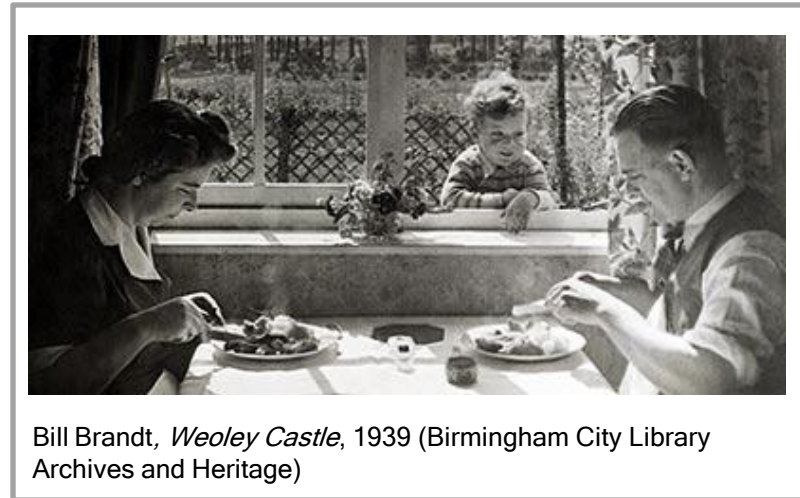


# Partnership & Collaborative Working

## Introduction

- Dr Richard Clay, lecturer in the History of Art, University of Birmingham
- *Suburban Birmingham: spaces and places, 1880-1960*
- £380,000 project funded by the AHRC's 'Museums and Galleries Research Grant' programme
- Partners:
  - University of Birmingham (UB)
  - Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (BMAG)
  - Birmingham Central Library Archives and Heritage Service (Archives)
  - University of Birmingham Special Collections (Special Collections).
- How and why the partnership was formed
- The challenges faced in partnership work
- The benefits of collaborative, inter-institutional research.



## *Suburban Birmingham: scope and outputs*

- Using partner institutions' collections to research and recount the histories of Birmingham's suburbs.
- Mutually reinforcing strengths of partners' collections and expertise
- Outputs include:
  - Scholarly articles
  - A major new website aimed at academic and non-academic audiences
  - New displays in each of the partner's display spaces
  - A 'day school' hosted by UB
- A key challenge: producing high calibre outputs that benefit academic and non-academic communities
- Meeting the challenge through an innovative model of partnership work



Anonymous, *Selly Oak Cinema*. 1932 (Birmingham City Library Archives and Heritage)



## *Suburban Birmingham: the Fellowship model*

- Two teams of research Fellows: one team working mainly in Year 1, second team working mainly in Year 2.
- Each team of Fellows includes: one member from BMAG, one from Archives, and one from Special Collections
- All Fellows work closely with academic Investigators and conduct research in all three of the partner's collections.
- Fellows bought-out for one week a month, for the course of a year,
- Research opportunities that the work schedules of curators', archivists', and librarians' can rarely accommodate.
- The partners expected that the research team would collectively have the skills, knowledge, and understanding to produce high quality, scholarly and, yet, widely accessible outputs.
- The partners expected that the project would lead to:
  - professional development
  - embedding of deeper understanding of one another's collections and professional practices
  - development of sustainable collaborative research culture in the city.

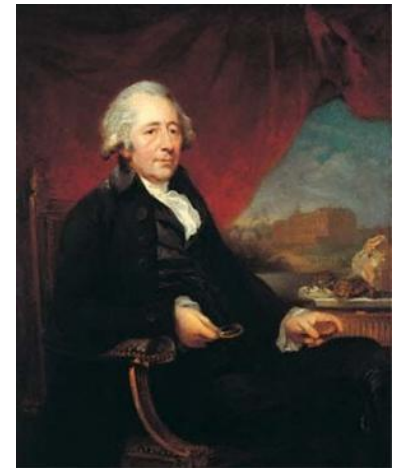


## *Suburban Birmingham: building partnerships*

- Relationships of trust based on growing understanding of colleagues' professional spheres.
- AHRC-funded collaborative PhD applications as a learning experience in partnership work
- Improving understanding of differing strategic needs
- Collaborative PhD students as evidence of partnership's benefits
- Agreeing research needs and strengths, in terms of collections and expertise
- Building trust, establishing understanding of institutional agendas and parameters
- Using workshops to extend and reinforce partnerships
- Starting 'small', establishing shared ground, developing a common vision
- The AHRC's 'Museums and Galleries Research Grant' programme as a driver for thinking 'big'



Ford Maddox Brown, *The Last of England*, oil on wood panel, 1855 (BMAG)

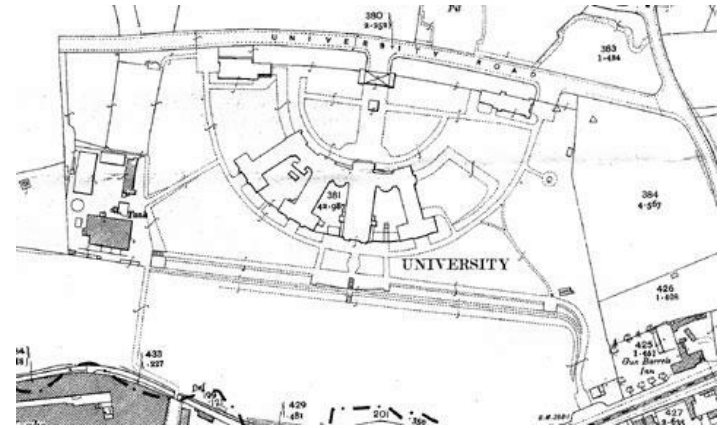


Carl Van Breda, *Matthew Boulton*, oil on canvas, 1792 (BMAG)



## The benefits of partnership work

- Preparing a major collaborative grant application
  - Identifying areas of mutual benefit
  - The challenge of agreeing a work model
- The advantages of having 'started smaller'
  - Seeing a problem from a partner's point of view
- The benefits of partnership work
  - High quality research
  - The development of 'bonus' outputs
  - Surprising benefits for partners' core activities
  - Adding value to partners' workplaces
- The importance of impact analysis
- Refining long-term collaborative research strategies
- A culture of bridge building



*Ordnance Survey Map of the University of Birmingham, 1902*



Frank Taylor Lockwood, *Bournville (A Sketch Made During Fire Watching Duty)*, graphite on paper 1941 (BMAG)

