

THE BRASS INDUSTRY IN BIRMINGHAM

The brass trade occupied about 8100 people in Birmingham in 1861. It had grown from about 1800 thirty years before, and its rise coincided with specialisation in different groups of trades.

The raw material was the brass ingot which was made into sheets, strips, tubes and wire. Brass wire was supplied to the pin trade, and also used in fireguards, chains, cables and bracelets. Sheets went to the brass-foundry trade, and tubes were used for balustrades and bedsteads, steam locomotive boilers and marine engines. In addition finished brass goods consisted of cabinet knobs, castors, handles and hooks, and there were also brass candlesticks and railway carriage lamp holders and fittings. Sanitation improved in the period around 1860 and there was great demand for water taps and pipes, i.e. plumbers' equipment. This plethora of designs was susceptible to fashion, especially in the more decorative end of the market. Not to be forgotten was bell-foundry work.

Robert Joseph Satchwell (1852-1926) was a brass finisher, to be found on the Harborne² chart, and several Satchwells on other charts were occupied as brass dressers or other similar occupations.

Ref: "The Industrial Development of Birmingham and the Black Country 1860-1927" by G.C. Allen, Cass 1929.