

FRIENDS OF THE CENTRE FOR WEST MIDLANDS HISTORY

SHARING THE PAST WITH THE FUTURE

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VISIT TO THE AVERY MUSEUM



Nowhere links us to one of the greatest periods of our history more than the site on which the Soho Foundry stands. Nothing more appositely captures the lifeblood of the commerce that was stimulated here than the history of weights and measures contained in the outstanding collection of the Avery Museum.

The visit started with a tour of the site. The Foundry itself is being restored by English Heritage but there is much more that deserves to be preserved. The cottages associated with William Murdoch are Grade II listed and the original retort used by Murdoch remains but is not accessible.

Entering the museum one was struck by the great quantity of artefacts. Once our guide, Andrew Lound, started his account of 6000 years of weighing history, the displays became the props for a captivating performance that kept members spellbound. Items from ancient Egypt, from primitive societies in Africa and from the Roman

Empire revealed that all commerce is based on weights and consequently so are all currencies, with most of them have names derived from the words used for weights.

The means used to establish weight are all represented, from primitive balances, based on the yoke, to strain gauge measurements used dynamically to determine the weight of vehicles passing over them. Trading standards, postal history and employment law are some of the areas in which weighing has been an essential tool and means have always been found to meet each demand. Tracing its origins back to 1728, The Avery has been involved in many of them and has played a leading part in new technologies, such as computing. As Andrew pointed out, on this site the Industrial Revolution has not stopped.

Andrew's presentation was so full of detailed and fascinating information that it deserves at least a second hearing and it is to be hoped that the Centre will repeat this visit in the future.

Sue Tungate

An Insider's View of the Staffordshire Hoard

by Sue Tungate

Members of the 'Friends' of the Centre for West Midlands History packed the lecture theatre on Monday 11th November 2013 to listen to a fascinating talk from Dr David Symons about the Staffordshire Hoard, the largest collection of Anglo-Saxon gold and silver metalwork ever found, anywhere in the world.

David Symons, who has been involved with the find since it was uncovered in a field near Lichfield on 5 July 2009, gave a fascinating account of an insider's view of the discovery. The Staffordshire Hoard consists of more than 3,500 items, made from 5 kilograms of gold, and nearly 1 ½ kilograms of silver, and 3,500 garnets. Nearly all the items are martial or warlike in character, with an amazing number of sword pommel caps and hilt plates, many of which feature beautiful garnet inlays or animals in elaborate filigree. The pommel cap is the tip of the hilt of a sword that anchors the hilt fittings to the sword blade, and to find 97 together is unprecedented. The red garnets in the hoard came from as far away as India or even Sri Lanka. Scientific analysis is being carried out to discover more.

The artefacts may have come from the 7th or 8th centuries, originating perhaps in the Kingdom of Mercia.

No-one has yet been able to say why the hoard was deposited where it was, near Watling Street. This was one of the major thoroughfares of Roman Britain, and was probably still in use when the hoard was buried. The Hoard contains a rare Christian item, a folded cross with an inscription in Latin, misspelt in two places, which reads 'Rise up, O Lord, and may thy enemies be dispersed and those who hate thee be driven from thy face.'

Since the find, a research and conservation programme, led by experts, has been launched and will be underway for many years. A Mercian Trail is being developed to tell the Anglo-Saxon history of the region, bringing together Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Lichfield Cathedral, Lichfield District Council, Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. Watch this space for more news on the Hoard!

All members of the 'Friends' are welcome to attend the People, Places and Things' seminars, which are held at 4.30pm on Mondays, as listed in events.

Birmingham History Day November 2013

The 2013 history day attracted a large enthusiastic audience, who heard a wide range of excellent talks about Birmingham. These included the children of the Ladywood news team, led by Norman Bartlam, who showed their film of recent events in the area, including the opening of the new Library of Birmingham. 'Fresh out of the archives', led by Mandy Ross and Pyn Stockman, showed how art and drama can be used to bring local history to life, while Rachel MacGregor, from the Library of Birmingham, illustrated her talk on the Birmingham Repertory archive with wonderful drawings of costumes. Henrietta Lockhart showed photos of some of the new acquisitions, added to the social history collection, at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

Mike Hodder talked about his new book on Sutton Park, and demonstrated how recent archaeological research has improved our understanding of the area. Steve Béauchampe's photographs of Moseley Baths demonstrated the significance of the

building to the community throughout the twentieth century. James Dixon talked about Birmingham politician George Dixon, who made a major contribution to the education of children at the end of the nineteenth century.

Current projects described were Charlotte Clarke's history of the cerebral palsy community in Birmingham, the research about printer Baskerville by Malcolm Dick and Caroline Archer, plans for a major heritage centre for Handsworth led by Aftab Rahman, and the history of St. George's Edgbaston, by Jane Darnton and Jim Berrow.

With thanks to Malcolm Dick and the Friends of the Centre for West Midlands History for organising the day.

Lorna Brown

MA IN WEST MIDLANDS HISTORY – A RECOLLECTION

by Guy Sjögren

There are twelve of us altogether - well, thirteen if one includes Dr Malcolm Dick, the course director, which of course one must. Sitting round a large table on a Saturday morning. Late September 2008. Induction day for the nine new boys and girls about to embark upon the MA course in West Midlands History. Well, not exactly 'boys and girls'; more a mix of mature men and women from a diverse range of backgrounds, bringing an equally diverse range of knowledge and skills to the party. Although they don't realise it as they sit around the table sizing each other up, the experience and experiences of this disparate 'gang of nine' will be the glue that will quickly bond them together into an enthusiastic self-supporting group; nine people with a common aim and a shared interest in the regional history of the West Midlands.

Introductions over, we are briefed on the programme that stretches before us – a programme that, during the first of our two years of part-time study, will introduce us to the lords and peasants of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century West Midlands, and will help us to understand the regional upheaval - religious, social and political – caused by the Reformation and the Civil War.

When we launch into the second year, we carry on from where we left off in the summer – historical sources. If one element of the programme is learning about the history of the region, another is learning about the range of source materials available to the local historian: what they are, how to find them and how to use

them - all coming with a 'Government Health Warning' about the strengths and weaknesses of individual sources. Equipped with this new knowledge, we begin to think about a suitable topic for our 15,000 word dissertation that forms the grand finale of the course. But before we get too involved in that, we must apply ourselves to the subjects that take us from the Lunar Men to the industrialization of Birmingham and the Black Country; and via female education in the nineteenth century, urban development, health, and the impact of the two world wars to the demise of the Coventry motor industry in the 1970s. By the time we reach that point, we have listened to stimulating lectures from a broad range of expert speakers. We have discussed 'Civil War garrisons' and 'civic gospels'; 'glebe closes', 'castles' and 'the Co-operative movement'; 'immigrant communities' and 'political change' - all within the context of the West Midlands region. All we have to do now is to immerse ourselves in various archives - dusty or otherwise - while we research our dissertation topics. Where did that summer go? Then it's gowns and caps on, shake hands with the Vice Chancellor, and have a plastic cup of wine to celebrate the conclusion of a thoroughly enjoyable, energising and inspiring two years.

Biography, History and the Shaping of Birmingham

21st October 2013 by Sue Thomas

The Library of Birmingham and the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography collaborated in organising this event which marked the ODNB's release of 70 new biographies of men and women who shaped the city of Birmingham. The event was held in the new Studio Theatre which serves both the Rep and the Library of Birmingham and the audience enjoyed the comfortable surroundings as well as a number of stimulating presentations.

Dr. Lawrence Goldman from the ODNB introduced the evening explaining that the 70 new biographies join the existing 59,000 which make the ODNB the longest single work in the English language! The Dictionary has been able to widen its scope by putting all its material online. The new Birmingham biographies include many lesser known, but still significant figures in the town's story. Mark Curthoys of the ODNB acted as editor on the project with Dr Sian Roberts of the Library of Birmingham.

Dr Chris Upton introduced a number of themes including the 'slippery' question of who can be said to come from Birmingham – so many of us are incomers or out-goers. Dr Upton also stressed the importance of biography as a 'way in' to history for many people.

Dr Sian Roberts suggested that many of the stories would broaden our understanding of the town and its people. For example, the biography of Margaret Ann Backhouse who was a significant educationist and humanitarian, adds to our knowledge of the Quaker presence in Birmingham. Margaret Backhouse was

awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 on behalf of the Society of Friends.

Professor Peter Marsh told the story of the daughters of Joseph Chamberlain, who left the town but continued their educational and social work, taking the model of Birmingham's civic gospel to the wider world. In contrast, Elihu Burritt the American consul and peace campaigner was attracted to the city in which he stayed and was active in child welfare.

The new entries concentrate on 19th and 20th century figures and include such diverse characters as Reverend Peter Stanford, Birmingham's first black minister of religion and Florence Camm, the Smethwick stained-glass designer. Many Friends will be able to say we heard it here first, as the stories have been told at past day schools or lectures of the Centre for West Midlands History!

The Oxford DNB is free to use both in the library and at home if you have a public library ticket. Details about this and a list of all the individuals featured in the release can be viewed via the links on the Library of Birmingham website www.libraryofbirmingham.com/blog/News/odnb

Additionally, History West Midlands has made a number of short films about some of the men and women featuring amongst the new ODNB entries. These will be released over the next few weeks and 'lives' include Florence Camm, Elihu Burritt and Sir Alfred Owen. Visit the website at www.historywm.com

If you would like to contribute to our next newsletter, please send editorial and news items to Kate Iles at kate_iles@hotmail.com. Please note we do reserve the right to edit material.

New Committee Member: Wei-sheng Lin



In contrast, as an international student coming all the way from East Asia to Birmingham, I found an all-embracing atmosphere, which made me feel at home.

I started my MA at Birmingham in 2011 after one of my lecturers during my undergraduate degree recommended Birmingham because of my interest in Medieval and Byzantine Studies. What I did not know then was that Birmingham is also a city that offers more than meets the eye. Although I did not arrive in time for Matthew Boulton and the Art of Making Money co-curated by Dr. Sue Tungate, I was drawn to the economic history of the West Midlands through my MA module in economic history and numismatics. Apart from the world-class coin collection at the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, the lively cultural scene at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and cycling along the canals on sunny days had been a major part of my initial experience of the city. Through the suggestion of Dr. Malcolm Dick and my curiosity about the city where I live, I turned to the research seminars and tours organised by the Centre for West Midlands History, which turned out to be the window on to the history of Birmingham and the West Midlands. Among all the activities, the tour to Hartlebury Castle in 2012 showed me the serious efforts of people in the region in preserving and interpreting the past.

I started my PhD in Byzantine Studies at the University of Birmingham in September 2013. My research focus is on how the Byzantines (or the Romans, as they called themselves) reacted to the Mongols coming all the way from East Asia to Europe and Persia in the thirteenth century. Cautious and calculating gestures were the mode of interaction between the Mongols and the Byzantines.

The Church that Louisa Ann Ryland Built

On entering the Church of All Saints in Sherbourne, Warwickshire, it is clear, even to those with little architectural knowledge, that this church was built, furnished and decorated 'as a piece' - and that no expense was spared. The coloured, antique marble columns flanking the nave are echoed in the clerestory windows. The fine carvings, in marble, alabaster and oak, repeat motifs of flora and fauna.

This is the fourth church on the site. By the middle of the 19th century, the third church had deteriorated so much that Louisa Ann Ryland, whose family lived on the Sherbourne Park Estate, decided to re-build it completely. She commissioned the distinguished architect, George Gilbert Scott to do this and in 1864

the Bishop of Worcester consecrated the new church.

This elegant, harmonious building contains examples of work by the Birmingham company, Hardman's, as well as by A.W.N. Pugin, who designed the Ryland Table Tomb in the Mortuary Chapel. Pugin is also reputed to be responsible for the glorious font, which is white marble and inlaid with semi-precious stones. In my opinion, this alone is worth a visit to this lovely church, which was built at the behest of a lady to whom Birmingham owes so much.

Christine Mann

Black Country History Day 2013

The eighth Black Country History Day, organised jointly by the Black Country Society and the Centre for West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham, again attracted well over 100 enthusiastic participants, who heard excellent presentations from the speakers. Firstly, retired architect Bob Tolley, the Chairman of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, explained the purpose of the Trusts, often the last resort for threatened historic properties which have been allowed to fall into disrepair. Bob's presentation looked at the case study of the Harris and Pearson Brickworks office building in Brierley Hill and a current project, the conservation of the Weavers' Cottages in Kidderminster.

Graham Worton, Dudley's Keeper of Geology, next examined the long history of mining in the area, from flint tools to the closure of Baggeridge Colliery in 1968, the last remaining pit in the Black Country.

Mark Curthoys, the Research Editor of the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, wove together seamlessly the lives of people from Birmingham and the Black Country recently added to the DNB. Gwen Lally, (1882-1963) was the pageant master who choreographed Dudley's pageant of history as part of the national Festival of Britain celebrations in 1951. Thomas Parker, (1843-1915), the Wolverhampton electrical engineer and inventor of coalite, Eliza Tinsley, (1813-1882), the Sedgley nail mistress and Sir Alfred Owen, (1908-1975), head of Rubery Owen and backer of the BRM motor racing team, have been included in the September 2013 update.

The final speaker, Gill Alleeson, inherited an illuminated manuscript given to the Wolverhampton antiquarian, James P. Jones on his retirement from the Wolverhampton Archaeological Society. This has led to much research by Gill into the origins of the Society and its many interesting members, including Gerald P. Mander and Sir Charles Marston. The day school was chaired by Dr Malcolm Dick, Director of the Centre for West Midlands History, University of Birmingham, who conducted the question and answer at the end of the day, when one member of the audience revealed her role as a tree in Dudley's pageant!

by Judith Watkin

MA in West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham

Have you ever wondered how the cities and counties of the West Midlands developed? Do you want to find out about the changing lives of local men, women and children? This part-time two-year programme provides an opportunity for study if you are interested in any aspect of the history of the region. It does not aim for a complete century-by-century coverage but will provide an in-depth knowledge of major themes. It is delivered by Saturday schools (three per term), from 10.00am to 5.30pm and taught by leading scholars. Teaching is via presentations, seminars, small group work and field trips. Students come from many different backgrounds and previous knowledge of regional history is not required. It is suitable for those students who have family and work commitments which make full-time study difficult.

Start Date: September 2014

Entry requirements

Individual applications are considered on their merit from people who have a strong interest in history. A history qualification is not a requirement of entry to the course, but students will normally have degree-level or professional qualifications.

Programme overview

The programme is broadly chronological and covers the history of the region from the 11th century to the end of the 20th. It does not aim for a complete century-by-century coverage but will allow you to gain a detailed knowledge of social, political, industrial, religious and cultural history.

Delivery

The course is delivered as Saturday schools (three per term), from 10.00am to 5.30pm, organised around lectures, seminars, small group workshops and day trips.

Learning and assessment

A variety of ways of learning are pursued to help students develop the knowledge and study skills needed for success. Opportunities for individual tutorial support are provided outside of the times of the day schools. Assessment over the two years is via six 4,000 word essays and a 15,000 word dissertation. Each essay is worth 20 credits and the dissertation is worth 60 credits.

For more information contact:

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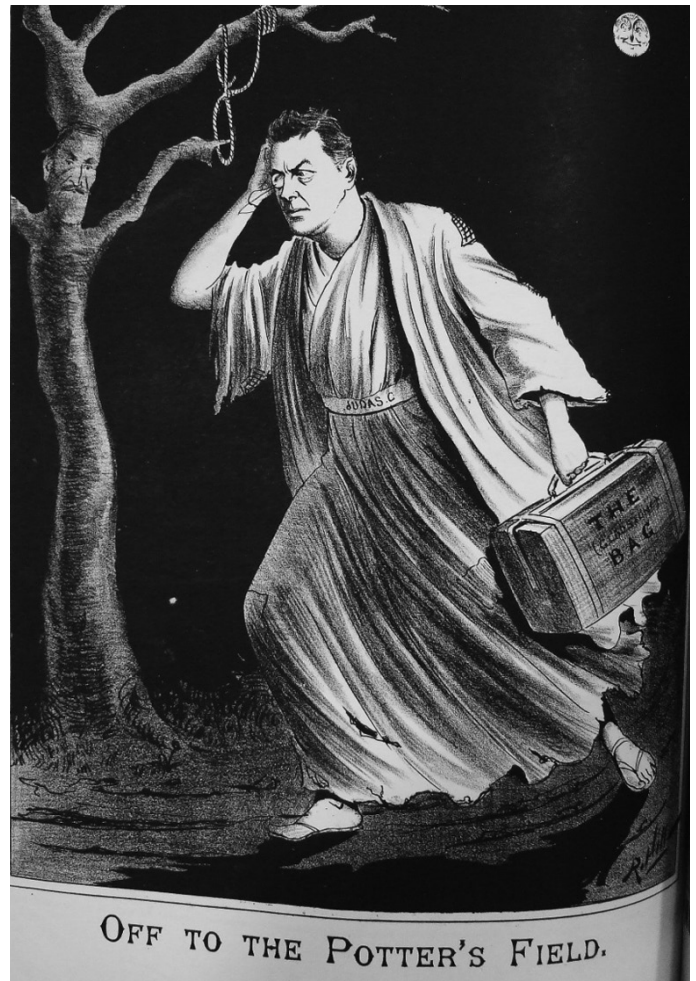
“JOEY” OR “JUDAS”? – THE REPUTATION OF JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

HISTORY ASSOCIATION LECTURE,
NEWMAN UNIVERSITY, OCTOBER 2014

It seemed a little unwise, if not reckless, to offer a talk on the reputation of Joseph Chamberlain, in his home city, where he is still held in much the same regard as when he died 99 years ago. The Times stated in his obituary that during his 3 year mayoralty between 1873 and 1876 ‘Birmingham... rose to a level of dignity and autonomous power surpassed by no other civic community in the world.’ Despite his sustained status in his adopted city, however, Chamberlain is not highly regarded outside the West Midlands. Richard Jay describes ‘an aura of failure’ that surrounds his reputation. It is true that he put a number of issues on to the political agenda for the first time, but Peter Marsh believes that ‘he failed to find answers to the great questions’ such as state education, land reform and welfare provision, in particular old age pensions.

Perhaps Chamberlain’s greatest legacy lies not in legislative achievement, but in the method and style of politics that he championed. Peter Clarke has described him as the first, truly modern, professional politician. His ruthless use of the caucus, the Birmingham ‘the 600’, his exploitation of his local, denominational and seemingly classless background and his engagement with modern media, especially in the canvassing of voters, the use of paid political agents and the production of electoral propaganda, mark him out as a crucial figure in this transitional period of British political culture.

To reach out to the significantly enlarged electorates of Birmingham and then the British nation, Chamberlain had to engage with the ‘new journalism’ of the time, most associated with W.T. Stead. One crucial feature of this was the use of political cartoons. Punch, which invented the political cartoon in the 1840s, had, by the 1880s spawned national imitators such as Judy, Fun, St Stephen’s Review and Moonshine as well as a mass of local illustrated periodicals, such as Birmingham’s Town Crier, Dart and Owl. Stead’s Pall Mall Gazette was the first newspaper to carry a regular cartoon. Mass consumption of visual politics began in the era when, according to Winston Churchill, Chamberlain ‘made the weather’. Successful newspaper cartoons were



frequently enlarged as posters, or, more commonly distributed as postcards, by the publication departments of all the major political parties and Stuart Ball has noted the dominance of visual propaganda as early as the ‘khaki’ election of 1900.

The paper focused on four crucial moments in the evolution of Chamberlain’s negative cartoon reputation:

- 1) His depiction in the Birmingham satirical journals of the 1880s, which set the tone for his depiction in the national media
- 2) The work of Francis Carruthers Gould in the 1890s
- 3) The excoriating attacks on Chamberlain by the European cartoonists and the Stop the War Committee during the Boer War
- 4) Punch’s rejection of the Tariff Reform Campaign

The talk concluded that, for a variety of reasons, Chamberlain failed to present an acceptable image in this new political arena and that the political cartoon was responsible for damaging his reputation, to such an extent that, outside Birmingham, by 1904 few voters trusted or admired him, with the consequent failure of the Tariff Reform crusade and the Unionist electoral debacle of January 1906.

Ian Cawood, Newman University

CWMH FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Friends of the Centre for West Midlands History will be informed of further details when they are available. Everyone is welcome to attend these events and there is **no need to book and all events are held at the University of Birmingham unless stated otherwise**. Contact Malcolm Dick to register your interest for events indicated by* via m.m.dick@bham.ac.uk and details will be forwarded to you. If you are not on e-mail, contact Malcolm by phone on 0121 415 8253 to leave your address. 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>

- Monday 27 January
People, Places and Things Seminar, 4.30-6.30pm
Dr Philip Slavin (University of Kent) 'Climate Change, Warfare and Ecocide in the Early Fourteenth-century British Isles'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Wednesday 29 January,
CWMH Seminar, 6.30-8.30pm
John Kimberley (Birmingham City University), 'Edward - the forgotten Cadbury?'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Monday 10 February
People, Places and Things Seminar, 4.30-6.30pm
Speaker and title to be confirmed. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Thursday 20 February
Lunar History Lecture (Lunar Society and CWMH) 6.30-8.30pm
Lucy Bamford (Derby Museum and Art Gallery), 'Joseph Wright of Derby: the Philosopher's Painter'. Large Lecture Theatre, (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham. Fee £10. Booking is essential via the Lunar Society. See separate leaflet. For online booking: <https://www.lunarsociety.org.uk/lunar-society-history-talk>
If you wish to book by post and pay by cheque please make cheques payable to the Lunar Society and send to Dipali Chandra, 6 Springfield Road, Kings Heath, B14 7TS.
- Monday 24 February
People, Places and Things Seminar, 4.30-6.30pm
Professor Wendy Scase (University of Birmingham), 'Manuscript Books for Medieval Midlands Readers'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Monday 10 March
People, Places and Things Seminar, 4.30-6.30pm
Dr David Smith (University of Birmingham) "I could have guessed it was full of water, can I have my money back": Town and Castle ditches from the Midlands – why it is worth doing the environmental archaeology'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Tuesday 11 March
Historical Association, 6.30-8.30pm
Louise Brown, 'Disgracing the Raj: White and Mixed Race Prostitution in Colonial India'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Saturday 15 March
Staffordshire History Day, 10.00am-4.45pm
Booking is essential via Staffordshire Record Office. See separate leaflet with this newsletter. The event is held at Kingston Centre, Fairway, Stafford ST16 3TW
- Wednesday 19 March
CWMH Seminar, 6.30-8.30pm
Professor David Williams (Loughborough University), 'The Birmingham Gun Trade - An Introduction'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Monday 24 March
People, Places and Things Seminar, 4.30-6.30pm
Joanne Krawec (University of Birmingham), 'Coming to America: Rubery Owen, a Black Country Business and the Drive for Efficiency'. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- *Saturday 29 March
Annual Conference of the CWMH, 9.30am-5.30pm
'Landscape and Green Spaces: Garden History in the West Midlands', Various Speakers. Large Lecture Theatre (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham. Booking is essential. See separate leaflet.
- Thursday 10 April
CWMH Seminar, 6.30-8.30pm
Yvonne Jones and Dr Chris Upton on an important papier maché box presented by the manufacturer Henry Clay to the Birmingham Overseers of the Poor in 1784. Lecture Room 3 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Tuesday 15 April
Historical Association, 6.30-8.30pm
Professor Jackie Eales (President of the Historical Association), 'Elizabeth I and the "Monstrous Regiment" of Women in Tudor and Stuart England'. Lecture Room 2 (Floor 1), Arts Building, University of Birmingham.
- Wednesday 7 May
Historical Association Eric Hopkins Memorial Lecture 6.30-8.30pm
Dr Jonathan Atherton (Newman University), 'Obstinate juries, impudent barristers and scandalous verdicts? Compensating the Victims of the Birmingham Priestley Riots of 1791'. Lecture Room 3, Floor 1, Arts Building.
- *Saturday 21 June
Annual Jewellery Quarter Day School with The Birmingham Assay Office, 10.00am-4.15pm
Arts and Crafts in the Jewellery Quarter: Artists, Objects and History, Various Speakers. Booking is essential. See separate leaflet.