

# BIRMINGHAM JEWELLERY QUARTER HERITAGE TRAIL



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Birmingham  
Museums



JEWELLERY QUARTER  
Development Trust

# BIRMINGHAM JEWELLERY QUARTER HERITAGE TRAIL

Birmingham's famous Jewellery Quarter is completely unique - there is no other historic townscape like it in the world. It is an area rich in heritage, but what makes it so special is that it is still also a living, working community.

The purpose of this walking trail is to provide an introduction to the Quarter's past and present, and to encourage visitors to discover more about this fascinating area. This trail is printed and distributed by the Jewellery Quarter Development Trust (JQDT).

## **The development of the Jewellery Quarter.**

Goldsmiths and silversmiths have been working in what we now call the Jewellery Quarter for more than 200 years. Originally scattered across Birmingham, they began to congregate in the Hockley area from 1760 onwards. The main reason for this was the development of the Colmore family's Newhall estate which released more land for housing and manufacturing.

Precious metal working grew out of the 'toy' trades – not children's playthings but buckles, buttons and other small metal trinkets. 'Brummagem toys' were produced in their hundreds and thousands, in cut-steel, brass and silver.



Westley's Map of Birmingham, 1731 - Confusingly north is to the right!

As the trade expanded new streets were laid out across former rural estates, and substantial new houses were built for wealthy manufacturers. Alongside these large houses, terraces of artisans' homes were also constructed. In time the gardens of these houses became built up with workshops and spare rooms had work benches installed.



*St. Paul's Square*

The different craftspeople and manufacturers were dependent on each other's distinctive specialist skills, which explains their concentration in so compact an area. Following the North American gold rushes of the 1840s, the industry expanded rapidly and reached its height in 1913 when some 70,000 people were employed in the precious metal trades.





For most of its history the Jewellery Quarter was a closed community. There were no jewellery shops until the late 1970s when the economic recession prompted some of the manufacturers to start opening their doors to retail customers. Soon other retailers moved into the area and in the 1980s old buildings started to be restored rather than pulled down.

Since then, the preservation and enhancement of the Jewellery Quarter has gained strength as its global historical importance has become more widely appreciated.

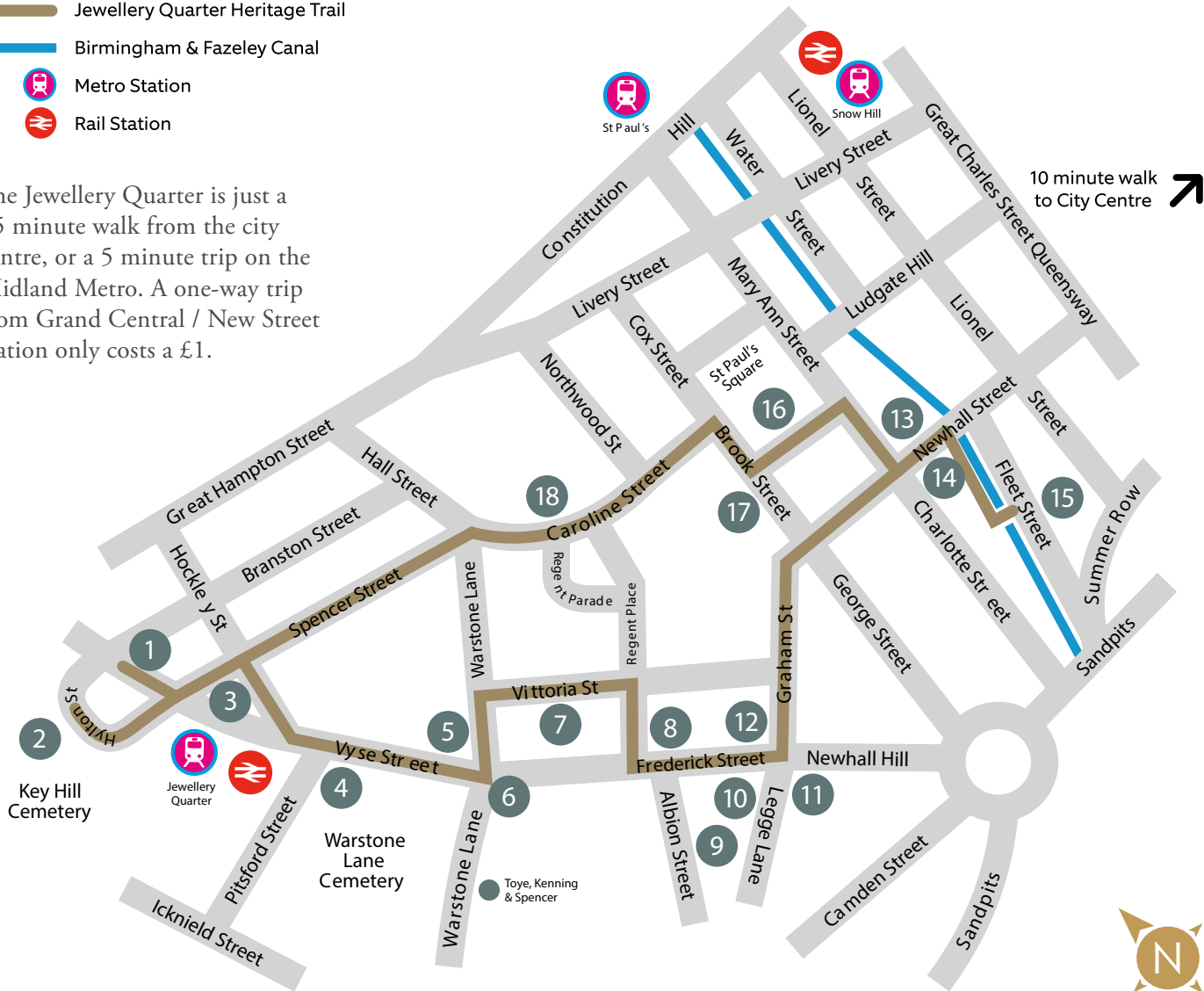


*Shops on Vyse Street*

# MAP OF THE JEWELLERY QUARTER

-  Jewellery Quarter Heritage Trail
-  Birmingham & Fazeley Canal
-  Metro Station
-  Rail Station

The Jewellery Quarter is just a 15 minute walk from the city centre, or a 5 minute trip on the Midland Metro. A one-way trip from Grand Central / New Street station only costs a £1.



Please note: this map is an approximate guide to the relative sites listed within this publication and is not drawn to scale. For an exact plan of Birmingham City Centre use an up-to-date A-Z or equivalent.

# 1

## MUSEUM OF THE JEWELLERY QUARTER



Located in and around the original factory of jewellery manufacturers Smith & Pepper, the museum tells the story of jewellery and metal working in Birmingham.

Most of the techniques and processes demonstrated on the fascinating factory tour are exactly the same as were used in the 18th century when the Quarter first developed.

Open all year round.

Tuesday – Saturday

10.30am – 5pm.

Closed on Sundays and Mondays  
except bank holidays.

Last tour at 4pm.

Admission charges apply, fully  
wheelchair accessible



Claret jug and cover by  
John Hardman & Co.

For more information please visit  
[www.birminghammuseums.org.uk](http://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk)  
Telephone 0121 348 8263

# 2

## KEY HILL CEMETERY

Reached through an alleyway off Hylton Street, Key Hill was Birmingham's first public cemetery. It was created in 1836 for the non conformists who were not permitted to be buried in Church of England graveyards, but was intended to be open for all denominations. They could be buried in Church of England ground but not with their own ministers.

Famous residents include the renowned politician, Joseph Chamberlain, and the manufacturer of Bird's custard, Alfred Bird. Open all year round, dawn to dusk. Some pathways may be a little rough



For more information please visit  
[www.birminghamconservationtrust.org](http://www.birminghamconservationtrust.org)

# 3

## JEWELLERY BUSINESS CENTRE, SPENCER ST.



These former workshops were restored and converted by the Duchy of Cornwall in 1991 and are now home to many local businesses. The spectacular gates were designed by metal craftsman Michael Johnson.



View from the street.

# 4

## WARSTONE LANE CEMETERY



The Church of England cemetery was opened in 1848. In the middle of the graveyard are the catacombs, one of the residents is John Baskerville, creator of the Baskerville typeface in 1757.

Major Harry Gem, the inventor of Lawn Tennis is also buried here.

Open all year round, dawn to dusk. Some pathways may be a little rough.

**For more information contact Friends of  
Key Hill and Warstone Lane Cemeteries**



# 5

## ROSE VILLA TAVERN



The Grade II listed Rose Villa Tavern was designed by local architects Wood & Kendrick and built between 1919-1920 for Mitchells & Butlers brewery.

The Modern building behind the Rose Villa Tavern is The Big Peg. Originally called the Hockley Centre, this large "flatted factory" was completed in 1971.

The area between The Big Peg and the Rose Villa Tavern is known as The Golden Square and was redeveloped into a spectacular new public realm space in 2015.

For more information please visit  
[www.rosevillatavern.co.uk](http://www.rosevillatavern.co.uk)  
Telephone 0121 236 7910

# 6

## CHAMBERLAIN CLOCK



This famous Jewellery Quarter landmark was erected in 1903 to commemorate Joseph Chamberlain's visit to South Africa as Colonial Secretary.

Chamberlain was Mayor of Birmingham between 1873 and 1876 and a Member of Parliament from 1876 to his death in 1914.

Portrait of Joseph Chamberlain by Oswald Burley.

For more information please visit  
[www.jqrt.org](http://www.jqrt.org)

# 7 SCHOOL OF JEWELLERY VITTORIA STREET



Founded in 1890, the School of Jewellery is now part of Birmingham City University (BCU). It is the largest Jewellery school in Europe and ranks amongst the foremost institutions for teaching precious metalworking in the world

The Atrium Gallery is accessible to the public 10am-4pm during exhibitions.



For more information please visit  
[www.bcu.ac.uk/jewellery](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/jewellery)  
Telephone 0121 331 5940

# 8

## THOMAS FATTORINI / TOYE, KENNING & SPENCER

Fattorini's are an old firm starting in Yorkshire but only starting in the quarter in 1919. Thomas Fattorini have been designing and manufacturing medals and badges, trophies and other regalia since 1827.

Nearby Toye, Kenning & Spencer on Warstone Lane date back even further. Also manufacturers of medals, badges and military regalia, Toyes were founded by a family of Huguenot immigrants in the East of London in 1685 and are considered to be the oldest company in Birmingham. The current premises were built after the Second World War.



CBE medal made  
by Toye, Kenning &  
Spencer



For more information please visit  
[www.fattorini.co.uk](http://www.fattorini.co.uk) and [www.toye.com](http://www.toye.com)

# 9

## J W EVANS, ALBION STREET



Established in 1881, JW Evans silver plate works is one of the most complete surviving factories in the Jewellery Quarter.

The site was rescued and restored by English Heritage between 2008 and 2011.

Tours of the factory are available on a limited number of days from April to October. Numbers are limited to 10 people per tour and must be booked in advance.



For more information please visit [www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/j-w-evans-silver-factory/](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/j-w-evans-silver-factory/) Tel: 0370 333 1181

# 10 THE ARGENT CENTRE, & THE PEN MUSEUM

Originally known as the Albert Works, this spectacular Renaissance-revival building was constructed in 1863 as the pen factory of W E Wiley. When first built the factory boasted a Turkish bath which reused steam from the production line!

Today the Argent Centre is home to the Pen Museum, which tells the story of the Birmingham pen trade.

The museum is open all year round, Tuesday to Saturday 11am - 4pm, Sunday 1pm -4pm  
Admission charges apply



For more information please visit  
[www.penmuseum.org.uk](http://www.penmuseum.org.uk)  
Telephone 0121 236 9834

# 11

## NEWHALL HILL



Meeting of the Birmingham Political Union by Benjamin Haydon, 1832

Newhall Hill was the site of a number of huge rallies organised by the Birmingham Political Union to demand parliamentary reform in the 1820s and 30s.

One of the leaders of the Political Union was Thomas Attwood, who along with Joseph Schofield became Birmingham's first members of Parliament in 1832.

Nearby in a house on Legge Lane the American author Washington Irving is said to have written his children's story RIP Van Winkle and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow in 1819.

For more information please contact  
[info@jqdt.org](mailto:info@jqdt.org)

# 12

## VICTORIA WORKS, GRAHAM STREET

Completed in 1840, the Victoria Works was originally the pen nib factory of Joseph Gillott. It is one of the earliest surviving purpose-built manufactories both in the Quarter and Birmingham as a whole.

During its heyday, upwards of 80% of the world's pen nibs were supplied by this factory, which routinely made over one million nibs a year. Visitors to the factory included the Shah of Persia, the explorer William Stanley and US President Ulysses S Grant.

Across the street from the Victoria Works is the Ramgarhia Sikh Temple which was originally built as a Congregational chapel in 1844.



For more information please contact  
[info@jqdt.org](mailto:info@jqdt.org)



# 13 THE ASSAY OFFICE, BIRMINGHAM



Birmingham's first Assay Office which was established in 1773, thanks to mainly the efforts of silversmith and manufacturer Matthew Boulton. Originally located in the city centre, this photograph shows the Newhall Street building which was purpose-built in 1877 but due to the rapid expansion of the trade was almost immediately found to be too small.

The Assay Office is now located in a new purpose-built building on Moreton Street. It continues to hallmark precious metal items to guarantee fineness and offers gemstone testing.

**View from the street only.**  
**[www.theassayoffice.co.uk](http://www.theassayoffice.co.uk)**  
**Telephone 0121 236 6951**

# 14

## ELKINGTON WORKS, NEWHALL STREET



*New Hall depicted on Westley's map, 1731*

Across the street from the Newhall Street Assay Office are the remains of the famous Elkington Works where the process of electroplating was first successfully used on a large scale.

Next door to Elkington is the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. Completed in 1789, the canal was a catalyst for the industrial development of the area.

Close to the canal is the original site of New Hall, home to the Colmore family, which was demolished in 1787.

For more information please contact  
[info@jqdt.org](mailto:info@jqdt.org)

# 15

## NEWMAN BROTHERS COFFIN WORKS



Restored by Birmingham Conservation Trust in 2014, the Grade II\* listed Newman Brothers coffin fittings factory is now open to the public. The factory is where Winston Churchill and Diana, Princess of Wales coffin fittings were made.

Visitors are invited to step back in time and experience the factory as a time-capsule, with it's original machinery, unusual products and stories of 100 years of operation.

Open Wed - Sun 10.45 – 3.00pm  
Admission charges apply.



The Shroud Room  
1950s

For more information please visit  
[www.coffinworks.org](http://www.coffinworks.org)  
Telephone 0121 233 4790

# 16 ST PAUL'S SQUARE

The only surviving Georgian square in Birmingham, St Paul's was developed in the 1770s and 80s on land belonging to the Colmore family.

Designed by Roger Eykyn of Wolverhampton, St Paul's Church was consecrated in 1779. The spire was added later in 1823.

Known as the 'Jewellers' Church', both Matthew Boulton and James Watt worshipped here.

Open to members of the public and groups (pre-booking is advised - please visit website for details)



For more information please visit  
[www.stpaulsjq.church](http://www.stpaulsjq.church)  
Telephone 0121 236 7858

# 17 RBSA GALLERY, BROOK STREET



The second oldest independent Art Society in Britain, the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists (RBSA) has a changing programme of exhibitions at their gallery just off St. Paul's Square on Brook Street.

Discover three floors of curated exhibitions showing original and affordable contemporary arts and crafts.

Open Monday - Saturday 10.30am - 5pm and Sunday 1pm - 5pm. Admission is free.

For more information please visit  
[www.rbsa.org.uk](http://www.rbsa.org.uk)  
Telephone 0121 236 4353

# 18

## CAROLINE STREET

Caroline Street was one of the earliest parts of the Quarter to be developed in the 1780s. A number of fine houses survive which were later converted to workshops, including no's 65 and 42.

On Regent Place, just off Caroline Street, a blue plaque marks the site of the house in which James Watt lived between 1777 and 1790. Watt was Matthew Boulton's business partner and was instrumental in the development of the steam engine.

To return to the start of the walk continue along Caroline Street, then on to Spencer Street which will bring you back to the Museum of Jewellery Quarter on Vyse Street.



For more information please contact  
[info@jqdt.org](mailto:info@jqdt.org)