**The Lunar Men**

“Led by Erasmus Darwin, the Lunar Society of Birmingham were a group of 18th century amateur experimenters who met on the Monday night nearest to the full moon. Together they nudged their whole society and culture over the threshold of the modern, tilting it irrevocably away from old patterns of life towards the world we know today. Amid fields and hills they built factories, planned canals, made steam engines thunder, discovered new gases, minerals and medicines and proposed unsettling new ideas.

Darwin, Boulton and Wedgwood were all born in the Heart of England, all descended from ‘yeomen’, small landowners and farmers. They came from different sides of the Midlands and apart from their works as a group each had their own particular project. With Wedgwood it was the Portland Vase, with Darwin it was ‘The Botanic Garden’ and with Boulton it was the Soho Mint. Joined by Watt and Priestly, this quintet formed the core of the Lunar Society but with many others weaving in and around their group.”

*(from a talk given to W.B.L.H.S. by Andrew Lound January 2005)*

“It has been said that the Lunar Society kick-started the industrial revolution. No individual or group can be said to change a society in such a way, and time and again one can see that if they hadn’t invented or discovered something, someone else would have done it. Yet this small group of friends really was at the leading edge of almost every movement of its time in science, in industry and in the arts, even in agriculture. They formed a constellation of extraordinary individuals, a tangle of friendships and dependencies, arguments and loyalties.

The legacy of the Lunar men is with us still, in the making of the modern world and in the inspiring confidence with which all these friends, in their different ways, reached so eagerly for the moon.”

*(from The Lunar Men by Jenny Uglow)*

**Principal Lunar Men in order of Age:**

John Whitehurst 1713-1788

Matthew Boulton 1728-1809

Josiah Wedgwood 1730-1795

Erasmus Darwin 1731-1802

Joseph Priestley 1733-1804

William Small 1734-1775

James Keir 1735-1820

James Watt 1736-1819

William Withering 1741-1799

Richard Lovell Edgeworth 1744-1817

Thomas Day 1748-1789

Samuel Galton 1753-1832