



Walk

## The jewel in the town

Discover the facets of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter

**Time:** 90 mins

**Distance:** 2 ½ miles

**Landscape:** urban

During the Industrial Revolution, Birmingham became the West Midlands' centre for metal-working. Besides heavy metal goods like cast iron, the town also became famous for fine jewellery.

This walk charts the changing fortunes of Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. Originally little-known, even to locals, the Quarter is now a major tourist attraction.

We'll see how the area developed and survived, and how recent success threatens the Quarter's future

Most of all this is a chance to walk around a traditional manufacturing district, where skilled workers still ply their trade.

**Location:**

Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham, West Midlands

**Start and finish:**

St Paul's Square, Birmingham B3 1QU

**Grid reference:**

SP 06496 87485

**Be prepared:**

There are steps to and from a canal towpath. Take care at the water's edge and when crossing busy roads.

**Keep an eye out for:**

Cast iron letter boxes and street signs - yet more reminders of Birmingham's metal-working heritage

**Thank you!**



This walk was created by Martin Haslett, a retired town planner and Fellow of The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)



## Route and stopping points



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## 01 St Paul's Square

Birmingham had been a small manufacturing centre for many centuries, but the Industrial Revolution led to great expansion. The town became the centre for metal-working in the West Midlands.

In many ways this is surprising because there was never any coal or iron ore in the city. These raw materials all had to be brought from the Black Country - the area around Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Nevertheless, the better road communications which Birmingham enjoyed helped it to become dominant from an early date.

This walk charts the changing fortunes of the Jewellery Quarter from when the area was first being developed, through world wars and the threat of redevelopment, to the present day. Originally little-known even to local people, the Quarter is now a major tourist attraction, with many people visiting the local museums, and many more attracted here to buy jewellery.

But there is so much more to the Quarter than just jewellery. We will see how right from when it first developed this was an area where all types of skilled metal-working were carried out. We shall see how in recent years an even wider range of businesses have become established here and how the success of the area threatens its future by diluting the manufacturing basis of the Quarter.

Most of all this is a chance to walk around a traditional manufacturing district, where skilled workers can still be seen plying their trade.

### **Directions**

*Stay in St Paul's Square. If you haven't already, make your way to the church in the middle. Stop in front of the church spire.*

## 02 St Paul's Church, St Paul's Square

By the late 18th century Birmingham city centre, to our east, was becoming a crowded industrial area full of small workshops. It was not a pleasant place for successful entrepreneurs to live. For this reason the local landowners, the Colmore family, developed fashionable new residential areas to the west of the city. It was common to find high-class suburbs to the south and west of a city at this time - the prevailing south-westerly winds meant that the air was cleaner here.

Built between 1777 and 1779, St Paul's Square is Birmingham's only remaining Georgian square. The fashionable Georgian houses allowed prosperous people to escape from the noise and dirt of the city centre and enjoy a better lifestyle. Having the church in the centre of the square makes a grand piece of town planning. The church may be open - if so, do have a look inside.

As we continue on our walk, it is important to remember that the small-scale metal working of the Jewellery Quarter is not typical of Birmingham's heavier metal industries. Look out for cast iron letter boxes on many old buildings and the cast iron name plates for the roads, in a design unique to Birmingham. Birmingham's industrial growth was built on the manufacturing of metal, usually of objects much bigger than jewellery.

### **Directions**

*With the church spire behind you, turn left and follow the path out of the Square. Turn left at the road and continue ahead onto Mary Ann Street. At the end, use the pedestrian crossing and turn right at the tunnel to follow the high brick wall of Livery Street. Continue with the railway arches on your left until you reach a canal. Go through the pointed pedestrian arch and take the steps down to the towpath. At the bottom of the steps turn hard right and go under a bridge. Continue along towpath with the canal on your left. Stop before the next bridge.*

### 03 Birmingham and Fazeley Canal

The Birmingham and Fazeley Canal opened in 1789. Having a canal so close to new high-class housing is rather surprising but in an un-planned age different landowners had varying ideas about how the area should develop.

The canal here was an important link in the national network. It also enabled this part of town to industrialise. This industrial development was completely in conflict with the houses we saw in St Paul's Square. As the area became more industrial, the prosperous residents escaped to the new suburbs being built to the south of Birmingham, mainly in Edgbaston.

In their place, metal-working trades rapidly developed here. With the plentiful supply of raw materials, Birmingham was becoming famous for metal goods. Jewellery was an important part of this expansion but by no means the only metal trade practised in late 18th century Birmingham. We will see examples of how many of these trades remain to this day.

#### **Directions**

*Go under the canalside bridge past a tall modern tower block. Go through the next tunnel and at end of it immediately turn right through a narrow gap in the wall. Go up a staircase to the road (Newhall Street). Turn left and stop just before The Queens Arms pub.*

### 04 Ormiston Academies Trust, 144 Newhall Street

We have seen how good communications helped Birmingham to grow, but there is another very important reason for its development. There were several very influential and progressive businessmen in Birmingham who led the way in industrial innovation.

Foremost amongst them was Matthew Boulton, who set up his Soho Manufactory in 1766 in nearby Handsworth. He was the first person to recognize the benefits of bringing people together in factories to improve production techniques. Boulton worked with the Scottish engineer James Watt to harness the power of steam to improve industrial efficiency.

These innovations were such a step forward from water power that Matthew Boulton is seen as one of the pioneers of the Industrial Revolution. The Soho Manufactory is often quoted as the world's first factory. It is Birmingham's great loss that the building was demolished in Victorian times.

The building we are now standing outside is another landmark in the history of industrial innovation, in this case more closely connected with jewellery. It was here in the 1840s that George Elkington had his electro-plating works.

Using electricity to deposit a thin layer of silver on a base metal made products that could look like solid silver. One of Elkington's employees was Alexander Parkes who went on to invent the world's first plastic.

#### **Directions**

*With your back to Elkington's works, look a little to your left across Newhall Street to the building with railings and an impressive columned porch under the royal coat of arms. Carefully cross the road and stop outside it.*

### 05 Birmingham Assay Office, Newhall Street

The history of hallmarking silver in England dates back to 1300 when a statute required that precious metals were tested and marked. Hallmarking is one of the oldest forms of consumer protection. It

protects the customer from fraud and the manufacturer against dishonest competitors.

Silver made in Birmingham had to be hallmarked in Chester and this added greatly to costs. Not only was it a long way to Chester but the poor roads led to articles being damaged and the added danger of highwaymen.

Matthew Boulton could see a way round this problem. Joining together with manufacturers from Sheffield, he petitioned Parliament to establish a hallmarking office in Birmingham. The bill was passed in 1773 and both Birmingham and Sheffield opened offices.

Birmingham adopted the anchor as its mark, which it retains to this day. People often ask how this could be, so far from the sea but legend has it that the Birmingham and Sheffield supporters met in a pub called the Crown and Anchor. When they were successful, they decided to use these two images for their new offices

From these modest beginnings, the Birmingham Assay office is now the largest and busiest in the world.

#### **Directions**

*With the old Assay Office on your right, turn right into Charlotte Street. When you reach the corner of St Paul's Square again, take the first left then first right around the Square (so that the church is on your right). Then turn left into Caroline Street, which eventually bends to the right. After the bend, stop on the right at the junction with Kenyon Street, outside a building marked 'Pickering and Mayell'.*

## **06 Former Pickering and Mayell building, 42 Caroline Street**

Although buildings in the Jewellery Quarter started as homes, many were converted into workshops as the various industries expanded. Many of the workshops that are still in use in the Jewellery Quarter are converted dwellings.

Sometimes the front was little altered, with 'shopping' being added to the rear. This 'shopping' is nothing to do with the retail trade - these were workshops, small-scale industrial buildings which were designed to maximize natural light to allow craftsmen to work.

Number 42 Caroline Street is a good example. It was originally built as two quite fine houses but the residential use of this area of the city was very short-lived. Very soon this pair of houses was converted to industrial use and occupied by a famous Birmingham silversmith. Later on Pickering and Mayell, who were jewellery case manufacturers, conducted their business from here.

You can see just from looking at the front that these were fine houses, with railings and decorative door cases and window detailing. These buildings are a good demonstration of how industrial uses eventually forced out the prosperous residents for whom these houses were originally built.

#### **Directions**

*Retrace your steps a little way and stop outside the modern red brick building that adjoins Pickering and Mayell. Look across the road at the building opposite, to the left of the car park.*

## **07 58-59 Caroline Street**

While many of the buildings in the Jewellery Quarter are converted houses, this is not true of all of them. 58-59 Caroline Street (the building with the large access arch) is a purpose-built manufactory, dating from the late 19th century. By this time the area had become largely industrial and landowners were building small factories.

The listing description for this building refers to workshops on the first floor and further workshops to the rear. A building of this design was probably better for the craftsmen to use than the converted house we saw at the previous stop. The large arch to the right would have allowed a horse and cart to be loaded to the rear. Although this building was never a home, note the considerable care and expense that has been taken over the brick detailing and decoration on the front.

Look a little to the left at the buildings next door, 60-61 Caroline Street. Are these converted houses or purpose-built factories? It can be quite difficult to tell. In this case they are a pair of factories, built rather in the style of homes. Perhaps the over-large windows indicate that the maximum amount of light was needed to aid the craftsmen in their work. Look out for more workshop/factories and converted houses as we continue.

### **Directions**

*Return to the Pickering and Mayell building and carefully cross over to the other side of Caroline Street. Continue to the end of Caroline Street then turn left. Use the pedestrian crossing to enter the road opposite, Spencer Street. At a safe place, cross over and continue along the right hand pavement.*

*At the end of Spencer Street is a mini roundabout. Keep the roundabout on your left and cross over the junction with Hockley Street to continue along Spencer Street. At the end, carefully cross over at junction with Vyse Street. Continue ahead into Hylton Street for about 20 metres. Stop outside the large red brick building on your left with arched upper windows.*

## **08 Former W H Haseler workshop, Hylton Street**

This grand building dates from about 1905 and its design makes it plain that this is not a converted house. Look at the high ground floor window sills and large first floor windows that make the best of the available light. Look too at the elaborate cut bricks between the ground floor and first floor windows, and the use of painted stone to give the design more appeal. The grand doorways also emphasize the building's importance.

This was a purpose-built jeweller's workshop. It was occupied by W H Haseler Ltd, jewellers and silversmiths. Haselers produced a range of jewellery, silver and pewter designed by leading artists of the day. They went into partnership with Liberty's, the London department store famous for its cutting edge design.

Such was their success that Haselers built an extension to the original building. You can see it if you look to the right of the original block, going round the corner of the street. This was built in 1920 and we can see how styles had changed over these 15 years. Even though it is a more 'modern' building, it still reflects the confidence of a firm with a connection to the leading designers and retailers of the day.

### **Directions**

*Return to Vyse Street and turn left. After a short distance, cross over the road and stop outside the Jewellery Quarter Museum.*

## **09 Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, 75-79 Vyse Street**

In the past few years there has been an increased recognition of the importance of our industrial heritage. People are interested in visiting places that bring to life the lives of working people, rather than just the stately homes of the rich and powerful.

In this way the Jewellery Quarter has become an important tourist asset to the city. Even today you will struggle to find heritage sites which focus on the story of small-scale manufacturing, as we find here. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has one of the world's finest collections of jewellery, but rather less information on how it was made and the people who made it. This is where the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter comes to the fore.

Here you have the opportunity to go into traditional jewellers' workshops, with their original tools and workbenches. It's well worth a visit - the staff can demonstrate the processes and machinery which have remained little changed for generations.

### **Directions**

*With your back to the Museum, turn left and continue uphill along Vyse Street (crossing the end of Spencer Street again along the way). When you reach the traffic island outside Jewellery Quarter railway station, use it to cross over and stop outside the station.*

## **10 Jewellery Quarter railway station, Vyse Street**

The increasing tourist interest in this area has led to improved transport services. The Jewellery Quarter railway station was opened in 1995, as part of the 'Jewellery Line' project. This was followed in 1999 by a new tram service between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

The Jewellery Quarter is an important employment area, not just for jewellery manufacture and sale but for a wide variety of other work. The combined train and tram link makes the area much more accessible and is another facet of its regeneration over the past few decades.

While we are here, look outside the station to see one of the original Birmingham pissoirs, a cast iron toilet originally found widely across the city, but, rarely elsewhere. This heavy cast iron structure was made in Glasgow, but it is not unlike the 'heavier' side of Birmingham metal manufacturing. It's in sharp contrast with the very precise, highly skilled small-scale work of the Jewellery Quarter and its associated trades.

### **Directions**

*Continue along Vyse Street and take the first right into Pitsford Street. Continue to the end, past a large cemetery. At the junction with the dual carriageway, turn left. Stop outside the impressive brick and stone building, just past a newer building called 'No.1 The Mint'.*

## **11 Former Birmingham Mint, Ickniel Street**

For this part of our story, we return to the great entrepreneur Matthew Boulton. At his nearby Soho Manufactory he perfected production processes that used steam power. In particular he developed presses. This production method harnesses the power of steam to 'press' out products using skillfully made dies.

Boulton experimented with machine-made tokens, which were much needed due to a shortage of coins. The Royal Mint still made coins using hand presses, a difficult and slow process. Eventually, Matthew Boulton was engaged to make the coins of the realm on his new steam presses.

The first of these were the famous 'cartwheel' pennies. Apart from speed, Boulton claimed that his presses produced coins which were much harder to counterfeit - a serious problem at that time. All of this took place a mile or so from here.

The connection with this building is that Ralph Heaton bought Matthew Boulton's presses and continued to produce coins as the 'Birmingham Mint.' The company moved to this site in 1862.

They won contracts to produce coins for all over the world, especially countries of the Empire.

The Birmingham Mint continued to prosper and became the largest private mint in the world. Even recently, they produced several million 1 and 2 Euro coins. Now though, production has ceased and only the front of the building has been for conversion to other uses.

### **Directions**

*Continue along Icknield Street and take the first left, Carver Street. After a short distance turn left again to enter Warstone Lane. Continue along this road until you reach the junction at the end with a clock tower.*

## **12 Chamberlain Clock, Warstone Lane / Frederick Street / Vyse Street junction**

The clock at this road junction records Joseph Chamberlain. In the late 19th century Chamberlain was another innovator and the embodiment of Birmingham. From an early and successful career in manufacturing, he applied the lessons learned in business to local administration.

In 1873 he became Mayor of Birmingham and used his influence to transform the town and its services. He went on into national politics and served as Secretary of State for the Colonies. When the Boer War came to an end in 1902, Chamberlain toured South Africa the following year to promote reconciliation between the British and the Afrikaners.

This clock commemorates Chamberlain's visit to South Africa. There are many other memories of the man in Birmingham, including Chamberlain Square in the city centre and 'Old Joe' the prominent clock tower at Birmingham University, an institution that he helped to found.

Before we move on, notice there are two branches of well-known banks at this crossroad. Banking services were very important to the expansion of business in Victorian times. Traders needed to send and receive money safely and a reliable place to keep it.

Although never a major financial centre, Birmingham gave England two of its major banks. Both Lloyds Bank and the former Midland Bank (now part of HSBC) were founded in Birmingham.

### **Directions**

*Use the pedestrian crossings to pass the clock tower and reach the entrance to Barclays. Continue along the right side of Warstone Lane. Take the first right into Vittoria Street and then look for the Birmingham City University School of Jewellery on your right.*

## **13 Birmingham City University School of Jewellery, 82-86 Vittoria Street**

In 1889 a meeting of all the principal jewellers was held to discuss the establishment of a jewellery school. Although apprenticeships were available, it was considered that the jewellery trade would benefit if workers were to have a broader education.

By 1890 the building here in Vittoria Street, formerly a factory, was acquired and adapted as a jewellery school. It catered for 460 students, of both sexes. By 1912 it needed an extension, which is what you see to the left of the main building.

Students had to learn the technical aspects of their work, but there was also a strong emphasis on the artistic side of jewellery design. They were encouraged to draw from natural forms and use nature to inspire their designs.

### **Directions**

*Retrace your steps and return to Warstone Lane. Turn left and stop outside one of the jewellery shops.*



## 14 Warstone Lane jewellery shops

The Jewellery Quarter has seen both good and bad times - according to the economic health of the country and contemporary fashions. Expensive and showy jewellery goes in and out of fashion and these changes directly affect an area like this. At one stage Queen Victoria agreed to make a point of wearing Birmingham jewellery as an advertisement for the area.

It was during one of the periodic downturns in the 1970s that local jewellery manufacturers hit on the idea of selling direct to the public. Small manufacturing premises sprouted shop fronts and it soon became known that a considerable bargain could be obtained here, rather than in city centre jewellers' shops.

This change of approach was an important turning point in the history of the Jewellery Quarter. It brought the area to the attention of the public at large. Until then, many local people were unaware that Birmingham had a Jewellery Quarter - it wasn't even shown on any road signs or maps.

### **Directions**

*Return to the end of Vittoria Street and look across the square at the large white tower block.*

## 15 The Big Peg, 120 Vyse Street

The large multi-storey building is 'The Big Peg' currently occupied by shops and offices. Its name refers to the traditional jewellers' workbenches (known as pegs) that you may have seen at the Jewellery Quarter Museum. It was built in the early 1970s as a 'flatted factory' (a building divided into separate units), replacing a considerable number of old workshops.

The City Council had already built flatted factories in other parts of the city as part of its redevelopment schemes, so whilst this was new to the Jewellery Quarter, it was not a new concept. It did seem at this stage, in the early 1970s, that the whole of the Jewellery Quarter would be redeveloped in this way and the 'magic' of all the old workshops would be lost for ever.

Much redevelopment had already been carried out in the 'Gun Quarter' to the north east of here. Modern factories had replaced some of the old workshops, but the scheme here was not a success.

Many of the small businesses who had been removed from their old, cheap workshops could not afford the rents or commit to the tenancies that the council demanded and simply went out of business. Fortunately for the Jewellery Quarter this was also at a time when ideas about redevelopment were beginning to change.

After the great rush to redevelop bomb sites and slums after the war, the tide was turning, not only for old industrial areas but for housing too. Now that the worst of the slums had been replaced, repairing and regenerating existing areas was considered better than rebuilding them.

Problems were starting to become apparent in redeveloped housing areas, and The Big Peg was encountering similar problems in industrial redevelopment. The mid and late 1970s saw a complete change in opinions about redevelopment and attention became focussed on regeneration.

### **Directions**

*Return to the Chamberlain Clock and turn left into Frederick Street. Find a safe place to cross over and take the first right into Albion Street. Stop after about 50 metres, looking at the left side of the road.*

## 16 J W Evans Silver Factory, 54 Albion Street

We heard at the last stop how redevelopment slowly gave way to regeneration. Here in Albion Street we can see a good example of the results. During the 1970s the problems associated with redeveloped housing areas were becoming all too clear, with social problems developing in the high-rise blocks which replaced slum housing.

As we saw at the Big Peg, similar problems were seen in industrial redevelopment. It was also a time when attention was beginning to be focussed on the 'inner city', areas which were in need of increased investment. This was in contrast to previous years when population and industry had been siphoned-off into new towns, like Redditch and Telford.

Urban planners turned their attention to the inner cities and changes in legislation directed investment to these areas. 'Industrial Improvement Areas' were designated which allowed grants to be paid for the refurbishment of existing buildings. Then in 1980 the Jewellery Quarter was designated a conservation area.

Within 10 years there had been a complete turnaround in planning policy. We can see some of the results here in Albion Street. Old buildings have been renovated and care has been taken to return houses and workshops to their original appearance, with traditional windows and doors.

There is also another museum, J W Evans Silver Factory, at number 54. This is a chance to visit a silver factory where the traditional crafts of the Jewellery Quarter carried on until quite recently.

### **Directions**

*Return to the junction with Frederick Street and turn left. After a short distance, you'll see a redbrick building marked Thomas Fattorini Limited. Carefully cross the road and stop outside this building.*

## 17 Thomas Fattorini Ltd, Frederick Street

Fattorini's is another famous name in the Jewellery Quarter. Senor Fattorini was an Italian who set up a number of jeweller's shops in Yorkshire. Demand for the products was so great that he decided to establish a factory in Birmingham and the business has flourished since.

Among other things, it specialises in ceremonial insignia, swords, medals and trophies. Again this is not jewellery strictly speaking but uses all the skills of the area, including presses to make metal parts for the products.

The building is an example of the larger type of manufactory in the Jewellery Quarter. It's also another listed building, built about 1895 although Fattorini didn't move here until 1927.

The railings outside show bomb damage. This is a visual reminder of how the skills of the Jewellery Quarter were put to work in the Second World War. Parts for armaments and Spitfire aircraft were made in the area. Just as in peace time, workers in the Jewellery Quarter could provide very large quantities of precisely-made metal parts for the war effort.

This made the Jewellery Quarter a major target for German bombers. The damage the area suffered led to the great need for post-war redevelopment, the results of which we saw earlier.

### **Directions**

*With the Fattorini building on your left, continue along the left side of Frederick Street. After about 75 metres, look across the road for the Pen Museum.*

## 18 The Argent Centre, 60 Frederick Street

We have now arrived at the best example of the third building type in the Jewellery Quarter - the large, purpose-built manufactory. From a heritage point of view, this is one of the best industrial buildings in Birmingham.

The Argent Works was built in 1862-3 to make pens, but also included Turkish baths reusing steam from the works! There is no doubt that this was a building intended to impress. The multi-coloured brick detailing, with the corner towers, echoes the style of early renaissance Italian villas in Florence. Behind the frontage it is less grand, with workshops around a central courtyard.

Although the building has gone through a succession of uses, it still celebrates its pen heritage and includes the Pen Room - a museum dedicated to the Birmingham pen industry. In Victorian times there were dozens of pen makers in Birmingham and the city became the world centre of the pen nib trade. It's another example of how the Jewellery Quarter has always been about more than jewellery and of the skilled press work that was needed to make a specialised metal product.

### **Directions**

*Take the first left into Graham Street and continue until the road bends to the right. Turn left here into Brook Street and stop on the left hand side outside the RBSA Gallery.*

## 19 RBSA Gallery, 4 Brook Street

As the Jewellery Quarter has become more fashionable, other uses unrelated to traditional Birmingham metal working have come into the area. The gallery of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists is a good example. The RBSA is a charity that promotes the work of Birmingham artists and the Gallery here has regular exhibitions of their work. Do have a look!

Around the corner in Northwood Street is St Paul's Gallery, which specialises in a very different type of art. St Paul's Gallery is the world's largest retailer of signed limited edition album cover art prints. In nearby Warstone Lane is Turner Fine Arts, an agency specialising in the sale and purchase of original unique artwork on behalf of its artists, clients and private collectors.

You may already have noticed several photographic studios and art shops in the Quarter, all part of the growing popularity of the area as a fashionable place to work, and live. All this activity helps to make this a vibrant area.

On the other hand, too much residential use would pose a threat to the Quarter's traditional manufacturing base. There is considerable resistance among local people to new residential uses.

### **Directions**

*Continue along Brook Street to return to St Paul's Square.*

## 20 St Paul's Square

This walk has taken us through a unique area and has given us the chance to understand how it has grown and developed through the years.

We have seen that there has always been much more to the Jewellery Quarter than just jewels. So many of the trades carried out here have one common theme, the production of precision metal parts, often using presses.


Jewellery is just one of the uses for these parts, but the businesses support each other even though their eventual products might be quite different. If a manufacturer needs a metal-working skill not available in one company, they can be sure that some other business in the Quarter will be able to supply what's needed. This is often why manufacturers find it useful to congregate in an area of similar trades.

In the early 1970s when it seemed that the Jewellery Quarter could disappear and be redeveloped as flatted factories. So much would have been lost. In fact, the area has changed little in the last 40 or so years, and so many places in it have improved. Today, although there are still decrepit corners to be seen, it now seems much more likely that these buildings will be taken over by a thriving new business rather than fall into ruin or be redeveloped by an ill-considered act of the council's redevelopment department.

As we have seen on the walk, many of these buildings are now listed. All listed buildings have a written description to explain why they have been designated. Many of these descriptions in the Jewellery Quarter include the following words to describe the area: "a manufacturing district of Birmingham now recognized as being of international significance".

Now recognised, yes, but only just in time!

 **Walk complete – we hope you have enjoyed it!**

 **Optional walk extension:  
The Coffin Works, 13-15 Fleet Street**

***Directions***

*Retrace your steps along Brook Street and turn left onto Newhall Street. You will be back at the Assay Office (Stop 5). With the Assay Office behind you, carefully cross the road. Turn left and continue along the right hand side of Newhall Street. Pass an open air car park then turn right into Fleet Street. Continue almost to the end and the Newman Brothers building (now a museum) will be on the left*

The link between jewellery and coffins is not immediately obvious. Yet apart from the traditional cabinet making crafts needed to make the wooden coffin, the handles and decorations are metal. These metal parts would be cast or pressed - a clear connection with Jewellery Quarter trades.

Newman Brothers were one of the foremost coffin makers in Britain and made the fittings for the funerals of Joseph Chamberlain, Winston Churchill and the Queen Mother. When the firm closed, the premises featured in the BBC television programme Restoration, which brought it to nationwide attention.

Many difficult years were to follow however before the building eventually opened in 2014 as the Coffin Works, including the Newman Brothers Museum. Now you have the opportunity to see all parts of the process of making coffins, including the press work that has contributed to so much to the story of this walk.