

ABRAHAM DARBY 1678-1717

Born in Dudley and died at Madeley Court. He had used coke in smelting copper in Bristol. In 1708 founded the Bristol Iron company. In 1709 he produced marketable iron in a coke-fired furnace, -after acquiring premises in Coalbrookdale, close to supplies of low-sulphur coal. Coke was superior and-efficient and enabled much larger furnaces to be built than was possible with charcoal as fuel. The latter was too weak to support a heavy charge of iron. This made thin castings possible and the quality of such could compete with brass.

The Thomas Newcomen steam engine created a new market for iron, leading to 100 of these cylinder machines cast at Coalbrookdale in Abraham Darby 11's time (1711-63.)

In 1779 Abraham Darby 11 (1750-91) completed (to Thomas Pritchard's design) one of the World's first cast iron bridges and in 1802 the Coalbrookdale Works built the first railway locomotive with a high-pressure boiler, -for Richard Trevithick.

The Dardys were devout Quakers, which is why there are no portraits of them.

Richard Ford (son-in-law) took over control until AB 11 was old enough to succeed. Likewise Richard Reynolds (son-in-law) until AB 11.

Abraham Darby 1V and Alfred (AB 11's grandson) had a successful stand at The Grand Exhibition in 1851 at the Crystal Palace. In 1881 the firm became a PLC.

In 1925 the connection died with Alfred Darby 11 as chairman.

NB AB's grandmother was an illegitimate child of Edward Sutton, 5th Baron Dudley.

AB's great-grandmother was a sister of the whole blood to Dud Dudley, who claimed to have smelted iron using coal 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.

I believe that the late Lady Labouchere of Dudmaston Hall was a descendant of Abraham Darby's brother and that her nephew still lives there, courtesy of the National Trust.

David Austin created the ABRAHAM DARBY ROSE, (PINKISH GOLDEN HUE)

As the pioneer of mass-produced iron, Abraham Darby 1 can be regarded as the founding father of the Industrial Revolution. This changed the world we live in, -or have done for the last couple of centuries. Therefore he deserves to be on a banknote for Shropshire, having triggered off the Darby family chain of legacy.