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**RAVENSTONEDALE**

N.G. Robinson

**SYNOPSIS**

*This short article covers the small trials around the limestone pavement near Ravenstonedale, Cumbria. Details were traced when researching the mines of Hilton and Murton.*

Ravenstonedale or Clouds Mines lie 2½ miles S.E. of the village of Ravenstonedale; they are situated on the limestone pavement at Stennerskeugh Clouds, on the lower slopes of Wild Boar Fell. The area of workings run for about one mile, with the largest area at the Southern end. These were mineralised joints carrying galena, baryte and calcite in the Great Scar Limestone and had been worked in the old days by open cast; a few shafts were sunk on one of the lead veins, and on the copper vein but the only attempt to try the veins in depth was by a level at the northern end behind High Stennerskeugh farm. The mines are very old, and were worked on a small scale for a number of years. There are 11 Lead veins, many of which are merely strings, 1 Tin vein (?), 1 Copper vein and Coal seam.

**Coal**

The coal seam outcrops in the side of Scandale beck; coal is also seen in two places on the top of Wild Boar Fell but has not been worked. On an old Boundary map of 1641 are three old coal shafts, and a place called Colliers Gutter. In September 1780, a Mr David Alderson of Nateby, made a survey of Ravenstonedale Coal and only two small seams lying in water were confirmed. A trial was made on these seams and by 1790, Roger Mayiton was working them. They were worked on a very small scale and by 1804 had been given up. A Mr John Bailey of Church Brough and Charles Holliday of Barras, Stainmore, made an offer of £25 a year provided it was let for a number of years; it is not known if anything became of this. The last working was in 1812, when John Bland was going to make some trials for coal but as nothing more appears in his letters little seems to have been done.

**Copper**

The Copper vein was worked by 10 shafts, with a level driven beneath them. There is another short trial level but this has not found the vein. On the shaft tips baryte and azurite are present but no production is known. The only copper smelt mill in the area was on the other side of Wild Boar Fell, above Aisgill Farm in Mallerstang, but was not built until about 1806 and was abandoned by 1812, so it is not known where the copper was sent for smelting. There is a small copper vein in one of the 1884 trials but not in a sufficient quantity to work.

**Lead**

The lead veins were worked by open cast trenches, some up to 6 ft. in width and 15 ft. deep. A small dressing floor was built but the waste tip from this floor is very small. It is very primitive and probably very old; the lead from the old workings was smelted in a bail hill on the spot. In Feb 1763, a Mr Summers, who had mines in Craven, wrote asking for a lease of Clouds, of which he had a good opinion but seems not to have obtained one as, over the next few months, offers came from a Robert Hunter & Co, John Nixon and John Henderson and Co, and from John Bowness and Thomas Fothergill, all for lead and copper. In 1790, a survey was undertaken by Joseph Armstrong, of Middleton in Teesdale but he found only one vein worth hushing. This is the vein (on the plan) that was supposed to be the continuation of the Keldside vein from Swaledale. He recommended to Lord Lonsdale that the London Lead Company work the vein. This concern acquired the lease in Dec 1802, at 1/5 duty, and started work at the northern end of the sett by sinking a shaft, but by August 1803, the vein had been lost. The workmen were then sent a little to the north and a new shaft was sunk and a very promising vein was discovered. "It is upward of a yard wide and nearly full of solid lead of the best quality" but by September the men had given up working the shaft, saying it was filling up with water and that they could not work it without a level being driven to drain it. On the 7th of July 1804, Thomas Dodd, the mine manager, put a stop to the trial. There were only small parcels of ore that were not worth washing. He thought the mine not worthy of pursuit and so ordered the workings to be covered up. The ore that was obtained was given to William Dawson and Anthony Metcalfe, but after duty, it was only valued at £5, so the largest company to work these mines pulled out. Two days later, Anthony Metcalfe, said that he thought Mr Dodd had not made a proper trial and had given the place a bad character by saying "If ever a man make a shilling of this mine I wish I may be taken by the French and shot dead". At this time, the 8 miners working at the mines were of the opinion that they were indeed worth working and Dodd had been wrong in his observations.

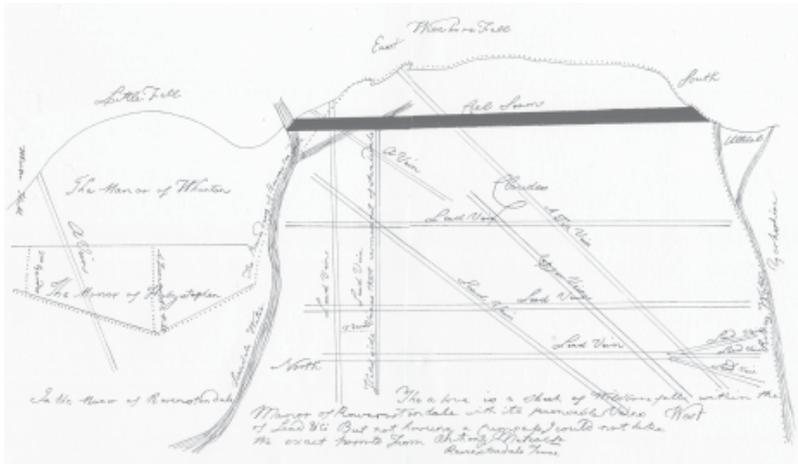
John Bland from West Wood, Barnard Castle, Durham, who was working nearby Murton mines, with John Richardson, acquired the lease and began to drive a horse level at the northern end of the mines on a vein thought to be the continuation of the Keldside vein from Swaledale. William Watson and 3 partners drove the level 40 fathoms and laid 30 fathoms of rail for £151.5.0. A waggon was made by Anthony Slee for £1.6.6 at Hilton, (the wheels coming from Newcastle and costing £2. 14s) the carriage of waggon and wheels being 18s. On the 23rd of Jan 1806, John Cousin, the mine Agent, was ordered to make up the mine pay bill. This came to £189.18.7½, half to be paid by Bland and half by Richardson. The level was then driven another 12 fathoms and a shaft was sunk from surface on to the level and then continued 5 fathoms below it. A second bill for £141.8.9d was made on Dec 12th 1806. A vein was found but not until December 1807, and the first ore was not got until the following May. Nothing is known until May 1810, when Bland reported they were doing well but could not do better as the farmers refused to let the men have water from the fell. On the 10th Feb 1812, there were only two men at work but not

paying their way as nothing new had been discovered. Bland intended to have one more last trial in spring. On the 15th, Bland wrote to John Cousin to make out the accounts, as on Monday he was going to discharge the men.

As the quantity of ore so far got was very small, Bland offered £3.15.0 per bingo. On the 29th, John Richardson chose to have his half of the ore sold before it was smelted. This was at a time when the price of lead was high; the duty on his ore was £5.12.6. The price immediately fell very rapidly and did not recover so Bland lost out. In May, plans had been made to start on further trials for lead and coal. Working continued on and off for the next seven years, and between July 22nd and September 22nd 1819, 10 bings of ore had been sent to Murton from William Watson, at a price of £4.10.0. This seems to be the last to be done by Bland and all his interest in mining was switched to Murton.

### The Last Attempts

In 1870, Henry Pease of Darling ton held the lease, but nothing seems to have been done by him and was given up by 1875. The last thing to be done was in 1884 when a company was formed with £10,000 in shares to open out the mine as a means of creating employment. One of the small trials in the face of the escarpment was driven on a small lead vein. This eventually cut a copper vein but was not very promising and was given up. Some work at Blands level was done before it was finally abandoned. So Dodd was right when he said "If ever a man make a shilling of these mines I wish I may be taken by the French and shot dead".



### REFERENCES

1. By permission of the trustees of the Lord Lonsdale Estate Trust. Copyright D/Lons/W. Letters and correspondence to Lord Lonsdale.
2. Cumberland and Westmoreland Herald.

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