

# WHY WILDEN

Wilden was recorded in the **Domesday Book**, 1086 as the mill at Mitton, (*Mettune*, meaning King's land) and the hamlet of Wilden then named *Winwladune* or *Winelduna* meaning Winela's Hill.



In 1511 **William Baylly** had established a fuller business, the process of treading woollen clothing in urine, a process outlawed in many areas, was essential to stabilize the cloth making it more durable and reduce the irritation.

Mill Races at Wilden

Storage at Redstone Caves

Why was this site chosen? Geographically it was ideal. A continuous fast flowing supply of water, a flat valley

bottom, a huge meander allowing water to be easily diverted, proximity to the River Severn, Redstone caves on the banks of the Severn served as a storage depot.

It was not until the iron skills of the **Foley's** took over this prime site, 1633 ideally situated within a mile of the **trow** transportation on the River Severn, connected by the navigable lower River Stour, do we see anything which can be described as slightly industrial, circa 1633.

The River Stour was described in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the book "the Rise of Midland Industry" as ..... ***possessed the greatest number of industrial works on its 24 miles than any other river in England.***

In 1771 saw the **Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal**, **James Brindley's Grand Cross** built at a cost of £100,000 linking major cities and their markets running for some 46 miles.

Stourport Basin

At this time, we first see the **Baldwin** name appear in the Stourport area. Thomas Baldwin, father of George Pearce and Enoch, and grandfather of Alfred, relocated from Shrewsbury establishing Baldwin, Son & Co in Foundry Street, Stourport, manufacturing cast iron, tinning and enamelled hollow ware. Stourport grew from a hamlet into a town of 200 dwellings and some 1300 people.





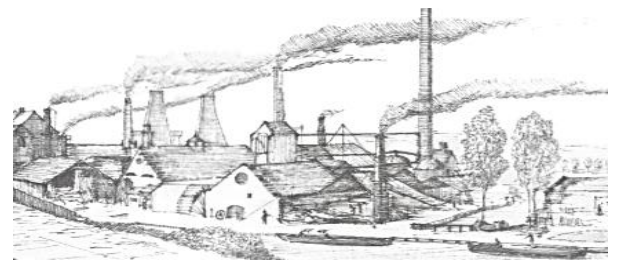
Platt's Wharf connection to Wilden Works

By 1771 just prior to the opening of the canal, the Wilden Works described as a tin mill was leased to **Thomas Hill**, an industrialist of the time who had mining rights and iron works in the Abergavenny area of Wales, now a world heritage site.

To accommodate debts, the third Baron Foley auctioned the works, Wilden Forge, in 1812 from the Stourport Inn (known today as the Tontine). Thomas Hill withdrew and the works was purchased by **Mr. Farmer** and subsequently

bought by **Mr. Lewby** in 1832, trading as **Wilden Iron and Tin Plate Co.**

A link channel from the works to Platt's wharf was opened in 1835 an artery allowing the inflow of raw materials directly into the works was



created. The economic outlook should have been very lucrative.

Sadly, the reverse was true, and the works became bankrupt in 1840.

The Baldwin Family had several diverse interests both in Stourport and throughout the Black Country. Enoch together with his brother George Pearce took over the Wilden Works trading as E.P. & W. Baldwin (Enoch, Pearce & William Hill).

In 1863 the business was split with Alfred and his two brothers George and Stanley taking control of Wilden Works.

In 1870 through poor management, difficult trading conditions and George and Stanley reportedly being dependence upon alcohol, the works was declared bankrupt.

It was at this point at the age of 29 using loans from his business associates, reported to be **£20,000**, Alfred paid off all debts, bought out his brothers and took sole control of the works.

That year Alfred and his family moved to a site directly opposite the works leaving the large house in Bewdley which had become the centre of the extended family life.



Severn linked to Staffs Worcs Canal



Wilden House

When you look back on events .....

Things just happen.

One thing triggers another.

Often without reason.

It's almost a family tree of happening.

I chose to look at this from a Wilden Church point of view.

Once the church was there, the school, village hall followed.

Alfred Baldwin, a lynch pin wished to nurture the wellbeing of his work force.

Once the factory was profitable, he provided the church, school, and recreation ground on the opposite side of the club's driveway. Such was the standard the county cricket team played there.

Wilden was a small community until the Canal arrived in 1771. The population was 360 in 1880. Up until WWII Wilden Land was but a narrow country road just Horse and cart size. It was not until 1950 did the school get a flushing toilet and ten it was outside.

The school of 60 pupils started to grow in number, but it was the development of the Grove and Birches that saw numbers exploded to 350. Temporary classrooms were added plus additional classrooms and facilities. More staff. The staff and parents formed a cricket team with no ground.

What happened next? Mortgage rates soared, nobody moved house, no more children and Worcestershire opted for a three-tier system removing two years of children from Wilden School. Number fell and the temporary classroom became obsolete.

The idea of Wilden Village Cricket Club was born.

