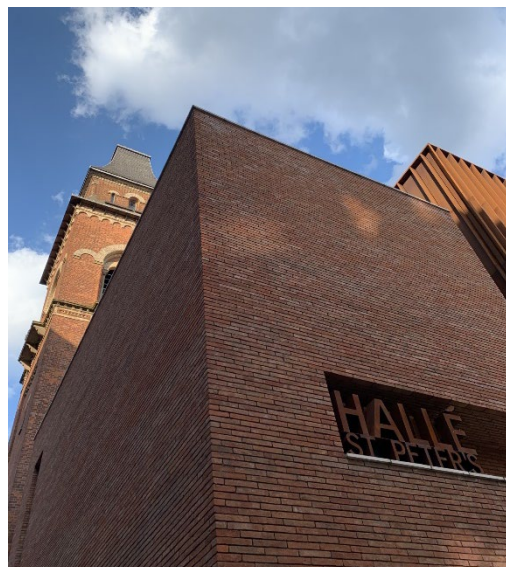


Tour of Ancoats with Jonathan Schofield

Following our AGM at the Hallé St. Peters, we were joined by Jonathan Schofield, published author of *'My Guide To...Manchester: The Complete Guide to the City'* and recipient of the University of Manchester's Medal of Honour for exceptional contributions to the city, who gave us a guided tour of the Halle St. Peters and demonstrated the huge geographical, historical, and sociological changes in the local area of Ancoats over the last 250 years.

Hallé St. Peters

We began our tour by indulging in the Hallé St. Peters; a former Church of England site in Cutting Room Square (dating from 1859) is now the permanent home to the Halle Orchestra (dating from within a year of St. Peters in 1858). In the main hall, Jonathan transported us back to his press reporting days and the first performance in the Halle and the flicking hair of Alex Kingston and over-pronunciations of Kenneth Branagh in Macbeth. We also visited the Victoria Wood Room and, along with the atrium, appreciated the architecture which makes the most of the square and amenities outside as well as paying homage to the Roman design of its interior amid a predominantly Italian community (at the time).



Little Italy and Hallé St. Michaels

On our way to the next stop, we walked past many bustling independent eateries including 'The Hip Hop Chip Chop', 'SUD Pasta' and 'Elnecot', which is the former 13th-century name for Ancoats. The newer-built tenements of Sterratt Street overshadow the dwindling numbers of terraces of Anita Street, whose name was previously Sanitary Street but as this was unpopular, the local council dropped 's', 'r' and 'y' from the name to make the avenue more attractive. We paused to look at another converted church which has become the Hallé St. Michaels, a recreation space dedicated to hosting community, education and artistic events.



Great Ancoats Street

Next on our tour we headed to Great Ancoats Street, part of Manchester's Ring Road to behold the futuristic architecture of the Daily Express building, dating from the 1930s. This contrasted to the Tudor-esque façade of neighbouring Brazen House; whose top floor was used as a 'punishment room' for young, single girls. As we continued along one of our city's busiest thoroughfares, we stopped outside The Horsefall and 42nd Street. This organisation prides itself on offering advice and providing activities for young people to support their mental health, and whose seemingly artistic wall can open up to reveal courtyards and green spaces for such activities.



Royal Mill

Finally, we walked along the Rochdale Ship Canal and into the edge of New Islington. Many of the buildings previously inhabited by industries and mills have been repurposed into mixed-use developments of apartments and workplaces, such as the Royal Mill, whilst new housing developments had been constructed alongside. The bridge across the canal which we surveyed the recent urban developments from could, on a bright and sunny day, reflect the Verve's famous line "cast no shadow" onto the water below. After our tour had concluded, it was clear to us

all that Manchester's past retained a real presence in the infrastructure of today and its shadow, in contrast to the Verve on this occasion, casts a huge shadow over the lives of today's Mancunians.

The Manchester Branch want to thank the Hallé St. Peter's for hosting our Annual General Meeting and Jonathan Schofield for our informative tour which has inspired a few of our members to re-organise school trips on urban regeneration to Ancoats and to take further tours with Jonathan in the future.

Josh Wilkinson, June 2023

