Discover one of the people who made Birmingham great

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Early industrial espionage, the smashing of counterfeiting activities and the beginnings of mass media are just some of the broad topics under the spotlight in an international conference being held in Birmingham next week.

'Where Genius and the Arts Preside' forms part of a year-long festival celebrating the life, works and legacy of Matthew Boulton (1728 – 1809). Being organised by Birmingham University, Birmingham City University and The Birmingham Assay Office, the conference will consider the historical significance of Boulton as a pioneering industrialist, a natural philosopher and patron the arts and is open not just to international scholars, but to students, teachers and Boulton enthusiasts - who can register by the day according to topics that interest them.

Professor Peter Jones from the University of Birmingham, who is one of conference organisers comments: "Boulton was an astonishing figure – inventor, entrepreneur and a true founding father of the City. Boulton's decision to back James Watt's steam engine is one of great examples of business acumen in history.

"His entrepreneurial spirit was even on show when meeting royalty , as he once famously told King George III: 'I am engaged, your majesty, in the production of a commodity which is the desire of kings.' The King asked him to explain: 'POWER, your majesty,' Boulton said and then he gave 'a description of the great uses to which the steam-engine was capable."

Professor Ken Quickenden, Heritage Jewellery Professor at Birmingham City University, said: "The conference promises to be a wonderful event. It will discuss Boulton's many varied activities, ranging from silver to steam engines and from coins to buttons as well as his role as one of the city's great men and a key figure in the industrial revolution."

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For more information contact: Ben Hill, Head of Communications, University of Birmingham, Tel 0121 4145134, Mob 07789921163.

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