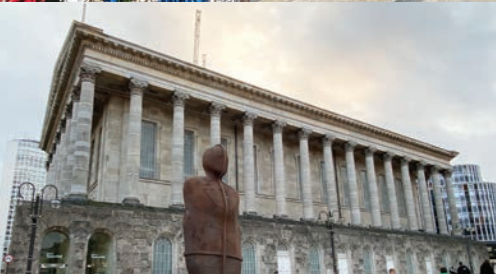


Birmingham City Centre Heritage Trails



Further Information

Websites

birminghamcivicsociety.org.uk
visitbirmingham.com

birminghammuseums.org.uk
libraryofbirmingham.com

Books

Chris Upton
A History of Birmingham
(The History Press Ltd, 2011)

Phillada Ballard (editor)
Birmingham's Victorian and Edwardian Architects
(Oblong / Victorian Society, 2009)

Andy Foster
Pevsner Architectural Guide to Birmingham and the Black Country
(Yale, 2022)

George T. Noszlopy & Fiona Waterhouse
Birmingham Public Sculpture Trails
(Liverpool University Press, 2008)

Credits

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Designed and produced by [Dave Walsh Creative](http://DaveWalshCreative.com)

A brief history of Birmingham



William Westley's East Prospect of Birmingham, 1732

The name Birmingham comes from the Anglo-Saxon *Beormingaham* meaning 'settlement of Beorma's people'.

The town's early growth dates from 1166 when Peter de Bermingham, the Lord of the Manor, secured a royal charter to hold a weekly market. By the 16th and 17th centuries the town had earned a reputation for its expertise in metal-working.

Birmingham developed rapidly as a manufacturing centre during the 18th century, prompted by advances in industry and transport,

including the development of Matthew Boulton and James Watt's steam engines and the creation of the Midlands canal network. The local economy also profited from the arrival of many Quaker and other non-conformist businesses.

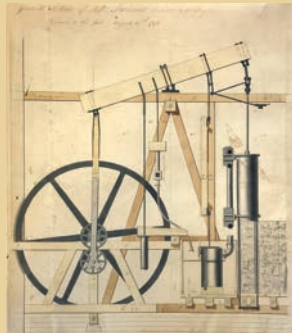
Whilst Birmingham was not as closely involved in the slave trade as the ports of Liverpool and Bristol, the town manufactured a significant quantity of colonial goods. Local gun makers in particular exported huge numbers of muskets which were used as currency to purchase West African slaves as part of the infamous 'triangular trade'.



Matthew Boulton
by L F Abbott
© Birmingham Museums Trust

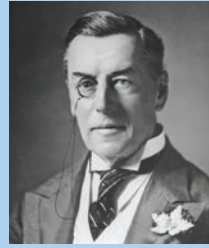


James Watt by
Sir Thomas Lawrence
© Birmingham Museums Trust



Boulton & Watt rotary
steam engine design, 1792

During the 19th century the population of the town increased to well over half a million people. However, this rapid growth outstripped the existing infrastructure resulting in the creation of overcrowded and unsanitary courts of 'back to back' houses.



In 1873 the liberal politician Joseph Chamberlain (*left*) was elected Mayor and embarked on a programme of transformation that was to earn Birmingham the accolade of the 'the best governed city in the world'. He brought the town's water and gas supplies under public control, undertook substantial slum clearance and built new

schools, public libraries, swimming baths and municipal parks. Chamberlain's municipal improvements were mirrored by the chocolate-manufacturing Cadbury brothers who in 1893 established their pioneering garden village in the suburb of Bournville.

Birmingham was granted city status in 1889 and the following century saw it continue to grow as a major industrial and manufacturing centre. The city suffered significant damage during the Second World War with more than 2,000 people losing their lives during German bombing raids between 1940-1943.

In the 1950s and 60s the city centre was transformed with the construction of New Street Station and the Bull Ring shopping centre. New tower blocks replaced much of the Victorian and Edwardian housing stock and a multi-lane ring road was constructed.

The 1950s also saw Birmingham benefit from the first significant immigration from Commonwealth nations which paved the way for today's diverse city.

Birmingham's economy underwent significant recession in the 1970s and 80s with the contraction of many of its traditional industries. Since then the city has reinvented itself as a global centre for conferencing, financial services, retail and culture, beginning with the opening of the International Convention Centre (ICC) in 1991.



The original Bull Ring Shopping Centre
opened in 1964

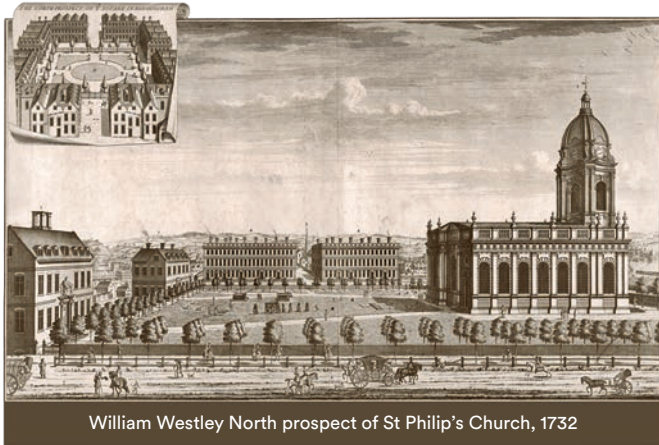


1 Birmingham Cathedral



Designed by the Warwickshire gentleman architect Thomas Archer, St Philip's was built as a parish church and was consecrated in 1715. The tower was added in 1725.

Archer had undertaken the 'Grand Tour' of Western Europe which inspired him to design his new church in the Baroque style.



William Westley North prospect of St Philip's Church, 1732

Between 1885 and 1897 the church was enhanced by the addition of four magnificent stained glass windows designed by local artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones.

St Philip's became the city's cathedral in 1905 and other than St Paul's in London is the only English cathedral designed in the Baroque style.

Steam engine entrepreneur Matthew Boulton and Sir Edward Burne-Jones were both christened in St Philip's.



The Archbishop of Canterbury admiring the Burne-Jones windows

2 Bennetts Hill & Waterloo Street



1821 view by Samuel Lines prior to the laying out of Waterloo Street
© Birmingham Museums Trust

Prior to the early 19th century the area occupied by Bennetts Hill and Waterloo Street consisted mainly of gardens and orchards.

The two new streets were created in the 1820s as part of the redevelopment of the Inge family's estate. Uniquely for the city centre many of the original Regency buildings survive today.



The Birmingham Banking Company building



These include the former Birmingham Banking Company designed by Thomas Rickman and Henry Hutchinson and built 1830-31. The corner entrance was added by Henry Yeoville Thomason (who also designed the nearby Council House) in 1868.

The artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones was born at number 11 and a Birmingham Civic Society blue plaque commemorates the location of his former family home.

3

Victoria Square

Named after Thomas Brock's 1901 statue of the monarch, Victoria Square is Birmingham's main civic space.

The spectacular Grade I listed Town Hall was the city's first public concert hall. Based on the temple of Castor and Pollux in ancient Rome, it was designed by Joseph Hansom and Edward Welch and opened in 1834. During its lifetime it has hosted performances by Charles Dickens, Sir Edward Elgar, the Beatles and Black Sabbath!



Antony Gormley's *Iron:Man* stands in front of the Town Hall



Across the square the Council House was designed by Henry Yeoville Thomason in 1874-1875 as the seat of the city council.

Between 1992 and 1994 the square was completely redesigned with Dhruva Mistry's River fountain (affectionately known locally as the 'Floozi in the Jacuzzi'!) as its centrepiece.

Left: Queen Victoria statue
Below: *The River* by Dhruva Mistry



4

Chamberlain Square



Opened in 1885, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (*left*) is a good starting point for anyone wishing to learn more about the history of the city.

The museum overlooks Chamberlain Square and the extravagant gothic Chamberlain Memorial Fountain. Unveiled in 1880, the memorial was built to celebrate the achievements of MP and former mayor Joseph Chamberlain.



Above: Birmingham School of Art
Left: Chamberlain Memorial Fountain

The fountain was designed by the influential local architect J.H. Chamberlain who was also responsible for the splendid Birmingham School of Art building on nearby Margaret Street.

Reclining on the steps of the square is Sioban Coppinger and Fiona Peever's 1993 bronze sculpture of Thomas Attwood who was elected as one of Birmingham's first two Members of Parliament in 1832.



5

Centenary Square

Centenary Square was created in 1989 to mark 100 years of Birmingham achieving city status.

At the heart of the square is the Hall of Memory which was built to commemorate the 12,320 Birmingham citizens who died during the First World War.

Other notable buildings include the Repertory Theatre of 1971, the International Convention Centre of 1991 and the Library of Birmingham which opened in 2013.

At the south-western end of the square is William Bloye's striking group statue of steam engineers Matthew Boulton, James Watt and William Murdoch, affectionately known as 'The Golden Boys'.

Below: Symphony Hall forms part of the International Convention Centre



Hall of Memory



Library of Birmingham

For a fine birds-eye view of Centenary Square and its surroundings the Library's two rooftop gardens are highly recommended.



6

The Birmingham Canal Network



Canalside Houses

Designed by the engineer James Brindley and opened in 1772, the Birmingham Canal helped to power the city's industrial development by providing improved access to the Black Country coalfields.

In 1795 the Birmingham & Worcester Canal was constructed to the south of the Birmingham Canal with both terminating at what is now the Gas Street Basin.

With the advent of the railways and improved road transport in the 19th and 20th centuries the canal network fell into disrepair.

During the 1990s Birmingham's canals were comprehensively restored as part of the wider regeneration of the city centre.

The transformation of the waterways has continued ever since, with a number of significant waterside developments like the Mailbox (completed in 2000) and The Cube (2010).



Gas Street Basin



The Mailbox

7

St Thomas' Peace Garden

St Thomas' Peace Garden on Holloway Head was designed around the ruined tower of St. Thomas' Church. The tower was the only part of Thomas Rickman's 1829 structure to survive German bombing in 1940.

In 1953 the site was laid out as a public garden based on the designs of the Birmingham Civic Society to mark the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.



St Thomas' Church



The Peace Garden includes a colonnade which had originally formed part of the Hall of Memory but which was relocated here when Centenary Square was laid out in 1989.

On the way back to the Mailbox it is well worthwhile to make the short detour to view the fine exterior of Singers Hill Synagogue.

Left top: Colonnade from Hall of Memory
Left: Singers Hill Synagogue



8

New Street Signal Box & Station

Heading back into the city centre from the Mailbox along Navigation Street is the distinctive New Street Signal Box (*right*). Built in 1964 in an uncompromising brutalist style, the structure is now Grade II listed.



A short walk brings you to New Street Station itself. Originally constructed between 1849 and 1854 by the London & North Western Railway, the station was completely rebuilt in the 1960s alongside the development of the Bull Ring shopping centre.

Unfortunately the 1960s building's concrete structure and underground platforms were never popular with travellers and the station was eventually redeveloped between 2010 and 2015. The distinctive stainless steel roof cladding is inspired by the distorted shapes seen from a moving train.



Left: Victorian New Street Station
Below: Stainless steel cladding on today's station



9 New Street



New Street Birmingham by Henry Harris, 1825

Originally laid out in the Middle Ages, New Street was developed during the 18th and 19th centuries as the town's most prestigious thoroughfare.

Although its earliest structures have been lost, the street still boasts some handsome Victorian and Edwardian buildings including the Burlington Hotel and the Piccadilly Arcade.



Piccadilly Arcade

At the southwestern end of New Street can be found one of Birmingham's most iconic buildings, the Rotunda (*left*).

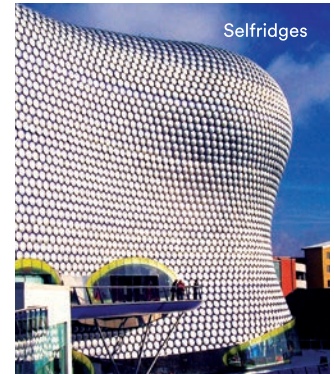
This 82m high circular tower was designed by architect James A. Roberts and constructed in 1964-1965. Now Grade II listed, the Rotunda was the only part of the 1960s Bull Ring to escape demolition when the shopping centre was redeveloped in 2003.



10 The Bull Ring

Established around 1166, the Bull Ring was the site of the medieval town's weekly market.

St Martin's was Birmingham's original parish church and dates from at least 1263. It was substantially rebuilt by Birmingham architect J.A. Chatwin in 1873-1875, although a few traces of the medieval structure can still be glimpsed inside.



Selfridges



St Martin in the Bull Ring



The present Bullring shopping centre opened in 2003. Although a completely new development, the complex respects the footprint of the historic streetscape including the central thoroughfare which broadens as it heads south towards St Martin's Church.

Another important historic survival is Sir Richard Westmacott's fine 1809 statue of Lord Nelson (*left*), which was the first figurative memorial to the admiral in the United Kingdom.

11 Brindleyplace



Created between 1993 and 2009, Brindleyplace occupies the site of various foundries, workshops, warehouses and wharves which fell into disuse after the Second World War. At the centre of the development is the Ikon contemporary art gallery. Originally Oozells Street School, the building was designed by the architects Martin & Chamberlain and opened in 1878. After the school closed in 1967 it remained unused until it was converted into the gallery in 1998.



Ikon Gallery



3 Brindleyplace

Another notable historic survival nearby is the Brasshouse pub (*left*) on Broad Street. Originally constructed in 1781 as the offices of a brass foundry and smelting works, the Grade II listed building is a reminder of the former industrial use of the area.



12 The Birmingham Main Line Canal

From Brindleyplace a short walk along the Birmingham Main Line Canal leads to the Utilita Arena and the Roundhouse.

The Roundhouse was built in 1874 and was originally designed to provide stables and a storage depot for Birmingham Corporation.

The Grade II* listed horseshoe-shaped building has recently been restored by the Canal and River Trust and the National Trust and now provides a base for volunteer-led tours of the city and the surrounding canals.

The Utilita Arena (*below*), originally known as the National Indoor Arena, was opened in October 1991. Although primarily intended as an indoor sporting venue, it soon began hosting music and entertainment events, including the 1998 Eurovision Song Contest!



The Roundhouse



Cast iron canal bridge, 1827



13

Birmingham & Fazeley Canal



The Kingston Buildings

Completed in 1789, the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal was one of the catalysts for the development of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter.

The Kingston Buildings of 1803 (now Austin Court) are typical of warehouses that lined the town's canals in the 18th and 19th centuries.

A short walk along the canal on Fleet Street is one of Birmingham's most unique museums, the Coffin Works. Originally the premises of Newman Brothers Ltd, the museum is a fascinating time capsule which tells the story of this family-owned coffin fitting and shroud manufacturer.



Coffin Works Tour

The trail leaves the towpath at Newhall Walk and continues up Newhall Street. Nearby is another city landmark, the 152m British Telecom Tower, which was completed in 1965.



The Birmingham & Fazeley Canal looking towards Newhall Street

14

St Paul's Square



St Paul's Church

This handsome Georgian square was developed during the 1770s and 1780s on land owned by the Colmore family.

Designed by Roger Eykyn of Wolverhampton, St Paul's Church was consecrated in 1779. The

upper part of the tower and spire were added in 1823 by Francis Godwin. Tradition has it that steam engineers James Watt and Matthew Boulton worshipped here for a time.

The church features an unusual painted window of *The Conversion of St Paul* (above) by Francis Eginton (1737-1805), based on a design by the artist Benjamin West.

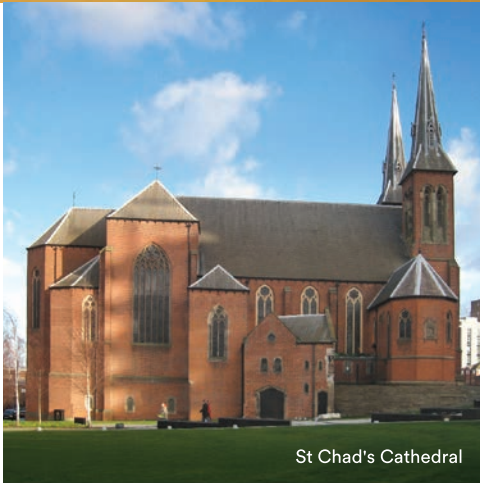
St Paul's Square is also one of the gateways to Birmingham's famous Jewellery Quarter, the heart of which is only a ten minute walk away.



15

St Chad's Cathedral

St Chad's was built between 1839 and 1841 to serve the rapidly expanding Catholic population of Birmingham. It was the first Roman Catholic cathedral to be built in England since the Reformation of the 16th century.



St Chad's Cathedral



Designed by the famous architect A.W. Pugin (1812-1852) in the Gothic Revival style, it was consecrated as a church in 1841 and elevated to the status of a cathedral in 1852.

The cathedral was built by George Myers with the original internal decorations by William Warrington (chancel windows); John Hardman Junior (church plate and several stained glass windows); and Herbert Minton (floor tiles).

Sadly the Bishop's House, also by Pugin, was demolished to make way for the inner ring road in 1960.



The chancel

16

Steelhouse Lane

Birmingham Children's Hospital



Steelhouse Lane is named after John Kettle's steel works which was located here during the 18th century.

Although there had been a hospital for sick children on Steelhouse Lane during the 19th century, the present Birmingham Children's Hospital only moved here in October 1998. The historic red brick building was formerly Birmingham's General Hospital and dates from 1897.



Across the road from the Children's Hospital, the West Midlands Police Museum (*above*) occupies the original Victorian Lock-up used by Birmingham City Police.

In use from 1891 to 2016, the Grade II listed building provided custody facilities for thousands of prisoners, including members of the gang who inspired the television drama *Peaky Blinders*.



17 Corporation Street



Victoria Law Courts

Conceived as an English version of a continental boulevard, Corporation Street was laid out in the 1880s as part of Joseph Chamberlain's civic improvements.

The construction of the new thoroughfare was accompanied by the clearance of large areas of slum housing which were replaced with grand new commercial and civic buildings.



Birmingham Slums



Methodist Central Hall

These included the spectacular brick and terracotta Victoria Law Courts which were designed by Sir Aston Webb and Ingress Bell and built between 1887 and 1891.

The equally striking Methodist Central Hall was created between 1903-1904 by architects Ewan and James Harper. After the Methodists moved out the hall was home to the famous Que night club between 1993 and 2017. Sadly this important Grade II* listed building is currently unused.

18 Old Square



Old Square

Old Square was once the finest Georgian square in Birmingham.

Most of the original 18th century houses were demolished as part of the building of Corporation Street in the 1880s. The area was redeveloped again in the 1960s and the oldest building that now remains is the Minories, formerly Lewis's department store, which dates from the 1930s.

The square features a glass and bronze 'cut-out' sculpture of the Birmingham-born comedian Tony Hancock by artist Hugh Williams, created in 1996.



Also worthy of note is Kenneth Budd's 1967 fibreglass and brass relief mural (*left*), Old Square, which was preserved and reinstated following the square's most recent refurbishment in the 1990s.



To return to the start of the trail go through the Minories shopping arcade and along Temple Row to Cathedral Square.