



# The website of the Black Country Society



Established in 1967 to Support, Record, Preserve and Celebrate the distinct  
Character and Nature of the West Midlands area known since the mid nineteenth century as 'The Black Country'



## A landscape of the end of the world: the industrial revolution and the Black Country c. 1706-1914

Saturday 1 July 2023 10.00am to 4.40pm

Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Rd, Dudley DY1 4SQ  
0121 557 9643 [info@bclm.com](mailto:info@bclm.com)

[Programme](#)

### Abstracts and biographies

**Dr Matthew Stallard, 'The Invention of the Black Country: The "Shock Landscape" of Extractive Fossil Capitalism'**

Abstract: First recorded in the 1840s, the idea of 'the Black Country' was one of the most important inventions of the Industrial Revolution. For bourgeois Victorians the idea became a hook for all of their deepest preoccupations about the impact of industrialisation, particularly environmental devastation, while their efforts to understand the spread of extractive fossil capitalism were articulated as the seeding and growth of new 'Black Countries' across the world. In the

era of Climate Emergency, understanding these origins potentially points the way to a reinvention of the idea of 'the Black Country' and its meaning for our collective identity.

**Biography:** Matthew is a writer and historian of industrialisation, colonisation, and enslavement based at University College London. His research focuses on global and local connections and experiences of industrialisation, colonisation, and enslavement and their legacies in post-industrial and postcolonial identities and heritage. Current and recent projects include: 'Global Threads', a collaboration with the Science and Industry Museum exploring lived experiences linked to Manchester's local and global textiles histories; 'Valuable Lives' a collaboration with The National Archives and Ancestry.com to digitise registers of all persons enslaved in the British Empire from 1817-1832; and as contributor on the development of industrial Manchester and links to the slave trade and the U.S. South for The Guardian's 'Cotton Capital' series.

### **Dr Simon Briercliffe, Migration and the Black Country: the arrival of the Irish in the Nineteenth Century**

**Abstract:** The Industrial Revolution drew many thousands of people to the Black Country, both from its surrounding rural hinterland and from farther afield, changing it into a sprawling and densely populated region. The Irish community in the Black Country contributed substantially to this change, especially following the famine of the late 1840s, and form a case study of how newcomers were received in a region with a reputation for insularity. This paper discusses their arrival and reception in the Black Country, the hostility and prejudice they faced, and their contribution to the ever-changing social make-up of the region.

**Biography:** Dr Simon Briercliffe completed his PhD on the Irish in nineteenth-century Wolverhampton at the University of Birmingham in 2022 and is now an Honorary Research Fellow at the University. He is also a researcher at the Black Country Living Museum, covering the whole of Black Country history with a recent focus on the post-World War Two era. His first book, *Forging Ahead: Austerity to Prosperity in the Black Country 1945-1968* was published in 2021, and his second, *Bangla Brummies*, in 2023, part of a community history of the Bangladeshi community in Birmingham.

### **Elizabeth Thomson, Brickmaking and the development of canals in the Black Country**

**Abstract:** The ninety or so miles of canals which run through the Black Country are the richest source of material evidence of the industrial development in the region. The canal network also contains the most significant collection of buildings and structures built with brick between the 1760s through to the 1860s. From pioneering narrow locks to heroic iron bridges this paper will explore the canals to show how brickmaking developed and adapted to the demands placed on the industry during the industrial expansion of the area.

**Biography:** Elizabeth Thomson has worked for British Waterways and the Canal and River Trust for over two decades on the conservation of its historic estate. She has been involved in several restoration projects including Stourport Basins and more recently the Grade II\* listed Roundhouse in Birmingham. In 2018 she started a part-time PhD on the brick making industry of the Black Country at the University of Birmingham. The collaborative studentship is funded by the Black Country Living Museum as part of the Forging Ahead development which Elizabeth has worked on as part of the PhD.

### **Professor Chris Baker, 'Topography and the Industrial Black Country: the 1822 and 1840 Fowler maps of Kingswinford'**

**Abstract:** This talk will discuss the Fowler maps of Kingswinford Parish that were produced for the landowners in 1822 and 1840. Together with their books of reference they give a great deal of information about the nature of the parish and those who lived there in that period, when extractive and manufacturing industries spread from the already industrial south to the rural north. A comparison of the two maps shows the transition between a largely rural area to one that was predominantly industrial, driven largely by the major landowners (and particularly the Dudley Estate) but with many others following in their wake, which ultimately create a scarred and broken landscape that is yet to be completely healed.

**Biography:** Chris Baker was born and brought up in Brierley Hill and studied Engineering at Cambridge University as an undergraduate and postgraduate. After graduation he worked at British Rail Research in Derby and the Universities of Nottingham and Birmingham, teaching water, wind and environmental engineering to several generations of Civil Engineering students, up to his retirement in 2017. His research specialities are in the fields of train aerodynamics and wind engineering. He has also worked on various aspects of Black Country history, and currently serves as the Black Country Society web master and social media co-ordinator.

### **David J Eveleigh, 'Change and Resilience: The Black Country Hardware Trades 1851-1914'**

**Abstract:** The extensive range of hardware trades in the Black Country producing household goods and finished articles for the building trade has been overshadowed by the region's heavier industries and its staple industries such as nail and chain making, the manufacture of locks and edge tools. In this lecture David Eveleigh surveys, the range of trades in the Black Country – some of them little known today – and examines how some firms fell victim to changes in technology and fashion whilst others successfully adapted to new markets.

**Biography:** David J. Eveleigh has worked in museums and heritage for over forty years and was previously Director of Collections Learning & Research at the Black Country Museum where he was responsible for achieving Designated status for the Museum's collections and fitting out the Museum's first 1930s shops and interiors on the Old Birmingham Road.

He has published and lectured widely on aspects of Britain's social and industrial history and was a co-editor of A History of the Black Country in 100 Objects. He is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and the Museums Association and an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Birmingham.

### **Rebecca Wilton, 'The Life and Legacy of Eliza Tinsley (1813-1882): Black Country Nail Mistress'**

**Abstract:** Eliza Tinsley was a highly successful Black Country businesswoman in the mid-1800s and the subject of Rebecca's MA dissertation. Eliza has become a figure of Black Country folklore but a new critical exploration of her life and business provided wider insights into the social, cultural and economic life in a particular space in time and place. This talk provides an overview of Rebecca's research and includes some new insights into Eliza as an agent of change and her impact on the landscape of the Black Country.

**Biography:** Rebecca Wilton completed the MA in West Midlands History in 2018 whilst curating and interpreting the canal arm and narrow boat collection at the Black Country Living Museum between 2008 and 2021. Most recently Rebecca became the only female contributor to the Wolves Museum's new guidebook with a piece 'The History of the Football Shirt'. She helped set up a Wolves Women's history group and supported the development of inclusive stadium tours. Rebecca hopes to return to academic research in 2023 and pursue her interests in the history of women in business and as workers during the industrial revolution in the Black Country.

### **Dr Malcolm Dick, 'Pollution, Landscape and Industry: Black Country Observations and Perceptions in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries'**

**Abstract:** Industrialisation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was largely synonymous with progress. Its damaging effects only became widely understood in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Pollution, however, in the sense that we understand it was first used by the Lichfield poet, Anna Seward, in the late eighteenth century who wrote about atmospheric pollution across the West Midlands including the Black Country. Other writers, visual artists and observers offered different commentaries on the relationship between the air we breathe, landscape and industrial development before the origins of our contemporary concern about climate change which we can date to over 200 years ago.

**Biography:** Malcolm is Associate Professor in Regional and Local History and Director of the Centre for West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham. He has been a Trustee of the Black Country Living Museum, Editor-in-Chief of History West Midlands Ltd and serves as Chairman of the Black Country Society and until recently, Editor of the journal Midland History. Malcolm has published work on the history of refugees, the Lunar Society, Birmingham and the Black Country. In 2019 he was awarded an OBE for services to history in the West Midlands.

## Jack Price, "A domain divided between pitchy blackness and fire": Francis Brett Young and the Black Country's Industrialisation'

**Abstract:** Born in 1884 in Halesowen, that debatable zone between the "black" and the "green", Francis Brett Young was from the outset perfectly positioned to experience the impact of the Black Country's Industrial Revolution. In his novels, he looks back at this period of immense activity and natural despoiling, depicting the Revolution as nothing short of a disgraceful attack upon nature and man. Using his own recasting of the Black Country's industrial rise to prominence, this talk will discuss just what Brett Young saw in the Industrial Revolution, and how it shaped his love of rural Worcestershire over his industrial fatherland.

**Biography:** Jack Price has, except for the four years spent over the border at the University of Birmingham, lived his whole life in the Black Country, a region of which he is exceptionally proud of and heavily interested in. Having graduated BA English and History and MA Literature and Culture, he now works at the Black Country Living Museum as a Historic Character, working primarily at the Drift Mine. His main interest is the works of doctor-cum-novelist Francis Brett Young, analysing his portrait of the Midlands, particularly the Black Country; his MA dissertation was on his depiction of this industrial region.

### Chair, Dr Malcolm Dick

**Biography:** Malcolm is Associate Professor in Regional and Local History and Director of the Centre for West Midlands History at the University of Birmingham. He has been a Trustee of the Black Country Living Museum, Editor-in-Chief of History West Midlands Ltd and serves as Chairman of the Black Country Society and Editor of the journal Midland History. Malcolm has published work on the history of refugees, the Lunar Society, Birmingham and the Black Country. In 2019 he was awarded an OBE for 'outstanding services to history in the West Midlands'.

