

Is the Jewellery Quarter

Is the Jewellery Quarter unique?

Is the Jewellery Quarter unique? To answer this question I must define the word unique. Unique means “unparalleled, one of a kind” definition taken from the Oxford dictionary. There is no other place in Britain that is like the Jewellery Quarter. The Jewellery Quarter has countless jewellery shops, about 4 or 5 in each building.

In this assignment I am going to look at the following aspects of the jewellery Quarter:

- Does the size make it unique?
- Does the architecture?
- Do the working practices of the Jewellery Quarter?
- Does the community make it unique?
- Whether or not it is still unique today?

The Jewellery Quarter is ½ square mile in size. I know this because if you refer to source 1, A-Z Map of Birmingham it tells you. The Jewellery Quarter is unique in terms of making jewellery. There is nothing else like the Jewellery Quarter anywhere else in Britain.

The jewellery quarter is unique because it concentrated on one aspect which is the making of jewellery. Other places that worked in the same way are:

- Ship building in Belfast
- Cutlery production in Sheffield
- Coal mining in south Wales
- Lanrover production at longbridge in Birmingham

During the 18th and 19th century the architecture used in the jewellery quarter was back to back houses this was because of the lack of space and also because land was expensive and premium. However this does not make the jewellery quarter unique because other cities also have back to back houses. Refer to site 4 in the site survey.

“Domestic” architecture and the use of bay windows to provide extra light, this is because jewellers are not very good working with artificial light. Bay windows were also used to make houses bigger and decorative purposes.

The bay windows in the Jewellery Quarter are added for the jewellers, because they are working with delicate pieces of fine jewellery. (See site 4 in the site survey)

There is also a flatted factory in the Jewellery Quarter with lots of different rooms/workshops in side it. The flatted factory is found in Regent Street known as the Standard Works. It was built in 1879. Its appearance is misleading because from the outside it looks like one big factory but in fact its lots of different workshops in one big block. However the flatted factory does not make the Jewellery Quarter unique because they can be found anywhere where the land is expensive or scarce. (See site 11, in the site survey)

The Victoria Works is a factory built around a courtyard. This makes the Jewellery Quarter unique because it is densely built upon, and all available land was used up.

So therefore it is strange as well as unique that they left a lot of space for a courtyard. But it is not unique in Britain, because you can find other industrial

factories, where there are courtyards. A courtyard is used to having goods sent out and raw materials coming in. (refer to site 6)

Decoration such as coloured bricks and terracotta tiles can be found in the Jewellery Quarter. The buildings have:

- Sash windows
- Key stones
- Fixed glazed windows
- Plaster mouldings
- Doric columns
- Arched doorways

But these decorations do not make the Jewellery Quarter unique, because you can find them in other areas, used as decorations such as Small Heath. (See site 4 and 5 in the site survey)

I think that the architecture in the Jewellery Quarter does not make it unique, this is because the Jewellery Quarter is not the only place that has these architectures, if you go to any Victorian area in the cities of Britain you will find that they will also have these features.

In the Jewellery Quarter manufacturing was done by one thing being passed around to different people until it was complete and then it was sold. Most workshops were involved in this process. This is known as domestic production. When a process was complete the goods were passed in to the next workshop. This meant that the Jewellery Quarter had a great deal of social and economical interaction.

However this does not make the Jewellery Quarter unique because it is similar to Clerkenwell in "London- A Biography" by Peter Atroyd. Also all the factories in Manchester and factories up north all do a number of jobs in one factory until the item is complete.

Clerkenwell has many similarities to the Jewellery Quarter e.g. watch making and other small items are made in the same process as the Jewellery Quarter - by one item being passed on from one place to the next. In the biography it states: "The nature of its manufacture with different artisans in different districts, making one small part of the assembly's." the vast majority is domestic production.

Unlike other shops in the Jewellery Quarter which pass one item from one place to another Smith and Peppers carry out all of their processing under one roof. Smith and Peppers was a factory in the 1800's, but then a Factory Act was passed. This was to "improve the safety for the workers." However there was one problem for Smith and Peppers. It was examined, because they did not employ enough workers. During the examination it was found that they did not pass the Safety Act, because they did not have:

- Safety cages around machines- this could have lead to injuries to the workers.
- So therefore they were resent from it. Today Smith and Peppers is a living museum.

The Jewellery Quarter was a community. It had many shops, schools, temples etc. all these things make the Jewellery Quarter a community. There is a Sikh Temple on called Ramgarhia Temple on Graham ST, which had previously been used as a church but was sold to the Sikhs. (See site 5 in the site survey)

In 1918 there was also a school on Graham ST. it was known as ST. Paul's School. (See site 7 in the site survey.)

If you refer to site 8 on the site survey you can see that on Albion ST, there was a public house called: "George and Dragon" the pub also gives me evidence to say that the Jewellery Quarter was a community, and not just a place of work it was a place where people were able to socialise, relax and entertain themselves.

The fact that the Jewellery Quarter was a community did not make it unique, because there are other places that were and are communities. A community is where people live, work, raise families, go to school etc. a community is anywhere where people live, e.g. Small Heath is a community and always has been. However the Jewellery Quarter is unique because it is the only place in Britain where the vast majority of people are dedicated to the production of jewellery.

The Jewellery Quarter is unique for many reasons, like I have mentioned above, although the Jewellery Quarter is not unique because of the majority of people who are dedicated to one particular product-making one small part of the assembly and then passing it to the next person, who does the next part of assembling, and passes on to another person, and then onto another, and another until the item is complete and ready to be sold in a shop.

There is also Clerkenwell in London where the people are also dedicated to one particular product, like the people in the Jewellery Quarter. If you refer to "London A-biography" by Peter Atroyd, it says "the nature of its manufacture with different artisans in different districts making one small part of the assembly" it also states: "By the end of the 18th century, some seven thousand artisans, almost half the parish-were dependant upon watch making."

The Municipal school of Jewellery and Silver Smiths, (see site 12, in the site survey) which was built in 1895. There are only two Jewellery Schools in the whole of Britain, although this does not make it unique, it makes it uncommon. However the point that makes it unique is that one of the schools is built in the Jewellery Quarter- which is dedicated to jewellery production. This is an advantage to people who work in the Jewellery Quarter because they can work, yet increase their knowledge about jewellery by going to the school and learn new techniques and skills. There are very few industries that trade and educate in the same area.

Back to back houses/poor people (see site 4)
Master Craftsman's house/rich people (see site 10)

The social mix of workers in the Jewellery Quarter was unique, because there is no other place like it, where people rich and poor lived side by side, because generally the rich moved out either to Handsworth or Hockley.

It was very uncommon to find rich people living alongside poor people. (if you refer to site 4 and 10 you will see that rich live in master craftsman houses, while the poor live in back to back houses.)

When the rich had enough money they moved out either to Handsworth or to Hockley.

In terms of production of novelties on a huge scale there were similarities between the Jewellery Quarter and Clerkenwell.

The Jewellery Quarter was highly densely populated, both the rich and the poor lived together. Clerkenwell is not as big as the Jewellery Quarter, but uses the same methods of production. It also had a lot of private houses - it says in "London A

biography” by Peter Atroyd “In almost every street there were private houses which had as door-plates the sign of escapement-maker, engine turner, springer, fisher, and so on.”