

Exploring Greater Manchester

a fieldwork guide

Web edition edited by Paul Hindle



Original printed edition (1998) edited by Ann Gardiner,
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1.3 Urban Regeneration: From Little Ireland to Castlefield

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Aims: To show examples of regeneration activity in Manchester and, in particular, some of the successful features of the Castlefield Urban Heritage Park.

Location: Chorlton-on-Medlock to Castlefield Urban Heritage Park.

Starting point: Junction of Oxford Road and Chester Street.

Estimated time: 1 hour.

Safety Measures: Take care near canals and in secluded places. Beware of traffic. It is recommended that you do not do this walk on your own.

Further reading:

Florida R (2003) *Boho Britain* Demos, London

Gibson C and Hardman D (1998) Managing Urban Heritage for Tourism. *Managing Leisure* 3/1, 37-54

Kidd A (2002) *Manchester* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh

Rochdale Canal: <http://www.penninewaterways.co.uk/rochdale/rc2.htm>

Date of last revision: July 2003.

Background

This area is on the edge of the city centre. In the 1970s and 80s it became very run down with many derelict sites and buildings. Manchester City Council made attempts to regenerate the area, but the main impetus behind the improvements was the Central Manchester Development Corporation (1988-1996). The CMDC assembled land, paid for infrastructure and gave grants to local businesses. Many of the projects you will see have been assisted by CMDC. The private sector now has confidence in the area as can be seen from the number of construction sites and new projects. A lot of the new developments are for residential properties, either conversions or newly built, and city centre living is now very popular. Manchester has been nominated as the top city in Britain for creativity and diversity by Demos (Florida, 2003).

Ireland because of the Irish community that was concentrated there. Some of the mills have been converted into high-class apartments or offices and some sites have new buildings.

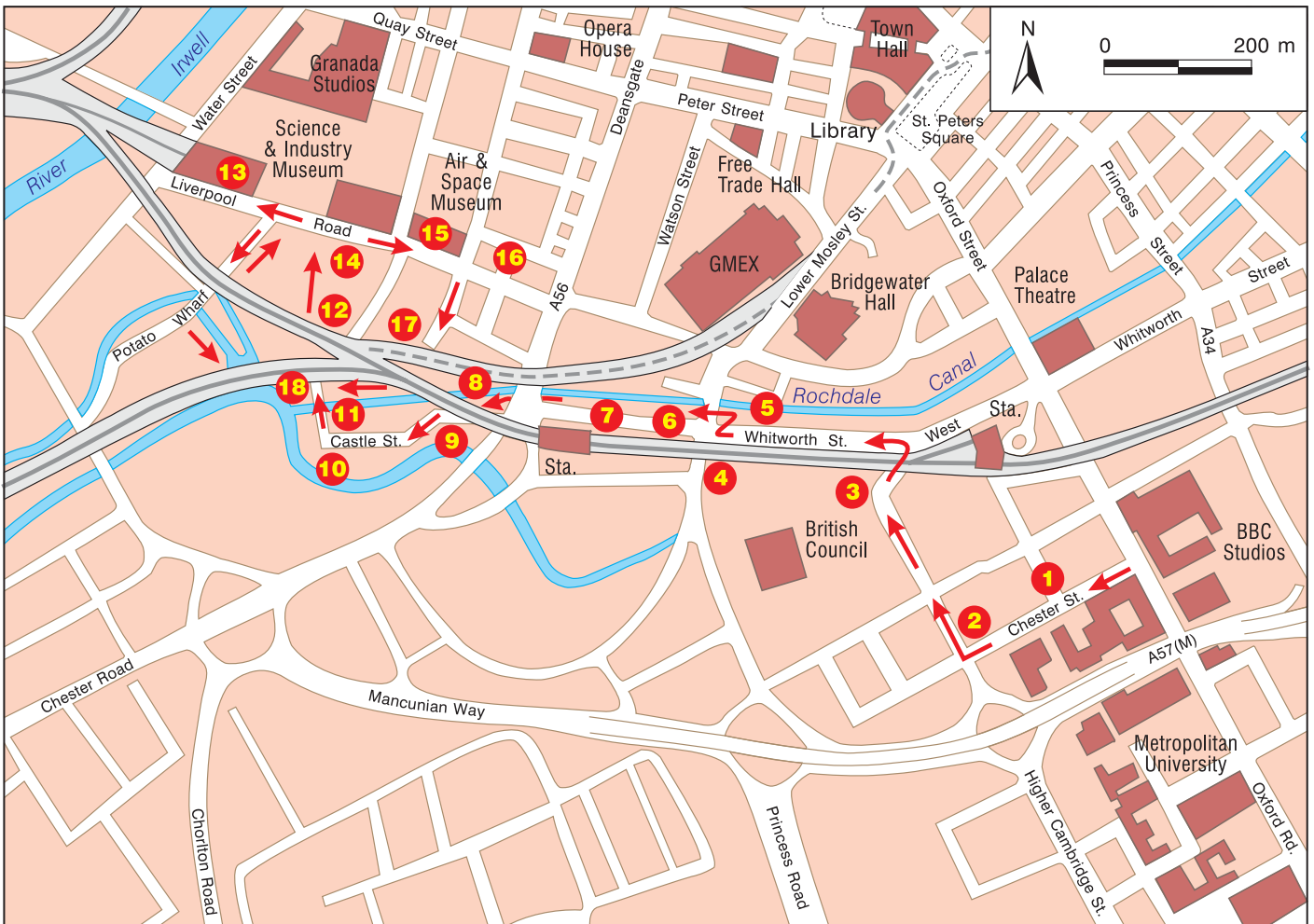
The site on the corner of Chester Street and Lower Ormond Street is currently (2003) a building site. It will be a new development called the Quadrangle which will include retail space on the ground floor, apartments built round a courtyard and parking. It is typical of many of the new residential developments in the area. Are they marketed at young professionals? Is there a finite market for this type of development? The government is encouraging more homes to be built in city centres, however is the city become overdeveloped?

Walking Tour

1. Start – Junction of Oxford Road and Chester Street. Walk down Chester Street; stop at Lower Ormond Street.

This area (Chorlton on Medlock) was, in early Victorian times, very busy and congested. You can see some of the mills that remain. As people tended to live very close to their places of work, houses generally surrounded the mills. Much of the land now used for the University was previously occupied by housing, which was usually of poor quality. The area of Lower Ormond Street was called Little





2. Walk along Chester Street towards Cambridge Street.

The Student Village on the corner of Chester Street and Cambridge Street was formerly Cambridge Street Mills. This is a Grade 2 listed building (listed as being of historical or architectural importance). It is the place where Mr Mackintosh developed the process for waterproofing fabric. The building also contains examples of early uses of cast iron roof supports. It was occupied by Dunlop Ltd, but then became derelict for a number of years. Housing Projects Ltd converted the building to over 1000 student flats as a private sector scheme; it was aided by a city grant of £4 million.

Turn right into Cambridge Street.

There are more examples of mill conversions. The Chorlton Mill scheme on the right is an example of the market responding to demand without the need for grant assistance. Mackintosh Village, further along, is also under construction (2003). The housing developers now have confidence in the area and will build without financial incentives.

3. Stop on the bridge over the River Medlock.

The river used to form the boundary of the township of Chorlton on Medlock and Manchester. From Victorian times the city has turned its back on its rivers – the Medlock, the Irwell and the Irk. Notice that most of the buildings go down to the river’s edge. Whilst the Development Corporation carried out a lot of work on the canal network in the city centre there was little done to the River Medlock. You will see the Medlock again in Castlefield.



4. Walk under the Railway viaduct and turn left onto Whitworth Street. Keeping on the left hand side of the road walk past the car park entrance to where there you can see through the viaduct arches.

Grand Island. This site now known as Grand Island was formerly the site of the Gaythorn gas works. The site was heavily contaminated and a significant amount of the money for the project was spent on decontaminating the ground to deal with the pollution problems from tar and methane. The building was built for the British Council and was their prestigious regional headquarters. They have since 'downsized' and moved out; the building is now occupied by BT.



Look at the landscaping and the footpath that runs parallel to the viaduct. The arches have been opened up. Note the use of machinery as sculpture. Unfortunately it has been defaced by graffiti. The pathways appear to be popular with skateboarders, is this a problem?



Number One City Road. Opposite Grand Island and to your right is the building with the round towers. It was previously pink! It remained unlet for many years. The architect wanted it to be a landmark, because this is one of the main routes into Manchester from the airport. What do you think about the architecture?

5. Turn round and retrace your steps a little to cross over Whitworth Street West and walk between the solicitors' office and the Merchants Exchange to reach the canal towpath.



This is the Rochdale Canal, completed in 1804. To your right it goes over the Pennines to Sowerby Bridge. It is fed by water from Hollingworth Lake and is therefore reasonable clean. Note the canalside cafes, pubs and wine bars. This space which was once industrial is now being taken over by leisure uses. Also notice the high quality materials used in the refurbishment of the towpath such as York stone and special paviers. This canal arm links the Rochdale Canal to the basin next to the Bridgewater Hall, enabling concertgoers to arrive by boat.



Turn left and walk along the footpath.

The large construction site (2003) on the left was the home of the Hacienda, a famous Manchester nightclub.

6. Go under the bridge.

Look back at Albion Wharf (gothic italianate style turquoise windows). This building was semi-derelict, but has now been refurbished; the facade remains but the rear section has been rebuilt. A number of buildings in Manchester have been treated in this way – is this a good way to deal with a listed building?



Deansgate Lock. The arches of the viaduct were originally blocked up and the area was drab. They have now been opened up and used for clubs and bars.

7. Walk along the towpath through the Deansgate Tunnel towards Castlefield.

Throughout the city centre the Rochdale Canal has been improved with repairs to the towpaths, lighting and better access.



8. Once you have left the tunnel and gone under a bridge stop at the bottom of the steps.

You will see Eastgate on your left; another example of a refurbished mill, now the home of a number of creative industries. Opposite there is an unsightly sawmill and a derelict fire-damaged building. This is where the remains of the Roman fort, and the origins of Manchester, lie. Note the building has been constructed directly off the rock, no foundations. What would you do with the site?



Opposite where you are standing is Pioneer Quay. You can see the stub of a canal arm. Manchester's canal network was much more extensive in the mid-19th century than it is today. There are still remnants of that network underground.

9. Go up the steps and cross over Castle Street, where there is a viewpoint.

Below you can see the Bridgewater Canal. It was constructed by the Duke of Bridgewater to bring coal from his mine at Worsley into Manchester; it was completed in 1762. You can see Coal Wharf below, currently used for car parking. The coal was hoisted up and you can see openings in the parapet walls where the sacks of coal were taken up, the weighbridge also still exists.

You are standing on the Grocers' Warehouse, it is one of the first refurbishment schemes in Castlefield and it was carried out by the City Council who aimed to recreate the warehouse. Goods would have been brought in below and hoisted up; you can walk below and see parts of the mechanism. Opposite you can see the Quay Bar a modern building designed by Stephenson Bell, a well known Manchester architectural practice. The project cost £1.35 million and has won a Royal Institute of British Architects award. It contrasts with the traditionally designed 'Staffordshire' canal bridge to the left.



10. Continue along Castle Street and pause by the side of Dukes 92.

You can look back across the Bridgewater Canal to Castle Quay, an apartment block on Deansgate. The building used to belong to the Manchester Ship Canal Company and was called Middle Warehouse. It was one of the first buildings in the area to be converted. It is a fine example of warehouse architecture – the boat holes where the goods were unloaded are now glazed in.



Continue along to the next bridge which crosses the Rochdale Canal.

This is where the Rochdale and the Bridgewater canals meet. The modern bridge which can be seen to the left links Catalan Square with Slate Wharf where there is new housing development.

Walk across the square in front of the Barça, under the main viaducts and over the 'Staffordshire' bridge.

These viaducts area an important landmark in the area. Some are in active use by trains or Metrolink, but others are redundant. Some of the viaducts are listed which means they cannot be demolished and have to be maintained.

The building next to you is Merchants' Warehouse. It was badly damaged by fire and remained derelict for many years. It was refurbished by Jim Ramsbottom, who owns Dukes 92; it is the home to a number of software companies.



11. *Continue along Castle Street where you can see the front of Dukes 92. This was originally the stable block for the ponies which towed the canal barges. It was refurbished and has since been extended owing to its success. You can see the Lock keeper's cottage on the opposite bank.*

12. *Continue alongside the canal arm under a red brick viaduct. The outdoor arena is promoted by the City Council for carnivals and musical events.*



Walk up the steps that are next to the Castlefield Hotel. The Castlefield Hotel is a mid-range hotel and contains the Y-club leisure club.

Turn left and walk to the western end of Liverpool Road.

13. *Cross over to see the Liverpool Road Station.*

This was the first passenger station in the world opened in 1830 (a Grade 1 listed building) and now part of the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry.



Cross back over Liverpool Road and turn right into Potato Wharf. As you may have realised by now many roads or areas are named after the goods which were kept there.

Walk under a bridge and up to the bridge on your right.

Looking below you can see the River Medlock again reappearing from underground.

Cross the road and walk towards the Visions building which has a futuristic design, it is built along the principles of energy saving. In front of it is the Giant's Basin – this is a piece of Victorian engineering which was used to regulate the water levels in the canal. Overflow water goes into the River Medlock which is below.

Next to the Giant's Basin is the Youth Hostel, which provides reasonably priced accommodation close to the city centre.



14. *Walk back onto Potato Wharf under the bridge, turn right and through the car park and back to the towpath. Walk in front*

of the Y Club and up the steps back onto Liverpool Road. Turn right and continue along Liverpool Road past the white building (the former Visitor Centre)

On the right hand side is the former Sunday School to St Matthew's Church, it is now the offices of a firm of architects. St Matthew's Church once stood further down Liverpool Road on a site now occupied by a motorbike company. The church was designed by Sir Charles Parry who designed the Houses of Parliament – it was a fine example of neo-gothic architecture. Unfortunately it was demolished when the population in the area declined and there was no longer a viable congregation.



You may wish to visit the Science and Industry Museum – it is free and well worth a visit, there are many galleries, you could spend a whole day there or just visit one gallery at a time. The Making of Manchester exhibition is excellent background to the history of Manchester.

Continue along Liverpool Road to the park.

Looking across the road you can see the two glass buildings which formed the Upper and Lower Campfield markets. One is now the Air and Space Gallery of the Museum of Science and Industry, and the other is occupied by restaurants and offices.



Walk across the park.

Sheep gently graze here.



From here you can see the reconstruction of the Roman Fort. What do you think of it?



17. Walk through the Roman gateway.

There are display panels with more information. The mural on the viaduct tries to give the atmosphere of a Roman fort.



18. Continue walking back under the main viaducts to Catalan Square.

From here you can walk back to your starting point along the canal towpath or walk along Castle Street, Whitworth Street West and Lower Ormond Street.

Alternatively you can relax in one of the many pubs and bars to reflect on your tour.