The Salter Family

*“In 1760 George III came to the throne. William Pitt was the Prime Minister and we were at war with France. It was this war and a few years later another war between England and her American colonies (1775-1783) – which gave such an impetus to the iron trade all over England, and especially to that part of the Midlands soon to become the Black Country.*

*There were in those days no factories and no employment of labour as we understand it today. The iron-workers of the Midlands worked in their own homes, in the kitchen or the backyard, often with the whole family taking part. But in each small community there would gradually emerge one who – more capable? more energetic? better at organising? – would act as go-between for the workers and the buyer, find the raw materials, collect the finished product: who would gradually become the boss, ‘the gaffer’ to the people for whom he was acting.*

*What was it that, here and there, threw up a man above his fellows. Probably just that extra bit of native wit, or shrewdness, grift or obstinacy: or skill in managing men and directing their work into the most profitable channels. In those days few men could read, write or cipher and although this was no insuperable obstacle to advancement, any skill in these accomplishments gave a man an advantage over his fellows. It must have been some such extra ability which brought the Salters to the fore. They were workers, as were those about them but they had that extra something which made them ‘the gaffer’ to their neighbours and finally employers of labour on a large scale.”*

*Mary Bache 1960, “Salter – The Story of a Family Firm”.*

The Salters possibly originated in Bridgnorth and joined up with the Silvesters. By 1760 a family of four Salter brothers were living in Bilston. One of them, George was an innkeeper. His brother William is mentioned as a “pocket steelyard maker” – a small weighing device, and brother Richard who was the first known Salter to make springs and went on to become the founder of the firm.

Between 1770 and 1780 Richard moved to West Bromwich and continued the manufacture of springs, spring balances and diverse items incorporating springs. He also began to manufacture bayonets. Both of William’s sons, John and George, followed Uncle Richard to West Bromwich and were bayonet makers.

John and George did not marry but their sister Mary married her cousin Richard Salter (George the innkeeper’s son). They had children George, John and Mary who were the third generation of Salters. When George died young in 1825 it was left to John and old Uncle George to carry on the business and it was at this time the firm became known as “George Salters”.

Salter family text for website