



**MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL**

Heritage Statement

For

Chorlton Library



**Prepared by Carl Smith
Capital programmes & Procurement**

9th September 2024

INTRODUCTION

1.01 Historical Note



Location Plan

A detailed description of the early history of the building is contained in the list description, (see Section 1.03), so is not duplicated here. The following gives a brief summary of this, together with details of significant interventions since the building opened.

Prior to construction of the building on land at the corner of Manchester Road and Longford Road, Chorlton cum Hardy, Manchester Corporation operated temporary Library facilities out of a house nearby on Oswald Road. The irregular shaped site for the library was given by the Withington Committee, and construction of the building, which opened in November 1914, was financed by a donation of £5,000 from industrialist and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, who funded 3000 such institutions across the USA, Canada, the UK and Ireland.

Chorlton Library was one of 3 no. libraries (the others being Didsbury, 1915, and Withington 1927), designed by Henry Price, who was appointed Manchester Corporation's first City Architect in 1902.

The design was completed in 1912 but Price's original plan drawings were lost in transit to Andrew Carnegie when RMS Titanic sank. Duplicate copies were sent later but the delay in obtaining approval may explain the time lapse between design and construction.



The library prior to public opening c1914.



The east elevation of the 1964 extension to the library building.

Externally the form of the building has changed little since construction, other than for an extension added to the south of the reference library (originally lending library) along the Manchester Road frontage in 1964. This provided additional space for the adult lending library, together with staff accommodation and facilities.

Originally the entrance porch of the building opened into a rotunda with a wrought iron galleried walkway running around the perimeter beneath a panelled dome with octagonal lantern. This was concealed during the last significant programme of the work to the building, undertaken in 1983/4, when a false floor was inserted at gallery level and the balcony front removed to create a staff room accessed by the original dog-leg balcony stair.



Until recently the dome was concealed above a suspended ceiling that has been removed along with the false floor and partitioning to reveal once more the rotunda.

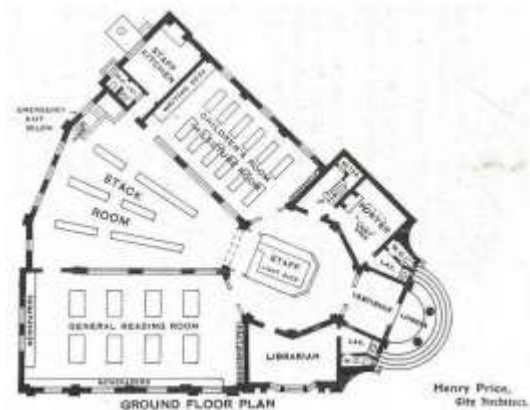
The dome retains its panelling and plaster cornice. The balcony and balustrade are to be reinstated and damage ornate plasterwork below the balcony restored using surviving plasterwork as reference.

Other internal works saw the enclosed porter's area in the south-west corner of the original building opened into the main space, and a rearrangement of the accommodation in the extension to provide meeting room, kitchen and WC facilities fit for flexible, stand alone, community use. At the time of writing work is taking place to reverse this intervention.

1.02 Description and Materials

The fan shaped plan of the original building responds to the triangular site and the two principal elevations address the adjacent thoroughfares. That to the narrower north end faces the junction of Longford Road and Manchester Road and incorporates the library's main entrance beneath a projecting semi-circular portico, whilst the principal east elevation stretches along Manchester Road.

The entrance lobby leads through to an area formerly occupied by the rotunda, the sense of which has been largely lost to the 1980s interventions described above in creating the first floor staff room, and the encroachment of the flanking office and WC facilities into the space at ground floor level



The original plan of the building



The plan of the building including extension c1964.

The area behind the rotunda is now open plan but the decorative piers and downstand beams which articulate the space into 3 no. large rooms were formerly infilled by glazed screens enclosing each element. The wedge-shaped central space was originally a 'Stack Room', or lending library, flanked to the west by the 'Childrens Library', (the south-west bay of which was taken up by a staff kitchen and WC), and east by the 'Reading Room'.

Over time the spaces have been repurposed many times, and the central and western elements now house the main Library facilities, including absorbing the staff kitchen (and later Porter's) area into the main space, with the children's' library moving across to the east.

The extension, built to the south of the eastern element, originally housed the adult lending library with staff facilities at the southern end, but now provides meeting rooms and community use facilities capable of operating independently of the main building.



Plan as per the changes granted in 2022. At time of writing the works are taking place on site.



The entrance portico, north elevation.

Externally the 2 no. principal elevations are richly detailed and constructed from high quality materials and incorporate a continuous entablature with projecting dentiled cornice beneath a part-balustraded parapet. The entrance (north) wall is finished entirely in banded rusticated Portland stone with curved outer edges, whilst the central entrance beneath the portico (carried on columns and responds of the Ionic order) and flanking small window openings all have triple keystones.

The east is faced in small gauge red engineering brick above a plinth in Portland stone, which is also used for other features. The 5 no. bay composition has a bay window at the north end, with Ionic columns carrying the entablature over, south of which the 4 no. window surrounds have eared and shouldered architraves and triple keystones, those in the outer bays flanked by pilasters which carry through to the parapet over.



Portland stone and small gauge brickwork, east elevation.



The remaining elevations of the original building are altogether plainer in detail, constructed in common brickwork, with the only embellishment being the rubbed brick flat arches over the window and door openings and sandstone parapet copings and window cills. The later extension is constructed from smooth red facing bricks above a 2 no. band limestone plinth. A similar 2 no. course band in the same material caps the wall head, the lower of which extends around the projecting bay windows which have full height fixed light glazing in proprietary aluminium frames.

Plain detailing, rear elevation of the listed building

Other than the rotunda's lantern capped dome, which is finished in asphalt over the concrete structure, and a small area of slated roof over the former staff kitchen / porter's area, all roof areas over the library and later extension are flat and concealed behind parapet walls. Mention is made of the dome roof being 'lead covered' in the List Description (see Section 1.03), but this cannot be substantiated by historic photographs and asphalt seems the more likely finish given the substrate. The dome drains to a perimeter asphalt lined stone gutter surmounting a stone band at the head of the small gauge red brick walls, which spills, via gargoyle outlets at the corners over the lower roof areas.



Asphalt covering to dome and perimeter gutter, note outlet in corner to gargoyle which spills over the lower roof, and infilled lantern on roof beyond.

The roof areas over the portico, lobby, and flanking accommodation east and west of the rotunda, retain their original asphalt finishes, with the roofs over the 3 no. main elements of the original library finished in mineral felt, presumably over asphalt. Similarly felt is used over construction infilling between the raised kerbs of former roof lanterns, which leaves their locations on the roof clearly defined externally, as well as internally by structural trimming. The flat roof over the extension is also finished in mineral felt behind a low parapet.

Internally, despite much remodeling and repurposing, with the exception of the area around the rotunda the original form and detailing of the building is still legible, and original features in the form of doors, cast-iron radiators, plain plaster moulded and dentil cornicing survive in the principal rooms.

All 3 no. rooms also retain original tiling beneath a dado, which has been overpainted but is likely to match the cream and green glazed-tile configuration seen to the balcony stair. It is thought that original floor finishes survive beneath those currently seen.



Surviving wall tiling, gallery stair.

1.03 Assessment of significance

Historic England's Advice Note 12, 'Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets', requires that applications for works to Heritage Assets should demonstrate an understanding of the form and history of the asset, and an assessment of significance. The history and form of Chorlton Library are described in Sections 1.01 and 1.02 respectively, and the assessment of significance is measured against the following various interests (see PPG - paragraph: 006 reference ID: 18a-006-20190723):

Archaeological interest: There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.

Architectural and artistic interest: These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

Historic Interest: An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

The levels of significance attributed to each are generally as follows:

- **Exceptional:** An asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites.
- **High:** A designated asset important at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and some conservation areas.
- **Medium:** An undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including local (nonstatutory) listed buildings, some conservation areas. May include less significant parts of listed buildings.
- **Low/Neutral:** Structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include later interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area.
- **Negative:** Structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset.

Using the above criteria, the Significance of Chorlton Library can be assessed as follows:

Chorlton Library, being built in the early C 20th on an undeveloped site, is unlikely to yield evidence of any human activity not already recorded other than means of construction which may be identified when the partition wall is removed. Despite its listed status for this reason the building is considered as having **Low/Neutral Archaeological interest**.

The principal (north and east) elevations of the building, together with the recessed dome rising above, give the library local landmark status. When viewed from Manchester Road these facades present fine examples of Edwardian Baroque design, executed in quality materials with careful attention to detail which respects the classicism on which it is based. Whilst these are considered as having High Architectural interest, the remainder of the facades are utilitarian, lacking detail, and can be considered as having medium significance.

Internally, further architectural and artistic interest is gained from the form of the rotunda and dome, and craftsmanship displayed in the associated plaster detailing both around the rotunda and the heavy, dentiled, cornices around the eastern element of the original library space, now the children's library. Views of the dome and form of the rotunda were largely lost during the 1980s refurbishment, diminishing significance, but the proposals seek to open-up this area once again.

The library is also significant in being the work of (John) Henry Price, (1867-1944), Manchester Corporation's first City Architect, who held the position from 1902 until he retired in 1934. Price was articled with Thomas Denville Barry and Charles Garret Barry 1884-1888 and started his career as an architect's assistant with Edmund Kirby in Liverpool in 1888. In 1892 he was appointed Assistant Surveyor to Toxteth Park Board, and in 1897 Building Surveyor for Birmingham, before securing his position in Manchester where he made a substantial contribution to the City's stock of public buildings. In addition to Chorlton Library the most significant of these are:

- Victoria Baths (1903-6, Grade II*)
- Withington Baths (1913, Grade II)
- Harpurhey Baths (1909-10, Grade II)
- Didsbury Library (1915, Grade II)
- Withington Library (1927, Grade II)
- Crumpsall and Cheetham District Library (1909-11, Grade II)
- Hydraulic Power Station (1907-9, Grade II*)
- Ashton House (1908-10, Grade II)



Didsbury Library (1915) (L) and Withington Library (1927) (R), other Carnegie Libraries by Henry Price

Taking the above into consideration the building is considered to have **High Architectural and artistic interest**.

The later extension to the building is not a designated asset and has **Low/Neutral Architectural and artistic interest**.

Chorlton Library has served the cultural needs of the residents of Chorlton cum Hardy for over 100 years, and, through reorganisation and extension to the facilities, has adapted to the changing requirements of the residents it serves. It can be argued that later interventions impact negatively on the significance of the asset, but it should be recognised that such works were undertaken with the functionality of the asset in serving the public's needs in mind and reversing some of the more insensitive interventions forms part of this application.

Except for the addition of the extension and removal of features at roof level which were always concealed behind the parapet walls the principal elevations of the asset remain unchanged in the context of its contribution to Chorlton's townscape, and the building is considered to have **High Historic interest**.

1.04 Listing

The Library is listed Grade II. A copy of the listing description is appended below.

OFFICIAL LIST ENTRY

Heritage Category: Listed Building
Grade: II
List Entry Number: 1414760
Date first listed: 21-August-2013
Statutory Address 1: Chorlton Library, Manchester Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 9PN

LOCATION

Statutory Address: Chorlton Library, Manchester Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester, M21 9PN
The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: Manchester (Metropolitan Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SJ 8156794244

SUMMARY

Library, 1914, by Henry Price. Red brick with Portland stone dressings. Single-storey and flat-roofed. Edwardian Baroque style

REASONS FOR DESIGNATIONS

Chorlton Library, constructed in 1914 to the designs of Henry Price, is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

Architectural quality: it has a distinctive Edwardian Baroque design displaying a careful attention to detail, and the library forms an imposing landmark within the local area; "

Planning: the original layout remains largely intact and retains its three distinct, principal spaces comprising a lending library flanked by a reading room and a children's library. Where alteration has occurred within the interior, the original arrangements remain clearly readable; -

Interior quality and survival: the interior detailing maintains stylistic continuity with the exterior, and numerous original interior features have been retained, including tiled dados, some original doors, the balcony stair, and plaster decoration in the principal rooms and the dome;

Architect: the library was designed by the notable Manchester Corporation City Architect, Henry Price who has a number of listed buildings to his name, and it survives as a good example of his work, reflecting his significant contribution to the construction of municipal buildings in Manchester.

HISTORY

Chorlton Library was constructed in 1914 to the designs of Henry Price, City Architect, and was funded by a £5000 donation from the steel magnate and philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie. As noted in his Oxford Dictionary of National Biography entry, Carnegie was a prolific philanthropist who, amongst many other donations, funded approximately 3000 libraries during his lifetime in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada and his adopted home of the United States.

Chorlton Library was one of three libraries designed by Price, the other two libraries being in Didsbury (1915, Grade II listed) and Withington (1927), and it was the twenty-fourth branch library to open in Manchester. In 1912 Henry Price's original plan drawings for the building, which were being sent to Andrew Carnegie for approval, went down with the RMS Titanic; duplicate copies were sent later.

The land for the library, which replaced a temporary library located in a house on Oswald Road, was provided by the Withington Committee and the building was erected by Messrs C.H. Narmanton & Son Ltd of Ardwick. It was opened on 4 November 1914 by the Lord Mayor of Manchester, Alderman McCabe. In c1964 an extension was added on to the south-east side and in 1983/4 some internal alterations were carried out.

Manchester Corporation created its City Architect's Department in 1902 and Henry Price (1867-1944) was the first City Architect, responsible for municipal building projects in the city. He has a number of listed buildings to his name in Manchester, including Victoria Baths (1903-6, Grade II), based on the 1901-2 designs of Henry Price's predecessor, the City Surveyor T. de Courcy Meade and his assistant Arthur Davies), Harpurhey Baths & Laundry (1909-10, Grade II), Crumpsall & Cheetham District Library (1909-11, Grade II), and Didsbury Public Library (1915, Grade II).

DETAILS

Library, 1914, by Henry Price. Red brick with Portland stone dressings. Single-storey and flat-roofed Edwardian Baroque style.

PLAN: the library occupies a triangular plot of land with a fan-shaped plan incorporating two principal elevations; that to the narrower north end faces the junction of Longford Road and Manchester Road and incorporates the library's main entrance, whilst the principal east elevation faces Manchester Road.

EXTERIOR: on the two principal elevations the library's flat roof is hidden from view by a partly-balustraded, Portland-stone parapet set above an entablature incorporating a dentil cornice; a plain brick parapet hides the roof from view on the rear and north-west sides of the building. Painted cast-iron rainwater goods survive, including a hopper decorated with a small cherubic face (putto) on the east elevation.

North (front) elevation: this 3-bay elevation, which has coved outside edges, faces the junction of Longford Road and Manchester Road and is faced entirely with Portland stone, which has banded rustication treatment. The main entrance is located to the centre and consists of a semi-circular, distyle-in-antis Ionic portico, which incorporates original cast-lead letters that read 'PUBLIC LIBRARY'. The original entrance doors underneath have been replaced by modern automatic doors, but the entrance doorway's eared and shouldered surround with a triple keystone survives, as well as the carved-timber inner-surround with a Greek-key frieze above the door and a decorative overlight. Flanking the entrance portico are slender windows with original, decorative painted wrought-iron grilles and triple keystones. Rising above and behind the front elevation, and also visible on the eastern side, is a large octagonal dome, which is constructed of red brick to the lower part (only visible from the building's flat roof and also incorporating two multipaned wrought-iron windows), and Portland stone to the upper part with a lead-covered roof and glazing to a small lantern (visible internally). Coving to the dome's eaves line incorporates lion head gargoyles.

East side elevation: this 5-bay elevation facing Manchester Road is lit by a series of four multipaned sash windows incorporating margin lights and some cross-patterned leaded glazing, which is also replicated to the rear elevations. Each window has an eared and shouldered architrave of Portland stone with a triple keystone, and both of the outer bays are flanked by panelled Portland-stone pilaster strips that rise through the parapet and incorporate lotus bud decoration with further rusticated stonework to the

side. A recessed, canted bay window to the far right of the elevation with similarly styled sashes, which lights the librarian's office, is flanked by Ionic columns. Attached to the south-east side of the building is a flat-roofed, single-storey extension of c1964 that is not of special interest and is excluded from the listing.

South-west (rear) elevation: due to the library's fan-shaped plan three angled walls comprise the main part of this plain brick elevation, which faces a rear yard area; that to the right is now largely hidden by the 1960s extension lying alongside Manchester Road. The rear elevation is buttressed and has fixed-pane and multipaned sash windows in the same style as those to the east elevation, but with plain sandstone sills and flat-arched, pressed-brick heads; the latter is also shared by an adjacent doorway. Set to the western end of the elevation is a lower, lean-to (originally the staff room) with a short brick stack set to the western corner and two blocked-up window openings. The upper parts of two basement windows are also visible, although that to the right has been bricked-up. The north-west side elevation is similarly plainly detailed, and is largely hidden from view by a neighbouring building.

INTERIOR: internally some original doors and cast-iron radiators survive, along with plain moulded corning and dentil corning to the principal rooms. The original flooring is believed to survive under later coverings.

The library has three large rooms: originally a lending library flanked by a reading room and a children's library, which are entered via an entrance vestibule and entrance hall. The entrance vestibule has a decorated ceiling and contains a classical doorcase with modern automatic doors installed in front. Two new doorways have been inserted into the north-west wall to access a modernised toilet and store room. Beyond the vestibule is a large entrance hall, which was originally octagonal, but the angled walls on the eastern and western sides have since been brought forward to create straight walls. The original classical architraves and doors with glazed panels and patterned glazing bars have been retained (albeit now in different positions) and the original wall alignment can be seen behind the later partitioning. The librarian's office, which is located off to the eastern side of the entrance hall, is still used for its original purpose, and has been extended through the incorporation of a former washroom. The former porter's room on the opposite side of the entrance hall has been converted into toilets.

Over the entrance hall is the dome, which originally incorporated a wrought-iron galleried balcony. In 1983/4 a false floor was inserted to create a staff room above and the balcony front was removed. The staff room is decorated with pilasters in a similar style to those in the rest of the building and is accessed by the original dog-leg balcony stair, which is located off the western side of the entrance hall, and has a curtail step, stick balusters, wreathed handrail, replaced tread coverings, and a dado composed of cream and green glazed tiles. The dome survives above a suspended ceiling and retains its original plaster panelling and medallion decoration and dentil cornice. The dome lantern's stained glass has been replaced by plain glazing.

The library's three principal rooms have dividing piers and wall pilasters with panelled plaster decoration in the same style as those to the former dome balcony and the pilaster strips on the exterior of the building. All three rooms also have dados (now painted over), which are most likely to be in the same cream and green glazed-tile configuration as the balcony stair, and a small internal square window exists to each of the rooms' northern walls, which originally fed additional light into the rooms via the top-lit dome. Where the central room fans outwards the roof is supported by slender cast-iron columns with decorative console-type scrolled capitals. The original staff room, which was located to the rear of the former children's library, has been incorporated into the western room through the knocking through of two openings in the dividing wall. Openings have also been knocked through in the library's rear south-eastern wall to connect through into the 1960s extension. An original stair set to the south corner of the central room leads down to the basement, which contains boilers and a small workshop/caretaker's room with a partly-glazed internal timber wall and a large Belfast sink.

SOURCES

Books and journals

Hartwell, C, Hyde, M, Pevsner, N, *The Buildings of England: Lancashire: Manchester and the South-East*, (2004, reprinted 2010 with corrections) Kelly, T, *History of Public Libraries in Great Britain*, (1977, 2nd Ed.)

Websites

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32296> Henry Price (or John Henry Price), accessed from http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=205185

Other

City of Manchester libraries Committee. Vol.19. 1912, *Souvenir of the Opening of the Chorlton-cum-Hardy Library*, 4th November 1914. Manchester Public Libraries.

LEGAL

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

The listed building is shown coloured blue on the attached map. Pursuant to s.1 (5A) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'), structures attached to or within the curtilage of the listed building (save those coloured blue on the map) are not to be treated as part of the listed building for the purposes of the Act.



2.00 IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS ON THE HISTORIC ASSET

2.01 The need for the intervention

As stated in the accompanying 'Design and Access Statement' The client (Libraries) within Manchester City Council wishes to form two new meeting rooms and reinstate a wall that was previously moved to increase the size of the staff room but in doing so reduce the size of the main library space.

This work is taking place to transform the library back to its original floor plan and will also enhance the user experiences.

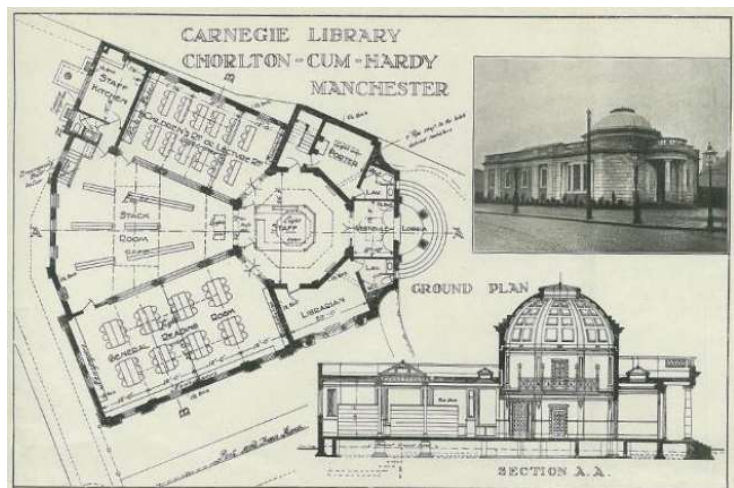


Proposed Floor Plan

2.02 The Proposed Changes to the Historic Asset

The works are confined to the interior of the building. Two new meeting rooms are proposed in what would have been an area of the building containing smaller rooms but was subsequently remodelled to increase the size of the library. In addition to this the client wishes to remove a partition wall that was erected in the 1980's and reinstate a new wall in what will have been its original position

Alterations will be required to the mechanical and electrical services to accommodate the changes. This will include ventilation, moving radiators, power, lighting, data, fire alarm.



Original Plan of the building dated 26/3/1915

2.03 The Perceived Impact on the Historic Asset

It is believed that the proposals will have a positive impact on the fabric of the historic asset. Internally the works to redefine the original plan form and reinstate the original floor plan, reverse previous interventions which impact negatively on the significance of the asset. Features lost during the erection of the partition wall will be reinstated based on information gleaned from historic photographs, drawings and evidence on site. This can only be seen as impacting positively on the historic asset.

The subdivision proposed within the listed building respects the original plan form and elements of structure. As such this will be of lightweight construction and 'reversible'.

Overall, it is believed that the proposals will have a positive impact on the historic asset, the internal alterations reinstating both lost form and historic features, and equipping the library for sustainable, more flexible public use.