

## Scottish Co-operative History

Many sources show that the Co-operative movement began in Rochdale, Lancashire in 1844 at a time when the Industrial Revolution was forcing more and more skilled workers into poverty. It was established by a group of social reformers who each paid £1 to establish the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society. Its aim was to sell unadulterated food products to the poor and return the surplus, or dividend, to the customers.

### **It was based on the principles of:**

- 1) Open and voluntary membership;
- 2) Democracy;
- 3) Member Economic Participation;
- 4) Autonomy and Independence;
- 5) Education and Information;
- 6) Co-operation; and
- 7) Concern for the Community.

However, materials have come to light that show Fenwick in Ayrshire was actually the location of the first ever co-op in 1769. The Rochdale model was very similar to the first Fenwick Co-op. Evidence of the Fenwick Co-operative can be found at the [National Library of Scotland](#).

By the beginning of the 20th Century 1004 independent co-operative societies had been established throughout Britain. By 1962 one quarter (1/4) of the British population were members and the organisation employed half a million people. They grew to be much more than a shop as they developed libraries, clinics, funeral parlours, Women's Guilds and much more.

Although today the Co-op has a smaller food retail market share of 6.7% in Scotland, it still remains much more than just a shop. It is involved in social and community activities and retains its commitment to creating a fairer society based on mutuality.

Scotland on Screen has a film explaining the history of the Fenwick Weavers: <http://s.coop/599h>

