Middle-Class Masculinity in Clubs and Associations: Manchester and Liverpool, 1800-1914.

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Humanities.

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School of Arts, Histories and Cultures
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<td>CWAC</td>
<td>City of Westminster Archive Centre.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EH NMR</td>
<td>English Heritage National Monument Record.</td>
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<td>JRULSC</td>
<td>John Rylands University Library Special Collections.</td>
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<td>LRO</td>
<td>Liverpool Record Office and Local Studies Service.</td>
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<td>MALS</td>
<td>Manchester Archives and Local Studies</td>
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<td>MLIC</td>
<td>Manchester Local Image Collection.</td>
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<td>OSM</td>
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Abstract
The University of Manchester
Alexandra Mitchell
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
Middle-Class Masculinity in Clubs and Associations: Manchester and Liverpool, 1800-1914.
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This thesis argues that clubs and associations provided a major arena for masculine social life in the period from 1800 to 1914. Using a range of sources from life writings and administrative records to photographs, drawings and buildings, the thesis presents a detailed picture of club life in the two provincial cities of Manchester and Liverpool. Examining the ways in which middle-class men wrote about associational culture, decorated their club houses and behaved in the company of other club men, the work highlights the complex and varied roles clubs and associations played in shaping masculinities. Club culture offered men the opportunity for homosocial friendship and fellowship, a respite from work but also access to business networks and political contacts. Above all, associational life allowed middle-class men to express their different tastes and identities, highlighting the diversity of masculine cultures in nineteenth-century provincial cities.

The thesis explores the ways in which masculinity was constructed as a relationship between men in the context of the club, and reveals how the identity of the club man intertwined with his role at work and in the family. It argues that the function of the club shifted over the course of the male lifecycle, determined by a man’s position as the head of a household and business. However masculine behaviour within the all-male association was also governed by its own codes of self-control; club life had no place for those men who drank too much, or failed in business.

The buildings of nineteenth-century provincial club houses form an important part of this study. The work shows how the interiors of club buildings were decorated and arranged as a significant setting for male social life, and functioned as places where men could articulate and express their different identities via activities such as dining and smoking. The thesis also reveals how the architectural styles of the club buildings functioned as an outward expression of middle-class identity. By unpacking the different social, political and cultural influences which shaped the appearance of these institutions, it is argued that middle-class masculine culture in Manchester and Liverpool was diverse, fiercely independent and distinctive from the metropolis. Clubs and associations were not simply peripheral spheres for masculine social life, but major arenas in their own right.
Declaration

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Archivist and librarians in Manchester and Liverpool have been helpful in the research of this project. Days spent in Chetham’s Library, and the search rooms in Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Liverpool Record Office and John Rylands Special Collections have been some of the most interesting during the course of this project. I would also like to thank the staff at the Liverpool Athenaeum, the Manchester Portico Library and the Manchester Racquets Club for allowing me access to their records and to see inside their unique institutions. I am also grateful to the general committee of the St James’s Club, in Spring Gardens, Manchester, who invited me to sample club life in the twenty-first century.

The past four years would have been unbearable without the support of my family. I have discovered that Andrew Seddon’s patience cannot be shaken, for which I am truly grateful. Zenia Mitchell’s encouragement and understanding have eased my doubts and difficulties, whilst Larysa Bolton has always been an inspiration. Finally, I would like to dedicate this to my dad, Barry Mitchell.
Introduction: Associational Culture and Middle-Class Masculinity in the Nineteenth Century

In the history of British masculinity, middle-class men of the nineteenth century are rarely seen outside the home and work. This thesis reassesses this view, and argues that clubs and associations provided a major arena for masculine social life in the period from 1800 to 1914. Using a range of sources from life writings and administrative records to photographs, drawings and buildings, the thesis presents a detailed picture of club life in the two provincial cities of Manchester and Liverpool. In examining the ways in which middle-class men wrote about associational culture, decorated their club houses and behaved in the company of other club men, the thesis highlights the complex and varied roles clubs and associations played in shaping middle-class masculinities. Club life and associational culture offered men the opportunity for male friendship and fellowship and a respite from work, but also gave them access to business networks and political contacts. Above all, clubs and associations allowed middle-class men to express their different identities and tastes and points to the rich and diverse masculine cultures in nineteenth-century provincial cities. Clubs and associations in Manchester and Liverpool were not simply additional spheres for masculine social life, but major arenas in their own right.

By examining the different roles of clubs and associations in the lives of middle-class men during the nineteenth century, this thesis throws new light on the history of masculinity in the period. Historians have tended to focus on the way in which the identity of middle-class men was constructed in relation to women, and have therefore only approached the club as an alternative to the home. However, by exploring how masculinity was constructed among and between men, this thesis
highlights the different ways associational culture intersected with other spheres of masculine life and argues that middle-class masculinity was not homogeneous, but comprised of a variety of different identities. The life writings of professional and business men show that the role of associational culture in the construction of these identities not only differed between individual men, but also across the male lifecycle. Minute books and other administrative records from an array of clubs and associations, including small tavern-based discussion groups and large institutionalized club houses, reveal how the identities of club men were also intertwined with their roles at work and in the family. However, although the functions of the club could change, the expectations placed on the club man remained more constant and middle-class club life was hostile towards men who lacked a proper sense of self control.

The buildings of nineteenth-century provincial club houses form an important part of the analysis in this study, which argues that buildings were integral to the function and meaning of both nineteenth-century club life and the construction of middle-class masculine identity. Club houses, as the permanent meetings places for the exclusive use of members, appeared at an increasing rate in Manchester and Liverpool during the nineteenth century, as a visible expression of a much longer tradition of associational culture. The thesis examines the architectural appearance of buildings, styles of interior design and their documentation in photographs and paintings, not simply as evidence of how club houses looked, but to understand how these buildings were intended to be viewed and used. The interiors of nineteenth-century club houses were decorated and arranged as settings for male social life and functioned as places where men could articulate and express their different identities through activities such as dining and smoking. But the thesis also shows how the
different architectural styles of club houses in Manchester and Liverpool were also outward expressions of middle-class status. By unpacking the different social, political and cultural influences which shaped the appearance of these buildings, this thesis suggests how middle-class masculine culture in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool was diverse, fiercely independent and distinctive from London.

The introduction is divided into two sections. The first section discusses how the thesis contributes to historiographical debates on class, masculinity and their relationship with club life and associational culture. By focusing on either the first or second half of the nineteenth century, and the ways in which clubs and associations affected relations between middle-class men, women and the working class, historians have overlooked the function of the club as a setting for masculine social life. This thesis offers an alternative by examining the club houses of middle-class men and relations between and among members themselves. Although class and gender are the two main working categories for analysis here, the thesis also contributes to a more complex understanding of identity as a ‘constellation of meanings’, and suggests that historians need to consider clubs and associations as part of a wider middle-class masculine culture that comprised of a range of different tastes. The second part of the introduction discusses the source material and methodological approaches, and concludes with an outline of the thesis structure.

\[\text{1} \quad \text{A. Kidd and D. Nicholls, ‘Introduction: History, Culture and the Middle Classes’, in A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds.) } \text{Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle Class Identity in Britain, 1800-1940 (Manchester, 1999), p. 6.}\]
Historiographical debates

Historians have recognized that associational culture was part of urban life for the middle section of British society since the sixteenth century. However, those studying the nineteenth century have created a fragmented picture of clubs and associations in the lives of the middle-class. While some historians have emphasized the role of clubs and voluntary societies at the beginning of the period in the formation of middle-class identity, others have shifted the focus to the second half of the century and have argued that club life was part of a new middle-class culture and a crisis in masculinity. By focusing on clubs and associations as spheres of masculine social and cultural life, this thesis bridges the gap between these two different historiographical approaches, and argues that the relationship between masculinity and the club was more constant and consistent throughout the period. By approaching masculinity as a homosocial construct, this thesis reveals the complex ways in which associational culture shaped middle-class masculine identities. It also argues that the buildings of club houses as the settings for masculine social life were important, because they reflected the differences in tastes between middle-class men.

Associational culture in the early nineteenth century has been explicitly linked to the ‘making’ of the British middle-class. This argument was pioneered by Robert Morris, who has highlighted the role of voluntary societies in forging a sense of shared identity across a middle class, politically and religiously fractured by urban

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expansion and the hostile environment of a free market society. Morris has acknowledged that the structure of the middle class in the cities of Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh, as a social, political and economic group was hierarchical. But he has argued that the involvement of both the upper and lower middle classes in a variety of voluntary groups for poor relief, education and leisure, circumvented the role of government and allowed them to assert a sense of unified authority and identity over the working class. Theodore Koditschek’s study of early industrial Bradford has similarly emphasized the role of associational culture in bridging the differences between an emergent middle class.

By focusing on the role of associational culture in the construction of a class identity, these accounts overlooked the more nuanced functions of clubs and associations among the different sections of the middle class. The arguments put forward by Morris and Koditschek presented voluntary societies in the early nineteenth century as disconnected from a longer tradition of associational culture that had permeated social and cultural life in the early modern period. Although Morris has recognized that it was ‘wrong to claim that voluntary societies in Britain were new in the period from 1780 to 1850’, by emphasising their growth after 1780, he has suggested that associational culture took on an entirely new role. Indeed, the interpretations put forward by Morris and Koditschek were very much a product of

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7 Morris, ‘Voluntary Societies’, 95.
their time. Writing at the end of the 1980s, both were contributing to a developing historiography of what they perceived to be a neglected section of nineteenth-century society. Developed in reaction to an established historiography of the working classes, historians of the middle class searched for a unified and coherent form of middle-class identity which could compete with E. P. Thompson’s model of working-class consciousness.8

This thesis argues that associational culture was integral to constructs of middle-class identity in the nineteenth century, but engages with the differences that characterized the middle class in the period. Although the professional and business men who lived and worked in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool used their membership of clubs and associations as part of the construction of middle-class identity in their autobiographies and diaries, they also reveal that the role of associational culture in their life stories differed, and was shaped by their individual identities and personal histories. Donna Loftus and Robert Gray have argued that the life writing of nineteenth-century middle-class men was not necessarily a reflection of class identity in the period, but part of its construction.9 The idea that the middle class was ‘made’ during the early nineteenth century is now questioned, and historians have noted the continuities between the middle class and the middling sort of the previous century.10 Although in recent years it has been suggested that class was a linguistic formation rather than the product of structural economic and social change, most historians of the middle class now accept that this was not a homogeneous group, and have emphasized the differences in wealth, occupation,

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religion and geographical location. A body of work on the lower middle class has also served in part, to reinforce incongruities within the middle section of nineteenth-century society. As we shall see, membership of clubs and associations in the life writings of middle-class men varied in their functions and reaffirmed status in different ways.

In addition to life writings, this thesis also draws on evidence from a wide range of different types of clubs and associations, from small tavern-based discussion groups to large institutionalized club houses to further explore the different functions of clubs and associations. In a study of middle-class public culture in the second half of the nineteenth century, Simon Gunn has highlighted the variety of clubs and associations that were active in the provincial cities of Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, and has argued that they ‘comprised different

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forms of middle-class male sociability." Gunn has identified the period from 1870 to 1914 as the ‘efflorescence of provincial club life’, when the choice of associations rose dramatically and became part of ‘a mass bourgeois culture of sociability that paralleled developments in popular urban leisure.’ According to Gunn, by the 1850s, the clubs and associations that had provided a base for middle-class political and social identity in the first half of the century had declined and were replaced by an associational culture focused more on sociability and leisure.

However, in contrast to Gunn, this thesis argues that club life and associational culture played a more constant role in middle-class social and cultural life across the nineteenth century. The paucity of research on the social life of the club in the early nineteenth century means that is difficult to support Gunn’s claim that associational culture differed entirely in character and function between the first and second half of the period. Club life certainly became more visible in late nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool, with the opening of new purpose-built club houses. But many of the ‘[i]nstitutes, Athenaeums and gentlemen’s clubs’ identified by Gunn as comprising the vibrancy of late nineteenth-century club life, were in fact rooted in the earlier half of the century. ‘The Manchester Athenaeum, which Gunn acknowledged as one of the ‘new cultural associations from the mid-nineteenth century designed to appeal to a wider propertied population than simply the elite’, was founded in 1835, and although the institution struggled financially during its early years, it was nevertheless a popular and lively centre for social life and education. In fact, for some clubs, it was the first rather than second half of the

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13 S. Gunn, The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City 1840-1914 (Manchester, 2000), p. 84.
14 Ibid., p. 91.
15 Ibid., pp. 86-87.
16 Ibid.
century which constituted a ‘golden age’. John Shaw’s Club, a Tory Anglican club which met in Manchester’s inns and taverns, and was active since at least the 1750s, suffered a decline during the 1880s and 1890s when it failed to attract new members. Membership of the Manchester Union Club, a social club founded in 1825, underwent its most dramatic growth during the early decades of the nineteenth century than at any other time, and doubled its membership from 200 to 400 members after the opening of its new club house on Mosley Street in 1836.

Nineteenth-century clubs and associations were overwhelmingly populated by men, but issues of gender went largely unnoticed in the accounts of middle-class associational culture proposed by Morris, Koditschek and Gunn. This thesis engages directly with gender identity and explores the role of clubs and associations in masculine life. Since the publication of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s study *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* in 1987, historians of the middle class have sought to explain how their social and cultural identity was gendered. Davidoff and Hall argued that the defining feature of the early nineteenth-century middle class was a domestic ideology which separated gender roles between the private world of the home and the public world of work. While women were positioned at the centre of the home, as a moral sanctuary away from the public domain, men straddled both the public and private spheres; a man’s occupation and public activities constituted an essential part of his identity, yet he also took active participation in family life. The idea of separate

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18 F. S. Stancliffe, *John Shaw’s, 1738-1938* (Manchester, 1938); John Shaw’s Club Minute Book 1885-1888, M485/1/1, MALS; John Shaw’s Club Minute Book 1892-1921, M485/1/2, MALS.
19 3 August 1829, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1829-1832, M17/2/2/2, MALS; 12 October 1835, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1832-1836, M17/2/2/3, MALS; ‘The Clubs of Manchester: The Union’, *The Sphinx*, 17 April 1869, p. 30.
21 Ibid., pp. 33, 90, 333.
gender spheres has been instrumental in the development of a model of middle-class masculinity during the nineteenth century, as divided between the home and work. John Tosh’s pioneering study of male domesticity in the period has furthered understanding about the role of middle-class men in the home and family life. However, Tosh has also suggested that historians of masculinity need to go beyond the simple dichotomy of home and work, and he has recognized the all-male association as a third arena for social and cultural activity in the lives of nineteenth-century middle-class men.

Yet despite Tosh’s claims about the significance of associational culture in masculine life, his work on male domesticity has created a one-sided picture of the relationship between the club and masculinity. Tosh has argued that from 1870 onwards, men of the professional and business classes were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with aspects of domesticity in the home and therefore turned towards the alternative homosocial lifestyle offered by the club or a career in the colonies.

When discussing the club in his study of male domesticity, Tosh only considered how club life shaped social and gender relations between men and women, and paid little attention to how it influenced relations between club men. Tosh’s ‘flight’ thesis was based on the idea that during the late nineteenth century, men faced a growing challenge from visible forms of homosexuality and an improvement in

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women’s education, political and legal rights.\textsuperscript{25} However, the lack of research in this area means that it is not yet entirely clear how this effected relations between and among men more generally.

Indeed, Tosh and other historians of modern masculinity have been uneasy about the issues of homosociality and relations between men. This has not always been the case. By focusing on environments and contexts that were predominantly confined to men, such as the public school and the scouting movement, James Mangan and James Walvin’s edited volume of essays, \textit{Manliness and Morality}, and Norman Vance’s, \textit{The Sinews of the Spirit} published in 1987 and 1985 respectively, threw new light on the public codes of manliness available to the social, political and intellectual elites and opened masculine identity up for scholarly discussion.\textsuperscript{26} However, both Tosh and Michael Roper have expressed a concern that by focusing too heavily on homosocial environments, these earlier explorations into masculine identity gave little weight to female influence and therefore obscured the relational nature of gender identity. ‘[T]here is scant acknowledgement’, wrote Tosh and Roper, ‘that the typical schoolboy had been moulded by his mother or nanny for some years…and that feminine absence conditioned his emotional development during adolescence.’\textsuperscript{27}


\textsuperscript{26} J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.) \textit{Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940} (Manchester, 1987); N. Vance, \textit{The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature} (Cambridge, 1985).

This thesis does not suggest that historians of masculinity should move away from thinking about how men’s identities were related to women. But it does argue that too much emphasis has been placed on this approach to the extent that we know very little about what men actually got up to outside the home in the context of the club, or even in the workplace. Some attempt has been made to address men’s behaviour within the all-male club or association. Examining the leisure pursuits of middle-class men, Mike Huggins has argued that the absence of women from club life meant that men were perhaps more susceptible to drunkenness. Mary Mulvey Roberts has also suggested that the absence of women from club life in the late eighteenth century meant that clubs were regarded as places for the expression of transgressive forms of behaviour. However these accounts have continued to define masculinity solely in relation to women, and have ignored how men judged behaviour between themselves.

Historians of masculinity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been more successful in using a homosocial approach in their study of masculine identity. Michèle Cohen and Alexandra Shephard have shown how early modern constructs of masculinity consisted of different forms which could on the surface seem contradictory. Although not concerned with masculinity per se, Peter Bailey has made a similar observation about the complexity of working-class identity and

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has shown how in certain types of working-class associational culture, notions of
self-improvement were accompanied by what would seem to be less respectable
forms of behaviour such as drinking beer. This thesis argues that approaching
masculinity as a construct between men provides a richer and more detailed
understanding of masculinities and club life in the nineteenth century. It examines
the attitudes of club men towards drink and reveals that although alcohol was at
times integral to the conviviality of club meetings, drunkenness was controversial
because it signalled a loss of masculine self-control. By using the club and
association to revisit the ways in which middle-class masculinity was constructed
between men, this thesis suggests that historians need to rethink their assumptions
about how men behaved in the company of each other, and perhaps also with women.

By approaching the club and its role in masculine life from a homosocial
perspective, I argue - in contrast to Tosh - that clubs and associations played a much
wider role in the lives of nineteenth-century middle-class men that went beyond their
relationship with the home. Tosh has assumed that by physically removing men
from the home, the club posed a threat to domesticity. But in doing so he has
overlooked the longer tradition of the association as its own sphere for social and
cultural life. Indeed, the idea that domesticity was any more important for a man
during the nineteenth century has been cast into doubt by recent research on the
eighteenth and twentieth centuries. Viewed from a different perspective, it is clear
that club life could play different roles in the life of the middle-class man.

32 P. Bailey, ‘Will the Real Bill Banks Please Stand Up? Towards a Role Analysis of mid-Victorian
33 H. Barker, ‘Soul, Purse and Family: Middling and Lower-Class Masculinity in Eighteenth Century
Manchester’, Social History 33, 1 (2008): 12-35; K. Harvey, ‘The History of Masculinity, circa 1650-
and Domesticity in Eighteenth Century Britain’, Gender & History 21, 3 (2009): 520-540; A. Vickery,
Behind Closed Doors: At Home in Georgian England (London, 2009), pp. 49-82; M. Francis, ’The
More recently, research on other nineteenth-century club cultures have questioned Tosh’s ‘flight from domesticity’ thesis. Amy Milne Smith has argued that for upper-class men whose homes lacked privacy in late nineteenth-century London, clubs provided a form of domesticity. Mrinalini Sinha and Robin D. Jones have also argued that British social clubs in colonial India were far from at odds with the idea of domesticity, but played an essential role in stabilizing the domestic lives of expatriates. These studies have also drawn attention to the physical club house and the ways in which it was decorated and organized as a place for domestic life. Smith has argued that certain rooms and services in the upper-class club mimicked the home, and Jones has noted how colonial clubs were decorated in styles similar to those found in colonial domestic dwellings.

However, by exploring the interiors of club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool, this thesis suggests that historians must go beyond comparing the club to notions of domesticity. Decorated in a variety of styles, provincial club houses drew inspiration from public buildings rather than the design of the home. The study of the club house in this thesis also focuses on the ways in which clubs and associational culture reflected differences between middle-class men. Recent studies on the nineteenth-century domestic interior have shown how consumer practices, decorative choices and the use of interior space were all integral to the domestication of the male.

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to constructs of middle-class identity. This suggests that the different decorative and architectural styles employed by individual club houses reflected both social and cultural differences and varieties of identity.

The thesis argues that differences between middle-class men were expressed not only between clubs, but also within them. As John Field has found in his study of nineteenth-century Portsmouth, styles of life and understandings of class identity amongst the middle class did not follow preordained patterns, but were influenced by a complex web of factors including local conditions, occupation, geographic location, age and the company within which individuals mixed. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociological study of French society in the 1960s demonstrated how taste and aesthetic judgement were used by the middle class as a clear marker of social distinction and status. Bourdieu’s theory highlights the complexity of taste and suggests that it was not defined by economic resources alone, but also determined by other variables such as educational background and social origin. This thesis demonstrates that the role of taste in defining identity amongst nineteenth-century club men also went far beyond the choice of wallpaper and architectural style. Men made statements and judgements about their own identities and those of their fellow members when they made decisions about all aspects of their behaviour. Thus dining, smoking and drinking within the confines of the club were all activities through which masculinities were both expressed and defined. By exploring the ways in which men used the club and wrote about associational culture, this thesis

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argues that clubs and associations were an important arena for middle-class masculine social life and highlights the diversity and complexity of men’s identities.

**Sources, methodology and structure**

My analysis of the relationship between associational culture and middle-class masculinity draws upon an assortment of source material including life writings, minute books, club histories, guide books, newspapers, architectural plans and photographs. By combining a range of sources and methodological approaches, this study provides an original and detailed account of the function and representation of club life.

As major commercial centres, both locally and nationally in the nineteenth century, Manchester and Liverpool were home to rich and diverse associational cultures which attracted men who not only lived in the cities, but were also drawn from towns in the surrounding area such as Bolton, Oldham and St Helens. The selection of archival material for this study was based on a broad definition of clubs and associational culture. Examples ranged in size, from small, informal groups which met in inns and taverns throughout the period, to large institutionalized club houses increasingly built in, but not restricted to, the final quarter of the century. The sample is also representative of associations which served different interests. Some had clear political motivations such as the Liverpool Canning Club founded in 1812, while others were established for the promotion of the arts, such as the Manchester Brasenose Club, founded in 1869. Other organizations examined in this study, evade easy classification. The Liverpool 30 Club for instance, which met during the last two decades of the century in a city-centre tavern, was founded for the
discussion of literary topics, but club minutes suggest conversation was in fact more
general. Despite differences in size, composition and interest, common to all of the
examples selected for analysis was the fact that they met on a regular basis and had a
clear social function for the benefit of their members.

Although sports clubs and freemasonry both featured heavily in archive
collections in Manchester and Liverpool, they are not included in this analysis.
These sorts of associations were formed at the end of the period and were therefore
not representative of associational culture throughout the century as a whole. Tosh
has included both freemasons and sports clubs in his ‘flight from domesticity’ thesis,
to reinforce his point about the increase in associational culture during the final third
of the nineteenth century. A history of masculinity in relation to freemasonry in
Britain remains to be written. However, writing about sports clubs, Tosh has noted
that these kinds of associations, ‘grew with breathtaking speed during the late
Victorian period [and] represented a major increase in men’s out-of-home
activities.’ Studies confirm sport and sporting associations had similar social
functions to the forms of nineteenth-century associational culture examined here.
However, they also suggest that the ways in which masculinity was constructed,
particularly through ideas about muscularity, was slightly different in these venues
than was the case for the professional and business man at work in the nineteenth-
century provincial city.

40 Tosh, A Man’s Place, pp. 186-187.
41 However there are studies on masculinity and freemasonry in nineteenth-century America. See: M.
A. Clawson, Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender and Fraternity (Gulford, 1989) and P. G.
Mackintosh and C. R. Forsberg, ‘Performing the Lodge: Masonry, Masculinity and Nineteenth
42 Tosh, A Man’s Place, pp. 186-187.
43 R. Holt, Sport and the British: A Modern History (Oxford, 1989); J. Lowerson, Sport and the
English Middle Classes, 1870-1914 (Manchester, 1995); H. Telfer, ‘Ludism, Laughter and Liquor:
The quality and quantity of information provided by club administrative records varied enormously between individual organizations. Records of the Union Club and Reform Club in Manchester were the most comprehensive. Those relating to the Union Club are particularly extensive, comprising of a collection of minute books from its establishment in 1825 through to 1917, and are accompanied by other items such library catalogues and bed books. Written administrative records for other large club houses have not survived, but they are represented in archival collections by visual sources, such as architectural plans and photographs. Records for smaller clubs and associations tend to cover a shorter time period, but are still a rich source of information. For instance, although there are only two minute books for the YZ Club, a small tavern-based discussion club in Liverpool, they cover a period of sixteen years and provide a detailed account of meetings and the topics discussed between members.

The majority of the collections found in archives were heavily skewed towards the final quarter of the nineteenth century and beyond. While this evidence appears to suggest that clubs and associations were more numerous at this later date, it is important to remember that the quality and extent of archival collections might be more indicative of changes in acquisition policies and collection practices than of social developments. References to groups and organizations in newspapers and local histories suggest a rich tradition of associational culture in both Manchester and Liverpool and the surrounding areas across the nineteenth century. Newspapers and journals are used throughout the study and have been particularly valuable in

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44 Records of the Manchester Union Club M17, MALS.

45 Records of the Liverpool YZ Club, 367 THI, LRO.
providing information on clubs and associations for which no original records or documentation has survived. Daily and weekly national newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Liverpool Mercury*, for example, ran articles on the opening of new club houses and their correspondence columns contained information about proposals for new associations. More local publications such as *The Sphinx*, a satirical journal published in Manchester between 1868 and 1871 and the *Liverpool Review*, both ran series on their local ‘clublands’ during the final quarter of the century. Editors and journalists themselves were not underrepresented in the clubs of Manchester and Liverpool. As Gunn has pointed out, J. H. Nodal, editor of the *The Sphinx* was a member of at least three clubs in Manchester, including the Literary Club, the Arts Club and the Brasenose Club.\footnote{Gunn, *The Public Culture*, p. 6.} However, aimed as they were at local and national audiences of educated men and women with a wide range of interests, these sources provide an insight into how clubs and associations constituted part of wider middle-class culture. Through reporting on the buildings and public meetings for new clubs and associations, newspapers and journals suggest that club life and associational culture were readily accepted as part of nineteenth-century urban life.

Where surviving administrative records for clubs were limited or non-existent, architectural plans, photographs and the buildings themselves have provided another way of accessing club life within these institutions.\footnote{The buildings of the Liverpool Conservative Club and Liverpool Reform Club, both on Dale Street, and the Manchester Conservative Club and Manchester Reform Club on St Ann’s Street and King Street respectively, are still standing. The Manchester Union Club and the Liverpool Palatine Club which are also analysed in this study were demolished in the middle of the previous century. The English Heritage National Monument Record holds photographic collections of the interior and exteriors of the Liverpool Conservative Club and the Manchester Reform Club. Floor plans and elevations for the Liverpool Reform Club can be found in the Edmund Kirby & Sons collection, 720 KIR, at the Liverpool Record Office.} The information that these sorts of visual sources give is not as obvious or immediate as
written documents, and historians cannot necessarily read them in the same way. Lynda Nead has suggested approaching sources of visual culture as forms of cultural representation, the meanings of which are embedded in the processes through which they are created and consumed.\textsuperscript{48} John Tagg has proposed a similar approach to photographs as ‘a material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts…for more or less defined purposes.’\textsuperscript{49} In this study, visual culture is not used simply as a reflection of club life, but as a medium through which the identities of club men and understandings of associational culture were expressed.

The study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one explores the ways in which clubs and associational culture were represented in the life writings of professional and business men, who lived and worked in and around the cities of Manchester and Liverpool during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Drawing on published autobiographies, biographies and diary extracts, the chapter analyses how professional and business men wrote about clubs and associations in their life stories and argues that rather than simply providing an alternative to the home, clubs and associations were located between home and work. By tracing the development of masculine identity through the lifecycle, I demonstrate how male writers depicted the different roles clubs and associations fulfilled through youth and adult life. While for young working migrants the club or association gave access to the public world, for many adults the club was envisaged as an escape from work and as a distinct social place for male friendship.

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Chapter two focuses on the workings of clubs and associations, to consider the ways in which masculinity was constructed and defined within the homosocial group of club members. Using minute books and other administrative records, I explore the different functions and varieties of club life to reveal the range of middle-class masculinities that were present in nineteenth-century club life and associational culture. By examining the varieties and functions of club life, I demonstrate the different ways in which club life intersected with other spheres of masculine activity, in both the world of work and in the family. However, men’s attitudes towards drinking alcohol in the club and notions of creditworthiness suggest that masculine associational culture also had its own code of self-control which was used to judge the character of the club man.

The final two chapters explore the exteriors and interiors of club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool. Chapter three focuses on the architecture and external appearance of six club houses built in the period from 1825 to 1883. Club houses are most often associated with London, but as this chapter shows, Manchester and Liverpool each had a distinct club culture which developed in a complex relationship with the capital. Using visual sources including photographs, paintings and the actual buildings themselves, the chapter examines each of the clubs in turn and explores the ways in which they were designed and constructed as a response to local social and political identities. By adopting different styles, architects and club committees made claims about the identity and function of their club in both a local and national context. Situated between the home and the public building, the architecture of these club houses reflected their function as a way into the masculine social life of the city, distinct from home and
the public world, whilst reinforcing the idea that middle-class club men did not possess the same tastes and identities.

Chapter four moves inside the club house to explore what the interior and its decoration can tell the historian about the function of nineteenth-century clubs and the identity of middle-class club men. It analyses the decorative styles of two clubs houses, the Liverpool Conservative Club, which opened in 1883, and the Manchester Brasenose Club, established in 1869. It argues that different types of clubs employed different decorative schemes to reflect their social and cultural differences. But it also argues that the particular styles chosen were intended to mark the club out as a distinctive place for masculine social life. Drawing on inspiration from the upper-class home and art gallery helped to distinguish the club from the spheres of home and work, whilst evoking notions of leisure. In the second half of the chapter I go on to explore two rooms which have been regarded as characteristic of the Victorian club house, the dining room and the smoke room. I trace the ways in which these spaces were used by members, from the table arrangements to the choices of food and tobacco products to show how the club house not only catered to a range of masculinities, but in contrast to the public world of work and business where it was situated, allowed men to express their individualities.
Chapter One: Between Home and Work? The Role of Associational Culture in the Construction of Middle-Class Masculine Identity.

Introduction

Edward Abbot Parry, a county court judge in Manchester for over fifteen years, recalled in his autobiography how much he missed working in the city and its club life: ‘When I come out of the Lambeth County Court into the Camberwell New Road it will always feel irksome to me not to be able to stride up Peter Street and push open the swing doors of a certain club in Mosley Street and find myself in an atmosphere of tobacco and good fellowship.’ Rather than comparing the club with home, Parry allied it with work and the public world. This contrasts with the current historiography which has approached the nineteenth-century club as either a refuge from domesticity or a return to it. As Parry suggested, clubs and associations took on a much wider role in the construction of male identity in this period. Professional and business men like Parry, writing about their lives in Manchester and Liverpool during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, did not depict the club simply as an escape from the home or as an alternative form of domestic life. As this chapter will show, life writers depicted the function of the club and associational culture as a distinctive place for male friendship and fellowship and where they were able to carve out their identities as middle-class men.

This chapter uses the published life writings of professional and business men to examine the role of associational culture in the construction of masculine identity over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While historians of masculinity have agreed that clubs and associational culture played an important role in the lives of men, they have tended to focus only on the way in which it provided

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1 E. A. Parry, What the Judge Saw: Being Twenty Five Years in Manchester by One Who has Done It (London, 1912), p. 4.
an escape from the home. John Tosh has identified the club as part of a middle-class ‘flight from domesticity’ which occurred from the 1870s, when men of the professional and business classes became increasingly dissatisfied with domestic life and female authority in the home, and therefore turned towards homosocial lifestyles. Amy Milne Smith has argued that for upper-class men, the situation was in fact the opposite and the club provided a form of domesticity for men whose homes lacked privacy. However, Simon Gunn has pointed to the wider functions of clubs and associations, noting how they ‘not only offered an escape from women, domesticity and business life, but also a way into the social life of the city.’ As this chapter will show, associational culture in Manchester and Liverpool was depicted by professional and business men as a place for masculine social life that went beyond providing an escape from or to domesticity. Instead, I argue that middle-class life writers portrayed the club and association in their life stories as opportunities for male friendship and fellowship which provided a relief from urban life and work.

By examining how clubs and associations were depicted in individual life stories, this chapter reveals the multiple and complex roles associational culture played in the construction of nineteenth-century masculine identity. Historians of masculinity have assumed that men experienced the club in the same way. Tosh has argued that although the club had long appealed to young bachelors as an alternative to the family home, from the 1870s, this feature of club life was attracting married

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men for the same reasons.\textsuperscript{5} However, the life writings examined in this chapter suggest that clubs and associations could fulfil different functions in the lives of professional and business men depending on their stage and situation in the male lifecycle. For youths on the cusp of manhood and not yet the heads of their own households, joining a club or association was used in the life story to mark their entry into the adult world. In the lives of adult and married men, associational culture tended to be depicted as a relief from work and urban life. Yet, as this chapter will show, the role of clubs and associational culture in the construction of masculine identity shifted not only in relation to the male lifecycle, but was also shaped by the individual identities and personal histories of the writers themselves.

In this chapter, I analyse different types of published life writings, from autobiographies and biographies to edited collections of diary extracts, as sites where identities are constructed and fashioned.\textsuperscript{6} Martin Danahey has agreed that all texts are spaces for the construction of identity. But he has also argued that the mode of identity expressed differs between forms, and he has made a distinction between "private" venues like diaries, letters and journals’ on the one hand, and ‘published, formal autobiography’ on the other.\textsuperscript{7} However, I argue that to make a definite distinction between public and private forms is misleading, and obscures the complex ways in which identity was constructed and expressed in these texts. While

\textsuperscript{5} Tosh, \textit{A Man’s Place}, pp. 127, 187.

there were differences between “private” sentiments and public display’, the process through which identity was fashioned in life writings proves similar across the board.\(^8\) Both autobiographies and diaries offer contemplative and reflective accounts of a life in action, whilst maintaining an eye to public perceptions of the self and social and cultural norms.\(^9\) As Philippe Lejeune has noted, autobiography had a didactic function and used a linear narrative, tracing the development of the individual through childhood and youth to retirement and old age, in order to instruct readers on how to live an exemplary life.\(^10\) Diaries too demonstrated a concern with the public perception of the self. As historians have suggested, diaries were less confessions of the self than sites where identity was fashioned through a process of self-scrutiny in order to maintain standards of behaviour.\(^11\) Studying the manuscript diaries of Samuel Bamford, Martin Hewitt has shown how the self expressed in these texts was subject to constant editing. As Hewitt has argued, the diaries are ‘less a laboratory of the self…than a workshop of the public persona, of the autobiographical presence’.\(^12\)

Published diary extracts were subjected to further re-fashioning, determined by the motives of their editors. Entries taken from the diaries of the Liverpool ship-owner and aspirant politician Richard Durning Holt (1868-1941) represented only a fraction of the material from the original manuscripts, more than half of which

\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^12\) M. Hewitt and R. Poole (eds.) The Diaries of Samuel Bamford (Stroud, 2000), p. xxiv.
related to family, business and social matters.\textsuperscript{13} However, the historian should still refrain from seeing published diaries as ‘public’ versions of ‘private’ documents. There is little sense that the diaries considered in this chapter were wholly private. The cotton manufacturer Absalom Watkin (1787-1861) noted on a number of occasions when his wife and other female acquaintances read his diary. It was perhaps for this reason that Watkin sometimes used a type of shorthand that only he could understand.\textsuperscript{14}

There has equally been much debate over the difference between writing about the self and other lives.\textsuperscript{15} But historians have agreed that separating autobiographical practice from other types of life writing is extremely difficult. Linda Peterson has noted how Victorian women drew on a variety of life-writing forms including biography and family history in compiling narratives of their own lives.\textsuperscript{16} Donna Loftus has noted that what distinguished the life writings of professional and business men from those by working-class authors was, ‘a sense of self that was informed less through interiority and more through a range of social relations.’\textsuperscript{17} As Loftus has shown, these male middle-class writers plotted the emergence of the self through their relationships with ‘family, friends and colleagues’, and in doing so placed their identity firmly within the context of wider society.\textsuperscript{18} The texts considered in this chapter demonstrated a similar blurring of boundaries between genres. Richard Durning Holt merged his diary with both auto- and family biography. Holt made clear his intention in the opening entry, ‘to keep a

\textsuperscript{13} Dutton, \textit{Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal}, p. xvii.
\textsuperscript{14} Goffin, \textit{The Diaries of Absalom Watkin}, p. 83.
\textsuperscript{15} L. Marcus, \textit{Auto/Biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism and Practice} (Manchester, 1994), pp. 273-274.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 68.
diary or short historical record of the doings of my particular family’, and he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, both keen diarists and more successful politicians.\textsuperscript{19} For Holt and the other writers considered here, the practice of life writing was not an exposure of the private self, but a negotiation of public identity.

The chapter is split into two sections and follows the course of the life story to reveal the ways in which associational culture was depicted, first in relation to youth and secondly, adult life. Clubs and associations played a prominent role in the construction of masculine identity during youth and writers depicted club membership as one of the final steps in becoming a man. This was particularly the case for men who began their working lives as migrants and they portrayed club meetings as a way into the public world, as well as a supportive social network. Writers who stayed in the family home when they began work presented a different picture of clubs and associations as a relief from the monotony of parental domesticity and moreover, as an antidote for a personal dissatisfaction with work.

The second half of the chapter looks at the roles assigned to clubs and associational culture in relation to adult life. Writers made explicit references to the club during this period as providing respite from the challenges of running a business or pursuing a professional career, and suggested that club meetings were a way of lifting their spirits. This function of associational culture echoed the experiences of youth and placed the club alongside the traditional role of the home and domestic life, as a shelter from the public world. But writers were careful to distinguish between the two spaces of the home and club as serving very different functions. For married

\textsuperscript{19} Dutton, \textit{Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal}, pp. xvii, 1.
men, the club and association was not so much an alternative to the home, as a unique place for male friendship and fellowship.

*Leaving home and starting work: the role of the club in becoming a middle-class man.*

Throughout the nineteenth century, the home provided the principle refuge from the world of work. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have shown, the idealized home in the earlier half of the period was depicted by middle-class writers as a place of peace and refuge, a private space separate from the public world. John Tosh has argued that in the second half of the century, the domestic sphere continued to fulfil both the physical and emotional needs of the middle-class man by alleviating the demoralising effects caused by the urban environment and marketplace. But for middle-class youths, the home did not fulfil this purpose. Young middle-class men were not the heads of their own households or families, but found themselves still within the family home, at university or in lodgings. It was precisely at this point in the male lifecycle that the first references to clubs and associations were made in the life writings of professional and business men. But as this section will show, the roles assigned to associational culture in the texts varied according to individual circumstances. Discussion clubs and debating societies played a particularly prominent role in the lives of young working migrants who were removed from the social networks of the family, as a place for male friendship and fellowship. For those who remained in the family home, associational culture was depicted as an escape from the monotony of domestic life, but there was also a strong emphasis on the relief the club provided from work.

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For many of the men whose lives were represented in the life writings, joining a club or association went hand-in-hand with a young man’s removal from the family home to another town in order to begin work. Henry Steinthal Gibbs (1829-1894), a cotton manufacturer in Manchester during the middle of the nineteenth century, had come to the city as a young migrant from Somerset and was apprenticed to a cotton manufacturer in Kearsley, Salford. Like many of the writers considered here, Gibbs saw himself as a self-made man and was keen to stress how he had started out in life on his own, as a young working migrant in a city where he had few or no family or friends. Soon after his arrival Gibbs joined the Athenaeum, a social and educational institution founded in 1835 and aimed at the city’s young business and commercial men. He depicted it as a fairly typical experience for the young migrant, and recalled in his autobiography how ‘[m]ost of the young men coming to Manchester were expected to become members of the Athenaeum, to which they were promptly introduced by some friend already in the enjoyment of membership.’ Peter Clark has noted that of young men joining clubs and societies in the early modern period, ‘a substantial proportion were recent arrivals in town.’ Leaving home to pursue training for business or a professional career was also a common experience for young males in the middle ranks of Victorian society. While some sons stayed at home in the expectation of continuing the family business, younger sons and those living in rural areas were...
often sent away to take up an apprenticeship. As centres of industrial activity and economic potential, Manchester and Liverpool were popular destinations.

Why did young working migrants like Gibbs join the Athenaeum when they arrived in Manchester? Gibbs depicted it as offering an attractive range of educational and social activities. From 1839, the Athenaeum was housed in purpose-built premises on Bond Street (now Princess Street), and for thirty shillings a year, members had access to the resources of a large news room supplied with local and national newspapers and journals, a library and lecture rooms as well as a coffee room, smoke rooms and a gymnasium.\(^{27}\) As a young man, Gibbs had not thought much of the library, and recalled that it ‘was a poor one, the books dirty, and the missing volumes…seemed never to reappear’.\(^{28}\) But he did admit there were ‘other advantages, such as Dramatic and Chess Clubs, French, German, Spanish and Italian classes…and an excellent Debating Society.’\(^{29}\)

Claiming membership of the Athenaeum also played a symbolic role in the construction of Gibb’s identity as a middle-class man. In his autobiography, Gibbs gave few details about his parents, noting only that his mother was Irish and his father ‘was a pupil of John Varley, who was the master of W. H. Hunt, Turner of Oxford…and made dextrous use of his brush.’\(^{30}\) Howard Wach has noted that the Manchester Athenaeum was one of three learned institutions established by Manchester’s middle class in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, for the moral and intellectual improvement of the city’s residents and workers.\(^{31}\)


\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 2.

young clerks and business men, the Athenaeum sat between the Royal Manchester Institution, founded in 1823 as an arts venue for the city’s bourgeois elite, and the Mechanics Institute, opened in 1824 as a social and educational institution for the working class. Gibbs was introduced to the Athenaeum by his friend Edward Phelps, whom he had first met in Manchester’s Mechanics Institute. But as Gibbs made clear to his readers, as a new and friendless arrival in the city, he did not use the Mechanics Institute to socialize, but had ‘resorted [to the Institution] on an evening, to read the daily papers only.’ For the middle-class migrant, the Athenaeum offered a more appropriate venue for social life and self-improvement.

Other writers suggested that as young working migrants, membership of a debating or learned society helped to alleviate the feelings of loneliness and dislocation caused by the absence of the family home. Born in 1836, Samuel Smith (d.1906) was raised and educated in Kirkcudbrightshire before coming to Liverpool to start an apprenticeship to a cotton broker at the age of sixteen. Recounting the experience in his autobiography, Smith depicted joining a club or association as helping to fill the void caused by his removal from the family environment and its social networks:

When I came to Liverpool I was friendless and alone, and felt the solitude greatly after my happy and cheerful family life; but I soon began to make friends, especially through literary and debating societies. My brother James also joined me after a year or two, and continued his education in Liverpool. About that time I made the acquaintance of Mr. W. B. Barbour, afterwards M. P. for Paisley. We lived alongside of each other in the same house for several years, and

the friendship there formed lasted till his death in 1892. Our lodgings were the resort of three young men who all entered Parliament, the other being my valued friend W. S. Caine, M. P… I cannot say how much I owed (as many others have done) to the literary societies of Liverpool; first to the Canning Street Society connected with the Presbyterian Church of Mr Welsh, which I joined, and which led me into kindly intercourse with active minded and religious men.\textsuperscript{34}

For Smith, associational culture and the Canning Street Society in particular, played an important role in subduing the feelings of loneliness caused by his removal from family life. He depicted the Canning Street Society and other associations as places for male friendship and fellowship. Smith suggested that he had initially been reluctant to take up his apprenticeship, and was unenthusiastic about the prospect of a career in manufacturing. But as the eldest of seven children, he had felt obliged to ‘make my way in life pretty early’, and having no taste for either the professions or agriculture, decided the only way forward was a career in commerce despite having no knowledge nor appetite for it.\textsuperscript{35}

Smith gave a particularly poignant account of his experiences as a young working migrant, but it was not uncharacteristic of his autobiography in general. A sense of loneliness pervades the entire text. Written and published during his retirement, the autobiography was the outcome of what he described in the preface as ‘a severe breakdown in health’.\textsuperscript{36} Having suffered the death of both his wife and only son, who had died from typhoid at the age of twenty eight, Smith dedicated his life story ‘to the memory of my beloved wife’, and described his son as ‘the most

\textsuperscript{34} Smith, \textit{My Life-Work}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p. 14.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. v.
unselfish character I ever knew, who promised a life of rare usefulness’, and whose premature death resulted in ‘leaving me alone’.37

Amy Milne Smith has argued that upper-class men in late nineteenth-century London found in their clubs ‘the emotional comfort traditionally associated with the family.’38 For Samuel Smith, the Canning Street Society provided a sense of emotional comfort, but he did not suggest that the friends and acquaintances he made there were any replacement for the home and family life. The arrival of Smith’s brother James suggests that Smith’s relations and rapport with his family remained close. Smith’s membership of the group signalled the beginning of a new stage in his life story, and symbolized the gradual maturation of his identity along a linear course from an insecure and lonely youth, to a confidant and sociable man of the world. Club membership enabled Smith to make friends, but also gave him access to wider social networks which extended beyond the boundaries of the Canning Street Society itself.

For young middle-class migrants, it was the religious community rather than the club or association which provided a much needed sense of domesticity. Although associational culture was depicted as playing an important role during this stage in the lifecycle, the first port of call for the young new arrival in town was the church or chapel. Historians have acknowledged the importance of the religious community for the socially dislocated individual during the industrial period.39 Churches were an obvious point of introduction for new arrivals of any social class,

37 Ibid., p. iii.
38 Smith, ‘A Flight to Domesticity?’, 798.
as a place where they could make social contacts. After his arrival, Samuel Smith had joined the congregation of the Presbyterian Church, and it was from here that he became involved in the Canning Street Society. The point was made more explicitly by the Manchester-based journalist, W. H. Mills in his biography of the cotton broker Charles Wright Macara (1845-1929). Born in Scotland, Macara left the family home in 1862 at the age of seventeen to begin work in a cotton manufactory in Manchester. Mills described Macara’s arrival in a town where he had few connections, and he singled out the Grosvenor Square Presbyterian Church as ‘a great resource’ for the young new arrival:

The fact is not always understood that in the days when the theatre was still regarded as malarial, miasmatic, and the music hall was not less on the shady outskirts of the town than the mortuary, and there was nothing like the present free trade in pleasure, religious sectarianism was the principle calorific of the English towns, as it remains the principle calorific of the villages to this day – roof, coals of fire, and fellowship. Sects and schisms – they ran like heating pipes through cold chambers, radiating that very high degree of warmth which comes from the agreement and communion together of small and isolated, and in some cases despised minorities, spreading the arts of music, oratory and public affairs. Charles Macara found a debating society at Grosvenor Square, and in that society he disentangled the affairs of Church and State...

In describing the role and function of the religious community, Mills evoked notions of domesticity. The church or chapel provided young lonely migrants like Macara with shelter and warmth, characteristics traditionally associated with the function of the home. It was only after gaining these comforts and a sense of familiarity that

41 Mills, Sir Charles, W. Macara, p. 32.
Macara went on to establish a debating society. Mills also suggested that by the time the biography was published in 1917, this function of the church and chapel in providing a sense of community was out-dated, and had been overtaken by other forms of leisure.42

The different roles played by the religious community and associational culture in the lives of young working migrants were based on the type of social networks they gave access to. The community of the church was, at least in theory, neither gender nor socially specific. Congregations mixed men with women and drew the old and young together from across the social spectrum. But as the historian of religion Hugh Mcleod has argued, during the nineteenth century women demonstrated a higher level of religious commitment and tended to dominate congregations at least numerically.43 In contrast, the life writers considered here rigidly defined the membership of the club or association as exclusively male. Macara’s debating society was depicted by Mills as distinctly homosocial, confined to men of a similar social standing. Smith similarly identified fellow members of his debating and learned societies as ‘active minded and religious men’, and in the process excluded both women and children.44

Defining the homosocial membership of the club or association was important in the life writings because it marked the period in the narrative of the lifecycle during which the boy became a man. An important part of the process of the transition from childhood to adulthood was the removal of young males from female company. While boys spent most of their time in the company of women, including mothers, sisters and nursemaids, entry into the world of work meant adulthood was defined in part by homosociality. As Tosh has noted, this transition

42 Ibid.
44 Smith, My Life-Work, p. 15.
to adulthood was implemented through phases of the lifecycle, from breeching and school, to university and apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{45} The Manchester-based cotton manufacturer Henry Gibbs plotted his transition from childhood to the cusp of adulthood through a similar series of markers. In the opening chapters of his autobiography, Gibbs recounted instances from his carefree infancy spent among his siblings and nursemaid in the rural idyll of Somerset, to his experiences at school. The first school, which he left at the age of seven, was ‘kept for young ladies and gentlemen’ and presided over by a female teacher, while the second was only for boys, specifically those ‘not intended to be clergymen or to follow a learned profession.’\textsuperscript{46}

Life writers depicted the homosocial environment of the debating or learned society as a place where young migrants made social and business contacts for life outside associational culture. Henry Gibbs was particularly fond of playing chess, and it was in the chess room of the Manchester Athenaeum that he made friends with two brothers, Benjamin and Jack Woodley, who had also come to Manchester as young working migrants.\textsuperscript{47} Gibbs carried on his relationship with these men outside the club, and their friendship turned from chess to discussions about business. In his autobiography, Gibbs noted how the two brothers ‘often came to my quarters when we renewed our chess proclivities, accompanied with “churchwardens”, and otherwise spent evenings discussing the relative merits of many of the leading firms with their buyers and other employes [sic].’\textsuperscript{48}

Other writers depicted debating clubs and learned associations as places where young middle-class migrants first came into contact with men who would

\textsuperscript{45} For a discussion of the transition from middle-class boyhood to manhood in the nineteenth century see Tosh, \textit{A Man’s Place}, pp. 102-122.
\textsuperscript{46} Gibbs, \textit{Autobiography}, pp. 1-12.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, pp. 92-93.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
grow up to be important public figures. In his biography of the cotton broker Charles Macara, Mills identified Macara’s fellow members of the Grosvenor Street Presbyterian Church debating society as fellow ‘young Scots’, including ‘John Alexander Beith, who became President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and John Kenworthy Bythell, who was afterwards the Chairman of the Directors of the Manchester Ship Canal.’ Another cotton broker and also fellow Scot, Samuel Smith similarly recalled members of the Liverpool Philomathic Society, which he joined around 1857, who eventually became prominent figures in Liverpool society:

At a later date Sir James Picton (with whom I debated the bimetallc question), the two Forwoods, Sir Arthur and Sir William, Richard Steele and other well known public men in Liverpool joined the Society which is still flourishing.

In writing his life story, Smith used the membership of the Philomathic Society to mark his entry and anchor himself into a public world of like-minded men. Loftus has shown how this was a common device used by middle-class male life writers. For Loftus, what distinguished these sorts of texts from those attributed to ‘men of letters’ and the working class, was ‘a sense of self that was informed less through interiority and more through a range of social relations.’ Approaching the genre of life writing as narrative for ‘successful self-making’, Loftus has argued that writers brought in male friends and associates ‘to bear witness to the author’s achievements as a mature masculinity was realised in the description of like-minded men.’

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50 Smith, *My Life-Work*, p. 16.
52 Ibid., p. 78.
Smith also depicted membership of the Liverpool Philomathic Society as providing valuable training for the young migrant at the beginning of his career. The Philomathic was a debating society, founded in 1825 by a group of professional and business men ‘for the attainment of knowledge by discussion.’ Meetings followed a formula typical of most debating societies, where individual members opened by giving a paper on a topic of their choice, followed by discussion and debate. For Smith, membership of the Philomathic Society was important because it provided him with the skills and tools he would later need during his ten year career as M.P. for Flintshire. During his time in parliament, Smith became a well-known speaker on a variety of moral, social and religious issues, including children’s rights and education, and the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act. In his autobiography, Smith credited the oratory skills he needed as an M.P. to his involvement in the Society. ‘[M]y best training in the art of speaking’, Smith told his readers, ‘was at the Philomathic Society.’

Like Gibbs, claiming membership of the Liverpool Philomathic Society played an important role in the construction of Smith’s identity as a middle-class man. Historians have acknowledged that the first half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic rise in cultural and learned societies. Alan Kidd and Arline Wilson have particularly stressed the role these institutions played in contributing to a new urban identity which counteracted national stereotypes of the ‘Manchester Man’ and Liverpool merchant as culturally inept, engrossed only in business and money-

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55 Smith, *My Life-Work*, p. 16.
making. Wilson has noted that a ‘central motif’ of the Liverpool Philomathic Society was ‘the compatibility of commerce and culture and a concern with upgrading Liverpool’s cultural image’.

Writers like Smith and Gibbs were aware of the cultural status which involvement in these types of associations offered to them as business men, and they used their membership of the learned society to locate themselves within a wider middle-class culture.

Meetings of cultural and learned societies like the Philomathic were social occasions, but they were governed by a sense of order and rationality. Smith described meetings as jovial occasions, but predicated on a desire for self-improvement and the rational exchange of information. ‘I can never forget’ wrote Smith, ‘the enjoyment of these noctes Ambrosianae, which to us lonely lodgers were “a feast of reason and a flow of soul.”’

Arnold Thackray has argued that one of the perceived benefits these types of organizations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was to distract the sons of professional and business men from vice by offering a rational form of entertainment and the ‘possibilities of instruction in self-control.’

Gunn has similarly pointed out that the type of sociability found in cultural and learned groups in the second half of the nineteenth century, was characterized by rational debate and discussion between educated men.

Not all the life writers considered in this chapter began their working lives as business or commercial apprentices. Edward Abbott Parry (1863-1943) spent his youth training for the law, and would eventually become a county-court judge in

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59 Smith, My Life-Work, p. 16.


61 Gunn, The Public Culture, pp. 95-96.
Manchester, as well as a novelist. Born in Lambeth in 1863, Parry was the son of a barrister and after finishing his formal education, decided to follow in his father’s footsteps. It was through an old contact of his father’s, that Parry was able to obtain a place in the Middle Temple. He recalled in his autobiography how this period in his life was not only filled with study, but, ‘[o]utside the pupil room there were lectures to attend, scholarships to be read for, dinners in the old hall, and debating clubs meeting on several evenings in the week.’

Parry included references to clubs and associations at this point in his life story as part of the preparation for adult life. Prior to publication, Parry’s autobiographical account of his twenty-five year career as a county-court judge in Manchester, What the Judge Saw published in 1912, was serialised in the local press. Parry assessed his youth from the vantage point of retirement. He depicted it as a liminal period in the lifecycle and distinguished it from the simplicity of childhood, but not yet quite equal to adulthood. Before deciding to pursue a career in the law, Parry had flirted with the idea of studying mathematics and even ‘fancied [himself] as an artist’, but eventually decided that ‘it was time to commence a career with money in it’. Parry did not consider his younger self as a fully-formed man, a status which he would only acquire with age and marriage. He described the three years he spent reading in the Middle Temple as his ‘student days’, and visualized himself during this time as ‘a thin slip of humanity shrinking amongst his elders’.

While some of the writers considered in this chapter were keen to stress how they had started out in life on their own, Parry suggested that his father had played a

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63 Parry, What the Judge Saw, p. 36.
64 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
65 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
66 Ibid., p. 37.
particularly influential role in this period of his life. He noted how his father had encouraged him to join clubs and associations from a young age. ‘Mindful of my father’s advice’, wrote Parry, ‘I had always kept in touch with an old boys’ debating club at King’s College School’. Tosh has argued that fathers played a particularly influential role during this transitory period in the lives of their sons. By linking his involvement in the debating club back to his father, Parry firmly established clubbability as an important component in the construction of his own identity.

However, Parry also used membership of clubs and associations to cut the ties of his childhood dependency on his father and to mark one of the final stages in his ascent to adulthood. Although Parry followed his father’s advice, he also joined two other clubs of his own choosing, ‘the Hardwicke and a very pleasant and more social club, the Mansfield.’ Gunn has argued that, ‘[e]ntry into the world of clubs and societies was an important rite of passage to adulthood for middle-class men [because] it signalled material independence and with it emotional detachment from the parental home.’ By choosing to join these other two associations, Parry demonstrated that he had an independent mind. It marked the point in his life story where Parry detached himself from the paternal bonds that had subordinated the son to his father and signalled his move towards independence. However, it is worth noting that club membership alone did not sever the influential bonds between parent and youth. In Parry’s case, these were already fractured by the sudden death of his father in 1880, when Parry was seventeen. His father’s untimely departure perhaps explains the author’s affectionate memories and to a certain extent, his decision to

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67 Ibid., p. 42.
68 Tosh, A Man’s Place, pp. 114-117.
69 Parry, What the Judge Saw, pp. 18-19, 42.
70 Gunn, The Public Culture, pp. 93-94.
71 Parry, What the Judge Saw, pp. 37-38.
pursue a career in law. But in order to show his progression towards manhood, Parry needed to demonstrate that like the ideal adult man, he could think for himself.

Not all middle-class youths who embarked on a professional career left home to begin their training. John Taylor was born in Bolton in 1811 and at the age of sixteen became articled to a local lawyer. Tosh has suggested that clubs and associations were particularly attractive to young men rebelling against the lack of social amenities in suburban family life. However, Taylor suggested involvement in associational culture during youth did not necessarily clash with the domestic sphere. Writing his autobiography in the second half of the century, Taylor described his youth as a particularly busy period in his life:

I worked willingly Sundays, Good Fridays, and in the night when required. I read much general literature, corresponded in the newspapers, kept a garden. I was Chairman of a Free and Easy Club. I could sing, spout, make election speeches, dress well, dance well and fence tolerably.

For Taylor domestic life was not entirely unfulfilling, and he appeared happy to divide what little time he had outside of work between his involvement in the Free and Easy Club, and the more domestic activities of gardening and reading. It is not entirely clear from the text how Taylor felt about his life at home during this period. Like many working and middle-class male life writers in the nineteenth century, Taylor demonstrated a reluctance to discuss private life and personal issues. But in describing his life outside of work, Taylor did not draw a clear distinction between domestic activities and associational culture. Rather, he divided his experiences during this period of youth between work and leisure.

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72 Tosh, A Man’s Place, p. 128.
73 Clegg, Autobiography, p. 23.
As an activity of his social life, Taylor depicted his involvement in associational culture as a relief from a dissatisfaction and resentment of work. In his autobiography, Taylor suggested that he found work during his youth unrewarding. Law had not been his first choice of career; upon leaving the Bolton Grammar school two years previously, Taylor had initially embarked on a five year apprenticeship with a local surgeon, but within six months decided that the medical profession did not suit him. Yet life as a trainee clerk seemed to offer little improvement. Taylor complained in his account of this period about the dreariness of endless copying, the lack of time for reading around his subject, and want of office comforts. His social experiences appeared to be typical of young unmarried clerks and shopkeepers in the second half of the nineteenth century, who outside of work hours favoured the social haunts of the poor. Free and Easy Clubs, of which Taylor was a chairman, were generally working-class in character and were linked in the press to drunkenness and prostitution. Taylor’s clubbable activities also went beyond the Free and Easy Club, and elsewhere in the narrative he informed his readers that he was a member of an Amateur Society for Dramatics and attended a conversation and drinking club at the George and Dragon Hotel.

For other young men who stayed at home when they began work, youth could prove a frustrating period in the lifecycle. A tedious domestic life and dissatisfaction with work went hand-in-hand for the young Edward Knowles Muspratt (1833-1923) during the early years of his career. Muspratt was born in

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76 Ibid., p. 23.
Bootle and was the son of a chemical industrialist who had a number of factories across Liverpool and north Wales. On his return home from university on the continent at the age of twenty three, Muspratt claimed his father ‘pressed me very seriously to stay at home and look after both Woodend and Liverpool works.’

He recalled the change in his life as ‘anything but pleasant’, not surprising considering his mother’s illness and subsequent death. But Muspratt still craved the social life he had led on the continent and complained that, ‘at home my father lived a quiet, humdrum life’.

But as Muspratt tells his readers, this was also a period when he was able, outside of business hours, to indulge his interest in politics and he joined the Liverpool Financial Reform Association, of which he was eventually to become president. In the narrative of the early days of his professional career, and whilst still living in the family home, Muspratt suggested that joining the association gave him a sense of identity and purpose. Disillusioned by the quietness of domestic life in the family home on the one hand, but equally down at heart with his work in the chemical factories on the other, Muspratt found respite in meetings of the Financial Reform Association where he immersed himself in the political issues of the day.

This section has argued that in the lives and experiences of middle-class youths, clubs and associations occupied a position more complex than simply being an alternative to the home. For most of the writers considered here, joining a club or association marked a new stage in the lifecycle when the youth embarked on his journey to become a man. However, the exact role assigned to associational culture by authors of the life writings depended in large part on their individual identities.

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81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
83 Ibid., p. 94.
and personal histories. While most writers were keen to claim involvement in clubs and associations as a marker of middle-class identity, each depicted a slightly different experience of club life. For men like the cotton broker Samuel Smith who came to Liverpool as a young migrant, the club helped to fill the void that had been left by the absence of the family and its social networks. However Edmund Muspratt who stayed in the family home during the early years of his career, depicted associational culture as a relief from his dissatisfaction with both work and domestic life. Despite the different emphasis writers placed on associational culture during youth, what united the ways in which they depicted clubs and associations was the distinctive function of associational culture in paving the way for a young man’s entry into adulthood.

**Adulthood: marriage, male fellowship and a flight from work?**

Not all writers continued to claim membership of a club or association during adult life. Although as an unmarried youth, the Manchester cotton manufacturer Henry Gibbs had been a member of the Manchester Athenaeum, he made no other mention of associational activity in his autobiography. But for those writers who did refer to clubs and associations during this period, rather than suggesting the club was an escape from the home, they depicted this sphere of masculine life as a place for homosocial friendship and fellowship. By describing club meetings as social occasions, professional and business men also portrayed associational culture as a relief from the harsh realities of urban life and work. Although in contrast to youth, life writers suggested that the home was expected to play a more prominent role in masculine life during this period, both the club and home were depicted side-by-side, as fulfilling separate and distinct functions for the adult man.
Some authors of the life writings suggested that following marriage, men were expected to cut back on their involvement in associational life. All of the professional and business men represented in the life writings were married, and most suggested that they had delayed the event until their late twenties and early thirties when they had accumulated the necessary economic and material resources to do so.\textsuperscript{84} As a young bachelor, the Liverpool cotton broker Samuel Smith had been an enthusiastic member of the Liverpool Philomathic Society and had even served as president in the early 1860s. But following his marriage in 1864 to Melville Christison, the daughter of a minister from Lanarkshire, Smith noted in his autobiography that he had ‘ceased to be a regular attendant.’\textsuperscript{85} For men like Smith marriage signalled full adult status as the head of a household, but he also suggested that this new position in life brought with it a range of responsibilities and demands on his time.

In constructing his public image as a middle-class man, Smith adhered to a code of ‘separate spheres’, by depicting the marital home as the principal refuge from work and the public world. Smith was twenty eight when he married, and had recently established a cotton brokers in joint partnership with his brother and a mutual friend.\textsuperscript{86} Smith depicted this as a busy and eventful period of his life story. He noted that after overcoming the initial difficulties and anxieties associated with setting up a new venture, ‘business flowed in on all sides’, and suggested that the workload intensified as his company developed.\textsuperscript{87} But while Smith found running a business challenging, he managed to find respite in his life at home. In his autobiography, Smith recalled that when he returned home after work during this

\textsuperscript{84} Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, pp. 223, 233; Tosh, \textit{A Man’s Place}, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{85} Smith, \textit{My Life-Work}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
period, he was met with a sense of domestic bliss where ‘all was peace and quiet in
the evening, and I look back with pleasure to many volumes read aloud by my wife,
and to delightful visits from family friends.’

The Bolton lawyer John Taylor also suggested associational culture was
unsuited to the early days of married life, but nevertheless continued in his
involvement. Following his marriage at the age of twenty four, Taylor persisted in
the active social life of his bachelor days, but he later felt that it was something that
should have been checked:

At the time of my marriage my habits ill became domestic life – much
company keeping – habituated attendance at inns and other public
resorts – a habit at that time very general amongst persons in what
ought to have been called decent circumstances. Taylor suggested that the social activities of his youth left him with little time for
domestic life at home with his wife. Indeed, this supports the argument put forward
by Tosh that the club posed a threat to domesticity because it physically removed
men from the home. Taylor confirmed that the responsibilities and status he
acquired upon marriage were not suited to an active social life which took him away
from the domestic sphere. However, he also suggested that the apparent
incompatibility of a busy club life and the obligations of marriage and domesticity
was not something he was aware of as a young man. It was only by looking back on
his life during retirement, that Taylor felt guilty that the home and his new domestic
situation had failed to take precedent over his social life.

Despite the suggestion that marriage was expected to have some initial
impact on a man’s clubbable activities, in the long term associational culture

88 Ibid., p. 76.
90 Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 187.
continued to be an important part of masculine life. Historians have agreed that marriage did not deter men from involvement in clubs and associations. While Tosh has argued that ‘the bachelor element’ was most dominant in club life, he has also stressed that clubs were still frequented by married men. Simon Gunn has pointed out that evidence from club membership lists in Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham, proves that married men were as numerous as their unmarried counterparts. Although Taylor admitted that he had been less conscientious in his domestic duties as a young married man, as the years passed, his involvement in associational culture continued and at the age of thirty nine, ten years after his marriage, he joined a discussion club of solicitors, cotton spinners, surgeons and clerics, known as the Delta Society. Similarly, although Samuel Smith’s involvement in the Liverpool Philomathic Society initially decreased upon his marriage, he gave no indication that he resigned or withdrew completely from its associational activities. Some years after his marriage and at the age of thirty nine, Smith also joined the Clerical Club, a theological discussion group which met at his home in Prince’s Park, a wealthy residential suburb located south-east of the city centre. Held once every three weeks, meetings of the Clerical Club were less frequent in comparison with Smith’s attendance at the Philomathic Society during his youth. However, the Clerical Club still demanded a high level of commitment on Smith’s part, not least because meetings took place in his own home.

92 Ibid.
93 Gunn, The Public Culture, p. 93.
96 Smith, My Life-Work, p. 105.
Tosh has argued that married, middle-class men were attracted to clubs and associational culture as an escape from domestic life. But it is difficult to apply this argument to home-based clubs and associations such as the Clerical Club and the Delta Society. Although archival records of home-based associations have not survived, the life writings of professional and business men suggest that these types of associations were fairly common during the nineteenth century. Absalom Watkin, a cotton merchant in Manchester during the middle of the period, was also a member of the Literary and Scientific Club which held its meetings in the homes of members on an alternate basis. In his diary, Watkin noted that the first time he met the wife of one member, Thomas Barlow Jervis, was during a meeting of the club at Jervis’ house. ‘Mrs J.’, wrote Watkin, ‘is young, pretty, modest, and apparently domestic rather than fashionable.’ Although Watkin suggested that women were present during club meetings, there is no indication that they took an active part in the discussions that passed between members. However, the important point is that rather than depicting the club as an alternative to domestic life, for Watkin it offered the opportunity to show other men how much he enjoyed life at home. The fact that Watkin’s turn to host a meeting occurred soon after his own marriage to the sister of a fellow club member, William Makinson, suggests that he was pleased and even keen to invite his associates to witness his new state of domestic bliss.

Associational culture and domestic life were therefore closely linked, but rather than comparing the two, married men depicted clubs and associations primarily as places for male friendship and fellowship. Watkin had come to Manchester from London at the age of fourteen following the death of his father to

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97 Tosh, A Man’s Place, p. 187.
99 Watkin, Absalom Watkin, p. 104.
100 Goffin, The Diaries of Absalom Watkin, p. 15.
work in his uncle’s cotton business. In 1811 at the age of twenty four, he co-
founded the Literary and Scientific Club along with two other young men that he had met through the local Methodist community.\textsuperscript{101} Attending meetings for almost fifty years, the club played a long-term role in Watkin’s life. Throughout the diary, membership of the club remained small and intimate, based around a small circle of friends and the occasional guest. As brothers-in-law, Watkin had a strong bond with Makinson, but he also socialized extensively outside club meetings with other members, and often took weekend walks and trips with William Grime and John Andrew.\textsuperscript{102}

Watkin depicted the fellowship of club meetings as a refreshing change from work and a way of lifting the spirits. Following his apprenticeship, Watkin’s career had progressed quickly and within six years he had bought out the business from his uncle’s partner and become his own master.\textsuperscript{103} In an extract from his diary in 1844 Watkin described a meeting of the Club after a particularly challenging day at work:

\begin{quote}
Extremely feeble and much depressed at the warehouse. Went at 6 o’clock to a meeting of the Club at Greaves’. We had at length a full meeting, Jervis coming in last. He has been to the Lakes and visited Wordsworth. Our meeting was pleasant, and I returned home in good spirits and with my head full of a new set of ideas. How much have I owed during my life to the influence of the Club.\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

As a place for male fellowship, the Literary and Scientific Club provided Watkin with a relief from work. Running a business made Watkin depressed and frustrated, but club meetings helped to gradually and temporarily alleviate his mood. Discussing Jervis’ trip to the Lakes was far removed from the concerns of business and commerce, and helped to shift Watkin’s thoughts from his difficulties.

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{102} For example, Ibid., pp. 20, 23, 96-97.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p. 240.
Watkin’s description of the relationship between work and club life sits uncomfortably with the historiography of British masculinity. Historians of the working class have stressed the centrality of work to constructs of masculinity in the nineteenth century.105 Tosh has argued that work was also integral to middle-class masculine identity:

Disciplined attention to business had long been the mark of the self-made man, but nineteenth-century attitudes to work went beyond crude economic rationality...In its most elevated form (as in the hugely popular writings of Thomas Carlyle) work ceased to be drudgery and became the path to self-making, a creative act conferring meaning on the work and identity of the worker.106

Indeed, there is no doubt work was central to the achievement of masculine identity in the life writings of professional and business men. A glance at the titles of the texts used in this study – Samuel Smith’s My Life-Work or John Taylor’s Autobiography of a Lancashire Lawyer, for example - confirm that a man’s occupation was imperative to the construction of his identity. But the role of the club as an escape from work challenges the hegemonic construct of middle-class masculinity as divided between the home and work. Extracts from Watkin’s diaries suggest that he hated the daily grind of managing a cotton warehouse, while feelings of feebleness indicate that he also doubted his effectiveness in running a business, and called into question his personal strengths as a manager. However, the centrality of work to a man’s identity was something Watkin’s great-grandson and first editor of the diaries all too readily understood. We only know that Watkin felt depressed

and defeated by his day at the warehouse prior to the meeting of the club from the later, second edition of the diaries published in 1993. Watkin’s great grandson, A. E. Watkin had omitted this piece of information from the earlier 1920 edition, perhaps as one of those details he felt were ‘intended for the eyes of their writer alone.’

Watkin measured the experience of the club against the challenges of running a business, but his attendance at meetings was not so much an alternative to work than a refreshing and much needed appendage. Like all of the men considered in this chapter, despite the difficulties associated with managing a business or professional career, a strong work ethic remained extremely important to Watkin’s sense of identity. Other entries from Watkin’s diaries depict a hard-working businessman preoccupied by a desire to do well and to succeed. Work was his ‘calling’; it was challenging and stressful but necessary to his livelihood and manly identity.

Although Watkin placed much value in the Literary and Scientific Club, it was only one way of relieving his mood after a trying day. Elsewhere in his diaries, Watkin suggested that he also enjoyed spending his time outside of work reading and maintaining his garden.

The judge Edward Abbott Parry also depicted the fellowship of associational culture as a relief from the pressures of work. Parry had spent some of his youth in the Middle Temple studying for a career in law, before coming to Manchester as a barrister in his early twenties. From the age of thirty-one, he worked as a county-court judge in the city and held the position for sixteen years. Parry’s judicial career was particularly successful, and in 1927 he received a knighthood in honour of his

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107 Watkin, *Absalom Watkin*, p. 7. For the 1844 entry without the reference to work see pp. 233-234.
contribution to the profession.\textsuperscript{110} Despite this, Parry confessed in his autobiography that he found work as judge to be lonely and ‘unfriendly’, and suggested that he struggled to reconcile work as a calling with his masculine identity and status. However, Parry was able to find some relief from the challenges of work and he promoted Manchester’s social life, especially its clubs, as the perfect remedy to lift the spirits:

…I made one rule that was a great joy to me. It became a penal offence to send any paper, book or document of, or connected with, the Court to my house. At last I was able to keep my work outside my home, and when I did get out of my cage and turn my head up Peter Street, I at least knew I was a free man until tomorrow morning. But if judicial work tends to make one morose, the good-fellowship that abounds in Manchester more than corrected the tendency. I have heard judges say that it is a mistake to live in the district in which they work, but I confess I do not agree. During my seventeen years in Manchester I went about in clubs and to social gatherings of every kind, and I never remember being spoken to about a case or heard a case discussed in my presence.\textsuperscript{111}

Parry acknowledged that the spheres of the home and the club were similar because they were not places of work. However, he clearly differentiated the club from the home as a place for fellowship. Parry depicted the home as the opposite to work; if work was his prison, then home gave him his freedom. The club, on the other hand, provided a relief from work because it was the place for social interaction with other men, and it was this that helped to alleviate his mood. Parry recommended Manchester’s clubs and societies to readers in search of ‘a really delightful evening’ as a source of ‘both fun and good fellowship’, and even claimed to have avoided

\textsuperscript{111} Parry, \textit{What the Judge Saw}, p. 222.
clubs when he first arrived in the town for fear their pleasantness would tempt him ‘away from chambers in working hours.’ \footnote{112}

The Liverpool cotton broker Samuel Smith depicted the friendly atmosphere of his home-based Clerical Club more generally, as an alternative to the tumult of urban life. His membership of the club came at a time when, owing to the joint demands of work and public life, Smith was forced to move his home from New Brighton, which he described as ‘a sweet situation embosomed in trees’, closer to the centre of Liverpool. In his autobiography, Smith described his new life in Liverpool and the suburb of Prince’s Park as a ‘tempestuous ocean … [where] there was little more rest for body or mind’, and contrasted it with the tranquillity and peacefulness of his former home. \footnote{113} According to Smith, meetings of the Clerical Club were the ‘[o]ne delightful engagement’ that was found possible in life at Princes Park. \footnote{114}

Smith depicted the meetings of the Clerical Club as friendly occasions during which men could express their differences. He described meetings of the club in his autobiography:

It included most of the Presbyterian ministers of Liverpool and neighbourhood, and some other friends. We took tea together, and then for two hours discussed some theological subject, one of our party opening by a short paper. Our object was edification, not argument, and we succeeded in keeping up this character for several years. \footnote{115}

Meetings of the Clerical Club were depicted by Smith as an opportunity for education and self-improvement. Although members were joined together by a shared interest, the fact that they were all friends allowed them the freedom to express their different thoughts and opinions. The amicable environment of the

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\footnote{112} Ibid., pp. 88, 273. \footnote{113} Smith, \textit{My Life-Work}, p. 105. \footnote{114} Ibid. \footnote{115} Ibid.
Clerical Club, coupled with its emphasis on education and self-improvement provided a contrast to the tumult of Liverpool life.

Other writers depicted the fellowship of the club or association as an important network of support for professionals struggling to make their way in the public world. The Salford-born architect Alfred Darbyshire (1839-1908) was a founder member of the Manchester Brasenose Club, an arts and social club established in 1869 and located on Brazennose Street in the city. In his autobiography, he described the membership of the club during its early days:

…its members were mostly impecunious, but the “generous gifts without pretence” were freely given; the helping hand was often held out and the cheering word often spoken to the struggling and deserving members.\textsuperscript{116}

Darbyshire depicted the Brasenose Club as a place for male fellowship and support. Although the club eventually became popular amongst men from across the businesses and professions, it was initially only intended to serve those involved in Manchester’s cultural and artistic scene. In his autobiography, Darbyshire depicted the club as the hub of Manchester’s artistic and cultural life, where members came into contact with an array of local and travelling artists, musicians and literary men.\textsuperscript{117}

Gunn has argued that arts and social clubs such as the Brasenose operated on the margins of respectability. Describing these types of associations as Bohemian, Gunn has suggested that the social life of the arts club was played out through ‘smoking, drinking and dining’, as well as artistic performance, music and art exhibitions.\textsuperscript{118} In his autobiography, Darbyshire also described the Brasenose Club as a ‘respectable Bohemian resort’, but his definition of Bohemia was characterized

\textsuperscript{116} Darbyshire, \textit{An Architect’s Experiences}, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., pp. 78-88.
\textsuperscript{118} Gunn, \textit{The Public Culture}, p. 96.
less by ‘drinking, smoking and dining’, than a close sense of brotherhood and support for struggling professionals. It chimed with Arthur Ransome’s depiction of Bohemia in early twentieth-century London, as a place of mutual support for poor young artists. According to Ransome London’s Bohemia was only a temporary stage in a man’s life before he got married and established a career. Darbyshire also suggested that a Bohemian lifestyle in nineteenth-century Manchester was not necessarily an alternative to domestic and family life.

The networks offered by other clubs gave access to the public world. The Liverpool ship-owner and aspirant politician, Richard Durning Holt, portrayed his membership of the Liverpool Reform Club as a necessary step in his overriding ambition to serve in Parliament. In the extracts from Holt’s diaries, visits to the Club were not portrayed as social occasions; it was after all a club devoted to the Liberal cause and the central rallying point for Liberals in and around Liverpool. Rather, Holt depicted his visits to the Club as opportunities to find out the latest political information, listen to speeches on policy and to make contacts. Visits to the club were typically marked in the extracts by Holt’s thoughts and opinions about political issues and the discussions in which he engaged with other members. For Holt, being a member of the Liverpool Reform Club was important because it placed him at the centre of political life in the city, and he was less interested in the social and recreational advantages of club life. Following a visit to Liverpool’s Junior Reform Club, which opened in 1889, Holt scathingly remarked in his dairy that, ‘this club counts for nothing in Liverpool, being almost less politically than they are socially.’

119 Darbyshire, An Architect’s Experiences, p. 82.
121 Ibid., p. 281.
122 Dutton, Odyssey of an Edwardian Liberal, p. 7.
The way in which Holt depicted his visits to the Liverpool Reform Club were shaped by the nature of his life writing. Holt made it explicit that his motives for keeping a diary were to produce a record of his public career and to carry on a tradition started by his father and grandfather, who were also politicians albeit more successful ones. Despite this, it would seem that for Holt keeping a diary was a necessity he did not particularly relish. He found it ‘rather impossible to do properly’ and made entries sporadically, only when he remembered. Although he did not entirely neglect social and familial matters, he wrote explicitly with an eye to his future readership, and felt certain that social aspects, ‘a shooting party, or a dance, or a dinner and the record of company thereat can be of little interest except to the author.’ Although the diary has been edited to focus on Holt’s political career, the self constructed through the narrative is one which looked constantly towards his public image. Holt was discreet in what he recorded about the private affairs of his family and he gave the reader little information about the bitter family feuds which clouded the early years of his married life.

Historians including Robert Morris and Theodore Koditschek have argued that associational culture in the nineteenth century helped to forge bonds of shared identity between sections of a political and religiously fragmented middle class. In the case of the Liverpool Reform Club attended by Holt, those bonds of shared identity already existed. But other life writers suggested that meetings of discussion clubs provided a neutral ground where men from different political and religious

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123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., p. 9.
125 Ibid., p. xvii.
affiliations were able to interact and form friendships. In 1878 at the age of forty-five, the chemical industrialist Edmund Knowles Muspratt joined the Liverpool YZ Club, a small discussion group which met once a month in a public tavern in the centre of the city. He described the club in his autobiography:

> it has reckoned amongst its members at different times men engaged in almost every vocation: clergymen, lawyers, medical men, bankers, merchants, brokers and manufacturers, all professing either literary or scientific tastes. Every phase of politics and religion has been represented: Liberals, Conservatives, Liberal-Unionists, Radicals, Churchmen, Non-Conformists Roman Catholics, Hebrews, Unitarians, have all met in friendly intercourse and they have freely debated social and religious questions without acrimony and without the slightest breach of friendship.\(^{127}\)

Muspratt depicted the YZ Club as a group of friends drawn from different occupations, religious affiliations and political opinions. For Muspratt meetings of the tavern club were social occasions, when men could express their opinions freely in a friendly environment. In providing a forum for middle-class men to express their differences in thought and opinion, Muspratt set the discussion club apart from other spheres of middle-class masculine life, such as the church, politics and work.

However, there were certain times during adulthood when clubs and associations were no longer depicted as important in the life writings. Later in life, the Bolton lawyer John Taylor suggested that he replaced membership of the Delta Society and others forms of secular associational culture with an increasing involvement in religion. Although meetings of the Delta Society continued at least until the early 1860s, Taylor left the Society in 1852, and his departure coincided with his growing interest in theology and his own spiritual well-being.\(^{128}\)


baptised, Taylor was not confirmed until 1878 at the age of sixty seven, and he spent the period between 1850 and 1878 going about different Anglican churches, Presbyterian and Non-Conformist chapels across Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool, to listen to various preachers and sermons. His diary entries during this period record both the wide range of theological texts he read and debates in which he engaged, up to his eventual confirmation in the Anglican Church. For Taylor, it was a commitment to religion rather than domesticity and his role as a married man that had the greatest impact on his clubbable activities.

The Liverpool cotton broker Samuel Smith ceased his involvement in the Clerical Club as a result of the increasing commitments of his political career. In his autobiography, Smith blamed the gradual decline of the Clerical Club on the increasing demands placed on his time as an M.P., which not only took him away from Liverpool, but also ate into his time when he returned home. Smith noted that the club had initially continued to meet when he first entered Parliament in 1882, but admitted meetings had begun to wane. By the time the autobiography was published in 1901, the Club had disbanded ‘two or three years ago’, although Smith did not retire from Parliament for another four years.

Clubs and associations during adulthood were depicted as part of a man’s search for something outside of work and domestic life. But rather than portraying associational culture as an alternative to these spheres, middle-class male life writers suggested that they functioned alongside home and work as distinctive places for male friendship and fellowship. Although the politician Richard Durning Holt did not seem to value the social side of club life, he still used the club as a place for fellowship, albeit of a political kind. For most writers, the importance of

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130 Ibid.
associational culture during adulthood lay in the relief it gave from work and urban life. For the frustrated warehouse manager Absalom Watkin, the fellowship of the Literary and Scientific Club was a refreshing distraction at the end of a challenging day. Alfred Darbyshire suggested that the Manchester Brasenose Club was a source of emotional and even financial help for the insecure and impoverished artist. However, it is also evident that there were times during the male lifecycle when associational culture became less important. This highlights the complex ways in which associational culture intersected with other spheres of masculine life and suggests that men’s experiences of clubs and associations were shaped by their individual identities and personal circumstances.

**Conclusion**

By examining the life writings of professional and business men, this chapter has argued that clubs and associations played a complex role in the male lifecycle that went beyond simply an escape to or from the idea of domesticity. Located between the home and work, nineteenth-century clubs and associations were depicted in the life writings as social spheres in their own right, and as places for male fellowship. Writers differed in the amount of space they gave to the club and association in their life stories. While some men depicted the role of associational culture as more prominent during youth, others concentrated on its function during adult life. But for all the professional and business men considered in this chapter, associational culture was an essential component in their self-image and reference to clubs and associations in their published diaries and autobiographies acted as part of a wider claim to masculine status and public identity.
In the life writings, youth was a transitory period in the male lifecycle when the boy became a man, and writers used their membership of a club or association during this period as an important marker in the young man’s progression towards adulthood. In the life stories of young working migrants, clubs and associations accompanied the youth’s entry into the world of work and were depicted as places where they were able to make both social and future business contacts. For these men, attending a club or association did not signal a youthful rejection of domesticity. Instead, the function of the club or association was depicted as providing access to a distinctly homosocial network and opened doors to the public world in which the youth would eventually play his own part. Other writers suggested that joining a club was an important experience for the young man in the process of establishing his independence. The county-court judge Edward Abbott Parry used club membership to reinforce his achievement of adulthood by signalling his detachment from the home and relationships with the family. Attending club meetings marked a young man’s transition from infancy to adulthood and simultaneously confirmed his adult status in a homosocial world.

However for the young men who did not leave the family home on starting work, the club or association played a slightly different role in the construction of their identity. The autobiography of Edmund Knowles Muspratt is the only example where the association is explicitly portrayed as an escape from the monotony of domestic life. But even here, this was not the only function of the club. Muspratt suggested that club life also provided an escape from work which he found as unsatisfying as the parental home during the early years of his career. By joining an association, Muspratt did not reject the ideals of domesticity and work for the middle-class man. Instead, he suggested that the club was a temporary means of
asserting identity, in a period during which he had not yet achieved full adult status as the head of his own household and business.

In the case of the adult man, writers used clubs and their social networks to reaffirm their status as successful professional and business men. But they also more frequently depicted associational culture as an escape from the pressures of work and the public world. In doing so, these writers suggested that associational culture did not necessarily clash with the domestic sphere as historians of the middle class have assumed, but rather worked in tandem with the home as a distinctive setting for masculine social life. Indeed, the club as an escape from work raises important questions about the construction of masculinity in the nineteenth century and suggests that further research is needed in this area. The life writings of professional and business men confirm that work was essential to constructs of middle-class masculinity. But men also clearly felt insecure about their roles in the work place, and looked for other ways in which to express their identity.

There were moments in the male lifecycle when clubs and associations became less important. For some writers, this was during the early days of marriage when their change in status brought new responsibilities and duties, although marriage itself had little impact on a man’s clubbable activities in the long term. In the case of the Liverpool cotton broker Samuel Smith, involvement in associational life became untenable when his public duties removed him from his established social networks, and a political career became more important than discussions with his Clerical Club. The Bolton lawyer John Taylor had been particularly clubbable during his youth but suggested that as he grew older, religion came to offer an alternative form of associational culture. As these instances highlight, men’s lives
during the nineteenth century were subject to constant change and their identities as middle-class men needed constant renegotiation.

This chapter has shown that aside from differences during youth and adult life, clubs and associational life were a persistent feature across the course of the male lifecycle. Writers suggested that membership of a club or association offered the middle-class man a social space in addition to the home and work, where they were able to strike up friendships and form acquaintances, whether for personal reasons or for public life. In the majority of the texts, the home continued to play a stabilizing role in the life of the professional and business man, although for young men and bachelors this was difficult – what was most desirable for these men was a home and family of one’s own. Throughout the lifecycle, the experience of work could be alienating and challenging. Although both the home and the club remedied this, they did so in different ways, by providing familial comforts, on the one hand, and a friendly, homosocial network, on the other. Clubs and associations were depicted as social spaces in their own right which served needs and fulfilled functions not satisfied elsewhere. This suggests that the historian of masculinity needs to consider associational culture, not in solely terms of its relationship with the home and work, but as a sphere with its own codes of conduct and behaviour. This will be explored further in the following chapter.
Chapter Two: Beyond Home and Work? Defining the Clubbable Man.

Introduction

This chapter explicitly examines middle-class masculinity in the context of the all-male club and association. Drawing on club administrative records, it explores the ways in which club life and associational culture functioned alongside the home and work, and argues that masculine identity in the club was not homogeneous but comprised a variety of different forms. Although John Tosh identified the all-male association as third arena for the negotiation of masculine identity in the nineteenth century, the workings of club life and the character of the club man have attracted little attention. ¹ Thus the historiography of nineteenth-century masculinity has been dominated by an image of the bourgeois man as hard working and home-loving, which has left little room for the club as a third arena for masculine life in its own right. By exploring the nature of club life and the construction of masculine identity between and among men, this chapter reveals the multiplicity of masculinities in middle-class associational culture and demonstrates how they were shaped by the spheres of home and work, as well as the notion of self-control.

By examining how masculinity was constructed between men within the club and association, this chapter offers another approach to the history of middle-class masculinity in the nineteenth century. Although historians of masculinity have acknowledged the importance of the club, they have only considered the role of associational culture in relationships between men and women, and have overlooked the way in which homosociality shaped relations between members themselves. Tosh, Amy Milne Smith and Mrinalini Sinha have all argued that the club played a

significant role in the lives of men from different social and cultural groups, including London’s West End and colonial India. However, by approaching masculinity as a heterosocial construct, they have only considered how the club functioned in relation to the home and notions of domesticity. This means that while we now know a great deal about how club life complimented or clashed with this sphere of masculine life, we know significantly less about the interaction between club life and work, and men’s relationships and identities within clubs and associations themselves. In part, the study of the heterosociality of masculinity has been undertaken with good reason; as Tosh and Michael Roper have noted, earlier studies of masculinity within homosocial contexts have obscured the wider relational quality of gender identity. But as Alexandra Shepard reminds us, studying masculinity requires ‘not only considering the ways in which maleness was defined in relation to femaleness, and comparing men and women’s gendered experiences, but also exploring the ways in which concepts and experiences of masculinity were premised on differences between men.’ By moving away from a heterosocial approach, this chapter will show that in the club or association, the identity of members was shaped by their relationships with one another and the world of work, as well as with women and domestic life.

It is my contention in this chapter that existing studies on the relationship between masculinity and the all-male association have reinforced an overly

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simplistic picture of middle-class masculinity in the nineteenth century, divided predominantly between the separate spheres of home and work. As historians of the eighteenth century have shown, examining the ways in which masculinity was constructed between men can reveal a whole range of masculine identities that not only existed side-by-side, but did not always fit neatly within prescriptive models.\(^5\) By combining evidence from a range of clubs and associations, from small informal tavern societies to large institutionalized club houses, this chapter explores the wider gradations of masculinity and associational culture in the nineteenth century. As Simon Gunn has argued, clubs and societies in provincial cities during the second half of the century were host to ‘different forms of middle-class male sociability’.\(^6\)

This chapter analyses the different functions and varieties of club life and the ways in which clubbable identity was shaped in relation to youth, financial reputation and drinking to suggest that the model of the middle-class man needs to be expanded to include a range of different masculinities.

The chapter draws on the administrative records of clubs and associations which met in Manchester and Liverpool throughout the nineteenth century. The records represent a broad range of associational culture, from groups and societies which met in inns, taverns and hotels, as well as large club houses, and provide an insight into the day-to-day running of organizations, from the payment of bills and accounts to the formulisation and revision of rules and regulations. Margaret Hunt has linked the development of book-keeping in the eighteenth century to notions of

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rationality, honesty and self-control. However, the large hard backed ledgers which typically contain the minutes of club meetings and committee proceedings were more akin to business paraphernalia than the personal pocket diaries and published life writings analysed in the previous chapter. Intended as quasi-official documents, administrative records provide information about meetings and decisions, and do not focus so much on how the individual club man constructed his own identity, but tell the historian more about how identity was constructed between members and within the organizations at large. They show us things that did not find their way into life writings, perhaps because they seemed routine. In his autobiography, the Liverpool cotton broker Samuel Smith noted how membership of numerous debating clubs and learned societies led him ‘into kindly discourse with active minded and religious men’, but he wrote nothing of what they spoke about or how he behaved. Yet even the most seemingly banal information in administrative records can reveal the ways in which members understood and used clubs and associations. It is through the day-to-day running, routines, practices and repetitions of club life that the functions and meanings of associational culture, and the characters of club men were produced, contested and reconfigured.

While administrative records give a sense of the workings and character of club life, they are also inherently frustrating for the social and cultural historian. The extent of the source material available varies significantly between individual organizations. With the exception of the Reform Club and Union Club in Manchester, few sets of records for the larger institutionalized clubs have survived, and the quality of the information they offer is tempered by the nature of record

keeping itself. Most minute books provide only snippets of what was actually discussed during club meetings, and the decisions that were made are often recorded in a terse and formal language, which leaves large gaps and frustrating silences in the historical record. Some club minutes often only record the beginning or the end of the decision-making process, and while they might provide information on the decisions that were reached and recommendations for action, they remain elusive about what happened afterwards, and what action, if any, was taken.

Source material for smaller clubs and societies held in local archive collections offers the opportunity to explore and contrast the wider dimensions of associational culture. But these records do not always cover the whole period of a club’s operational existence, which creates a fragmented and potted narrative. Minute books for the 30 Club, an arts and literary social group which met at the Exchange Station Hotel in Liverpool between 1895 and 1925, remind the reader about the function of the minute book for future generations. Cutting short an account of a discussion on potential candidates for the West Derby Bye-Election, the minute taker noted: ‘[t]he discussion was however too personal to be recorded in this book which, we are so often reminded is to be handed down to posterity.’

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section explores the functions and varieties of associational culture, and how men negotiated the club and association in conjunction with other spheres of masculine life. While for some middle-class men attending the club was a way of shutting out the world, for others it provided access to business networks. Indeed, in the case of men who held multiple club memberships we see associational culture play a more nuanced role that went well beyond the function of the club as an alternative to the home, and

9 26 January 1903, 30 Club Minute Book 1900-1907, 367 THI 1/2, LRO.
highlights the range of masculinities in nineteenth-century club life. The second half of the chapter focuses on the relationship between club life and masculine character. I begin by exploring clubs and associations as a training ground for youth, in order to shape and develop their character as middle-class men. Since young working migrants lacked adult status as the head of their own household and family, they were considered to be particularly vulnerable to the corruption of the commercial and public world. Associational culture was intended to encourage them to socialize with other middle-class youths, to assert independence and to develop a sense of civic identity. As adults, clubbable status was largely predicated on the notion of self-control. I go on to consider how bankruptcy and drunkenness could compromise this status, and suggest that masculine identities within the club could not be completely separated from the outside world. However drinking in the club did not always carry negative connotations; the consumption of wine in particular, points to a wider middle-class masculine culture based on notions of individuality and taste that are explored in further detail in later chapters.

The functions and varieties of club life.

Archival collections attest to the fact that nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool were home to a range and variety of clubs and associations, from political club houses to informal tavern-based debating societies. This section explores the different functions and workings of this broad range of associational culture as a sphere for masculine social life. It argues that in emphasising the relationship between the club and the home, historians have overlooked the wider functions of club life and especially its relationship with work. The assortment of club life on
offer in the nineteenth-century provincial city, and the different benefits men drew from associational culture confirm that middle-class masculinity was not homogeneous or monolithic, but coloured by a range of different types and constructs.

All of the clubs and associations considered in this chapter were located in the centres of Liverpool and Manchester, close to places of work and business. Some men used club houses as convenient places to dine when at work in the city. Writing a history of the Manchester Brasenose Club, an arts and social club founded in 1869 with its own club house on Brazennose Street, the Salford-born architect Alfred Darbyshire noted that this type of behaviour was most typical of married business men who ‘only come in for lunch or dinner…and who make for their homes at the close of business.’ Katherine Chorley recalled that late nineteenth-century business men who travelled together by omnibus to work in Manchester from their homes in the suburbs, would reconvene for lunch at the city’s Union Club. Account books from the both Union Club and the Reform Club in Manchester confirm that these club houses were busy places during lunch time, throughout the nineteenth century. When Mr John Greaves cancelled his membership to the Manchester Union Club in 1834, he stressed that it was not ‘from any unpleasant motive’, but because ‘the House is really of no use or convenience to me, as a proof of it, I will mention that I have not dined in it these four years.’

12 For example, 3 August 1829, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1829-32, M17/2/2/2, MALS; 1 July 1886, Manchester Reform Club Minutes of the Finance, General and Finance Committee 1886-1890, MRC1/1/1, JRULSC.
13 13 December 1834, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1832-1836, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
Organized around the patterns of working life, for some professional and business men club life could bear too much resemblance to work. A minute book from the Liverpool 30 Club described its first meeting in December 1895, held at half past six in the evening at the Exchange Hotel on Tithebarn Street in the city:

The business portion had taken up the greater part of the evening but it was felt that many excursions might have been made amongst the assembled souls of all that men hold wise; and that a good dinner, a cheerful room and congenial company would out as incentives to discuss current matters of interest in Art and Literature.  

The business of the first meeting had been to compile a list of thirteen rules and regulations, which set out the general format for meetings and the terms and conditions for membership. However, the minutes suggest that for some members these administrative tasks were not part of the congeniality and enjoyment that they typically associated with club life, but were more akin to work. The thirteen men who were present that evening had all been members of the defunct Liverpool Arts Club, and were keen to ‘resuscitate friendly meetings’. Although the initial meeting of the new club was not especially enjoyable, members were hopeful that their future gatherings would be free from the drudgery and dreariness of activities associated with work.

It was the duty of the chairman appointed at each meeting of the Liverpool 30 Club to provide an account of the discussions which took place. But not all members embraced the responsibility of the role, and some struggled to keep the minute book up to date:

14 2 December 1895, 30 Club Minute Book 1895-1900, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.  
15 Ibid.
Now, your Chairman has to confess that instead of writing these minutes shortly after the meeting was ended he procrastinated, in fact it was not until the well-known printed post-card reminded him of duty neglected that he unearthed his notes made at the meeting and lo! They were for the most part meaningless.\(^\text{16}\)

It would seem that a degree of forgetfulness in writing up minutes was not unusual among members of the Liverpool 30 Club. Other members failed to take any notes at all during meetings, and stated in the minute books that they were unable to recall what discussion had passed between members. ‘To record what took place at the last meeting should be the object of the writer of the minutes’, noted one minute taker, ‘but in this instance the writer of these minutes would have to draw entirely on his imagination as no notes were taken.’\(^\text{17}\) However, it should not be assumed that all club men were lazy and unenthusiastic in carrying out their administrative duties. For all those who did not relish the opportunity for book-keeping outside of work and scrawled their accounts in the minute books in almost illegible handwriting, there were others who wrote lengthy and meticulous narratives of meetings in a clear and presentable style.

Members of other clubs were reluctant to impose too many rules and regulations on club life. Meetings of the Liverpool YZ Club, another small tavern-based discussion group, were depicted in their minutes as social and jovial occasions. As one minute taker noted: ‘[t]he meeting was an exceedingly social one and conversation was very general and various – too good in fact to be reduced to exact notes and too pleasant to be remembered in detail by the present scribe.’\(^\text{18}\) Although some members of the Liverpool YZ Club wondered on more than one occasion

\(^\text{16}\) 13 April 1896, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.  
\(^\text{17}\) 26 April 1897, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.  
\(^\text{18}\) 14 June 1871, YZ Club Minute Book 1870-1886, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.
whether topics for discussion should be set in advance in a format used by other discussion clubs, it was decided that talk should be left to chance, ‘on the grounds that chance may always be trusted to originate something.’

The reluctance of some club men to engage in the business side of club life, suggests that associational culture functioned in part as an escape from the world of work. Indeed, in the life writings analysed in the previous chapter, we saw how men depicted the fellowship and friendship they found in clubs and associations as an antidote to the pressures of a professional career and the challenges of running a business. Minutes from the Liverpool 30 Club confirm that club meetings provided members with relief from the difficulties of business life by physically removing them from situations of commercial transactions. But they also suggest that this sense of escapism also worked on a mental and imaginary level:

Had the meeting not been brought to a close some other member would no doubt have asked us to follow him into another world of reminiscences away from the thoroughfares of our commercial city into which the members of the Thirty Club now emerged carried through the cold and cheerless streets on the wings of fantasy and realising that,

‘Remembrance is the only Paradise from Which we cannot be driven.’

For members of the Liverpool 30 Club, reminiscing on the past during club meetings provided a distraction from the present. It was a benefit of club life that was not only confined to the occasion of the club meeting, but also had a positive effect on men’s moods for the rest of the evening.

19 11 September 1874 and 10 October 1877, 376 YZ 1/1, LRO.
20 5 October 1896, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.
Another way in which members of the 30 Club found respite from the troubles of work and business life was by talking about books and particularly fiction:

Discussions on current literature and particularly of that of fiction, occupy a large portion of these pages, proving that there is a corrective for every irritant in as much as the materialistic preoccupations in a purely commercial atmosphere like ours seek then antidote in the realms of romance.21

Fiction provided these club men with a respite from the real world. This contrasts with the work of Arline Wilson and Alan Kidd, who have argued that the purpose of provincial cultural and learned societies in the first half of the nineteenth century was to prove that business and culture were compatible in order to raise the national profile of commercial cities such as Manchester and Liverpool.22 However, in the administrative records of some of the clubs and associations considered in this chapter, the function of cultural and learned societies was a way to shut out the world rather than engage with it. Similar motivations lay behind the Manchester Literary Club, established in 1862. As one of the founder members John H. Swain explained, ‘[i]t is an ideal of the Club that in the midst of a great commercial city it is to do what it can to keep the mind of the city true to the higher and more unselfish forms of mental activity.’23

By bringing professional and business men together in a social setting, other clubs and associations provided the opportunity to network in ways which explicitly

21 26 April 1897, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.
engaged with the world of work. The banker, Thomas Barlow Jervis, suggested that
membership of the John Shaw’s Club, a social club of Tory Anglicans in Manchester,
gave him access to a new set of informal business contacts. In a letter to the
secretary of the Club on his appointment to the post of vice president in 1855, Jervis
was explicit about the benefits of his new position:

I have received your note...informing me that I have been elected
Vice-President...an honour I did not expect but I gladly accept and for
which I desire to express my acknowledgement...I am deeply
conscious of the usefulness and importance of the club as a valuable
means of giving and receiving commercial information to its members
in confidence and at the same time reciprocating hilarity and joyous
feelings within proper and moderate limits.24

Jervis suggested that his new role in the Club was advantageous not only for himself
as a partner in a banking firm, but also for other members who included
manufacturers, solicitors, and engineers.25 The John Shaw’s Club traced its roots
back to the middle of the eighteenth century, and was named after the victualler of a
tavern in which the club first met.26 Jervis had only been a member of John Shaw’s
for a few months before he was promoted, introduced and nominated for the post by
the manufacturer and president of the Club, Edmund Buckley.27 Minute books were
only concerned with the proceedings of club life, and therefore give little away about
the personal business advantages members gained through membership. But as
Jervis suggested, club life did offer another way of engaging in the business and
commercial world.

24 3 December 1855, John Shaw’s Club Miscellaneous Items, M485/3, MALs.
25 For Jervis’s role in Manchester banking see, L. H. Grindon, Manchester Banks and Bankers:
Historical, Biographical and Anecdotal, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1878), pp. 162-164.
26 For a history of the John Shaw’s Club see J. S. Stancliffe, John Shaw’s, 1738-1938 (Manchester,
1938).
27 Ibid., pp. 273-275.
Like many middle-class men in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool, Jervis held multiple club memberships each of which fulfilled particular functions and served different interests. In fact, Jervis was also a member of Absalom Watkin’s Scientific and Literary Club, a small home-based discussion group of close friends founded in Manchester in 1811. Jervis had joined the Club in 1819 and had held numerous meetings at his own house, as well as accompanying Watkin and other members on weekend trips into the countryside.\textsuperscript{28} Both Watkins’ diary extracts and the records of the John Shaw’s Club depict Jervis as a jovial and well-liked character in club life. In his diary, Watkin described Jervis as a good host, and recalled that at a dinner party held at the Jervis household there was ‘lively conversation during all the time.’\textsuperscript{29} Similarly, in a poem about the John Shaw’s Club written in 1857, a fellow member John Leigh suggested that Jervis, despite his occupation as a banker, was an amiable addition to the group:

\begin{quote}
Tis’ said that he whose business ‘tis alone in gold to deal
Must purse his heartstrings up forsooth and pity never feel
For he alone should deal in gold whose heart is made of steel
Away-away such trash as this this never more be heard
A Jervis gives the lie to it – ‘tis falsehood every word
But listen to his cordial view and behold his genial face
And every thought of hardness then as quickly we erase.\textsuperscript{30}
\end{quote}

and recalled a particular occasion when Jervis had entertained the meeting of the Club with an account of his trip to the Lake District and a meeting with William Wordsworth.  

Political clubs were more obviously directed towards establishing networks and connections and could be useful in providing resources when candidates were up for election. In his diaries, the ship owner and politician Richard Durning Holt depicted his visits to the Liverpool Reform Club as opportunities for political networking, and suggested that it was a place where he could share ideas with other members of the local Liberal Party and listen to speeches from visiting candidates. But political club life also served social and recreational functions. As Holt himself noted, the Junior Reform Club in Liverpool was renowned for its social character rather than its political influence. Established in the 1880s as a less expensive alternative to the senior Reform Club which had opened earlier in 1879, the Junior Club often featured in the local press for its evening ‘smoking socials’, consisting of musical entertainment and theatrical comedy sketches. The Manchester Reform Club was as famous amongst its members for its billiards room, which was ‘the handsomest and best-appointed billiards room in Clubland’, as for its function as the meeting place of the local Liberal Party. Indeed, members were explicit about the social attractions of political club life. In 1889, Mr G. G. Belcher was found to be a member of the both Manchester Reform Club and the Liverpool Conservative Club at the same time. According to minutes from the Manchester Club, Belcher claimed that he had joined the Liberal club on invitation to be a ‘social member,’ and during

33 Ibid., p. 7.
34 ‘Liverpool Junior Reform Club’, *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 February 1897, p. 5.
the fifteen years he had used the club house, he had taken no part whatsoever in politics. It would seem that the committee of the Manchester Club accepted Belcher’s differentiation between the social and political functions of club life, and although he offered to resign, no further action was taken.36

As well as places for social and political gatherings, political clubs also played a role in family life. Historians have often pointed to the absence of women from nineteenth-century club life, and used this as evidence of the club as an escape from domesticity and the tyranny of women in the home.37 Gunn has gone so far as to claim that ‘no institution was so carefully and persistently safeguarded against women’s intrusion as the male social club.’38 However, there is no evidence to suggest that women and the family were completely absent from club life in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool. Although women did not serve on club committees nor did they hold membership in their own rights, in the Manchester Reform Club women were allowed access to certain rooms in the club house during the evening and also at the weekend.39 In other clubs, women were invited to inauguration balls and anniversary celebrations, and they also had their own calendar of ‘Ladies’ Socials’.40 In addition to its famous ‘smoking socials’, the Junior Reform Club in Liverpool was equally renowned in the local press for its annual ‘Children’s At Homes’, which provided refreshments and entertainment for member’s children.41 It was not only political clubs which included women in social

36 4 July 1889, MRC1/1/1, JRULSC.
37 Tosh, A Man’s Place, pp. 186-187.
38 Gunn, The Public Culture, p. 92.
39 25 July 1905, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1904-1907, MRC1/3/4, JRULSC.
events and activities. In addition to weekday meetings at a city-centre tavern, the Liverpool discussion group the YZ Club, also organized weekend excursions into the countryside ‘accompanied’, according to the minutes, ‘by the ladies of [member’s] families.’

Within the context of the club and association, men’s identities were to a certain extent shaped by their position in the domestic sphere and family life. Some clubs used men’s relationships with women to honour individual members. The Liverpool Canning Club, a small tavern-based Tory club founded in 1812, annually appointed the daughters and other female relatives of members to the position of Lady Patroness. The role itself was little more than symbolic, and although administrative records noted that on election some women sent small donations of money, there is no evidence that they took an active part in club proceedings or were even present at the monthly meetings. Nonetheless, the position highlights the fact that men’s identities within the political club were still defined in part by their roles as fathers and husbands. Writing to the secretary of the Canning Club on her appointment to the post in 1813, Miss Hollinshead, the daughter of a current member, thanked the Club for the ‘compliment you pay to my Family for their Loyalty and Patriotism.’

As places for male friendship and fellowship, club meetings provided the opportunity for men to discuss domestic life and other personal issues. For instance, members of the Liverpool 30 Club shared their experiences of having heart-to-heart

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42 17 May 1876, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.
43 23 February 1813, Canning Club Minute Book 1812-1820, 329 CAN/1/1 LRO.
45 26 February 1813, 329 CAN/1/1, LRO.
talks with their sons about ‘the temptations of the wicked’.\textsuperscript{46} It is also evident that members of Manchester John Shaw’s Club discussed their private lives. Members were fined on the occasion of the marriage or birth of a child, which played on their role as the heads of households and the main wage earners.\textsuperscript{47} Indeed, for some men, the club could even provide a network for personal and emotional support. Mr Prange apologized to the other members during a meeting of the Liverpool YZ Club for failing to write up his account of the previous meeting. His reason, according to the minutes, was because he had felt too depressed following the illness and death of his wife.\textsuperscript{48}

This section has suggested that clubs and associational culture played diverse and multiple roles in the lives of nineteenth-century middle-class men. While some men used clubs as a way of relieving the pressures of work, for others associational culture offered access to alternative business networks. Middle-class men often held membership for more than one club or association in order to fulfil different needs and interests. It is also clear that club life and the identities of club men were not entirely removed from men’s relationships with women and their roles in the family. In fact, many clubs and associations made provision for both women and children to take part in club life. This is an aspect of associational culture which historians have been too hasty to dismiss and which is clearly in urgent need of further research. The inclusion of women and the family in some forms of club life suggests that the identities of nineteenth-century club men cannot be looked at in isolation from other spheres of masculine life.

\textsuperscript{46} 28 February 1898, 367 THI 1/1, LRO.
\textsuperscript{47} 14 November 1899, 11 December 1900 and 11 December 1901, John Shaw’s Club Minute Book 1892-1921, M485/1/2, MALS.
\textsuperscript{48} 13 November 1878, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.
Club life and character

The varied functions of associational culture as a sphere of masculine social life shaped the character of nineteenth-century club men. This section explores this character in depth. I begin by examining the role of the club in relation to middle-class youth. Historians have often emphasized the role of parents and school as a way of controlling and shaping the young man during this period of the life cycle. But for young business and commercial men who had left school and started work away from the family home, clubs and associations were intended to provide an alternative form of social education in preparation for adult life. I go on to explore how the clubbable character of the adult man in the context of the club rested overwhelmingly on notions of trustworthiness and self-control. The ability to maintain networks of credit and to behave with decorum, even if drunk, determined a man’s clubbability and reputation amongst other members.

Clubs and associations aimed directly at young men were intended as a training ground for adult life. The Liverpool Roscoe Club was founded in 1847 by a number of local professional and business men. The decision to form a club was taken following a series of letters which appeared in the short-lived Liverpool Weekly News, which called for ‘an institution to combine social and intellectual culture’ for the city’s young business and commercial men. The previous chapter showed how clubs and associations were depicted in the lives of young working migrants as important places for male fellowship. The Liverpool Roscoe Club was similarly aimed at those young men who lived at some distance from the parental

49 Tosh, A Man’s Place, pp. 102-122; E. A. Rotundo, ‘Learning about Manhood: Gender Ideals and the Middle Class Family in Nineteenth Century America’, and J. A. Mangan, ‘Social Darwinism and Upper-Class Education in Late Victorian and Edwardian England’ in J. A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.) Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940 (Manchester, 1987), pp. 35-51, and pp. 135-159, respectively.

50 11 March 1847. Provisional Committee for the Formation of the Roscoe Club, 367 ROS 1/1, LRO.
home. As an article in *Liverpool Mercury* which outlined the scheme for those new to the club noted:

> [i]t cannot have escaped the observation of the more intelligent classes of this great community that there are thousands of young men in the town, many of them from a distance, actively engaged during the day in arduous, useful and responsible occupations, who in the evenings have not the comforts of a well regulated home to repair to, and to whom the expense of the most judicious hospitality, consequent upon drawing around them the most suitable companions.  

Institutions such as the Liverpool Roscoe Club were intended to compensate for the absent home by training and controlling the young man in preparation for adult life. Since the eighteenth century, the home had been regarded as the primary retreat from the corruption of the commercial world. But young men who had left home to start work and were not yet the heads of their own households did not have this resource to draw on. By providing a replacement for the home, the function of the youth club was not necessarily to provide a sense of domesticity, but to control and shape the character of youths.

Articles advertising the plan of the Roscoe Club highlighted the fears surrounding the vulnerability of the young, middle-class migrant. In an apparent letter from a young man to his aunt near Preston, the Roscoe Club was depicted as a place of ‘mental improvement and harmless recreation’. The youth described for his aunt a typical evening at the Club:

> after enjoying our tea together, and seeing the news, we perhaps adjourn to the cricket field, if the weather permits, or pass a pleasant

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hour at draughts or chess, then go off to our respective lodgings, taking with us, perchance, a book from the library.\textsuperscript{54}

As a place to go in the evening after the close of work, the Roscoe Club was intended to detract youths from the public house and less respectable forms of recreation. But the club was also a place where a youth came into contact with other young middle-class men with whom he could socialize and develop his character through discussion, chess and reading.

An emphasis on providing a social place for Liverpool’s young commercial men distinguished the Liverpool Roscoe Club from existing educational institutions in the city. Although Mechanics Institutes had been intended for the working classes, by the 1830s many focused on providing educational classes for young clerks, shop assistants and commercial men.\textsuperscript{55} Modelled on the Manchester Athenaeum founded in 1836, and the more recently established Whittington Club in London, the Liverpool Roscoe Club offered educational facilities which focused not only on encouraging self-improvement and the assertion of independence, but also emphasized rational recreation.\textsuperscript{56} Like the Whittington Club in London, formal education was only part of the scheme of the Liverpool Roscoe Club. Only one of the rooms in the club house located on Bold Street in the city was allocated as a class room, and other rooms included a newsroom, dining room and smoke room.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} 14 September 1847, Liverpool Roscoe Club House Committee and Other Small Committees Minute Book 1847-1850, 367 ROS 1/4, LRO.
Becoming a member of the Roscoe Club was intended to encourage young men to assert their independence. As another article advertising the scheme in the local press claimed:

Young men of Liverpool to you it will be invaluable, give it your earnest consideration, think of the many benefits it will afford you, and make those benefits your own, determine to have such a club and cordially assert those who are earnestly advocating it….It is for you to resolve that so desirable an institution be brought into existence. You must have all felt its want, that want may now be supplied and by yourselves wait not for others to do it, look not to patronage for support, but come forward, establish it, support, manage it yourselves, and in proportion as you do so will the benevolent, the wealthy and the gifted assist you.\(^{58}\)

In the life writings of professional and business men, we saw how joining a club or association marked the achievement of independence during youth by cutting the ties of parental influence. However, although the young men of the Roscoe Club were urged to take control of their institution, it was clear that they were not considered to be fully responsible adults. The idea for the Club had apparently come from a young man typical of the target audience, but in reality the committee comprised of older professional and business men who were senior shareholders in the scheme. Indeed, it would seem that young members had little or no say in the running of the club. It was only once a youth reached the age of twenty one that he became eligible vote in the election of committee members and could contribute to general meetings.\(^{59}\)

Training for adulthood in the Liverpool Roscoe Club was also intended to include the development of a sense of civic pride and identity. In a study of

\(^{58}\) 11 March 1847, 367 ROS 1/1, LRO.
\(^{59}\) 22 December 1847, Liverpool Roscoe Club Special and Annual General Meetings of Members 1847-1850, 367 ROS 1/2, LRO.
Liverpool’s early cultural and learned societies, Wilson has argued that institutions such as the Liverpool Athenaeum were an attempt to fuse commercial interests with cultural pursuits and to create an image of the enlightened Liverpool gentleman, and raise the cultural profile of the city alongside commerce and business.\textsuperscript{60} In fact, the Roscoe Club was named in memory of William Roscoe who had helped to found the Athenaeum and other cultural projects in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{61} The committee of the Roscoe Club encouraged young men to think of their membership to the Club as a benefit to the city of Liverpool:

Young men and tradesmen of the Town...The great success that has attended the formation of similar institutions throughout the kingdom, gives us every encouragement to hope that our town the great emporium of commerce will not be behind others in the onward march of intellectual improvement.\textsuperscript{62}

Supporters of the Roscoe Club tied Liverpool’s future prosperity to the calibre of its young men, not only in terms of their business acumen but also in regards to their intellect and appreciation of culture. The association between the public world, business and masculinity was made explicit in the records of the Liverpool Roscoe Club. Middle-class men in nineteenth-century Liverpool hoped to create a club that would provide a training ground for a youth’s future activity in the public world and his identity as a business man. But their plan also contrasted with the function of other cultural clubs explored in the previous section which were used by adult men as a way to shut out the commercial world.

As young middle-class men would discover, a man’s clubbable status was largely predicated on his financial character. Historians have shown how networks of

\textsuperscript{60} Wilson, ‘The Cultural Identity of Liverpool’, 56.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid; A. Wilson, \textit{William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture} (Liverpool, 2008).
\textsuperscript{62} 26 March 1847, 367 ROS 1/1, LRO.
credit have underpinned social relations since the sixteenth century. Shani D’Cruze has argued that creditors and patrons in eighteenth-century Colchester were also one’s friends, whilst Margot Finn has shown how there was a fundamental nexus between personal character and personal credit throughout the modern period. Indeed, as we have already seen in the previous section, nineteenth-century club life was closely aligned with the world of work and business. Although men used some forms of associational culture to escape the pressures of work, other clubs and associations offered men access to business networks and financial support. As Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have suggested, associational culture in the early nineteenth century was a forum for information on potential creditors and business contacts. Therefore, the ability of the club man to stay in control of his finances demonstrated to other members that he could be trusted and was worthy of club membership.

Paying one’s bills within the club or association was part of the mutual etiquette of club life, and ensured a sense of level footing between members. But it also gave assurances that a club man was trustworthy. Finn has noted that determinations about an individual’s creditworthiness were based less on actual wealth than an identity constructed through an individual’s lifestyle and conduct. In the Manchester John Shaw’s Club, members were required to contribute towards the dinner bill at anniversary occasions whether or not they were present at the

67 Finn, *Character of Credit*, p. 21.
meal. In the larger institutionalized clubs, the late payment of fees and subscription rates was a serious breach of the club rules. In the Manchester Union Club subscription payments were due at the beginning of each year and those who failed to pay by the end of January received a copy of the rules to remind them of their oversight. The Brasenose, Reform and Union Clubs all advocated a policy whereby the names of members who had failed to pay their annual subscription rates were posted in highly visible places in the club house. Locations could range from the Reading Room to the Dining and News Rooms, but crucially these were locations where the names would not go unnoticed. Failure to pay after two months resulted in the termination of membership. Advertising the names of those who had not paid their bills in the club tarnished their reputation, trustworthiness and social standing amongst potential creditors.

Bankruptcy placed a more serious question mark over the character of the club man because it signalled a loss of self-control. Bankruptcy, as the legal process to administer a person’s affairs, was based on the assumption that the individual was unable or incapable of doing so themselves. As Julian Hoppitt has argued, in the eighteenth century bankruptcy was understood as not only a personal failure for the business man because it suggested that his skills and knowledge were inadequate, but also a sign of his untrustworthiness to others because he had failed to repay his creditors. Most of the large club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and

68 31 January 1826, M485/3, MALS.
69 2 November 1897, Manchester Union Club General Meetings Minute Book 1861-1917, M17/2/1/2, MALS.
70 ‘Rules of the Brasenose Club’, A. Darbyshire [The Lion], A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club, vol. 1 (Manchester, 1890), p. 104; ‘Rules and Regulations of the Manchester Union Club’, no date, M17/1/2, MALS; 6 July 1904, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1904-1907, MRC 1/3/4, JRULSC.
Liverpool barred bankrupts from membership, and threatened those members who faced the liquidation of their assets with expulsion.\textsuperscript{73}

However, on closer look the rules and regulations concerning bankruptcy within club life suggest that expulsion was not absolute. Rule IX of the Manchester Union Club in 1870 stipulated that,

If any member shall become bankrupt or an outlaw, or shall make any composition with, or assignment for the benefit of the General body of his creditors, or if the affairs of any members shall become subject to liquidation...he shall \textit{ipso facto} cease to be a member of the club, and forfeit all right and claim upon the Club and its property. Such person may however be readmitted (without payment of any entrance fee) by the committee at a meeting of their body specially summoned for that purpose and at which, at least twelve members of the committee shall be present, if a majority of two-thirds of such meeting are of the opinion that his character as a gentleman remains unimpeached.\textsuperscript{74}

According to the rules of the Manchester Union Club, bankrupts could retain their membership on the basis of their character. As Hoppitt has noted, an interest in distinguishing honest from dishonest bankrupts had marked debates around bankruptcy laws since the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{75} Although by the nineteenth century the legislation regarding bankruptcy had shifted and was no longer restricted solely to merchants and other business men, the rule of the Manchester Union Club suggests that social attitudes towards bankruptcy were still influenced by the individual’s conduct and his trustworthiness. Members of the Union Club continued to distinguish between the dishonest bankrupt who had broken his promises with his creditors through reckless and selfish behaviour, and the gentleman bankrupt who, as

\textsuperscript{73} ‘Rules of the Reform Club’, Manchester Reform Club Minutes of the General Committee 1895-1898, MRC 1/3/1, JRULSC.

\textsuperscript{74} 12 December 1870, M17/2/1/2, MALS.

\textsuperscript{75} Hoppitt, \textit{Risk and Failure}, p. 20.
the subject of an unavoidable misfortune, had lost control of his money through no fault of his own.

Two cases of bankruptcy from the minute books of the Manchester Reform Club demonstrate these attitudes to bankruptcy at work. Like the Manchester Union Club, the Reform Club legislated against bankruptcy and forced bankrupt members to give up their membership. Roger Macpherson became subject to the rule in 1891:

Attention was called to the fact that Mr Roger Macpherson who had appeared in the Bankruptcy Court under very discreditable circumstances and whose prosecution was ordered by the Registrars was a member of the Club and the Secretary was directed to write to him requesting him to resign his membership.  

Macpherson was expelled from the club because his bankruptcy was the result of fraud. Unemployed and supported financially by his mother-in-law, Macpherson had gained credit from tradesmen on false pretences by claiming that he was a partner in his father’s business. Macpherson had been living well beyond his means, and had fitted out his new home with furniture and stayed in the expensive Grand Hotel in Paris for his honeymoon. Macpherson’s character was discredited among the committee of the Reform Club because he had proved himself to be completely untrustworthy and lacked any sense of self control.

The second case concerned James Ryder, a property developer. Again in 1891, Ryder similarly found himself subject to the Bankruptcy court and his membership of the club was put on the line. At the time, Ryder wrote to the committee, ‘stating that his affairs were not yet settled’ and ‘he very much wished to

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76 5 November 1891, Manchester Reform Club House and General Committees Minute Book 1890-1892, MRC1/2/1, JRULSC.
77 ‘Manchester Bankruptcy Court: Reckless Extravagance with Other People’s Money’, Manchester Guardian, 16 October 1891, p. 7.

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be reinstated in his membership but would not be in a position to pay his subscription till after that date.’ As Victor Markham Lester has noted, the prevalence of bankruptcy in the late Victorian and Edwardian period differed between occupations, though most occurred in small businesses based on building and retail. Members of the Manchester Reform Club committee who considered Ryder’s case agreed that, ‘Mr Ryder’s failure had been brought about by property speculations which had turned out unfortunately but…there was not anything he need be ashamed of.’ Ryder’s character as a trustworthy club man remained intact because his failure and loss of control was not so much his own doing, but the result of an honest yet unlucky failure.

The character of the club man was not only limited to his control of money and access to financial resources. Middle-class club men were also expected to have control over their social behaviour and possess a certain level of cultural knowledge and taste. Historians have tended to link clubs and associations with a culture of drinking. An extensive literature on the temperance movement has led to the assumption that middle-class men did not drink much, and when they did it largely took place in private, either in the home or in the member’s only club. Indeed, Mike Huggins has suggested that clubs challenged the hold of respectability by providing a screen for intemperance. Since there is little research on drinking

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78 23 June 1891, MRC 1/2/1, JRULSC.
80 23 June 1891, MRC 1/2/1, JRULSC.
cultures in British history, and even less so on the relationship between drinking and middle-class masculinity, it is not clear how much more common drinking was amongst middle-class men in the home or club than elsewhere.  

There were certainly opportunities for overindulgence in the context of the all-male association, but this does not necessarily mean that insobriety was an acceptable form of behaviour for the nineteenth-century club man. As the following discussion shows, drink was part of a wider middle-class masculine culture of connoisseurship, where knowledge about certain types of alcohol and how it was consumed was read as an indicator of taste and social identity. The relationship between drinking and masculinity was tempered in the context of the club by a scale of self-control, and drinking was only detrimental to a man’s identity when it affected his behaviour.

The life writings of professional and business men discussed in the previous chapter, suggested that a culture of drinking was not typical of all clubs and associations. Life writers, especially those who claimed membership of home-based associations depicted club meetings as social yet sober affairs. Meetings of Samuel Smith’s Clerical Club, for example, were lubricated by tea. But in urban clubs and associations, a culture of drinking went hand-in-hand with the idea of the club as an informal place for business networks. This was particularly the case in the smaller discussion and social groups such as the Manchester John Shaw’s Club and the Liverpool YZ Club and 30 Clubs, which met in inns, taverns and hotels across the period. Historians have tended to agree that by the middle of the nineteenth century, middle-class men had for the most part withdrawn from the public house because of

83 The collection of literary essays in A. Smyth (ed.) *Pleasing Sinne: Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth Century England* (Cambridge, 2004), has been particularly useful here in thinking about the relationship between masculinity and drink. 
its association with ‘rough manners and drunkenness.’ Wolfgang Schivelbusch has gone so far as to claim that for the middle-class man ‘going to a pub was as scandalous as visiting a brothel.’ However, Tosh has admitted that northern business men were slower to reject the public house and were still using taverns for lunch in the 1870s. Located close to offices and other places of middle-class work, public houses in Manchester and Liverpool continued to play a prominent role in the business and public lives of middle-class men.

However, middle-class club men were selective regarding the establishments in which they chose to meet. As Peter Clark has suggested in his research on the alehouse, public drinking establishments fitted into a complex and nuanced hierarchy, ranging from inns and taverns to the more prestigious hotels. In 1813, the Liverpool Canning Club moved from its home in the Leaden Hall Tavern on Pall Mall, to what was described in the minutes as the more ‘eligible situation’ of the York Hotel on Williamson Square. Taverns had once been the preserve of a wealthy clientele, but by the turn of the nineteenth century they had for the most part lost their social distinction to the new style of hotels which sold wine, spirits and food at a particularly high price. According to the 1812 guidebook, A Stranger in Liverpool, the Canning Club’s new home on Williamson Square was reputed to be one of the town’s principle establishments. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, members of the discussion group the Liverpool 30 Club also considered

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87 Tosh, A Man’s Place, p. 125.
89 6 July 1813, 329CAN 1/1, LRO.
moving their meetings from the Exchange Station Hotel to the newly opened Adelphi Hotel, because they were disillusioned with the standard of service and catering.\textsuperscript{92}

Alcohol could affect the mood and character of club meetings. As one chairman of the Liverpool YZ Club noted in April 1872,

as soon as generous wine had brought out the individual idiosyncrasies and greatly to the honour of their manly spirit, it became manifest that combativeness and straight talking are not wanting among the characteristic features of the brotherhood.\textsuperscript{93}

Meetings of the discussion club took place in one of Liverpool’s city-centre taverns and began at six o’clock in the evening with dinner and wine. According to the minute taker, drinking impacted on men’s behaviour in the club and the way in which they engaged with each other. But it seemed that this was an accepted characteristic of YZ Club meetings. Other members of the discussion club felt that alcohol ‘stimulated the mind’ and ‘provoked conversation.’\textsuperscript{94} Those who chose not to drink risked distancing themselves from the rest of the group and were the subject of ridicule. Edward Samuelson, a tobacco merchant and Mayor of Liverpool between 1872 and 1873, was mocked by his fellow members of the YZ Club for becoming teetotal. The author of the minutes described Samuelson’s announcement during a meeting in 1878 as made in a ‘voice broken with emotion.’\textsuperscript{95} Samuelson complained at the meeting that drinking tea and coffee was no less expensive, but it was suggested in the minute book that he was given little sympathy from the other members who felt that it ‘served him right.’\textsuperscript{96}

\textsuperscript{92} 17 December 1900, 367 THI 1/2, LRO.  
\textsuperscript{93} Undated April 1872, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.  
\textsuperscript{94} Undated September 1875, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.  
\textsuperscript{95} 9 October 1878, 367 YZ 1/1, LRO.  
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
The Manchester cotton manufacturer Absalom Watkin accepted that alcohol played an important role in enlivening the mood of club life, but he was critical when it threatened to disrupt the atmosphere of conviviality. In his diaries, Watkin recalled a meeting of his own home-based Literary and Scientific Club:

the cigars and liquor brought in, and we were soon in a state of friendly excitement, had a round of papers and parted at nearly half-past twelve, in great good humour with one another. Mr Remington drank freely of brandy and water, smoked cigars adroitly, talked with much self-expressions. He talked of spewing and told us that spirits and tobacco acted upon him as diuretics etc. and with much composure, indeed extreme self-possession is, I think, a man of coarse manners. I should not like to be intimate with him.97

Remington had been invited to the meeting of the Literary and Scientific Club as a guest, and although drink initially enhanced feelings of friendliness between those who were present, the amount Remington consumed affected Watkin’s opinion of his character. Drink had boosted Remington’s confidence, but he overstepped the mark by exposing too much of himself and left Watkin with the impression of his coarseness. As Stella Archilleos has shown, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a long-standing ambiguity surrounding alcohol and its consumption, where on the one hand drinking could be celebrated as part of an urbane culture of male sociability, but on the other, over-indulgence and insobriety were condemned for disrupting the ‘spirit of conviviality and companionship’.98

Drink reflected badly on a club man’s character when it caused him to lose self-control. In extracts from his diaries, Watkin was critical on numerous occasions

97 Goffin, The Diaries of Absalom Watkin, pp. 97-98.
about the drinking habits of other club men. Attending the annual dinner of the
Commercial Clerks Society in the early 1820s, he complained that the noise and
behaviour of members became progressively worse in relation to the increasing
amount of alcohol they consumed, and he watched as the evening sunk under ‘more
noise, less order and louder shouts.’99 Watkin was a supporter of temperance reform,
but we also know from his diaries that he enjoyed drinking and would sometimes get
drunk. Social gatherings held by Watkin and his wife at their home were often
lubricated by alcohol and diary entries suggest that he did not hold back on these
occasions and suffered badly from the consequences the following day. After one
particularly late party in 1838, Watkin confessed, ‘I drank too much and slept ill and
suffered from weariness and headache.’100 As Hannah Barker has shown in a study
of lower and middle-class men in eighteenth-century Manchester, the struggle to stay
sober was also one of personal willpower and restraint.101

The use of alcohol as part of an initiation rite in some clubs was an explicit
test of a middle-class man’s self-control. The Ardwick Corporation was a dining
club which traced its roots back to the middle of the eighteenth century, and had
retained a tradition of using alcohol to introduce new members into the group. In
between swearing three oaths, new members were required to drink a full glass of
wine, without leaving any “heel taps” or remnants in the bottom of the glass.102
Members of the club in the nineteenth century included some of Manchester’s most
influential business and professional men and often, although not limited to,

99 Watkin, Absalom Watkin, p. 97.
100 Goffin, The Diaries of Absalom Watkin, p. 193.
101 H. Barker, ‘Soul, Purse and Family: Middling and Lower-Class Masculinity in Eighteenth Century
MALS.
prominent Conservatives. Historians have tended to associate initiation rites with the masculine culture of the working class. The case of the Ardwick Corporation demonstrates the ways in which the masculine cultures of different social groups overlapped.

The relationship between masculinity, drinking and self-control is echoed in evidence from other clubs. In 1902 it was noted in a meeting of the General Committee of the Manchester Reform Club that:

Several members had complained of the annoyance caused by Mr James Paterson who comes into the Club in a state of intoxication and that on the 17th instance he was in the Club in this condition and by his conduct and language caused members to leave the room where they were sitting.

When the incident was repeated the following week, Paterson was asked to resign from his membership. The complaints made about Paterson to the committee were not necessarily about how much he drank, but the way he subsequently behaved. The use of what was presumably foul language was an indication that Paterson had lost self-control. Although there has been little, if any, research on swearing and its relationship to gender identity, Davidoff and Hall have noted that by the middle of the nineteenth century, the use of strong language was unacceptable when in the company of women. Indeed, the writer J. T. Slugg recalled that one of the changes to have taken place in Manchester during the nineteenth century was the decline of ‘swearing on the part of respectable men.’ According to Slugg, when he arrived in the city as a young apprentice in 1829, ‘it was quite common for

103 Ibid., p. 25. For instance, both Elkanah Armitage and W. B. Watkins, the son of Absalom Watkin, were members of the Liberal Party and were members of the dining society in the 1830s and 1840s.
105 24 July 1902, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1901-1904, MRC 1/3/3, JRULSC.
106 24 July 1902 and 31 July 1902, MRC 1/3/3, JRULSC.
respectable gentlemen…unconsciously and habitually to use some of those expressions which are classed under the heading of swearing.' The incident of Mr Paterson in the minute books of the Manchester Reform Club implies that by the end of the nineteenth century, the use of foul language was also questionable among and between men.

Just as foul language signalled a loss of self-control, so too was any kind of aggressive or violent behaviour. In 1891 a special meeting of the committee of the Manchester Reform Club were called to consider a dispute between John Ashworth and Daniel Williams which had resulted in a ‘scuffle in the Card Room.’ Witnesses to the incident made an explicit connection between alcohol and physical aggression. Although neither man admitted to have been drinking, witnesses present at the incident had told the committee that they doubted whether the men were sober and recalled hearing the use of foul language. As Tosh and others have noted, by the nineteenth century violence and aggression were no longer acceptable forms of bourgeois masculine behaviour. Williams confessed in a letter to the committee that he had been ‘provoked to act in an ungentlemanly way to a fellow member.’ Both men were asked to resign their membership.

In the Manchester Reform Club, a personal loss of self-control was also understood as detrimental to the character of the club as a whole. In 1899 a Mr

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109 13 November 1891, MRC 1/2/1, JRULSC.
110 Ibid.
112 13 November 1891, MRC 1/2/1 JRULSC.
113 Ibid.
Thorpe was asked to leave the Club after he had repeatedly urinated on the chairs he sat on in the Smoke and Reading Rooms. Committee members present at the meeting were reminded that such behaviour violated club rules because it was ‘injurious to the character and interests of the Club.’ As Jason M. Kelly has shown in his study of elite associations in the eighteenth century, the individual reputations of members and the club in general were closely intertwined. Thorpe’s behaviour and his inability to control his own bodily functions were thought to have serious consequences for the Reform Club itself and the other members.

However, alcohol was not always associated with drunkenness and over-indulgence in nineteenth-century club life. There was a general understanding that a moderate consumption of wine was beneficial to one’s health and constitution, especially when consumed with food. As Edward Lonsdale Beckwith noted in his *Practical Notes on Wine* published in 1868, ‘wine acts more as a stimulus to nutrition than as a material of nutrition.’ Rules of the Liverpool YZ Club stipulated that wine should only be consumed with the meal and not during the meeting itself. Indeed, from the middle of the nineteenth century, wine was promoted as a temperance alternative to other forms of alcohol. Ale and spirits had been associated with heavy drinking since the eighteenth century, and there was a growing concern amongst the middle classes from the 1850s about the adulteration

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114 28 March 1899, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1899-1901, MRC 1/3/2, JRULSC.
115 Ibid.
of beer.\textsuperscript{119} The association of spirits with the lower classes meant that wine was perceived as a purer form of alcohol, and therefore believed to be less harmful.\textsuperscript{120}

As a writer for the \textit{Cornhill Magazine} (1864) noted in an article on club-house drinking practices, ‘a bottle of club Claret, which will cost three or four shillings, will not possess more intoxicating power than a pot of genuine stout.’\textsuperscript{121}

In fact contemporary opinion argued that club life encouraged sobriety amongst both middle and upper-class men.\textsuperscript{122} Thomas Walker, the Manchester-born police magistrate and author of the short-lived weekly periodical, \textit{The Original} (1835), claimed that,

\begin{quote}
[clubs] are favourable to temperance. It seems that when people can freely please themselves, and when they have an opportunity of living simply, excess is seldom committed...Many people drink no wine, some only one glass; and excess, or even anything approaching to it, may be said to be unknown.\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}

Similar sentiments were expressed thirty years later in the \textit{Cornhill Magazine}:

\begin{quote}
In a club a member is not obliged to drink for the benefit of the house. In hotels, on the contrary, it is almost an absolute necessity….It is, perhaps, this one principle in the club house system which renders it far more conducive to temperance than the tavern of the public house.\textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}

The writers suggested that in the context of the club house and the all-male association, there was little temptation for a man to drink to excess. For the writer of the \textit{Cornhill Magazine}, it was owing to the club system that he could claim

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{119} Burnett, \textit{Liquid Pleasures}, p. 123.  \\
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid; Davidoff and Hall, \textit{Family Fortunes}, p. 400.  \\
\textsuperscript{121} ‘Club House Sobriety’, \textit{Cornhill Magazine}, April 1864, p. 480.  \\
\textsuperscript{122} Huggins, ‘More Sinful Pleasures?’, 589-590.  \\
\textsuperscript{123} ‘Clubs’, \textit{The Original}, 9 September 1835, pp. 179-80.  \\
\end{flushright}
Englishmen of the middle and upper orders were the most sober in the whole of Europe.

However, not everyone agreed. Fletcher Moss, a Liberal councillor and provisions merchant in nineteenth-century Manchester, depicted the club house in his autobiography *Fifty Years of Public Work in Didsbury* (1915) as a potential site for insobriety. He described a certain Constitutional Club as:

> worse than any beerhouse in my opinion, for public-houses have to close for some time at night and gambling is not allowed. A young man well known to me who committed suicide, leaving a wife and family, was several times brought from this club ‘the next day.’

Changes in the licensing laws in the early 1870s curtailed opening hours for public houses but had left clubs untouched. Moss suggested that the extended availability of alcohol in the club house provided members with an opportunity to behave in ways that sat uneasily with the home and domestic life, and he depicted the club as a place of immorality. This chimes with the argument put forward by Mike Huggins, that late nineteenth-century clubs provided a screen for middle-class intemperance. However, Moss had both a personal and political motive for depicting the club as he did. The chairman of the Constitutional Club, Mr Moore, had stood against him in the 1890s as a political candidate in south Manchester, at a time when social and moral issues surrounding the drink question became

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125 F. Moss, *Fifty Years of Public Work in Didsbury: The Evolution of a Village from 1,500 to 15,000 People* (Didsbury, 1915), p. 66.
126 Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, p. 255; Greenaway, *Drink and British Politics*, p. 34.
entrenched in party politics. Thus Moss used the association of drinking and character in the context of the club to attack a political opponent.

Unlike the consumption of beer and spirits, drinking wine in the context of the club or association was part of a wider middle-class masculine culture of connoisseurship and taste. As the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu showed in his study on the French bourgeoisie in the twentieth century, cultural taste can act as a marker of social identity and distinction. Charles Ludington has argued that the sheer variety of port available at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made it a popular drink among the middling sections of society, who were keen to display their diversity. A selection of different types of wines served at the anniversary dinners of the John Shaw’s Club in Manchester during the early nineteenth century, suggests that these were occasions for middle-class men to express their different identities and tastes. Receipts and sales bills listed a range of wines including port, Madeira, and Buccellias, an expensive white Portuguese wine that was popular during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Members of the John Shaw’s Club were offered a selection of wines that varied in strength and suited different palates.

While it would seem that the amount of alcohol consumed at the anniversary dinners of the John Shaw’s Club was sufficient to cause drunkenness, it is difficult to know just how much members drank. The bills from the annual dinner of the John Shaw’s Club in Manchester during the early nineteenth century, suggests that these were occasions for middle-class men to express their different identities and tastes. Receipts and sales bills listed a range of wines including port, Madeira, and Buccellias, an expensive white Portuguese wine that was popular during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Members of the John Shaw’s Club were offered a selection of wines that varied in strength and suited different palates.

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Figure 1.1 Wine List from the Manchester Conservative Club Tariff (no date).
Source: Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
Shaw’s Club held in 1828 show that for twenty four diners there were thirty eight bottles of wine, twenty bottles of port, nine bottles of Buccellias and six bottles of Madeira.\textsuperscript{132} Before the 1860s, bottles were not standardised. According to Cyris Redding, the author of numerous books on wine in the middle of the nineteenth century, a consumer could expect to buy wine in a quart or two pint bottle, though they often only got a pint and a half.\textsuperscript{133} Bottle sizes also varied between alcoholic drinks. John Burnett has noted that a port bottle typically held five sixths of a pint.\textsuperscript{134}

Some of the large club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool invested a great deal of time and money on their wine cellars. The Manchester Union Club even had a specially elected wine committee.\textsuperscript{135} But knowledge about wine was also important for the individual identity of the club man. The wine list from the Manchester Conservative Club (Figure 1.1) listed fifteen types of sherry and port, a wide selection of French and German wines, twelve champagnes and eight liqueurs. Spread over two sides of the card, with a food menu on the reverse, the wine list required a great deal of knowledge on the part of club members not only about the different types of wine on offer, but also about their suitability for certain foods and courses. Such rules could be complicated: as \textit{The Epicure’s Year Book} from 1868 advised readers, Madeira should ideally be drunk after soup courses and light German wines only with cold entrees.\textsuperscript{136}

The types of wines available at the Manchester Conservative Club also suggest that the tastes of middle-class club men differentiated them from other social

\textsuperscript{132} 3 March 1828, M485/3, MALS.  
\textsuperscript{134} Burnett, \textit{Liquid Pleasures}, p. 147.  
\textsuperscript{135} Manchester Union Club Wine Committee Minute Book 1875-1916, M17/2/7, MALS.  
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{The Epicure’s Year Book and Table Companion} (London, 1868), pp. 45-46.
groups. Wine itself was not a luxury in the nineteenth century; after tax duties were lowered in 1861 imported wines became more readily available to the middle and lower classes and could be purchased in restaurants as well as in grocer’s shops.\(^{137}\) Cheaper wines available to the lower middle class and the better paid working classes were usually Spanish and Portuguese, whilst French wines continued to be expensive, especially following the spread of vine disease after 1875.\(^{138}\) The dominance of German wines on the tariff of the Manchester Conservative Club places it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period during which German wines were particularly popular amongst the moderately wealthy.\(^{139}\)

In 1822, the Manchester cotton manufacturer Absalom Watkin added a postscript to a column he wrote for the short-lived newspaper the *Manchester Iris* about the proceedings of the Social and Literary Club. ‘One of our members’, wrote Watkin,

who is still unmarried, but who does not affect singularity, is particularly desirous that so much of the first number as relates to our drinking, maybe explained in such a manner as to render it liable to no misconstruction. He wishes it to be stated that he, and perhaps one or two others, seldom take more than a single glass in the course of the evening. He says that the explanation will give much satisfaction to a certain elderly gentleman, whose good opinion he is very desirous to preserve; and who, as well as his amiable daughter, reads the *Iris*, and is aware of our friends connexion with the club.\(^{140}\)

This quotation suggests that attitudes towards the identity of the club man differed between members, on the one hand, and those outside of club life, on the other. As this section has shown, the relationship between masculinity and drink in the

\(^{137}\) Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures*, p. 150.  
\(^{138}\) Ibid., pp. 149-150.  
nineteenth-century club or association was not straightforward but based on notions of self-control and taste. Watkin’s fellow member of the Literary and Scientific Club was at pains to make clear to those outside of the club that alcohol did not result in a personal loss of self-control. However, the fact that he was concerned about the father’s, rather than the daughter’s opinion of his behaviour, highlights a contrast between the ways in which masculinity was constructed between men within the club, and in other spheres of masculine life.

**Conclusion**

Club-culture could clearly touch the limits of respectability, yet this did not necessarily result in a slip in accepted standards of masculine behaviour. In fact, the homosocial club-life of the late Victorian and Edwardian period was host to contrasting and conflicting forms of behaviour which were central to the masculine identity of the clubbable man. By exploring the way in which masculinity was constructed between men in the context of the all-male association, I have argued in this chapter that middle-class masculinity in the nineteenth century was not only defined by the home and work. Instead, I have shown how there was more than one identity for the nineteenth-century club man, and these identities were shaped by a complex web of factors drawn from all spheres of masculine life.

Club life and associational culture in the provincial cities of nineteenth century Manchester and Liverpool were not simply an alternative to the home and domestic life, but more closely intertwined with work and the business world. For some club men, this meant that going to the club and enjoying the company and

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141 Shepard, ‘From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen?’, 292-293.
friendship of other club men, was a way of temporarily escaping from the stresses and pressures of work. This confirms the findings in the life writings of professional and business men, and suggests that further, detailed historical research is needed on this assumed, yet neglected area of masculine life. Yet at the same time, club life also provided middle-class men with a way into a wealth of different networks. Indeed, the close relationship between the identity of the club man and his financial character suggests that associational culture could be an important resource for business and commercial interests. However the networks within the club went beyond business and could also be beneficial to those seeking a political career or emotional support. As I have shown in this chapter, middle-class club life and associational culture was not so much a separate sphere of gender identity and experience, but overlapped and interacted with masculine life in complex ways.

By focusing on the construction of masculine identity between and among men, I have raised some important points about the relationship between club life and women. Evidence from clubs and associations in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool suggests that contrary to the historiography, women were not entirely absent from club life and in fact, some clubs played a role in family life. Women’s access to clubs was restricted. Club houses only allowed women entry into certain rooms during the evening and at the weekend, confirming that during the business hours of the week, urban club life was by and large, a male-only enclave. Nevertheless, a female presence poses a challenge to the idea of the club as part of a masculine flight to or from domesticity and highlights the fact that homosocial approaches to the history of masculinity do not necessarily obscure the relational nature of gender identity.
Finally, in this chapter I have also suggested that clubs and associations can provide an insight into the cultural and social identities of nineteenth-century middle-class men. Drinking in the club was about more than getting drunk; knowledge about certain wines and how they should be paired with foods was a demonstration of a level of taste, and helped to distinguish the cultural identity of club man from the working-class drinker in the public house. It was through these forms of social and cultural behaviour within the context of the club that middle-class men articulated their identities as a social group, but also as individuals. Throughout this chapter we have encountered the different identities of club men through the clubs they chose to join and the ways in which they constructed their identities in relation to other club men. In the following chapter I will explore how these identities were expressed through the architectural appearance of purpose-built club houses and the significance of their location in the provincial cities of Manchester and Liverpool.
Chapter Three: The Architecture of the Club House.

Introduction

A study of nineteenth-century clubs and associations must take into account the club house. As permanent meeting places for the exclusive use of members, these buildings became characteristic of nineteenth-century club life: ‘[c]lub-houses’, wrote Joseph Hatton, in his *Clubland: London and Provincial* published in 1890, ‘as we know them today, are of recent date. They are a feature of the progress of our times’.

But while the club house is implicit in the current historiography of the club as an escape from or to domesticity, it has received little attention as an object of study within social and cultural history. This chapter and the one that follows explore both the architecture and interior of club houses and what they reveal about the wider role of the club and its associational culture in the nineteenth century. The two chapters are based on the understanding that buildings are not simply the backdrop to social life, but shape and are shaped by social relations.

Located in the centres of Manchester and Liverpool, club houses were part of the public culture of the city, and the ways in which they were built and decorated reflected the diversity of club life outside London and the function of the club as an arena for masculine social life.

Though these buildings only represent a fraction of the total number of clubs and associations operating in Manchester and Liverpool over the course of the period, by analysing the architectural style and location of club houses, this chapter will throw new light on the social, political and cultural significance of club life.

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3 Manchester directories from the 1880s list over twenty clubs with their own premises though most were not purpose-built and instead occupied existing - and often renovated - buildings. See *The Official Handbook of Manchester and Salford and the Surrounding District, with information on Local Institutions and Societies* (Manchester), 1883, 1884, 1888.
The chapter draws on a sample of six club houses, built in the period between the 1830s and the 1880s: the Manchester Union Club (1836); the Liverpool Palatine Club (c.1854); the Manchester Reform Club (1871) and Conservative Club (1876); and the Liverpool Reform Club (1879) and Conservative Club (1883). Each building was designed by different architects in a range of styles, from the Grecian inspired, to the Italianate, Gothic and French Renaissance. Though contemporary with club houses in London, this chapter argues those established in Manchester and Liverpool did not simply mimic London trends. By adopting different styles, architects and club committees made distinctive claims about the individual identity and function of their clubs in both a local and national contexts. Situated between the home and a public building, the architecture of these club houses reflected their function as a way into the masculine social life of the city.

Social historians of the nineteenth century have agreed that architectural style played an important role in the social meanings that buildings were intended to express. Public buildings such as town halls, law courts and art galleries have been considered as instrumental in the projection of a homogenous middle-class identity by signalling notions of power, authority and civic consciousness through both their appearance and architectural style. As Kate Hill has argued, ‘civic architecture was used in such a way as to separate the elite from the rest of the city, and to enhance [its] status within the town itself and in relation to the rest of the country.’ However, there is little understanding of why certain types of buildings were built in particular styles and the specific meanings they carried. Further, while the notion of

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architectural expression has been extended to some commercial buildings, the
collection of club houses has been overlooked. Simon Gunn has included a study
of clubland as part of his wider analysis of middle-class public culture, but he has not
considered the role of the club buildings and the significance of their physical
structure.  

Architectural historians have suggested that the physical structure of the
nineteenth-century club house was particularly significant. Those working within
the traditions of art history have shown how clubs in early nineteenth-century
London played an influential role in the wider development of architectural style.
The Travellers Club (1829-1831) and Reform Club (1837-1841) on Pall Mall
designed by Charles Barry have been credited with changing the direction of
nineteenth-century architecture from a classicism inspired by ancient Greece to an
Italianate Renaissance style. However, there has been no agreement about how
developments in London impacted on club architecture elsewhere. While James
Stevens Curl has claimed that ‘[l]ater clubs tended to follow London precedent’,
Roger Dixon and Stefan Muthesius have argued in the provinces ‘the echo of
London clubland was faint’. As the examples from Manchester and Liverpool
suggest, club houses were far from homogenous in style. Attempting to squeeze
buildings into a stylistic typology not only overlooks differences between buildings,
but in fact tells the historian little about why certain styles were used.

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6 S. Gunn, The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1850-1914 (Manchester, 2000), see especially Chapter 4 ‘Clubland: the Private in the Public’, pp. 84-105.
8 Stevens Curl, Victorian Architecture, p. 545; Dixon and Muthesius, Victorian Architecture, p. 78.
However, it is important to note that not all architectural historians have agreed on the significance of style. Thomas Markus and Jane Rendell have moved towards a spatial analysis, exploring the ways in which the plan of the club house influenced relations between members inside and those outside the institutions.\(^{10}\) Markus has rejected style almost completely, and has claimed the ‘real significance’ of building such as the London Reform Club ‘resides … not in its style but in the way the plan was organized.’\(^{11}\) Interiors are explored more fully in the next chapter, but the important point here is that studies of the interior alone overlook the fuller significance of these buildings. Interiors do not exist in a vacuum, but are integral to buildings as a whole which, as Mary Moskowitz notes, are important in their very visibility because they are seen by more people than those who might use them.\(^{12}\) Of course, not all clubs were purpose built and many, like the Manchester Brasenose Club examined in the next chapter, as well as the Exchange Club in Liverpool, occupied existing buildings such as offices or banks. But for those clubs that did build their own new premises, style and external appearance were important factors in the choice of design.

The process of planning, designing and building a new club house was controlled and funded by members of the club itself; either through a specially elected building committee, or more typical of schemes in the latter half of the period, by Limited Building Companies. Like most building projects in the nineteenth century, the design of a club house was thrown open to competition and attracted a significant amount of interest from architects hoping to secure a new


commission and develop their reputation. The architectural press which emerged in the second half of the century provides a useful source for information on these competitions, and although London dominated coverage in publications such as *The Builder*, R. H. Harper has noted that Manchester and Liverpool attracted a significant amount of attention, which suggests they were also important centres of building development.\(^\text{13}\) But as Howard Davies has observed, architects are only one of the agents involved in the design of buildings.\(^\text{14}\) In the case of the purpose-built club house, competitions were for the most part judged by members and building committees. It was only towards the end of the century, following efforts by the Royal Institution of British Architects (RIBA) to tighten control over the profession, that competitions were judged with the assistance of qualified architects.\(^\text{15}\)

The social and cultural connotations of style are analysed here through a combination of visual and documentary sources, though the availability of source material varies from club to club. The first two case studies explored here – the Manchester Union Club and the Liverpool Palatine Club - were demolished in the second half of the twentieth century. Surviving photographs and illustrations of the buildings have been supplemented by available documentary sources, such as administrative records, newspaper reports and guide books. Using these sources, this chapter explores what the styles of these early buildings reveal about nineteenth-century club men and the role of club life in the provincial city. Although looking to London for inspiration, clubs in Manchester and Liverpool developed independently from the capital and tapped into local civic identities. Moreover, as the case of the


\(^{15}\) Ibid., pp. xvi-xvii.
Liverpool Palatine Club suggests, the relationship between London and the provinces was more reciprocal than has hitherto been suggested.

The final four case studies focus on Manchester and Liverpool’s Reform and Conservative Clubs. Information on these buildings is more readily available. Built in the final third of the century, they coincided with the development of the architectural press, while other administrative sources relating to the clubs and their buildings have also survived in local archives. Moreover, in contrast to the earlier club houses, these buildings are still standing and are protected as listed buildings. Architectural reports conducted by English Heritage have been used alongside contemporary documentary sources in order to explore the ways in which these buildings represented their members and the function of clubs in the late nineteenth-century city. This section highlights the fact that club life was not necessarily private, but part of a masculine public world. I have also included my own photographs of these buildings in the analysis. The problems associated with using photographs as historical sources are explored further in the next chapter, but a note of caution is needed here about the way in which these photographs can be read. The images included show close-ups of the buildings and have focused on architectural and aesthetic details. As a result, this has created the impression of monumentality and the images have eschewed the wider environment in which the buildings stood. However the photographs should be approached as visual references to specific aesthetic details which contributed to the appearance and architecture of the building as a whole.
The Manchester Union Club

The first case study focuses on the Union Club, Manchester’s earliest purpose-built club house, completed in 1836. The establishment of the Union Club marked the arrival of a new type of club in the provinces inspired by London trends. But although the Union Club was contemporary to club houses in the capital, its architectural style suggests that it was not intended simply as a metropolitan replica. The style of the building echoed a local civic identity and at the same time, was differentiated from other public buildings in the city through key stylistic features.

Though the Union Club was not Manchester’s only social club operating in the 1820s, what made it distinctive was the emphasis it placed on a club house. John Shaw’s and the Scramble Club had both met in the rooms of inns for some years, and the Mosley Street Club had been housed in the Assembly Rooms since 1795. The prospectus for the Union Club published in 1825 stated that it was ‘to be on the plan of similar Establishments in London, and to be supplied, in the best style, with whatever may contribute to the comfort and advantage of the Members.’ Members were required to pay an entrance fee and annual subscription rate, which at twenty-five and five guineas respectively were on par with contemporary establishments in the capital. London had an established tradition of club houses dating back to the eighteenth century, which catered for members of the aristocracy and gentry, and were concentrated in the area in and around St James’s Street in the West End. But the founding committee of the Manchester club may have had in mind a number of more recent establishments set up in the area around Pall Mall, including the new

17 ‘Prospectus’, 26 July 1830, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1829-1832, M17/2/2/2, MALS.
club house of the London Union Club. Founded in 1805 as a social club for merchants, lawyers, MPs and ‘gentlemen at large’, it met in a number of locations before settling in purpose-built premises on Trafalgar Square in 1824. It was designed by Sir Robert Smirke in a Greek Revival style and was unusual in that it comprised of two parts to be shared by the Club and the Royal College of Physicians.

For the first nine years, the Manchester Union Club found accommodation in existing buildings, built and formerly used as, domestic residences. The proposal of the first committee was to purchase an existing house and warehouse on Mosley Street, funded through the sale of shares. This echoed similar practices in London. As Jane Rendell has written ‘[i]nitially club houses were often conversions of family homes, but many purpose-designed buildings modelled themselves on domestic dwellings.’ For Rendell, this link has reinforced the idea that for upper-class men in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century London there was a close relationship between the club building and its function as a place for male intimacy. However, evidence suggests domestic residences were not wholly suitable to be used as club houses. According to the Manchester minute books, the premises purchased by the members of the Union Club on Mosley Street took two years to renovate, and in the meantime the club found temporary accommodation in another former house on

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21 Cunningham, *Hand-Book*, p. 517; Cruchley’s *Picture of London* (London, 1834), p. 134. The building was altered on conversion to Canada House in 1925 by Septimus Warwick. While the Pall Mall East façade of the Royal College of Physicians was largely untouched, the entrance to the Union Club was completely rebuilt and a fourth storey added to the attics over the centre of the building. See N. Pevsner, *London*, vol. 1, *The Cities of London and Westminster*, rev. B. Cherry (Harmondsworth, 1973), p. 321.
22 ‘Prospectus’, M17/2/2, MALS.
Figure 2.1 Map showing the location of the Union Club on Mosley Street in relation to the Portico Library, Royal Institution and Manchester Athenaeum. Source: Grid: SJ89 Sheet: 193000000281 Scale: 1056 (1851) OSM http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/ancientroam/mapper;jsessionid=CF420D09580F03539189F2129E506F85?execution=e1s1 (accessed 23 September 2011).

Figure 2.2 The Union Club on Mosley Street (1905). Source: m03415 MLIC http://images.manchester.gov.uk/web/objects/common/webmedia.php?irn=1989&ref table=ecatalogue&refirm=24383 (accessed 23 September 2011).
Norfolk Street, belonging to a founder member, the calico printer and banker Samuel Brooks.²⁴ Owing to the style of minute taking employed by the committee, the nature and extent of the alterations on the Mosley Street building are unclear. But evidence from other, later clubs suggests they could have been substantial. The Manchester Clarendon Club which also took up residence on Mosley Street in the 1860s, occupied a building renovated from two existing former houses, which according to a writer in the local journal, *The Sphinx*, ‘have been thrown into one, re-faced, re-arranged – in fact, done everything with, short of being actually built over again.’²⁵ Though the writer claimed the Clarendon was ‘a striking instance of successful alteration’, it seemed that the outcome for the Union Club was less so. According to the Union Club minutes, it was not long after moving into the Mosley Street premises that members began to demand further accommodation to cater for a general increase in membership and the addition of new rooms.²⁶

As a result, in 1832 Brooks, the owner of the Norfolk Street house, made a proposal to the committee of the Union Club to build a new club house on a plot of land he had recently acquired further down Mosley Street from the current premises, on the corner with Nicholas Street (see Figure 2.1). Brooks was born in Whalley, Lancashire, at the end of the eighteenth century, and was fairly typical of Manchester’s ‘self-made’ middle-class elite, beginning his career as a junior partner in a calico printing firm set up by his father, before branching out into the family bank, Cunliffe, Brooks and Co.²⁷ According to club committee minute books, Brooks went so far as to have plans drawn up by the locally-based architect Richard

²⁴ 28 May 1827, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1825-1829, M17/2/2/1, MALS.
²⁶ 28 November and 26 December 1831, M17/2/2/2, MALS; 30 August 1832, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1832-1836, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
Lane, and offered to rent the premises to the club for an annual fee of £700.\textsuperscript{28}

Although the committee rejected the proposal on grounds of cost, they were clearly impressed with both the idea and the proposed design. The committee offered to purchase the land from Brooks and opened up the design for a new building to competition. According to the minutes, around thirty designs were submitted, but the competition was won by none other than Lane himself.\textsuperscript{29}

The founding of the Union Club in 1825, followed by the design for the new club house just over a decade later, not only signalled the growing popularity and prosperity of the club, but also coincided with the removal of the middle-class home from the urban centre to the suburbs. According to Martin Hewitt, by the 1830s Manchester’s bourgeoisie had settled in the areas around Ardwick and Victoria Park in the south and east of the city, and in Broughton and Pendleton to the north and west.\textsuperscript{30} Early club members were part of this migration. Alongside banking and printing, Brooks was also an early private property developer. It was around the time of his proposal to the Union Club committee that he purchased land outside the city centre to develop the wealthy residential area of Whalley Range, where he settled with his own family in 1834.\textsuperscript{31} Another early Club member, Leo Schuster, a German immigrant who began trading in Manchester as a shipping merchant and manufacturer in the early 1820s, had initially lived on Mosley Street, before moving to Crumpsall Green, again outside the city centre.\textsuperscript{32} Schuster’s case was not unusual, and many former domestic residences were increasingly adapted for

\textsuperscript{28} 9 April and 28 May 1832, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
\textsuperscript{29} 22 April 1833, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
\textsuperscript{31} M. Spiers, \textit{Victoria Park Manchester: A Nineteenth Century Suburb in its Social and Administrative Context} (Manchester, 1976), p. 3. Brooks built and resided in Whalley House which was also likely to have been designed by Lane. It is now demolished.
business use. When Richard Cobden converted the former domestic residence he purchased on Mosley Street in the early 1830s, he noted in a letter to his brother that he was simply following the example of many others on the street. ‘My next door neighbour Brooks of the firm Cunliffe and Brooks, bankers,’ he wrote, ‘has sold his house to be converted into a warehouse.’ Mosley Street was no longer the elite social and residential area it had been in the late eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, but formed part of a new mix of Manchester’s warehouse and commercial districts described by Benjamin Love in his 1839 guide book, *Manchester As It Is.*

Work began on the new building of the Union Club in 1834, and took two years to complete. As Figure 2.2 shows, it was a large, plain stone building, three storeys in height with seven windows on the Mosley Street façade and nine bays which faced onto Nicholas Street. The massive, monumental proportions of the building, coupled with the flat Doric pilasters which extended from the first floor up to the frieze, were suggestive of the Greek Revival style that reached its height in the late 1820s. In the absence of drawings of the other proposed designs, it is not clear how different the new design was to that commissioned earlier by Brooks. But as John Summerson has noted, by the 1830s opening designs up to competition was common practice amongst private building schemes as an inexpensive way of securing the best design for the lowest price. Lane was clearly the committee’s preferred architect, but his design was one of the most expensive submitted to the

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34 Quoted in Bailey, *Manchester*, p. 31.
competition and he did not entirely fulfil the original instructions issued to competitors which asked them to include space for railings around the Mosley Street and Nicholas Street façades.\textsuperscript{38}

Selecting Lane’s design was a conscious decision to secure a building which reflected the identities of members and of early nineteenth-century Manchester itself. It has been suggested that the Greek Revival style was stronger in the north of England because of its associations with non-conformism.\textsuperscript{39} Lane’s Friends Meeting House on Mount Street (1828) is one example.\textsuperscript{40} Early members of the Union Club, such as the bankers Benjamin and Thomas Heywood, were also affiliated to the Cross Street and Mosley Street Chapels and had been educated at Glasgow University. However, the choice of a Greek Revival style also tapped into a local, civic architectural typography that had been developing since the late eighteenth century. Gunn has argued that Manchester, along with Birmingham and Leeds, only began to develop a distinct architectural appearance from the middle of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{41} Yet as the architectural historian Claire Hartwell has shown, Greek Revival was associated with Manchester’s architecture much earlier.\textsuperscript{42} Adopting a sense of Greek Revivalism drew the club into a nexus of public buildings, some of which had been designed by Lane himself, including the town halls of both Salford and Chorlton-upon-Medlock, built in 1825 and 1830, respectively. Further examples of the Greek Revival style could be found across the

\textsuperscript{38} 22 April 1833, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
\textsuperscript{41} Gunn, \textit{The Public Culture}, p. 37.
Figure 2.3 View of Mosley Street, Charles Calvert (1844).  
Source: m79856 MLIC  

Figure 2.4 The Athenaeum on Bond Street (1898).  
Source: m64338 MLIC  
town, including Thomas Harrison’s Exchange building (1809), on the corner of Market Street and Exchange Street, and Francis Godwin’s old Town Hall (1834), on King Street. Mosley Street itself was no stranger to the Greek revival style. Harrison’s Portico Library built in 1806, and Charles Barry’s later Royal Manchester Institution, finished in 1823, were both located within a stone’s throw of the new building of the Union Club. Figure 2.3 which shows Charles Calvert’s watercolour painting of Mosley Street from 1844, suggests that the new building of the Union Club fitted well into the local landscape as part of a continuous line of strong, monumental buildings which terminated at St Peter’s Church (now St Peter’s Square), and projected a classically proportioned, restrained streetscape.

Having a building which reflected a sense of local identity was important to early club members. Though the general Greek Revival style of the building echoed Smirke’s Union Club in London, it was very different to the Italianate palazzo used for other contemporary London clubs, such as Charles Barry’s Travellers Club and Reform Club on Pall Mall. For many architectural historians, these club houses marked a shift in the development of nineteenth-century architectural style. John Archer and others have argued that the style of sixteenth-century Roman and Florentine palaces provided a more practical design for the demands industrialization and urbanization placed on space and the built environment. Manchester’s mercantile and business men wanted large, well-lit, multi-storey buildings. Such features were difficult to accommodate in strict Grecian designs, which as Michael

Whiffen has noted, ‘were at best simply successful essays in façade making.’

However, in designing the Union Club, Lane showed how the Greek Revival style could be adapted as a functional design for new building types. Members of the Union Club wanted an impressive building, but for little financial outlay. The instructions issued to competitors had stipulated that ‘whilst an effective and elegant character of structure is desired…it essential that an enriched or otherwise expensive style be avoided.’ Lane designed a practical and functional rendition of what was essentially an emblematic style on a small budget. One of the main differences between Lane’s building and other Grecian examples, including the London Union Club, was the lack of a portico. Porticoes rendered Greek Revival buildings not only expensive, but also for structures intended to accommodate a large number of people (whilst fitting into the confines of the street façade) porticoes were highly impractical because they consumed valuable space.

Strict Greek Revival architecture was too severe for club houses, which in contrast to other public buildings such as town halls, were supposed be places for comfort and leisure. It was not the first time Lane had designed a Grecian-inspired building without a portico. His earlier Exchange Newsroom and Library in Bolton, completed in 1826, similarly lacked the portico feature typically found over the entrance to a Greek Revival building. Critics in the local press noted how the missing portico rendered the building ‘homely’ in appearance, more akin to the ‘style of a metropolitan dwelling house, than that of a public edifice in a large

45 8 February 1833, M17/2/2/3, MALS.
46 Curl, *Victorian Architecture*, p. 31.
Figure 2.5 A comparative drawing of the Athenaeum and Union Club buildings in Manchester.
manufacturing town’. Architectural historians Gavin Stamp and Colin Amery have argued that Renaissance styles such as the Reform Club’s *palazzo* ‘appealed to a public tired of the chilly austerity of the Greek Revival. Buildings like Smirke’s British Museum might be imposing, but they were not comfortable or sympathetic.’ The fact that the Union Club building was not a strict rendition of the style - having a rusticated ground floor, coupled with the absence of a portico - differentiated it from other public Greek Revival buildings and also gave it a more informal appeal.

The architect Charles Barry was also one of the names listed as submitting an entry to the Union Club competition. However, he was to be more successful in his design for the Manchester Athenaeum located around the corner from the Union Club on Princess Street and completed in 1839 (Figure 2.4). The large, two-storey sandstone building modelled on a sixteenth-century Florentine palace provided a stark contrast to the sombre, plain severity of the Greek-inspired Union club house. But these were two very different institutions. Funded through public subscription, the Athenaeum was intended as a place of education, aimed specifically at young men; not only as a place where they could lounge and socialize, but where they could learn. The object of the Athenaeum - ‘for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge’ - was emblazoned in stone around the frieze towards the top of the building, and was clearly visible to all passers-by. Youth was also represented in the founding committee, made up of men like James Heywood, the youngest son of the

banking dynasty, and aged twenty four. The city republics of the Renaissance were seen as an appropriate model for the next generation of ‘Manchester men’, as they celebrated the virtues of trade and industry and an independent municipal culture. Figure 2.5 shows an illustration of the two buildings from Benjamin Love’s *Handbook to Manchester* published in 1842, which emphasized how the similarities and differences between the institutions were reflected in their architectural style.

The Union Club, at least for its members, was not intended to simply supplant the home. As Chapter One has shown, though the club could work in tandem with the home, it was not seen as a direct replacement for it. Club houses were first and foremost intended to be places for masculine comfort and leisure in the city, and this was signalled in the distinct architectural appearance of the club house. Distinguished from public buildings by the absence of a portico, and differentiated from the home because of its location in the urban centre amongst places of business and commerce, the club house provided an alternative setting for masculine life. Love’s description the Union Club in his 1842 guide book as ‘elegant’ and ‘modern’, suggested that the architectural appearance of the building reflected the uniqueness of the club house in the early nineteenth century, as a new type of institution with a distinct function.\(^51\)

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\(^{51}\) B. Love, *The Handbook of Manchester; containing Statistical and General Information on the Trade, Social Condition, an Institutions of the Metropolis of Manufacturers* (Manchester, 1842), p. 239.
**Conferring ‘a sort of Pall Mall air upon the locality’? The Liverpool Palatine Club.**\(^{52}\)

This section examines the architecture of Liverpool’s Palatine Club, which was located on Bold Street in the city and completed around 1854. Men who established clubs in early nineteenth-century Liverpool directly compared their institutions with examples in London. When the Liverpool Palatine Club was first established in 1835, it advertised almost immediately in the London-based newspaper the *Morning Post* for a house steward with ‘experience in a London club’.\(^{53}\) But as this section will show, the architecture of the Palatine Club suggests that Liverpool club men did not simply model their institution on examples in the capital. Whereas Manchester had defined itself as an independent city with its own distinctive identity, Liverpool had a more competitive relationship with London, and considered itself as equal to the metropolis as the country’s most important port. The architecture of the Liverpool Palatine Club suggests that a more complex and at times reciprocal relationship was at work between the capital and the provinces.

When the Palatine Club was first established it initially occupied an existing building on Bold Street in the city. In the absence of surviving records, apart from a rule book published in 1835, it is difficult to know more about the early members of the Palatine Club and why they decided in the early 1850s to move from the converted premises on Bold Street to a new, purpose-built club house close by. In February 1900, the *Liverpool Review* struggled to find information on the Bold Street premises for its series, ‘Liverpool Clubland and the Dwellers Therein’.\(^{54}\) With

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\(^{54}\) ‘Liverpool’s Clubland and the Dwellers Therein: The Palatine Club and the Y. M. C. A’, *Liverpool Review*, 8 February 1900, p. 11.
Figure 2.6 The Palatine Club on Bold Street (1961).
Source: 7 Bold Street, Liverpool Reference number: BB42/01855 OP09563 EH NMR. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage. NMR.
entrance fees and subscription rates similar to those of the Union Club - priced at twenty five guineas and five guineas respectively – the writer claimed that members were amongst Liverpool’s most prosperous merchants. In a town built on overseas trade and commerce, merchants held monopoly over Liverpool’s economy, and it is no surprise that they were among the wealthiest in the port.

A sense of wealth and exclusivity were suggested in the façade of the new club-house building. The structure was an end of terrace *palazzo*, three storeys high with three bays on the Bold Street façade. Figure 2.6 is a photograph of the now demolished building taken in 1961, and shows an ornate structure with a heavy, richly modelled cornice based on sixteenth-century Italianate designs. Each floor was treated differently. Although the rusticated ground floor was altered in the middle decades of the twentieth century, the first and second floors retained their original features, which culminated on the second floor with an architrave and pediment above a set of Venetian windows. Contemporary accounts of the building highlighted the use of Bath stone, which suggests that it was not commonly used in Liverpool. It was also an expensive choice, considering the availability of more local materials. Writing in *Views in Modern Liverpool* published in 1864, William Herdman and James Orr Maples drew a contrast between the former home of the Club in ‘a modest-looking brick building’ and ‘the present handsome structure’.

The new club house was designed by the London-based architect Charles Octavius Parnell, who won the commission through competition. Michael Port has suggested that nineteenth-century property developers favoured the competition

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35 Ibid.  
36 Stamp and Avery, *Victorian Buildings*, p. 78.  
38 Herdman and Maples, *Views in Modern Liverpool*, p. 47.  
39 Picton, *Memorials of Liverpool*, p. 237; the competition was advertised in the *Liverpool Mercury*, 31 January 1851, p. 2.
method not only because it yielded a choice of design, but also because it attracted both local and national designers. Reports on the building of the new club house in the Liverpool Mercury noted that two other designs, by local architects Mr Williams and Mr Arthur Holmes, were also highly recommended by the committee. In 1852 Holmes had won the commission for another Italianate building on Bold Street, to replace the former Music Hall which had burnt down earlier in the year. But Parnell was perhaps a more attractive candidate since he had already established a reputation for club-house architecture by collaborating with Alfred Smith in the design of the Army Navy Club, completed in 1851 on London’s Pall Mall and based loosely on a sixteenth-century palazzo.

The combination of architect and design gave the Liverpool Club a sense of prestige, and confirmed its status as a gentleman’s club. By the middle of the nineteenth century the palazzo was synonymous with London clubs, as places for leisure and luxury. It was perhaps with reference to Parnell and the style of the Palatine Club that the local Liverpool architect James Picton described the building as lending the area around Liverpool’s Bold Street ‘a Pall Mall air’. Picton suggested the building also influenced the behaviour and attitudes of members and he described them as “flaneurs” assembled at the door…likened, longo intervallo, to the aristocrats at the windows of Brooks’s’. As has already been noted, for professional and business men in the provinces, club houses took on semi-domestic

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61 ‘Local Intelligence’, Liverpool Mercury, 18 April 1851, p. 6.
63 Parnell also designed the the London and County Banking Company, which became the Westminster Bank on Lombard Street (1860-61), and the Victoria Sporting Club, Endell Street (1864-66). His banks and clubs were ‘in a so-called florid Italian palazzo style that owed much to sixteenth century Venetian architecture.’ See, A. K. Placzek, Macmillian Encyclopaedia of Architects, vol. 3 (London, 1982), p. 373.
64 Rendell, The Pursuit of Pleasure, p. 68.
65 Picton, Memorials of Liverpool, p. 234.
66 Ibid., p. 265.
functions, as places of comfort and leisure. The Palatine Club was characteristic in this respect. According to the *Rules and Regulations* printed in 1835, the object of the Club was ‘to secure a convenient and agreeable place of meeting for a society of gentlemen, all connected with each other by a common bond of social or personal acquaintance.’ Exclusivity and privacy as a member’s only club was inscribed into the Bold Street façade, where large windows were reserved for the first floor, so that viewers could see out. Since Bold Street connected the residential districts in the north of the city to the business centre around the Exchange, for merchant members going to the Palatine Club signalled a physical removal from the world of work, while preserving their connection to it.

Members of the Palatine Club looked to London for inspiration, but they also had their own ideas about aesthetic taste. Though London’s Army and Navy Club and the Liverpool Palatine Club shared similarities by drawing on characteristics of the sixteenth century *palazzo*, the Liverpool Club was elegant but less obviously extravagant than the slightly earlier London club house. Liverpool had long had a fiercely independent sense of identity. The port had forged strong links with London since the early eighteenth century, but Liverpool merchants and traders did not model themselves on their metropolitan counterparts, and rivalry with the capital ran a constant thread in civic debate throughout the period. By the 1850s, the provincial port was clearing more than twice the export business of London, and was arguably the most active port in the world. Liverpool guidebooks suggest a deep sense of pride in the port’s commercial character, and Liverpool men were more than

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67 *Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Palatine Club* (Liverpool, 1835).
aware of their own status. In 1852 Thomas Baines claimed that the town of Liverpool ‘fully equals, if it does not surpass, that of London and New York’. 71

In fact, the Palatine Club house suggests a reciprocal relationship in terms of architectural comparisons between the port and the capital. Designing the Palatine Club provided Parnell with the opportunity to practice and perfect his club-house palazzo style. Harper and Port have considered the advantages of architectural competition from the point of view of the architects themselves, and have suggested that entering a competition was a chance to make one’s name and establish a reputation. 72 ‘To win a competition’, Harper has concluded, ‘was therefore, to gain a “certificate of competence.”’ 73 Following the Palatine Club project, Parnell went on to design another London club house, the Whitehall Club on Parliament Street, built between 1865 and 1866. Another end of terrace palazzo, although a much larger structure than the Palatine, the Whitehall Club maximized details used in the façades of the Liverpool club. 74 According to Stamp, the Whitehall Club was one ‘example of what the Victorians considered to be architecture as art.’ 75

The style of the Palatine Club was shaped to suit the street and locality in which it stood. In Liverpool the connotations of the palazzo lay with business and commerce, having being used for office buildings, banks and warehouses since the 1840s. The palazzo, according to the architect Picton, was ‘the visible embodiment

73 Ibid.
75 Stamp and Amery, Victorian Buildings, pp. 12, 78.
Figure 2.7 Map showing the location of the Palatine Club on Bold Street, Liverpool.
Source: Grid reference SJ38 Sheet 05007162 County Series 1:2500 Lancashire (1893) OSM
Figure 2.8 View of the Palatine Club on Bold Street, watercolour by W. Herdman.

Figure 2.9 Late nineteenth-century drawing of Bold Street and the Liverpool Lyceum.
Source: BB751846 NMR. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage. NMR.
of modern commerce. It was a style that lent itself well to buildings in densely populated and built up areas like Bold Street. In contrast to the Army and Navy Club on London’s Pall Mall, the Liverpool club house was a tall and narrow structure, spread over four floors. This was undoubtedly owing to the size of plot on which the new club was located, formerly the site of a cabinet making business.

Bold Street (see Figure 2.7) had developed along the site of a former eighteenth-century rope works and by the nineteenth century was a bustling commercial area with a mixture of shops, boarding houses, small businesses and warehouses. By choosing to use the palazzo, Parnell had created an attractive looking building for a restricted space. Where the Manchester Union Club had been plain with little cosmetic adornment, the Italianate style of the palazzo provided the opportunity to add decoration to an ordinary street façade.

Figure 2.8, a watercolour painting by the local artist William Herdman from Views in Modern Liverpool (1864), suggests the club house was designed to fit with the existing architecture and general character of Bold Street. The painting shows a building which at once harmonized with the elegant character of other buildings in the street, but also stood out. Part of a continuous street façade, the club-house stood slightly taller than neighboring buildings, and had the distinct, ‘noble’ air of a palazzo. However, by placing the Club at the head of the street façade the artist ignored the much larger building of the Liverpool Lyceum. Standing next door to the club house on the corner with Church Street, the Lyceum was built between 1800

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79 Dixon and Muthesius, Victorian Architecture, p. 18.
and 1802 to a design by Thomas Harrison, in his trademark Greek Revival style. The building housed the Liverpool Library and the Lyceum Newsroom, to which many of Liverpool’s merchant and business elite subscribed. Figure 2.9, a sketch dating from the late nineteenth century, suggests that the Greek Revival building of the Lyceum, visible on the right hand side of the image, dominated the corner of Bold Street and overshadowed the smaller palazzo of the Palatine behind it.

The architecture of the Palatine Club suggests that club life had established roots in Liverpool from the early nineteenth century. Although the general style of the building was clearly inspired by London, the club house also reflected the independent spirit and identity of local middle-class men. The architecture of the Liverpool Palatine Club highlights the close relationship between club life and civic identity. The specific design of the building and its location was shaped by the tastes of Liverpool merchants and club men, who saw themselves as equal to their counterparts in London. But the building of the Palatine Club also suggests that the relationship between the capital and the provinces was not one way. Just as London clubs provided a model for Liverpool men, the Palatine Club was looked to by the capital as an exemplary design.

‘[T]he latest expression of…political life’\textsuperscript{80} : The political clubs of Manchester and Liverpool.

The final section of this chapter examines the Reform and Conservative Clubs of Manchester and Liverpool, which were built in the period between 1869 and 1883. By the late nineteenth century the most common type of club house found across

\textsuperscript{80} Shaw, \textit{Manchester Old and New}, p. 65.
British towns and cities were those associated with the main political parties. London set the precedent in the wake of the 1832 Reform Act, with the opening of the Tory Carlton Club and the Liberal Reform Club, both on Pall Mall in 1832 and 1836 respectively. The Reform and Conservative Clubs in Manchester and Liverpool initially looked to their counterpart institutions in London. But the architectural style and appearance of each provincial building was the product of a much wider set of local identities and environmental conditions. As this final section of the chapter will show, by the final quarter of the nineteenth century club life in Manchester and Liverpool was well established as part of the masculine social life of the city. The political club houses were designed and built to accommodate up to 1,000 members and were prominently situated in the city centre. But the architectural style of the buildings also reflected the distinctive identities of each city and their club men.

I begin by comparing the architectural style of the Manchester and Liverpool Reform Clubs. While the Gothic architecture of the Manchester Reform Club reflected the strong political identity of the city’s Liberal club men, the Classicism of the Liverpool Reform Club suggests that identities in Liverpool were less politically entrenched and instead shaped by a pronounced sense of civic pride. I go on to consider the style of the Manchester and Liverpool Conservative Clubs, showing how both clubs were built in a similar French Renaissance style which reflected the increase in popularity of club life amongst provincial middle-class men. But the Conservative Clubs also suggest a further twist in the relationship between architectural style and political identity. While in Manchester the French Renaissance style of the Conservative Club reflected the role of the Club in the commercial redevelopment of the city, in Liverpool it carried more overt political
Figure 2.10 Map showing the location of the Manchester Reform Club on King Street.
Source: Grid reference SJ89 Sheet 1910412 County Series 1:2500 Lancashire (1908) OSM
Figure 2.11 The Manchester Reform Club on King Street. 
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 20 May 2009).

Figure 2.12 The Manchester Reform Club, view from Spring Gardens. 
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 20 May 2009).
connotations. The political club houses of Manchester and Liverpool suggest that a political aesthetic was at work in nineteenth-century provincial cities, but it was shaped by a wider set of social and cultural factors that were specific to each city.

Considering the long-standing association between Manchester and Liberalism in the nineteenth century, it is no surprise that the first political club house to open in the city was the Reform Club. Founded in 1867, it coincided with the implementation of the Second Reform Act, which increased the electorate and gave Manchester, along with cities such as Liverpool, Birmingham and Leeds, an extra seat in Parliament. Jacob Bright, younger brother of John, and a newly returned M.P. for Manchester, was amongst the founder members, and the club was housed for the first three years in rooms above his family’s warehouse in Spring Gardens. The intention of Bright and others was to ‘provide a place of resort for social and political intercourse, and to serve as a centre of united political action.’

According to the Club’s historian, local journalist W. H. Mills, by the end of 1867 it became apparent that larger premises were needed. Membership had increased to over 500, and the three rooms above the warehouse were left feeling overcrowded and oppressive.

Plans to erect a new club house were put into effect almost immediately. A building company was established through the sale of shares and a large site covering some 1,000 square yards was purchased for £35,000, not far from the warehouse on the corner, where Spring Gardens met with King Street (see Figure 2.10). When the building was completed in 1871 at the cost of £24,000, it was very

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81 ‘Manchester Reform Club 30th Anniversary of the Opening of the Premises, 1901’, 367 M159, MALS.
different from Barry’s earlier *palazzo* version for the London Reform Club on Pall Mall. Designed by the locally based architect Edward Salomons as Figure 2.11 and Figure 2.12 show, the Manchester Reform Club was a large, three storey detached building in Gothic Revival style, with Venetian or what might be termed Ruskinian characteristics. John Ruskin had popularized the Venetian strand of Gothic architecture in *The Stones of Venice*, his three volume study on the city and its art, published between 1851 and 1853. A number of characteristics advocated by Ruskin could be seen in the façade of the club house. Most striking was the arcade of tall windows on the first floor, or *piano nobile*. Defined by curved hood mouldings, the windows were enhanced by the use of structural polychromy – a decorative effect achieved by contrasting the natural textures and colours of different materials. Ruskin admired the way in which the architectural decoration of Venetian Gothic buildings was achieved ‘naturally’ through the structure of the building and the contrast between the materials. In the façade of the Manchester Reform Club, York sandstone, a widely used and easily obtainable material which appeared ‘white and glistening’ when new, contrasted with the red-coloured, polished Cumbrian Shap granite used for the columns and pilasters. Salomon’s use of stone carved ornamentation generally followed the naturalistic forms also praised by Ruskin. Sculpted foliage sprawled across cornices, capitals and the frieze, and sprouted from the stone shafts which separated the square headed windows on the third floor.

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Foliated forms also crept around brackets, which supported the oriel windows on the floors below, and through the moulding over the main doorway.

The Gothic appearance of the building placed the Reform Club within an existing stylistic discourse. By the 1870s, Gothic architecture had become synonymous with Manchester’s civic identity. This architectural relationship began in 1859, with Alfred Waterhouse’s Venetian style Assize Courts on Great Ducie Street and was continued in three designs by Thomas Worthington: the Anglo-Venetian Albert Memorial (1862-7) on Albert Square, the Memorial Hall (1864) opposite, and the Police and Sessions Court on Minshull Street (1867-73). Other Gothic styles had also made an impact on the local urban landscape. Most notable was Waterhouse’s thirteenth-century inspired design for the new Town Hall in Albert Square (1868-77), followed by his building for Owen’s College on Oxford Road (1870-73).

Salomons created a palatial spectacle, which stood out as a landmark in the urban landscape and added to the Gothic appearance of the city. In truth, although the Manchester Reform Club had certain Ruskinian characteristics, the building was no paradigm of the style. For Ruskin, Venetian Gothic was a ‘sermon in stone’, infused with morality and true to purpose. Although an advocate of secular Gothic styles, Ruskin developed the earlier ideas of Pugin emphasized the overriding importance of function and utility to civic buildings, and the virtues of strength and truth in both construction and ornamentation.\(^85\) Salomons did not create an accurate replica of the style but rather a fanciful rendition which combined Venetian characteristics with more romantic effects, most notably in the original steeply-pitched Flemish roofs which were replaced at the turn of the century.

Contemporaries were unsure about the exact nature of the design, describing it as ‘Venetian Gothic, freely treated’, and while *The Builder* published an engraving of the proposed design, it did not specify a particular style.\(^{86}\)

The Gothic style of the Reform Club made strong links between civic endeavour and local political identity. Recently, architectural historians have questioned the idea of distinctive political aesthetics. Research on the 1856 ‘Battle of the Styles’ fought over the building of the Foreign Office has suggested political ideologies were less important than the search for a ‘national’ style that was representative of Britain’s imperial authority at the time.\(^{87}\) However, the Manchester Reform Club suggests that political identities did have some influence on aesthetic choices in the nineteenth century, at least on a local level. Ideologically, Gothic carried cultural weight for Manchester’s liberals. Following the building of the new Palace of Westminster (1837-67) in London, Gothic had developed from its early nineteenth-century associations with ecclesiastical architecture advocated by Pugin, but it had also retained its links with concepts of inherited authority, hierarchy and paternalism.\(^{88}\) The Venetian form in particular was a style which looked specifically to the commercial world of medieval Italy, and was associated with notions of freedom, liberty and individualism.\(^{89}\) In contrast, Terry Wyke has suggested that classicism in Victorian Manchester was associated with Toryism, discernible in the architecture surrounding Piccadilly and the Royal Infirmary, an

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institution controlled by a board of trustees with a strong Tory presence. According to art and architectural historians, using the Gothic style was a way of making claims about the past. Chris Brooks has noted how since the seventeenth century, Gothic played an important role in the construction of origin myths and ideas of nationhood. Joseph Mordaunt Crook has argued that Gothic in particular was ‘the preferred choice of the self-made nouveaux riches, because by dressing up in borrowed old clothes they could acquire a veneer of ancestral respectability.’

There were also more practical elements involved in the adoption of the Gothic style. The development of nineteenth-century Manchester was largely unplanned, resulting in many corner and irregular shaped plots. In designing the Town Hall, Alfred Waterhouse demonstrated the advantages of Gothic for a building that needed to fit into the triangular shaped area of the former Town Yard. The plot bought by members of the Manchester Reform Club for their new club house, was similarly irregular in shape. Salomons dealt with this problem by designing a building where each of the three main façades was slightly different in design and arrangement. Evidence of the irregular shape was most notable in the Spring Gardens façade, which sat at a forty-five degree angle and was divided into two parts, joined by a two storey curved bay window (see Figure 2.12). Salomons was clearly influenced by the winning design of the Town Hall nearby. His own Renaissance submission for the competition had been unsuccessful, but his

94 'The Reform Club’, Royal Commission, p. 3. EH NMR.
subsequent work demonstrated his interest in a wide variety of different styles.\textsuperscript{95}

The son of a German Jewish cotton merchant born in London, Salomons had lived in Manchester since the age of nine, and trained at the Manchester School of Design. By 1869 he could already boast an impressive portfolio of buildings; from synagogues and theatres to warehouses and domestic residences. While most of these were in strong Italianate and Romanesque styles, Salomon’s post-Reform Club designs were more diverse and experimental, including the Saracenic Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue on Cheetham Hill Road, and the Manchester Crematorium.\textsuperscript{96}

The style of the club house was also an expression of the function and purpose of the club as a place for male social life in the city. The new club house stood proud at the top of a slight incline, occupying what the \textit{Manchester Guardian} described as a ‘commanding site’.\textsuperscript{97} The area around King Street where the new club house stood was a place of money and prestige, dominated by finance. The \textit{Manchester Guardian} noted how the outward appearance of the club house contrasted with ‘the plain and prosaic buildings’ in the surrounding area which were a medley of classical styles; from the office and warehouse \textit{palazzi}, to the Greek Revival buildings of the Bank of England and the old Town Hall.\textsuperscript{98} One of the main advantages of the Gothic style was the access it gave to light.\textsuperscript{99} Salomons made maximum use of this visual effect in the range of tall Venetian windows on the first floor; two lights with round-arched heads illuminated the room behind.\textsuperscript{100} Clare Hartwell and Bailey have noted how this arcade of windows was one of the most prominent features of the main façade as an ‘external expression of the internal

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{95} Bailey, \textit{Manchester}, p. 108.
\bibitem{98} Ibid; Rodgers, ‘The Face of Central Manchester’, 35.
\bibitem{99} Bowler and Brimblecombe, ‘Environmental Pressures’, p. 177.
\bibitem{100} Muthesius, \textit{The High Victorian Movement}, p. 188.
\end{thebibliography}
spaces’.\textsuperscript{101} The overall effect was to draw attention to what was the principal and largest room in the building, the main dining room, which stretched across the whole of the frontage. In the following chapter I explore how dining was integral to the types of sociability found in the club house. But the style of the Reform Club not only differentiated it from commercial buildings. By the late 1850s, the area was already proving to be a desirable address for other clubs, including the Albion and Bridgewater Clubs and the Prince’s Club on Cheapside.\textsuperscript{102}

Despite the popularity of the Gothic style for secular buildings in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, its specific impact on club architecture was limited. In fact, the Manchester Reform Club stood as one of very few clubs built in this style. The architecture of the club house suggests that club life in Manchester operated as a sphere for masculine life that was separate from London influences. While the earlier London Reform Club was no doubt a source of inspiration for Manchester’s liberals, the choice of a Gothic style building suggests that they saw themselves not only as independent from the capital, but also as social and political leaders in their own right. Gothic architecture drew the Reform Club into a nexus of other local public buildings and reinforced the links between the identity of liberal club men and the city of Manchester itself.

In contrast to Manchester, the architecture of the Liverpool Reform Club was shaped less by politics than by the social and civic identity of Liverpool’s Liberal club men. Although the Liberal Party had never been particularly strong in the city, it was during a brief spell of electoral success that the Liverpool Reform Club was founded in 1876. Earlier attempts to establish a Reform Club in the late 1850s had

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proved unsuccessful. The intention of the earlier scheme - to bring men from the
different ‘classes’ of ‘tradesmen, shopkeepers, clerks, collectors and artisans’
together with business and professional men for ‘the dissemination of political
knowledge’ - failed to attract support.\textsuperscript{103} It would seem that encouraging the
participation of the working man was not in the interests of a significant and
powerful proportion of local Liberals. As Neil Collins has pointed out, in contrast to
Manchester, Liverpool’s Liberal party was inherently ‘aristocratic’; with its leading
figures and finances drawn from the port’s merchant princes and shipping magnates,
their interests were overwhelmingly concentrated in business and overseas trade.\textsuperscript{104}
According to a circular published in the local press, the intention of the new Reform
Club was to promote the interests of the party ‘in quite a distinct line [by] bringing
the local Liberals together in a friendly social manner’.\textsuperscript{105} Founder members,
including the wealthy shipping magnates Thomas Brocklebank and George Holt,
looked specifically towards the capital and envisioned the new project to be ‘on a
broad and comprehensive basis and of the character of the leading London clubs’.\textsuperscript{106}

The location acquired by the Liverpool Reform Club committee for the new
club house on Dale Street reflected its function as an exclusive place for the city’s
Liberals to socialize. Figure 2.13 shows a map of the proposed site for the new club
house which was adjacent to the city’s principal buildings including the Town Hall,
Exchange and Municipal Offices and also the buildings of major insurance and

\textsuperscript{103}‘A Reform Club for Liverpool’, \textit{Liverpool Mercury}, 23 December 1858, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{105}‘The Liverpool Reform Club’, \textit{Liverpool Mercury}, 30 November 1878, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{106}‘Our Clubs: Liverpool Reform Club’, \textit{Liverpool Citizen}, 19 March 1890, p. 6.
Figure 2.13 Map of the proposed site of the Liverpool Reform Club, including the distances from nearby buildings.
Source: Records of Edmund Kirby and Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO
Figure 2.14 The Liverpool Reform Club on Dale Street.
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 19 May 2009).
The Reform Club was intended to sit between civic government and commerce, embodying the long-established links that had characterized power structures in Liverpool since the eighteenth century. Running inland from the Town Hall and the Exchange, Dale Street was an extremely busy thoroughfare and provided the principal route in and out of town. From the 1830s the area had become the main terminus for the local network of omnibuses, and was serviced by a high proportion of inns and taverns. From the middle of the century the commercial district began to expand and the character of the street changed, as speculative office blocks modelled on the palazzo style were built around the Exchange, replacing buildings of an earlier era. Further east, Dale Street simultaneously developed as a centre for local government, with the opening of the Magistrates’ Courts, Bridewell and Fire Station complex in the years between 1857 and 1859, and joined by the Municipal Buildings in 1868. The Liverpool Reform Club was a landmark on the route taken by Liverpool men who moved between different, yet compatible spheres of Liverpool life. As Joseph Sharples has pointed out, for members of the town council who were also drawn from the business elite, the close proximity between the office district and the Municipal Buildings allowed for easy movement between the sphere of local government and individual business interests. But the Reform Club also marked something of a social boundary; Charles Goad’s insurance plans of 1888 showed a densely populated area behind the Reform Club, known as Ryley’s Gardens, crowded by narrow streets and small

107 Drawings of Liverpool Reform Club Buildings 1876-1879, Dale Street, Liverpool, 720 KIR 2232, LRO.
108 Milne, Trade and Traders, p. 3.
109 Sharples, Built on Commerce, p. 17.
111 Sharples, Built on Commerce, pp. 28-29.
dwellings. Liverpool’s merchants and business men were never far from the
town’s poorer and less desirable areas.

In selecting the architectural style for their new club house, Liverpool’s
Liberals did not share the penchant of their contemporaries in Manchester for
emotional and romantic expressions of the Gothic. Rather, the building of the
Liverpool Reform Club was in the palazzo style, designed by the local architect
Edmund Kirby. Figure 2.14 shows a four-storey detached building, each floor with
seven bays of square-headed windows to the Dale Street façade. Though altered in
the twentieth century, the main façade of the building was symmetrical, based
around a centrally located entrance with a porch and with each floor marked by a
simple patterned cornice.

There is evidence that the Gothic style did not find favour with some of
Liverpool’s Liberal elite. The objection made by the cotton broker and founder
member, George Holt, to the use of the style for a new Unitarian Chapel on Hope
Street was tinged with a strong dose of utilitarianism:

I had not previously seen the Elevation which appears to be in the
elaborated early English with a high Spire, & much broken details, not
at all pleasing to my ideas of what would have been most suitable &
Elegant, & inappropriate to the Town situation, besides which it must
prove a costly structure...An entirely different style wod.[sic] in my
judgement have been more convenient, cheerful, elegant and less
costly, some chaste & well considered adaptation of the Grecian,
using the beautiful stone lately brought from Derbyshire for
constructing St George’s Hall.113

112 Ibid, pp. 11-2.
For Holt classicism, and specifically its Grecian form, was a more desirable style, because it suited both the purpose of the building and the character of Liverpool itself. It was also more economical. In contrast to Gothic designs, classical Italianate or Renaissance buildings were generally much plainer in decorative embellishment, cutting the cost of materials and labour.

Although the new building of the Liverpool Reform Club was not Grecian, it fulfilled the approach to architecture that Holt admired. Kirby was a prominent local architect responsible for a range of private and commercial buildings executed in a variety of styles, including both Gothic and classical. The project, including the land, cost around £60,000, and was paid for by a building company of shareholders. Simple in design, the club house was a particularly sober and robust-looking rendition of the palazzo style, with little excessive ornamentation. Only the Dale Street façade carried decorative detail, and the wrought-iron balcony on the first floor was noted in the local press as lending a sense of elegance to the entire building. But even here, the degree of decoration was minimal and contrasted with the flat brick wall and square headed windows. With the exception of the iron framework imported from Belgium, all the materials were obtained locally. Large Shap granite blocks at the base of the building were quarried in Cumbria and the bricks brought in from North Wales. These materials also had the added bonus of being particularly hardwearing. As the Daily Courier noted, although the building company had considered more elaborate designs, ‘after consideration it was decided to build as simply as possible, and with materials most

114 ‘Edmund Kirby and Sons: Historical Notes’, Trident, 7 April 1981, p. 36, LRO.
116 Ibid.
suitable for resisting the ravages of time and the smoke of the Liverpool atmosphere."\textsuperscript{117}

However, in contrast to Manchester, the architecture of Liverpool’s public buildings and the city centre in general, lacked party political connotations. Earlier designs for a Conservative Club on the corner of Victoria Street and North John Street suggest Gothic had a local Tory link. Plans commissioned in 1874 by the brewer and local Mayor Andrew Barclay Walker proposed a club house with French and Venetian characteristics complete with a conical turret, pointed windows and steeply pitched roofs. Gothic evoked notions of national identity and the chivalric age, and it is for this reason that Liverpool Tory Anglicans favoured the Gothic style for their suburban domestic residences.\textsuperscript{118} Although Sharples has noted how the influence of the Gothic style was detectable in some examples of fenestration and decorative embellishments, the style failed to make any significant impact on the architectural appearance of the city. Despite the fact that for most of the nineteenth century, conservatism dominated political culture in Liverpool, Gothic buildings were a rarity in a city where classicism reigned supreme.\textsuperscript{119}

The examples of the Manchester and Liverpool Reform Clubs raise important questions about the meaning of architectural style in the late nineteenth-century provincial city. They suggest that the styles of club houses were shaped and influenced by a mixture of political and social identities that were specific to each city. The appearance of the Manchester Reform Club was partly the product of political and civic identities that were closely intertwined. The strong link between

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{118} Sharples, ‘Secular Gothic’, pp. 222-223.

Manchester and Liberalism not only left its mark on a number of public buildings but also gave the city a distinctive appearance. However, the architectural style of the Liverpool Reform Club was part of an aesthetic culture that was influenced less by local politics, than by social and cultural factors. This is not to say that the Liverpool Reform Club was entirely without political connotations, but it does suggest that the political identities of club men in Liverpool were less tightly drawn. A comparison between the Manchester and Liverpool Reform Clubs supports the recent arguments of architectural historians who have questioned the idea of a political aesthetic and the ‘battle of the styles’. But taken individually, these buildings suggest political identities were more influential in the architectural appearance of some cities as opposed to others.

It is tempting to see the Conservative Clubs of Manchester and Liverpool in terms of a response to their Liberal counterparts. After the opening of new Reform Club buildings in both cities, local Conservatives quickly followed suit. Manchester’s Conservatives originally opened a club on St James’s Square in 1868, before moving to new purpose-built premises on the junction of Cross Street and St Ann’s Street in 1876 (see Figure 2.15). Following a series of meetings in the Royal Hotel on Dale Street in 1881, Liverpool’s Conservatives similarly decided to build a new club house on a plot of land not far from the already established Reform Club (see Figure 2.16). However, to view these buildings solely in relation to earlier club houses overlooks the meaning of their styles and the individual reason for their construction. The architecture of the new Conservative club houses suggests that the choice of architectural style was influenced by a similar combination of local factors and environmental conditions, and throws further light on the role and function of clubs in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.
Figure 2.15 Map showing location of the Manchester Conservative Club on the corner of Cross Street and St Ann’s Street.
Source: Grid reference SJ89 Sheet 19104062 County Series 1:2500 Lancashire (1908) OSM

Figure 2.16 Map showing the location of the Liverpool Conservative Club on Dale Street.
Source: Grid reference SJ39 Sheet 05007162 County Series 1:2500 Cheshire (1899) OSM
Figure 2.17 The Manchester Conservative Club on Cross Street.
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 20 May 2009).
Figure 2.18 The Liverpool Conservative Club on Dale Street.
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 19 May 2009).
Although separated by a period of over five years, the Conservative Clubs of Manchester and Liverpool are unusual in the sample of club houses examined in this chapter, because they demonstrated similarities in terms of architectural style. Both buildings had characteristics which gestured towards the French Renaissance. As Figure 2.17 shows, the Manchester Conservative Club was a large, three-storey building with evenly spaced windows to both the Cross Street and St Ann’s Street façades, which were reminiscent of the palazzo style. However, the building was rendered distinctive by a high level of surface decoration and a Mansard roof, which echoed the current stylistic trend on the continent known as Second Empire. The style was more pronounced in the Liverpool Conservative Club, completed in 1883 (see Figure 2.18). Despite the earlier Gothic plans, the new building for the Liverpool Conservative Club was a highly elaborate affair, spread across four floors and with two wings to the Dale Street façade. In contrast to the flat, plain edifice of the nearby Reform Club, the two main façades of the Liverpool Conservative Club, one facing Dale Street and the other Sir Thomas Street, were enlivened throughout with decorative relief. Each floor was marked by a cornice, though the first floor was the most ornate with a stone balcony originally fenced by an iron railing, while large round arched windows were separated by Corinthian columns and pilasters.

The Second Empire style of the Manchester and Liverpool Conservative Clubs reflected the popularity of club life in provincial cities by the final quarter of the century. Originating in Paris, the style had developed as a result of a growing demand for larger commercial and public buildings. In Britain by the 1870s, the Second Empire style had become increasingly popular in the design of hotels.

120 ‘Our Clubs: The Liverpool Conservative Club’, Liverpool Citizen, 26 March 1890, p. 6 described the style of the Liverpool Conservative Club as ‘Italian of a French type’.
122 Dixon and Muthesius, Victorian Architecture, p. 81.
John Tosh and Simon Gunn agree that during the final quarter of the nineteenth century, club life and associational culture reached its zenith for middle-class men in the provinces.\textsuperscript{123} Both the Manchester and Liverpool Conservative Clubs were built as a response to an increasing demand for club membership and services. When the Manchester Conservative Club was founded in 1868, membership had reached nearly 800 by the end of the first year alone.\textsuperscript{124} Instructions issued to competitors for the design of the new club house in the early 1870s, stipulated that the building should be designed to accommodate 1,200 members, ‘with lavatories and all other domestic conveniences’, and all the usual facilities including a large dining room, smoke room, billiard rooms and service rooms.\textsuperscript{125} The design for the new Liverpool Conservative Club was to be even larger. The two main façades of the building were each six bays wide, and spread over three storeys; the whole building covered a site of around 1,100 square yards. According to the \textit{Liverpool Courier}, it was ‘the largest clubhouse in the provinces’.\textsuperscript{126}

The choice of a bold ornamental style for these new club houses had a practical function. By the end of the 1870s Gothic architecture was fast becoming unpopular, for although it was an adaptable style that could fit into irregular plots, it was less suited to street façades where space was restricted.\textsuperscript{127} As Catherine Bowler and Peter Brimblecombe have suggested, because Gothic relied on a high level of intricate decoration, and therefore softer types of stone, it was also unsuited to the polluted atmospheres of cities like Manchester and Liverpool, where soot and dirt

\textsuperscript{123} J. Tosh, \textit{A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England} (London, 1999), pp. 186-187; Gunn, \textit{The Public Culture}, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{126} ‘Opening of the Senior Conservative Club’, \textit{Daily Courier}, 9 November 1883, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{127} Curl, \textit{Victorian Architecture}, p. 16. The Manchester Reform Club has been described as the last major Venetian Gothic to be erected in Manchester’, see Bailey, \textit{Manchester}, p. 117.
Figure 2.19 Window detail from the Manchester Conservative Club (top) and the St Anne’s Street façade (bottom).
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 20 May 2009).
Figure 2.20 View of Dale Street, Liverpool demonstrating how the Liverpool Conservative Club formed part of the street façade.
Source: Author’s photograph (taken 19 May 2009).
quickly obscured decorative detail and eroded façades.\textsuperscript{128} Strong, bold styles were needed that would not only be visible through the dirt and dust, but could also be carved from harder stone.\textsuperscript{129} The façades of both the Manchester and Liverpool Conservative Clubs were faced in hard stone and there was an emphasis on strong outlines. Guidelines issued to competitors for the design of the Manchester Club stipulated a preference for a building ‘characterized by simplicity and dignity’.\textsuperscript{130} As Figure 2.19 shows, windows on the St Ann’s Street façade of the Manchester Club were accentuated by carved pilasters and pediments broken with stone-carved cherubs and the club crest. Most of the façade was taken up by superimposed classical style pillars, carried through on all floors, and topped with an elaborately carved pediment. In the case of the Liverpool Conservative Club, both the Dale Street and Sir Thomas Street façades were so enriched with decorative carving, that there was little left untouched.

In the case of the Liverpool Club, the location of the building was also an important factor in the choice of design. As the map in Figure 2.16 shows, the club house was located on Dale Street, next door to the Municipal Buildings. According to the architectural press, Grecian styles were too ‘severe’ and would be ‘thoroughly “squashed” by the municipal buildings it would lie near’.\textsuperscript{131} As Figure 2.20 indicates, the winning design made the building appear as part of a continuous street façade and its showy style fitted with buildings nearby. As the \textit{Liverpool Review} observed, the ‘imposing appearance [of the club house] is well in keeping with its

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\textsuperscript{128} Bowler and Brimblecombe, ‘Environmental Pressures’, pp. 181-182.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{131} ‘The Liverpool Conservative Club Designs’, \textit{British Architect}, 15 October 1880, p. 175.
\end{flushleft}
elegant neighbours, the Municipal Buildings, the architectural style of which it emulates so closely as to seem almost a continuation of the block.'¹³²

Yet club architecture was not expected to be wholly subsumed into neighbouring buildings. Commenting on the competition for the Liverpool Conservative Club, the British Architect suggested an important consideration in the design was the way in which the building would be visible from a distance. ‘The angle of a club building in such a position’, noted the editor, ‘should be treated in a commanding and effective manner, and attract attention from a distance down the street.’¹³³ Over in Manchester, forty-nine entries were submitted to the competition for the design of the Conservative Club, but none fulfilled the expectations of the building committee.¹³⁴ The guidelines issued to competitors had stipulated the preference for a building ‘in one of the so-called Italian or classic styles’, but by the final quarter of the century, the palazzo was already well represented on Cross Street, where the new club house was intended to be located.¹³⁵ Running through the heart of the city, from the Town Hall and Albert Square to the Exchange, Cross Street was an area dominated by the palatial offices of finance companies and the press, making it a hub of business activity. Although the committee of the Manchester Conservative Club chose three winning designs, including one by Edward Salomons, none of the original designs were fully realized because, according to The Builder, they lacked any special architectural features and were, ‘for the most part, indifferent.’¹³⁶ Eventually, a solution was found in a collaborative design by Richard Walker, a Cumbrian architect practising in London and one of the

¹³⁴ ‘Manchester Conservative Club Competition’, The Builder, 5 April 1873, p. 260.
winners, together with two local architects, William Horton and Henry Bridgeford. 

The *Manchester Guardian* praised the design because it differentiated the club house from neighbouring buildings: ‘regarding it in its architectural features and in relation to the surrounding property’, claimed the writer, ‘the new building fully justifies the choice which was made.’\(^{137}\) The writer also noted that the ornamentation and embellishment of the Cross Street and St Ann’s street façades made ‘a pleasing relief to the plainness of the adjacent buildings.’\(^{138}\)

The appearance of the Liverpool Conservative Club helped to refresh Liverpool’s architectural image at the end of the nineteenth century. The winning design was executed by Francis Usher Holme and his uncle George Holme, a partnership whose commercial buildings, including the County Sessions House (1882-4) and the Homeopathic Hospital (1887), demonstrated a preference for extravagant and lavish styles, strongly influenced by the French Renaissance. Of a total of twenty nine entries, F & G Holme’s design was one of the most moderately priced, under the budget of £30,000.\(^{139}\) Describing the Liverpool club house, the *Liverpool Review* noted how, ‘[t]he exterior, all of stone, with its numerous balconies, balustrades, lamp pedestals, torrets and pinnacles, constitutes altogether one of the ornaments of the Liverpool streets’.\(^{140}\) References to the city of Liverpool and its heritage were made in the main Dale Street façade. Liver birds were carved onto to the brackets which supported the stone balcony on the first floor and the Liverpool coat of arms appeared in the pediment above the main entrance.


\(^{138}\) Ibid.


In Manchester, the Conservative club house played an important role in contributing to the redevelopment and planning of the urban centre. Research on the nineteenth-century department store has shown how buildings of this type were often part of municipal improvement schemes and coincided with improved access around cities.\textsuperscript{141} In terms of size and expense, the Manchester Conservative Club was comparable to the new building of Kendal, Milne and Co., the city’s first department store constructed between 1872 and 1873, as part of the Deansgate improvement scheme.\textsuperscript{142} The former secluded location of the Manchester Conservative Club in St James’s Square, sandwiched between John Dalton Street and King Street, was in stark contrast to the new plot purchased on the junction of Cross Street and St Ann’s Street, directly opposite the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel. At £61,000, the plot of land had cost almost triple the amount as the building itself, and was among the most expensive sites in Manchester, equal to some of the most prestigious locations in Paris.\textsuperscript{143} Entrants to the competition for the design of the new Conservative Club building were required to reserve space on the ground floor to be leased as shops and offices, which not only raised extra revenue for the club but also contributed to the commercial character of the street and the surrounding area.

Whereas in Manchester, the Conservative club house was linked to the commercial development of the city, the architectural style and location of the Liverpool Club reinforced links between the local Conservative Party and the governance of the port and city. In contrast to Manchester, Conservatism had stronger representation in Liverpool and despite minor and sporadic Liberal
victories, Tory power was never relinquished throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{144} Although competition guidelines for the new building of the Liverpool Conservative Club printed in the architectural press, had not stipulated a preference for any specific style, entry was limited to local Conservative architects.\textsuperscript{145} While other clubs marked the opening of their club houses with banquets and private dinners, Liverpool’s Conservatives commemorated the building of the club house with an outdoor ceremony, during which a cornerstone was laid by the Marquis of Salisbury.\textsuperscript{146} Describing the completed building as ‘a civic club house’, \textit{The British Architect} made explicit the link between the club and the governance of Liverpool.\textsuperscript{147} Reporting on the Club as part of a mini-series on Liverpool’s clubland, the \textit{Liverpool Citizen} concluded that: ‘[a]ltogether, it may be said that the Liverpool Conservative Club represents in a sufficiently dignified and imposing way, the social power and influence of Conservatism in this part of the county’.\textsuperscript{148}

Although the Conservative Clubs of Manchester and Liverpool were built after the Reform Clubs in each city, to see them as a response to their liberal counterparts overlooks much of their political and cultural distinctiveness. While the French Renaissance style of these buildings suggests that by the final quarter of the nineteenth century Conservatism had a clear political aesthetic, on closer inspection the appearance of the Manchester and Liverpool Conservative Clubs were the outcome of more local and individual factors. In both cases, the French Renaissance style offered a practical solution to the problem of creating an architecturally

\textsuperscript{144} Collins, \textit{Politics and Elections}, p. 233.  
\textsuperscript{145} ‘Competitions: Liverpool Conservative Club’, \textit{The Builder}, 16 October 1880, p. 84.  
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Proceedings in Connection with the Ceremony of Laying the Corner Stone of the Liverpool Conservative Club by the Marquis of Salisbury on Wednesday 12 April} (Liverpool, 1882).  
\textsuperscript{148} ‘Our Clubs’, \textit{Liverpool Citizen}, 26 March 1890, p. 6.
impressive building which could accommodate a large number of people and withstand the ravages of the urban environment. But on a local level, the style carried different meanings for Manchester and Liverpool men. While in Manchester the French Renaissance style of the Conservative club house reflected the commercial and popular nature of provincial club life, in Liverpool it reflected the strong links between political and civic identity. This further complicates analysis of the ‘battle of the styles’ and the idea of a political aesthetic. Where members of the Liverpool Reform Club saw their club as an expression of their social identity, Liverpool’s Conservatives used the architecture of their club house to make claims about their political leadership of the city. The architectural style of Manchester and Liverpool’s political club houses suggest that the historical relationship between politics and aesthetics was not straightforward, but was shaped by a mixture of conditions specific to each individual city.

Conclusion

Black’s Guide to Manchester and Salford, published in 1877, informed visitors that ‘[t]he Club Houses in Manchester can now boast the architectural splendour of some of their London rivals.’149 But as this chapter has shown, club life in Manchester and Liverpool did not simply mimic London trends. Both cities had much longer traditions of club life that predated the final quarter of the nineteenth century and preserved distinctive, provincial identities throughout the period. The architecture of club houses in Manchester and Liverpool suggests that associational culture played a greater role in masculine life beyond their relationship with the home. Rather, club life in the provincial city was a place where the social, cultural and

political identities of middle-class men intertwined.

Club house architecture in nineteenth-century Manchester consistently asserted a strong sense of the city’s independent identity. Despite an initial sideward glance at London, Manchester’s first purpose-built club house, the Union Club, drew directly on an existing civic architectural typology. Even the Conservative Club, perhaps the most influenced by the *palazzo* looked to the local hotel and department store rather than any metropolitan prototype. In contrast to London, Manchester never fully absorbed the *palazzo* style for its club architecture. Barry had used it for the Athenaeum, an institution which functioned as a club for young men, but the style was never fully incorporated into this sphere for male social life and was absorbed instead into the commercial and banking sectors.\(^\text{150}\) Club houses in Manchester were built in a variety of different architectural styles influenced by trends concurrent in public buildings at different periods during the city’s modern history. In the early decades of the nineteenth century this revolved around ideas of Greek Revival, before giving way later to the Gothic splendour epitomized in the Town Hall.

In Liverpool the social, political and cultural connotations of club architecture were rather different. A closer relationship with the capital shaped architectural styles which were based on notions of leisure, luxury and comfort. The palatial residences of the Palatine and Reform Clubs, along with the civic club house of the Conservatives all reinforced the idea that Liverpool men not only compared their city to London, but saw it as the metropolis of the north. For some, political identity was extremely important and found expression in the preferred architectural

style of their club houses. This was especially the case for members of the Liverpool Conservative Club who saw themselves as the leaders of the city.

The political club houses of nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool raise important questions about the politics of aesthetics. Architectural historians no longer assume that political identities were straightforwardly mapped onto architectural forms. This revisionist argument is supported in part by the buildings considered here, though what is also revealed is that political identities remained influential. What is needed is a more nuanced approach to the study of political cultures and their influence on aesthetic styles.

While a general sense of civic identity was important factor in the development of architectural styles in Manchester and Liverpool club houses throughout the nineteenth century, the identities of club men within each city were distinguished by a complex web of individual factors. The different styles used in the appearance of club buildings and their locations in the city centre, point to a range of middle-class masculine identities at work in nineteenth-century club life, and provincial society more generally. The next chapter will explore the expression of these differences in more detail via a move into the interior of the club house.
Chapter Four: The Interior of the Club House.

Introduction

This chapter turns to the interior of the club house and what it can reveal to historians about provincial club life and the men who used it. The previous chapter showed how the architectural styles of club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool reflected the different identities of club men. This chapter will demonstrate that differences between clubs and their members were carried through into the internal spaces of the club house. I contend that the way in which club-house interiors were decorated and used reflected the identities and social relations of their members. The approach is influenced by research on nineteenth-century domestic interiors which has shown how decoration and furnishings were used to express social identity.\(^1\) Sociologists have also highlighted the close relationship between identity and aesthetic judgement. Pierre Bourdieu’s seminal study on mid-twentieth century France for example, has shown how variations in taste are used as markers of distinction; as a means of delineating and maintaining social boundaries.\(^2\)

Drawing on influences from aristocratic homes and public buildings, club houses in Manchester and Liverpool were decorated and furnished as institutions for masculine social life. But the different ways in which club houses were decorated and divided into rooms also suggests provincial club men varied in their tastes, interest and experiences. The club-house interior was a place where these differences were articulated.


Nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool were hosts to a range of clubs and associations. As this chapter will show, the committees of different types of clubs selected furnishings and decorative styles which reflected their individual tastes and interests and the type of club experience they envisaged. Historians of nineteenth-century middle-class clubs and associations have often looked for the similarities between institutions and member’s experiences. Robert Morris has emphasized the role of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century voluntary associations in bringing together a fractured middle class, while John Tosh’s ‘flight thesis’ has worked with the assumption that all bourgeois men needed to escape from the home. However, this chapter argues that through the decoration and use of the club-house interior, middle-class men were as keen to articulate their differences as much as their sense of cultural belonging.

Historians of upper-class and colonial clubs have considered the role of the interior in the experience of club life. But like the historiography on the middle-class club, these studies have only emphasized their similarities. Amy Milne-Smith and Robin Jones have shown how such clubs were decorated and arranged in imitation of the home. Jones has observed that ‘the plan and interior spaces of most clubs within the [Indian] Subcontinent replicated and amplified the interior spaces of the colonial domestic dwelling’. Milne-Smith agrees that by providing ‘a dining hall, library, entertainment centre, sleeping quarter, bathhouse and study’, the ‘club offered the patterns and habits of leisure life usually reserved for the home’. Other historians have also assumed club houses were decorated in the same style. The

design historian Penny Sparke has suggested that most gentlemen’s clubs were dark and sombre, while Quintin Colville has alluded to a homogeneous ‘club style’ that to date has received little concrete delineation.⁶ Yet club houses in Manchester and Liverpool were not all decorated in the same way and drawing on the similarities between institutions overlooks the opportunities that decorating and furnishing provided for constructing varied forms of social identity. This chapter begins by focusing on two club houses, one an arts club and the other a political club, and explores the ways in which their interior design reflected their differences. But it also goes beyond aesthetic appearance and examines some of the ways in which these interiors were actually furnished. Corporate furniture designs and the introduction of modern technology marked these interiors out as institutions for male social life, distinct from the home and work.

Examining the interior through its decorative status alone as the setting for club life can only tell the historian so much about how these interiors were used. The second part of the chapter looks at how different forms of social identity were articulated through the use of two rooms common to most club houses - the dining room and the smoke room. Architectural historians Jane Rendell and Thomas Markus have explored some of the ways that the physical form and layout of the club-house interior could play an important role in generating and sustaining identities.⁷ Studying the clubs of early nineteenth-century London, Rendell has shown how the division of interior space differentiated members from other social groups such as servants, strangers and women. However, it is not entirely clear how

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this impacted on social relationships between members themselves. While both Rendell and Markus give much weight to the structuring power of the walls, corridors and windows of interiors, they give little attention to the individual agency of those men who used the club space. Sociologists Thomas Gieryn and Michel de Certeau, as well as the design historian Judy Attfield have reminded scholars of the need to consider the ways in which space and material culture are themselves an integral part of social relations. This chapter will show how the social distinctions between men were played out in and between the spaces of the dining room and smoke room. Serving different functions, these two rooms marked the perimeters of masculine identity, but within each we see the wider gradations of club life at work. The choices men made when dining and smoking in the context of the club, highlighted their differences as members of the middle class.

The interior of the club house and its material life are explored here using a combination of visual and textual sources, from photographs and menu cards to newspaper reports and club administrative records. In her work on domestic interiors, Jane Hamlett has shown how photographs can shed new light on the practices of everyday life. But this proves difficult with certain types of photographs. Those used here are forms of documentary photography. Although they give a detailed impression of how club interiors looked, they do not represent club houses as a whole; corridors, staircases and service areas are absent, as are facilities such as toilets, washrooms and cloak rooms. There is also a distinct absence of social actors, a particular characteristic of the architectural genre - the

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purpose of which was to record the decorative work and craftsmanship employed in architectural and interior design.\textsuperscript{10}

In order to make use of these photographs as historical sources I argue for the need to go beyond the image itself and to consider the ways in which they were created, distributed and used. Raphael Samuel has advised historians to subject photographs to the same rigorous analysis as any other text: ‘[f]ormal analysis,’ writes Raphael, ‘in terms of composition, lighting and frame – the grammar of photography – could tell us something of what the camera is up to’\textsuperscript{11}. John Tagg has stressed the importance of paying close attention to the circumstances of production: ‘[t]he photograph’, writes Tagg, ‘is not a magical “emanation” but a material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes.’\textsuperscript{12} The context in which these images were produced is suggestive of how the club interiors were intended to be understood and the values invested in them. According to Robert Elwall, architectural photography is often overlooked by historians ‘as having a purely promotional purpose’ and representing a ‘glossy dream of perfection’.\textsuperscript{13} But this arguably is where the strengths of architectural and documentary photography lie. As Molly Nesbitt has noted, the purpose of these photographic forms was to communicate meaning that could be directly understood by the viewer.\textsuperscript{14} The time spent on photographing the


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 9.

interior of nineteenth-century club houses therefore suggests they were intended to be viewed as social spaces in their own right.

Decorative styles, furnishings and the function of the club house.

Club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool varied in their style of decoration. This section explores the interior design and furnishings of two club houses: first the purpose-built interior of the Liverpool Conservative Club, a political club which opened on Dale Street in 1883, and second the rooms of the Brasenose Club, an arts and social club established in 1869 in a former office building on Brazennose Street in Manchester. Neither of these clubs was unique, as both cities had other political and arts clubs operating around the same time. But as examples of two types of club house they highlight the breadth and variety of nineteenth-century provincial club culture and the ways in which differences in identity and taste were articulated through interior design and decoration. Rather than decorated in imitation of the home, the styles of these two club houses reflected their function as social institutions of masculinity. By drawing on the idea of a gentleman’s house and London club, on the one hand, and the public art gallery, on the other, the interiors of these clubs were differentiated from the private world of the home and the public world of work. But the different styles of decoration adopted by political and arts clubs also helped to distinguish them from one another. By the late nineteenth century certain types of clubs were associated with particular aesthetic styles and provided the stage for the social relations that will be explored in the second half of the chapter.

In decorating and furnishing their club house, Liverpool Conservatives were careful to match their claims to status and power in the style and location of the new
Figure 3.1 The Morning Room in the Liverpool Conservative Club, Dale Street (1888).
Reference Number: BL08753. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage.NMR

Figure 3.2 The Library in the Liverpool Conservative Club, Dale Street (1888).
Reference Number: BL08756. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage.NMR
Figure 3.3 Two photographs of the Dining Room in Liverpool Conservative Club, Dale Street (1888).
Reference Number: BL0875. Reproduced by permission of English Heritage. NMR.
Figure 3.4 The Billiard Room in the Liverpool Conservative Club, Dale Street (1888).

Figure 3.5 Sample of wallpaper for Reading Room of the Liverpool Reform Club, Dale Street (c. 1884).
Source: Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
building. When the new club house opened in 1883, £13,000 was spent on creating a series of grand and opulent rooms in tune with the architectural splendour of the building described by the local press as both palatial and picturesque. The photographs of the interior were taken shortly following redecoration in 1888 and were produced by the London-based commercial agency, Bedford Lemere & Co., which specialized in architectural photography and provided for a clientele of professionals and tradesmen with high quality, detailed images of architectural, decorative and furniture styles. The Morning Room and Library, seen in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2, were amongst the most ornate in the building, featuring Corinthian columns, enriched cornices and decorative ceiling mouldings, and finished with intricate wrought-iron chandeliers. Grandiose mirrored over-mantles and fully-fitted Axminster and Brussels carpets added a sense of luxury. Even in the Billiard Room, where the decorative scheme was more modest, two elaborately carved billiard tables, as seen in Figure 3.4, suggested no expense had been spared to secure the best materials and craftsmanship. Joseph Hatton, author of Clubland: London and Provincial (1890) concluded that, ‘[t]he Liverpool Conservative Club house is by far the finest in the city, and is not surpassed architecturally, or in regard to internal arrangements and fittings, by any club in the provinces.’

16 Elwall, Photography Takes Command, p. 20; Elwall, Building with Light, p. 52. The photograph of the Morning Room is recorded in the archive of the National Monument Record as the Reading Room. Evidence from the library photograph coupled with a floor plan in a commemorative brochure from 1882, suggests the room has been labelled incorrectly. The plan shows that the ceiling moulding of the Morning Room had a distinctive tessellated design and the room itself was divided into two parts by pillars. Both characteristics are visible in the photograph. It is possible the fault lies with the photographer Bedford Lemere himself. In a study of his work, Nicholas Cooper found that it was not uncommon for the otherwise ‘meticulous’ photographer to label his images with the incorrect address or subject. See N. Cooper and H. Bedford Lemere, The Opulent Eye: Late Victorian and Edwardian Taste in Interior Design (London, 1976). Plans of the club house can be found in Proceedings in Connection with the Ceremony of Laying the Corner Stone of the Liverpool Conservative Club by the Marquis of Salisbury on Wednesday 12 April 1882 (Liverpool, 1882).
17 ‘Opening of the New Conservative Club’, Liverpool Mercury, 10 November 1883, p. 5.
Photographs of the Liverpool Conservative Club show an interior that was deliberately styled on the rooms of an upper-class or aristocratic London club. As the *Liverpool Citizen* observed, in terms of both architectural style and interior arrangements, the Liverpool club house ‘would not at all be out of place amongst the palaces of Pall Mall.’ Following advice given by designers and cabinet makers for the upper classes, photographs of the interior, along with newspaper reports, suggest individual rooms were furnished in a range of different antique styles. For instance, the library furniture was described in the *Liverpool Mercury* as ‘in the Italian renaissance style, of a rather more elaborate character than that of the morning room.’

However, while the Liverpool club interior may have taken on the luxurious appearance of the upper-class home or a Pall Mall club, the way in which it was furnished revealed a more functional and corporate purpose to the club house. Unlike the individually commissioned and antique pieces associated with elite domestic tastes, the furniture and decoration of the Liverpool Conservative Club interior was part of a wider corporate aesthetic supplied by none other than S. J. Waring and Sons, one of Liverpool’s largest wholesale cabinet-making firms. Company trade catalogues and photographs from the Bedford Lemere collection show that the furniture used in the club house had more in common with Waring’s public and commercial contracts. Large rectangular tables and imposing light

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22. The firm S. J. Waring and Sons was founded in the 1830s, and by the 1880s traded from a large shop on Bold Street in Liverpool. At the turn of the twentieth century, the company had merged with Gillows of Lancaster, to become Waring and Gillows. According to trade catalogues, the new company went on to decorate royal residences and number of London clubs. See *Waring & Gillow Ltd., Decorative Contracts* (London, 1907).
fittings, as seen in the photographs of the Morning Room (Figure 3.1) and Library (Figure 3.2), were similar to those found across council chambers, board rooms, banks and offices designed and fitted by the company at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{23}

The style used in the rooms of the Liverpool Conservative Club also echoed the interiors of some of the older and more elite club houses in London. Alexander F. Baillie’s description of the ‘large, lofty, well-proportioned and handsomely decorated’ reception rooms of the capital’s Oriental Club on Pall Mall, could have easily applied to the Conservative Club on Dale Street in Liverpool.\textsuperscript{24} Other London clubs were also known for their historically styled interiors. When Lord Crewe joined Brooks’s, one of the capital’s oldest clubs in the 1870s, he made a particular note of its neo-classical Adams furniture and fittings, a style which dated back to the late eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{25}

Amy Milne Smith has suggested that the interiors of London clubs imitated the home and notions of domesticity.\textsuperscript{26} However there is no evidence to suggest that the interiors of club houses in London were any more ‘authentic’ or domestic than in Liverpool. Although these interiors may have drawn on the appearance of the upper-class home, like the Liverpool Conservative Club, their furniture and furnishings were designed in a corporate and uniform style. Research by Mary-Ann Hunting Massie has shown how a significant proportion of London clubs were furnished by the London-based cabinet makers Holland and Sons.\textsuperscript{27} According to correspondence in the company’s archive, in furnishing the newly established London Athenaeum on

\textsuperscript{23} Photograph Album Stamped Waring and Gillow Ltd, Manchester 1910-1935, GWG/2233/9, CWAC; Photograph Album of Bedford Lemere Prints of Unidentified Offices and Grand Interiors, 1910-1930, GWG/2233/19, CWAC.

\textsuperscript{24} A. F. Baillie, \textit{The Oriental Club and Hanover Square} (London, 1901), p. 53.


\textsuperscript{26} Smith, ‘A Flight to Domesticity?’, pp. 803-805.

Waterloo Place in 1824, the founder John Wilson Croker had asked specifically for furniture of the same pattern and price produced for city’s Union Club. While Henry Whittaker’s furnishing manual included designs for the London Conservative Club alongside those for mansions and country homes, the pieces commissioned for the club house tended to be uniform in style.

The parallels between the Liverpool Conservative Club and London models suggest those responsible for the appearance of the Liverpool club-house interior envisioned it as a luxurious place for masculine social life. London clubs had long been associated with notions of leisure. Describing Liverpool’s Palatine Club in 1851 as ‘a miniature copy of Pall Mall’, the journalist Samuel Sidney observed how the merchant members could be seen at the windows ‘trying very hard to look as if they had nothing to do but dress fine and amuse themselves.’ Some contemporary commentators went as far as to suggest that club life had no natural habitat in industrial and commercial cities like Manchester and Liverpool. ‘Liverpool’, wrote the local architect J. A. Picton ten years later, ‘is a place to make money in, not to spend it…the prices of cotton and sugar, very exciting for the Exchange flags, are scarcely fit subjects for the drawing room of a club.’ The association between clubs and leisure was also recognized in the interior arrangements of other building types. According to the architectural historian Michael Port, clubs were cited as models for improvements to the House of Commons during the 1860s, as places of comfort and convenience.

However, photographs of the Liverpool Conservative Club suggest that while the approaches to furnishing clubs houses were similar, the actual style of their

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decoration differed. While design historian Penny Sparke has noted that gentlemen’s clubs in London were ‘usually dark, plush and overtly “masculine” in nature’, photographs of the Liverpool club show an interior decorated in what could be termed a feminine style.\(^{32}\) Early work on the domestic interior has shown how nineteenth-century decorative advice literature mapped material life and aesthetic choice onto gender identities. As Juliet Kinchin has noted, ‘male space was codified through dark tones and heavy furnishings, in contrast to the lighter and more delicate characteristics of feminine space.’\(^{33}\) Although the monochrome photographs of the Liverpool Conservative Club tell the historian little about the actual colours that were used in decorating the interior, they nonetheless emphasize a sense of lightness which pervaded the rooms. This was particularly evident in the photographs of the Dining Room (Figure 3.3), where large floor to ceiling windows maximized the influence of natural light. Joseph Hatton confirmed the use of light tones associated with a feminine style of decoration in his description of the Liverpool Club in his 1890 publication, *Clubland*: ‘[t]he morning room might be called a harmony of primrose and terra cotta, it looked as dainty as a ladies boudoir’.\(^{34}\) Evidence from club archives suggests that the Liverpool Conservative Club was not unusual in its feminine style of décor. Figure 3.5, a hand-painted sample of wallpaper created for the redecoration of Liverpool Reform Club Reading Room in 1884, shows a floral design on a blue background points to a similarly feminine decorative scheme.

The use of a feminine style of decoration in the Liverpool Conservative Club is suggestive of the unique function of nineteenth-century club houses, as masculine social spaces located in the context of the city. Jane Hamlett’s study on nineteenth-

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\(^{34}\) Hatton, *Clubland*, p. 78.
century student rooms suggests that gendered styles of decoration are meaningless unless they are understood in the context within which these styles are set to work.\textsuperscript{35} Just as dark colour schemes marked out libraries and studies in the feminized home as spaces for the serious tasks associated with masculinity, the feminine style used in the club house denoted a place for leisure, distinct from the public world of work.\textsuperscript{36} Corinthian stucco columns, visible in the photographs of the Morning Room (Figure 3.1) and Dining Room (Figure 3.3), signalled the social function of the rooms, in a way that was rooted in notions of femininity. In Greek mythology, the Corinthian order represented the acanthus leaves springing from the grave of a young woman. Sir William Chambers, author of the \textit{Treatise on Civil Architecture} (1862), likened the Corinthian order to ‘the delicacy of a young girl’ and recommended it for palaces and public squares as well as for theatres and ball rooms - places where both men and women congregated.\textsuperscript{37} However, it is important not to over emphasize the feminine style of this club-house interior. Photographs show how notions of delicacy and femininity were balanced by bolder design features associated with masculine priorities. For example, the tessellated ceiling design of the Morning Room, as seen in Figure 3.1, was also used in the domestic dining and billiard rooms identified in decorative advice literature as male terrains.\textsuperscript{38}

Beneath the luxurious appearance of the interior, the Liverpool Conservative Club was a working institution. This is to some extent obscured by the photographs. While large airy rooms evoked notions of the upper-class home, they also fulfilled the more practical function of late nineteenth-century clubs to accommodate

\textsuperscript{35} Hamlett, “Nicely Feminine, Yet Learned”, 137-161.
\textsuperscript{36} J. Hamlett, “‘The Dining Room should be the Man’s Paradise, as the Drawing Room is the Woman’s’: Gender and Middle Class Domestic Space in England, 1850-1914”, \textit{Gender and History} 21, 3 (2009): 585.
\textsuperscript{37} W. Chambers and J. Gwilt, \textit{A Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture} (London, 1862), pp. 159-60, 229.
\textsuperscript{38} Photograph Album, GWG/2233/17, CWAC.
expanding memberships. In catering for large numbers of people, club houses needed to be kept clean and well ventilated. According to newspaper reports on the opening of the new building, elaborate ceiling mouldings and cornices as seen in Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.3 of the Morning Room and Dining Room, were ‘pierced for the extraction of foul air’. Leather upholstery was a popular choice in the club house, not simply because of its masculine overtones, but because it was less likely to absorb food and tobacco smells and was hard wearing in a busy environment. Newspaper reports also noted that the interior walls of the Liverpool club house were covered with Lincrusta, a hard-wearing, waterproof material used in railway carriages and ships that could be intricately embossed or moulded to resemble wood and leather.

The use of new materials and technologies helped to shape the experience of the club house. Electric lights had been installed in the Liverpool Conservative Club at the time of opening in 1883 and were still a relatively new and expensive form of illumination. Early experiments had shown that electric lighting could be temperamental, and because the power had to be generated on site, it was only really suitable for large buildings. The dual-form light fittings visible in the photographs of the Dining Room (Figure 3.3) suggest electric lighting was not without problems in the Liverpool club house. However, lighting the club by electricity transformed

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40 ‘Opening of the New Conservative Club’, Liverpool Mercury, 9 November 1883, p. 6.
the atmosphere of the interior and distinguished it from the noisy and polluted world outside. As Chris Otter has shown in his study of illumination, in an age of gas and oil lighting, electricity was marketed as hygienic. Introduced into libraries and public reading rooms, electric lighting was preferred to gas burners because it produced a comfortable environment conducive to study that was silent, free from fumes, odour and excessive heat.\textsuperscript{46} Tranquil and peaceful surroundings were also important in the club house. Visiting the Liverpool Conservative Club, the journalist Joseph Hatton noted how ‘[t]he atmosphere of the club is pleasant, one hears the car-bells of the streets in a subdued jingle, and the clocks in the various rooms have a soft rich tone.’\textsuperscript{47}

The Liverpool Conservative Club was decorated and furnished as a luxurious and modern institutional setting for club life. It offered middle-class men a different experience of club life to that in London’s older and more elite institutions, which were much slower, and even resistant to the introduction of new technologies into their club houses.\textsuperscript{48} There were some exceptions. During the 1830s, the Reform Club on London’s Pall Mall became famous for its technologically innovative kitchen under the direction of its head chef Alexis Soyer.\textsuperscript{49} However, by the late nineteenth century large modern club houses were looked on by the London elite \textit{de haute en bas} and were regarded as pale imitations or copies. Describing the new ‘Junior’ political clubs which had opened on London’s Pall Mall towards the end of the nineteenth century, William Beckett commented that ‘Rome was not built in a day, and the prestige of a club cannot be obtained with the same celerity as marble,\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} Hatton, \textit{Clubland}, p. 78.
\textsuperscript{49} Lejeune, \textit{The Gentlemen’s Clubs}, p. 206.
morocco, Turkey carpets and the electric light.\textsuperscript{50} The club men of nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool did not look to London in this regard, but embraced distinctive forms of modernity in their club houses. For example, minute books from the Manchester Reform Club noted the installation of telephones and lifts in the King Street club house at the turn of the century.\textsuperscript{51}

The interior of the Manchester Brasenose Club suggested that members expected a very different type of club experience from that of the Liverpool Conservative Club. Although still decorated and furnished as a place for masculine social life, the Brasenose interior drew on a loose Arts and Crafts style, and was inspired by a nineteenth-century picture gallery. This differentiated the Brasenose from other types of nineteenth-century clubs, and in particular it suggested a leisured experience expressive of individuality.

The Manchester Brasenose Club was founded in 1869 as an arts and social club intended to fulfil a particular gap in the market. A circular letter printed in May that year stated that ‘[t]he want ha[d] long been felt in Manchester of a Club tending to promote, on a social basis, the intercourse of Gentlemen of Literary, Scientific, or Artistic pursuits or professions.’\textsuperscript{52} By the end of the 1860s there was already an established club life in the city. The Union Club founded in 1825 was still going strong, and had been joined by a number of newer establishments, including the political Reform and Conservative Clubs, the Freemason’s Club on Cooper Street, the Albert Club for the German community on Oxford Road, as well as the more generally social Princes’ Club on Cheapside and the Clarendon Club on Mosley

\textsuperscript{51} Manchester Reform Club 30th Anniversary of the Opening of the Premises, 1901’, 367 M159, MALS.
\textsuperscript{52} ‘Original Circular’, Brasenose Club Additional Records, M17/8/addnl, MALS.
Figure 3.6 Photograph of the Entrance Hall in the Manchester Brasenose Club, Brazennose Street premises (c. 1890).
Source: A. Darbyshire [The Lion], A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club, vol. 1 (1890).

Figure 3.7 Photograph of the Library in the Manchester Brasenose Club, Brazennose Street premises (c. 1890).
Figure 3.8 Two photographs of the Club Room in the Manchester Brasenose Club, Brazennose Street premises (c. 1890).
Figure 3.9 Two photographs of the Dining Room in the Manchester Brasenose Club in the Brazenose Street premises, c. 1890.
Street. As a writer in the local journal *The Sphinx* recalled, by early 1870 there was already ‘the club political; the club social; the club professional; the club commercial; the club genteel.’ However, as a social club with a particular emphasis on the arts, the Brasenose had according to the writer ‘a raison d’être of its own.’

The desire to differentiate the arts-based Brasenose Club from other types of club houses was played out in the decorative style of the interior. Figures 3.6 to 3.9 show the rooms of the Manchester Brasenose Club in its first home in offices on Brazennose Street, which it occupied from 1869 to 1892. They show an interior decorated in a style reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts movement, an aesthetic approach at its height in the final two decades of the nineteenth century, which rejected the ornate and over-decorative styles of the age, and emphasized instead the importance of simplicity in design. In contrast to the Liverpool Conservative Club, the look of these rooms was much more modest. Rooms of the Brasenose Club appeared small and compact, the style of the wall coverings was either plain or very simple, and gas jets which provided illumination in the rooms were, with the exception of the Library, generally unadorned. The furniture similarly lacked conscious grandeur, and photographs show the same style of chairs and tables were used throughout the club house.

Studies by design historians have tended to focus on the moral, social and intellectual background to the Arts and Crafts movement and the role of its

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55 Ibid.
prominent personalities such as William Morris. However, photographs of the Brasenose Club interior show the more tangible impact of the organization of its aesthetic approach in the practice of everyday life. Members of the Brasenose Club decorated their interior as a reaction to the formulaic luxury and wealth evident in other club houses. Founder members of the club were aware of how other club houses were decorated and furnished. For example, the architect Edmund Salomons was also a member of the Manchester Bridgewater Club and the Albert Club. It was around the same time as the opening of the Brasenose Club in 1869, that Salomons was working on the design for the new Manchester Reform Club on King Street, which included a complete design of the interior from the wall coverings to the furniture. Speaking at the thirtieth anniversary dinner held in January 1900, H. M. Acton a founder member described the motives behind the Brasenose Club, and depicted it as a unique institution:

We did not see anything that exactly suited our views, and we determined to establish, if we could, a club in which there would not be too much respectability or to much wealth, but in which there would be good fellowship, and an opportunity for the display of those faculties, which might contribute to common gratification. As Acton suggested, the Brasenose Club was intended to be very different from other clubs in the city.

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58 A. Darbyshire [The Lion], *A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club*, vol. 2 (Manchester, 1900), p. 42.
59 Alfred Darbyshire, another founder member of the Brasenose Club would also go on to design club interiors, including the new Conservative Club on the corner of Cross Street and St Ann’s Street in 1877, the Manchester Arts Club on the corner of Portland Street and Oxford Street in 1879, and the Chorlton Conservative Club in 1892. See Alfred Darbyshire Scrapbooks B, MALS.
The apparent rejection of wealth and luxury was a common theme in the aesthetic appearance of other provincial arts clubs as well. When the Manchester Arts Club opened on the corner of Portland Street and Oxford Street in 1879, the Manchester Courier reported that founder members had not ‘intended to make a luxurious club – but that it should have a character of comfort and convenience, combined with simplicity.’\(^{61}\) Joseph Hatton used similar language when he visited the Liverpool Arts Club for his book Clubland (1890). Hatton described the club as ‘unostentatiously housed’ and ‘plainly furnished’ and even noted that one of the rooms was used by members as a picture gallery.\(^{62}\) Both interiors of the Manchester and Liverpool Arts Clubs had more striking similarities with the Manchester Brasenose Club. Reminiscent of the photographs of the Club Room in the Manchester Brasenose Club, the Smoke Room in the Liverpool Arts Club contained ‘all kinds of easy chairs and handy tables’ and there was ‘no attempt at decoration.’\(^{63}\) According to the Manchester Courier, the Club Room of the new Manchester Arts Club was furnished with couches and settees and the walls were ‘hung with a number of watercolour sketches, drawings, and autotypes.’\(^{64}\) Indeed, the parallels between the two Manchester clubs are not surprising considering the interior of the Arts Club had in fact been designed by Alfred Darbyshire, one of the founder members of the Brasenose.\(^{65}\)

In addition to the decorative style of the interior, the Brasenose Club also sought to distinguish itself through the arrangement of interior space and the way it could be used by members. Describing the Brasenose Club to The Sphinx, one

\(^{61}\) ‘The Opening of the Arts Club’, Manchester Courier, 29 September 1879, in Alfred Darbyshire Scrapbooks B, MALS.

\(^{62}\) Hatton, Clubland, p. 69.

\(^{63}\) Ibid., p. 70.

\(^{64}\) ‘The Arts Club’, Manchester City News, 4 October 1879, in Alfred Darbyshire Scrapbooks B, MALS.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.
member noted how like other clubs, the Brasenose had a dining room, smoking room, lavatory and cellar. But there were two things that members could not do:

‘You can’t go to bed and you can’t play at billiards. The men here being tolerably wide awake and able to talk presently, couldn’t go to sleep if they would, and wouldn’t go to sleep if they could. As for the spot stroke [a type of shot in billiards]…something of that kind can be done anywhere.’

The absence of a billiards room and bedrooms in the Brasenose Club was depicted as part of its distinctive character. However, readers were also reminded that the character of the club was shaped by members themselves. The writer made it clear that men joining the Brasenose were in search of a club unlike any other in the city. It was suggested that members of the Brasenose Club were more sociable and more eclectic than other club men, and were uninterested in the conventional and common attractions of club life.

However the absence of bedrooms in the Brasenose Club was not especially unusual, and reinforces the point that for provincial middle-class men, club life in general was not an imitation of domesticity but part of a male social world. Smith has argued one of the ways in which the club functioned as a surrogate home for upper-class men in late nineteenth-century London, was in the provision of bedrooms. For most clubs in Manchester and Liverpool, overnight accommodation was simply not a priority. In the floor plans and minute books of the Reform and Conservative Clubs there is a distinct absence of sleeping accommodation. Of those clubs which did have bedrooms, there were only enough for a very small number of members to use on an occasional and temporary basis. For instance, the

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Manchester Union Club had only eleven bedrooms for a membership of 400. Rules of the Union Club stipulated that guests could only stay for a maximum of two nights consecutively, and priority was given to those members who lived at some distance from the city centre.  

While the large institutional clubs such as the Liverpool Conservative Club looked to a club house model in the style and design of their interiors, the interior of Manchester Brasenose Club was arranged to look like an art gallery. Photographs of the club interior show paintings and sketches mounted on the walls of every room, including the entrance hall. Art exhibitions were also a regular feature of the Brasenose Club calendar. But the idea of the club interior as an art gallery was also evident in the way in which the rooms were photographed. The direction of the camera suggested large areas of uninterrupted wall space and an enfilade arrangement of rooms around a central entrance hall, architecturally characteristic of late nineteenth-century art galleries. In the photographs of the Club Room (Figure 3.8) two continuous picture rails, ottomans and buttoned upholstery suggested this was the main exhibition area where members could view the works on display in comfort.

Replicating the feel of an art gallery marked the Brasenose Club out as a place for leisure. Amy Woodson-Boulton has noted a tension in the use of public art galleries in the late nineteenth century, as sites of social and moral reform, on the

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69 ‘Union Club Original Byelaws 1827-1836’, Manchester Union Club, M17/1/1, MALS; 8 February 1833, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1832-1836, M17/2/2/3, MALS; Manchester Union Club Furniture and Cabinet Minute Book 1836-1856, M17/3/6, MALS.

70 Ten exhibitions are listed in A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club held between 1874 and 1889 including those showcasing work by Randolph Caldecott and Frederic Shields, see Darbyshire, A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club, vol. 1, p. 97.

one hand, and as settings for middle-class sociability, on the other. Writers in *The Sphinx* suggested pictures, paintings and ‘mural decoration’ in general helped to both enliven and improve the interiors of Manchester’s club houses and regretted their absence in the Conservative, Union and Clarendon Clubs. Central to creating a leisured experience was the actual arrangement of pictures and paintings. Art historians have shown how picture hanging methods impacted on the atmosphere of the art gallery space, and were integral to how works of art were intended to be viewed and received. Carol Duncan and Giles Waterford have argued that the single and double row hanging method, as seen in the photographs of the Club Room (Figure 3.8), directed the focus of the viewer to each work in turn. Visitors to late nineteenth-century art galleries noted how this style of hanging created a sense of ‘quiet harmony’ in the room because it allowed for proper, uninterrupted study. This fits with the description of the Club Room of the Brasenose Club, given by the writer of *The Sphinx* during a visit in 1870:

A number of gentlemen were seated at the tables, writing, or reading, or quietly conversing, or taking a glass of wine or a cigar. ‘Nice place, isn’t it,’ remarked Langsyne, with an air of serene complacency. Our content was absolute, and we said so. We found that everything relating to creature comforts was simply perfect, and that a certain elegant ideal reigned everywhere.

Like the art gallery, the Club Room in the Brasenose was an agreeable and relaxed environment.

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75 ‘The Brasenose Club’, *The Sphinx*, p. 129.
Photographs of the Brasenose Club Dining Room, seen in Figure 3.9, show a different method of picture hanging known as the picturesque. Although this type of hanging was also associated with leisured ideals, it suggests that the atmosphere and environment of the Dining Room was intended to be less contemplative than that of the Club Room. The picturesque hang was a form of arrangement which dated back to the private galleries of eighteenth-century country houses, where the underlying principle was to maximise decorative effect by organising and arranging paintings according to their visual similarities. In public art galleries, paintings were generally arranged chronologically, which allowed the viewer to learn how the painter or movement had developed over time.\(^{76}\) In the picturesque hang, paintings which demonstrated similarities in subject matter or colour were clustered together to create an attractive impact. As Christopher Whitehead has noted, it was a style of arrangement that did not present paintings as objects to be scrutinised, but used them to contribute to the atmosphere of the room in general.\(^{77}\)

The picturesque was also a style of hanging used in the Brasenose Club for special exhibitions, when the interior took on the explicit function of an art gallery. Figure 3.10 is a photograph of the Club Room during an exhibition of works by the artist Edward John Gregory in the Brasenose Club’s second home, in a former bank on Moseley Street. The Club had moved in 1892 and the exhibition was the first to be held in the new premises, continuing a tradition begun in the former club house.\(^{78}\) The paintings belonged to the local business man and member of the Brasenose Club, Charles Galloway, an avid collector of Gregory’s work.\(^{79}\)

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\(^{76}\) Waterford, ‘Picture Hanging’, p. 50.
Figure 3.10 Two photographs of the second Club Room of the Manchester Brasenose Club in the Mosley Street premises (c. 1892).
Source: A. Darbyshire [The Lion], *A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club*, vol. 2 (1900).
transformed the function and feel of the Brasenose Club interior as it opened its doors beyond the usual membership. Reminiscing on the history of the Brasenose Club under the pseudonym ‘The Lion’, Alfred Darbyshire noted how the Club had become ‘famous in the art world’ for its special exhibitions and ‘people were glad to come from a distance to be allowed to see them’.  

The two photographs of the second club house show the interior of a club that had become more ‘club like’. What is particularly striking about these images is the extent to which the large room, high ceilings, elaborately decorated cornice and picturesque arrangement of the paintings, resembled a private gallery in a gentleman’s country house. There were similarities with the old Club Room in Brazennose Street. The fireplace for example, was comparatively modest, and the tables and chairs, though re-upholstered, appear to be the same as those seen in Figure 3.8 and 3.9 of the previous premises. But the move to the new club house was not only accompanied by an increase in membership but also by the addition of new rooms, including one for billiards.

What the interiors of club houses in Manchester and Liverpool confirm is that clubs offered men a quasi-leisured experience distinct from the home and work. Nineteenth-century provincial clubs were decorated and furnished in styles that represented the type of club or institution they fulfilled. In the case of the Liverpool Conservative Club, going beyond the visual style and appearance of the club house interior reveals an institutional setting, designed to accommodate and serve a large number of people in a style familiar to public buildings. The Manchester Brasenose Club drew more stylistic influence from a particular type of public institution, the art gallery, adapting it to suit the setting and function of the nineteenth-century club.

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But as this section has suggested, there were also differences between specific rooms in the club house and the type of environment they were intended to create.

**The dining room and the smoke room**

The division of the club house into a series of rooms, each with a distinct function, suggests that not all men used the club in the same way. This section shows how nineteenth-century provincial clubs catered for a range of middle-class masculinities. It explores two rooms commonly found across most club houses, the dining room and the smoke room, and analyses how these were used by club members. It suggests that the experience of dining in the club, and the choice of whether or not to smoke, marked out differences between men and emphasized their individual identities.

Here I draw on the work of other historians who have suggested that the dining room and smoke room represented two polarized models of masculinity. Both Rachel Rich and Amy Milne Smith have linked dining in the club with male domesticity.\(^2\) John Burnett points out that club dining became more popular in the wake of the middle-class migration to the suburbs and the widening gulf between home and work.\(^3\) The smoke room, on the other hand, has been considered by John Tosh as contributing to a ‘bachelor ambience’ in the club, signalling middle-class male disenchantment with the home and domestic life.\(^4\) Mike Huggins has similarly suggested that smoking contributed to the image of the club as a place of vice, unregulated by the codes of respectability which pervaded social relations in the

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\(^4\) Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 187.
home and in other areas of public life.\textsuperscript{85} However, by focusing on each room in turn, this section reveals a more complex range of masculine identities at work within the club house. Differences between members did not stop at the threshold to each room, but were carried out in the distinctive ways that members used and interacted within the same space.

It was in the context of the dining room that differences between members were mapped out. Rich has rightly emphasized what distinguished club dining from the restaurant experience was the issue of exclusivity. While restaurant dining was open to anyone who could afford the bill, dining in a club was regulated by membership and private invitation.\textsuperscript{86} Reminiscing on the history of the Brasenose Club, Darbyshire recalled that in the early days when membership was small, members dined in what later became the library and ‘sat at one long table like a family party.’\textsuperscript{87} However, in the larger political clubs of the late nineteenth century, evidence suggests that social relations between members were more complicated. In addition to the main dining area, the Manchester Reform Club like most club houses had a number of smaller private dining rooms, which could be used by members for exclusive parties or meetings.\textsuperscript{88} Floor plans from the main Dining Room in the Liverpool Reform Club (Figure 3.11) show tables of different sizes, which suggests that members did not all dine together at the same time, but were accommodated in individual groups with little or no connection to each other. Photographs of the Dining Room in the Liverpool Conservative Club (Figure 3.3) show a similar layout.

\textsuperscript{86} Rich, \textit{Bourgeois Consumption}, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{87} The Lion, \textit{A Chronicle}, vol. 1, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{88} ‘Manchester Reform Club 30\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of the Opening of the Premises’, 367 M159, MALS, p. 9.
Figure 3.11 Floor plan of Liverpool Reform Club Dining Room, c. 1870s.
Source: Dale Street, Liverpool Reform Club: Drawings including Furniture and Fittings with some Bills of Quantities 1871-81, Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2229, LRO.
The arrangement of furniture in the club-house dining room dictated where members could dine and marked out social boundaries. Despite noticing how the irregular placement of the tables in the Dining Room of the Liverpool Conservative Club was ‘capitally adapted for converse and conviviality’, a writer for the *Liverpool Review* made it clear that dining room sociability was not unregulated: ‘[i]n the principal bay is a certain round table to which the leaders of the Conservative party repair regularly to discuss over luncheon the latest phase of the local party situation.’ Social relations in the Dining Room of the Liverpool Conservative Club were characterized by a clear sense of hierarchy. Similar arrangements were found in other club houses. According to Arnold Thompson, the Dining Room of the Manchester Reform Club had two tables at either end of the room known as the ‘Corporation Table’ and the ‘Junior Corporation Table’, which were occupied by the same groups of diners on a day-to-day basis. Thompson suggested seating arrangements on other tables were more flexible. But while diners were welcome to fill empty spaces where they were available, it was only good manners to ask permission first before taking up a seat. Thompson recalled ‘being seated at lunch in the Club with two others when a third member came up and asked if there “was any objection to his bringing Mr. John Bright to the table!”’ Needless to say [in the Reform Club] there was no objection at all.

Not all men used the club dining room at the same time of the day. Club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool served food at different times in order to accommodate the various working patterns of middle-class men.

As Darbyshire recalled of the Manchester Brasenose Club:

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91 Ibid., p. 80.
There have always been two classes of frequenters of the Club. One set of married men only come for lunch or dinner; they are busy men (married men mostly), whose legs have done shaking, and who make for their homes at the close of business…The other class consists mostly of professional men, artists, journalists, lawyers, barrister-at-law, actors, and doctors. These men run in for refreshment and tobacco at all hours, but their symposium is generally held in the evening. The actor comes in for his bit of supper after a hard evening’s work, and the “press” man writes a notice of his performance.  

Manchester men had been known for their lunch-time dining habits since the 1830s. Visiting the ‘manufacturing metropolis of the north’ in 1839, a writer for *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* noted that Manchester’s ‘merchants, bankers and shopkeepers, warehousemen and clerks’ all dined when the clock struck one.  

As Benjamin Love informed visitors to the city in his *Handbook* from 1842, Manchester’s commercial men worked long hours, beginning between eight and nine in the morning and not returning home often until ten o’clock in the evening.  

Evidence from minute books confirms club houses in Manchester and Liverpool tended to serve most meals during the middle of the day. This contrasted with upper-class clubs in London which were more heavily patronized in the evening.  

But as Alfred Darbyshire suggested, Manchester clubs were also used by men in other professions which ran to a different clock and whose working routines were more sporadic.

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95 For example see, 1 July 1886, Manchester Reform Club Minutes of the Finance, General and Ballot Committees 1886-1890, MRC 1/1/1, JRULSC.  
The way in which food was served in the club house also allowed provincial club men to express their individual tastes. By the 1830s, club-house dining had become associated with a particular style of service which emphasized the individuality of the diner. When the Manchester Union Club opened in 1825, it employed a table d’hôte, a system whereby diners were expected to sit down together as a group at a certain time to share in the same meal. However, by the following year it was clear that this type of service was unpopular, and it was consequently abandoned because it had failed to attract enough diners to make it profitable.

Menu cards from other Manchester and Liverpool club houses suggest the alternative was service à la Russe, where courses were brought out individually and served by waiters directly to diners. Figure 3.12 shows an undated tariff from the Manchester Conservative Club where courses were individually listed. It was a style of service associated initially with restaurants from the late eighteenth century, and in the second half of the nineteenth century used increasingly for dinner parties in the home. However, in the club house the presence of a menu and service à la Russe meant members could order food without sitting down as part of a large group at a specified time.

The use of a menu in the dining rooms of Manchester and Liverpool club houses also suggests their members were able to express their individuality through their selection of food. Rebecca Spang has traced the introduction of the menu back to restaurants in late eighteenth-century France, where they signalled a new kind of

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98 20 March 1826 Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1825-29, M17/2/2/1, MALS.


100 Although there is no date on the tariff card, it is likely to be from the end of the nineteenth century. It was found amongst the drawings of furniture for the Liverpool Reform Club in the Edmund Kirby archives.

Figure 3.12 Manchester Conservative Club Tariff (no date).
Source: Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
Figure 3.13 Manchester Conservative Club Tariff, cover page (no date).
Source: Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
personalized treatment that centred on the individual. As Spang has written, ‘[t]he restaurateur invited his guest to sit at his or her own table to consult his or her own needs and desires, to concentrate on that most fleeting and difficult to universalize sense: taste.’\textsuperscript{102} Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham Davis, author of \textit{Dinners and Diners} published in 1899, noted that the main disadvantage of the \textit{table d’hôte} was ‘that you have to eat a dinner ordered according to someone else’s idea, and you have no choice as to length or composition’.\textsuperscript{103} Observing the use of the menu card in the club houses of mid-nineteenth century London, George Dodd noted that ‘from this carte the diner selects according to his taste...and pays individually for his refection’\textsuperscript{104} The tariff card from the Manchester Conservative Club suggests an even more enhanced personal experience. Though diners were offered a variety of combinations, from single plates to numerous courses and additions, each clearly priced, they were also encouraged to order dishes not included on the menu. However, those doing so were warned that they should be prepared to wait. Figure 3.13 shows the front page of the tariff card with the notice: ‘Members ordering anything that is NOT on the Bill of Fare will have to wait Twenty Minutes.’\textsuperscript{105}

The choices a diner made were interpreted by other members as an indicator of a man’s character and identity. Andrea Broomfield has argued that the middle class thought of meals as expressions of their status and values.\textsuperscript{106} Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers have similarly suggested that whether an individual had good or bad taste could be judged from the menu choices he made: ‘the eater could be recognized

\begin{footnotes}
\item[102] Spang, \textit{The Invention of the Restaurant}, p.75.
\item[105] Manchester Conservative Club Wine List and Tariff, Records of Edmund Kirby & Sons, Architects and Surveyors, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
\end{footnotes}
as a gourmet or connoisseur by other eaters or the staff.\textsuperscript{107} Some club members were clearly surprised by what their fellow diners chose to eat. Arthur G. Symonds, secretary of the National Reform Union and a member of the Manchester Reform Club, recalled seeing John Bright lunch twice at the club house with one of his sons and ‘noticed on each occasion he ate custard pudding.’\textsuperscript{108} Bright’s choice of food symbolized a number of differences between the two men. A cheap and easy dish to both prepare and eat, custard pudding was recommended for invalids, and also included in cookery books aimed at new and inexperienced cooks or for wives on a budget.\textsuperscript{109} In contrast to the younger and Oxford-educated Symonds, Bright represented an older generation of politician whose political schooling had began in the workplace. Born in Rochdale in 1811, Bright joined the family firm at the age of sixteen. By the time Manchester Reform Club was founded in 1867, Bright was already in his late fifties and had suffered bouts of ill health including a nervous breakdown.\textsuperscript{110}

However, this is not to suggest custard pudding was untypical of the type of food served in the club houses of nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool. Daily menus, such as the tariff from the Manchester Conservative Club seen in Figure 3.12, suggested that in an age when French-inspired or haute cuisine made its mark on restaurant and hotel menus, the food served in clubs remained markedly plain and simple. The tariff from the Manchester Conservative Club ranged from sandwiches, bread and butter and soup, to larger plates of hot or cold meat

accompanied by bread, potatoes, and vegetables.\textsuperscript{111} As Burnett has pointed out, club-house food was not wholly dissimilar from the meals served in chop houses used by both tradesmen and merchants since the first half of the century.\textsuperscript{112} A writer dining at the Conservative Club for ‘The Clubs of Manchester’ series in *The Sphinx* in 1869, commented that the bill of fare from which diners chose their food ‘contains nothing extraordinary’ although he made a particular note of a ‘novelty...hodgepodge of vegetables, browned and very good, surnamed *Kailcannon*.’\textsuperscript{113} This suggests that new influences on the tastes and cuisine of the provincial middle class was as likely to involve the rediscovery of traditional foods from within the British Isles as the more elaborate cuisine of the neighbouring French.

In fact, there is little evidence to suggest that in comparison with the club houses of other cities, and especially those in London, Manchester and Liverpool, clubs were unusual in their food provisioning. While some London’s clubs had earned a gastronomic reputation from their kitchens under the direction of continental chefs, it is questionable how far *haute cuisine* actually influenced the food they served.\textsuperscript{114} In 1911 Ralph Neville noted that the members of the London Athenaeum were far too preoccupied with scholarly debate and discussion and ‘for this reason, perhaps, the Athenaeum has never been noted for its cooking.’\textsuperscript{115} John Burnett has also argued that even during Alexis Soyer’s time at the London Reform Club on Pall Mall, meals were in the chop-house style, and modestly priced. Indeed,

\textsuperscript{111} MCC Wine List and Tariff, 720 KIR 2235, LRO.
\textsuperscript{112} Burnett, *England Eats Out*, pp. 85-86.
\textsuperscript{113} ‘The Conservative’, *The Sphinx*, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{115} Cowell, *The Athenaeum*, p. 94.
it was chops rather than any dishes of *haute cuisine* which the novelist W. M. Thackeray claimed the London Club did better than anywhere else in the world.\textsuperscript{116}

Eschewing the more fashionable *haute cuisine* marked out the club house as a place for masculine social life. Restaurants and hotels, purveyors of the more delicate and light dishes associated with French cuisine, were amongst the few places where middle-class men and women dined together in public.\textsuperscript{117} The *American Stranger’s Guide to London and Liverpool at Table*, a guide book published for the fourth time in 1859, associated standard chop house fare of steaks and chops with notions of masculinity. As the writer advised diners: ‘If the digestive organs be somewhat impaired, a light French dinner is preferable to a substantial English one; if, on the contrary, a man has been taking strong exercise all day, and has the appetite of a Saxon, our indigenous dishes of beef-steaks and mutton chops will be duly appreciated.’\textsuperscript{118}

However, the experience of dining in the club house was not entirely devoid of the influences of *haute cuisine*. Amy B. Trubek has argued that for the British middle class, ‘eating French’ was a way of consolidating and validating one’s social status. ‘The desire of the British bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century’, Trubek has written, ‘to establish and conform class identity, and their need to view themselves as “cosmopolites,” play a pivotal role in French haute cuisine’s becoming part of British eating practices.’\textsuperscript{119} But it was on the menu card rather than the actual type of food served and eaten that *haute cuisine* made its mark in the provincial club house. Burnett has argued that the club filled a gap in the market for the middle-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] *The American Stranger’s Guide to London and Liverpool at Table: How to Dine and Order a Dinner and Where to Avoid Dining*, 4\textsuperscript{th} ed. (London, 1859), pp. 6-7.
\end{footnotes}
class man in want of something to eat, but reluctant to degrade himself by going to a chop house. Small French signifiers on the tariff from the Manchester Conservative Club (Figure 3.12), such as the use of the word ‘Entrée’ and ‘Sweets, as per carte’, suggested that although the food was of a general standard, dining in the club was superior to that served in the café or chop house.

Table arrangements added a further sense of refinement to the club-house dining experience and helped to reinforce the idea of the club as a quasi-leisured environment. Rachel Rich has suggested that table arrangements in the home implied a sense of refinement and civility. Photographs of the Dining Room in the Liverpool Conservative Club (Figure 3.3) and the Manchester Brasenose Club (Figure 3.9) suggest the decoration and arrangement of dining tables conformed to contemporary advice literature. Draped in bright clean cloths, tables were dressed ready for diners with carefully placed cutlery, sharply folded napkins and floral arrangements. The series of reviews of Manchester’s club houses, which appeared in The Sphinx in 1869 and 1870, judged club dining rooms using similar criteria to those used for other public eating establishments. Edwina Ehrman has noted how a new genre of food writing and directories that emerged in the nineteenth century criticized public-eating establishments, such as inns and restaurants, according to certain qualities including lighting, decoration, cleanliness, ventilation and service. For the writer in The Sphinx, the environment and setting of the Dining Room in the Manchester Clarendon Club was an essential part of the club-house dining experience. As he observed: ‘[T]he little tables, each just large enough for a cosy party of four, and decorated with cut flowers, or growing plants with large glossy

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120 Burnett, England Eats Out, p. 87.
Figure 3.14 House Dinner Menu Card from the Manchester Brasenose Club (1901).
Source: Brasenose Club additional records M17/8/addnl, MALS.
Figure 3.15 Sixth Anniversary Dinner Menu Card from the Manchester Brasenose Club (1875).

Figure 3.16 Menu Card from the Manchester Brasenose Club commemorating the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal (1894).
Source: Brasenose Club additional records M17/8/addnl, MALS.
leaves; the silver and glass,-the snowy napkins,-the well trained and attentive
waiters,-the elegance and comfort reigning everywhere,-there!'\textsuperscript{123}

The language of \textit{haute cuisine} was also used to celebrate special occasions in
the club calendar. Rich has argued that ‘dressing up’ food in French on the menu
card of the club banquet or public dinner was a way of displaying cultural capital
because it demonstrated wealth and culinary knowledge.\textsuperscript{124} Figure 3.14 shows a
menu card from a special House Dinner held at the Manchester Brasenose Club in
January 1901, in honour of fellow member and judge, Edward Abbott Parry. The
menu listed nine courses with a mixture of French and English dishes, such as clear
oxtail soup and purée Crecy. This presentation echoed the practices of public
banquets. For example, \textit{The American Stranger’s Guide to London and Liverpool at}
\textit{Table} included the French bill of fare prepared for a banquet given in honour of the
Lord Mayor of Dublin when he visited Liverpool Town Hall in 1853.\textsuperscript{125} Burnett has
suggested that special occasions called for a more elaborate cuisine.\textsuperscript{126} Yet there is
little evidence that the type of food served was actually radically different to that
served on a day-to-day basis. The ordinary tariff from the Manchester Conservative
Club and the menu card from the Brasenose House Dinner do not necessarily differ
in the type of food served, but rather in the kind of information they give to diners.
While the Manchester Conservative Club tariff (Figure 3.12) placed an emphasis on
the size and composition of the meal, the House Dinner menu (Figure 3.13) focused
on ingredients and preparation.

\textsuperscript{123} ‘The Clarendon’, \textit{The Sphinx}, p. 80.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{The American Stranger’s Guide}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{126} Burnett, \textit{England Eats Out}, p. 85.
However, menus from the Manchester Brasenose Club also challenge the extent to which French and *haute cuisine* was accepted as a signifier of social status across the middle classes. Figure 3.14 shows the menu for the sixth anniversary dinner of the Brasenose Club held in October 1875, written entirely in French. According to Darbyshire author of *A Chronicle of the Brasenose Club* (1890), the menu was designed by two fellow members, Robert Pollett and William Slagg, and was ‘intended as a satire on the fashion of having English dinners with a French bill of fare.’

The same sense of snobbishness towards unrefined tastes can be seen in another menu from the Club (Figure 3.15), this time from a dinner held in 1894, in commemoration of the opening of the Manchester Ship Canal. A number of members had played prominent roles in the scheme, including the chief engineer, Sir E. Leader Williams and the directors, Sir William H Bailey and Charles J Galloway. Designed again by one of the members of the Brasenose Club, the menu card took a humorous approach to *haute cuisine* by giving individual French sounding names that made reference to the canal project and those involved in it. For example, the fish course included ‘Saumon à la follow your Leader’, followed by a game dish entitled ‘Faisans à la Galloway’. Dining in the nineteenth-century provincial club house was not only an exercise in the expression of personal tastes and identities for individual members, but it also revealed a broader range of middle-class cultures which differed between clubs.

The smoke room was another place in the nineteenth-century provincial club house where the different identities of club men were played out. Although by the final quarter of the century smoke rooms were amongst the most common rooms found across club houses, this had not always been the case. Separate

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129 Ibid.
accommodation for smokers in the Manchester Union Club was only provided from 1831, six years after the club had first opened, following complaints from members about the nuisance smoking caused. Since there is little research on smoking cultures in British society before the twentieth century, it is not clear whether smoking as a leisure activity was new amongst the middle-class members of the Union Club, or if attitudes towards smoking had changed. Historians have claimed smoking was unfashionable in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but this seems to have been largely restricted to the upper classes. Writing on the history of smoking in 1914, G. L. Apperson suggested that while snuff was popular amongst the social elite in the eighteenth century, smoking a pipe continued to be the choice of provincial clerics and tradesmen.

However, the creation of the smoke room reminds the historian that club houses in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool were institutions catering for a range of middle-class masculinities. Although not all club members smoked, the important point was that men’s different tastes and interests could be accommodated under the same roof. There were some exceptions. The 1835 rules and regulations of the Liverpool Palatine Club prohibited smoking anywhere in the Bold Street club house, but in the absence of any subsequent records from the club it is unclear as to whether this rule was carried out long term. Anthony Lejeune has noted that disputes over smoking were a recurrent theme across London club life throughout the nineteenth century. But it seemed that London clubs were less flexible in their

130 7 February 1831, Manchester Union Club General Committee Minutes 1829-32, M17/2/2/2, MALS.
131 There is more research on smoking and the relationship with women and femininity. See for example, P. Tinkler, Smoke Signals: Women, Smoking and Visual Culture in Britain (Oxford, 2006).
134 Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Palatine Club (Liverpool, 1835).
approach to men’s personal choices. Members of the Oxford and Cambridge Club mounted opposition to plans to create a separate smoke room in the 1830s, while the Marlborough Club was reputedly established in 1868 by followers of the Prince of Wales after he was refused permission to smoke in the drawing room of White’s, one of the capital’s oldest clubs.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 181-187.} In contrast, smoke rooms in nineteenth-century provincial clubs support the idea that smoking was understood as a personal choice.

Smoking in the nineteenth-century provincial club house was associated with being at leisure. Matthew Hilton has argued that in the popular imagination the smoke rooms of nineteenth-century club houses were regarded as places of escape. ‘Tobacco’ writes Hilton, ‘was held to offer an escape from the problems of the world as readers [of the periodical press] were encouraged to imagine their ideal smoking environment which, for many, was the smoking room of the gentleman’s club’.\footnote{M. Hilton, ‘Leisure, Politics and the Consumption of Tobacco in Britain since the Nineteenth Century’, in R. Koshar (ed.) Histories of Leisure (Oxford, 2002), p. 324.} This fits with the idea of the club as an escape from work and public life. But Hilton’s argument is problematic because it is based on a description of a club house smoke room in the 1867 novel Under Two Flags, written by the female author Marie Louise Rame, under the pseudonym Ouida, who was unlikely to have had access to a club-house smoke room.\footnote{M. Hilton, Smoking in British Popular Culture, 1800-2000 (Manchester, 2000), p. 34.}

Rather than a retreat from the public world, within the context of the club house the smoke room symbolized a retreat from other members. Mark Girouard has noted how in the second half of the nineteenth century the smoke room in the upper-class home acted as a male retreat, especially from women.\footnote{M. Girouard, Life in the English Country House (London, 1978), pp. 294-295.} In the club house, the smoke room could perform a similar role separating smokers from non-smokers. But it is also clear that despite the allocation of a specialist smoke room, by the late
nineteenth-century members tended to smoke elsewhere in the club house as well. While observing that the Smoke Room of the Manchester Clarendon Club was ‘nicely fitted up with small marble tables &c’, a writer for *The Sphinx* noted that ‘[m]ost of the members however, will surely prefer to smoke in the billiard room, - the room of rooms, - to which we shall mount presently after we have finished our dinner’.  

When smoking took place in other areas of the club house, smoke rooms were relatively quiet and private environments. In the 1870s Mr Maclean, a member of the Prince’s Club on Cheapside in Manchester, regularly chose to write his letters in the smoke room of the club. It was also the scene of his murder at the hands of another member who found his victim there alone before turning the gun on himself!  

Smoking in the club houses of Manchester and Liverpool was a sociable activity. This was especially true in arts clubs, such as the Brasenose and the Manchester Arts Club, where smoking was an integral part of a masculine social world. Rather than providing a separate smoke room, members consumed tobacco in the Club Room which lay at the heart of club life. Darbyshire described the Club Room of the Brasenose as ‘the crowning glory of the club’:  

> everybody must come to this room; there is no splitting up into cliques or parties; the conversation is general; and, at certain times of the day it assumes a Babel-like character. The room looks like a London fog, out of which occasionally come the shrieks of the “euchre” [a type of card game] players, or the loud laughter provoked by the side splitting anecdote. Ah! My dear old Brasenose boys, whatever you do, or wherever you may go in the future, cling to the tradition of this

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common room. In it lies the great secret of your success and the
source of all your good fellowship.\textsuperscript{142} Smoking was depicted here as a prop of sociability, associated with cordiality and
companionship, as well as the success and longevity of the club itself. Darbyshire
depicted smoke as part of the backdrop to the relaxed social relations of the Club
Room. Hilton has suggested that for middle-class men, smoking was represented as
an individual activity, and provided an opportunity for men to indulge in their own
thoughts.\textsuperscript{143} However, at least in the context of the Brasenose Club, smoking was
also a communal activity which helped to bring members together.

For members of the Manchester Brasenose Club, smoking was also linked to
notions of taste. Hilton has shown how the nineteenth-century periodical press was
influential in legitimising smoking for middle-class men, by associating it with
notions of connoisseurship.\textsuperscript{144} Before the introduction of the mass-produced
cigarette in the 1880s, smoking had developed as a masculine skill, established
through specialist knowledge of the history and science of tobacco consumption.\textsuperscript{145}
Photographs of the Brasenose Club Room, seen in Figure 3.8, show both ashtrays
and spittoons, suggesting members had a familiarity and understanding of different
tobacco products and the ways in which they were consumed. Like many other club
houses, cigars were available for members to purchase in the club house. But
complaints in the club suggestion book regarding their quality suggest that members
were assured about their own personal sense of informed taste.\textsuperscript{146} Different types of
tobacco product were also a means of demonstrating personal preferences. In A
\textit{Chronicle of the Brasenose Club}, Darbyshire personified individual members

\textsuperscript{142} Darbyshire, \textit{A Chronicle}, vol. 2, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{143} Hilton, \textit{Smoking}, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., pp. 17-40.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., pp. 28-29.
\textsuperscript{146} Darbyshire, \textit{A Chronicle}, vol. 1, p. 40.
through their smoking habits. For instance, the painter Charles Mitchell was described by Darbyshire as ‘pulling stolidly at his short pipe’, while ‘poor Charlie Levitt, painter’, smoked an ‘everlasting cigarette.’ In doing so, Darbyshire alluded to the individual identity of each man.

References to different tobacco products highlight the range of middle-class men who were members of the Brasenose Club. Hilton has shown how certain types of tobacco products were associated with different social classes. Whilst cigar and pipe smoking were at the top of the hierarchy because they required skill and were time consuming, cigarettes were until the twentieth century associated with the working class, because they were much cheaper and did not require any technical knowledge. In contrast, attitudes towards smoking habits in London’s elite clubs were pervaded by a sense of snobbishness and as Alexander Baillie of the Oriental Club pointed out, cigarette smoking was rare. The range of tobacco products implied in the photographs of the Club Room (Figure 3.8) together with the different smokers represented in the club’s history highlighted the concern of Brasenose Club members not to appear too respectable or wealthy.

The opportunity for members to smoke in the club house reinforced the idea that the provincial club occupied a liminal position between the private home and the public world. Tosh has argued that the smoke room was essential in creating the bachelor-style ambience of the nineteenth-century club that was so attractive to married men in search of an escape from the home. Tosh’s idea that smoking evoked notions of a bachelor lifestyle is based on the assumption that it was at odds with middle-class domestic life, but there is little evidence to support this. Though

147 Ibid., p. 10.
149 Baillie, The Oriental Club, p. 127.
150 Tosh, A Man’s Place, p. 187.
smoking was not always acceptable in public, it is clear that men did smoke in the home and in private life. Jane Hamlett has noted the presence of smoking paraphernalia in domestic dining rooms, alongside objects associated with female occupations, which suggests smoking did take place in the marital home. Not all women were adverse to men’s smoking habits. A correspondent to *The Sphinx* complained of being accused of snobbishness when he objected to fellow passengers on the train smoking a pipe or cigar and noted how younger women viewed him as an ‘unmitigated milksop’

**Conclusion**

By exploring the interior of the club house, this chapter has suggested that nineteenth-century provincial clubs were decorated, arranged and used as places for masculine social life that straddled home and work. Catering for different needs and interests, decorative styles reflected varied masculine tastes. The location of club rooms influenced men’s relationships with one another, and how the material culture of these rooms fashioned men’s identities. Unpicking the meanings underpinning social tastes highlights the fact that the middle-class club men were far from a homogeneous group but had different expectations and experiences of club life.

The two case studies of the arts-based Brasenose Club and the political Liverpool Conservative Club show the way decorative style was used to signal differences between institutions. Describing the Liverpool Club in particular as an institution sums up the fact that this was an interior designed and furnished to cater for a large number of members in a modern environment. The style of decoration in the Liverpool Conservative Club shows how middle-class men could display upper-

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class tastes. But this was not necessarily an attempt to replicate the lifestyles of those above. Historians have noted how processes of emulation in interior decoration and furnishing are more complex than such a top-down model allows.\footnote{A. Girling Budd, ‘Comfort and Gentility: Furnishings by Gillows, Lancaster, 1840-55’, and Q. Colville, ‘The Role if the Interior in Constructing Notions of Class and Status: A Case Study of Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth, 1905-39’, in McKellar and Sparke, Interior Design and Identity, pp. 27-47 and pp. 114-132 respectively.}

While the Liverpool Conservative Club interior took on the appearance of a gentleman’s house or a London club the materials and technologies used remind the historian that this was nevertheless a modern and practical interior, designed as a club house to serve the demands of a large, city-centre clientele. Contemporary understandings of club-house style were rooted less in decorative schemes than in the overall approach taken in fitting up interiors to function on an institutional basis.

While examining the furniture and decorative style of the Liverpool Conservative Club, this chapter has also suggested that more research is needed on the interiors of London clubs. It is too simplistic to assume club-house interiors were dark and sombre. Just as Manchester and Liverpool clubs differed in style, so too did those in the capital. Anthony Lejeune has noted differences between clubs in the West End and those clubs located in the City of London.\footnote{Lejuene, The Gentlemen’s Clubs, p. 97.} But there were further differences between those clubs formed at the end of the eighteenth and the early decades of the nineteenth century, and those of later provenance. Some London clubs were furnished with corporate furniture designs which differentiated them in terms of taste and aesthetics from domestic interiors.

The Manchester Brasenose Club offered a different type of club experience that was carefully removed from the luxurious surrounding of clubs such as the Liverpool Conservative. Decorated in a loose Arts and Crafts style, here decoration and furnishings represented a rejection of convention. Basing the interior on the idea
of the art gallery created an atmosphere which maximized the creativity and individuality of each member. But the extent to which the Brasenose Club was actually unique is questionable, and it is evident that other arts club adopted a very similar style in the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the removal of the Manchester Brasenose Club to a former bank building in Mosley Street towards the end of the century, coupled with the addition of a billiard room suggests that despite their tastes and interests, middle-class men had clear expectations of what a club should offer as a place for masculine social life.

The nineteenth-century club house separated members from non-members but once inside the premises, middle-class men did not operate as a unified or homogeneous group. The dining room and smoke room were a testament to the fact that the average provincial club house catered for a range of masculinities, and at least in theory, allowed men to express their sense of self via notions of taste and preference. The whole process of dining in the club house, from the place where a diner sat to what he chose to eat, was a demonstration of identity and could be instantly read by others as expressive of social character. Dining in the club was not necessarily a gastronomic experience; it would seem that the tastes of provincial middle-class men were more adventurous ‘on paper’ (on the menu cards) than they were on the plate. Smoking could also be read as an indicator of taste, but here divisions between members were clearer cut. While most men ate, not all smoked. However, the smoke room also provides evidence that the provincial club house, in contrast to the public world of work and business where it was situated, was a place where men were able to articulate their differences and as well as their shared identities.
Conclusion

In this thesis I have argued that clubs and associations in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool provided middle-class men with a significant arena for social and cultural life. From the political, social and arts club, to the tavern-based discussion group and the large institutionalized club house, associational culture in these cities reflected the diverse tastes and interests of nineteenth-century middle-class men. It has been my contention that club life did not simply ‘make’ the middle class, or provide an escape from the home as historians have suggested.¹ Rather, by going inside the club house and engaging with the conversations and lifestyles shared between members, I have explored the wider functions of associational culture in relation to home and work and the complex ways in which it intersected with masculine life.

Moreover, the thesis has shown that clubs and associations were not used and experienced by men in the same way. The life writings of professional and business men reveal that associational culture was understood to take on different roles over the course of the male lifecycle. While for young working migrants, clubs and associations were depicted as providing important access to the public world, for the married adult man, associational activity could offer an escape from it. John Tosh has suggested that middle-class masculinity was premised on a balance between home, work and all-male association.² By exploring the role of the club in the life

writings of professional and business men I have shown that masculine identity was further complicated by age, personal history and individual circumstances.

In fact, the thesis has shown that contrary to Tosh’s argument, the idea of the club as an escape from home and domestic life was only part of the story of associational culture in nineteenth-century Manchester and Liverpool. Club life in the provincial city was often closely tied into the world of work, and interacted with it in complex ways by providing access to business networks, on the one hand, and as a respite from the challenges of a professional career, on the other. This suggests that historians of masculinity need to rethink the ways in which they have approached the relationship between work and constructs of masculine identity.

While this thesis has confirmed that work was imperative to the shaping of middle-class masculinity, I have also suggested that at least on an individual level in the life writings of professional and business men, there was a great deal of anxiety surrounding this area of masculine life. Historians of gender have emphasized the role of the home as the antidote to work and the public world in the nineteenth century, but it is evident that middle-class men also looked to the club for this purpose. The friendship and fellowship a man found in his club or association, the activities of reading and discussing literature with other men and even the way in which the interior space of the club house was decorated, all differentiated associational culture from the world of work.

Historians of colonial and London clubs have emphasized the similarities between the organization of club interiors and those in the home. Yet club interiors

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in Manchester and Liverpool reveal more about the function of the club as a specific setting for social life and for a range of middle-class tastes and identities, rather than as a reflection of domesticity. While notions of comfort and relaxation were paramount in the design of these interiors, club men and designers looked to other forms of sociability and social spaces for inspiration, including the upper-class London club and the public art gallery, in order to differentiate the club from the other spheres of home and work. Exploring the way in which the club interior offered men a place in which to dine and smoke has revealed much about the lives and tastes of provincial middle-class men. This thesis has highlighted the importance and usefulness of examining the places and settings within which club life emerged. In doing so, it has uncovered distinctive cultures of masculinity at work in the cities of Manchester and Liverpool during the nineteenth century.

The analysis of the architectural styles of purpose-built club houses and their location in the cities of Manchester and Liverpool have pointed to the wider political, social and economic features of nineteenth-century club life, and the ways in which the identities of middle-class men intersected with adjacent spheres of urban life. Simon Gunn has argued that the club house was a unique institution that straddled both the public and private domains in the provincial city.5 Though the social life of club-house interiors was restricted to their use by members, the architectural styles of these buildings also made grand public claims about the status of nineteenth-century middle-class men in terms of their position as political leaders in the two provincial centres. One of the most significant aspects of this study has been to show how club life in Manchester and Liverpool was fiercely independent –

\[\text{Objects, Space and Identity within the Indian Subcontinent, c.1800-1947 (Manchester, 2007), pp. 175-177.}\]

differentiated not only from each other but also from London’s clubland. Historians have regularly emphasized the importance of metropolitan clubland, assuming that the clubs and associations in provincial cities were largely imitations of the London scene. This thesis has shown that this was far from the case and that the relationship between the capital and the provinces was more reciprocal than has hitherto been suggested.

Historically, the development of associational culture in the two cities during the nineteenth century points to long social and cultural continuities as much as major ruptures. Clubs were used by middle-class men throughout the period as a setting for social life. There is little to suggest that club culture differed extensively in the first and second half of the century. While clubs certainly became more visible from the end of the 1860s, with the increasing number of purpose-built and elaborately decorated club houses, they confirmed a longer tradition of associational culture as a setting for male friendship and fellowship and organized around the routines of work and professional life. Some clubs, as in the case of the Manchester John Shaw’s Club, even had roots in the previous century.⁶

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 marked a definite change in the role clubs and associations had played in provincial life. Already by November of that year, the Manchester Reform Club was experiencing a shortage of staff owing to military enlistment, and the general committee apologized to members that they could no longer expect the same high level of services they had enjoyed previously.⁷ Military service also had an effect on membership numbers. From May 1916, meetings of the Manchester John Shaw’s Club were held only annually, and those

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⁶ F. S. Stancliffe, John Shaw’s, 1738-1938 (Manchester, 1938).
⁷ 18 November 1914, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1913-1918, MRC1/3/7, JRULSC.
members who remained were urged to ‘foregather in friendly harmony, thus preserving the continuity of the club records.’ As the war removed men from their roles in the home and workplaces, the importance of urban associational culture as a constant place for masculine social life was also affected.

This picture in some ways contradicts how historians have presented the decline of associational culture across the twentieth century. Approaching provincial clubland as part of wider middle-class public culture, Simon Gunn has argued that its dissolution came at the end of the interwar period, ‘once the social and economic foundations of the middle class [had] fragmented’. Peter Clark has suggested that the long-term growth of associational culture since the late sixteenth century faced its most serious challenge during the Second World War, when ‘bombing, blackouts and conscription’ had serious consequences for the regularity of club meetings. Yet Ross McKibbin has insisted that formal associationalism continued to be a distinguishing feature of middle-class culture up until the middle of the twentieth century. In fact, it would seem that towards the end of the nineteenth century there was a move towards a more suburban-based club life. Architects such as Alfred Darbyshire, who had been responsible for the design of city-centre club houses in Manchester and Liverpool, shifted their attention to suburban projects. Billiard tables, bowling greens and concert halls suggest these new clubs were intended to

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8 31 May 1916, John Shaw’s Club Minute Book 1892-1921, M485/1/2, MALS.
play an important role in suburban social and cultural life. The general point here is that investigation of club life after 1918 is an open field for fresh research, which has the potential to suggest new insights into the forms of middle-class masculinity.

There is some agreement that the character of modern associational culture shifted with increasing female involvement. While McKibbin has noted that men dominated club life and associational culture in the first half of the twentieth century, he also noted that ‘the pattern was increasingly for husbands and wives to join associations together’. Helen McCarthy has similarly argued in her research on service clubs, that associational culture in the decades after 1918 demonstrated a clear shift towards gender equality. However, the extent to which the twentieth century marked a drastic change in relation to women’s participation in club life and associational culture remains questionable. By end of the nineteenth century, women had an increasingly visible presence in urban clubs and associations, not least in the large social and political club houses of Manchester and Liverpool. The Manchester Reform Club had a separate Ladies Room since at least 1895, and women were also allowed access to the Reading Room, Sandwich Room and Grill Room after four o’clock in the afternoon. Women’s social evenings and weekend trips to the countryside, organized by clubs for members and their wives, as well as children’s parties in the club house, all provide evidence that middle-class men made attempts to integrate family and club life in the provincial city. Further, as Erica Rappaport has shown, the emergence of women’s clubs were in late nineteenth

15 McKibbin, Classes and Cultures, pp. 88-89.
17 7 November 1895, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1895-1898, MRC 1/3/1, JRULSC; 25 March 1903, Manchester Reform Club General Committee Minute Book 1901-1904, MRC 1/3/3, JRULSC.
century London part of a female urban culture that was concentrated around the West End.\textsuperscript{18} Manchester and Liverpool also had Ladies’ Clubs established in the 1880s, which provided women with the resources of dining rooms, dressing rooms and writing rooms and were located in close proximity to men’s clubs.\textsuperscript{19} Both masculine and feminine club cultures developed in the provincial cities of Manchester and Liverpool on par with London.

This thesis has demonstrated how nineteenth-century associational culture was firmly rooted in the context of the city and its distinctive urban environment. Groups held their meetings in city-centre taverns, club houses were built in prominent locations, close to public buildings and places of work, and even home-based societies were described by their members as part of urban and public life. For middle-class men who lived and worked in and around Manchester and Liverpool during the nineteenth century there was an alternative sphere to those of the home and work. I have argued throughout that historians of nineteenth-century masculinity need to move away from the separate spheres dichotomy and consider the ways in which masculine identity was constructed among and between men, as well as in relation to women. I have also shown the importance of considering the place and setting of social and cultural relations to further understand the function of the club and association in the lives of middle-class men. Club life was not simply a subsidiary sphere of men’s sociability, but it was an integral part of masculine provincial culture.

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