

Thirty One: ROCHDALE TOWN CENTRE.

In addition to a good art gallery, a great little museum, and a superb gothic town hall, there is a little gem of preservation called The Baum where the birth of the Cooperative Movement is commemorated.

Take the train from Eccles Station to Manchester Victoria. Change onto a train that stops at Rochdale (there are plenty). Alight at Rochdale.

Leave the front entrance of the station and cross the road towards the tram stop. *On the left is the impressive basilica church of St John and on the right the fire station. Both are notable brick buildings. Notice the firemen's houses just beyond.*

[**OPTION:** To visit the Greater Manchester Fire Service Museum at the rear of the fire station yard, walk down between the Church and the fire station. Turn right along Hampden Street and right along Richard Street. Go right at Fire Station Yard and the museum is on your left. *Admission is free, and it is open 10.00 to 16.00 every Friday (BHX) and every first Sunday.* On leaving the fire station yard, turn right and then right again along Station Road to end up at the tram stop.]

Proceed along Lower Tweedale Street by the right hand side of Haji Cash & Carry. *This gives a hint of the next stage of the itinerary!* At the end of Tweedale Street you enter a distinct immigrant community area - *notice to your left the amazing shop window display of Indian sweets.*

Turn right along Durham Street between the plethora of little cooked food shops. *When you come to Drake Street Notice the row of old cottages opposite that is now business premises.* Cross the road. Continue ahead along Church Stile, or through the grave yard running parallel to it.

You are now opposite St Chad's Church and vicarage. *A very fine parish church and an elegant vicarage are both worth a close look.*

Go left and enter the gates of Broadfield Park. *It is a fine spacious park.* Continue ahead, descend a small flight of steps and turn right. Cross sparrow Hill. *Notice the building of the Broadfield Park Hotel. This was a small nurse*

training hospital of 1905. As a hotel it has a plush lounge with a small bar selling one cask conditioned beer on hand pump.

Continue ahead down between the rocky walls. A red footbridge goes over the path. Take the curved path (right) up to it and cross it. Walk along the terrace. *Here there is a monument to four Rochdale Dialect writers, and to the social reformer John Bright.*

Descend to the park gates ahead and turn right along the Esplanade. Cross over at the little traffic island and you are facing the Touchstone Museum and Art Gallery. *It houses a very good museum and art gallery with changing displays. Notice the themes of the windows. Admission is free and it is open Tuesday to Saturday 10.00 to 17.00. <http://www.link4life.org/centres/touchstones-rochdale>*

Leaving the Touchstone, walk along The Esplanade in the direction of the Town Hall. *Notice the River Roach down below and the Memorial Gardens on your left. This walk is in fact on a great bridge over the River Roach.*

On your right is Rochdale Town Hall. Cross over to visit it. *Opened in 1871 and designed by William Crossley, this is a superb example of Northern gothic revival architecture. At the very least go in to look at the reception area! You can take a guided tour of the building at 14.15 on the last Friday of each month for £3.50. However there is a public bistro in the building – go to the back of the reception area and left.*

http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/tourism_and_travel/rochdale_town_hall.aspx

Cross back over the road in front of the town hall and go right in front of the *elegant* Post Office building. Cross at the circle and walk towards the Regal Moon, *a large and well done conversion of a cinema to a Wetherspoon's public house – worth a look in for the decor and the local history on the walls.*

You come to face the Royal Bank of Scotland Building. Go left up The Butts Avenue *by the attractive smaller Victorian bank building.* Fork right onto Bull Brow *(and look above you).* Then go left.

At Yorkshire Street go right uphill. *This is the main shopping street of Rochdale. The market is in the Rochdale Exchange, with bronze sheep outside.*

At the top of Yorkshire Street you come to the ring road – *which cuts off the rest of the street and demonstrates really well the disastrous effects of the motor car on our town centres.*

Double back down Yorkshire Street and keep an eye open on your right for an *obscure little* entry called The Baum (say ‘Borm’). Go down it and cross the road. Go left a short way and on the right is Toad Lane.

The church on your right is St Mary in the Baum. *Take a look round the other side – it is an unusual concoction of styles having reused parts of an earlier church. Are the walls of glass or brick? The Toad Lane classical music concerts take place here on Wednesdays at 12.30-13.30 –admission £3.50.*

<http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/event/toad-lane-concerts-11>

Across Toad Lane from the church is The Baum public house. *This pub is the CAMRA national pub of the year for 2013. Behind the Victorian shop style frontage it purveys fine cask conditioned ales and some very good food at reasonable prices.* <http://www.thebaum.co.uk/>

On the same side as The Baum is the Rochdale Pioneers Museum. *This is a small museum to a very big idea! Admission is free. The building is the original shop of the co-operators. Open Monday to Saturday – 10,00 to 17.00. Sunday & Bank Holidays - Noon to 16.00.* <http://www.rochdalepioneersmuseum.coop/>

Return to Yorkshire Street and go right to descend to South Parade. Cross South Parade towards the Town Hall.

[OPTION: If you do not like steps follow the tram lines up Drake Street (opposite The Regal Moon) back to Rochdale Railway Station. *On the left you pass the Cask and Feather (real ales).*]

Go left onto Packer Street. On your left is The Empire Hall, and The Flying Horse Hotel *which sells a range of cask conditioned beers.*

Ascend the flights of stone steps (*sorry*) towards St Chad’s Church. Take a look at the gardens on the cliff side. *The fountain is Packer Spout, a natural spring from the hill side. Look behind you to see the rear of the Gothic Hall and its coach house.*

Head for the lych gate and cross Sparrowhill to go along Church Stile. Cross onto Durham Street and left along Lower Tweedale Street to return to the railway station for your train to Manchester.

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM LENGTH, EASY,
 PARK, ARCHITECTURE, SHOPS, MUSEUM, PUBS
 RAIL FARE – category one

Maps: OS 1:50 000 sheet 109 Manchester A-Z

Philip's Street Atlas Greater Manchester