

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE



SALE THROUGH
AUGUST

TIME

Team

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Collaborator



This project was an assertive collaboration with Steve Hodkinson, representing the main event: the Sale Festival. This partnership between the Manchester School of Architecture and the local community provided us with a unique vantage point that went beyond academic research. Steve acted as a cultural bridge, offering invaluable guidance and connecting our architectural vision to the town's lived reality. His involvement ensured that our proposals were not just theoretical interventions, but meaningful contributions designed to complement and enhance the existing festival's annual celebration of local identity.

Introduction

Sale Through Time

Sale Through Time, is a multimedia exhibition conceived as a collaborative bridge between the Manchester School of Architecture and the Sale Festival. The project imagines a small, walkable sequence of stations that invites visitors to experience Sale's history through multiple senses, from the Victorian Era all the way to present time.

The Sale Festival is a community celebration of local culture, creativity, and shared stories, and our project invites visitors of all ages to step into the town's history through an immersive experience. Set in St. Paul's Church, the journey involves multimedia sources that will introduce key moments and characters. Together, these elements will create an immersive, layered encounter with the past, accessible and engaging for visitors of all ages, to celebrate Sale's cultural and architectural heritage within a festival context.

The exhibition unfolds through a curated sequence of thematic stations, each one designed to reveal a different layer of Sale's evolving identity. Rather than presenting history as a static timeline, the installation encourages visitors to wander, pause, and interpret, allowing personal memories, family stories, and local knowledge to intermingle with the material on display.

The project embraces a site that has long served as a social anchor for the community. The building becomes both container and participant: its architecture frames the narrative while its atmosphere deepens the emotional resonance of the journey. In bringing together students, residents, and festival-goers, Sale Through Time aims to spark conversations about heritage, belonging, and the ways in which everyday places carry the traces of collective life. It is an invitation not only to look back, but to imagine how Sale's past continues to shape its future.

OUR MEETINGS

FIRST MEETING

We held our first group meeting together with our collaborator, Steve Hodgkinson. This initial session was an opportunity to get to know one another, align our expectations, and begin familiarising ourselves with the project. Steve introduced the brief, which was intentionally open-ended, giving us a great deal of creative freedom in how we choose to interpret and develop it. We left the meeting with a shared understanding of the project's potential and agreed to reconvene the following week to bring forward ideas and begin shaping a clear direction collaboratively.

We met during the scheduled group session and had another productive catch-up. We managed to complete the tasks set earlier that morning and clearly delegate who would be responsible for the four required outputs, due on the 6th of March. We also spent time talking through what the final project might look like and how we can break tasks down as we move towards the exhibition in June. On top of this, we went over the final tweaks for our poster to make sure everything is coming together. Overall, the meeting felt focused but relaxed, and it was good to see how well we're continuing to work together as a group.



WHAT IS THE SALE FESTIVAL?

We learned during our first meeting with Steve that the Sale Festival is an annual tradition that serves as a vibrant catalyst for local arts, music, and heritage within the town of Sale. More than just a series of events, the festival acts as a collective expression of community identity, drawing visitors together to celebrate the rich cultural fabric of the region.



THE BRIEF

From the beginning, we did not receive a brief or specific project proposal from Steve, which allowed us to have initial freedom in how we approached the ideas to complement the festival. While that meant a process of constant brainstorming, it also brought one of our first difficulties: agreeing on what the proposal could be. We needed to craft a proposal that could speak to the festival's identity, but that would also work with St. Paul's Church, which is where this year's festival would be centred.



Image Top:
First meeting with Steve,
the collaborator in the MTC
building.

Image Middle-Top (Left):
First visit to Sale and St.
Paul's Church

Image Right:
Visit to the Sale Library.
Showing of the archive
pieces.

Image Middle-Bottom
(Left):
Weekly MSA Live meeting.
Group reunion on the
outside.

Sale's History Research

To better understand Sale as a formed town, it is important to go back in time and identify its key moments in history. Sale was originally a small rural settlement, characterised by farmland and scattered buildings. The Bridgewater Canal (around the 1760s) allowed for early transport and economic activity. The arrival of the Manchester–Altrincham railway caused rapid suburban growth in Sale. Sale developed into a commuter town for Manchester during the Victorian period. St Paul's Church (in 1882) reflects this expansion and the formation of a growing community. The surrounding area transitioned from low-density rural land to structured housing. Over time, Sale evolved into a defined suburban environment with civic and public infrastructure. Present-day Sale is shaped by transport, residential growth, and community-focused spaces

Bridgewater Canal (opened 1760s) is one of the earliest major infrastructures influencing Sale's development. Originally constructed to transport coal into Manchester, supporting industrial growth. Established an early connection between Sale and surrounding industrial regions thus played a key role in shaping the settlement pattern and economy of the area. During the Victorian period, it functioned as an active industrial transport route. Contributed to making Sale a more accessible and desirable location for development. Over time, its function shifted from industrial use to leisure and recreation.

Sale Town Hall (in 1915) marked the shift from the primarily church-led community to a more civic and administrative centre. Reflects the growth and formal organisation of Sale as an established suburban town. The Cenotaph / War Memorial (1925) was introduced following World War I. Represents the impact of national events on the local community and transformed the space into one of collective memory and reflection.

Sale Waterside (redeveloped 2016) represents the transformation of traditional civic buildings into a modern cultural hub. It combines library, theatre, and community spaces into a single accessible venue. Located near the town centre, it strengthens the area as a social and cultural focal point. Demonstrates how public spaces have evolved to support inclusive and diverse activities. Contrasts with Victorian institutions by prioritising informality, accessibility, and experience while continuing the tradition of public gathering, but in a contemporary, secular context. To better understand Sale through its physical transformations, the historical maps were read and compared.



1870s–1890s: Initial expansion driven by the railways

1 Following the opening of the Manchester–Olderferingham Railway in the mid-19th century (1849), Sale began its transformation from an agricultural village into a middle-class commuter town.



1890s: Urbanisation Process

3. Urbanisation began to accelerate. Rows of Victorian terraced houses and detached villas began to appear, filling in the gaps around the station. The Bridgewater Canal remained an important freight waterway.

2. Maps show extensive farmland and open countryside. Development was concentrated mainly along the main roads and near the railway station. At this time, Sale and the neighbouring town of Ashton upon Mersey were still two relatively separate entities.



The 1910s: The Prosperity of the Edwardian Era



The 1950s: Post-war reconstruction and suburbanisation

5. A housing boom; post-war maps show large-scale expansion westwards and southwards, with the emergence of numerous semi-detached houses and modern housing estates.

4. Maps from this period document the heyday of Sale as a high-quality residential area. Building density increased significantly, giving rise to a grid-like street layout.



2005 – present: Modern Landscape and Transport Innovation

6. The urban fabric has become exceptionally compact. The town centre has undergone multiple redevelopments, including the creation of a pedestrianised high street and the introduction of multi-storey car parks.

FIRST OUTCOMES

We eventually moved from many abstract concepts to a concrete plan for the June festival. Considering the identity of the festival and its approach to arts and culture, we proposed the creation of a three-piece exhibition around the Church's interior: a 1:1 set design exhibit, a physical model of the evolution of Sale, and a short film showcasing Sale's every day life

This way, the film group made multiple visits to Sale to capture videos, and the model group prepared files, laser cut, and put together the idea of the model, and the Victorian installation group began gathering the needed inventory and preparing the logistics of creating a real-life dining set in the church. And although we stayed separated for the actual work, this never stopped being a collaborative process within the group as a whole.

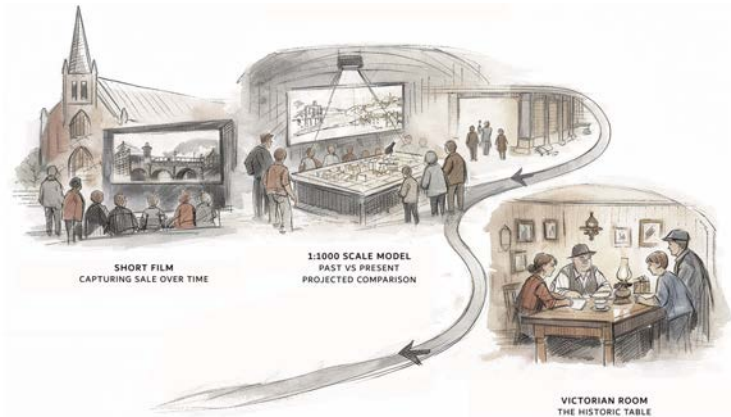


Image on Top:
Visual concept of the exhibition "through time" for the Festival.

Image on Bottom:
Research of precedents of a Victorian set's representation over the years.

Images on Right Page:
Process of replanning the outcomes.

TURNING POINT

Every collaborative process faces a moment of critical reappraisal, and during the conceptualization of these first three outcomes, some difficulties fell upon our discussions.

Initial Intention

The project initially proposed a fully immersive Victorian room recreation as part of the Sale Festival interactive experience, where the aim was to physically transport visitors into a historical domestic setting, and use material authenticity and spatial immersion to communicate Victorian life. This approach was rooted in the idea of embodied learning through environment.

What changed and why?

Despite the depth of research and development, the decision was made not to carry forward the Victorian room reconstruction.

This was because it required significant budget allocation, complex set fabrication and sourcing, and increased installation time and logistics. In addition to this, after visiting the proposed project site we realised that it had restricted usable space. A fixed installation would reduce flexibility of the exhibition and limit visitor flow.



FINAL OUTCOMES

A NEW EXPERIENCE

Following the turning point, we shifted our focus toward a more integrated "spatial experience" strategy. We moved away from literal reconstruction toward a suggested immersion, where our initial "Victorian Table" set design idea turned into informative panels. We engaged in journey mapping and circulation sketching to explore how movement through space could communicate history. Our research, where furniture, tableware, and lighting were analyzed not just as objects, took these elements as tools for storytelling, ensuring the final experience was both flexible and atmospheric.

We divided our efforts into two specialized groups to tackle the complexity of the site. The film group focused on the temporal aspect, making multiple visits to Sale to capture the rhythm of contemporary life and its historical echoes. Simultaneously, the Model Group translated urban scales into tangible forms, utilizing laser-cut MDF sheets. By layering these materials, we constructed a site model that served as a physical foundation for our spatial narrative, allowing us to visualize the town's density and architectural language.

The final result was a cohesive multimedia intervention that successfully complemented the Sale Festival. By synthesizing film, physical models, and curated historical research, we provided a platform for the community to reconnect with their heritage. The project demonstrated that architectural translation is not about replicating the past, but about creating meaningful dialogues between history and the contemporary user, leaving a lasting educational legacy for the people of Sale.

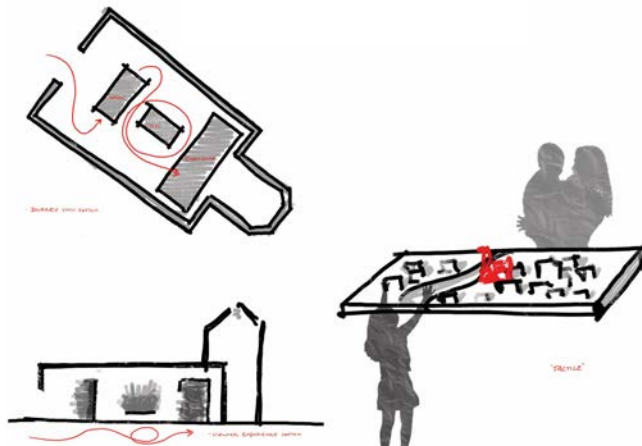


Image: Conceptual drawing of the overall visitor experience inside St. Paul's Church on the day of the Festival.

1. VICTORIAN TABLE

Instead of producing a 1:1 set, we provided extensive research into the historic Victorian table, investigating the necessary inventory, and creating a visual comparison of an upper and lower class dining tables. This revealed the hierarchical differences within Victorian Britain, providing a learning opportunity for visitors during Sale Festival.

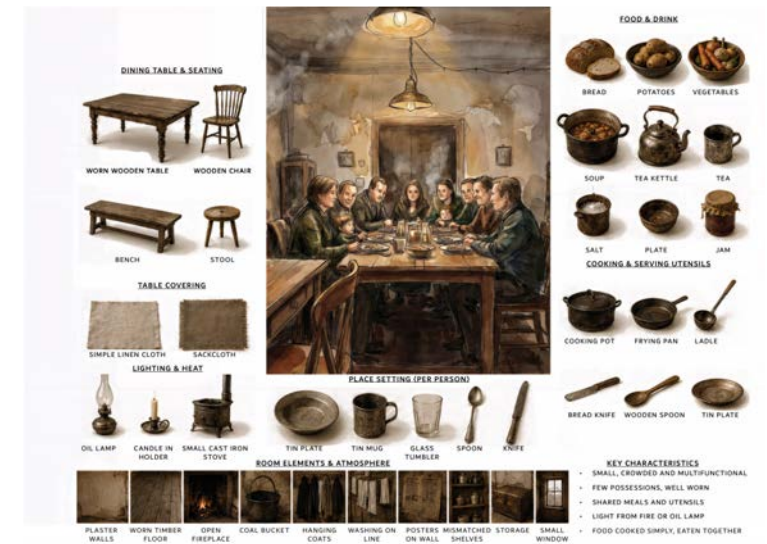


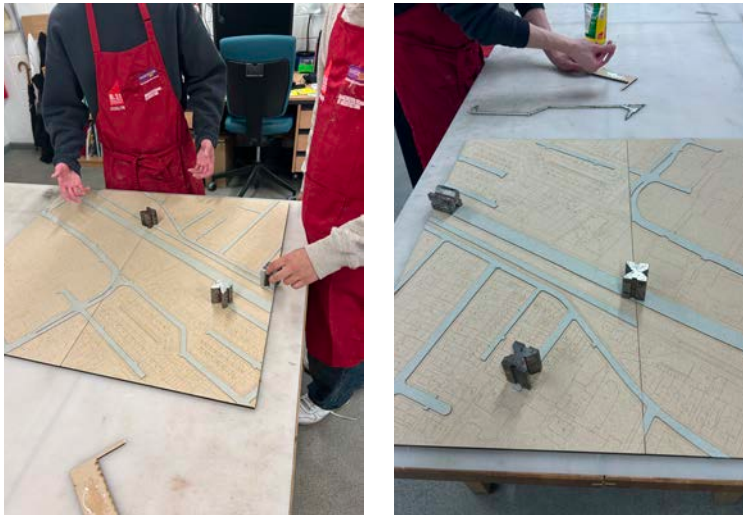
Image on Top: Informative collage of the "Queen's Victorian table"

Images on Bottom: Informative collage of the "Working class Victorian table"

OUTCOMES

2. THE 1:500 MODEL

The first layer of the final output is a contextual site model of present day Sale, with St Paul's Church distinctly highlighted in white as the focal point. The secondary engagement layer invites festival goers to interact with the model by pinning personal memories, stories and experiences on site, creating a collective archive of both past and present day Sale. This collective of pins, string and stories will be collated on a board, creating a participatory piece that encourages community storytelling. Sale Through Time now transforms the site model into a shared community map, allowing visitors to actively contribute their own memories, stories, and connections to Sale. Through a simple interaction of placing pins and tying strings to meaningful locations, participants become part of the exhibition rather than just observers.



Images:
Model making process in
B15 Workshop

3. THE SHORT FILM

The film explores the evolution of Sale through a layered narrative of movement and atmosphere. It captures the city's development and everyday life through an immersive lens.



Image on Top:
Editing process of the short
film.

Images on Middle:
Film reel with some of the
shots taken during the visits.

Image on Bottom:
QR Code to watch the short
film.



WATCH THE SHORT FILM!

Scan the QR Code and get transported to an everyday scene of Sale.

REFLECTION

The final result was a cohesive multimedia intervention that successfully complemented the Sale Festival. By synthesizing film, physical models, and curated historical research, we provided a platform for the community to reconnect with their heritage. The project demonstrated that architectural translation is not about replicating the past, but about creating meaningful dialogues between history and the contemporary user, leaving a lasting educational legacy for the people of Sale.

Overall, the MSA Live project represented a significant exercise in multidisciplinary group work for each of us who are a part of each programme during the architecture studying journey. From navigating an initially open brief that required us to embrace the complexity of abstraction and collective brainstorming, to gradually filtering a multitude of ideas into a consolidated vision that truly represented the festival's essence. Beyond the technical outputs, the experience left us with a deep understanding of collaborative dynamics that go from managing internal teamwork to professional engagement with a real-world collaborator and members of the local community. Ultimately, we realized that while the tangible product of the project may be modest, its cultural impact is extensive, because at the end, by translating complex history into an accessible narrative, we created a tool for long-term education that will resonate with younger generations and the people of Sale, ensuring that the town's heritage remains through time.

Image:
Conceptual image of the
1:500 model exhibition
at the St. Paul's Church
during the Sale Festival.



Conceptual image generated with AI

ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1, Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students, BA foundation and year 1 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects are for community benefit or have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. The projects are celebrated in presentations at the end of the academic year. .

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 400 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 34 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team, Emily & Julie:

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BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2026

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