

May 2017

Our visit to the most amazing unique museum, Newman Brothers, The Coffin Works, in the heart of Birmingham City Centre.

Newman Brothers were established in 1882 by Alfred Newman and his brother Edwin. Originally brass founders, they predominantly made cabinet furniture until 1894, when the company moved to the present site on Fleet Street and began to specialise in the production of coffin furniture.

The factory is a rare preserved example of Victorian engineering. We experienced a time capsule, with it's working machines and unusual products - coffin handles and ornaments, linings and shrouds. All left on shelves and benches when the workers down their tools and left for the last time. We could have been one of the workers having "clocked in" with our cards, we experienced the sights, sounds and smells of the factory life. From our volunteer guide, Nicholas, we heard personal stories about the workers. One of the few manufacturing industries where the jobs were for life, it was not unusually for both men and women workers to be there for over 50years!

Newman Brothers produced some of the world's finest coffin furniture, including the fittings for the funerals of Joseph Chamberlain, Winston Churchill, the Queen Mother, Lady Diana. Fittings for the Queens coffin have been put aside for when the time comes. The owners tried to keep up to date with modern requests, shrouds were designed for all religious groups, in colours to suit every skintone.

Newman Brothers continued to specialise in this area until, due to competition from abroad and failure to change from metal coffin furniture to cheaper plastic components, they were forced out of business and ceased trading in 1998.



NEWMAN BROTHERS

PRODUCTS THROUGH THE AGES

FROM 1894



No. 8018



No. 8102



No. 866



No. 8664



No. 8202

FROM 1920



No. 1483



No. 1483



No. 1100



No. 1237



No. 1217

FROM 1960



No. 1095



CAST 58



No. 102



No. 1162



No. 1217

COFFIN WORKS, FLEET ST. BIRMINGHAM



Please do NOT touch the items on this table.

All of the items on display are original and fragile. Handling will cause irreversible wear.

Thank you for helping us out. Also collecting