

What is the Co-operative Heritage Trust?

We exist to preserve the heritage assets of the co-operative movement in the UK.

This means that we look after collections from records to objects which tell the story of how the movement began, the way it grew and its influence on the social, economic and political history of the country.

One of our assets is the building in which the first successful consumer co-operative began. **Number 31 Toad Lane** was where 28 working class people came together to try to create a fairer way to live and work to benefit their community. They established a set of values and principles which formed the basis for co-operative organisations all over the world. The building, which has been open as **Rochdale Pioneers Museum** since 1931, remains a source of inspiration for people wanting be a part of positive change. *We are an accredited museum.

We also provide secure storage for and access to records in our **National Co-operative Archive**; housed at Holyoake House, in Manchester where members of the public visit by appointment to do their own research.

What the Museum does

Rochdale Pioneers museum is free to the general public. This enables locals and other visitors to discover more about how citizens of Rochdale were able to come together to benefit their community. We want everyone to be able to appreciate why what happened here in 1844 was important and the difference people can make when they work together.

We continue to collect objects which help to tell the story of the UK movement and accept donations from the public according to our policies and storage. Due to our small size, we can only show a limited amount of our collections at any one time, so we rotate displays through temporary themed exhibitions.

We host public events and workshops for a range of audiences, ages and interests.

The Rochdale Pioneers were committed to education and helping people to help themselves. We continue this through our schools and adult education programmes as well as by working with local communities to grow confidence and skills through co-operative practice. We try to put the ideas we stand for into action to help people understand why the heritage of the movement is still relevant to people's lives today.

What the Archive does

Based in Manchester's Co-operative Quarter, we hold a wide range of records in different media relating to the development of the movement in the UK. We exist to preserve these records for the future and to provide access to them for people to learn from and interpret them in different ways. We work with researchers from local historians to students, writers and artists looking for inspiration in our materials.

We are able to offer advice to co-operative businesses and groups about how to take care of records they hold. Additionally, we continue to collect contemporary materials which will be of value to researchers in the future.

We are working to digitise a higher percentage of our collections to make them more accessible.

The Co-operative Heritage Trust was formed in 2007, bringing the museum and archive service together. The Trust was formed by three founders to be an independent charity in order to safeguard the heritage of the movement for the future.

Our founders

31 Toad Lane was first opened as a museum in 1931, and was cared for by the Co-operative Union, which is now known as Co-operatives UK (the apex body for co-operative organisations).

The archival and library collections were held by the Co-operative College, which was created in 1919 to provide training and education for British co-operators and still exists to provide support and development in the UK and overseas.

The Co-operative Group was created from a number of mergers with the Co-operative Wholesale Society or CWS which was first formed in 1863. It is now one of the largest consumer retail co-operatives in the world and the UK's fifth largest food retailer.

From the Co-operative Heritage Trust website: <https://www.co-operativeheritage.coop/>

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In October 2019 the management agreement with the Co-operative College expired and was not renewed. This means that the College no longer provides management services and staff for the CHT. From this date The Co-operative Heritage Trust will have its own constitution and governance as an independent Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).