

Book Review

Late in 1999 Rev. Norman Ryder kindly sent me a copy of *Wealden Iron* published by the Wealden Iron Research Group in collaboration with the West Sussex County Planning Department. The issue is Bulletin No. 19, Second Series.

What is of particular interest about this is that it includes an article titled "Swedenborg's Description of English Iron-making" by Jeremy Hodgkinson and Anne Dalton which opens with the following statement:

In *Wealden Iron*, Ernest Straker made use of an illustration of the Gloucester furnace, Lamberhurst, from an 18th century treatise on iron entitled *De Ferro* written by Emanuel Swedenborg, which had been published in 1734. In the original treatise the illustration accompanied a chapter on iron-making in England which included a description of the furnace, as well as of Wealden gun production, and blast furnaces and forges in general. No complete translation of the treatise into English is known by the editor. (p. 47)

The authors then give an outline of Swedenborg's life that includes reference to his appointment as an Assessor "in the *Bergskollegium*, the Royal Swedish College of Mines" and to his trilogy titled *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia* that includes *Principia*, *De Ferro*, and *De Cupro* published in Dresden and Leipzig in 1734. The account of Swedenborg's life closes with

During a visit to England in 1745 Swedenborg received a vision which convinced him that his course lay in revealing the inner meaning of the Bible, and he abandoned the material concerns that had occupied him until then and, for the rest of his long life devoted his energies to propounding a Christian theology. He died in London in 1772. (pp. 47-48)

Following this is an informative commentary on the importance of natural resources to Sweden's economy, particularly iron ore. The background to Swedenborg's *De Ferro* is then given.

The state-inspired recognition of the importance of iron to the nation's economy stimulated visits to other iron-making areas of Europe by a number of individuals involved in the iron industry in Sweden, who reported to their colleagues on their observations. Swedenborg numbers among them. (p. 48)

The introductory material concludes with an account of the circumstances of the translation of several sections from *De Ferro* that were included in a French work *Descriptions des Arts et Métiers . . . translated from the Latin by Monsieur Bouchu, 1762*. The authors express gratitude "to Peter Dalton for his assistance with the translation of Bouchu's French, and to Tom King . . . for translating Swedenborg's original Latin . . ." (footnote 7).

The text includes the following sections: "The method of smelting ore and of remelting raw iron in England"; "Blast furnaces in England" (including a figure of the Gloucester Furnace, Lamberhurst); "Iron Blast Furnaces for casting guns in England"; "Forges in England"; "A new attempt in England to smelt iron in reverberatory furnaces using stone coal or mineral coal"; and "The English method of burning coal, and of removing the sulfur through calcining."

The substantial footnotes are an important part of this very interesting article that includes translation of parts of one of the few remaining texts of Swedenborg yet to be translated into English.

Erland J. Brock
Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania