

James Duffield

Born in Tipton, Staffs, in 1832, and died in March 1914.

He married a young widow, Selina Price (Price being her maiden name) of Parkgate, Rotherham, by whom he had two daughters:-

Elizabeth (Mrs. Moorwood, mother of three sons and one daughter) and

Annie (Mrs. Hugh Barbour, mother of one daughter).

A self-made and self-educated man, James Duffield was one of fifteen of a Staffordshire mining family, being the son of Abraham Duffield, a mine sinker, and his wife (whose maiden name was Wilkinson).

He started work in the pits about the age of seven; but his father and three older brothers being all killed in the mines, it left James at the age of eighteen, head of the family.

Withdrawing at his mother's request from the occupation of mining, he set off with another young fellow (and with 1/6d [7 and 1/2 pence] in his pocket) to walk to Yorkshire. At one point on the journey they parted company, and James Duffield continued alone. Arriving at Parkgate, Rotherham, he began to work in the iron works, later becoming a puddler there. In those early days he married a young widow, and to eke out their means, she kept a little "general" shop, and James delivered the orders when his day's work was done.

Eventually he went into the employ of Messrs. Charles Cammell and Company at their iron works in Sheffield. There his rise was rapid.

When the Bessemer of converting iron into steel came into being and his firm decided to adapt it, they laid down a plant for this process in Dronfield Derbyshire (about 4 miles from Sheffield), and James Duffield was chosen out of 46 applicants to be Manager.

He was now forty-six years of age.

While in Dronfield, he invented the Compound Armour Plate, which was adopted by the firm and consisted of a plate of iron face with steel (molten). (This invention ran for seven years, and was succeeded by a full steel armour plate.)

After ten years of working the Bessemer Process in Dronfield, land required for tipping the refuse and slag from the furnaces became difficult to obtain; besides which, the town of Dronfield, being inland, lacked the shipping facilities on which the trade largely depended.

It was James Duffield who persuaded Cammell's to move their works to the coast, and after inspecting many sites, he decided to submit that of Workington on the Cumberland coast as meeting their requirements. This plan the firm finally approved.

In six months time, the Dronfield works were closed - the work people of Dronfield had moved to Workington - and the new works commenced operations.

Later Charles Cammell and V Company amalgamated with the firm of Lairds of Birkenhead, and James Duffield was made a Director of the joint concern.

This post he held until he went into retirement at his home at Tallantire Hall near Cockermouth (and about 8 miles from Workington).

"Local (little) Jimmy Duffield" as he was popularly known, was three times Mayor of Workington, and was a great advocate of the cause of temperance. (Incidentally it is interesting to know that the lad with whom he set off from Tipton also became Mayor of his particular adopted town.)

James Duffield died at the age of eighty-two, and was survived his wife and daughter(Mrs. Barbour), his elder daughter(Mrs. Moorwood having died years before.But all the grandchildren were alive at the tiem of his death.