

Locating a buried Synagogue on campus

We are standing outside the south entrance of Samuel Alexander Building. Things to note, the 'setts' (Figure 1) eroding through the modern road surface telling us we are standing upon an old road. Archaeologists use this kind of 'stratigraphy' to understand the relative order of events. Also note how Oxford Road and the Holy Name Church are visible on our left.



Figure 1. 'Setts' eroding through the modern road surface

Figure 2 is a section of the 1920s map. Find the Holy Name Church and Oxford Road on the map as these are useful reference points. To orientate ourselves hold the map so that Oxford Road and the Holy Name Church are on the left. This shows that we are standing at the junction of 1920s Leamington and Blossom Street. Let's walk down Blossom Street.



Figure 2. 1920s map showing Oxford Road and the Holy Name Church

Using a 1940s map

Figure 3 covers the area we can see when standing at the end of Blossom Street, but as it would have been in the 1940s. Based upon this 'map regression' we can see that some changes occurred between the 1920s and 1940s and this presents the possibility that it could have been because of bomb damage during the Second World War. Changes include the arrival of a College of Music and the arrival of the Synagogue we are interested in (bottom right hand quadrant of the map).

An interesting detail to note is how the house next to the Synagogue (number 29 Ducie Grove) has an open back yard area on the 1920s map, but on this 1940s version it seems to have a roof on it. Some kind of structural change has occurred at 29 Ducie Grove between the 1920s and 1940s.



Figure 3. 1940s map showing the Synagogue and number 29 Ducie Grove with a now enclosed backyard area

Using the Manchester Libraries Photo Archive

Figure 4 is a photograph of Ducie Grove taken in the early 1970s. The single story building on the left of the image is the Synagogue. Note how the front door of number 29 Ducie Grove (next door to the Synagogue) has been bricked up indicating that access must have been through a different entrance. This could be part of the structural change discussed above.



Figure 4 shows the Synagogue and number 29 Ducie Grove next to it in the early 1970s (Photo: Manchester Libraries)

Using the Manchester Jewish Museum Archive



Figure 5. Is this inside number 29 Ducie Grove after the Synagogue (Photo: Manchester Jewish Museum)

Using a 1980s map

Fast forward to the 1980s map and we can see more changes. Figure 6 shows how Blossom Street has changed to Blyton Street, and Ducie Street has become Devas Street. Ducie Grove is still present but the Synagogue and housing has disappeared. However, a new building has arrived on the Oxford Road end of the Synagogue plot. It is marked as 296 Oxford Road and in the 1980s this building was a Bank.



Figure 6 is a 1980s map showing the new structure at 296 Oxford Road

Through painstaking personal research it can be revealed that the structure that was once a Bank is now be a bar called Big Hands! We can see the back of Big Hands from where we are standing here. Let's head over and find the footprint of the Synagogue and meet Tereza. Tereza has been working with the records within the Religions and Theology Department here at UoM, as well as those held at the Manchester Jewish Museum. Tereza can tell us more about the Synagogue building, but also the people who used it...