## Technical terms used in the brass mills in the Saltford 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 Saltford and Keynsham remained, still using water as their main source of power. Saltford 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. Saltford 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

Trough or large bowl for water, kept Bosh

in front of ovens

Killott Three-legged stand to take trays carry-

ing wire

Rolling Process

Shah

Slabs Rectangular brass mould used for roll-

ing sheet

Slips Elongated moulds for rolling strip

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 (in-

variably accompanied by unmentionable

language)

Pritchel Punch or pointed tool for marking sheet

to pattern

Curls 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

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

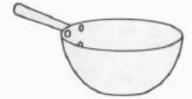
and other waste to extract usable metal

for remelting

Lemmel (?) or lemmey (?)

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

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 "14 shruff or old plate brass', is used.

Water Wheels These provided the main source of

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.

Paddles Floats

Wooden slats which paddles were fit-Starts

Stays Metal rods between each float

Rings The two circular frames of each wheel

without floats, starts or stays