access to the Reports of Captain Jebb to the Privy Council in 1838, which are among the archives of the Privy Council Office. These reports shed much interesting light on the course of the fight for the charter.

I am indebted to Miss Marion Fitzgerald—who has much experience of public health work—for the sections of Part III, Chapter I, dealing with the death rate, infectious diseases, smoke abatement, maternity and child welfare; to the City Surveyor and the Housing Director for the maps; and to the Medical Officer of Health for permission to print Tables I and II in Appendix II.

An article on the history of the municipal franchise which I contributed to the *Journal of Public Administration* is, by kind permission of the editor, reprinted as Appendix I.

Without the extremely able assistance of Mrs. Burnett, B.A. Admin., the book could never have been written, and I am grateful to my secretary, Miss Lowe, for her devoted work.

But the person who is primarily responsible for this book, whether or not he is prepared to accept it, is my husband. He brought me to Manchester twenty-five years ago, helped me to get on to the City Council, and has "aided and abetted" me in all my public work. Anyone who has read his books on municipal matters will realize how much this one owes to him.

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