
FOTHERGILL family, iron-masters, etc.

The Fothergill family were from Kendal and from Cumberland. The first to travel southwards were two brothers, one of whom established a small iron-works in the Forest of Dean and was later connected with the iron-works at Tredegar and Sirhowy. They were Richard Fothergill I (1758 - 1821), and JOHN FOTHERGILL (1763 - 1828), of Bedwellty, Monmouth. The present note will deal only with Richard and his descendants.

RICHARD FOTHERGILL I (1758 - 1821),

became a builder at Clapham, and was attracted to South Wales by its mineral prospects. In 1794 he became a partner in the Sirhowy iron-works with Matthew Monkhouse and another. In 1800, he joined [Samuel Homfray](#) (see the article on that family) at Tredegar, but retired from the Tredegar management in 1817. On the termination (1818) of the Sirhowy works lease (which he had intended to renew, but which was given without his knowledge to Messrs. Harford, Ebbw Vale), he removed all his plant and severed all connection with Sirhowy. In 1818 he had iron-works at Pont-hir, near Caerleon, and lived for a short time at Back Hall, Caerleon. His knowledge and ability were utilized by Messrs. Tappenden, owners of the Aber-nant iron-works, Aberdare. He witnessed the agreement signed between them and Messrs. Scale of the Aberdare Iron Co., owners of the Llwydcoed iron-works, in 1804, for the use of the tramway to connect their works with the Neath canal. In 1807, he witnessed the deed, and appears to have acted as a mediator, at the dissolution of partnership in the Aber-nant works 1807, when they were taken over by Messrs. Tappenden from [Jeremiah Homfray](#) and James Birch. He soon acquired great influence in the management and welfare of the Aber-nant works in addition to those of Tredegar and Sirhowy, and prepared the way for his son, Rowland Fothergill (below), to acquire the control and later the proprietorship of the works at Llwydcoed and Aber-nant. His second son, THOMAS FOTHERGILL (1791 - 1858), succeeded at the Pont-hir iron-works. He was high sheriff of Monmouthshire in 1829.

ROWLAND FOTHERGILL (1794 - 1871),

son of Richard Fothergill, was an able iron-master and soon, on the withdrawal of the Tappendens, became the chief director of the Aber-nant works and later acquired a controlling influence in the Llwydcoed iron-works, being often at cross purposes with the Scales family. After a costly lawsuit, the whole works were put to auction in 1846; Rowland Fothergill acquired them and with his able management soon amassed considerable riches, and retired to Hensol castle, near Cowbridge. In addition to the above works, he had also erected the Taff Vale iron-works in the parish of Llantwit Fardre, near Pontypridd, which was very successful in the manufacture of iron rails.

Rowland Fothergill, who was high sheriff of Glamorgan in 1850, died 19 September 1871, and was buried at Pendoylan church, and the Hensol estate, with its castle, descended to his heiress, Isabella, daughter of his sister Ann, who married 1877, Sir Rose Lambert Price, bart.

RICHARD FOTHERGILL III (1822 - 1903), iron-master, coal-owner and politician;

was the eldest son of RICHARD FOTHERGILL II, (1789 - 1851), eldest son of Richard Fothergill I, and succeeded his uncle as manager, and later proprietor, of the Aberdare iron-works, etc. He had acquired extensive knowledge of all the processes involved in the manufacture of iron and in the production of coal. His ownership of a 'truck shop' led to some opposition and a prosecution at the Aberdare police court in 1851, and to some strictures by [H. A. Bruce, lord Aberdare](#), the stipendiary magistrate. Aber-nant grew and prospered to a remarkable degree. In 1873, just previous to the great crash, the wage bill amounted to £200,000 whereas twenty-five years earlier it was £60,000. In 1862, the whole of the Plymouth works, near Merthyr, had passed into his hands. Up to this time they had been carried on in the old way on the cold blast system, but his enterprise led to the introduction of the hot blast and soon the works were in serious competition with the great concerns at Dowlais and Cyfarthfa. Soon afterwards the Penydarren works passed into his hands, and he thus acquired at Merthyr a prestige and popularity second only to that which he enjoyed at Aberdare. He built a mansion at Aber-nant (later the home of S. Michael's College and the Aberdare hospital), surrounded by beautiful grounds, still called 'Fothergill's Park.'

Fothergill was elected on the first Aberdare board of health in 1854, and, on Merthyr and Aberdare becoming entitled to two members of Parliament, in 1868, [Henry Richard](#) and he were elected. In Parliament he took an active part in advertising the valuable properties of South Wales coal for the navy as compared with that of the North Country and Scottish coals; he spoke on 29 July 1870, during the Franco-Prussian war, pointing out its non-smoking qualities as essential for this country in such a crisis. He was ably supported by [Sir H. H. Vivian](#). He was an original member of the Iron and Steel Institute in 1869, and in 1871 was elected a member of its council. He married in 1848 Elizabeth, sister of James Lewis, Plas-draw, Aberdare, and after her death, married 31 December 1850, Mary Roden. He continued to sit in Parliament until 1880, when he retired to Tenby, where he died 24 June 1903.

As a result of great changes in the manufacture of steel through the Bessemer process, and owing to coal strikes, the companies of which Fothergill was chief failed disastrously, as did so many others at this period. Llwydcoed and Abernant iron-works closed down, never to be reopened.

Author

Watkin William Price, (1873 - 1967)

Sources

For the chief sources, see under Crawshay,

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