

FRIENDS OF THE CENTRE FOR WEST MIDLANDS HISTORY

SHARING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE

BIRMINGHAM HISTORY DAY 24 NOVEMBER 2012 by Guy Sjögren

The cry was heard, 'Form an orderly queue, if you'd be so kind!' And they did - over a hundred local historians - all at the University of Birmingham to attend the 'Birmingham History Day 2012' - and all patiently queuing and squeezing into a very small room to get a cup of coffee. But it wasn't just the coffee that drew them to university on that November day. The main attraction was a pot- pourri of a programme, plentifully packed with presentations on people and places, publications and plans...and pens.

Mark Curthoys gave an informative and witty overview of that valuable online resource for historians, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, providing an insight into the ODNB's Birmingham resources and making specific reference to a number of Birmingham luminaries. People and places were linked by means of the youthful reporters comprising the 'News Team of Ladywood'. Their delightful film covering the history of this district of Birmingham proved to be one of the highlights of the day. The application of geographic information systems (GIS) to map the development of the City over time proved to be equally fascinating.

During the day, the audience was introduced to two recent publications covering very different subjects. Anthony Peers spoke about his book on Birmingham Town Hall: a beautifully illustrated book, described by one reviewer as 'scholarly yet accessible'. Pete Bounous talked about an altogether very different publication: *The Pigott Smith Map of Birmingham* (1855). Copies of the map have been reproduced together with Pete's short account of both the cartographer and the reasons for the production of the map.

Rachel MacGregor, Senior Archivist at Birmingham Archives and Heritage, gave an illustrated talk on the development of the new Birmingham Library and Archives, due to open in September. Amongst Rachel's slides was an enduring image of a typist in the original Reference Library swathed in a blanket to keep out the damp and the cold.

And the pens? John Berkeley OBE, former Chairman of Brandauer Holdings Limited, gave a short talk entitled *From Pens to Particle Physics: Brandauer, the Story of a Family Business*. This is also the title of a short book, although copies are now sold out. All is not lost, however, as John will be giving a longer talk during the Jewellery Quarter Day School on Saturday 15 June at the University, and the booklet can be accessed at www.brandauer.co.uk/timeline.

All-in-all, a splendidly varied programme was put together by Malcolm Dick, and one that was greatly enjoyed by an enthusiastic and knowledgeable audience.

Saturday 20 April 2013, 2.00pm to 4.00pm
Guided tour of Stokesay Court,
near Craven Arms, Shropshire.
Cost £15 per head (including afternoon tea).

There is an opportunity to visit the fortified manor house of Stokesay Castle in the morning and then travel two miles or so to Stokesay Court. The Court is a fine example of a Victorian mansion, and is doubly interesting as it was the location for the film *Atonement* (2007) - see <http://www.stokesaycourt.com>. Advance booking essential. Contact Guy Sjögren at gsjogren@btinternet.com or by telephone on 01694 722291.

Industry and Genius: John Baskerville and the Beauty of Letters

A new film outlining Baskerville's importance as a typographer, printer and industrialist can be seen on www.historywm.com. Entitled 'Industry and Genius: John Baskerville and the beauty of letters', the film has been produced as part of the new History West Midlands Project which is publishing a magazine and producing a website on the history of the west midlands region. The film coincides with the launch of the first edition of the magazine early in 2013 on the 'West Midlands Enlightenment', which will contain an article by Caroline Archer on Baskerville. The film contains footage of locations in Birmingham, images of Baskerville's products and interviews with Caroline Archer, Malcolm Dick and Martin Killeen, Rare Books Librarian at the University of Birmingham. It is possible to sign up for free issues of the magazine on the website: www.historywm.com

Reading and Writing in Warwickshire's Past

14-15 September 2013,
The Shakespeare Centre,
Stratford-upon-Avon

Reading and Writing in Warwickshire's Past - a weekend conference organised by the Dugdale Society with the support of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and in association with the Printing Historical Society. Saturday and Sunday, 14th and 15th September 2013 at the Shakespeare Centre, Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon. The conference celebrates the history of reading books, writing and printing in Warwickshire over five centuries. The speakers will be concerned with both readers and writers, and will deal with the production, sale, distribution and consumption of books, pamphlets, newspapers and other forms of writing. <http://www.dugdale-society.org.uk/>

Hic Jacet, or 'The Corpse in the Crescent' Norman Painting Archive, the University of Birmingham

Whilst there is a good body of poetry and prose, both fact and fiction that has been written about the craft of printing, there is however, only one radio play. *Hic Jacet*, or 'The Corpse in the Crescent' is a macabre story about the death and post-mortem antics of John Baskerville! Written by Neville Brendon Watts it was first broadcast by the Midland's Home Service of the BBC on 29 December 1947. As far as we know, it has only been performed twice, in 1947 and again in 1956 to mark the 250 anniversary of the birth of Baskerville: no recording of the original broadcast is available. However, copies of the script have been discovered both in the Archives at Birmingham Reference Library and

the Norman Painting Archives at the University of Birmingham. Painting was the Reader in the original broadcast and went on to play Phil Archer in the BBC Radio 4 soap opera: a role he played for more than 50 years. Other members of the original cast of *Hic Jacet* also went on to play long running characters in the Archers including Wortley Allen [Amos], Chris Gittins [Walter Gabriel] and Denis Folwell [Jack Archer]. A copy of Painting's own script of the play - heavily annotated and adorned with doodles - can be seen at the University of Birmingham. <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/cadbury/index.aspx>

IS THERE STILL A ROLE FOR THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES IN A WORLD INCREASINGLY DOMINATED BY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY?

Joanne Krawec a student on the MA in West Midlands History was shocked to receive an e-mail on 17 January. Professor Steve Ellis, Director of Education in the College of Arts and Law at the University wrote a personal message to congratulate Joe on winning the College PGT essay competition. Joe had entered a competition for taught postgraduate students to write a 750-page essay: 'Is there still a role for the arts and humanities in a world increasingly dominated by science and technology?' She had no ambition to win, but wanted to make a point:

'In the light of recent news of the exclusion of arts subjects from the English baccalaureate, I felt the need to defend our right to pursue whatever interests we wish. I entered with no ambition to win, merely to make my point. I am glad to say though that the two things did not prove to be mutually exclusive, and so I was awarded first prize!

Joe was given her award and a prize - an iPad - at a ceremony on 28 January. Writing about her experience she noted: 'I would not have dreamed of entering something like this before starting my MA course.' We thought that you might like to read Joe's essay which is printed below.

Let us imagine for a moment that the world passes a law to ban the senses of taste and smell. It states that these senses are superfluous and 'not necessary for the function of a normal human being'. If such a ruling were made, what would you think of it? You might consider the law unenforceable. After all, taste and smell are an integral part of being alive. It would seem that the only possible means of ensuring co-operation with the new law would be to physically remove our senses – a mass operation for the masses, so to speak. Or you may merely think the law ridiculous, a bad joke. How could a person not take pleasure from eating ice cream? Fight the urge to sniff a rose?

Both conclusions are entirely rational. Such a law would be absurd; utterly wrong. Being human means to taste and to smell, as well as to hear, see and touch. We do all these things and more. The remit of human experience is vast and spectacular. We have yet to find our limit.

So, knowing this - how ridiculous dismissing those things that make us human is - why then forsake half of the human experience? Because this is the implication of our question: To reject the role of the arts and humanities is to reject being human, just as abandoning science and technology would also refuse who we are. They are wholly part of our lives, created by us, for us. We may as well seal our nostrils up and pull our tongues out rather than never again compose poetry or dance to our favourite song.

For our ancestors the question would seem unintelligible. The word 'scientist' was only coined in the nineteenth century. The people who pioneered the practice of science were termed 'natural philosophers' before this and their work was considered to be another of the Arts. Looking further back we find the men and women of the Renaissance. Would we favour the design for the flying machine of Leonardo da Vinci to the cost of the Mona Lisa? Leave her painted loveliness languishing in some dusty attic? Of course not; we recognise his genius in both the mechanical and the artistic. If we accept his duality - why not accept our own?

But the world was in some ways simpler then. As science and technology expanded it required specialists, thus the figure of the fifteenth century all-rounder seems impossible to find today. However, this makes it all the more vital to champion the role of the arts and humanities. The inspiration that one person may lend to another; the need to interpret advancements in technology to make them accessible to all makes it vital to share our respective research. If being human means to practice art, humanities, science and technology, then the way we understand the world includes all these. We cannot and should not seclude ourselves.

Let us briefly analyse this so-called dominance of science and technology. In its most immediate and popular form – the internet – we witness the proliferation of arts and humanities across the medium. The self-published book, the YouTube video, Google Translate – this is technology and art in tandem. It seems as though modern life is answering the question without our help, and the answer it shouts out is a firm and unequivocal: 'Yes!'

It is scholarship in the arts and humanities that we question most of all. We believe that theatre, music and their ilk are natural talents not requiring the nurture of a classroom; that the humanities are 'weak' subjects unable to withstand the rigours of test and analysis. And yet, in the giant economies of countries such as China, we witness huge cultural investment in the arts and humanities. They demand success across all faculties. If we are to compete with the rest of the world we need to equip our children to become world-class in anything they set their minds upon.

In conclusion, there will always be a role for arts and humanities because they make us who we are. If we stand back and survey the picture formed from the myriad of specialists who make up the world, we will see the face of the most brilliant natural philosopher to have ever existed; the supreme combination of our human whole. We need not question where our focus should be. Instead, our joint motto should simply state: 'Excellence in All Things'.

GRAHAM FISHER TALK

27TH NOVEMBER 2012

by Sue Tungate

The 'Friends' of the Centre for West Midlands History had a treat on 27th November 2012 when they attended a presentation by Graham Fisher MBE. Graham is a well-known presenter and author, who has previously talked to the 'Friends' about his interest in canals. His book, *Jewels on the Cut*, discussed the glass industry which lay alongside the canals in the Amblecote and Wordsley area of Stourbridge. His latest production, *The Portland Vase Project: Recreation of a Masterpiece*, continues on this theme, and tells the story of the 2012 project which culminated in the production of some fantastic glass masterpieces.

Glass is made by heating sand (silica, SiO₂) to a very high temperature, with other substances such as limestone (calcium carbonate, CaCO₃) and soda ash (sodium carbonate, Na₂CO₃). Glass of different colours may be produced by variations of the basic mix, with some additives, for example lead oxide (PbO) giving specific properties, such as high lustre to the glass. Man-made glass has been found in Sumerian sites in Mesopotamia from the 23rd century BC, but may have been used earlier in its natural volcanic form, obsidian, for cutting tools. Cameo glass, where there is a darker layer overlaid with a lighter layer, was made from Roman times, and the Portland Vase is an example created two thousand years ago. The original is now found in the British Museum, and gained its name from the previous owner, the Duchess of Portland. This vase served as inspiration to many glass and porcelain manufacturers from the 18th century. It is about 25cm high and 56cm in circumference around its widest point. The glass is almost black, and has a white cameo featuring seven figures.

The glass industry has been based in the Stourbridge area for four hundred years. The first mention is in the records of St Mary's Church, Kingswinford, where Paul Tyzack is listed as a glass maker on 26th April 1612. Graham was invited to record the attempt to recreate the Portland Vase to celebrate the anniversary. He described how the project team planned, created and publicised the event. Research was done on the original Portland Vase, and other attempts at re-creation, such as by John Northwood in the 19th century. The principal players were project manager, Ian Drury, glassmaker, Richard Golding and cameo engraver, Terri Colledge.

To make the replica cameo vases, many skills were needed, including getting the glass mixture correct. Then the glass blanks needed to be blown, a tense day-long task, performed publicly, before an audience of invited guests including Graham. The blanks were then engraved, a series of laborious and painstaking processes. The result of the project was to produce several masterpieces, including a copy of the Auldjo Jug, another piece of Roman cameo glass found at Pompeii, and an Olympic cameo jug, as well as a replica Portland Vase.

Friends Christmas Social

The Friends Christmas 2012 social took a musical turn with entertainment from Dr Richard Churchley. Richard is a PhD graduate from the University of Birmingham and a local historian but is also an accomplished folk musician. He concentrated on local songs and folklore and wove together ancient tales and Christmas cheer.

Country songs were interspersed with music hall favourites such as 'I can't find Brummagem'. The audience was in fine voice, joining in the choruses with gusto, and even tackling a round or two.

Richard and friends supply music for many different events and you can find out more at his website: www.churchley.org.uk.

Resurrecting the Book

16-18 November 2013,

The Library of Birmingham

To celebrate the re-opening of the largest public library in Europe and its outstanding special collections, The Library of Birmingham, Newman University College, The Typographic Hub at Birmingham City University and Digital Ink Drop have united to host a three-day conference on the theme of 'Resurrecting the Book'. The conference will run in conjunction with The Library of Lost Books project - a major exhibition of 50 de-accessioned books which have been given new life as objects redesigned into works of art - which will form part of the opening festival for the new Library of Birmingham in 2013. The conference will include an opportunity to visit The Library of Lost Books exhibition and attend artist talks on re-working the books.

<http://www.typographicHub.org/diary/entry/resurrecting-the-book>

<http://resurrectingthebook.org/>

If you would like to contribute to our next newsletter, please send editorial and news items to [Connie Wan via cwmhrg@hotmail.com](mailto:ConnieWan@cwmhrg@hotmail.com). Please note we do reserve the right to edit material.

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Council for British Archaeology West Midlands

News from the Past: the latest Archaeological Discoveries in the West Midlands

**Saturday 16 February 2013, 10.00am – 4.45pm
The Library Theatre, Birmingham Central Library B3 3HQ**

Programme

10.00am	Welcome and introduction by Kirsty Nichol, Chair CBA WM & Chris Patrick of Coventry CC
10.10am	Archaeology in Birmingham by Mike Hodder of Birmingham City Council
10.40am	A South Warwickshire Roman landscape: fields, farm, treasure and temple by David Freke of Warmington Heritage Group
11.00am	Morning Coffee
11.30am	The Bredon Hill Hoard; Discovery, Excavation and Future by Tom Vaughan and Debbie Fox of Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service
12.15am	Recent Discoveries of the Portable Antiquities Scheme by Angie Bolton, FLO for Warks & Worcs
12.45pm	Lunch break
1.45pm	The Stour Valley in the Neolithic by John Hemmingway
2.15pm	Archaeological Excavations at Worcester Castle by Mike Napthan of Mike Napthan Archaeology
2.45pm	Early Railways at Caldron Low, Staffordshire, 1778-1847 by Mike Shaw of Wolverhampton CC
3.15pm	Afternoon Tea
3.45pm	The development of Warwickshire's towns: the extensive urban survey by Ben Morton of Warwickshire Museums Service
4.15pm	Community archaeology at West Bromwich Manor House by Paul Belford of Nexus Heritage
4.45pm	Close
5.00pm	Library Theatre closes

See <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbawm/meetings.php> for more information nearer to the event.
The times and order of individual presentations may be subject to alteration.

NEWS FROM THE PAST 2013 - BOOKING FORM

Fee: CBA members £15.00 Non-CBA members £20.00

Join CBA West Midlands today for £10 and get the member's discount for this event (total to pay £25.00). Membership also includes a copy of West Midlands Archaeology, regular newsletters and other events. Full details on our website at http://www.archaeologyuk.org/cbawm/how_to_join.php

No. of places CBA members: Non-members:

No. of CBA West Midlands Membership @ £10: Total Amount Payable:

(Please make your cheque payable to "CBA West Midlands")

Please complete in BLOCK CAPITALS

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr (delete as appropriate) Surname: Forename:

Address:

..... Postcode:

Tel (day): Tel (evening): Email address:

Please return your completed enrolment form to:

Caroline Mosley, CBA West Midlands, c/o 84 Grosvenor Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9AN

Telephone Contact: 0778 694 1059, Email Contact: nftp.cbawm@gmail.com

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you require a map or receipt

Data Protection Act: The names and addresses of people attending our events are held on a computerised mailing list which will be used to send you information. Please let us know if you wish your name to be removed

CWMH Forthcoming Events

Friends of the Centre for West Midlands History will be informed of further details when they are available. There is **no need to book unless stated otherwise and all events are held at the University of Birmingham**. The best way of keeping in touch with events is via the Centre's website: <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/activity/cwmh/index.aspx>

- Wednesday 20 February, 6.30-8.30pm
Pete Bounous, 'One man and his map: John Pigott Smith and his 1828 Plan of Birmingham' (Centre for West Midlands History Seminar). Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Saturday 23 February, 9.30am-4.00pm
'From home to hospital: health care in 18th and 19th century Birmingham' (Birmingham Museums Day School) Waterhall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. £30 per person - includes refreshments and a buffet lunch. To book call 0121 3031966 or visit www.bmag.org.uk
- Thursday 28 February, 6.30-8.30pm,
Dr Kate Iles, 'Lunatics and their ladies: the wives and daughters of the Lunar Society' (Joint event with the Lunar Society). Arts Lecture Room 3. Cost £5. All welcome. Booking via <http://www.lunarsociety.org.uk/> or pay on the day.
- Monday 4 March, 4.00-6.00pm
Dr Nicola Whyte, 'The place of the dead: territory and identity in the early modern landscape' (People, Places and Things Seminar). Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Saturday 8 March, 10.00am-4.30pm
Staffordshire History Day (Joint event with Staffordshire Record Office and Keele University). Cost £17. Booking is required, complete the form attached to the newsletter or contact Staffordshire Record Office for a leaflet on 01785-895035 or matthew.blake@staffordshire.gov.uk
- Tuesday 12 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm
Dr Malcolm Dick, 'Birmingham, the slave trade and anti-slavery' (Historical Association). The Open University in the West Midlands, 66 High Street, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9NB. All welcome.
- Saturday 16 March, 10.00am-4.00pm
History of the University of Birmingham Day School (Joint event with the Cadbury Research Library). Arts Large Lecture Theatre. There is no fee, but booking is essential. Contact Malcolm Dick on m.m.dick@bham.ac.uk or 0121 415 8253 providing your contact details.
- Monday 18 March, 4.00-6.00pm
David Eveleigh 'It's all a gas': the development and provision of household technology in the Black Country 1800-1939' (People, Places and Things Seminar) Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Tuesday 19 March, 6.30-8.30pm
Dr Susan Whyman, 'The Life and Times of William Hutton - Birmingham's first Historian 1723-1815' (Centre for West Midlands History Research Group Seminar). Arts Lecture Room 1. All welcome.
- Saturday 23 March, 10.30am-4.00pm
Art and the Black Country Study Day at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Speakers include Dr Michael Hall. £25 per person including lunch. To book telephone 01902 552055 or visit www.bookwhen.com/wolverhamptonartsandheritage
- Saturday 6 April to Sunday 7 April 2013
A two-day conference: **'John Baskerville: Art, Industry and Technology in the Enlightenment'** (Joint event with the Typographic Hub, Birmingham City University) Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre. See the attached form for more information and booking details.
- Thursday 11 April, 6.30-8.30pm
Dr Ian Cawood, Cholera, title TBC (Centre for West Midlands History Research Group Seminar). Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Wednesday 1 May, 6.30-8.30pm
Dr Jennifer Aston, 19th Century Birmingham Businesswomen, title TBC (Centre for West Midlands History Research Group Seminar). Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Wednesday 8 May, 6.30-8.30pm
Eric Hopkins Memorial Lecture (Historical Association), presenter and title TBC. Arts Lecture Room 3. All welcome.
- Tuesday 21 May 2013 6.30-8.30pm
Professor Barrie Trinder, 'Britain's Industrial Revolution: the Making of a Manufacturing People, 1700-1870' (Book Launch). Large Lecture Theatre. Refreshments provided. Cost £5 in return for £5 off a copy of Barrie's book. Booking details will be provided in the next newsletter.