

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir,

Further to my paper on the AD Lead Mines in Swaledale, Yorkshire, published in Bulletin Volume 11, No. 4, I should like to draw your attention to a major reinterpretation of the pre-nineteenth century smelt mills on Barney Beck. This affects the paragraph at the foot of the first column on page 211.

The current model for the history and location of these mills was proposed by Dr Raistrick, in his *Lead Industry of Wensleydale and Swaledale: The Smelting Mills*. This splits four mills (excluding the two on the Old Gang Mill site) between Philip Lord Wharton and his brother, Sir Thomas Wharton. I have been unhappy with this model for some time, hence my calling the mills Old Low, New and High, as per the available documents. Nevertheless, I retained the spatial and chronological elements of Dr. Raistrick's model.

On careful re-reading of the documentary sources, most of which have been published by the North Yorkshire Record Office, it became clear that the model was seriously flawed. Firstly, the accounts only refer to three mills on Barney Beck in the late seventeenth century. These were the Low, High and New Mills.

There were no smelt mills on Barney Beck in February 1668/69, when Swale and Barker leased the mines from Philip Lord Wharton. The lessees undertook to build one when production was high enough or Lord Wharton desired it. Dr Raistrick suggested that they did this almost immediately, but evidence shows that their ore was smelted at mills in lower Swaledale between 1671 and 1674. At the end of August 1674, however, Lord Wharton gave instructions 'That there be a tally kept at Swaledale Mill as the rest'. Thus, the first mill on Barney Beck was built in 1674, but we cannot tell whether it was the High Mill or the Low Mill. Whichever it was, the other mill was built by December 1682, when a valuation of lead in stock refers to Lord Wharton's mills, rather than mill, in Swaledale. A slag mill, later called the New Mill, was built near the Low Mill during 1685.

Dr Raistrick correctly placed the Low and New Mills near the nineteenth century smelt mill at Surrender, but he put the High (or Raygill) Mill, which he called Sir Thomas Wharton's High Mill, near the Old Gang mills. This is incorrect, because there is ample evidence that the High Mill was near the foot of Ray Gill. The fourth mill was Smith's or Philip Lord Wharton's High Mill, which is shown on the 1857 O.S. map. It does not appear in records relating to the Wharton mines and it was not until 1738 that Thomas Smith purchased the estates. Contrary to Dr Raistrick's suggested date of 1670, therefore, Smith's mill was probably built in the mid 1740s to serve his mines at Beldi Hill.

Other aspects of the model's spatial accuracy are also in question. There is a clear distinction between Lord Wharton's and Sir Thomas Wharton's mills. The former are always referred to as the high and low hearths in Swaledale, whilst the latter are just Sir Thomas Wharton's high and low hearths. Moreover, it is clear from the accounts that Sir

Thomas's hearths were in the manor of Ravensworth, which he purchased in 1675 from Leonard Robinson, who was the owner of one of the mills used between 1671 and 1674. Dr Raistrick believed that Robinson's mill was at Applegarth, but his proposed site for it was, to say the least, unlikely. It was based on a misreading of letters relating to the supply of chopwood from woods in Applegarth to Sir Thomas's newly acquired mill. Applegarth smelt mill does not exist, however. This leaves us with the question of the locations of Captain Robinson's and Sir Thomas's Mills. We have evidence of two mills in the manor of Ravensworth, both of them on Smelt Mill Beck. These are Whaston Copper Mill, and Gilling Mill. The former may possibly have been built by Robinson to smelt lead and, if so, it could have been the high hearth. Nevertheless, Sir Thomas's accounts only refer to one mill, that at Gilling, and the copper mill appears to be later. It is, therefore, more likely that Captain Robinson's Mill was an alternative name for the Gilling Mill, which he had owned. If the foregoing is correct, then Sir Thomas Wharton's high and low hearths were both at Gilling Mill. This hypothesis is supported by Dr Raistrick's drawing of the site, which he called Hartford Mill.

The fully developed arguments will appear as part of a *Gazetteer of Smelt Mills in Yorkshire and Lancashire*, in *British Mining* No.45 (November 1992).

Michael C. Gill.

Dear Sir,

Regarding the firesetting watercolour in PDMHS. Bulletin 11:4, p164-6. There is yet another mine called "Hope Mine" in Ireland at Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan (also called Dundalk Leadmine). However this is an unlikely place for the watercolour to have come from.

R. Alan Williams,