



Sedgley's

Diamond 60

*Sixty years, sixty people,
sixty stories about village life
since 1952.*

1979

Closure of Bilston Steel Works

by Mrs Andree A Hickey

For many years I was Welfare Officer for the Bilston Steel Works. My work involved visiting all the employees who were absent from work due to illness or injury. I was born in the shadow of 'Big Lizzie' (the blast furnace) in Withy Lane, the old entrance to the steel works.

John Wilkinson was the founder of the steel works. He came from Cumberland, then moved to Coalbrookdale, and finally in 1740 moved to Bradley in Bilston. He died in 1808 and was buried in an iron coffin which he had made for himself.

Iron making has been carried out on the Bilston site for over 200 years. Stewarts and Lloyds acquired the works in 1921. The completion of the modernisation programme in 1964 meant that the plant consisted of a High-Top Pressure Blast Furnace capable of producing up to 7,000 tons of pig iron per week. A new mill completed the redevelopment of the Bilston Site and this enabled an extensive range of 'rounds' to be rolled; also 'blooms', 'billets' and 'slabs' could be produced to absorb the extra production from the steelworks.

In 1959 a steam engine called Gertrude used at Bilston Steel Works was sold for just £2.00. Four years ago (2008) four people put together £50,000 to have this steam engine repaired. When this work had been completed it was towed back to Bilston and put on display outside the Steel Works Social Centre. Many people attended to see it including Lord Bilston (Dennis Turner) who had worked at the Steelworks as a young man.

Unfortunately the Steelworks Site closed in 1979 and has now been redeveloped with new homes and an industrial estate.

Bilston people have never forgotten the steel works and only a few years ago arranged for a plaque to be erected at the top of Coseley Road to commemorate the Works.



Bilston Steel Works closed in 1979.



Gertrude the steam engine was used at the Works until it was sold in 1959. In the foreground are Lord Bilston (Dennis Turner), and former Welfare Officer Andree Hickey who both worked for the company.