

Abraham Darby I

Abraham Darby was born at the Wren's Nest in 1678. He played an important role in the development of the modern iron industry by his use of coke in smelting iron and casting iron pots in sand moulds. It is a marvellous tribute to him to have this monument to him organized and unveiled to day by the enthusiastic group of people who live or work so close to the place of his birth.

Abraham would probably have been surprised by this public tribute - but may be secretly pleased by it. He was a devote and active Quaker who "... had a gift in ministry" and his faith influenced his life and work. He was apprenticed to a Quaker maltmill maker in Birmingham. Then he went to Bristol where he joined a thriving group of Quakers and was manager of the Bristol Brass Works with its Quaker partners. He made his experiments in casting iron pots in Cheese Lane, Bristol.

The Society of Friends had a network of local and regional business Meetings. The Yearly Meeting for Wales included both Bristol and Gloucestershire Quakers. Thus Abraham met Quakers from Broseley who told him about the Coalbrookdale iron works where coke had been used to smelt iron in 1703.

Abraham visited Broseley in 1706; took out his Patent for Casting Iron Pots in 1707 and began work at Coalbrookdale in 1708.

Abraham was an entrepreneur and involved in other ventures too. Coke smelted iron was only better for making thin iron pots. Over 90% of the market was for thick castings for cannon or bar iron for the forges made from charcoal smelted iron. Abraham's furnaces at Dolgun and Vale Furnace used charcoal fuel for the much larger market.

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