



Dudley Kingswinford

Rugby Football Club



A Brief History of DK.

DK has a long and interesting history going back to 1920. It is important that we record and publish this story. It is only when we know where we have come from that we can fully appreciate where we are!

We are lucky at DK because we have a keen, accomplished and indeed a published historian (and retired Engineer) in Bob (Stuart) McMaster.

Bob has huge archives of facts and images of DK going all the way back to its inception in 1920. He has produced articles for the Black Country Bugle and has provided a wealth of information for our website.

If you have any information regarding this article that we might be able to include please contact admin@dk-rfc.co.uk

Please take the time to read them and enjoy!

“People without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture are like a tree without roots.”

The Bank (also known as The Bonk).



Fig 1: The bank and stand c.1990.

Former 1st XV rugby player and Life Member of the club, Brian Platts, has been asking questions about the bank which runs parallel to the 1st XV Team pitch.

'The Bank! Why is it there, it's not a natural feature, so who put it there, when and why?

"The bank didn't always look like this, when I first joined the club the stand wasn't there. Spectators had a 2-step tier made from paving slabs that extended almost the full length of the bank and in the middle, where the new stand now sits was a shed made from corrugated steel sheets. I remember when something good happened on the pitch the onlookers who were lucky enough to fit in the shed would bang the metal sheets producing a sound reminiscent of thunder! Not all my memories of the Bank are good ones. On training nights, we would be instructed to go to the far end, sprint up the bank, run along the top towards the clubhouse and back to the start point and do it all again, sometimes with a partner on your back! The installation of a fence only added to the difficulty!"

But what about the when and the why? Well, to find out we need to speak to Bob McMaster. Bob has done extensive research and written articles on the "Industrial Heritage of DK" and I found the answer there. It goes all the way back to 1829 - the following is an excerpt from one of Bob's articles.

The Industrial Heritage of DK - The Bank



Fig 2: Club President Viscount Ednam, 1929/30 Season

Archive records for the season 1929-30 (the second season at Kingswinford) indicate that the club's President was **Viscount Ednam** (1894-1969) also known as **William H E Ward**, 3rd Earl of Dudley, MC TD. Viscount Ednam was a member of one of the Black Country's most prosperous families; his predecessors had inherited approximately 30,000 acres of mineral deposits, two hundred iron and coal mines, several iron works and a substantial fortune.

In the 1820s the success of the Earl's coal mines, and in particular the Corbyn's Hall Colliery located in the Pensnett area, was dependent on the ability to deliver coal to the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal as quickly as possible – the canal at that time was the most efficient means of distributing coal to developing industries around the country. The means of achieving success lead to the construction of the Shut End Colliery Railway, also known as the Earl of Dudley's Railway, the Kingswinford Railway or the Pensnett Railway. The railway line ran from Shut End, Pensnett, via the Dawley Brook area of Kingswinford and Wall Heath, to the Ashwood basin (coal wharf) located on the Staffs & Worcs canal. The railway (the first railway to be constructed in the Black Country) opened in 1829, ran for a distance of 3.75 miles and was home to the **Agenoria** steam engine built by **Foster, Rastrick & Co** of Stourbridge.

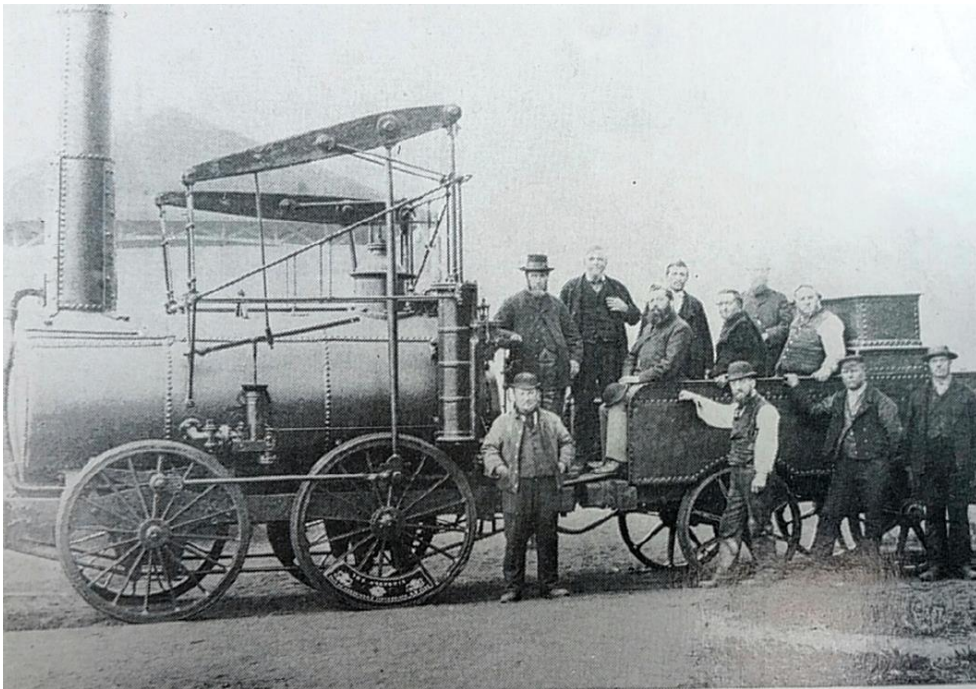


Fig 3: Foster and Rastrick's Agenoria at Shut End in 1887



Fig 4: Thankfully, the Agenoria survives to this day and is on public display at the National Railway Museum in York.

The lines to Askew Bridge, Baggeridge Colliery and Ashwood Basin were still in use in the 1950s, but the line from Dawley Brook Junction to Ashwood Basin was used for the last time in October 1953, when the National Coal Board ceased sending coal from Baggeridge to Stourport power station via the Staffs & Worcs canal.

When DKRFC acquired their new 1st Team rugby pitch located at the northern end of Penzer Street, Kingswinford, in 1928, match spectators were also in a position to observe the movement of Shut End rail traffic at the same time. The railway line ran adjacent to the pitch as it made its way towards Wall Heath.

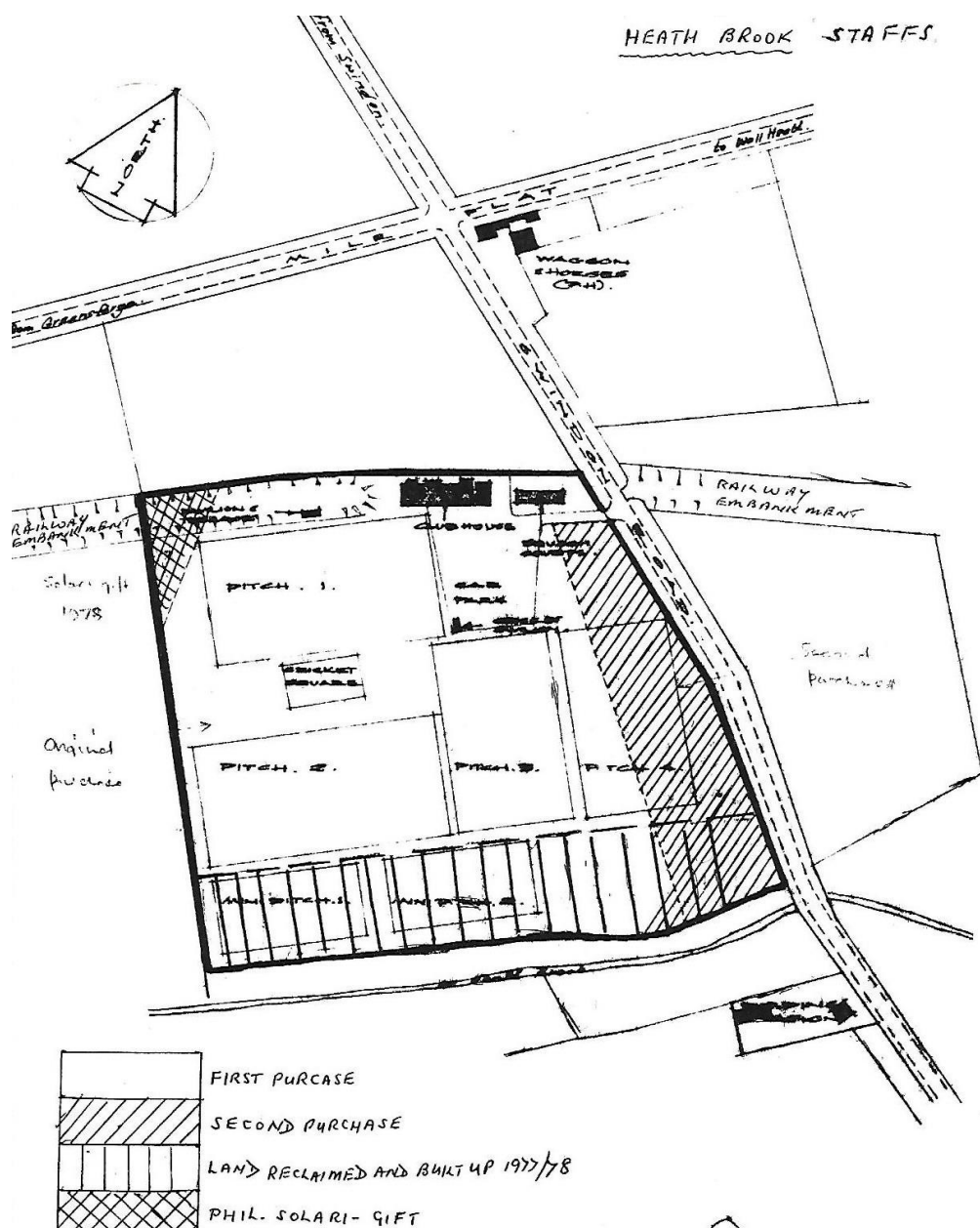


Fig 5: Drawing of rugby pitches and railway embankment at Heathbrook.

When the club relocated to Swindon Road in 1963 a section of the disused Shut End railway embankment, which leads to the Ashwood canal basin, was acquired along with the land that was destined for conversion to rugby pitches. Today, the section of embankment provides a vantage viewing point for spectators and has facilitated the construction of a spectators' stand.



The Agenoria has also been immortalised in brick. On the housing estate off Tansey Green Road which was the site of the old Shutt End Colliery can be found this brick reconstruction of the locomotive. *Fig 6*

Fig 6: The Agenoria at Tansey Green Road

'So there you have it, the DK Bank (the Bonk), is not just a great viewing point but it's part of the history of the Black Country.'

Footnotes 1 & 2.

1. The Agenoria (so-called after the Roman Goddess, who was supposedly the 'Goddess of Industry') was the very first steam locomotive to work in the Midlands or south of England. Today, it is the oldest locomotive on public display at the National Railway Museum in York.

2. While working on the Shut End Railway, Horatio Allen, who was touring England to acquire locomotives for the Delaware & Hudson Canal Co, USA, visited Rastrick of Stourbridge. He was so impressed with the Agenoria he ordered three engines. They were taken to the USA where one of these engines, called 'The Stourbridge Lion', has the singular distinction of being the first locomotive to turn a wheel on a commercial railroad in the United States at Honesdale, Pennsylvania. The remains of 'The Stourbridge Lion' are on display in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.