

# Technical terms used in the brass mills in the Salford and Keynsham area

JOAN DAY

A brass mill was started by Abraham Darby at Baptist Mills, Bristol, in 1702. When he left the area for Coalbrookdale a few years later, the company continued under the leadership of its remaining Quaker partners, and developed rapidly over the next 50 years. Several new mills were established along the River Avon and its tributaries between Bath and Bristol; Keynsham, the most suitable site, became the headquarters of the company. Other new firms were also established in this area, which was at this time regarded as the technical centre of the industry, but by the end of the century the initiative had passed to other regions with the coming of steam power and other developments. During the 19th century the local brass industry declined rapidly and most of the mills were closed, until by 1900 only Salford and Keynsham remained, still using water as their main source of power. Salford battery mill closed in 1908, the last brass battery in the country, but the rolling mills there remained, as did the wire and rolling mills at Keynsham, to be revived a little by the 1914-18 war effort. Salford finally closed in 1924, to be followed just three years later by the old headquarters of the firm at Keynsham.

These local terms have been taken from tape-recorded interviews with three of the last very elderly and rather infirm old men, who remember their work in these mills. The author would be glad to hear of any similarities or differences of such terms used in comparable industries from other parts of the country.

## The Annealing Process

Nealing	Annealing (in general use)
A fire	A furnace load
Buckle or buck hole	Ash pit of annealing oven
Bosh	Trough or large bowl for water, kept in front of ovens
Killott	Three-legged stand to take trays carrying wire

## Rolling Process

Slabs	Rectangular brass mould used for rolling sheet
Slips	Elongated moulds for rolling strip
Shab	Dross or impurities in sheet brass; had to be removed before final process
Stranded or studded	The jamming of rolls when incorrectly adjusted for thickness of metal (invariably accompanied by unmentionable language)
Pritchel	Punch or pointed tool for marking sheet to pattern
Curis	Strip metal curled round into circles after going through slitting mill

## Battery Work

Helve	Arm or shaft of tilt hammer (made of wood)
Stulch or stulsh	Sprag or length of wood used to prop under helve disengaging it from cogs, thus stopping hammer
Husk or Hursk	Metal ring enclosing helve, on which it pivoted

Naps	Round shapes of brass cut on shears in preparation for hammering into shapes of pans
Ferrier	Outer pan of three, placed one inside the other, whilst being shaped up by battery hammers
Wire Drawing	
Strings	Narrow brass strip prepared for wire drawing
Rumpling	First stage in wire drawing
Wortle plate	Die or plate through which wire was drawn
Jacobite	Pincers which drew wire through wortle plate
Rumple pritchel	Tool for reaming out holes in wortle plate to correct size
Other Processes	
Pickling	Immersion of brass in 'vitriol and water', to give hard bright finish
Stamps	Crushing process for furnace ashes and other waste to extract usable metal for remelting
Lemmel (?) or lemmei (?)	Iron pot into which waste wire was hammered for remelting



A Compass Bowl



A Guinea Kettle



A Lisbon Pan

Shuff (men's version today)	Waste brass, filings, off-cuts etc., used for remelting	power for mills; they were undershot, and from 15 to 18 ft diameter. Eight were in use at Keynsham until 1927, and five at Saltford, although only three were used latterly.
Shruff	Same as above. This version taken from 1862 sales catalogue of Keynsham and Saltford premises. Hamilton's 'English Brass & Copper Industries to 1800', p. 340, quotes Houghton's method of making brass in 1697, in which ' <u>shruff</u> or old plate brass', is used.	Paddles
Water Wheels	These provided the main source of	Wooden slats which paddles were fitted on
		Metal rods between each float
		The two circular frames of each wheel without floats, starts or stays
	Floats	
	Starts	
	Stays	
	Rings	