

People's History Museum timeline



1960s A group of activists, including the **Trade Union Labour and Co-operative History Society** (TULC), begin to collect historical campaign materials about the rights of working people.

1975 The **National Museum of Labour History** (NMLH) is opened by **Prime Minister Harold Wilson** in Limehouse Town Hall in Tower Hamlets, London.

The collection on display to the public includes writer and political activist **Thomas Paine's** (1737-1809) desk and banners that would go on to form what would become the largest collection of political and trade union banners in the world.

1980-1984 The museum rescues material that would simply have been lost otherwise. The museum also acquires the complete collection from prominent activist **Walter Southgate** (1890-1986). This sees the museum grow from one room in Limehouse Town Hall to the entire building.

1985 The museum acquires a vast part of influential artist **Cliff Rowe's** (1904-1989) work including paintings, works on paper, sketchbooks and folios. Many of the images capture female scientists at work.

July 1986 A Board of Trustees is created by **Michael Foot MP** and General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) **Jack Jones**.

1988 The museum's future is threatened by a lack of funding, the collection is rescued by **Manchester City Council** and the Greater Manchester authorities, with the help of the **Trades Union Congress** (TUC). The move to Manchester begins.

February 1989 Director **Dr Nick Mansfield** is appointed and builds up a team of qualified staff, and the existing collection begins to be properly catalogued and conserved.

1990 Interest in the museum and the work it is doing to engage people in the story of British democracy continues to grow and the collection rapidly expands. This includes the acquisition of important 19th century trade union banners.



The oldest surviving trade union banner, the **Tin Plate Workers Society banner** of 1821, is one of those acquired.

April 1990 The **Labour Party archive** arrives – the most complete political party archive in the world, which is later followed by Labour Party poster, photographic and object collections.

May 1990 After challenging work to fund the move from London and catalogue the collection, **The National Museum of Labour History** opens in its new location on Princess Street in central Manchester, in the building where the first meeting of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) took place over one hundred years earlier.

A series of changing exhibitions begins, with partners including the **Musicians' Union** and the **Professional Footballers' Association**.

1991 The museum is awarded **national registration**, under a recently introduced Museum Registration scheme.

1992 A commemorative plate is donated to the museum, a piece created to recognise the **Dagenham Ford sewing machinists'** strike of 1968 and the Equal Pay Act that followed in 1970.

28 May 1994 Larger premises are needed, so a second site is opened at **Manchester's Grade II listed Edwardian Pump House**, which had been closed since 1972. The building allows for public galleries, exhibition spaces, learning programmes, events and a shop and cafe.



The expansion to a second site is accompanied by a vision to expand the museum further in the future, so that all its activities, services, operations and staff can be on one site.

1995 Following the disbandment of the **Communist Party of Great Britain**, the museum acquires the party's collections of working class material. This includes several hundred early 19th century radical and anti-radical cartoons, posters from the Tory and Liberal parties and women's suffrage movement posters.

1997 The **Employment Department** donates a unique collection relating to the impact of the state on working people.

The museum embarks on the **National Banner Survey** of all historic banners in UK museum collections. It is the very first attempt to create a national survey of one group of objects. Over 3,000 museums take part. The survey records are still hosted on the collections database and are searchable on the museum website.

1998 The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) introduces a '**Designation Scheme**', for collections of 'pre-eminent national importance'. The museum's complete collection is given Designated status.

spring 1998 Created with professional actors, writers and directors in conjunction with Peoplescape Theatre, a series of **Living History** performances is developed to tell the stories of historical moments through the lives of individuals. Events covered include the Match Girls' Strike (1888) and the Jarrow March (1936). Regular performances have been ongoing ever since; part of public programmes and bookable for groups as part of the Learning Programme.

26 September 1998 *The Tories and the People: Mass Conservatism 1867-1997* exhibition is opened by Leader of the Conservative Party **William Hague MP**.

It is the first of four exhibitions on British political parties, and draws on the museum's extensive collection of Conservative Party objects from the original iteration as the Tories to today.

26 February 2000 *The Builders and the Dreamers: One Hundred Years of the Labour Party* exhibition is opened by Home Secretary **Jack Straw MP**.

2001 The museum becomes part of a Pan-European collaboration funded by the European Union (EU) – **Migration, Work and Identity** – with





3 November 2001

seven sister institutions. The project lasts for four years with exhibitions, publications and joint learnings exploring migrant communities throughout the continent.

ITV's *Spitting Image* co-creator **Roger Law** donates the puppets of Harold Wilson and Michael Foot. The number of puppets in the collection has since grown and remains a fascination for visitors.

Reforming Manchester: The Liberals and the City exhibition is opened by Leader of the Liberal Democrats **Charles Kennedy MP**.

1 February 2002

The museum announces a new name: **People's History Museum** (PHM) ahead of the XVII Commonwealth Games in Manchester (summer 2002). The museum's changing exhibition programme becomes more diverse with a focus on cultural diversity and social inclusion became part of the Commonwealth Games' legacy.

17 July 2003

A key item of 1980s political history, **Michael Foot's 'donkey jacket'** is donated to the museum. The former Leader of the Labour Party was widely criticised for wearing it at the Cenotaph for the 1981 Remembrance Day service. The jacket was bought by Michael Foot's wife from Harrods.



2004

A **Peterloo pike**, which is said to have been used on St Peter's Field by one of the protestors for self-protection, is donated to the museum by the owner's great, great, great grandchild. This is one of several significant Peterloo Massacre items in PHM's collection.

9 August 2005

Chancellor of the Exchequer **Gordon Brown MP** announces PHM is to become one of the national museums that is free to enter.

25 January 2006

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) agrees to support the museum's proposed 'one site' project – to bring all of the museum's activities, services, operations and staff onto one site.

27 April 2007

Songwriter and political activist **Billy Bragg** opens the last changing exhibition, *Battle for the Ballot – the struggle for the vote in Britain*, before the museum closes for redevelopment.

7 October 2007

PHM closes to the public and work begins to move both staff and the collections to their short term homes. For the museum this means a temporary home at the **Science and Industry Museum** (MOSI).

16 January 2008

An investment of £12.5 million is successfully secured from local, regional and national partners. Work begins on a modern four storey extension attached to the Pump House.

28 January 2008

PHM @ MOSI is opened by Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families **Ed Balls MP**, with some of PHM's most popular displays on show in the 1830 Warehouse.

January 2009

The museum's new extension is clad in Cor-Ten® steel, the first public building in Manchester to use this unusual material perhaps most well known for being used for the Angel of the North.

27 October 2009

The Pump House celebrates its centenary. The building was built between 1907 and 1909, and was designed by **City Architect Henry Price**, who also designed Victoria Baths.

13 February 2010

The new museum opens its doors to the public for the first time and features two permanent galleries, a state of the art conservation studio,



a changing exhibition gallery, archive and study centre and extensive learning and community spaces where visitors are invited to explore ideas worth fighting for.

The first annual banner exhibition takes place. This has taken place every year since and results in the revamp of a quarter of the museum's main galleries and its visitor experience.

The new museum is officially opened by Secretary of State for Health **Andy Burnham MP**.



9 August 2010 **Katy Ashton** joins as Director and leads the museum on the next chapter of its trail blazing journey.

30 May 2011 PHM's first wedding ceremony takes place with the reception held in the Engine Hall.

1 November 2012 PHM's first same sex civil partnership ceremony is held at the museum.

2013-2014 PHM welcomes a record breaking 100,000 visitors. Donations, Venue Hire bookings and shop sales soar.

17 November 2014 **Join the Radicals** scheme is launched, enabling people to sponsor their chosen Radical and in doing so support vital work of the museum.

14 February 2015 *Election! Britain Votes* opens ahead of the 2015 general election, a major exhibition charting the history of general elections in Britain over the last 100 years. The interactive experience includes the opportunity to register to vote, live feeds, broadcasts and evolving statistics.

28 Jan 2016 **Baroness Jan Royall** takes over from **Lord John Monks** as Chair of PHM's Board of Trustees.

18 May 2016 PHM unveils an interactive installation *The Euro Tunnel* ahead of the EU Referendum in June, explaining what the EU does, who our MEPs are, how they are elected and encouraging people to use their vote.

2017 PHM embarks on an ambitious contemporary collecting programme, linking to programme themes; LGBT+ stories, contemporary campaigns for women's rights, modern protest, migration and disabled people's rights and activism.

2 March 2017 Actor and activist **Ian McKellen** opens the exhibition *Never Going Underground: The Fight for LGBT+ Rights*.

This marks 50 years since the partial decriminalisation of homosexual acts in England and Wales (1967 Sexual Offences Act) and is the first time that the museum takes a theme-led approach to its programming. Throughout 2017 events, talks, community projects and learning sessions explore the LGBT+ movement and the museum continues to grow its collection to better represent LGBT+ stories.

August 2017 With the support of a crowdfunding campaign, the museum acquires the **Manchester suffragette banner** (1908), which becomes one of the most iconic pieces in its collection.

2 October 2017 PHM is named as the **Family Friendly Museum of the Year**. Presented by national organisation Kids in Museums, this is the only museum award in Britain where families pick the winner.



6 February 2018 As the centenary of the Representation of the People Act (1918) is marked, PHM begins a year long programme to consider what representation means to people one hundred years on.

2 June 2018 *Represent! Voices 100 Years On* exhibition opens by recreating a suffragette protest that took place in 1910 ahead of a march which would become known as Black Friday due to the atrocities that were inflicted upon those seeking to gain the right to vote.



Leading the voices of today is women's rights activist and writer **Helen Pankhurst**, great granddaughter of Emmeline Pankhurst.

The museum acquires **Women's March** placards and a pink 'Pussyhat' to reflect contemporary campaigns for women's rights.

October 2018 A mural on the exterior of the building by international street artist **Axel Void** is revealed called *Peterloo*. The work remembers the Peterloo Massacre by viewing it through the lens of the Windrush scandal.

November 2018 The museum discovers and displays the first written account of suffragette force-feeding in prison in a 1909 letter written from one suffragette to another.

16 August 2019 PHM plays a leading role in marking the **200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre**. In this month alone 11,000 people visit the exhibition *Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest*, which is part of a year long focus for the whole museum exploring the past, present and future of protest. It includes a very rare Peterloo artefact donated by a descendant of its owner who was present at Peterloo, known as the Peterloo cane.

20 September 2019 PHM joins the **Global Climate Strike** by carrying out an #ArtStrike. Exhibits in *Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest* go on strike for the day in support of those demanding action to prevent further global warming and climate change. The #ArtStrike initiative is led by the UK Student Climate Network.

Student climate strike placards are added to the museum's collection.

1 January 2020 PHM begins its most ambitious programme to date, with a year dedicated to the exploration of migration, working with a specially recruited **Community Programme Team** made up of people whose lives have been shaped by migration. The focus for contemporary collecting is on migration and the effect of the hostile environment.



13 February 2020 Consultation begins for 2021's programme exploring disabled people's rights and activism.

13 February 2020 PHM marks the 10th anniversary of its current building with a party, a live music event and open house celebration. An **Impact Report** is published on the story and results of PHM's work over the last ten years.