

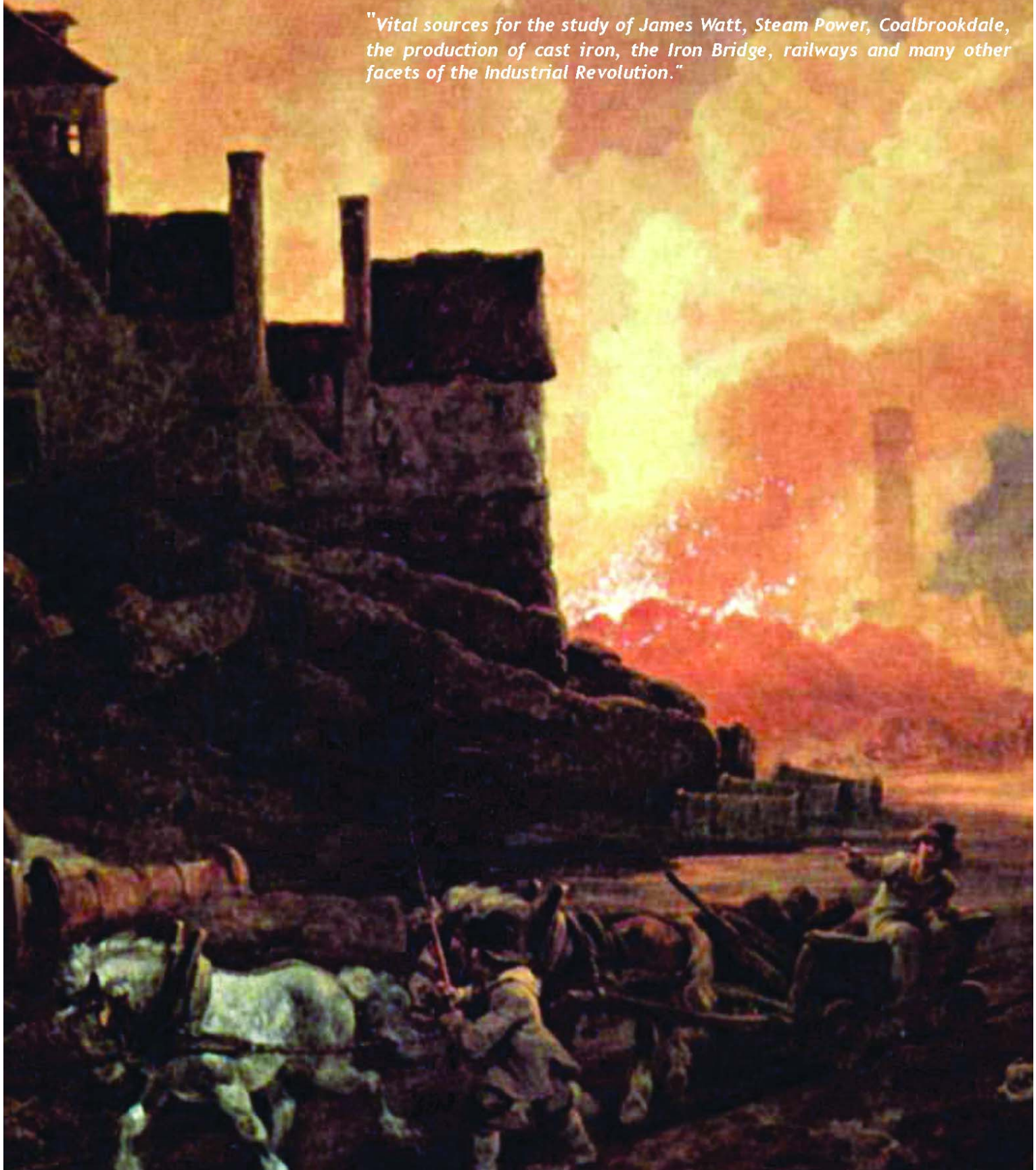
Industrial Revolution: A Documentary History

Series Four: Sources from the Record Offices in the United Kingdom

Part 3: The Papers of James Watt (1736-1819) and James Watt, Jr (1769-1848) from the James Patrick Muirhead Collection at Glasgow University Library

Part 4: The Darby Family, Coalbrookdale Estate and the Iron Bridge. Sources from Shropshire Archives

"Vital sources for the study of James Watt, Steam Power, Coalbrookdale, the production of cast iron, the Iron Bridge, railways and many other facets of the Industrial Revolution."



Coalbrookdale

“A vision of Hell on

The Iron Bridge

Earth”

James Watt, Jr

James Watt (1736-1819)

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“The Muirhead Collection is invaluable to understanding how the multifarious activities and achievements of James Watt - so thoroughly documented in other parts of the Adam Matthew Industrial Revolution microfilm collections - were interpreted to the wider world by those who most immediately guarded Watt’s literary estate and his reputation.”

David Philip Miller

School of History and Philosophy of Science
The University of New South Wales

There are four major sources for the study of the life and achievements of James Watt:

1. The Boulton & Watt Papers at Birmingham Central Library
2. The Muirhead Collection at Birmingham Central Library
3. The James Watt Papers formerly held at Doldowlod House
4. The Muirhead Collection at Glasgow University Library

The first of these was made available in Industrial Revolution Series One, Parts 1, 3, 5, 11-15. The second can be found in Series One, Parts 2, 6 & 8. The third can be found in Series Three, Parts 1-3. We now complete our coverage of this vital material with the Muirhead Collection from Glasgow.

James Patrick Muirhead is remembered as the biographer of the engineer and scientist James Watt senior, and a close friend of his son, James Watt Jr. The Glasgow Collection provides a mass of evidence relating to the life of James Watt senior and is full of insights into the way in which his reputation and achievements were managed.

There is fascinating material on his wide-ranging claims to be acknowledged as a great Natural Philosopher and also on the social status of engineers in Victorian Britain.

There are also important records concerning the Great Eastern steamship, the Soho engine works, Muirhead’s biography of Watt and his translation of Arago’s Eloge, family papers and journals of journeys in France and Italy by James Watt, Jr.

Part 4: The Darby Family, Coalbrookdale Estate and the Iron Bridge - sources from Shropshire Archives

Coalbrookdale has been described as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution because it was here that the Darby family pioneered the world’s first successful coke-fired blast furnaces. Their cast iron spanned the country in the form of railroad tracks. It was used in textile mills to replace the combustible wood of earlier frames. It was also used to create the iconic Iron Bridge across the River Severn.

In this part we offer access to a cluster of collections from the Shropshire archives describing the activities of successive generations of the Darby family of Coalbrookdale, ironmasters of the Industrial Revolution. We include:

- The Papers of the Coalbrookdale Company, including observations, memorandums, correspondence, reports, resolutions, articles of agreement and bonds.
- The Archives of the Iron Bridge, 1775-1861.
- The Deeds and Family papers of the Darby Family, ironmasters of the Industrial Revolution.

Scholars of the Industrial Revolution will be delighted to have access to these archives which describe the evolution of one of the central companies of the industrial age.



Adam Matthew Publications

orders and enquiries: ☎ +44 (0) 1672 511921 ✉ info@ampltd.co.uk 🌐 www.ampltd.co.uk