

Sedgley Friendship Group in association with
Sedgley Archive Project Reminiscence Cafes and
All Saints' Friday Coffee Mornings

Abraham Darby I

Pioneer of the industrial age

(14 April 1678 – 8 March 1717)



A slide show and talk
All Saints' Church, Sedgley
11am, Friday 6th March 2020

With many thanks and credit to
Carl Higgs for source material and
original research;

Abraham Darby I memorial design
by Steve Field.

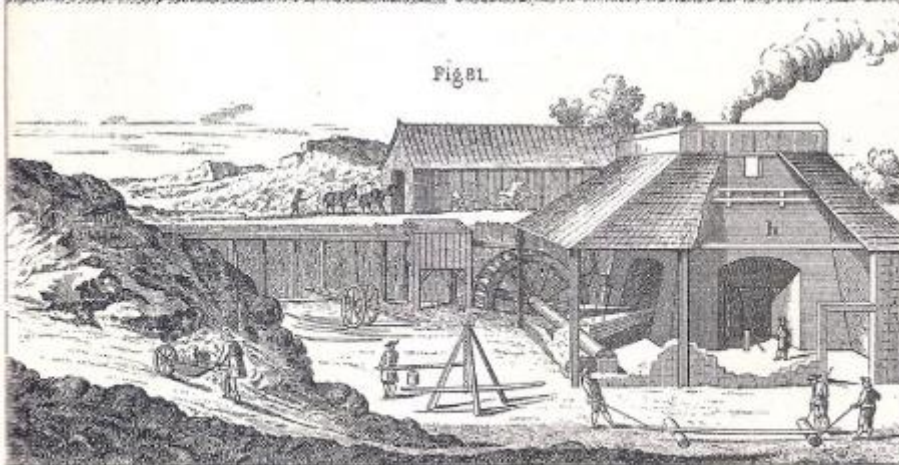
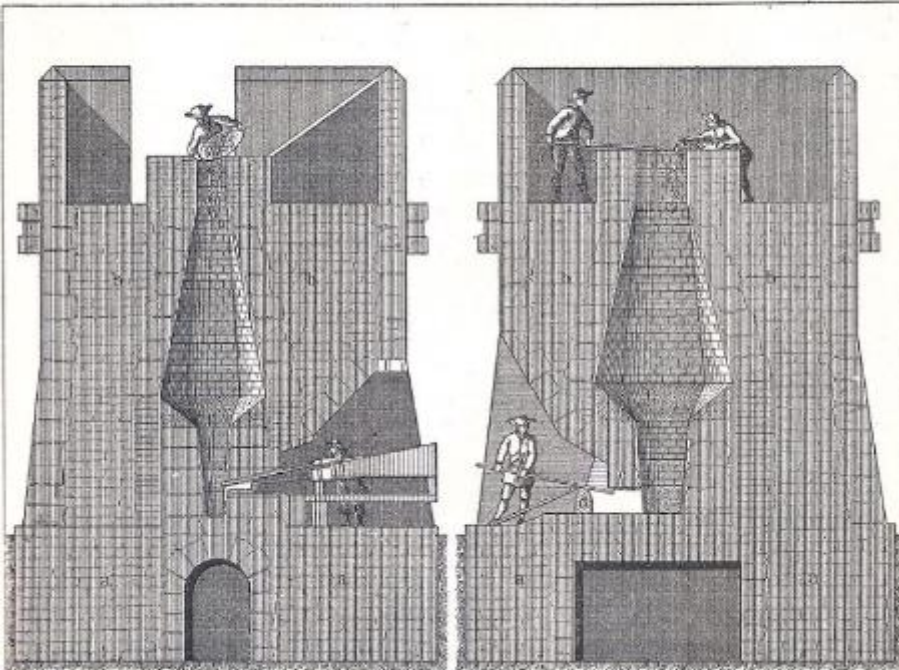
Why is Darby such an important figure?

Darby developed a method of producing pig iron in a blast furnace fuelled by coke rather than charcoal.

This was a major step forward in the production of iron as a raw material for the Industrial Revolution.

Fig. 79.

Fig. 80.

Disposition d'un haut-fourneau au commencement du xviii^e siècle.

What is a blast furnace?

In a blast furnace, fuel (coke), ores, and flux (limestone) are continuously supplied through the top of the furnace, while a hot blast of air (sometimes with oxygen enrichment) is blown into the lower section of the furnace through a series of pipes called tuyeres, so that the chemical reactions take place throughout the furnace as the material falls downward. The end products are usually molten metal and slag phases tapped from the bottom, and waste gases (flue gas) exiting from the top of the furnace. The downward flow of the ore along with the flux in contact with an upflow of hot, carbon monoxide-rich combustion gases is a countercurrent exchange and chemical reaction process.^[2]

What is pig iron?

Pig iron is an intermediate product of the iron industry, also known as **crude iron**, which is obtained by smelting iron ore in a blast furnace. Pig iron has a very high carbon content, typically 3.8–4.7%,^[1] along with silica and other constituents of dross, which makes it very brittle and not useful directly as a material except for limited applications.^[2]

The traditional shape of the molds used for pig iron ingots was a branching structure formed in sand, with many individual ingots at right angles^[3] to a **central channel or "runner"**, resembling a **litter of piglets being suckled by a sow**. When the metal had cooled and hardened, the smaller ingots (**the "pigs"**) were simply broken from the **runner** (the "sow"), hence the name "pig iron".^[4]

As pig iron is intended for remelting, the uneven size of the ingots and the inclusion of small amounts of sand caused only insignificant problems considering the ease of casting and handling them.

Why was Darby so important?

Abraham Darby made an important step towards the Industrial Revolution. His method of casting pots in sand provided his successors with a viable business that operated for over two centuries.

Smelting iron with coke ultimately released the iron industry from the limitation imposed by the preliminary step of "charcoal burning" where trees were first cut and burned to make charcoal. It also shifted the fuel used for making steel from renewable wood, to a fossil fuel, which began the modern anthropogenic process of global warming.

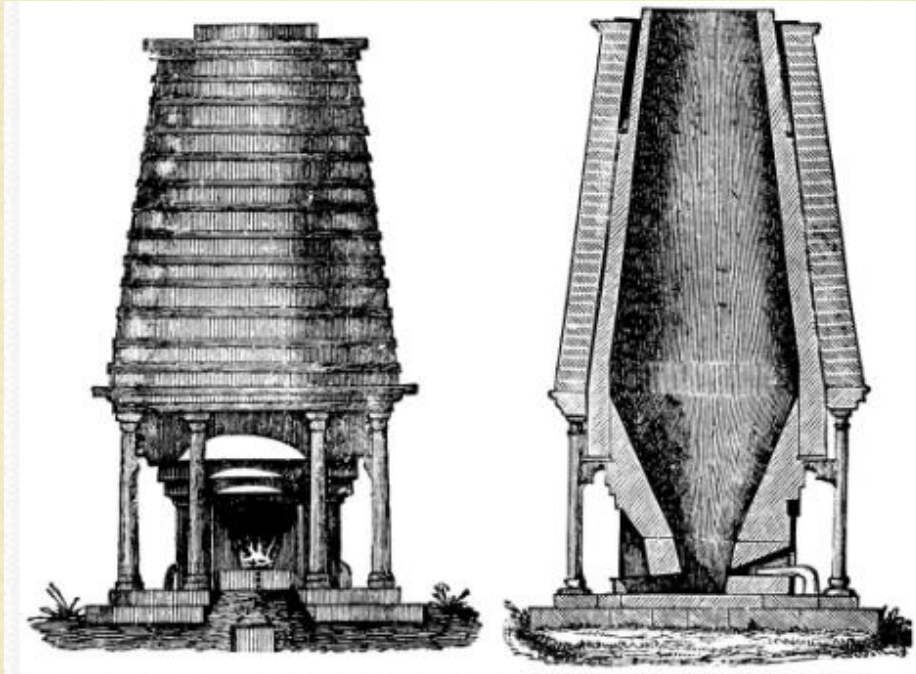
Coke-smelted cast iron went into steam engines, bridges, and many of the inventions of the 19th century. Coke smelting made possible the great quantities of iron produced which drove the Industrial Revolution.

The process

Iron ore was obtained in the general method of **underground mining** and conveying the ore to the surface preparation are where it is **crushed, washed, and transported to the smelter**. Here the iron is put into the smelter along with **limestone and coke** and subjected to **hot air blasting and heat** which converts the ore to **molten iron**. This is tapped from the **bottom of the furnace into moulds into a block of useful metal**.

Smelting is the process by which iron is extracted from iron ore. When iron ore is heated in a charcoal fire, the iron ore begins to release some of its oxygen, which combines with carbon monoxide to form carbon dioxide.

1709 Blast furnace



-Abraham Darby discovered a new way to make pig iron with coke as fuel. At first this method of processing iron produced iron that were impure, so it was impossible for forge masters to turn it into tools and goods. Improvements later improved the quality by using more advanced techniques.

A cross section through his 1709 blast furnace, used to successfully develop Darby's new method of casting iron.

Typical product

Coke iron casting



Is this cooking pot, dated to 1714 at the Coalbrookdale Museum, the oldest known coke iron casting in the western world?

© Courtesy Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Darby's patent would only work if the liquid iron he used to pour into his moulds was made with coke. It would not have worked with charcoal, which was previously universally used.

To begin with, coke iron was only of economic use for the manufacture of cooking pots, but the profit from this activity allowed him and his descendants the time to develop the coke blast furnace for all the other applications became suitable for.

Lease of Old Park property

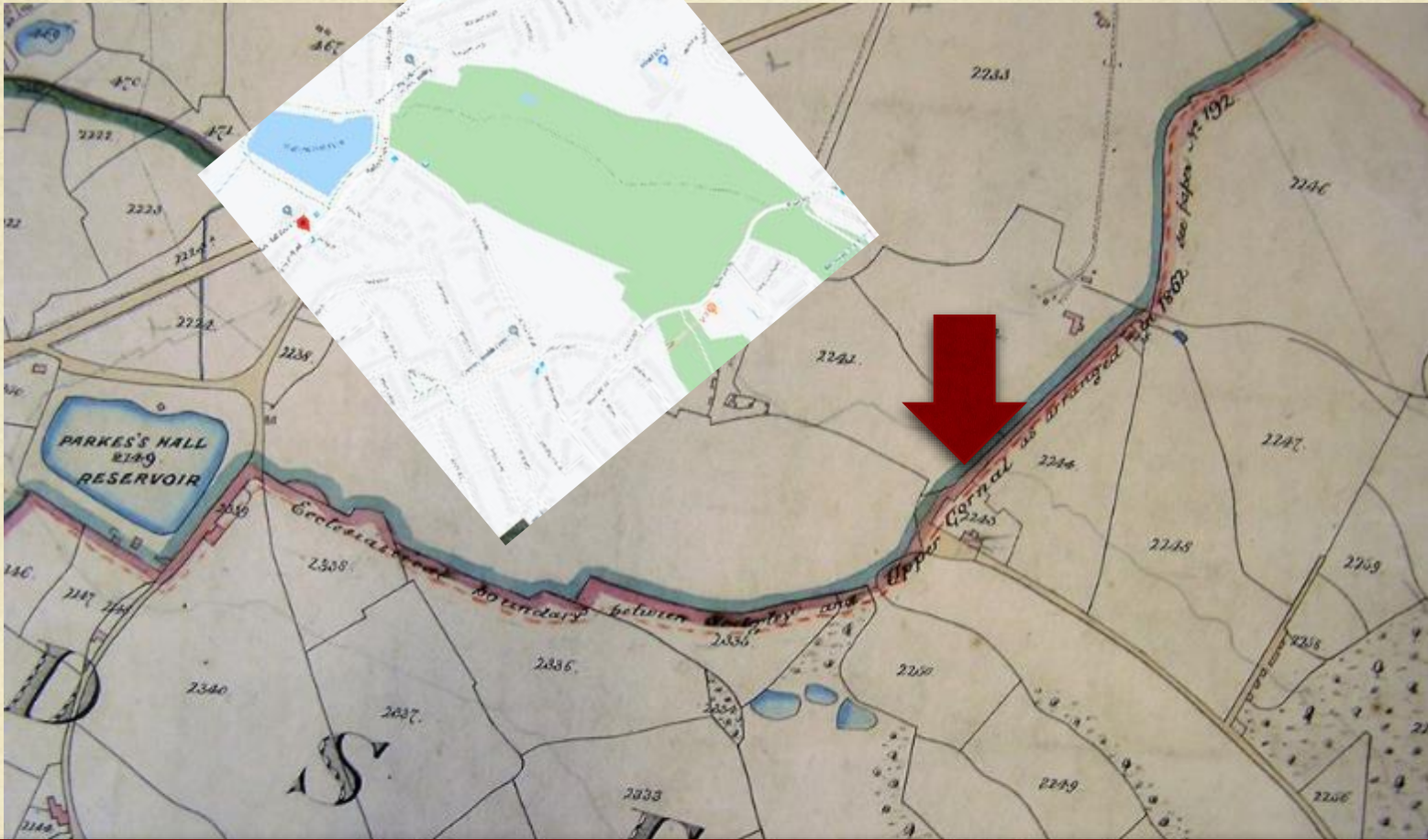
Dudley Archives Copyright



Counterpart lease between John Darbye of Sedgley, locksmith, and Humble Lord Ward, Baron of Birmingham, for part of the Old Park of Dudley and Sedgley, dated 10 Dec. 1649.

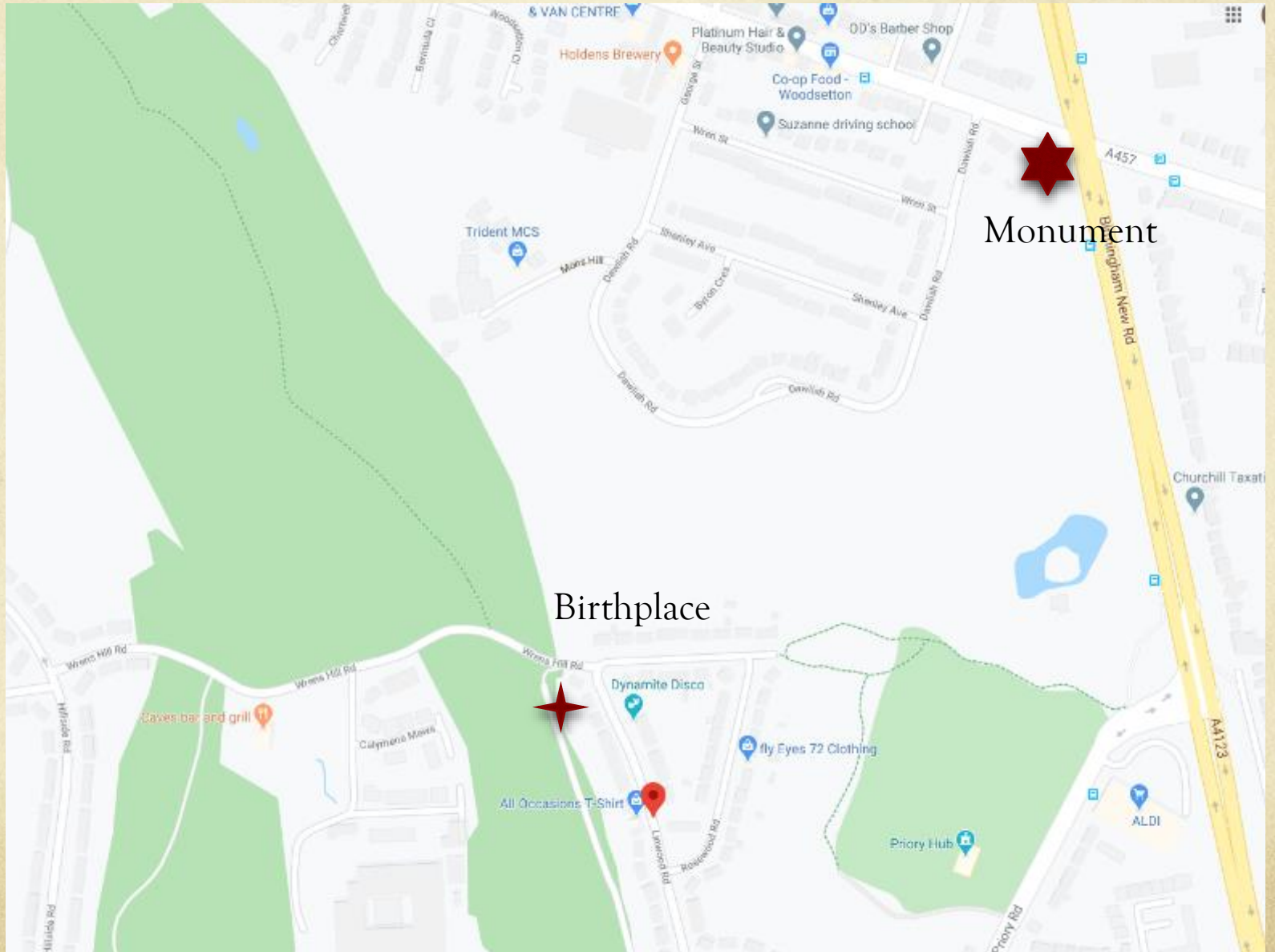
Birthplace location

1678



The location of the 'Old Lodge' in the Old Park of Woodsetton, seen on the Sedgley tithe map of 1844 as plot 2243, just off Wren's Hill Road (this may have been a later house). This was the lodge in which Abraham Darby's grandparents, and probably also his parents lived. It is likely Abraham was born here in 1678.

Birthplace location



Birthplace location



1775 map showing the Old Lodge in the north west corner of plot 21 - in the shadow of Wren's Nest

Birthplace location

Regarding the question of where exactly **Abraham Darby I was born**: an early account of the family by Hannah Rose, the daughter of John Thomas who had worked for Darby in both Bristol and Coalbrookdale, states that Abraham had been born “at **Wren’s Nest House** near Dudley”.

This house was a **very substantial property** at the **southern-most point of Wren’s Nest Hill**, which actually belonged to Lord Dudley’s family and was also lived in by their higher status employees.

It seems very unlikely that John Darby’s family as Quakers fell into this category. There may be the remote possibility that **Abraham’s mother had been taken there purely for her ‘lying in’**, especially if for some reason she needed more specialist nursing and there was someone there who could assist with the birth.

Birthplace location

So, in the absence of other evidence it would be safest to say that Abraham Darby was born probably at the Old Lodge in the Old Park of Dudley and Sedgley, or simply that he was born at Woodsetton, in the shadow of Wren's Nest Hill.

1678

Birth and early life

Abraham's birth is recorded in the registers of the **Society of Friends' Meeting House, Dudley**. His parents were **John Darby (1649-1725)** a farmer and locksmith, and **Ann (nee Baylies or Bayliss)**.

When Abraham was only two years old his mother died (28 Aug. 1680) probably from complications following the birth of his sister Esther.

With a baby and a toddler to look after, John would have no doubt needed help, and it's likely little Abraham and his sister were brought up in the household of his grandparents or by other female members of the family for a time at least.

Six years later Abraham's father John remarried to **Joan Luckcock (or Luccock)** whose family lived in Halesowen, but who probably had connections to Shropshire Luccocks involved in Abraham's later Coalbrookdale business.

✓ Abraham Darby son to John & Ann Darby was
born the 14th of the 2th month 1678

✓ Joseph Wrayton son to John & Lathern Wrayton
was born the 10th day of the 5th month 1678

And departed
& was buried

Mary the
son's wife
day of the 8th month 1678;

James Darby the son of Edward Darby, of
Sodgley was born the 19th day of the 11th month 1678
Edward Darby's wife

Part of a page from Dudley Society of Friends Registers, showing the birth of Abraham Darby to John and Ann on the 14th day of the 2nd month 1678. This used the old style calendar so the 2nd month was then April. Seen below is the birth for Abraham's cousin James, son of Edward and Mary Darby (my ancestors).

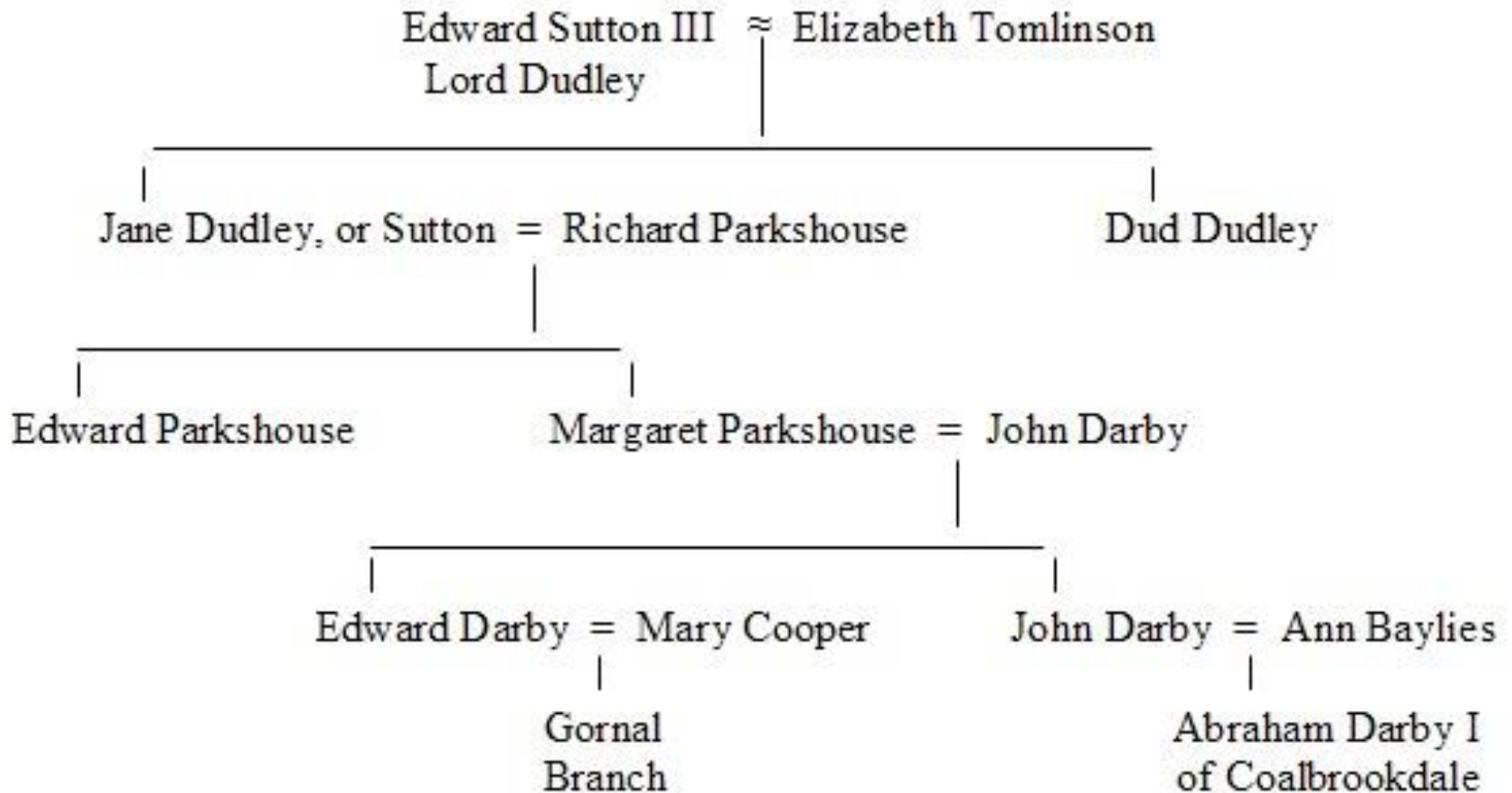
Did Abraham know Dud Dudley?

[Abraham Darby must have known (or at least discovered from his father and grandfather) that he was closely related to Dud Dudley, a colourful if somewhat contentious character who, besides being an iron master, **had fought for the Royalists during the Civil War**, and then masqueraded as a doctor while in hiding and in later life - Darby may even have met him as an infant (Dudley died in Worcester in 1684).

The family connection was through his grandmother, John Darby snr's. wife, Margaret Parkhouse. She was the daughter of Richard Parkhouse and Jane Dudley (alias Sutton) of Hurst Hill and Lower Gornal, and Jane was Dud Dudley's sister.

Simplified genealogy

Simplified Genealogy showing relationship of Abraham Darby to Dud Dudley



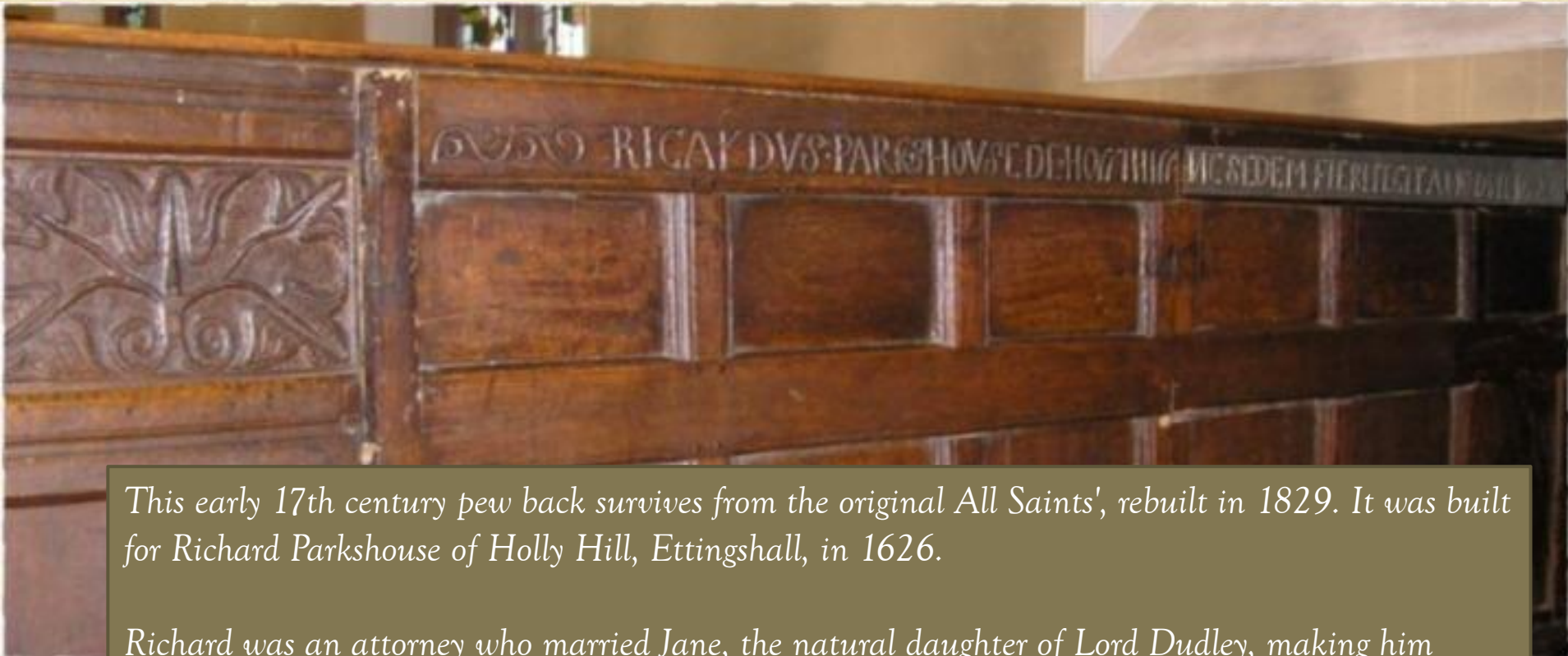
Secrets - Edward Parkhouse

Both Jane and Dud were termed 'natural' or illegitimate children of Edward Sutton, Lord Dudley (1567-1643) by his long-term mistress.

Dud Dudley had confided in his nephew Edward Parkhouse (Margaret's brother) by revealing only to him his 'secret' methods for smelting iron with coal (presumably by first coking it) after Edward had persuaded his uncle to write up his exploits in 'Metallum Martis' in 1665. (See my simplified family tree).

We can't be sure, but Edward Parkhouse may well have been instrumental in passing on some at least of Dud Dudley's knowledge to his brother-in-law John Darby snr's. family, including young Abraham.

The Parkshouse pew - All Saints'



This early 17th century pew back survives from the original All Saints', rebuilt in 1829. It was built for Richard Parkshouse of Holly Hill, Ettingshall, in 1626.

Richard was an attorney who married Jane, the natural daughter of Lord Dudley, making him brother-in-law to Dud Dudley.

He was involved with Dud's exploits in the early use of coal to smelt iron, by transporting samples to the Tower of London for testing. His daughter, Margaret, married John Darby, ancestor of the Coalbrookdale Darbys.

John Darby Senior

Young Abraham would then have grown up on his parents' farm or more probably smallholding, in **Woodsetton**, which combined a forge for metalworking.

His grandfather **John Darby snr. (died 1700)** was probably the **first member of the family to become a Quaker sometime in the 1660's**, when this was still very anti-establishment and could lead to persecution and even imprisonment for failing to conform.

It was only after the **Toleration Act of 1689** when things eased a little for Quakers and other Nonconformists. John snr. was similarly employed as a **yeoman farmer and locksmith**; this duality of occupation was not uncommon in Sedgley and surrounding villages, as the focus could then be shifted from one to the other as the seasons or weather changed. It was possibly the **same house where Abraham's parents lived**.

Quaker origins

Quakers were known for:

- thee as an ordinary pronoun,
- refusal to participate in war,
- plain dress,
- refusal to swear oaths,
- opposition to slavery, and
- teetotalism.

Some Quakers founded banks and financial institutions, including Barclays, Lloyds, and Friends Provident;

manufacturing companies, including shoe retailer C. & J. Clark and the big three British confectionery makers Cadbury, Rowntree and Fry; and philanthropic efforts, including abolition of slavery, prison reform, and social justice projects.



Contemporary William Penn (14 October 1644 – 30 July 1718)

Descent

Abraham Darby was the son of John Darby, a yeoman farmer and locksmith by trade, and his wife Ann Baylies. He was born at Woodsettle, Woodsetton, Staffordshire, just across the county boundary from Dudley, Worcestershire. He was descended from nobility; his great-grandmother Jane was an illegitimate child of Edward Sutton, 5th Baron Dudley.

Abraham's great-grandmother was a sister of the whole blood to Dud Dudley, who claimed to have smelted iron using coke as a fuel. Unfortunately, the iron that Dudley produced was not acceptable to the charcoal ironmasters.

However, this may have inspired his great-grandnephew Darby to perfect this novel method of smelting.

Edward Sutton, 5th Baron Dudley

Dudley Castle, now ruined, was Lord Dudley's seat and main home.

Edward Sutton, 5th Baron Dudley (17 September 1567 – 23 June 1643) was a major landowner, mainly in Staffordshire and Worcestershire, and briefly a Member of the House of Commons of England.

Through his intemperate behaviour he won widespread notoriety, completed the financial ruin of his family, and was the last of his name to bear the title.



Humble Ward

Lord Dudley also had a longtime mistress Elizabeth Tomlinson, who bore him a large family of illegitimate children, at least 11 in number. Lord Dudley provided for this second family. The eldest Robert Dudley otherwise Tomlinson was given a small estate at Netherton in Dudley. Another son **Dud Dudley** was given a lease of Chasepool Lodge in Swindon, Staffordshire. A daughter Jane was grandmother to ironmaster Abraham Darby I.

At the Star Chamber, Gilbert Lyttelton attempted to discredit Dudley by claiming that he had abandoned his wife in London without support to live with Elizabeth Tomlinson, "*a lewd and infamous woman, a base collier's daughter*". The Privy Council ordered Dudley to pay his wife an allowance, which he failed to do. In August 1597 he was sent to Fleet Prison. He was released after a few days, on condition that he pay maintenance of £100 annually for his wife, and £20 for each legitimate child. In less than 18 months he was back before the Privy Council, having got into arrears.

Dudley's legitimate son, Ferdinando, predeceased him, leaving a daughter Frances. Dudley married this granddaughter to **Humble Ward**, the son of a wealthy goldsmith, William Ward, who was one of his creditors.

Dudley died on 23 June 1643 and was buried in St Edmund's Church, Dudley. Frances Ward inherited the estates, with their debts, and became **Baroness Dudley** suo jure. Humble Ward paid the debts and **redeemed the estates** for the benefit of themselves and their descendants.

Dud Dudley

Dud Dudley, (born 1599, England?—died 1684, England?), English ironmaster usually credited with having been the first to smelt iron ore with coke, which is a hard, foamlike mass of almost pure carbon made from bituminous coal.

Charcoal, made from wood, had been exclusively used for smelting iron until Dudley began experimenting with coke, or, as he called it, “pit-coal.” Such experimentation had been encouraged by the English government, which was concerned about the rapid destruction of forests for fuel.

Dudley obtained a patent for his innovation in 1621 and was soon producing a record seven tons of pig iron per week at the Hasco Bridge (now called Askew Bridge) ironworks owned by his father, Edward Sutton, 5th Baron Dudley.

Dud Dudley

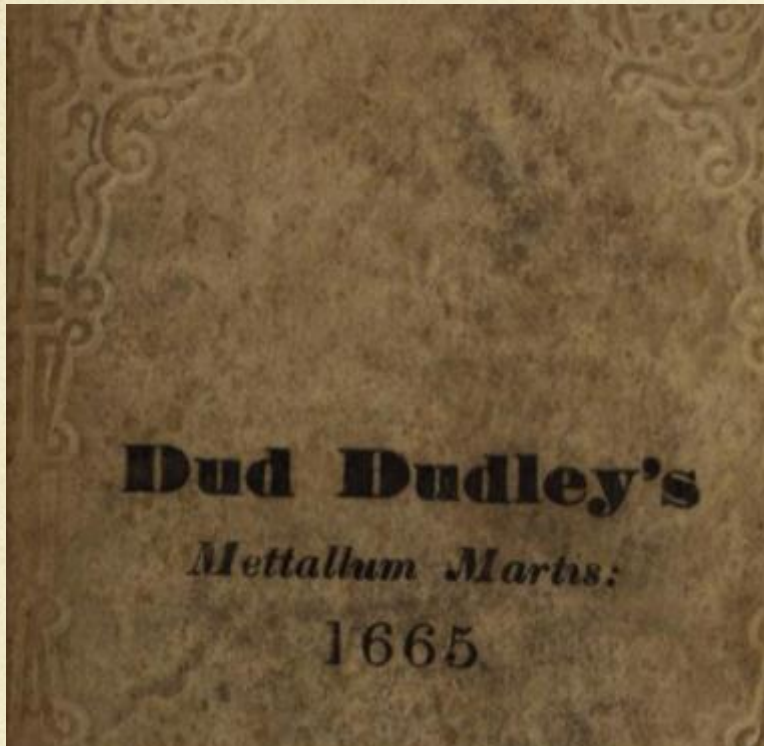
Lord Dudley, like his immediate ancestors, owned substantial estates around Dudley Castle including the manors of Dudley, Sedgley and Kingswinford.

He developed the mineral resources of these estates, building (probably) five blast furnaces on them. He obtained a licence to use the patent of John Robinson (or Rovenson) for making iron with pitcoal (that is, mineral coal) in 1619, and in 1622 renewed this patent in his own name.

He brought his illegitimate son **Dud Dudley** home from **Balliol College, Oxford** to **manage his ironworks**, but this strategy was not entirely successful.

Ultimately Edward Dudley fell out with Dud and expelled Dud from the new coke-fired furnace that Edward had built at **Hasco Bridge** on the boundary between Gornal and Himley. Debts continued to grow, and by 1593 the estate had been sequestrated.

Metallum Martis



Dudley describes his use successively of an ironworks on [Pensnett Chase and at Cradley, of a furnace at Himley, and of a furnace at Hasco Bridge near Gornal.](#)

Dud Dudley's

Metallum Martis :

OR,

IRON

MADE WITH

Pit-coale,

Sea-coale,

&c.



And with the same Fuell to Melt and Fine Imperfect Mettals, and Refine perfect Mettals.

LONDON; Printed by T. M. for the Authour.
1665.

1857.
193. c. 76.

Apprenticeship

At the age of about fourteen (1692) Abraham was apprenticed to a prominent Birmingham Quaker, and maker of **brass malt mills**, named Jonathan Freeth.

Malt mill making for domestic use and for brewing was also a 'local' Sedgley trade, the skills needed to make the inner steel blades being not unlike those required for making locks.

Here, Darby would have learned how **coke was used by brewers** to fuel malt ovens, as the coking process reduced impurities in the coal that would otherwise have tainted the beer.



Whereas Abraham Darby of Bristol Ironminger and
 Mary Sergeant Daughter of Thomas Sergeant of Fulford
 Heath in the Parish of Solihull in the County of Warwick
 Yeoman Having declared their Intentions of taking such other
 in marriage before severall Publick meetings of the People
 of the County called Quakers in Warwickshire according to the
 Lordes order used amongst them whose proceedings therein after
 a Migrate Consideration there of were approved of by the said
 Meetings: they appearing clear of all others As also having
 a Certificat from our friends of Bristol on his behalf had
 having consent of Parents and Relations concerned now these
 are are to certify all whome it may concern that for the full
 accomplishing of this said — Intentions this eighteenth
 day of the month called September in the year according to
 the English account one Thousand six hundred ninety and
 nine they the said Abraham Darby and Mary Sergeant appeared
 in a Publick Assembly of the a fore said People and others come
 together in their Publick meeting place in Birmingham in
 the City of Warwick and according to the Example of the
 Holy men of God Recorded in the scriptures of Truth in
 a solemn manner he the said Abraham Darby taking the
 said Mary Sergeant by the Hand did openly declare as followeth
 I hence forward you to be my my wife in the presence
 of God and this Assembly of my Friends and Mary Sergeant
 to be my wife promising thro Gods Assistance to live with her
 according to Gods Holy Ordinance a loving and faithful Husband
 till death separate us or words to this effect And then and there
 in the said Assembly the said Mary Sergeant did in like
 manner declare as followeth in the presence of the Lord
 and this Assembly to take this my friend Abraham Darby
 to be my Husband and to live with him a loving and faithful
 Wife till death according to Gods Holy Ordinance till death
 separate us or words to this effect — And the said
 Abraham Darby and Mary as a further Confirmation thereto
 did then and there to these presents set their Names and sines
 we whose names are hereunto subscribed being present amongst
 others at the solemnizing of their marriage and subscription
 in manner aforesaid as witnesses have also to these presents
 subscribed our names the day and year above written

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| The Rose
John Rose
James Lewis
Samuel Lee
Robert Hill
Richard Bayly
Isaac James Law
Thomas Freeth
Jacob Birmingham
William Keck
Richard Chandler
Charles Huesly
Willie Rose
Abr Hall
Will Donniend
Jonathan Freeth
Henry Darby
Edward Snape
John Givell
Allen Myson
Joseph Hill
Thomas Baldwin | Thomas Shopp
Joseph Underhill
Henry Edwards
Will Kellernin
Row the Bragg
Edward Mearns
John Aspley
Jacob Alth
Eliza Walslain
Joh Dennis
John Heath
Henry Payton
Cho Osborne
Henry Perkins
John Sutton
Benj a Coole
Edward Collyer | Eliz Pemberton
Mary Loyd
Mary Spibiter
Hannah Smith
Sarah Brown
Sarah Jacobs
Mary Spid
Mary Robinson
Abraham Young
Hannah Hughes
Mary Baylies
Sarah Baylies
Sarah Spid
Eliz Heath
Eliz Heath
Mary Handford
Mary Bright
Mary Dwyer
Sarah Dwyer
Eliz Weller
Mary Freeth
Sarah Weller
Eliz Alth
John |
|---|---|--|

Part of a page from the Birmingham Society of Friends Registers showing the very detailed marriage entry for Abraham Darby to Mary Sergeant, 18 Sep 1699, with a very long list of witnesses, including Jonathan Freeth to whom young Abraham had been apprenticed, as well as Abraham's parents and other members of the Darby and Baylies families.

1699

The move to Bristol

After completing his apprenticeship, Abraham married Mary Sergeant on 18 Sep. 1699, at a 'Friends' meeting in Birmingham.

She was the daughter of Thomas Sergeant, a farmer and bleacher of linen yarn, from Fulford Heath near Solihull. The marriage entry shows Abraham had already moved to Bristol prior to this and had joined with the 'Friends' there, as he possessed a 'certificate to marry' from them.

Interestingly it also gives his trade as '**ironmonger**', though he almost certainly continued as a **malt mill maker** for a time.

1702

Bristol Brass Company

In 1702 Abraham set up the **Bristol Brass Company** with a group of fellow Quakers at Baptist Mills, specialising in making holloware (**kettles, pots and pans**) from sheet brass.

He then brought a number of experienced **workers over from Holland** and in 1703 set up a **foundry** in Cheese Lane. With the help of a Welsh apprentice named John Thomas, Darby developed the use of '**greensand**' moulds by adding a casting box with a core, for casting **larger vessels out of brass**. This enabled the mass production of thinner and lighter pots.



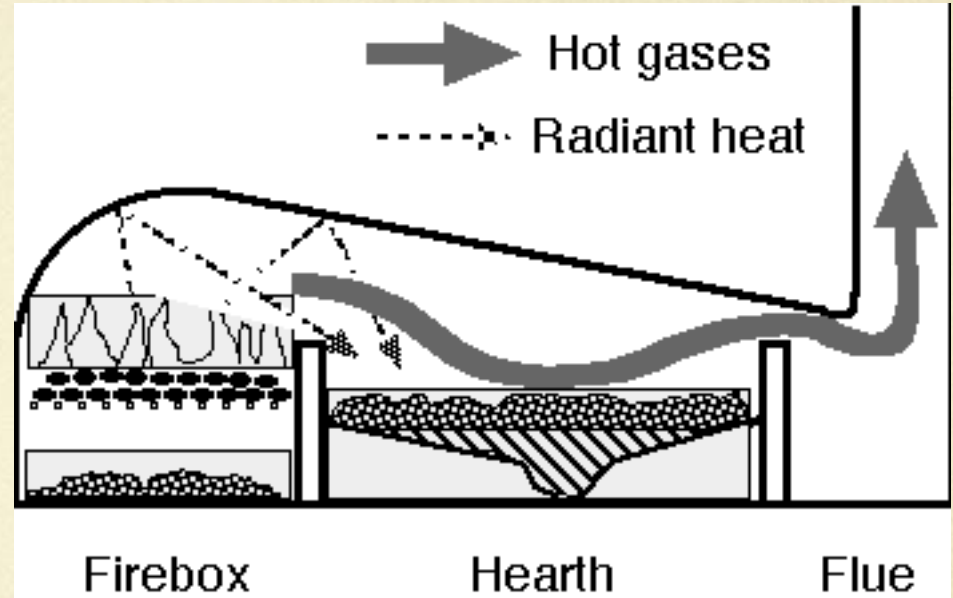
The buildings on the right of the road includes the 'Message' and the **metallurgical laboratories** used in the greatest secrecy by Abraham Darby, and later William Champion. It was there that Darby first perfected the **casting of iron pots on an industrial scale** using his **green sand process**. The two buildings on the left of the road and in the foreground were two of the early Meeting Houses before the plant expanded further to the east and the right of the windmill.

1705

Patent for casting in iron

By 1705 Darby turned his attention to **casting in iron** as this was much cheaper, and in 1707 he took out a **patent** for his **method**, which used a **reverberatory air furnace** of a type originally developed by **Sir Clement Clerke** (died 1693) for smelting lead.

This is intriguing, as one of Clerke's associates in the 1670's had been Darby's much older relative **Dud Dudley**, who had experimented with **coal in place of charcoal to smelt iron** as early as 1620.



Sir Clement Clerke

The Coalbrookdale enterprise

1708

Darby leased the furnace in September 1708, and set to work preparing to get it into blast. His first account book, running from 20 October 1708 to 4 January 1710 survives. This shows the production of 'charked' coal in January 1709 and the furnace was brought into blast on 10 January. Darby sold 81 tons of iron goods that year.

The furnace was used for the first time on 10 January 1709 and the blast appears to have been successful. Darby was probably helped by the fact that the Shropshire 'clod coal' that he was using was fairly sulphur-free. However, experimentation with different fuels continued for some time; for example cargoes of coal were brought up the Severn from Bristol and Neath.^[18] Some of the molten iron from the blast was run into pigs and sent down the Severn for use in Bristol foundries, but much of it was used to cast pots and other cast iron goods.^{[16][19]}

The reasons why the iron produced by Darby was not used in forges to make wrought iron have been much debated. The reason may be partly that his pig iron was better for castings than charcoal pig iron, but the presence of silicon as an impurity made it an unattractive feedstock for finery forges. However recent work has thrown doubt on this explanation, which is based on data from the 1720s when the Coalbrookdale Company operated a forge: the forge could hardly even make a profit with charcoal pit iron.^[21]

The business was partly financed by a loan from Thomas Goldney II of Bristol and by Graffin Prankard and James Peters becoming partners. Later John Chamberlayne became a partner, and Darby's brother-in-law Thomas Baylies a manager.^[22]

The Old Furnace Coalbrookdale

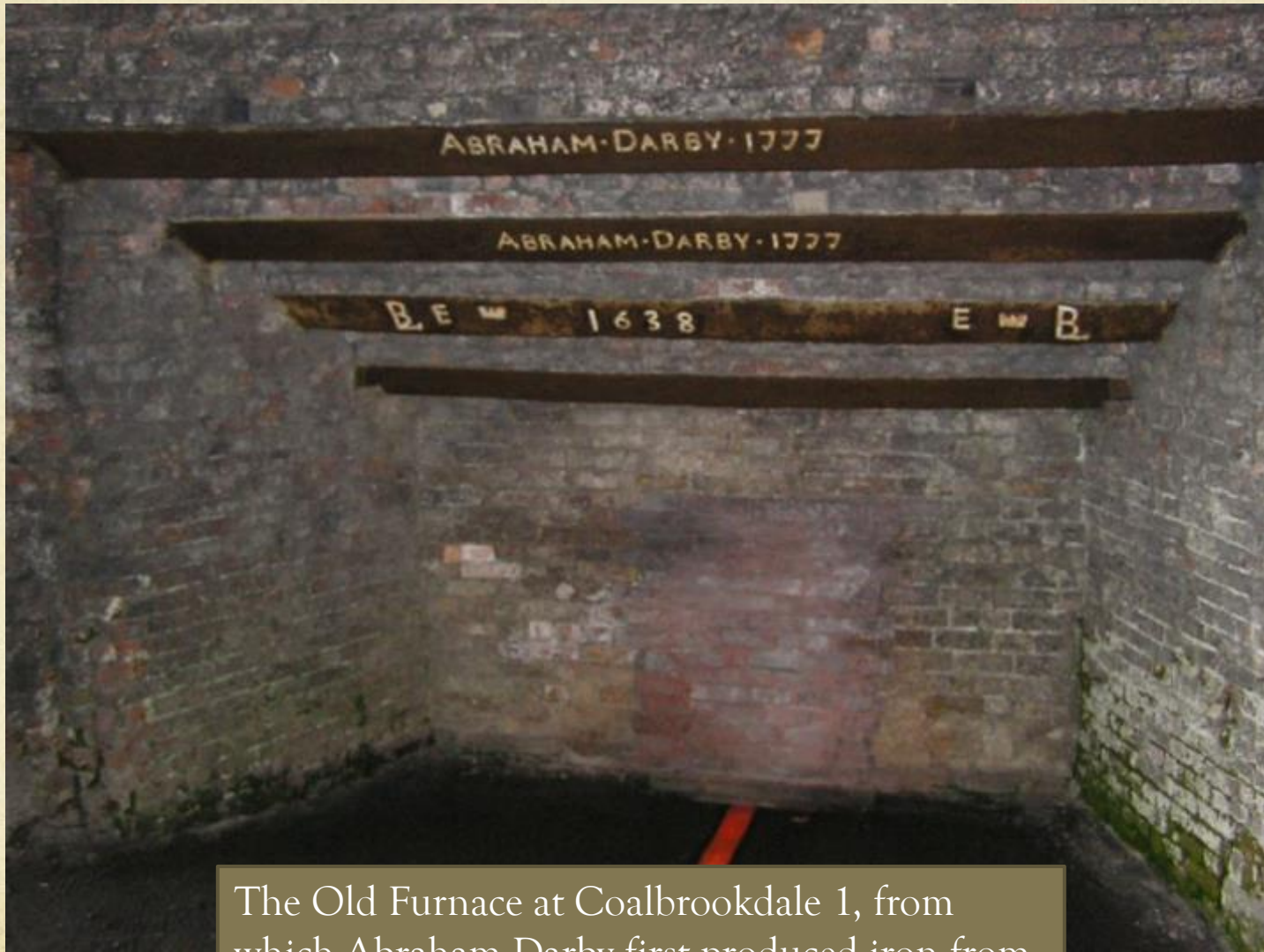
By 1708 Abraham was involved with another group of Bristol Quakers who had set up along the Severn Valley, possibly influenced by the presence of his sister **Esther** and her husband **Anthony Parker**, who were living at **Dawley Dale**.

In **September 1708** Darby took out a lease on the old furnace at **Coalbrookdale**, and on **10 Jan. 1709** this furnace produced iron from 'charked' coal for the first time. He sold **81 tons** of iron goods that year.

Abraham Darby's success at Coalbrookdale continued with construction of a **second furnace** in **1714**, as well as engaging others into the **partnership** later to become known as the **Coalbrookdale Company**.



1714



The Old Furnace at Coalbrookdale 1, from which Abraham Darby first produced iron from 'charked' coal in January 1709 (Carl Higgs)

Old Furnace, Coalbrookdale 2 (Carl Higgs)



Old Furnace, Coalbrookdale 3 (my photo)



Part of the old works and later 19th century viaduct at Coalbrookdale 1 (my photo)



1717

Death and legacy

Abraham Darby I unfortunately did not live to see the long-term success of his enterprise, as he died after a long illness on 5 May 1717 aged just 39. He had been living with his family as tenants at Madeley Court and sadly never got to enjoy the house that was being built for him at Coalbrookdale (now part of the Ironbridge Gorge Museums).

Abraham was buried in the Quaker burial ground at nearby Broseley on 8th May. His widow Mary died a few months later on 30 Mar. 1718 and was recorded as being buried in Bewdley Grave Yard.

But Abraham Darby's legacy lived on in the company he had started and with his descendants, in particular his son Abraham II (1711-1763) who continued his work at Coalbrookdale, and grandson Abraham III (1750-1789) who is remembered especially for constructing the world's first cast iron bridge across the River Severn in 1779.

Part of a page from Broseley Society of Friends Registers, showing the burial of Abraham Darby on 8 May 1717 (three days after he died) and also the death of his widow Mary on 30 Mar. 1718, who was buried at Bewdley.

707-12
v Abraham Darby Sen, Was Buried the 8th Day of the 3rd month 1717

v Robert Evans, Was Buried the 22nd of the 9th month 1717

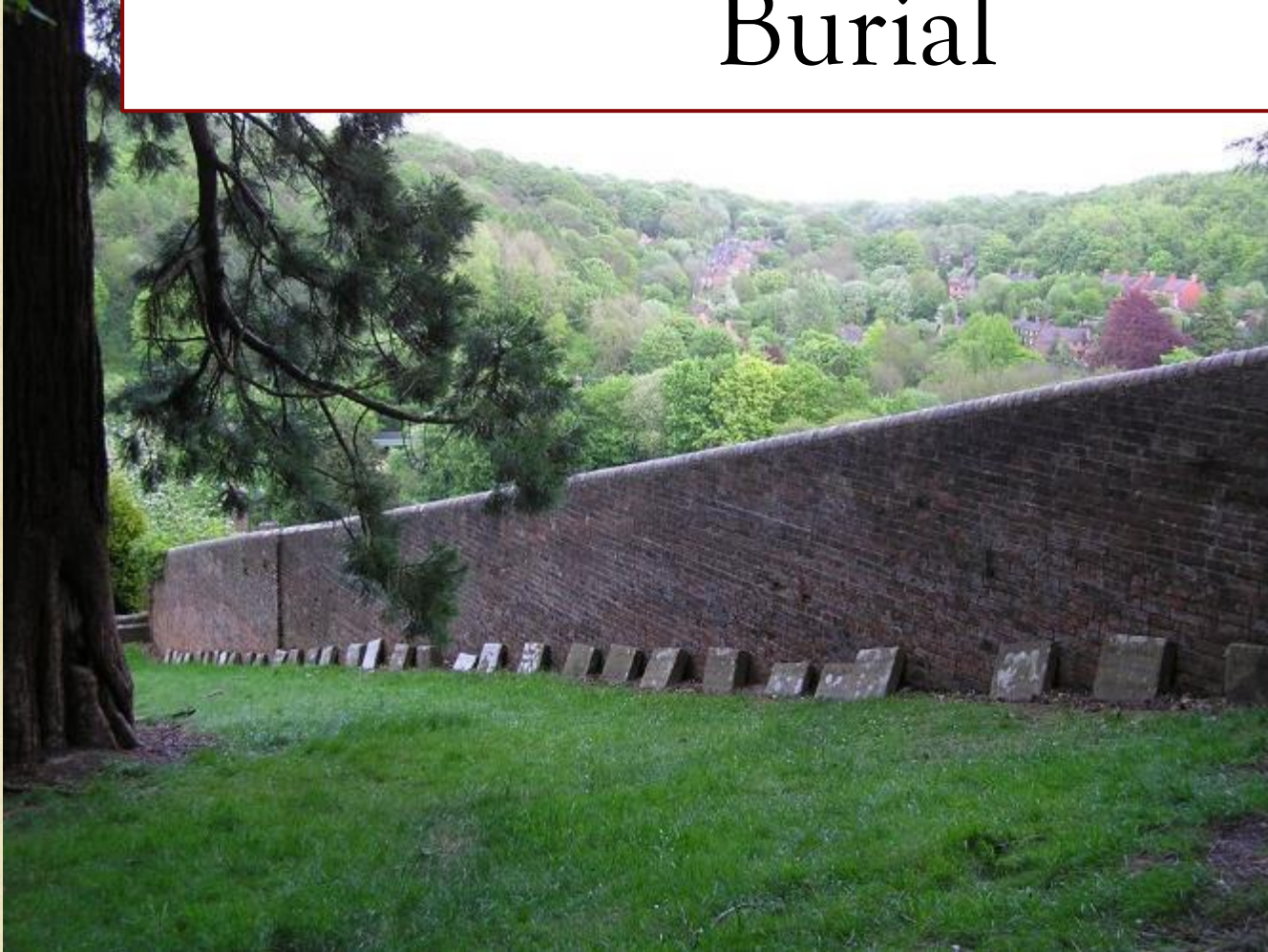
v Samuel Turner, Was Buried the 26th Day of the 8th month 1718

v Elizabeth Andrews, Was Buried the 10th Day of the 10th month 1718

v William Paddy, Was Buried the 25th Day of the 1st month 1719

v Mary The Wife of Abraham Darby Separated this life the
30th Day of the 3rd month 1718 and was Buried in Bewdley
Grave Yard

Burial



Broseley Quaker Burial Ground, where
Abraham Darby was buried in 1717. (Carl Higgs)

Broseley Quaker Burial Ground 2 (Carl Higgs)



Part of the old works and later 19th century viaduct, Coalbrookdale 2 (my photo)



Rosehill House, Coalbrookdale 2 (Carl Higgs)



Rosehill House, Coalbrookdale, built for Abraham Darby but not finished until after his death in 1717 1 (Carl Higgs)

Rosehill House

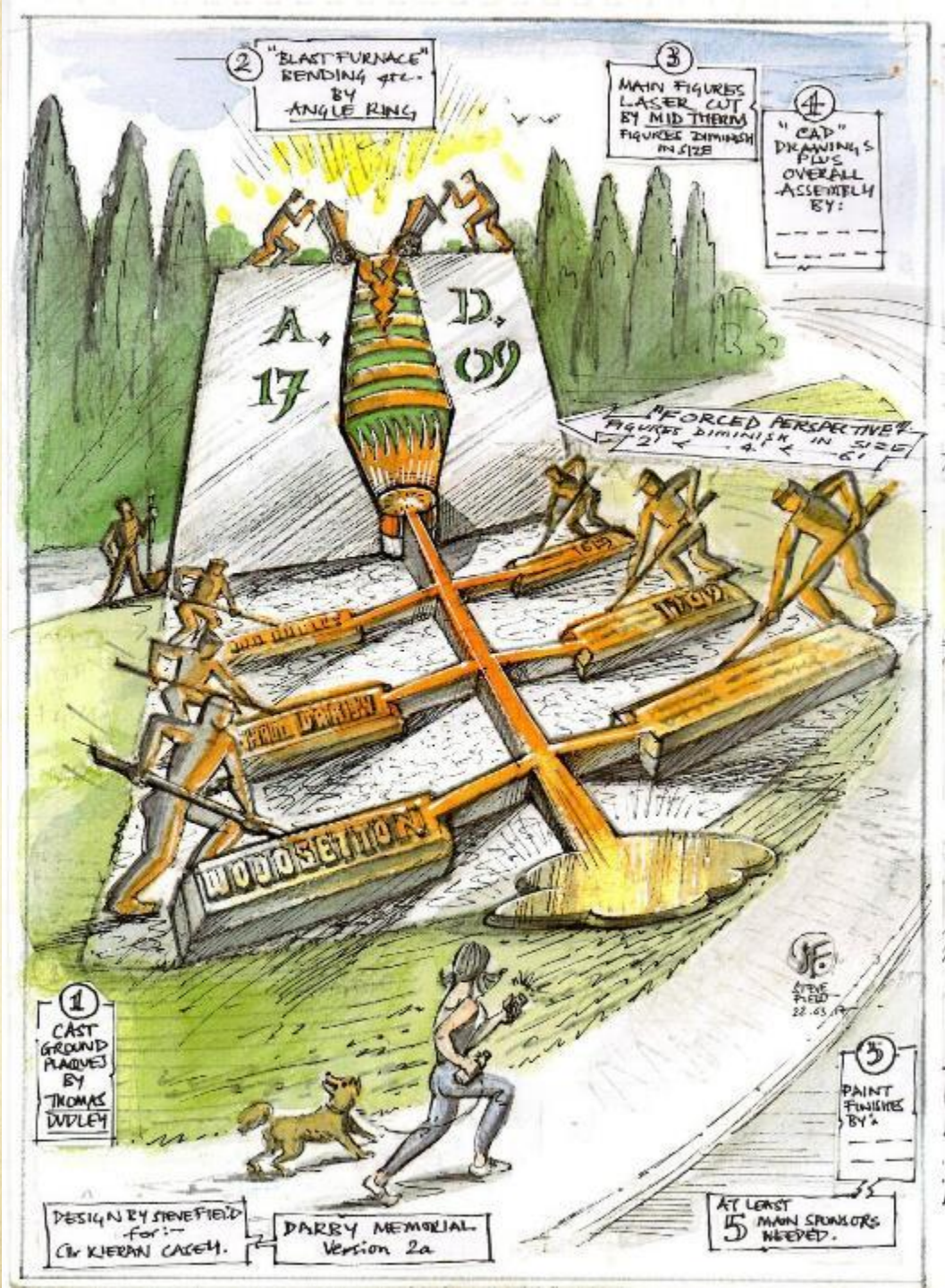


Memorial sculpture

Plan for the sculpture to be located on the corner of Sedgley Road and Birmingham New Road in Woodsetton.

Planning permission was gained September 2019.

Residents and councillors, along with members of the Woodsetton Charitable Trust and Friends of Wrens Nest groups, have been working to secure funding to produce the permanent memorial to him.



Location of sculpture



The location for the sculpture is on the corner of Sedgley Road and Birmingham New Road, Woodsetton.

The siting of this memorial seems particularly apt, as it is **closer to the site of the Old Lodge in the Old Park of Dudley and Sedgley** (which included Woodsetton) where Abraham Darby was most probably born. This would have been off **Wren's Hill Road near the corner with what is now Linwood Road.**

Abraham Darby's sister Esther married Anthony Parker, a nail maker of Hagley, at a meeting of the Dudley 'Friends' or Quakers, 24 Sep. 1706. They appear to have moved to the Severn valley before Abraham did, **living first at Dawley where Anthony began farming.** At some point they moved into **Madeley Lodge**, where **Abraham and Esther's father John Darby jnr. and stepmother Joan (nee Luckcock)** joined them from Sedgley. Most likely this move occurred when **Abraham settled at nearby Madeley Court in about 1710, having first lived at White End near the upper forge**, but it's unclear whether it was directly connected to Abraham's success with **smelting iron from coke in 1709.** Both **John and Joan outlived Abraham** - Joan dying in 1724 and John in 1725 - and were buried in the **Quaker burial ground at Broseley.** Some of Anthony and Esther Parker's descendants were involved with the Darby's Coalbrookdale works before becoming iron masters in their own right. It was their grandson **George Parker** who left Shropshire in about 1783, returning closer to the family's roots, and becoming involved in the **Coneygre Furnaces (where Thomas Newcomen had erected the first commercial steam engine in 1712).** Along with four of his brothers; Richard, Benjamin, John and Abraham as partners and investors, George then set up the iron manufacturing firm of **Parker Bros. in Tipton.** By 1798 they had a second furnace operating near Tipton Green. A lease dated 1 Aug. 1783 was renewed in 1800, with mining rights for them to **extract ironstone and the 'heathen coal' which lay directly underneath, immediately south east of Wren's Nest,** running in a line north east across **Foxyards Lane (now Sedgley Road)** towards the **canal locks at Coseley Moor.** Besides works in Tipton and Oldbury, Parker Bros. also had furnaces in Apedale and Silverdale in North Staffordshire.

Sources

Notes

Sources for dates etc (where not from original documents):

Arthur Raistrick; 'Dynasty of Ironfounders' (1953)

Barrie Trinder; 'The Darbys of Coalbrookdale' (1974, 1991 revised ed.)

Maps and letters from John Hemingway to myself, Nov. 2004

Township of Woodsetton 1750 map produced by John Hemingway and Jennifer Foster, 2006 (DMBC)

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/media/6312/woodssetton.pdf>

Primary sources available at Dudley Archives, and/or on [Ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) etc:

Registers of Dudley Society of Friends (Quaker Meeting House, High Street)

Registers of Birmingham Society of Friends (Quaker Meeting House, Colmore Lane)

Counterpart Lease for part of the Olde Park of Dudley and Sedgley, between John Darby and Humble Lord Ward, 10 Dec. 1649