



## Castlefield

Originally a Roman settlement, Castlefield was arguably the birth-place of Manchester. Around the mid-nineteenth century it witnessed the largest growth in its history, largely due to the industrial revolution. The rivers Medlock and Irwell were integral to its development, allowing goods to be brought in from the port of Liverpool and stored in warehouses in the basin. In 1877 the Cheshire Lines Company erected the massive Southern Iron Viaduct, still a prominent feature of the area. The combination of railway viaducts and canals has forged a distinct identity for the basin, now taken forward by new developments and refurbishments. Knott Mill abuts the area and is home to many of Manchester's leading architectural and design practices.

## Box Works

Worsley Street, 2001

**Architect[s]:** [Urban Splash](#)

**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)

**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Buildings](#) [DesRes](#) [Regeneration](#)

The Box Works is an impressive Art Deco warehouse standing on the banks of the Bridgewater canal in Castlefield. The development is marketed on the concept of 'The Naked Loft' which was another unique selling proposition offered by Urban Splash. The Box Works provided its residents with an opportunity to purchase shell space whereby they could personalize the interiors to their own tastes. Whether the concept is successful only time will tell, however the major refurbishment of the existing structure is commendable, bringing life to an otherwise tired but elegant building.

## Britannia Mills

Castlefield, 2000

**Architect[s]:** [Urban Splash](#)

**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)

**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Buildings](#) [DesRes](#) [Regeneration](#)

Britannia Mills is one of three major Urban Splash developments in the Britannia Basin area. The site lies within the Castlefield conservation area which contains many examples of innovative Victorian mill construction. Urban Splash has converted six 19th century buildings into 125 apartments with the addition of a new modern building complementing the older structures.

However, unlike most city centre loft developments, Britannia Mills incorporates secluded outdoor areas; a landscaped courtyard and a canal inlet coming into the site. All the features of the original building have been left exposed, reflecting typical architectural qualities of the mills age and size: the buildings good natural light, high ceilings, cast iron columns and timber floors.



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Following the success of Britannia Mills it has afforded Urban Splash the confidence to continue development in the area – Timber Wharf and the Box Works. Saying that, the development is marketed on the basis of affordable housing, however, the price tag associated with the apartments is rather expensive – affordable is a relative term.

### Castlefield Arena

Castlefield, 1994

**Architect[s]:** DEGW [Glasgow]  
**Area[s]:** Castlefield  
**Theme[s]:** Regeneration Urban Spaces and Parks

Adjacent to the Castlefield Centre the £1.05m Outdoor Arena is designed for both community and commercial events. It was part of a larger scheme facilitated by DEGW who were also responsible for the stepped spectator stand, sheltered by Hopkinsesque canvas tents which gracefully overlook the canal arm from the east. To date the arena has been used for a multitude of high profile events providing a strong focal point to the basin area.

### Castlefield Footbridge

Castle Street, 1998

**Architect[s]:** Ian Simpson Architects  
**Area[s]:** Castlefield  
**Theme[s]:** Bridges

This small and unassuming footbridge is a direct response to its context. It is clad with Locharbriggs sandstone to harmonise with the surrounding warehouse buildings and to refer to the bedrock of the canal basin. Like other projects in the area it was grant assisted by the Central Manchester Development Corporation.

Passing over the Rochdale Canal, the bridge, 15 metres in length and held in tension by a stainless-steel radiused frame, links the derelict north-side with the heart of the Castlefield Basin. This is reached through a passage between the Eastgate Offices by Stephenson Bell and the Bass Warehouse (another Ramsbottom building) recently refurbished by OMI Architects.

Fourteen 1200 x 1200 x 175 mm stone blocks with curved tops doubling as handrails form each side of the bridge, slotting between stain-less-steel uprights that are welded to the frame. The deck was constructed in layers and is composed of granite sets laid on red in-situ concrete, poured on to reinforcing mesh. The frame is supported at each end by stainless-steel shoes resting on stone-clad abutments. Seamless and elegant, a simple formula and a rational approach has resulted in a bridge that is far more honest than the cast-iron version originally suggested by the client.



## Castlefield Gallery

Hewitt Street, Knott Mill, 2002

**Architect[s]:** [Arca](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Interiors](#) [Museums and Galleries](#)

Won in competitive interview, the outline design for the new Castlefield gallery was completed in just three weeks. This rapid response enabled the gallery to meet the tight deadline for the last wave of Arts Lottery Board grants in July 1999.

Reflecting the balance between an innovative artist-led organisation, and its commercial intent was the main challenge of the brief. The design concept was based on overlapping volumes of the existing shell, which are marked by recesses, folds and steps in the wall and ceiling surfaces. Materials are presented largely in their raw states: hardwood, glass, clear lacquered mild steel, and polished concrete.

## Castlefield Masterplan

Castlefield, 1996

**Architect[s]:** [Central Manchester Development Corporation](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Regeneration](#) [Urban Spaces and Parks](#)

The successful transformation of Castlefield from a derelict industrial area into a national visitor destination has vindicated Manchester's decision to drive the regeneration process by exploiting the area's rich industrial heritage.

In 1979 Castlefield was designated a conservation area predominantly due to its wealth of historic buildings and industrial heritage which although valuable were mostly derelict, with most of the land belonging to the Manchester Canal Company. By 1982 the City Centre Local Plan actively supported the opening of the Museum of Science and Industry as a flagship project and Castlefield's self nomination as Britain's first Urban Heritage Park in 1983.

The Castlefield Management Company was created in 1992 as a non profit company to provide services and events as well as maintain the environmental quality of the area. As a consequence of strategic planning and creative vision the Castlefield area has not only retained its original character but led to its wholesale regeneration bringing in over 2 million visitors between 1996-1998 which is still continuing to grow.



## Castlefield Viaduct

Castlefield, 1880

**Architect[s]:** [The Midland Railway Co.](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Late Georgian and Victorian](#)

Historically, Castlefield functioned as a city edge where goods were delivered to the industrial centre. The impact of this can now be observed in the multiple layering of transport infrastructures. Castlefield Viaduct bridges over the earlier Rochdale Canal. The cast iron viaduct is an excellent example of the 19th century attitude to engineering. Its heroic brute scale is romanticised by the castellated turrets adorning the structure. The building of this and similarly large nearby structures has given the city some of its most dramatic spaces, Piranesian in their quality. Partly in use for Metrolink services, the viaduct provides a dynamic viewpoint for the whole of Castlefield. Through the reconfiguration and reuse of this previously defunct infrastructure, this area was the most visible expression of the existence of the Central Manchester Development Corporation between 1987 and 1997, although its gentrification has produced a lessening of the dramatic impact of the original host structures

## Choice Bar and Restaurant

Castle Quay, 2002

**Architect[s]:** [Original Architect Unknown](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Bars and Cocktail Lounges](#) [Contemporary Interiors](#)

Choice can be found within the Castle Quay building, discretely located within Castlefield. On entering the bar and restaurant it is surprisingly an elegant and sophisticated interior that belies its low-key frontage. The interior is divided logically between the eating and drinking areas, with a centrally located bar area. A rich and intelligent palette of materials has been fully utilised to provide the interior with a sophisticated but not overtly opulent feel. Already Choice has been widely praised for its superb menu and wine lists; rather than read about it, give it a visit. Highly recommended.

## Dukes 92

14 Castle Street, 1991

**Architect[s]:** [Stephenson Bell](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Bars and Cocktail Lounges](#) [Contemporary Interiors](#)

Situated in the heart of Castlefield, Dukes 92 gets its name from the fact that it lies next to Lock No. 92 on the nearby Rochdale Canal. The brief given to the architects was to create a comfortable place which would attract all sections of society from canal boaters and business people to students alike. This was



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quite an ambitious aim when taken into consideration that the Castlefield area was still in its early stages of redevelopment.

In essence Dukes 92 is a long narrow Georgian stables block which was literally lost in a maze of dilapidated rusting tin sheds. Subsequently these were demolished to reveal the elegant little building and to make way for the first deliberate public open space in the basin. The simple restored shell was inhabited by a bar of black steel and marble, a pitch pine floor and 'real' old furniture that both the architect and client purchased in antique shops.

## Eastgate Offices

Castle Street, 1992

**Architect[s]:** [Stephenson Bell](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Interiors](#)

A former tarpaulin works, built in the 19th century in between the Rochdale Canal and the Bridgewater Canal in Castlefield. By the time Stephenson Bell became involved, Eastgate was in poor condition. A building on five floors, 60m long and 10m wide, its structure comprised load bearing masonry and massive timber beams at 2.5m centres spanning between external walls. During its lifetime, due to new and heavier storage requirements, two steel columns per beam have been added.

The approach they pursued in trying to satisfy the brief was one of careful restoration coupled with clear contemporary expression of new uses where appropriate. As found, Eastgate was without an entrance. The new projecting entrance uses the line of the east wall of the Roman fort which used to stand on the site.

Institutional office space is almost always created for unknown end users and in consequence, is bland and anonymous. The adventurous developer client (Castlefield Estates), coupled with a building which already had a strong personality, allowed the opportunity to make a place with which the occupants can identify.



## Granada Television

Quay Street, 1962

**Architect[s]:** [Ralph Tubbs](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [1960's Modern](#)

In contrast to the structural expressiveness of the architect's earlier Dome of Discovery at the Festival of Britain, this is a restrained work. A simple 8 storey slab block sits perpendicular to Quay Street, the language and materials reflecting the functional concerns of the architect. Blank gable walls are contrasted with glazed curtain walling to the main elevations. Lower level subsidiary buildings continue the architectural restraint of the main slab. The muted quality of the buildings serves as a foil to the sculptural expressiveness of the cantilevered entrance canopy, heroic roof top spiral stair tower and the confident use of typography on entrance and roof top signage.

## Liverpool Road Station

(Museum of Science & Industry) Liverpool Road, 1830

**Architect[s]:** [George Stevenson](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Grade II Listed](#) [Late Georgian and Victorian](#) [Museums and Galleries](#)

George Stevenson for the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company (1830) the world's oldest passenger railway station, this building ceased passenger use in 1844 although it was still in use as a goods station as late as 1975. It is a late Georgian building and shows the difficulty engineers (and subsequently architects) had in adapting to the new age of steam. Incorporating an earlier house of 1808, the station is basically two storeys to accommodate access to the platform raised on an embankment behind. However, this commercial structure has elements of grandeur as befitted its use by passengers with first class tickets. Rustication on the lower storey is combined with an elemental applied portico with a three bayed window above. The rest of the building is smooth-faced with minimal mouldings, much of it reconstructed. Towards Deansgate the rendered elevation gives way to brickwork on the upper storey in acknowledgement of its less refined use for goods. The building is now both an exhibit of, and accommodation for, the Museum of Science and Industry (Grade II listed).



## Merchants Warehouse

Castlefield, 1997

**Architect[s]:** [Ian Simpson Architects](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Grade II Listed Warehouses](#)

This Grade II listed canal side warehouse was built in 1827 (original architect unknown) pre-dating the introduction of cast iron frames. It is one of only two warehouses in Castlefield that remains like its original form, despite being damaged by fire in 1971. The architect has completely restored both the fabric and the integrity of the building which is currently occupied by one of Europe's leading computer software producers.

They sought to respect the integrity of the original warehouse building with new vertical circulation cores being added to the gable ends, expressed clearly as contemporary structures. High quality materials - steel, glass and red sandstone - complement the existing building whilst allowing life and activity to be visible from a distance. Light has been introduced into the building and is distributed through a central void.

## Merchants' Bridge

Castlefield Basin, 1995

**Architect[s]:** [Whitby & Bird \(with RHWL Architects\)](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Bridges](#)

Situated in Castlefield Basin, Merchants' Bridge spans the Bridgewater Canal at its junction with the Rochdale Canal. With a strong resonance of its nineteenth-century glory as a vibrant industrial area, Castlefield Basin demanded a bridge unique in character which also respected its traditional context.

The steel footbridge, spanning a distance of 40 metres, features a curvaceous single arch that delicately counterbalances the 3-metre-wide curved deck, allowing the structure to remain in a state of perfect equilibrium. Thirteen inclined tapered hangers link the deck to the arch, while not detracting from its slender appearance. Sensitive use of lighting accentuates its sculptural qualities after dark, making the bridge a focal point in the canal basin.

Access to Merchants' Bridge is gained from two particular points, but the easiest and the best is via the front of Barça cafe-bar. The designers unashamedly acknowledge Santiago Calatrava as a major influence in their approach to the overall design, placing great emphasis on the use of torsion. The best vantage point for fully appreciating Merchants' Bridge is gained from high above on the Altrincham to Manchester Metrolink line.



## Modo Clubroom (formerly Quay Bar)

Castlefield Basin, 1998

**Architect[s]:** [Stephenson Bell](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Buildings](#)

This project received a Royal Academy Summer Exhibition prize when it was presented in model form. With its planning based on spiral geometry inspired by the site, the building sits adjacent to Bridgewater Viaduct looking over Castlefield canal basin. At street level its presence is announced by a light tower. From the street the bar is reached by a ramped bridge which enters at the upper level of a double height space. Full height glazing, supported by airfoil section structural fins addresses the canal. The intention to create a series of layered spaces opening out towards the canal is not completely successful and the detailing is sometimes unresolved, but the terrace to the canal works well. On completion the building was awarded a 1998 RIBA Award for Architecture as an example of the best new British architecture.

## Museum of Science and Industry

Liverpool Road, 1999

**Architect[s]:** [Ian Simpson Architects](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Grade II Listed Museums and Galleries](#)

The Museum occupies the former Liverpool Road Station, one of Manchester's most important historic sites. Liverpool Road Station only operated as a passenger station from 1830 to 1844, but continued as a goods station until 1975.

The Museum opened at its new site on 15 September 1983, the 153rd anniversary of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. Initially, only the Power Hall and parts of the Main Building and Station Building were in use. Ian Simpson Architects prepared a detailed Site Development Strategy for the Museum, which formed the basis of a successful Heritage Lottery Fund application. The first phase involved the design and implementation of two new gallery spaces, the 'Making Textiles' gallery and a changing exhibition gallery, housed within the Grade II listed Lower Byrom Street Warehouse.

Now funded by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Museum has continued to restore the buildings to hold new galleries and facilities. The current developments, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, will complete the transformation of the site.



## Planet 4 Studios

2-4 Little Peter Street, Knott Mill, 1995

**Architect[s]:** [Ian Simpson Architects](#)

**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)

**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Interiors](#)

This recording studio re-uses and adds to a small existing early 19th century building. It is an example of the creative industries that have been recolonising the formerly derelict Knott Mill area. The entrance is treated in a simple planar manner, the most dramatic feature being the glass block shower pod which tops the scheme. This project is a good example of how contemporary architects are sympathetically reusing old buildings to create schemes which are fresh and modern.

## Rochdale Canal

Castlefield, 1804

**Architect[s]:** [Rochdale Canal Company](#)

**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)

**Theme[s]:** [Grade II Listed](#) [Late Georgian and Victorian](#) [Urban Spaces and Parks](#) [Warehouses](#)

The first major transport infrastructure running through central Manchester, the Rochdale Canal was constructed to feed the city's booming trade and industry during the Industrial Revolution, linking with the Bridgewater Canal in Castlefield. The canal is an excellent example of industrial architecture of the era, with fine functionally detailed sandstone and brickwork along its length. The restored locks exemplify well-considered use of these materials in conjunction with timber lock gates and cast iron fixtures. The striking difference between the functionally designed canal and towpath, and the picturesque domestic accommodation of the lock keeper's cottages is particularly evident at the Dukes 92 lock in Castlefield. The canal now provides a spatially dramatic east-west armature for pedestrians and joggers, and connects many of the buildings mentioned in this guide. Please note that the length of the canal crosses many of the routes in this guide. A walk down the canal itself provides an interesting cross-section of the architecture of Manchester.



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## **St George's Church**

Castlefield, 2003

**Architect[s]:** [Provan and Makin](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Interiors](#) [DesRes](#) [Grade II Listed](#)

St George's is a grade II\* listed church which has recently been converted into 25 apartments by the property developer – Keith Burke. The scheme is based on a new internal structure that has been designed to be a self-supporting lightweight intervention. Residential pods are sculpted to fit between the arches of the nave to leave the existing structure and volume intact and recognizable. The main clock tower is home to a single nine level million pound apartment that is the main centrepiece to the scheme. Car parking is an optional extra at £12,000 per space.

## **Timber Wharf**

Castlefield, 2001

**Architect[s]:** [Glenn Howells Architects](#)  
**Area[s]:** [Castlefield](#)  
**Theme[s]:** [Contemporary Buildings](#) [DesRes](#) [Regeneration](#)

Timber Wharf is the first development to be built from scratch, which has set a new standard for quality living accommodation in the Castlefield area. The scheme was won in a limited competition by way of its simple construction techniques and attention to detail whilst remaining relatively inexpensive to develop. Designed by the Birmingham architect Glenn Howells, Timber Wharf consists of 181 penthouses, apartments and live / work spaces. It utilises an imaginative array of materials that include glass, timber, concrete and stone to create an urban landmark in the area.

The format of the building is somewhat similar to the hated 1960's slab block developments that became synonymous with urban decay and alienation; however, that is where the similarity ends. The core principle of the design is to utilise and adapt a simple and efficient construction system to maximum effect. The robust structure provides a very clear and strong identity to the project and challenges preconceptions, creating a form which is not immediately recognizable as housing, but continues the scale and simplicity of an industrial aesthetic