

# Our History



## 1800's

In the 1800's, the heart of Manchester's shopping district was located right here.

The main high street, which is still known as High Street (located just a few streets over) , ran through the area between Great Ancoats Street and Shudehill.

The surrounding neighbourhood of Ancoats was known as the 'world's first industrial suburb' and became a cradle of the Industrial Revolution. It was an overcrowded, bustling area, home to a large number of Italian and Irish immigrants.



Manchester was known as centre of the cotton and textile industry, gaining the name 'Cottonopolis'.

Ancoats was the home to textile production in the form of hand loom weaving. The area was characterised by three-storey houses that had top floor weaving workshops to maximise daylight. Some weavers' houses can still be seen in the area.

Manchester also played a huge part in the manufacture of flint glass. Over 25 glassworks have been identified in Manchester, all built during the 19th century, many of which were in Ancoats.





**1873**

Our building first opened its doors in 1873. This popular city centre shopping hub was filled with markets known as the Smithfield Markets. It was part of the second largest market in the country and took up the majority of the local area.





The various Smithfield Market buildings housed butchers, greengrocers, and even meal and flour markets.

Our building was part of the retail fish market and was home to 40 traders with stalls and offices at weekly rentals.



It is known that store holders often spoke backwards to disguise what they were saying, and their foul language, in front of their customers





The Gibbons family had their own fishing boat at Hull and supplied fish over Lancashire.



Mr. Gibbons



Dakes's stall



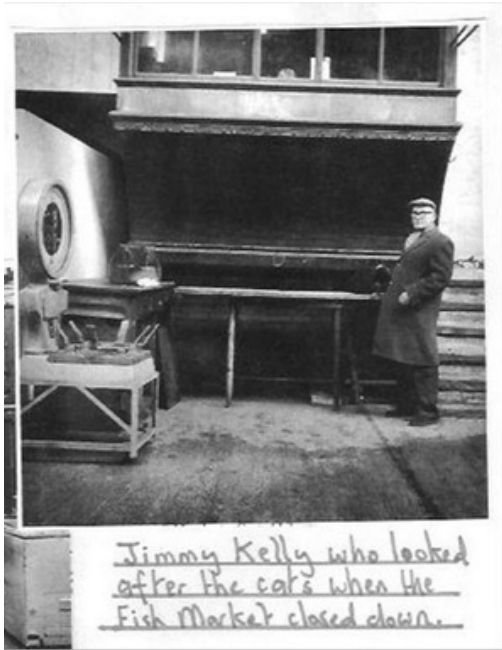
You can see two of the remaining Fishmongers' booths on the ground floor. They retain the original features and painted signs of Ellen 'Nellie' Gibbons (unusual as a female Fishmonger) and F Hodgkinson who traded from here.

**1973**

The Smithfield Markets closed their doors after 100 years of trading. Trading ceased due to the increasing competition from the newly opened Arndale Shopping Centre.







Jimmy Kelly who looked  
after the cats when the  
Fish Market closed down.



The story of Jimmy Kelly, a fishmonger who looked after the cats after the markets closed down is told in a mural on the side of our building on Copperas Street with the help of residents from the Smithfield Estate.

The mural by Hammo is inspired by the cats that were used as a form of pest control and were paid for their hard work by fishy dinners. Once the market ceased trading, Jimmy would return to feed the cats so they didn't go hungry.



1978

As the majority of the markets were demolished, the remaining disused retail fish market was to be converted into Manchester Craft Village - a creative space for local makers and visitors.





1982 -

After 4 years of conservation, the building reopened its doors to the public. The premises, owned by Manchester City Council, has been in operation as a venue for craft ever since.





You can still find many of the conserved original features at MCDC  
The glass roof, cast iron frame, writing desks in the upstairs studios ,fishmonger booths downstairs and toilets in cellar.

Manchester Craft Village played its part in the regeneration of this area, the Northern Quarter-an independent, innovative creative community full of shops, cafes and restaurants.

In fact, the phrase 'The Northern Quarter' was coined in our building!





2003 -

Initially operating as an artists' cooperative, the Centre became a not-for-profit limited company with a voluntary Board of Directors, changing its name from Manchester Craft Village to Manchester Craft and Design Centre.







**2012 -**

We celebrated our 30th Anniversary

**2013-**

Manchester Craft and Design Centre won 'Best independent Retailer' for the second time at the Manchester Tourism Awards.

**2016 -**

The Centre became a charity, supporting our work to engage audiences with craft and design.





Today we home :

19 studios

24 Resident Makers

19 official affiliate or helpers

Practices:

Ranges of jewelers, glass, wood work, textiles, leatherwork, pewter smith, ceramics, macrame

1 café

1 exhibition space

1 workshop space (Space 2)





We support the growth of successful and sustainable creative businesses and develop new talent through our programmes and opportunities for early-career makers.

Over the years the Centre has championed a wide and diverse range of designer makers through its studio spaces, exhibitions programme, public workshops, business development seminars and networking events.



From bustling fish market to busy craft and design hub, we are proud of our role in preserving our historic building and reinvigorating it with creativity.

You can find out more about our centre through one of our curated tours. You can plan a group visit, book a tour or download a self-led tour, with family friendly activities at [craftanddesign.com](http://craftanddesign.com)





**Do you have 5 minutes spare to fill out a questionnaire  
about your visit today?**

We're carrying out this survey to help us learn more about our audience and how we can give them the best possible experience.

Use your camera phone to scan the QR code.