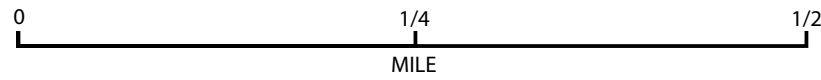
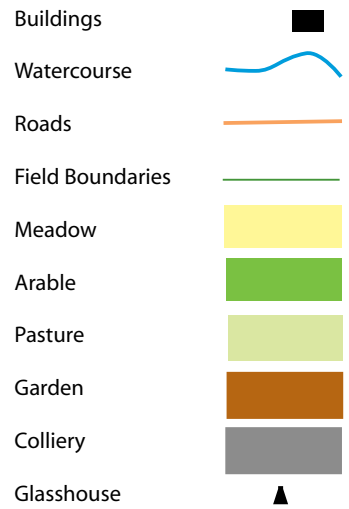


"Township" of Audenham with Brettell 1750



P E N S E T T C H A S E



Audenham Township

Audenham Township is in the parish of Kingswinford and within the county of Stafford. Its name is of early English (Anglo-Saxon) origin and is of two elements; a personal masculine name *Aude* and *ham* – at a bend in the river.

The bounds of Audenham are: Brettell Lane in the south, the River Stour in the west, Wordsley Brook in the north and the Brettell (Hawbush) boundary in the east. Audenham was a small area which was intensively cultivated in the late medieval period. Lands between Marsh Lane and Wordsley Brook in the east of the township were termed Leys and were the communities pasture lands. A number of meadows lay alongside the River Stour.

The earliest evidence of human activity was a Neolithic polished stone axe found close to Brettell Lane but it was not until the Anglo-Saxon period that we get any evidence of further occupation i.e. the name. By Domesday (1086) it was a township in the parish of Kingswinford, but it was not until later that the name was first recorded.

Audenham Brook ran through the middle of the township and the 18th century field patterns show that by that time that most of Audenham was comprised of plough lands. Nagers Field (a corruption of Negro Field referring to the black soil of the area) lay to the east. A Gibbet Field on the Brettell boundary referred to a gallows that once stood near by; no doubt malefactors that were caught in Pensnett Chase were hung there.

The inhabitants of Audenham belonged to a scattered community, if there was a centre it was close to the junction of Brierley Hill Road and the A495, but there were buildings erected at both roads. Close to this area was Dob Hill, where the early Dob Hill glass house was built which according to Guttery existed in 1710 and seems to have fallen down in the 1780's. The Compson's who held it for a while in the 18th century also held some of the surrounding land in the area. During the 18th century a gentleman's residence called Wordsley House was built between the Whitehouse Glassworks and the Wordsley Brook. The occupiers of the house became deeply involved in the growing industry of the area.

The open land of Audenham was enclosed in 1776 and the narrow strips of the open field system were turned into square and rectangular fields. Some of these arable lands were not used for farming for very long as in 1779 the Stourbridge No.1 canal, which rode across the watershed between the Wordsley and Coalbourne Brooks, was opened up and led to a rapid industrial development along its length. The glass cones that had been formerly by the main arterial routes now moved to the canal side.

By the 19th century glassworks occupied both sides of the canal: Whitehouse, Wordsley Flint, Audenham/Boulton and Mills, Albert, Jacobs Well and the Red House works. It was at the Redhouse Works that cameo glass was first reproduced after the secret of its manufacture was lost for over 1,500 years. The Webb's started a seed business which led to a huge countrywide industry, with the warehouses next to the canal in Audenham.

Coal mines, clay pits and fire clay pits opened up in the east part of Audenham. The largest was in Nagers Field. These works were accompanied by sand quarries which were dug out of the glacial material west of the A495. The glass industry began to decline by the turn of the century and by mid 20th century most of the works had ceased. This led to the building of dwelling houses over most of the township, a habit that has continued to the present day.

John Hemingway,

Notes: The base material for the composition of the 1750 map is the parish map of 1822, with other material gathered from local histories and documentary research.

Select Sources

D.R. Guttery, (1950) *The Story of Pensnett Chase*.

D.R.Guttery, *Notes on Kingswinford History*.

Grazebrook, H.S. (1888) *The Barons of Dudley*, William Salt Collection.

Kingswinford (1977) *Victoria County History of Staffordshire*, London.

Stenton, Mawer & Houghton, (1927) *The Place-Names of Staffordshire*, Oxford.

Tithe Map:1845

Thorn, Frank & Caroline (Ed) (1982) *Domesday Book: Staffordshire*, Chichester.

Brettell Township

Brettell was a township of Kingswinford in the county of Stafford. The place-name displays a great deal of corruption that seems to have occurred in the post-medieval period. The early name seems to have been a version of Bred Hill. This is likely to have derived from either a corruption of *Brit* (British) or *Brad* (Broad) Hill. The earliest reference to the place is a personal name, Thomas de Bredhill, recorded in the Lay Subsidy for Kingswinford in 1327. The fact that the *de* element meaning 'of' is used shows that he came from a place called Bredhill. Where the hill in question was is difficult to determine, but the site of the original settlement was on a flat part of the slope on Brettell Lane quite close to the Bull Street junction, so it may be conjectured that this was the original Bred Hill. The geology of the township is chiefly the coal measures.

The bounds of Brettell are; Coalbourne Brook in the south, this place-name presumably resulted from the waters flowing over an outcrop of coal which stained them. The western boundary was the arable lands of Audenham, the northern boundary Wordsley Brook and the eastern boundary is of an irregular pattern butting up against Pensnett Chase. It seems highly likely that the residents of Brettell had been encroaching on the Chase for many centuries and had reached Brierley Hill just before the 18th century enclosure.

The chief line of communication was Brettell Lane. This originally ran from Audenham through Brettell, across the Chase to the outskirts of Dudley Town. The fact that it predated Audenham and Amblecote suggests that as a route it is well over 1,400 years old. Although there was an arable field system around the village centre it seems likely that the agriculture was chiefly stock rearing, with access on to the Chase for grazing.

During the medieval and post-medieval period the main family were the Bredhill's. By the 15th century period they appeared to be wealthy enough to be educated. A John Bredhill became Rector of Kingswinford Parish Church and seems to have opened up a school there. He was also a firm favourite of Constance Sutton (Lady Dudley). This relationship may have inspired her son John to lead a raid on his rectory in 1432. The Bredhill's were not the only inhabitants of Brettell, in 1533 William Blakemore a '*customary tenants*' of the manor of Brethill gave an endowment of 5/- for masses to be sung at the parish church.

By the late 15th - early 16th century the name was starting to undergo some corruption, the 'd' was being changed to 't' and the 'h' being lost. This can be seen by the gradual way that personal names were being spelt. In a 1539 Muster Roll for Kingswinford a John Bretyll is recorded. By 1592 a William Brettell recorded in a document from the same area has suggested the name change is complete.

The township lasted as an agricultural entity until the 16th century when evidence of coal mining began. It was chiefly Brettell coal mining that drew Andrew Yarrington to the area with his canalised river. A plan drawn up by Andrew shows two rail lines leading to a wharf on his canal. Recent research has identified that the field pattern that Yarrington

drew is identical to the boundaries around Brettell village. It was due to the easy access of coal and their need for a cheap fuel, that glass workers began to operate in the area from the beginning of the 17th century. In the late 17th century Phillip Henzy, a glass master, bought up a substantial part of the township for £400 and renamed it Hawbush, the name that is generally used today for the area.

Communication must have always been a problem but with the building of the canal in the 18th century this was admirably solved. The canal ran from north-to-south opening up the whole of the township. Collieries, firebrick works, glassworks and foundries grew along its course. This was added to in the 1850's when the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway ran through the township. By the 19th century Brettell had become the centre for a great deal of the industrial activity in the area, but by the time of the decline of industry in the 20th century Brettell-Hawbush had been submerged in the greater Brierley Hill area. Although one or two industrial activities take place within the township it is now chiefly residential.

John Hemingway, 29th January 2005.

Notes: The base material for the composition of the 1750 map is the parish map of 1822, with other material gathered from local histories and documentary research.

Select Sources

M.A.Faraday The Lay Subsidy for Shropshire 1524-7, Shropshire Record Series 3. pp.32-33. & 103-195.

D.R. Guttery, (1950) The Story of Pensnett Chase.

D.R.Guttery, Notes on Kingswinford History, P 13-31.

Grazebrook, H.S. (1888) The Barons of Dudley, William Salt Collection.

Kingswinford (1977) Victoria County History of Staffordshire, London.

Stenton, Mawer & Houghton, (1927) The Place-Names of Staffordshire, Oxford.

Tithe Map:1845

Thorn, Frank & Caroline (Ed) (1982) Domesday Book: Staffordshire, Chichester.
