

Exploring Greater Manchester

a fieldwork guide

Web edition edited by Paul Hindle



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1.6 Salford Quays

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Aims: a walk around the Quays to explore the structure and character of these regenerated docklands.

Starting Point: Tourist Information Centre

Estimated time: one hour, plus time spent in Lowry Centre and the Imperial Museum of the North.

Further information:

Law C. M. (1988) *The Redevelopment of Manchester Docks*, University of Salford, Department of Geography, *Discussion Paper No 33*

Law, C. M. (1988) *From Manchester Docks to Salford Quays*, *Manchester Geographer*, NS 9, 2-15

Myerson, J (2000) *Making of the Lowry*, Salford, Lowry Press

White, K. N *et al* (1993) *Urban Waterside Regeneration: Problems and Prospects*, Chichester, Ellis Harwood. (several chapters deal with Salford Quays)

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Introduction

The Manchester Ship Canal, which follows closely the rivers Mersey and Irwell, was opened throughout in 1894. The main docks were built beside the Trafford Road in Salford, and later in 1905 the large No. 9 Dock was opened. Manchester businessmen had argued for the building of the canal because they believed that the Liverpool docks were overcharging. However, upon the opening of the canal, Liverpool charges were reduced and trade grew only slowly. To encourage trade, the world's first industrial estate was planned in 1896 at Trafford Park on the south bank, which was linked to the docks by a private railway. For many decades the Manchester Docks handled about 2m tons of cargo a year and at its peak employed about 3,500 people. In the 1960s and 1970s with the containerisation of trade, its concentration in a few other British ports and the increase in the size of ships, trade at the docks almost completely disappeared between 1972 and 1982 leaving behind redundant space.

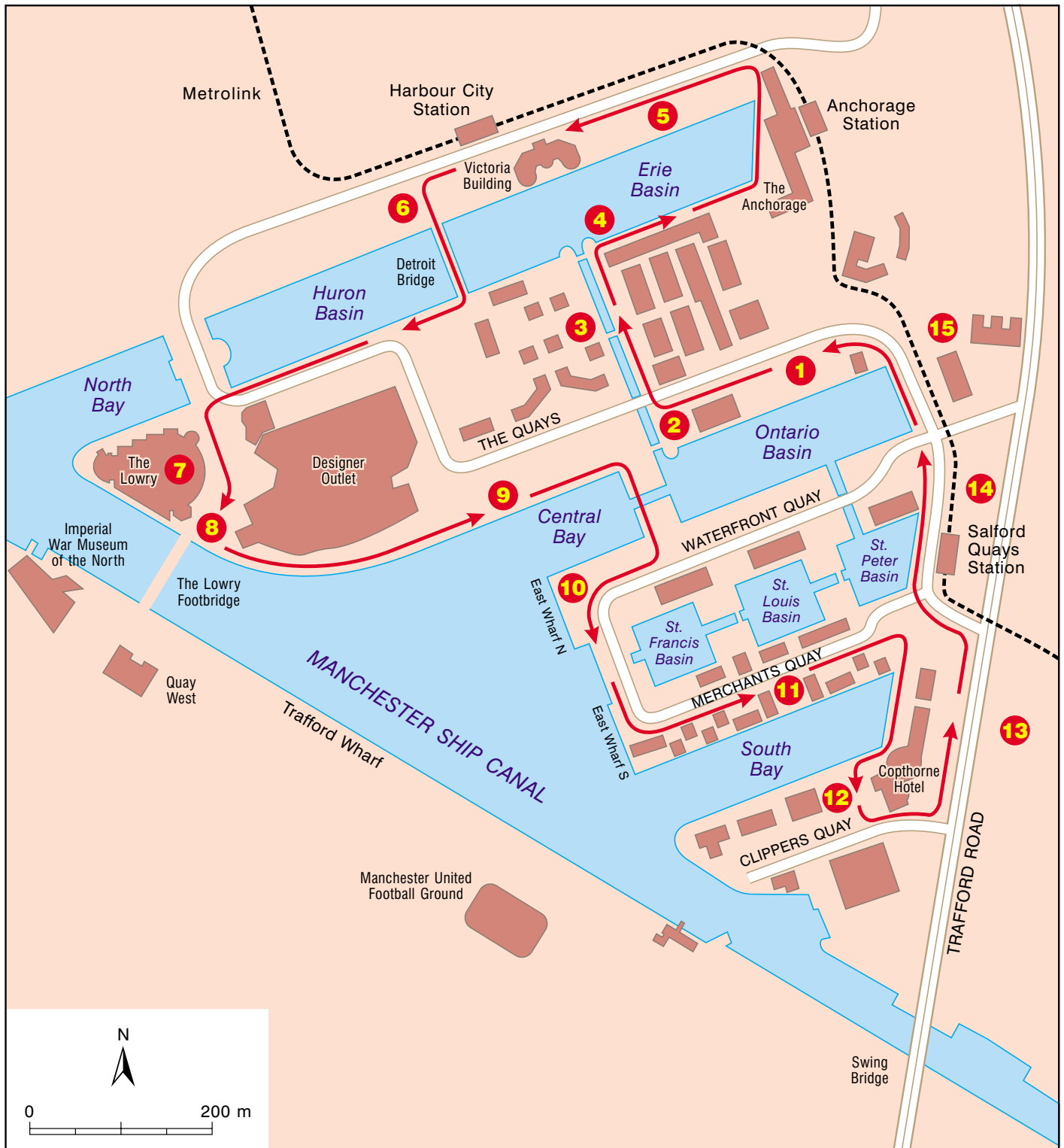
In 1981 parts of the dock estate, particularly the undeveloped northern areas, were designated an Enterprise Zone (EZ) to last for 10 years and hopefully attract new activities. The nature of the EZ incentives meant that they attracted either light industry (in the north) or offices (in the designated part of the docklands). By 1981-3 it was realised that trade in the docks was likely to disappear completely and that large funds would be required to transform the docks for other uses. The Manchester Ship Canal Company, at this time thinking that there would not be a return on any investment, sold the docks to Salford City Council so that public funding could be obtained. Plans were drawn up and the new name of Salford Quays given.

In 1985 the government agreed to provide £30m for the basic infrastructure part of the scheme, with other funding coming from the city council, and the European Union. A condition of this funding was that all development should be privately financed, and to that end the southern part of the docks were sold to Urban Waterside. The plan proposed that the land should be used for residential, employment and leisure purposes in approximately equal amounts. Unlike many other dockland redevelopment schemes in Britain, no buildings have been preserved or were thought worthy of preservation (with the sole exception of the Dock Offices).

Redevelopment commenced in 1986 and gathered momentum in the late 1980s. The economic boom and the prospect of the ending of EZ status in 1991 stimulated construction, particularly of offices. However by 1991 when many of the offices were just being completed, there was a recession and many remained unoccupied for many years and development overall was stalled. In the late 1990s as the economy picked up, development resumed. Lottery funding enabled the construction of 'The Lowry' arts centre. More dwellings have been constructed and the Metrolink extension was opened in late 1999. Office take-up has increased, reducing vacancies and encouraging developers to contemplate new construction. Salford Quays is generally regarded as a successful example of regeneration, creating jobs, housing and leisure facilities, but these have been mainly for middle class people coming from outside the area. One issue concerns the extent to which the scheme has benefited and will benefit local people. Another aspect of the lack of integration is reflected in the need for a high level of security.

The Trail starts at the Tourist Information Centre; there is a pay car park. You should follow the map below. The nearest Metrolink station is Salford Quays. At various point along the route there are maps of Salford Quays.

1. The Tourist Information Centre contains material about the docks and sells leaflets, maps and postcards.
2. Walk along the side of Ontario Basin past the Travel Inn, a budget hotel with 52 rooms opened in 1996 and the Quayhouse/Beefeater restaurant opened in 1990, both owned by the Whitbread company. Turn right to walk along Mariner Canal.



3. Grain Wharf. This estate of houses and apartments was built between 1985 and 1995. Salford Quays attracts non-family households of one or two persons. Many are rented, perhaps as an interim measure. Others may belong to people who need to be in Manchester to work for only a few days in the week and who have another house elsewhere. The prices of the properties and the social composition of the residents contrast with those in the Ordsall district of Salford on the other side of the Trafford Road, a typical inner city district with much public housing and many lower income residents.

4. On reaching Erie Basin turn right and proceed to the large office block at the head of the dock called The Anchorage. You will pass Anchorage Quay consisting of 80 dwellings, a recent development completed in 1998. The Anchorage was the first large office block to be constructed in the Quays. Completed in 1991 with a floor space of 275,000 sq ft (25,550 sq m) its main tenant is BUPA the private health insurance company which employs over 500 people.

5. Pier 9 on the north side of the Erie Basin remains in the ownership of the Manchester Ship Canal Company. In the late 1980s it planned a large office complex along the entire length of the quay to be called Harbour City. The central 116,000 sq ft (10,775 sq m) Victoria Building was completed in 1992 in the midst of a recession. A second office building, The Alexandra with 60,848 sq ft (5,650 sq m) of space was completed in 2002. Apartments and duplexes are now planned for the western end of the pier. In mid-2000 the company brought out new proposals for the north side of the ship canal for houses, shops and offices.

6. Turn left to cross Dock 9 over Detroit Bridge, a former railway bridge that was relocated here having previously been sited near Clipper Quay. Dock 9 can be used for events such as regattas.

7. The Lowry. Designed by Michael Wilford and opened in April 2000, the £98m centre, assisted by £64m of lottery funding, contains two theatres, the Lowry art collection and other exhibition space. If there is time a visit should be made. Next to the Lowry, the Lowry Outlet Mall is an £70m complex of cinemas, shops, restaurants bars and a 172-apartment block, opened in 2001. A third component of this end of the pier development is the Digital World Centre due to open in summer 2003.



8. From the steps to the Lowry Bridge the Quay West office building can be seen and the striking Imperial War Museum of the North designed by Daniel Libeskind in the form of shards (broken pieces of a globe); it was opened in 2002. If there is time this museum should be visited.

Behind it is the Hovis flour mill built in 1907, the only survivor of Trafford Park's three mills. Today it uses imported wheat brought by road from Liverpool.



Turn left and follow the Centenary Walk through a small park which was constructed in 1994 to mark the anniversary of the canal. Looking across the canal Manchester United's stadium, the so-called 'theatre of dreams', can be seen.

9. The Watersports Centre, to be used by local people, was constructed in 2001. Docks 7, 8 and 9 were dammed to keep out the polluted water from the River Irwell and the Ship Canal, and the water within the basins is purified. From Dock 8 (Ontario Basin) there is an entry lock and the other two docks are linked to the system by newly constructed canals.

10. Pier 7 is mainly given over to office buildings constructed by developer Feamley under the name Waterfront 2000. Each is relatively small and low rise and they have been described as undistinguished architecture. Many are occupied by computer companies who regard the Quays

as a prestige location. The last site on the pier is occupied by a 120-room Holiday Inn Express Hotel which opened in 1998.

11. Pier 6 contains one of the two main residential areas, both of which were built on non-EZ land. Merchants Landing, containing 153 dwellings, was built between 1987 and 1991. More recently houses have been built on the piers in Dock 7. The comments about the type of residents in Grain Wharf apply here as well. There is a fairly high turnover of residents in these areas as shown by the number of boards of For Sale and To Rent.

12. Walk around South Bay to Pier 6 and the Waterside Inn (1988). This part of the docks was the first to be developed, undertaken by the developer Urban Waterside. The 166-room Copthorne Hotel was opened in June 1987. A small multiplex cinema was opened in 1988 but this closed in 2001 a consequence of the increased competition in the area. The building is now empty awaiting a new use. The rest of what is called Pier 5 is given over to offices; Clipper Court (1988), Regatta House (1988), Optimum House(1989) and also a Banks pub in the old pump house (1992).

13. On the other side of Trafford Road is the large Exchange Quay (530,000 sq ft; 49,240 sq m) one of three such large office buildings constructed around 1991 and which contrast with the earlier smaller scale office blocks.

14. The island site beside Trafford Road is owned by Urban Waterside (see above). Originally there were plans for a large building here: but the recession of the early 1990s prevented such proposals from being realised and in its place four low density eateries were opened in 1996. The accessibility of the Quays and thereby its attractiveness for development has been enhanced by various road improvement schemes in the area including making Trafford Road a dual carriageway in 1997.

15. The Dock Office was built in 1926, part is still used by the Ship Canal Company but most is let. Behind the Dock Office is the tall Furness House built in 1969 for use by Furness Withy who ran Manchester Liners, then an important shipping line associated with the port. In front of the Dock Office is Ontario House, built in 1990 and let to a government department. The value of such offices has increased since the Metrolink line (to Eccles), which passes in front of them, was opened in 2000; the tram makes the area more accessible for workers.