

After six years of development and a total investment of £8.9 million, 'Birmingham: its people, its history' is Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery's biggest and most ambitious development project in recent decades. It has seen the restoration of large parts of the Museum's Grade II* listed building, and the creation of a major permanent exhibition about the history of Birmingham from its origins to the present day.

'Birmingham: its people, its history' draws upon the city's rich and nationally important collections to bring Birmingham's history to life. Birmingham has been built upon the self-reliance, creativity, inventiveness and hard work of its people – rich and poor – over many generations. This is the first time that Birmingham's important story has been celebrated in a dedicated permanent exhibition. Around 1,500 objects are on display, most of which have never been seen by the general public before.

In these stunning new galleries, visitors can discover how Birmingham became an industrial powerhouse, the vital role it played during the world wars, and what it's like to live in the city today. The unique qualities of Birmingham people are reflected throughout these galleries, through object displays, community projects and the personal contributions of local people.

The new Birmingham galleries are Phase 1 of a long-term plan for the refurbishment of the museum and gallery. As the new Birmingham Museums Trust we aim to make this a priority for our flagship museum and its world-class collections.

Simon Cane,
Interim Director,
Birmingham Museums Trust.

REVEALING BIRMINGHAM'S HIDDEN HERITAGE BIRMINGHAM: ITS PEOPLE, ITS HISTORY

The new 'Birmingham: its people, its history' galleries at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, officially opened in October 2012 by the Birmingham poet Benjamin Zephaniah, are a fascinating destination for anyone interested in history. They offer an insight into the development of Birmingham from its origin as a medieval market town through to its establishment as the workshop of the world. But the personal stories, development of industry and campaigns for human rights represented in the displays have a significance and resonance far beyond the local; they highlight the pivotal role the city played in shaping our modern world. From medieval metalwork to parts for the Hadron Collider, these galleries provide access to hundreds of artefacts, many of which have never been on public display before. They are well worth a visit whether you are from Birmingham or not.

The permanent exhibition in the galleries contains five distinct display areas:

- 'Origins' (up to 1700) – see page 1
- 'A Stranger's Guide' (1700 to 1830) – see page 2
- 'Forward' (1830 to 1909) – see page 3
- 'An Expanding City' (1909 to 1945) – see page 4
- 'Your Birmingham' (1945 to the present day) – see page 5

Each gallery takes a different interpretative approach. For example, the period 1700 to 1830 is presented as a guide for the eighteenth-century visitor, offering practical tips for those arriving in the town. Sections explore where to stay, where to find work and what to do when the visitor gets into trouble. In this period, as travel options began to improve – Birmingham started its first regular coach service to London in 1731 – guide books appeared offering suggestions for discerning 'strangers'. By the end of the century Birmingham became a major destination for wealthy tourists visiting industrial locations such as Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory.

Alongside the new galleries are two original art commissions: a topographical painting of Birmingham by local artist James O'Hanlon and a three-dimensional kinetic light installation by international artist Keiko Mukaide, which are also well worth seeing.

We are delighted to be supporting this important collection, which has been developed with input from the people of modern-day multi-cultural, multi-faith, Birmingham, by publishing this short guide to the galleries. We hope it whets your appetite.



Benjamin Zephaniah at the opening of the new history galleries.

The History West Midlands Team

The new galleries have been developed with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Birmingham City Council and several organisations and charitable trusts.

For more information on this and other exhibitions and events at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, see www.bmag.org.uk

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ORIGINS: UP TO 1700

'Origins' takes Birmingham from its medieval beginnings up to 1700.

At the time of the 'Domesday Book' of 1086, Birmingham was an insignificant place with a population of around 50.

In 1166, the Lord of the Manor Peter de Birmingham purchased a market charter and the fortunes of Birmingham started to change. 200 years later Birmingham was one of the wealthiest trading centres in Warwickshire with a wide range of industries.

The trades in the medieval town attracted migrants from across the region and beyond. By the end of the seventeenth century Birmingham had a national reputation for its metal trades.

OBJECTS IN FOCUS

The town of Birmingham came into existence in the 1160s, but people have lived in this area for hundreds of thousands of years. This hand-axe was found in Saltley. It was made at least 250,000 years ago by a member of the species known as 'homo erectus', which first evolved in Africa about 2 million years ago and gradually migrated north.

These early people lived together in small groups, hunting mammoth, woolly rhinoceros and reindeer. Hand-axes were probably used by these communities to cut meat.



Hand-axe found in Saltley, around 250,000 years old

This meat hook was found during excavations at Weoley Castle, which was home to the Lords of Dudley. The hook would have been used in the kitchens there, perhaps to hang venison from the surrounding deer park. It was probably made in Birmingham, which already had a thriving metalwork industry in the medieval period. Evidence of the range of metal goods manufactured here has been unearthed during recent excavations in the city centre.

Luxurious manor houses like



Iron hook and chain used for storing meat, around 1400

Weoley were built from stone and had luxury features like glazed roof tiles and patterned floor tiles. Most people lived in simple wooden framed houses with thatched roofs and earth floors.

Pottery was being made in Birmingham by the thirteenth century. The kilns were positioned on the edge of the town to keep them away from wooden buildings, because of the fire risk. Birmingham pottery has become known as 'Deritend ware' because of



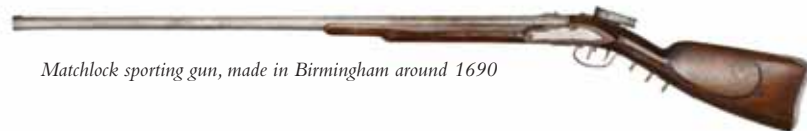
Deritend ware jug, 13th to 14th century

the area in which it was made. Its orange and white appearance was very distinctive. Orange mud clay was found locally, whilst white clay came from coal deposits in the Black Country. This shows that Birmingham had important trading connections as early as the thirteenth century.

The Birmingham gunmaking industry thrived from the seventeenth century onwards. Birmingham sold many guns to the British government during the wars against France.

During the English Civil War Birmingham supported the Parliamentary forces and supplied them with arms, including 15,000 sword blades.

In 1643 King Charles 1 visited Aston Hall, and his baggage train was raided by Birmingham people as he departed. His nephew, Prince Rupert, took revenge and attacked Birmingham. The townspeople did not give up without a fight, but Birmingham was overrun by the Royalist army who set fire to the town.



Matchlock sporting gun, made in Birmingham around 1690

Between 1550 and 1700 Birmingham's population grew from 1,500 to 11,500. By 1700 it was the fifth largest town in England with a national reputation for

metal working. This rim lock by John Wilkes is an example of the high-quality work produced by Birmingham's skilled craftspeople. Birmingham offered flexibility in employment and trade. Religious tolerance and freedom from guild restrictions attracted non-conformists and entrepreneurs. Among many Quaker migrants, the Welshman Sampson Lloyd settled in Birmingham in the seventeenth century, and went on to found Lloyd's Bank.



Rim lock made by John Wilkes, 17th century

A STRANGER'S GUIDE: 1700 – 1830

The galleries present eighteenth-century Birmingham as 'A Stranger's Guide' – a travel guide for the first-time visitor, giving tips on such important issues as the best places to stay, where to spend your leisure time and who you might meet during your visit. For those who wish to put down roots, there is guidance on finding work or investing in a business. You can find out about eighteenth-century medical care, and what might happen to you if you get into trouble with the law.

OBJECTS IN FOCUS



Snuff box with portrait of John Baskerville painted by Samuel Raven, 1760s

Among the many colourful personalities in eighteenth-century Birmingham, John Baskerville was one of the most significant.

Baskerville (1705/6–1775) was one of the many thousands of people who came to Birmingham in search of work. His first job, after arriving in Birmingham from Wolverley near Kidderminster, was running a writing

school in the Bull Ring. He later worked in the japanning trade and more famously as a printer, inventing a new typeface which still bears his name. By the time this snuff box was made Baskerville was a household name in Birmingham.



Medal of Thomas Birch, Surgeon and Man Midwife, 1734–46

For those about to give birth Thomas Birch's services would have been especially valuable. He lived in Digbeth and worked as a midwife and surgeon in the 1730s and 40s. Male midwives were sometimes called on to attend difficult births where the use of the newly-invented forceps was required. This medal

could have been intended as a way of promoting his business as it shows him amputating an arm on one side and with a newly-delivered baby on the other. Thomas Birch died in 1746 and was buried in St Martin's graveyard.



Tobacconist shop figure, 17th century

Birmingham's industries contributed to the transatlantic slave trade. Birmingham supplied guns, shackles and knives, as well as 'manilas' that were used as currency in Africa. Birmingham people also consumed tobacco and other goods produced by enslaved labour.

There were black people living in Birmingham although very little is known about their lives. A Swedish visitor in 1749 noted an enslaved man working at Lloyds' Slitting Mill, and in 1774 a black man called George Pitt Charry was buried at St Martin's church. Place names can indicate what was happening in a particular area. The Black Boy Inn in Jamaica Row once had a carving similar to this tobacconist shop figure above its entrance.



Dress made for Elizabeth Attwood, 1830s

Women's stories can be difficult to unearth. A dress on display in A Stranger's Guide gives an insight into one Birmingham family. In 1789, the silk for this gown was bought for Mary, the wife of William Carless, but she died before she could use it. In 1806, her daughter Elizabeth had it made up for her wedding to Thomas Attwood who became one of Birmingham's first MPs. The dress was later unpicked and re-made in the 1830s in the style it appears today. There were many independent women in eighteenth-century Birmingham, including pawnbroker Ann Fuller whose portrait appears in the display.



A Birmingham Prize Fight by W Allen, 1789–90

Eighteenth-century Birmingham had its share of celebrity figures. Isaac Perrins was an ironworker who worked as a foreman at the Soho Manufactory and in his spare time he was a boxer. Perrins was nicknamed the Gentle Giant because at 6'2" and 17 stone he often towered over his opponents. At the fight with Tom Johnson in 1789 Perrins' tenacity and courage outweighed his skill and after 62 rounds Johnson emerged the victor, taking away the major part of the 250 guineas (£262.50) winnings. Afterwards, Perrins quit both boxing and Birmingham and moved to Manchester where he died in 1800.

FORWARD: 1830 – 1909

'Forward' explores life in nineteenth-century Birmingham. During this period Birmingham became an industrial powerhouse. It made everything from pen nibs to steam pumps, and exported its products across the globe. Most homes in Victorian Britain would have contained at least one object made in Birmingham.

Meanwhile, many of those who worked in the town's booming industries lived in dire poverty. Birmingham's successful entrepreneurs devoted time and resources to social reform.

Birmingham claimed a place in national politics, demanding representation in parliament and campaigning for the abolition of slavery. Women and working people started to make their own voices heard.

OBJECTS IN FOCUS



Joseph Sturge, attributed to Alexander Ripplingille, around 1850

Sturge visited the Caribbean twice to see the realities of the 'apprenticeship' system at first hand, and his report was part of a successful campaign to abolish apprenticeship in 1838.

The first women's anti-slavery society was started in Birmingham in 1825 and led a nationwide campaign, which included boycotts of sugar and cotton. Throughout the nineteenth century Birmingham played host to black anti-slavery campaigners, including Frederick Douglass who visited in 1846.

Birmingham men and women played a significant role in the movement to abolish the institution of slavery. The leading light of the Birmingham Anti-Slavery Society was Joseph Sturge. He visited the Caribbean twice to see the realities of the 'apprenticeship' system at first hand, and his report was part of a successful campaign to abolish apprenticeship in 1838.

The first women's anti-slavery society was started in Birmingham

Birmingham continued to play a major role in the campaign for political representation, from the Chartists to the Suffragettes.

Meeting of the 'Birmingham Political Union' by Benjamin Haydon, 1832



The dreaded workhouse was the place of last resort for those who could not support themselves. It was generally assumed that people became poor through their own fault. The workhouse regime was harsh, although Birmingham workhouse was considered better than most.

Life was hard for the poor in Victorian Birmingham. Thousands lived in cramped and overcrowded 'courts' with poor sanitation. Immigrant communities including the Irish and Italians congregated in the poorest areas, and were regarded with suspicion. Anti-Catholic riots erupted in 1867.



Medicine bottle stamped Birmingham Workhouse, 1800s



Gilded copper monstrance by John Hardman & Co for St. Scholastica's Priory, Atherstone, 1860-80

This magnificent piece by Hardman is an example of the high quality of Birmingham's products. Hardman & Co made church metalwork and stained glass, and their work was in demand across the world from South Africa to North America.

The displays feature some of Birmingham's most famous companies, including Elkington, Osler and Tangye, alongside the hugely successful pen nib trade which revolutionised writing throughout the world.

Successful businessmen engaged in philanthropic work, investing resources in welfare and in Birmingham's cultural life. Birmingham Town Hall was built in the 1830s to house the triennial music festival, which raised money for the General Hospital.

In the early nineteenth century industrial towns like Birmingham had no MPs, and even in areas that were represented in Parliament, women and ordinary working people had no vote. Thomas Attwood, a Birmingham banker, formed the 'Birmingham Political Union' in 1829 to fight for 'real and effectual representation of the lower and middle classes' in the House of Commons. Attwood's movement helped push the Government towards the Great Reform Act of 1832. This enabled Birmingham and other industrial towns to elect MPs.



Lithograph of Joseph Chamberlain, 1900

When Joseph Chamberlain was Mayor of Birmingham in the 1870s he transformed the way the town was run, taking gas and water supplies into public ownership and improving health and sanitation. His controversial 'improvement scheme' demolished thousands of slum dwellings to make way for Corporation Street.

Concerns about poverty and inequality prompted movements for reform. Joseph Chamberlain, George Dixon and others played a national role in the campaign to provide elementary education for all. The Birmingham 'Board schools' became a model for the whole country.

AN EXPANDING CITY: 1909 – 1945

'An Expanding City' explores two key aspects of Birmingham's history during the first half of the twentieth century: the development of the suburbs and the impact the two world wars had on Birmingham and its people.

In a 'Vision for Birmingham', displays explore how the suburban estate reflected the changing social and political ideals of the time in an attempt to improve the way people lived. Personal stories are used to convey what the new suburban way of living was actually like.

'Birmingham at War' looks at both world wars, exploring the shared experiences, expectations and realities of war, both on the home front and overseas.

OBJECTS IN FOCUS



Booklet, *The Factory in a Garden*, published by Cadbury's

Motivated by their Quaker beliefs and keen business sense, Richard and George Cadbury relocated their factory from Bull Street in central Birmingham to

Bournbrook in 1879, renaming the area Bournville.

Bournville village and factory was a social and industrial experiment. George Cadbury believed the social and moral welfare of the factory worker was the responsibility of the employer. Leisure, education and welfare facilities were as important as improving the working environment.

Cadbury's advertising often featured an idealised view of the factory, like this one, as well as its female employees.

At the end of the first world war Prime Minister Lloyd George pledged to make 'Britain a fit country for heroes to live in'.



Doll's house and furniture made by Jack Restall for his daughter in 1938

For the first time local authorities were required to build houses. Birmingham built over 50,000 council houses between the first and second world wars, one of the largest schemes in the country. Private house building in the suburbs was also significant during this period. This doll's house was based on a style of house built in Handsworth during the 1930s.

Personal stories told by the people of Birmingham play a key part throughout 'An Expanding City'.

The central feature of 'Birmingham at War' is an installation combining oral history and archival imagery.

'When the war came see of course, my parents being Italian, we had to sort of go a bit easy because the people were rather hostile to Italian people you see.'

Photograph of Philip Allonzo during the second world war



I was given the choice of being interned in the Isle of Man, or going in the forces. Well I naturally chose the forces because I didn't want to be thought of as cowardly or anything'. Philip Allonzo



Jester's bauble used to entertain Belgian children in Birmingham, 1914-18

Families across Britain and Europe were torn apart by war and in some cases were never reunited.

Birmingham has a long tradition of providing refuge to those fleeing conflict or persecution, and refugees came to Birmingham throughout both world wars.

The Birmingham Belgian War Refugee Committee dealt with over 4,000 refugees between 1914 and 1918. Many stayed in Birmingham. The committee provided welfare, housing and employment, with the support of local people, religious communities and trades unions. This jester's bauble was made by Dr Crew to entertain Belgian children who were billeted at his home.

Birmingham's engineering and munitions industries were central to the British war effort during both wars. Aircraft, armoured vehicles, machine guns, rifles, ammunition, bombs, explosives and hand grenades represent only a small sample of what the city produced.

Prior to the Conscription Act, 1916, propaganda campaigns called for men to 'do their bit' and volunteer for the armed forces. Women were encouraged to shame men into volunteering by publicly giving them a white feather, a symbol of cowardice, if they were not wearing a military uniform. During both wars skilled jobs in industry were classed as 'reserved occupations'. People in these roles were often exempt from active service. During the first world war badges like this were issued to distinguish them from conscientious objectors.



War Service badge worn by people in reserved occupations, 1914-18

YOUR BIRMINGHAM: 1945 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Birmingham since 1945 is presented in the 'Your Birmingham' gallery, featuring a series of personal objects and interviews collected from Birmingham people. The gallery focuses on Birmingham 'Places', 'Events' and 'People'. The contributors to this gallery represent the rich diversity of Birmingham's community. The stories they tell offer an insight into what it's been like to live and work in Birmingham from the late 1940s to the present day.

OBJECTS IN FOCUS

Places: Mothers Nightclub



Pink Floyd poster

Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. Mothers gained an international reputation and was ranked 'best rock venue in the world' twice by US-based 'Billboard' magazine. The club closed in 1971.

Pink Floyd recorded part of their live album 'Ummagumma' at Mothers nightclub in 1969. Mothers nightclub, 'the home of good sounds,' opened in the former Carlton Ballroom in Erdington in 1968. The club aimed to provide live progressive music for the city's younger generation. Membership of the club was 2 shillings and 6 pence (12.5p) a year. The club quickly became a cult venue attracting performances by bands such as The Who, Pink Floyd, Led

The factory produced the full range of HP Sauces. Following the building of the A38, a pipeline carried vinegar from the Top Yard on one side of the road to the main Tower Road factory site on the other. Production created a distinctive smell which pervaded the surrounding area.

In 2007 new owners Heinz decided to move production of HP Sauce to the Netherlands.

Events: The March for Longbridge



Rover placard, 2000

This placard was carried by a Longbridge worker during the March for Longbridge in 2000. Hundreds of placards were issued to marchers by the T&G Union.

Workers felt betrayed by owners BMW who planned to break up the Rover group and cut production. On 1 April 2000, 80,000 people marched in protest. People gathered in the city centre and marched to Cannon Hill Park, where speeches and a concert took place.

Despite this, Longbridge closed in 2005 and over 6,000 jobs were lost. Longbridge re-opened in 2007 under new Chinese owners, producing MG cars.

Places: Lewis's Department Store



Lewis's box with bridal veil and headdress, 1966

Birmingham branch included the pets' corner, children's entertainment, rooftop gardens and a Christmas grotto. By the 1960s, the store was famous for its Bridal department.

In 1991 Lewis's closed. The building has since been converted for many different uses including offices, shops and restaurants.

This box contained a bridal veil and headdress purchased from Lewis's department store in 1966.

In 1885, Joseph Chamberlain invited Lewis's to open a store on his new Corporation Street. Popular aspects of the

People: Benjamin Zephaniah



Typewriter belonging to Benjamin Zephaniah

Benjamin Zephaniah, one of Britain's leading poets, was raised in Handsworth, Birmingham. In 1976 he was given this typewriter by a friend. Zephaniah was born in 1958. Despite leaving full-time

education by the age of 13, by 2008 he was listed as one of the UK's 50 most important post-war writers. He writes about themes such as identity, injustice, personal relationships and his early life in Birmingham.

While he was growing up, Zephaniah considered Handsworth as a 'cold suburb of Kingston Jamaica'. The music and oral tradition of Jamaica strongly influence his poetry.



Sign from the HP Sauce Factory

Opened as the Midland Vinegar Company in 1875, HP Sauce employed 920 people including factory workers, office staff, delivery drivers and blacksmiths.

The illuminated HP Sauce sign was a feature of the HP Factory at Aston Cross until its demolition in 2007. The sign was rescued by BBC WM. The club quickly became a cult venue attracting performances by bands such as The Who, Pink Floyd, Led