



Association of Open University Graduates Region 04 – West Midlands

Edition 17

December 2017

Welcome & Introduction

A lot of things have happened since our last newsletter. At our Tea & Coffee Morning in Wolverhampton, our members enjoyed looking at some popular events in our Region. Last year, our New Year's Dinner was at Novotel Hotel. This year, we have our New Year's Dinner at Bluebrick Restaurant in

Wolverhampton. It is not too far from Novotel Hotel in Wolverhampton. We discussed our event at Wednesbury. There were some interesting leaflets from the Tourist Information Centre which our members brought. Our OMEGA magazines provided many interesting points to discuss.

A VISIT TO **WEDNESBURY MUSEUM & ART GALLERY**

Our visit to Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery took place on Saturday 11th November 2017 from 2.00 pm onwards. It

was easy to find. Wednesbury lies on the Thomas Telford's London to Holyhead road which was built in the 19th century.

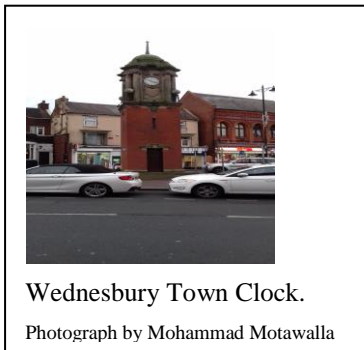


Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery. Photograph by Mohammad Motawalla.

Originally, it grew as a market town with rich medieval history. During medieval times, it was fortified by Ethelfleda. She was a daughter of Alfred the Great. She was well known as the Lady of Mercia. She erected five fortifications to defeat the invading Danes. Wednesbury was the centre of her fortification. Other fortifications were Bridgnorth, Tamworth, Stafford and Warwick. During this time, Wednesbury was very small. Its inhabitants were mainly farmers. In the 17th century, pottery was very popular. 'Wedgbury ware' was made here and sold to distant places. White clay was used to make tobacco pipes. Discovery of coal led to growth of many new industries. This encouraged development of roads, canal and railways. These new

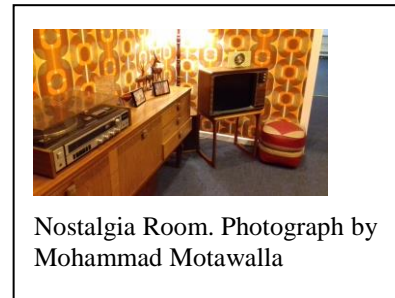
developments increased the population of Wednesbury.

There is a town clock which was erected for the coronation of King George V.



Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery was built in 1891 to house a collection of paintings, drawings and water colours which were donated by Mrs. Mary Ann Richards on behalf of her husband, Edwin. It is a beautiful Victorian Building on Holyhead Road. This museum has an excellent collection of pottery, paintings and sentimental nostalgia rooms which reminds us of the totally

different lifestyle we had in the last century. After World War II, many new devices were introduced in our houses. People had good jobs, money became available and homes were changing fast to absorb new inventions. Radios and televisions became popular in homes. New styles of kitchens were built.



These Nostalgia rooms brought back memories of our recent forgotten lives.

Our event was an outstanding adventure of changing lifestyles on local communities from ancient times to last century's world wars.

OUR EVENTS IN HANDSWORTH

We had two events in Handsworth which were related to each other. They were exciting and interesting events. Many of us had learnt about Industrial Revolution during our school days. However, not many of us had a real opportunity to discover its origins. Surprisingly, our Region has many answers to the Industrial Revolution. The great men of the Industrial Revolution lived and worked in Handsworth. They were laid to rest in this famous area too. On Sunday 5th March 2017 we had a Guided Tour of Soho House, Handsworth where Matthew Boulton and his family lived from 1766 onwards. It was a regular meeting place of Lunar Society too.

Matthew Boulton [1728 - 1809] was born in Birmingham. His father was a Birmingham manufacturer of metal products. He died when Matthew was thirty-one years old. Matthew had developed experience in his father's business and successfully expanded it. Massive deforestation created fears of running mills. Wood became scarce. However, discovery of iron and

coal, promoted strong support for the industrial era. The rapid changes in using fuel from charcoal to coke is called a 'Period of Transition'. Industries expanded using modern technology. Birmingham saw rapid expansion. Matthew Boulton had talents and leaderships. He built Soho Manufactory and adopted the latest techniques which promoted new revolution in industry. Old mills were transformed into factories and industries.



Soho House, Handsworth. Photograph
by Mohammad Motawalla

Our visit to Soho House depicts these concepts of Industrial Revolution in an amazing way. There are many items on display on the ground floor and on the first floor which demonstrate skills developed during this important revolution. There was no real long

distance transport during this period. Roads were poor and canals were not developed. There were no railways. Therefore, much of iron forged in small foundries near Birmingham was thin iron sheets which were easy to transport to local factories. Metalworkers concentrated on making small and valuable items like buttons, buckles, cane heads, snuff boxes, etc. These small items are collectively called toys and a person who is engaged in this trade is called toymaker. These toys were easily and cheaply manufactured locally in Birmingham and sold in Europe with profits. Hence, there was expansion of trade overseas.

The partnership of Boulton & Watts successfully installed hundreds of steam engines in Britain and overseas. These steam engines were used in both mines and factories.

Boulton founded the Soho Mint during the period when British coinage was in a poor state. He used the new technology of steam engines of the time in Soho Mint. His cartwheel pieces were very successful and continued to be minted until 1971 when decimalisation took place.

Boulton introduced an insurance system for his staff which acted as a

model for future insurance systems. It paid compensations to his staff in an event of either injury or illness.

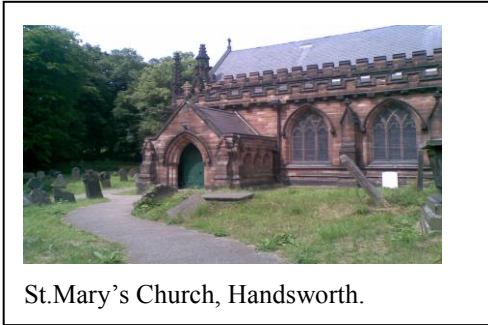
William Murdoch [1754-1839] was a Scottish engineer and inventor. He worked for the Boulton & Watt firm and later, he became their partner.

Boulton did not have any formal education in sciences, but he was a brilliant enthusiast. From an early age, he had a great interest in scientific advances of his times. He carried out many scientific experiments. He got acquainted with many other enthusiasts which led to the formation of Lunar Society.



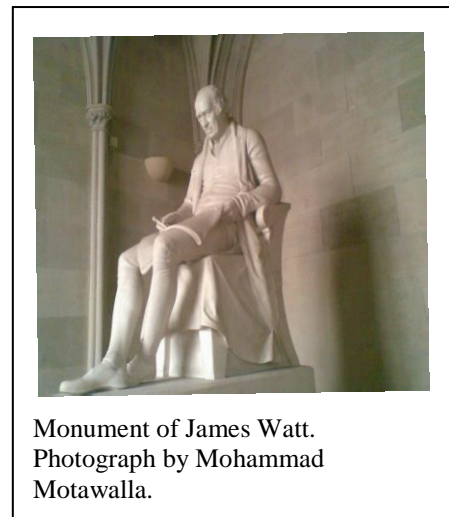
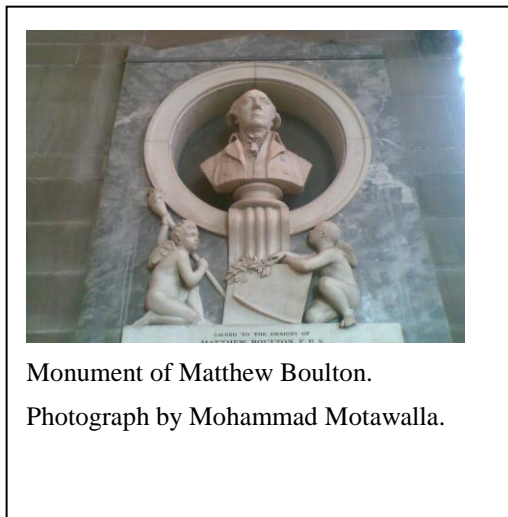
They met regularly at Soho House on a full moon day. The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished late in the evening. Members of this society had been credited for developing theories and techniques in sciences, agriculture, manufacturing, mining and transport which gave birth to a successful Industrial Revolution. In 1785, both

Boulton and Watt were elected as Fellows of the Royal Society.



Our visit to St. Mary's Church, Handsworth on Saturday 5th July 2017 revealed the resting place for many great men and women, but amongst them were graves of

Matthew Boulton, James Watt and William Murdoch. This church is often referred to as Handsworth Old Church and The Cathedral of the Industrial Revolution. This church was built in the 12th century as a Norman structure. Over the centuries, it had expanded and improved. It is a very picturesque church which is not too far away from Soho House where the fathers of the Industrial Revolution are resting. Our events in Handsworth had opened up a wealth of knowledge of amazing history.



Ideas For Fund Raising

We need funds for our Charity. Hence, we are looking for new ideas and methods to increase funds. Members had suggested that we hold Coffee & Cake Days which may bring in some funds. Other suggestions were to hold Car Boot Sales, Sponsored Walks, selling unwanted items on eBay and collecting loose change in Smartie Boxes. These few suggestions had brought in some funds to our Charity in the past. If you have any ideas which may be good for our Region to collect some funds, then I shall be glad to hear from you by emails. Otherwise, if you have any donations to make, please send them directly to the AOUG Office.

AOUG AGM 2018

Our next AGM will be held at the Norton Grange Hotel and Spa, Castleton, Rochdale from 18th to 20th May, 2018. This AGM will be our 30th Anniversary. Therefore, it is going to be a special AGM. Excursions to Robinsons Brewery, the Hat Works and a walk around Media City/The Lowry will be planned for this AGM. The AGM and Social Weekend are open to all AOUG members, their family and friends as well as any interested OU Graduates, OU students and OU staff. Booking Forms are in the Winter edition of OMEGA magazine. Also, you can download this form from our AOUG website www.aoug.org.uk .

AOUG EVENT
NEW YEAR'S DINNER [2018]

AT
THE BLUEBRICK RESTAURANT,
191 BROAD GAUGE WAY, WOLVERHAMPTON, WV1 0BA
[www.tabletable.co.uk]

ON SATURDAY 27TH JANUARY 2018 FROM 12.00 NOON TO 2.00 PM

It is situated next to Rail & National Coach Stations and very close to the Metro Station in the City Centre of Wolverhampton. It is a new Restaurant. Choose your own meal. All charges according to Menu price. Facility for car parking available.

Please contact Mohammad Motawalla as soon as possible for reservations.

MOHAMMAD MOTAWALLA,
EXECUTIVE REPRESENTATIVE OF AOUG FOR WEST MIDLANDS,

[T] 01902 771328 [M] 07825645997

EMAIL: mamotawalla@yahoo.co.uk

Saturday 17th February. 12noon

Meet at the Cafe Reception Area of Halfpenny Green Airport, Crab Lane, Bobbington, Stourbridge, DY7 5DY. It is a flourishing airport with a superb location for businesses and aircraft flying schools. We will have lunch at this café and observe aircrafts from the Watch Tower. Please advise the Executive Representative if you intend to attend.

Saturday 10th March. 2pm

Meet at the main Reception of Walsall New Art Gallery, Gallery Square, Walsall, WS2 8LG. This Art Gallery was opened in 2000 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. It is a five storey building in the town centre of Walsall. Please advise the Executive Representative if you intend to attend.

Saturday 7th April. 11am

Meet at the main entrance to the Leather Museum, Littleton Street, Walsall, WS2 8EW (on the A4148 ring road). There is free admission and it is wheelchair friendly. It is situated near the bus and railway stations and easily accessible from the M6. The museum celebrates the local leather industry and the work of craftsmen as well as exhibiting historic artefacts. For further details and reservations, please contact the Stoke –on-Trent Local Contact before the 26th March.

Executive Representative and Wolverhampton Coffee Mornings – Mohammad Motawalla 01902 771328 Mobile: 07825 645997 mamotawalla@yahoo.co.uk

Local Contact

Birmingham Patricia Etheridge - 0121 424 441

Stoke-on-Trent Keith Ward - 01782 316429 Mobile 07981 744451 kjward@talktalk.net