

Exploring Greater Manchester

a fieldwork guide

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Rochdale Canal Walk: Two centuries of urban change

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Aims: A walking tour to investigate the reuse and regeneration of the Rochdale Canal and neighbouring premises through the city centre and into Ancoats. The environmental theme is the struggle to maintain environmental quality in an urban water way and the contrast between managed and naturally recolonised vegetated areas.

Starting point: Deansgate-Castlefield metrolink station (which adjoins Deansgate Rail Station)

Estimated time: 1½ - 2 hours (3 miles / 5 km)

Further information:

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Maps: Ordnance Survey Greater Manchester Street Atlas (large scale city centre pages)

Bancks and Co's Plan of Manchester and Salford 1831

Date of Last Revision: March 2012

Introduction

This walk takes a route away from the streets across the southern part of the urban core of Manchester, in places cutting through the sandstone bedrock, in others diving beneath roads and buildings and elsewhere exposing vistas of water bodies. It passes some of Manchester's oldest industrial buildings and some of its most modern office and apartment buildings. While much of the length of waterway followed was built between 1798 and 1804, a new section was built in New Islington in 2007–2011! The 33 mile long Rochdale Canal was the first trans-Pennine canal, with 92 sets of locks and climbing nearly 200 meters to link Manchester to Sowerby Bridge, whence boats had access via the Calder and Hebble Navigation to Hull and the east coast. Reuse and regeneration is the human theme of this walk.

The walk begins at the Deansgate-Castlefield metrolink station. From the southbound platform (that closest to the Deansgate Railway Station link bridge) go down the staircase to street level, cross Deansgate and walk down Bridgewater street until you see Manchester's reconstructed Roman fort in front of you. The Fort is part of the Castlefield Urban Heritage Park that was so designated in 1982 in recognition of the wealth of historic sites in the area. Walk up to the reconstructed part of the fort and see the view across the Potato Wharf area towards Salford. The history of the Roman Fort can be divided into three major stages:

(i) The first turf and timber fort stood from 79 AD to

around 110–125 AD. Because the south side of the fort was protected by the River Medlock, the two defensive ditches lay on three sides only. The fort probably contained barracks, granaries, stables and a commandant's house. A small civilian settlement, or vicus, of about 2000 people, including tradesmen and craftsmen, grew up adjacent to the fort.

(ii) In about 160 AD a larger fort was built on the site of the old one. At the same time the settlement grew in size and importance, becoming more of a local trading centre. Many inhabitants worked metals, with smelting and forging of iron, lead and bronze.

(iii) Around 200 AD a stone fort replaced the old turf and wood one. The vicus was little affected by the building of the stone fort and gradually the industrial activity declined and wooden houses were replaced by newer stone ones. However, when the military left the fort, the vicus declined rapidly.

From the Roman Fort walk down and go under the railway viaducts to Castle Street Bridge across the canal. Castle Street is one of the last settled streets in Manchester. The railway viaducts over both the canal and Castle Street are very good examples of skew bridges. Castle Street Bridge is part of the Bridgewater Canal and displays its name in green and cream, the Bridgewater Canal colours. Following the transfer of responsibility for the Rochdale Canal from the Rochdale Canal Company to British Waterways, the

bridges were numbered (this had not been the practice on the canal and in error this bridge was assigned the number 101). The steel Castlefield Railway Viaduct from Manchester Central, Dawson Street and the red brick viaduct from Knott Mill and Deansgate Station are both Grade II buildings, listed on 4 February 1988. To the left is lock number 92 of the Rochdale Canal, also known as the Dukes lock. At first the Duke of Bridgewater had refused a link to his Bridgewater Canal at Castlefield when the Rochdale Canal bill went to Parliament in 1792. He later relented, and the bill went through Parliament in 1794. Nevertheless, the Duke insisted on control of the last lock, hence the name of the neighbouring bar “Dukes 92”. The canal through the centre of Manchester was opened in 1804 when through access from the Bridgewater Canal to Sowerby in Yorkshire became possible. The feeder reservoirs on the Pennines were not completed until 1827. The Rochdale canal was formally abandoned in 1952. In 1974 the Rochdale Canal Society was formed to promote the restoration of the waterway. Support from local authorities helped in raising funds for restoration and the whole route was re-opened in July 2002.

Look across the Bridgewater Canal to Castle Quay, an apartment block off Chester Road. The building used to belong to the Manchester Ship Canal Company and was called the Middle Warehouse. It was one of the first buildings in the area to be converted around 1988. It is a fine example of warehouse architecture – the boat openings where the goods were unloaded are now glazed in. The main phase of redevelopment of this area was driven by the Central Manchester Redevelopment Corporation from 1989–1994. Initially the effort was to restore existing warehouses, such as the Middle Warehouse. Later the re-use of old buildings was replaced by new-build, such as the buildings around Potato Wharf.

Stop 1: Lock 92, Dukes Lock. Look up the Rochdale Canal and see the Beetham Tower, a landmark £150 million development at the junction of Deansgate, Great Bridgewater Street and Liverpool Road. Standing at 171 m tall, it is the tallest building in Manchester, and has the UK’s highest living space, and is the UK’s tallest building outside London. The building includes a five star, 285 bedroom Hilton Hotel from levels 5–23, a ‘destination sky bar’ on the 24th floor and apartments up to floor 50. As proportion of height to width, the tower is, from the side, one of the thinnest skyscrapers in the world with a ratio of 10/1.

Look at the lock itself. Note the winches attached to the lower lock beams – necessary in order to open the gate which is located up against Castle Street Lock would have been impossible to open otherwise. This is a solution adopted at only a handful of locks in the country. Compare with the other lock gates where the beams are the usual length. As the canal lacks side-ponds and weirs, it is not unusual for excess water to flow straight over the gates.

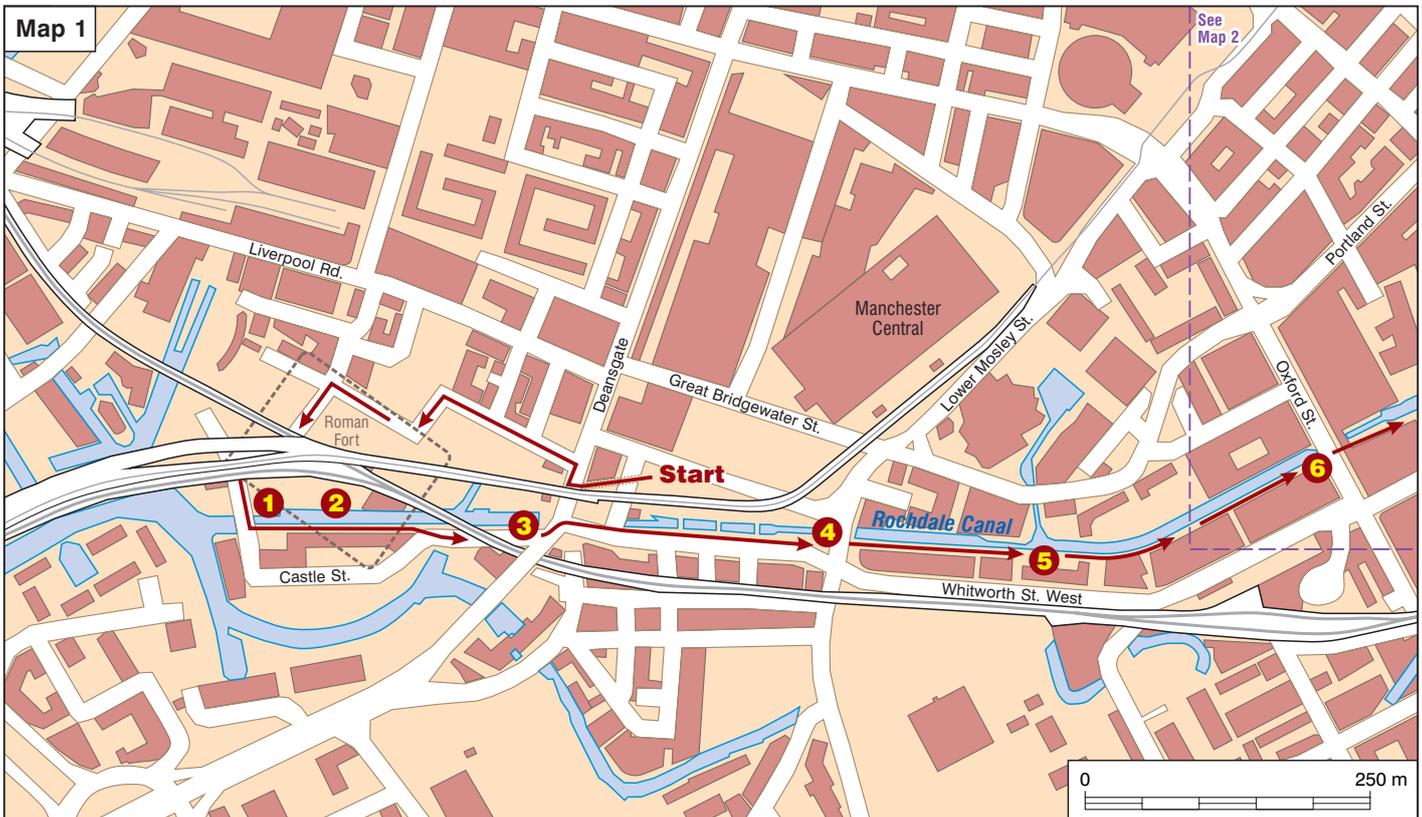
Proceed along the canal towpath.

Stop 2: Opposite the side arm of the canal. Here Canada Geese are frequently seen, using the adjacent grass for grazing and enjoying the waterspace along the canal. The Collyhurst sandstone is exposed on both sides of the canal. The sandstone is of aeolian origin and was formed in a sand-sea with dune and interdune areas. Walk 55 m further along the towpath and you can see a fine example of cross bedding in the sandstone on the other side of the canal. This cross-bedding shows the desert dune origins of the sandstone, where one dune has been formed on top of another, probably when there was a change of wind direction after a period of relative stability.

Proceed along the canal towpath.



Figure 1: Bridgewater Canal views at Castlefield; The Merchants Warehouse, and The Railway Viaduct.



Stop 3: Lock 91. Look at the vegetation growing on the sides of the canal in the spray below the lock gate. Here you see the ferns and lichens typical of wet forest environments. Here is the Gaythorn Tunnel, also known as Knott Mill Tunnel. Today the tunnel is 71m long, but was originally 307m, the rest being opened out into the cutting from the Dukes Lock that you have just walked through. Walk up the ramp to the level of the lock and look at the different types of plants growing in cracks in the pavement on the opposite side of the lock and the reeds growing in a depression. Beyond the bridge the old railway arches, once blocked off, have been opened up for a variety of bars and restaurants.

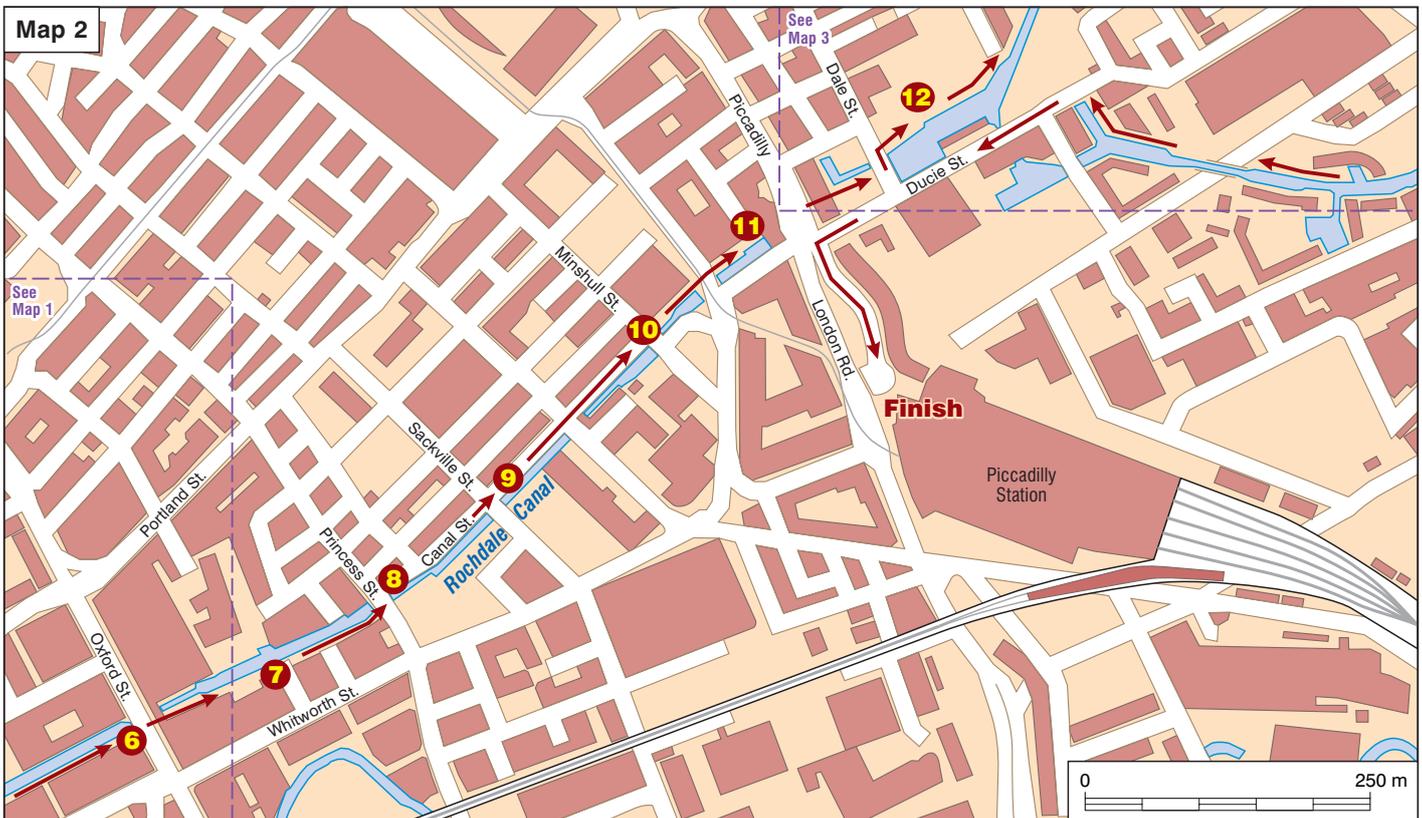
Proceed along the canal towpath.

Stop 4: Lock 90. Here there is another view of the Beetham Tower and the roof of Manchester Central. Once the Central Station, that opened in 1880 as the Manchester terminus of the Midland Railway that ran from St. Pancras in London through Leicester and Derbyshire, Central Station was Manchester's fourth main line station. The original train shed design was attributed to Sir John Fowler, engineer to the very similar St. Pancras Station in London, although the Manchester Guardian at the time commented on the unfinished appearance of Central Station. By the 1930s, 400 trains a day ran into the station but the station was closed under the Beeching plan for the rationalization of the railways in 1969. Several ambitious redevelopment plans

failed to come to fruition and the site remained derelict until regeneration started in 1982 with the total refurbishment of the Grade II listed train shed to form the Greater Manchester Exhibition and Event Centre. The eighteen internal 65 m span wrought-iron arches were consolidated, and externally a new aluminum roof was installed which expresses the original 'Paxton-type' ridge-and-furrow glazing. G-MEX, which was opened by the Queen on 21st March 1986, is now known as Manchester Central (Parkinson-Bailey, 2000).

Proceed along the canal towpath. Immediately after the bridge, the wall of the new Hacienda building is on your right. A former yacht warehouse which housed the legendary Hacienda night club from the early 1980's to 1997 was demolished in 2002 to make way for the present 'Hacienda' apartment building. Venues like *The Hacienda*, which played a central role in the development of the UK *Acid House* scene and the so-called 'Madchester' scene of the late 1980s. A series of panels along the towpath lists the names of the famous bands and groups that played at The Hacienda in its glory days. The first panel to be seen in the direction of the walk is for 2003 and they go back in time as you walk further. (These may have been removed and not replaced).

Stop 5: After Lock 89. A side arm of the canal leads off the opposite bank. This branch leads one end of the Manchester and Salford Junction Canal which led from the basin



adjoining the modern Bridgewater Hall passing under Lower Mosley Street through a pair of locks and then under Watson Street where it entered a 400 m tunnel passing under Deansgate and Campo Street before reappearing just beyond Atherton Street (now the site of Granada Television). Here another pair of locks dropped the level again and a final single lock linked the canal to the River Irwell beyond Water Street, south of the Victoria and Albert warehouses. When this canal was planned, there was no link between the Irwell and the Bridgewater and Rochdale Canals. However, as a part of the passage of the Manchester and Salford Junction Bill, the Bridgewater Company was allowed to build the Hulme locks. The latter were completed in 1838 a year before the Manchester and Salford Junction Canal opened. The middle section of this 1000m canal was filled in when the Cheshire Lines Railway built part of the Central Station over it in 1872. The portion between the Irwell and the great Northern Railway Goods Depot however remained open until 1936, using lifts to interchange goods between the canal and the five levels of railway storage above. The arm feeding into the Rochdale canal was re-opened with the building of the Bridgewater Hall and Barbirolli Square development.

Lock 89 is called Tib Lock. The once partly navigable but now mainly culverted River Tib, whose name is thought to be derived from the Celtic 'watercourse', rises in Miles Platting and flows into the Medlock near Gaythorn Bridge crosses the Rochdale Canal (Warrender, 2007). Proceed along

the canal towpath. The area on your right is a former site of St. Mary's Hospital from which it moved to the present site on Oxford Road in 1904. As you approach Oxford Street note the Portland stone former headquarters of the Calico Printers Association situated over the canal and dominating it (Clegg Knowles Fryer and Penman 1912). On far bank is the headquarters of the Tootal Broadhurst Lee Company, first phase 1896 was faced in orange terra-cotta. The two extensions are easily identifiable.

Stop 6: just before Bridge 98 under Oxford Street. Look back across the river at the brackets about 1.5 m above water level on the side of the building. These originally supported asbestos lagged pipes that carried hot water from the Bloom Street Manchester Corporation Power Station to heat buildings in this part of the city. Keep your eye open for other brackets as you walk under the bridge and further along the canal.

Proceed along the canal towpath. The Palace Theatre is on your right. During its construction, an accident occurred when the Rochdale Canal burst its banks, flooding the stage area. The cost of pumping water from the foundations was estimated to add £2000 to the cost of the building. The opening of the "Manchester Palace of Varieties" originally planned for Easter 1890 actually occurred in 1891 (Pritchard, 1995). There were mills on the site of the Palace Theatre in 1831. On the opposite bank were two arms of the canal, one

going parallel to each side of Dickinson Street. At the head of the western arm, just east of where Portland Street now joins Oxford Road, was the Pickfords Warehouse, “where boats were loaded with goods for London” (Parkinson-Bailey, 2000).

Stop 7: Bridge 97a. On the opposite side of the canal is the former Bloom Street Power Station that, with the adjacent Dickinson Street power station, was the first significant combined heat and power (CHP) plant in Britain, providing steam to nearby offices and factories from 1911 (Russell, 1993). At first the steam was taken “live” from the boilers, but later it was “bled” from the first condensing turbines installed during the First World War. The city centre stations were not selected for inclusion in the Central Electricity Generating Board’s national scheme when the municipal supply was taken over during the nationalization of electricity undertakings in 1950, but the supply of steam continued until the 1990s (Rüdiger, 1986; Budden, 1988; Russell, 1993). The pipes along the canal were removed in the early 2000s. As you look at the power station note the mooring rings for coal barges and the many doors through which coal could be unloaded.

Proceed along the canal towpath passing under the Princess Street Bridge and go up the ramp to Canal Street Lock.

Stop 8: Canal Street. This street along the canal is the heart of the “Village” quarter of Manchester and is the focus for

gay community activities. The Union public house had a gay clientele since the 1940’s and in 1965 the licensee was imprisoned for ‘outraging public decency’ for running a public house in which gay men were welcome. It was renamed the New Union after his release (Parkinson-Bailey, 2000). After improvements to the streets and to lighting on Canal Street by the Central Manchester Development Corporation in the early 1990s and the conversion of older buildings, such as the building which is now Manto’s café bar, the Gay Village started to form its present identity. Canal Street’s development was very much seen as an economic opportunity by Manchester City Council; adding another focus to its city centre leisure attractions. The “Village” now has 20,000 visitors every weekend, and the August Mardi Gras attracts 100,000 visitors.

Here there is a gap in the towpath; turn round and walk over the bridge into Canal Street and follow the footpath with the canal on your right.

Stop 9: Immediately after crossing Sackville Street, look across the canal and see the remains of a large and a small asbestos lagged pipe in the far wall. These were probably a part of the CHP scheme.

Follow Canal Street, crossing Chorlton Street where, at number 41, a canal house was built astride the canal. Proceed to Minshull Street.

Stop 10: Minshull Street Bridge (notice the plaque commemorating the opening of the bridge in 1905). To the

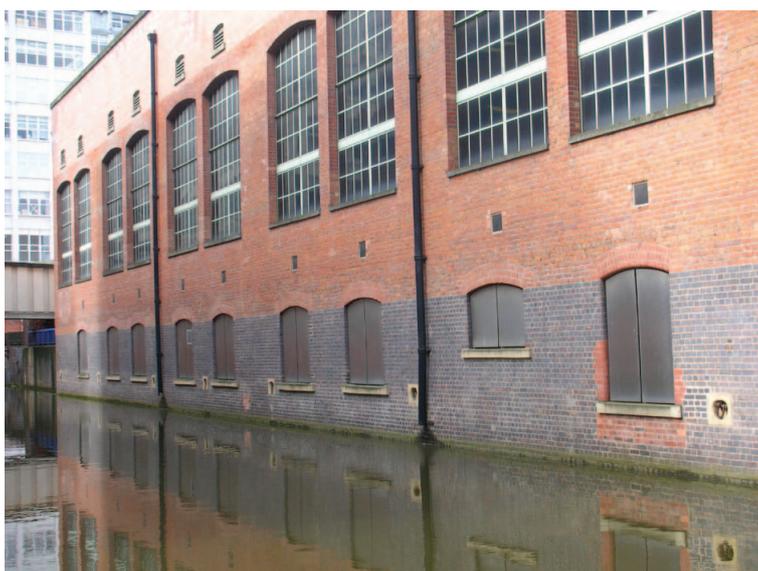


Figure 2: Views of the Bloom Street Power stations, showing the mooring rings and chimney.



left is the Minshull Street Courthouse (originally called the Manchester City Police and Sessions Courts) of Italianate design by Thomas Worthington 1869-1871. Then in contrast see the new Piccadilly Place development. This project is a mixed-used development by Argent and the Carlyle Group. One Piccadilly Place is the “City Inn” building. Two Piccadilly Place is the new headquarters for the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive. Three and Four Piccadilly Place provide 300,000 sq ft of new office space. Five Piccadilly Place contains 167 apartments. Beyond Piccadilly Place is Piccadilly Rail Station,

Rejoin the canal towpath and proceed towards London Road.

Stop 11: Bridge 93a. Note the plants (especially the *Buddleia* (*Buddleia davidii*) which is a perennial woody species, introduced into the UK in the late 19th Century, that has become rampant in urban environments) growing on the bridge and on the walls near the canal. One of our important industrial legacies is the way transport infrastructure allows invasive species to spread around the country. The



Figure 3: Views of the Piccadilly Tunnel.

invasive species appear to have increased plant vigour in locations to which they are introduced. Compared to their native habitat in China, *Buddleia davidii* plants in invasive populations are significantly taller and had thicker stems, larger inflorescences, and heavier seeds than plants in native populations. Since leaf herbivory is substantially reduced in invasive populations, escape from natural enemies, associated with increased plant growth and reproduction, contributes to the invasion success of *Buddleia davidii* in Europe (Ebeling *et al.*, 2008).

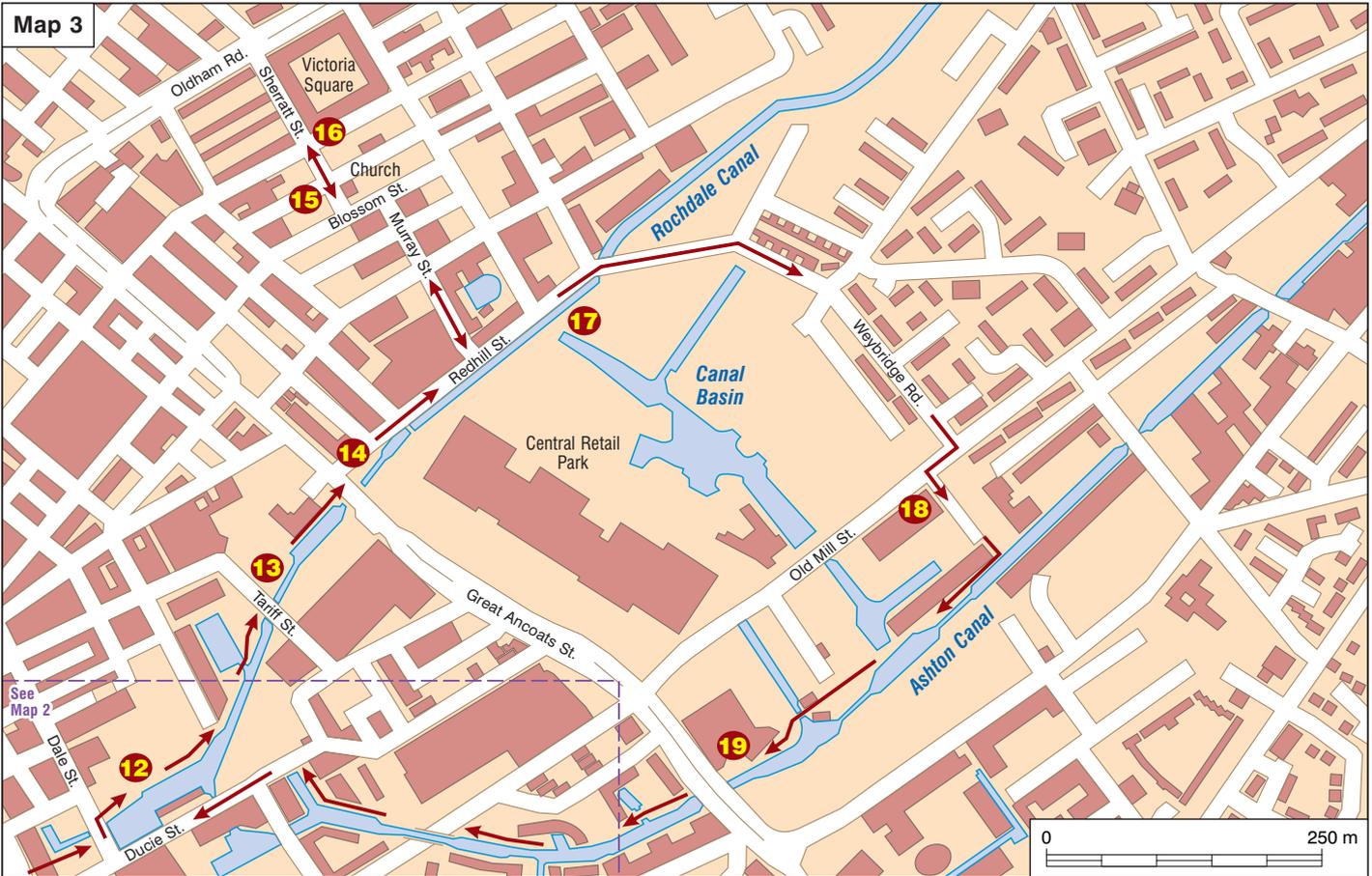
The Malmaison hotel occupied the former Hoyles Warehouse which was built across the canal. During the original construction period, the canal company insisted that the canal be kept navigable at all times. This was achieved. Proceed into the Piccadilly tunnel, observing the basins associated with nearby former warehouses and goods depots.

Stop 12: after the tunnel emerge at Dale Street Lock (84), the first of the “Rochdale Nine” series of locks. These locks that you have passed since leaving Dukes 92 linking the Ashton and Bridgewater Canals through the centre of Manchester formed the only part of the Rochdale Canal not to be closed to navigation in 1952. Just beyond the lock the Ashton Canal turns off to the right. This is part of the “Cheshire Ring” linking to the Peak Forest Canal and the Macclesfield Canal.

At this point it is necessary to turn round, go up on to Dale Street, turn right and walk 20 metres to the Arch leading into Dale Street Car Park, walk through the car park back to the canal and follow the modern footway. Left of the entrance arch to Dale Street Car Park is a four-storey warehouse built of millstone grit 1806, it is the earliest canal warehouse in Manchester that still exists. This building is sometimes referred to as the salt warehouse, although others would dispute the usage. It uses cast-iron columns throughout. It was converted into offices in 2004. After the footbridge there are new apartments. Behind them is a brick grain warehouse built in 1836. Examine the new development around the basin and the entrance to the Ashton Canal. At the footbridge beyond the turning basin, cross back over the Rochdale Canal and rejoin the footpath. Follow it to:

Stop 13: by Bridge 91. Examine the canal basin with the Grade II star listed Jackson’s Warehouse that has been converted into apartments. The developer’s description of the conversion reads:

“Jacksons Warehouse is a stylish conversion in the heart of Manchester and comprises a stunning waterside



residential development of 40 luxury apartments. Future phases of residential development are planned adjacent to Jackson’s Warehouse and will comprise circa 58 apartments and incorporate restaurant/retail use at ground and lower ground floor level. Further residential provision is planned to complement the retail village”.

Follow the towpath under Tariff Street and Great Ancoats Street to:



Figure 4: Jackson’s warehouse, the new apartments and the redeveloped canal basin. Tariff Street is on the right.

Stop 14: by the retail park on the right and opposite the Ancoats Urban Village, known as the world’s first industrial suburb, which has one of the largest concentrations of Grade II and Grade II* listed building in Manchester. Many of these mills are currently being restored and turned into modern yet sympathetic apartments and commercial space. The magnificent Royal Mills, overlooking the Rochdale canal, is being rejuvenated and complemented by a series of imaginative new buildings creating a bustling, canal-side community. Royal Mills – a £85 million project - gained the coveted ‘Built in Quality’ Award from Manchester City Council.

At this point, in March 2012, the towpath was affected by construction work for the new canal basin in the new Islington Development behind the fence on the right. It may be possible to follow the towpath in future, but equally it is worth leaving the towpath and going up to Redhill Street on the north side of the canal and then walk along passing the mills to your left and having the canal on your right. To the right you will see elements of New Islington, the third Millennium Community in the country, and which is transforming a once council estate into a thriving 21st Century development. The 30 acre site is undergoing a radical transformation which will feature over 1,700 new homes, retail and leisure space, a new primary school and health centre alongside an eco park.



Figure 5: The entrance to the former canal basin in the Murray's Mills complex (left) and St.Peter's Church, Ancoats (right).

To left you pass Old Mill (built 1798), and Sedgwick Mill (built 1818-20) and now converted to apartments. At Murray Street, turn left to walk between the mills.

Stop 15: Observe the formal face of Murray's Old Mill (built 1798). See the elaborate windows above the archway leading into the yard and former canal basin through which goods came into the mill complex.

Some may like to continue two small blocks further to see St. Peter's church whose Ancoats parish once had 14,000 residents. Disused since 1960, the church's restoration by the Ancoats Buildings Preservation Trust was completed in

June 2006. This group of preserved historic buildings is in strong contrast to the modern structures appearing in the New Islington Development. Walk past the church, turn left into Blossom Street and right into Sherratt Street. Cross Loom Street and George Leigh Street to see the Victoria Square building on your right.

Stop 16: Victoria Square, opened in 1894 was the first major re-housing scheme undertaken by Manchester City Council and was intended for 848 people in 237 double tenements and 48 single. The flats had internal bathrooms and the Square had shared laundries with drying facilities in the top



Figure 6: Victoria Square from Oldham Road (left) and George Leigh Street (right).



Figure 7: View of the new canal and marina, with the Chips Building in background (left) and the Chips Building from New Mill Street (right).

rooms of the corner towers – an attempt to avoid dampness in the dwellings and reduce bronchial infections. Still owned by the Council, the Square now provides sheltered housing for the elderly and has attractive communal gardens, and in the early 2000's about £8 million pounds were spent on complete home refurbishments, external works including windows and new lifts. It is a Grade 2 listed building.

Return to Redhill Street and continue parallel to the canal.

Stop 17: by the canal opposite Waulk Mill. The new canal can be seen on the right. As the map below shows, in 1831 the area contained a large coal wharf with a series of canal arms feeding the wharves. 170 years later this area is undergoing a second phase of canal development. By March 2012, the new canal was open and the first barges were moored in the new Marina. Earthworks were continuing around the new canals but beyond them the coloured rectangular blocks of the Chips Building, designed by Will Allsop and built by Urban Splash, can be seen.

Continue along Redhill Street until the road crosses the canal. From the bridge, a few remaining mill chimneys can be seen. Turn right and go down the road to the gaily painted houses that are the pioneers of the New Islington development. The houses are of a design never seen before in Manchester, developed in partnership with local people. As well as upside down arches, there are balconies and patterns in the brickwork.

The feedback from existing residents is that, while the development is a constructive process, it will not necessarily solve all of the existing problems in the area. However, those that have stayed in the area appear to like the design of their new houses and feel at home there, possibly because

they had a large input into choosing the architects and developing the plans.

“They listened. They really listened to what we wanted. And we just liked them as people.”

Cardroom resident, April 2007.

This Woodward Place scheme has been designed by Sean Griffiths, Sam Jacob and Charles Holland, three architects who call themselves Fat, an acronym for ‘fashion, architecture and taste’. This is the group’s first venture into



Figure 8: Extract from the Bancks and Co Plan of Manchester and Salford 1831 showing the Rochdale and Ashton Canals.



Figure 9: New Islington – the new canal with *Buddleja davidii* in the foreground in 2008; the gaily-painted, gabled houses; and the derelict former Cob o’Coal pub in March 2008.

the messy world of housing associations (they made their reputation as architectural pranksters designing exhibitions). Now, they have set out to shake up the received ideas of what constitutes social housing.

New Islington represents a more mature stage of inner city regeneration reflecting growing confidence (Robson, 2007). The Cardroom estate was a small area of post-war local-authority housing which had lost occupiers, was suffering crime and anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that the new development will attract a mix of residents, including families.

In March 2008, opposite the Woodward Place houses, further into the development area stood the derelict old Cob o’ Coal, then the only structure left in what once was the Cardroom housing estate. According to the New Islington development website at the time, “It’s retention is as much symbolic as anything else and we want it to be a watering hole which is a central focus for the community”. However, on the 1st April 2008, five fire crews were called out at 0323

hours to find the pub well ablaze. The circumstances of the fire are alleged to be suspicious, but the loss of a physical reminder of past community life was deeply regretted by many local residents.

The latest group of houses being built (in March 2012) in New Islington on Weybridge Road have been named “The Guts”, following consultation with local residents, because they are at the heart of the New Islington development. The Guts comprises both terraced and semi-detached houses, unified with one consistent colour of brick at ground floor level and individual colours for each home on top. Just beyond this development on Weybridge Road are refurbished council houses which were saved from demolition after petitions by local residents. People liked the community and the properties and did not want to move.

By 2012, there was still one reminder of the old Ancoats in New Islington, the dispensary building of the former Ancoats hospital, which is reached by walking up Weybridge Road and turning right into Old Mill Street.



Figure 10: “The Guts” houses being developed by Great Places, Urban Splash and Plumlife.



Figure 11: Views of the former Ancoats Hospital as it was in 2008 (left) and in 2012 (right).

Stop 18: Examine the former Ancoats Hospital on your left. The Ancoats Hospital and Ardwick and Ancoats Dispensary (1873–1948) was built by Lewis and Crawcroft in 1872–4. Ancoats Hospital was the great Victorian institution that had always dealt with the medical needs of the city centre’s population. It played a particularly important role in dealing with casualties during the 1940 blitz of the city. The casualty department closed in 1987 and the hospital finally shut its doors in 1996. In 2008 the plan was for Urban Splash to convert the building into apartments, however in 2011 Urban Splash decided to submit an application for listed building consent to demolish the building. One of the factors contributing to this was the Government’s decision to close the Regional Development agencies, which meant that a Northwest Development Agency grant for repairing the shell of the building was withdrawn. Before the application

was made, Urban Splash had offered the building to the Heritage Works Buildings Preservation Trust for a nominal sum. A detailed consideration of alternative future uses, necessary repairs and likely funding for restoration led the Trust to turn down the Urban Splash offer. The Victorian Society is campaigning (early 2012) to save the building, whose condition is deteriorating.

In contrast is the new Primary Care Centre for New Islington opened in 2007 which stands 300m further along Old Mill Lane on the right.

From Old Mill Street follow Upper Kirby Street on the right hand side of the hospital building to look at the Chips Building and then climb up the steps to the towpath of the Ashton Canal. Turn right along the towpath and walk to the junction with the new waterway into the New Islington Development.



Figure 12: The new Ancoats Health Centre in 2008 (left) and 2012 (right).

Stop 19: at the new Bascule Bridge near the Ashton Canal. When New Islington is complete, this opening bridge will cross the point where water enters the development from the Ashton Canal. Constructed in Summer 2004, this bridge was the first piece in the canal jigsaw. New Islington's developers promised dramatic architecture, vibrant communities and an eco park in a sustainable development. The slow-down caused by the 2008 financial crisis is evident, but future followers of this walk will be able to judge whether those promises are fulfilled.

From here the Ashton Canal can be followed to the right back to Ducie Street and the Rochdale Canal whence it is a short walk to Piccadilly Rail and Metro Stations. This takes you across the Store Street Aqueduct which is also a Grade II listed structure. Alternatively you can descend from the aqueduct to Store Street and turn right, away from Ancoats and walk to London Road and then turn right and right again to the lower entrance to Piccadilly Station, bus stops and taxi rank. Alternatively, the frequent 216 bus service runs along the south side of Great Ancoats Street (going westwards) direct to Piccadilly Gardens.

Acknowledgements

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