

FRIENDS OF THE CENTRE FOR WEST MIDLANDS HISTORY

SHARING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE

Lord Mayor Receives Millionth Copy of Heritage Buildings Guide By Elaine Mitchell

The Grade II listed Moor Street Station is just one of the new entries included in Birmingham's most popular guide to the city's heritage buildings.

Written and produced by the Civic Society, Birmingham Heritage Buildings is now in its fourth edition. The one millionth copy was recently presented to the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Cllr Len Gregory, at the guide's launch hosted by major sponsor, Chiltern Railways at Moor Street Station.

The guide is an important part of the Civic Society's work in promoting the city's heritage to residents and visitors alike. It includes maps, information about the buildings featured and suggested walks around the town.

If you would like a copy, get in touch with Elaine Mitchell at the Birmingham Civic Society on 0121 236 8110 or email info@birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk

The Committee of the Friends of the Centre for West Midlands History wishes everyone a belated Happy New Year!



Christine Mann showing the Lady Mayoress and Keith Clenton some of our Friends' Newsletters

Local History Fair 2010

The 2010 History Fair took place at the Radisson Hotel on Holloway Circus in June. Many local history societies were represented, alongside more specialised groups such as the Air Raid enthusiasts. The Friends' stand received many enquiries, not least from the Lady Mayoress. Our thanks are due to Keith Clenton for all his hard work in organising another enjoyable day for all.

'INDUSTRIAL RESPONSES' EXHIBITION

AT THE RBSA GALLERY BY ELAINE WILLIAMS



The New Buffery, Richard Chattock RBSA (1825-1906), c. 1870, © Royal Birmingham Society of Artists.

The 'Industrial Responses' exhibition took place at the RBSA Gallery in October and November 2010 and featured works from the RBSA archives. Curated by members of the volunteer archivist team at the gallery - including undergraduates, librarians, art teachers and RBSA members, the exhibition focused on works representing the Society's Members' responses to the region's ever-changing industrial landscape.

Works on display ranged from the late 18th century to the present day. **Joseph Barber's Trade Card for Birmingham Union Fire Office** c.1790, a small scale watercolour on paper, illustrates the influence of Classicism on advertising at this time. The central figure in the work is a representation of woman embodying the attributes of security and hard work. She is depicted outdoors seated at the foot of a large column and points to a large scale key which is symbolically placed on an open book with a heading of SECURITY. The background depicts a blazing building with a beehive in the near distance and many bees buzzing round. The image suggests that Birmingham would be safe within the hands of the Birmingham Fire Union, one of many competing fire services at the time.

Whilst some works selected represent the artists' urge to escape the industrial situation (such as **Barber's Two Travelers on a Country Path**, a watercolour dating from around 1800), other works truly represent the industrial heritage of this region. **Richard Chattock's The New Buffery**, dating from 1870, shows how our landscape is subject to the demands of technological change. Industry literally chokes the air,

with huge billows of dense smoke covering the top third of the work. The scale of the industrial building is highlighted by the incorporation of a worker placed half way up the building, operating what looks like some sort of pump mechanism. This exterior view of a changed landscape contrasts with another of his works **The Rolls**. In this 1872 etching on paper, Chattock depicts the heat and majesty of the machine age and captures the sense of enclosure and confinement of the rolling mill. The worker is absorbed in the process and huge chains hang from the ceiling, suggesting the imprisoned nature of his workplace. Though they are a hundred years apart, Chattock's work can be seen as a pre-cursor to **Harry Ecclestone's Blast Furnace at Night** of 1981, a work that is dominated by the heat and sparks of the forging and welding process.

Finally, the selection of **Frank Taylor Lockwood's Hastings, August 1961** is a reminder of how industrialisation paved the way for higher wages, paid holidays and the expansion of the railways, opening up the opportunity for workers to escape to the seaside for a while to experience a welcome relief to the hard work of industrial progress.

An accompanying study day was held on October 17th, where the receptive audience was presented with the wider themes of art and industry. **Hannah Carroll**, a member of the volunteer archive team, gave us an introduction to the themes of the day and skillfully presented each speaker. **Dr. Malcolm Dick, Director, Centre for West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham**, discussed writers who have commented on industrial landscapes. **Brendan Flynn of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery** presented changing views of Birmingham as seen in the works of **Arthur Lockwood**. **Sophie Rycroft** and **Emily Fletcher**, who are both undergraduate History of Art students at The University of Birmingham, considered the ideas of the picturesque and the sublime in relation to industrial change. Finally, **Georgia Ramplin** and **Natalie Quiney**, who are two sixth-form students, discussed the Galtons, one of Birmingham's most prominent industrialist families and their connections with the art world. The exhibition was officially opened by Dr. Malcolm Dick.

If you would like a copy of the free, colour illustrated catalogue, contact Connie Wan at the RBSA Gallery via connie@rbsa.org.uk or telephone 0121 236 4353.

A Birmingham Peregrination: Visit by University of Leicester Postgraduate Students to Birmingham

Postgraduate students from University of Leicester came to Birmingham in November to experience the historical delights of the Jewellery Quarter and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The students belong to the History Lab at Leicester: a thriving interdisciplinary research community, so members of the group have varied research interests.

The morning began with a tour of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter led by Sally Baggott and taking in the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, the Pen Room and St. Paul's Church. Lunch at BMAG was followed by tours of the glass and jewellery galleries at BMAG led by Sally Hoban. The students were amazed by what Birmingham has to offer in terms of heritage, and the day really did challenge their perceptions of the city. Members of the Centre for West Midlands History Research Group are keen to maintain the link with Leicester and more joint events are planned for this year.

Aston Hall Visit 15 October 2010

A dozen members of the Friends enjoyed a guided tour of the newly refurbished Aston Hall. The display rooms have been much improved and illustrate various periods and events in the history of the Hall. The famous Long Gallery looks magnificent. The conversion of the stables block into a comfortable cafe was also much appreciated by those of us seeking a cup of tea after our climb into the attic.

Sandwell Archives Visit 22 November 2010

The stairs were in the opposite direction during the Sandwell Archives visit on 22nd November, down to the basement store rooms. The range of material here is frequently underestimated. The records of five Black Country Boroughs, namely West Bromwich, Oldbury, Smethwick, Wednesbury and Tipton are held plus those of the townships and hamlets comprising Rowley Regis. Public records for hospitals and courts and for religious communities, particularly dissenters are also held. A substantial archive from Chance Bros, the glass manufacturers, covering employees, orders, product design and lighthouse lenses, is supplemented by the records of a number of other prominent businesses in the area. And as a researcher, the welcome afforded by the archivists, Sarah Chubb and Maureen Waldron, was a great inducement to go back and do some serious work.

If you would like to contribute to our next newsletter, please send editorial and news items to Sally Hoban sally.hoban@btinternet.com. Please note we do reserve the right to edit material.

Forthcoming Activities of Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage (FOBAH):

**Annual General Meeting and Public Lecture with
Professor Catherine Hall *Birmingham, Slavery and
Abolition: Re-thinking the Legacy***

Saturday 26 March 2011, Library Theatre, AGM at 1:30pm and Lecture at 2pm

IMPORTANT NOTICE!

The Archives at Birmingham Central Library will be closed during the move to the new Library of Birmingham. A final date for this will be decided in February 2011, but users may be unable to access archives for up to a year during the move, possibly from June/July 2012. If members are concerned about their research, they should discuss availability of material with a member of Archives staff as soon as possible. There is potential to make certain archives available during the closure if plenty of notice is given.

**Centre for West
Midlands History
Research Group
(CWMHRG) Meeting
11 November 2011**

The latest gathering of the Centre for West Midlands History Research Group was treated to two interesting presentations by members. First we learned about Iron Making in Birmingham from Ray Shill, who detailed the various iron foundries and associated industrial processes which developed in the area from the 16th century onwards. He illustrated the positions of various iron manufacturing sites with a series of maps and images.

The second fascinating presentation by John Townley was on the Crank Company and their Customers. John has done some detailed research on the early rotative steam engines made by Matthew Wasborough and James Pickard of the Crank Company in 1780/1. He discussed how this innovative technology was introduced at various sites. Their main engine erector, John Stead, installed Twigg's rolling mill in Water Street, Birmingham and Pickard's corn mill on the adjacent site at Snow Hill according to John's informative talk. This engineer was praised by Boulton and Watt, who tried to encourage Stead to join their business.

UPCOMING EVENT:

RESEARCH SHOWCASE
AN EVENING WITH...

CHRIS PENNEY:
THE HURD LIBRARY

THURSDAY 10 MARCH 2011
6.30-8.30PM

LECTURE ROOM 3 (FIRST FLOOR),
THE ARTS BUILDING,
UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

TO CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE OR TO JOIN
OUR MAILING LIST PLEASE CONTACT
CONNIE WAN AT CWMHRG@HOTMAIL.COM

WE'RE LOOKING FOR SPEAKERS!
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A
TALK ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH AT
OUR INFORMAL SHOWCASE
EVENINGS THEN GET IN TOUCH!
EMAIL CONNIE AT THE EMAIL
ADDRESS ABOVE FOR
MORE DETAILS.