

Hay Farm No.10

Hay Farm stands on high ground to the south of Blists Hill above Coalport and commands impressive views along the Severn Valley.

The name Hay originated in the 13th century when the whole of the manor of Madeley belonged to Wenlock Priory. In 1283 the King, Edward I, allowed the monks to enclose their wood of Madeley and to make a part there with a 'haia' or enclosure for deer. The local names of Deer Park, Rough Park and Park Lane date from this period.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries the Manor of Madeley including the Hay was sold to Sir Robert Brooke, a distinguished lawyer and a future speaker of the House of Commons. Part of the manor was already leased to the Charlton family whose main seat was at Apley Castle, and they continued to rent it until the 1630's or 1640's.

Madeley Parish Records list various tenants of the Hay in the 17th century. At one period in the later 17th century Thomas and Bazil Brooke were living at the Hay, possibly when Madeley Court, their usual residence, was undergoing alterations.

In 1705 the Madeley Manor Estate was sold by Combertford Brooke, and the Hay Farm was bought by John Ashwood and William Phillips. The following year it was sold again to the trustees for the heirs of John Purcell, whose family had been tenants there since at least 1683.

In 1758, five years before his death, Abraham Darby II purchased half of the Hay Farm as an investment. In 1771 his son, Abraham III, was able to purchase the other half of the farm, and although he continued to lease it to the tenant, Thomas Sparrow, he began to make alterations and improvements with a view to moving in himself.

Before Darby moved into the Hay in 1780 he spent large sums of money on rebuilding and altering the house, and stocking the garden. Surviving accounts for this period give details of his expenditure – in 1775, for example, he paid for sawing, smithwork, tiles, masonwork and limestone and also wages and various miscellaneous disbursements. These sums may have been for building the stables which bear the date 1775 in a cast iron plaque. Abraham Darby III farmed the Hay himself, and it provided grazing and fodder for the horses used in the industrial concerns at Coalbrookdale as well as giving him some control of the local grain trade.

Abraham Darby III died at the Hay in 1789 from scarlet fever. Shortly before his death he sold some of the farm's meadows beside the River Severn to Richard Reynolds, and there, in 1793, the new development of Coalport grew up based on the interchange between the river and the Shropshire Canal.

The Hay was occupied by Rebecca, the widow of Abraham Darby III for some years, and then by Francis, his son, until 1805. In that year, Barnard Dickinson and his wife Anne, Francis's sister, took over the Hay, and remained there for five years.

Other occupants in the 19th century included John and Thomas Rose, of the Coalport Porcelain Company and John Holland Wase, a farmer. In 1858 Henry and Adelaide Whitmore, the heirs of Francis Darby, sold the Hay to Joseph Reynolds who enlarged the farm and left it by his will to the Anstice Family, owners of the Madeley Wood Company. In the early years of the present century the Hay Farm passed into the hands of private farmers.



For over four hundred years the Hay Farm has been connected with the most important families in the area, and many of the people who played an important part in the industrial revolution in Shropshire had some connection with this house.

The present building dates mainly from the late 17th and early 18th century with alterations from about 1770. The main front of the house faces east with a symmetrical facade of seven bays and projecting hipped wings on either side of a central recess, consisting of an entrance door between sash windows.

The farm buildings are good examples of 18th and 19th Century farm buildings. The stables are in a two storey block with a loft above, and they have particularly interesting ventil action openings of patterned brickwork. One of the barns dates in part at least from the 17th century and has distinctive timber roof trusses.

As a group the house and outbuildings form an interesting feature on the skyline of the Severn Gorge and point to the historical interdependency of agriculture and industry. Much of the land belonging to the Hay Farm has been developed as a golf course by Telford Development Corporation and now attracts golfers from all over the West Midlands.

Hay Farm is a Grade II building in the Department of the Environment's list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest.

