



SAMPLE PAGES

The 80-page, A4 handbook for Birmingham's Heritage, with text, photographs, maps, appendices and a reading list, is available for purchase, price £15.00 including postage and packing.

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Birmingham's Heritage

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Friday September 13th-Tuesday September 17th 2013

interesting breaks with interesting people

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Birmingham & Fazeley Canal: Farmer’s Bridge Locks (2013)

Introduction

One has no great hope of Birmingham. I always say there is something direful in the sound.

Jane Austen, *Emma* (1816) [Mrs Elton]

Probably in no other age or country was there ever such an astonishing display of human ingenuity as may be found in Birmingham.

Robert Southey (1807), [quoted in Tim Adams, 'Elegy to the Bull Ring', *The Observer*, March 5th 1995]

Birmingham is a wonderful place, when thoroughly comprehended, but this is not to be done by a glance.

The Builder, Vol 7, No 346, September 22nd 1849 [quoted in Anthony Sutcliffe & Roger Smith, *History of Birmingham Vol 3, Birmingham 1939-1970* (Oxford University Press 1974)]

...This, then, is how modern Birmingham works – an insatiable monster preying on the green fields surrounding it, and excreting brick, concrete, and tarmac in its wake.

Vivian Bird, *Portrait of Birmingham* (3rd edn, Robert Hale 1979)

It is odd that, of the ancient manors of Warwickshire, Birmingham should have so thoroughly eclipsed its neighbours. In the Domesday Survey Aston, Edgbaston, Erdington, Handsworth, Selly Oak and Witton were each significantly more valuable and populous than Birmingham, to which they are all now suburbs. The geographical origin of Birmingham, the ford across the River Rea at Deritend, has long been invisible, but the medieval street-plan is still embedded in the modern city-centre. The original High Street runs still from Digbeth, past the site of the triangular market place at the Bull Ring, crossing an east-west alignment that is still marked by Edgbaston Street. New Street was new in the fourteenth century. The medieval manor house, on Moat Lane, was demolished as late as 1822, and the only surviving medieval building in the city is the late-fifteenth century former guildhall and school of St John the Baptist, now the Old Crown Inn in Deritend.

The success of the town and city principally lies in the richness, extraordinary diversity and historic freedom of Birmingham's trades, which is attributed to the fact that though it gained a market as early as 1166 it only gained borough in 1838. There was a goldsmith working in the town by 1406. Leland described it already in the reign of Henry VIII as a centre of manufacturing:

There be many smiths in the town, that...make knives and all mannour of cuttinge tooles, and many lorimers, that make bittes, and a great many naylor. So that a great part of the towne is maintained by smiths, who have their iron and sea-cole out of Staffordshire.

In addition to the coal of south Staffordshire and east Worcestershire, early Birmingham smiths were supplied with charcoal from north-east Warwickshire.

In 1683 fully half of the 202 forges recorded in the hearth-tax returns were located in Deritend, Digbeth and Edgbaston Street. The higher ground to the north was developed in the eighteenth century as elegant streets and squares, built around the parish churches of St Philip (now the Anglican Cathedral, 1709-15) and St Paul (1777-9).

Industry has always been its pride and its hallmark: Camden described it as "full of inhabitants and resounding with hammers and anvils for most of them are smithes". Samuel Timmins' 1865 'Report on the Industrial History of Birmingham' to the British Association underlines the town's implicit encouragement of prosperity:

Our town seemed to have the power of attracting within its boundaries artisans of every trade and every degree of skill. Although not situated on any of the great highways of the land, it was near enough to be easily accessible. It

already mechanised; when steam-power became available – even though the first engines were built at Soho – it was simply not needed to maintain a high level of productivity. Jewellery, gun-making, edge-tools, minting, pen-making, pin-making – almost any type of metalworking in iron, steel and from 1740 onwards brass – were within the scope of this enormously flexible and adaptable, tightly-knit community of manufacturers.

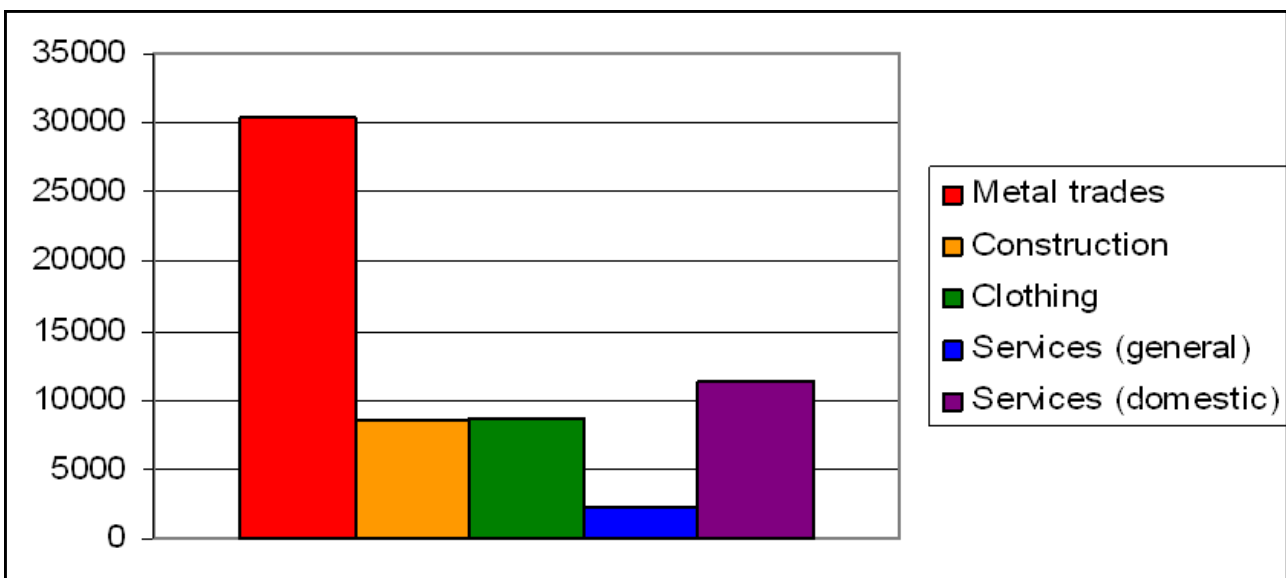
As the town’s population increased the estates surrounding the historic core were systematically developed: a land-owner called John Pemberton began Old Square in 1697; other lands belonging to the Phillips and Walker families were laid out from 1709 around the new St Philip’s Church. The Colmore family gained a private Act of Parliament in 1746 allowing them to build on the Newhall estate, stretching northwards from Colmore Row; by the 1790s they were building around St Paul’s Square. What is now called the Jewellery Quarter extended gradually to Vyse Street between the 1840s and 1870.

The Gough, Gooch and Inge families were establishing housing south-west of the town from 1778 onwards, and in 1810 George Gough, 3rd Lord Calthorpe, began the development of Edgbaston to attract “those people who, having acquired a modest competence, wish to retire to a small country house, and therefore take just as much land as would be sufficient for the purpose.”

Through the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, Birmingham craftsmen adapted their skills to circumstances and markets, from working mainly in iron, steel and brass to a later concentration on non-ferrous and precious metals. Eric Hopkins outlines the primacy of mid-nineteenth century Birmingham in –

...guns, brass-work (particularly the cabinet and lighting branches), jewellery (especially middle-class jewellery and cheap trinket ware), buttons, pins, screws and bedsteads.

– and reproduces the occupational statistics from the 1851 census:



Birmingham occupational groups, 1851 census: more detailed data can be found in Appendix 1

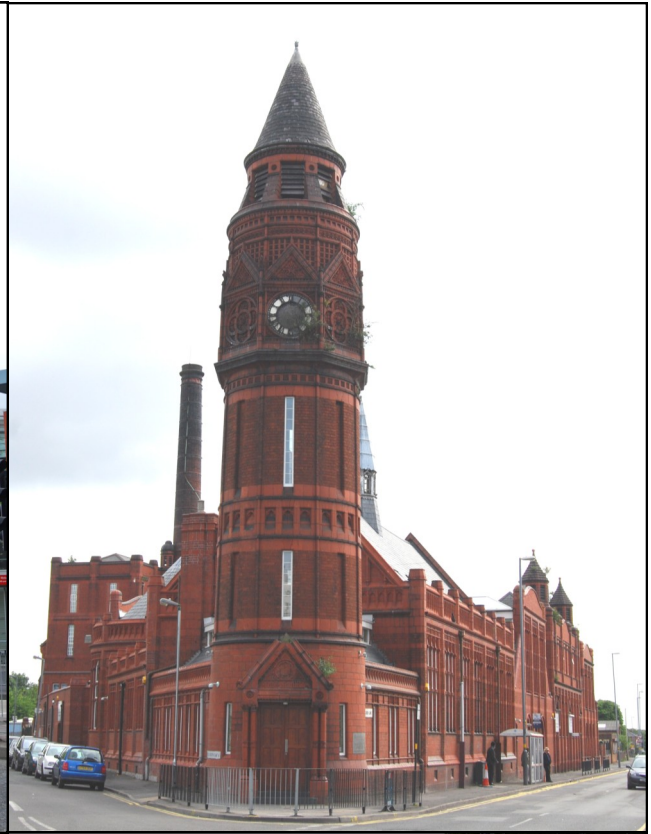
Eric Hopkins suggests that the growth of industry in Birmingham in the period 1760-1840 is more typical of towns across Great Britain than the classic narrative of the Industrial Revolution which emphasises the innovations in the textile industry, the consequent development of the factory system and the effects of steam power on manufacturing and transportation. In contrast to this model, Birmingham industry was largely unmechanised as late as 1840, yet its manufacturers were using and developing sophisticated hand-powered specialist techniques throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The application of the division of labour in Birmingham trades itself represents a powerful device for adding value to the production of quality articles from basic materials. Furthermore, considering that Matthew Boulton contracted with, rather than employed, many of the workers in his Manufactory – the absence of large, autocratically directed factory units in Birmingham was typical of industry outside the textile trades until the early years of Queen Victoria’s reign.

Lock 13 is the bottom of the flight, and the level pound beyond is much less dramatic. Lower Loveday Street crosses the canal by the elegant cast-iron **Barker Bridge** (1842). **Aston Junction**, where the Digbeth Branch diverges from the main Birmingham & Fazeley line, is an evocative spot, where one of the attractive Horsley Iron Works roving bridges contrasts with the plain concrete structure carrying the A38(M) Aston Expressway, which connects the city-centre Inner Ring Road with “Spaghetti Junction” at Gravelly Hill.

From the towpath at Aston Junction it is no more than fifteen minutes’ walk through the campus of Aston University to the top end of Corporation Street.



Gas Street Basin (1977)



*Top left: Spring Hill Library;
top right: former Green Lane Library, Small Heath;
bottom left: Bloomsbury Library, Nechells;
bottom right: Moseley Road Library, Balsall Heath*

Appendix 3: All Saints' (formerly St Aidan's) Church, Small Heath

The Anglican parishes around the Birmingham Small Arms factory in Small Heath were carved out of the ancient parish of Aston. The parish of St Andrew, Bordesley, was created in 1846, followed by the parish of All Saints', Small Heath in 1875. Within the parish of St Andrew, Bordesley, an iron church of 1882 developed into the parish of St Oswald of Worcester, which in turn was divided to form the parish of St Benedict in 1898. In the parish of All Saints', Small Heath, a mission-church of St Aidan was opened in 1891, followed by another iron church, the Good Shepherd (1900), which subsequently became the parish of St Gregory the Great. All these Small Heath parishes, along with St Agatha's, Sparkbrook and others, were part of the Anglo-Catholic "biretta belt" of South Birmingham.

Church	Architect	Date	Closed	Subsequent use
St Andrew, Bordesley	R C Carpenter	1846	1985	Spire removed after storm-damage, 1894; demolished 1985
All Saints, Small Heath	A E Dempster	1875	1940	Bombed
St Oswald of Worcester, Small Heath	W H Bidlake	1893; 1899-1900	1998	Grade II*; community use
St Aidan, Small Heath	Thomas Frederick Pound	1894-1898	Open	Grade II*
St Gregory the Great, Small Heath	J L Ball with Ernest & Sidney Barnsley	1902-1912	1996	Grade II; now Bethel United Church; rood transferred to St Michael's, Great Torrington, Devon
	H W Hobbiss	1926-1928		

[Source: William Dargue, *A History of Birmingham Churches from Aston to Yardley* <http://ahistoryofbirminghamchurches.jimdo.com>]

The garden in which the iron mission church of St Aidan was erected was virtually the last remaining vacant plot in Herbert Road, and became the restricted site for the brick church which was begun in 1893. The eastern end – chancel, guild chapel and two bays of the nave – was completed in 1894 and consecrated two years later; the western end including the baptistery and bellcote was finished by the end of 1898.

The church was designed in red brick with buff terracotta by Thomas Frederick Proud (d 1901), and the new clergy house, intended for a team of single curates, was the work of the Birmingham metalworker and architect Arthur Stansfield Dixon (1856-1929), designer of the Birmingham Guild of Handicrafts headquarters and the Anglican Cathedral of St Mary the Virgin & St Nicholas, Seoul, South Korea (completed 1996). Once the shell of the church was complete, Arts & Crafts designers supplied much of the decoration: Bertram Lamplugh of the Birmingham School of Art designed the Good Shepherd window which was installed in the Guild Chapel in 1907.

Frederick Bligh Bond (1864-1945) and W E Ellery Anderson (1888-1942) collaborated with the incumbent, Canon Newell Long, to begin an ambitious decorative scheme, most of which remained unexecuted because of the intervention of the Great War. The rood beam and the Calvary it supports were added in 1910-12; the organ was elevated to a loft to create space for the Lady Chapel, for which the reredos and screen were designed by Bligh Bond who may also, in 1914, have designed the screen added to the Guild Chapel.