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**THE LONDON LEAD COMPANY'S YORKSHIRE MINES:
A NEW ASSESSMENT**

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SYNOPSIS

This paper critically reassesses Dr Raistrick's 1973 paper on the activities of the London Lead Company in the Yorkshire Dales, and proposes some new conclusions in the light of more detailed evidence.

The activities of the London Lead Company in the Yorkshire Dales, especially in Wensleydale and Swaledale, were the subject of confusion until 1973 when Dr Raistrick wrote what is widely regarded as the definitive paper on the subject.¹ The latter paper was based on evidence from the company's minute books for the period 1733 to 1841, and it has been widely quoted by its author and others since. Unfortunately, it is impossible to check these references because the minute books were mistakenly included with material which was destroyed.²

The first to question the level of the company's involvement in Swaledale were Fieldhouse and Jennings who, in the late 1970s, remarked that "There is, however, no evidence that the company actually undertook mining operations in the dale".³ This view was also supported by Gill who, when writing of the AD Mines remarked that "One is forced to conclude, therefore, that the London Lead Company did little, if any, work here".⁴ Nevertheless, they did not seek to mount a more detailed challenge and it has become apparent to the authors, who have both researched and written extensively on the lead industry of the Yorkshire dales, that Raistrick's paper is unsatisfactory. On the basis of their work, therefore, this paper reassesses what is known of each area in which it was claimed that the London Lead Company worked and in most of them presents clear evidence to refute its involvement. For each area, the authors quote the minutes as recorded by Dr Raistrick and follow these with a detailed résumé of what is now known of its history. Minutes Regarding The Grinton Mines: 1733

31st August - Proposed to purchase the manor and lease of mines with smelt mill in Grinton for £2,800.

5th September - Purchased from Hugh Marriott for £2,625, mines in Grinton, Whitaside and Harkerside.

Committee to interview Duke of Bolton for farm of his mines in Swaledale.

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The intimation is, therefore, that the company got its first Yorkshire mine, at Grinton, in the autumn of 1733. This argument is seriously flawed, however, because Reginald Marriott, Lord of the Manor of Grinton and lessee of the Crown's minerals there, did not die until 1736 when he left both the manor and the rights to the Crown lease to his son, Hugh. Moreover, shortly after inheriting the lease, the latter demised the remaining term of the mining lease to Edmund Moore for an annual rent of £100.⁵ The latter renewed the lease in his own name in 1743, when it expired. Hugh Marriott kept the manor and it passed to his widow, Lydia, on his death. She conveyed it, along with the smelt mill and other buildings on the waste of the manor, to Caleb Readshaw in May 1756.⁶

The reference to the Duke of Bolton's mines, which Raistrick included with those for Grinton, belongs with the section on Marrick and is dealt with below.

From the foregoing, there are two clear points. Firstly, the mines were leased from the Crown and were, therefore, not Hugh Marriott's to sell. Secondly, in 1733 (the supposed date of purchase) Reginald Marriott, not his son, Hugh, owned the manor and the mining lease. This, the subsequent subletting of the lease to Edmund Moore, and the sale of the manor to Caleb Readshaw clearly demonstrate that the London Lead Company never took the Grinton mines.

Minutes Regarding The Wharton Mines: 1735-42

24th June 1735 - Proposed a lease of Lord Wharton's royalty in Swaledale for 31 years at 1/8th duty. This was changed to 1/7th for the first eighteen years and 1/6th for the remaining term.

Later note:- The Swaledale mines leased are: Old Rake Vein and Merryfield from the CrossP or Wood Shaft where the veins meet, eastward to Barnard Beck with all the ground between and 100 yards to north and south of the veins and also all the ground eastward from Barnard Beck. All ground from 100 yards south of Freeman's Vein to the River Swale and also all ground west of Gunnerside Gill.

18th May 1742 - Lease from Lord Wharton of Swinnergill eastward to the forefield of Lownathwaite Level and 800 yards westward and 400 yards breadth and liberty to follow all cross veins 1200 yards at 1/8th duty - changed to 1/7th.

The Wharton family's involvement in the area began in 1544 when, in an attempt to stiffen its northern defences, King Henry VIII granted the manor of Muker and a moiety of the adjoining manor of Healaugh to Sir Thomas Wharton.⁷ The Whartons derived an income from their lead and coal mines but there is no evidence of their direct involvement in mining until the late

17th century, when Philip Swale and Robert Barker's partnership with Lord Wharton is well recorded.^{8,9} The latter's son, Philip, the first Duke of Wharton, was a spendthrift and was described as unstable. He spent the family fortune so rapidly that, in 1718/19, an Act of Parliament was passed, vesting the manors of Aske, Cotherstone, and other lands in Yorkshire in the hands of Trustees, to be sold or mortgaged to begin repaying his mounting debts.¹⁰ Nevertheless, his debts increased and, on the 20th March 1721, Wharton was forced to convey the manors of Healaugh and Muker to Thomas Gibson, and John and Robert Jacomb in trust for £5,750.¹¹ Undeterred, he lost a further £22,000 in the South Sea Bubble speculations of 1722. After this he went completely off the rails and espoused the cause of the Young Pretender in the attack on Gibraltar by the Spaniards. For this act of treason he was attainted in 1729.

Philip was the first and last Duke of Wharton and, when he died in 1731, his estates were shared equally between his only sisters, Lady Jane Coke and Lady Lucy Morice. On the 24th April 1733, however, Letters Patent were issued placing all Wharton's realty and personality in the hands of Trustees for the payment of his debts.¹² The residue was reserved for the use of his sisters.¹³

In 1738, in order to raise cash, the Trustees sold the manors of Healaugh and Muker to Thomas Smith, of Gray's Inn, for £10,500.¹⁴ The sale reserved mines of lead, copper and iron ore in all the common and waste lands for the use of the Trustees, and Smith got the rights to the coal mines, including the Tanhill Colliery, which lay in the wastes. The ambiguous wording of the agreement, however, led to disputes which were not settled until the 1770's.

When the Lady Lucy Morice died without issue in 1739 her moiety returned to Lady Jane Coke. She, in turn, died in 1761 and left her estate to her niece, Anna-Maria Draycott, formerly Delagard, of Sunbury, Middlesex(15). The term niece was a sobriquet, however, because Clarkson tells us that "Lady Jane ... bequeathed the mines, the only property which remained after the payment of debts, to a Miss Ann Maria Draycott, whom she had brought up". This settlement, however, also made provision for the support of the dowager Duchess of Wharton (Maria Theresa) during her lifetime. A settlement made in 1726 gave her £1,200 annually, and orders of the Court of Chancery, confirmed in December 1752, refer to payments of an annuity. Between midsummer 1752 and January 1758, this amounted to £15,245.94.¹⁶ Anna-Maria Draycott married George Fermor, the 2nd Earl of Pomfret, in May 1764 and he prosecuted the mines vigorously.

The management of the estate and mines was left in the hands of Matthew and John Smales, of Gilling, until 1733 when James Close, of Richmond, took over.¹⁷ Direct working of the mines continued under the Trustees from

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the 1730s to the 1750s when Alexander Denton was the head trustee. The Trustees also granted leases of some mines and, in 1735, a company of national importance took a lease of the trust's lead mines on the south side of Swaledale, between Spout Gill, Keldside and Sleddale. This was the Company of Mine Adventurers of England, which was a joint stock company, established in 1698, with extensive mining interests in Cardiganshire and Montgomeryshire.¹⁸ The company does not appear in the 1736 account, probably because its mines were only developing and had not gone into production. Between 1750 and 1755, however, the output of ore from its mines varied between 14 and 162 tons, on which a duty of one-eighth was levied. The company built its own smelt mill at Spout Gill, a drawing of which, dated 1735, is preserved in the Egerton MSS, at the British Library.¹⁹ Another lease, to the Fryar Intack mine, was granted by James Close in November 1736.²⁰

The Trust's principal mines were those now regarded as the Old Gang but this name is never used in the accounts, which always describe them as 'the Lead Mines in Swaledale in the possession of the Trustees of the late Duke of Wharton'. The mines were in three groups (at Swinnergill, Lownathwaite and Merryfield) and worked all the veins described in the London Lead Company's minute.²¹

The first group of mines, those at Swinnergill, were the subject of a long running and often violent dispute, the records of which tell us much about the mines when the London Lead Company was interested in them.^{22,23}

In 1739 their new owner, Thomas Smith, laid claim to minerals under an area called Beldi Hill, on the west of Swinnergill, which he alleged was enclosed. In 1742, Smith leased the Beldi Hill mines to two brothers, John and Thomas Parke, and Leonard Hartley.²⁴ They drove a short level into the hill and developed a mine from it but soon found that the ore went deeper and pumps were needed. To alleviate this, they chose a much lower point from which Parkes' Level was driven for 366 metres to the mine. This cost £300 and took nearly 3 years.²⁵

The Beldi Hill Veins crossed the boundary between Smith's and the trust's royalties at Swinnergill and James Close, the trust's receiver, was given permission to view the vein in Parke's Level.²⁶ In 1749, therefore, Close sank several shafts and found the veins, calling them the Swinnergill Mine.^{27,28} Because Parkes' Level cut the veins near the boundary it also drained the trust's mine but, by the late 1740s, the Beldi Hill mine was nearing exhaustion and the company was seeking payment from the trust for the drainage which it was providing. When this was refused, in the spring of 1751, the Parkes' Level was dammed and water turned into the Beldi Hill Shafts, thereby flooding the Swinnergill Mine. The trust's workmen destroyed the

watercourses leading to the shafts and watchmen were set, with orders “to acquaint the agents with what they see done at different times”.²⁹ The flooding caused roof-falls in the mine, which also had to be cleared. The matter does not seem to have been resolved for, on June 6th 1751, a bargain was let for a new level to drain the Swinnergill shafts. This was 117 metres long, to the Sun Vein, and took eight miners, working day and night, until the 24th September 1752 to complete it. James Waggett and his partners were paid £130.00 for that contract.³⁰

After the trust was wound up, the mineral rights passed to Anna-Maria Draycott and, in 1769, her husband, the Earl of Pomfret, claimed the minerals at Beldi Hill, which belonged to Thomas Smith. This lengthy dispute had begun in 1742, and the affidavits submitted in that case give a clear impression of the violent tactics employed by the mob protecting Pomfret’s pretended interests but at no time refer to a third party, like the London Lead Company.

The accounts also show that the London Lead Company made no duty payments in 1735-36 or between 1750 and 1756, when the Trustees were making regular bargains and paying the miners at Swinnergill, Lowanthwaite and Merryfield.^{31,32} This also applied to the veins running east from Barnard Beck and the complete absence of any references to the Company must, therefore, be taken as conclusive evidence that, whatever its intention, it never began mining in this area.

Minutes Regarding The Marrick Mines: 1747

11th June - Lease of the mines of Marrick, Swaledale, from Edward Powlett for 31 years at 1/8th farm.

The Mineral Lord of the Marrick liberty, which includes the Hurst and Copperthwaite mines, in 1747 was not Edward Powlett but William Powlett. In fact, there never was an Edward Powlett.³³ Moreover, the precise title to the Hurst mines under the Powlett family has been the subject of some confusion. The following summary will clarify matters.³⁴ Charles Powlett, Marquis of Winchester, later the first Duke of Bolton, purchased practically all of the manor of Marrick in February 1683. On his death in February 1698/9, however, instead of the manor passing to the duke’s eldest son, it was bequeathed (by entail) to his second son, Lord William Powlett, for life. After his death, the manor went to the Hon. William Powlett, first son of the said Lord William Powlett.^{35,36} After 1699, therefore, the Dukes of Bolton were no longer Mineral Lords at Marrick, even though it remained in the Powlett family.

Nevertheless, there is a gap of 90 years in our knowledge of the working of these mines which coincides with the proposed lease. In the eight years from

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1711 to Michaelmas 1718, when they were leased for 21 years to four partners, the mines had an average annual output of 293.61 tons of lead.^{37,38} Moreover, the schedule of workings attached to that lease, give a clear impression of the mines' extent. Under the new company, however, the mines proved poor. The annual average was 29.65 tons, and the company gave up in 1727 after doing very little work. What happened between then and 1782, can only be inferred from Jackson's survey of the manor of Marrick for William Powlett-Powlett, which was made in the latter year.³⁹ This shows that the mines were well developed. Several deep shafts had been sunk on the Copperthwaite Vein, the Shaw Level had been driven to try the Wallnook Vein, and the Nungate Level was working the Hurst Veins.

It is strange that the Company should have mistaken the name of the person who had granted it such a potentially important lease. Nevertheless, there clearly was at least one significant period of working, between 1727 and 1782, when the Main Limestone, in particular, was developed systematically at depth. A lease with a duration of 31 years would easily have allowed a major company, like the London Lead Company, to do this. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, therefore, Marrick is the only part of Swaledale in which the Company may have worked.

Minutes Regarding The Fremington Mines: 1827

Mr Wharton of Skelton Castle offered his Manor of Arkengarthdale but it was again declined.

This statement is inaccurate because the Whartons had no interest in the manor of Arkengarthdale. In the adjoining manor of Fremington, however, the Crown owned the mineral rights and since 1598 had leased them to the Wharton family, of Gillingwood, at the annual ancient rent of 20s, but no details of their tenure or duty returns have been found.

Charles I sold the manor of Fremington to Francis Bradock and Christopher Kingscote, both of London, in February 1636/37. The king retained the minerals, and Bradock and Kingscote soon sold the manor to the Freeholders who have held it ever since.⁴⁰ The Enclosure Act for the latter, passed in 1771, confirms that the manor was held by the Freeholders and makes no mention of the Wharton's owning land There.⁴¹ Moreover, because the Crown let the minerals jointly with those of Grinton, Wharton was unable to offer the manor on his own account. The only mines of any consequence in Fremington were at Fell End and, in 1827, they were being worked by Messrs Jaques, Knowles and Tomlinson, who were also lessees of the Hurst mines.^{42, 43}

Minutes Regarding Mines In Upper Wensleydale: 1734-40

1734 - 15th February 1733/34: Treat with Edward Wortley Montague for his mines in Wensleydale.

- 22nd October: part of the manor of Wensleydale leased.

1738 - March: (Stagsfell mine is working = ? Sargill).

1740 - Lunds leased.

Edward Wortley, husband of Lady Mary Wortley Montague, bought the manor of Wensleydale, or Dale Grange, from Henry, Viscount Lonsdale. This was in 1723, after which the manor became known as High and Low Abbotside. The former included Cotterdale, Lunds and Fossdale. When Wortley died, in 1755, he left his estates to his daughter Mary for her life, and then to James Archibald Stuart, her second son, who then demised them to his eldest son John Stuart. The latter died unmarried and, in 1797, the estates passed to James Archibald Stuart Wortley Mackenzie who was created Baron Wharncliffe in 1826.^{44,45,46} Lord Wharncliffe was still lessor of Sargill in the 1860s.⁴⁷

Both of the above areas are in the Parish of High Abbotside, near Hawes, which is on the western margin of the mineralised area in Swaledale and Wensleydale. Dr Raistrick suggested that the Stags Fell and Sargill mines were one and the same place, but this was not so.⁴⁸ The former worked the southern (SSW) end of the Lover Gill Vein, and the latter was on the southern (SSE) extension of the Providence Vein. At their junction in Swaledale, both were worked under the name of Glover Gill Mine by the Company of Mine Adventurers of England. Very little is known of the history of lead mining in High Abbotside but, with the exception of Sargill Level, which appears to date from the early nineteenth century, it was all very small scale or, in case of the area around Lunds, practically barren. The Stags Fell vein was worked from opencuts alongside the Butter Tubs road, and there were also some shallow shafts and a level, driven under the Main Limestone from Fossdale Gill. The absence of galena on the tips suggest that very little ore was found.

The Stags Fell area is, nevertheless, the only one for which incontrovertible proof of the London Lead Company's interest has been found. In September 1734, the company set its seal to a lease of that part of Wortley's manor which was to the east of Fossdale Beck.⁴⁹ The boundary of this area, which was divided into three parts, the enclosed lands; Little Stags Fell; and Great Stags Fell, appears to exclude Sargill.

The foregoing supports Dr Raistrick's assertion that the London Lead Company leased Edward Wortley's mines in 1734. If Sargill was excluded, however, it is impossible to rate the mines as anything more than short-lived and highly speculative trials.

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Minutes Regarding The Bowes Manor: 1841
Lord Strathmore offered Bowes Manor.

This statement is also wrong because the manor of Bowes was owned by the Freeholders, and its minerals were owned by the Pulleine family, of Crakehall.^{50,51,52}

Like the Lunedale area of Teesdale, Bowes was part of the old North Riding of Yorkshire until 1974, but it is now part of County Durham. The Closehouse and Lunehead mines, in the Parish of Lunedale, were worked by the London Lead Company but are well outside Bowes.

Conclusion

Dr Raistrick's paper was based on fragmentary minutes which were both confused and imprecise. Nevertheless, when they were read outside the context of a detailed knowledge of events within the liberties concerned it is easy to see how they were mistaken for actual leases. Notes on negotiations which, with the exception of the manor of Wensleydale, came to nothing were thereby given a spurious authenticity.

Since 1973, however, knowledge of Dales lead mining has been greatly expanded. A number of widely dispersed sources have been examined and synthesised into monographs. This has both led to a new understanding and raised a new generation of questions. Not the least important of these relates to ownership.

As this paper shows, with the important exception of Lunedale, and contrary to Dr Raistrick's assertions, the London Lead Company was absent from most of Yorkshire. Even in Marrick, the one liberty where the lack of evidence to the contrary leaves room for doubt, it is unlikely that such a major company could have remained so anonymous.

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NYCRO	North Yorkshire County Record Office
PRO	Public Record Office
VCH	The Victoria History of the Counties of England. A History of Yorkshire North Riding
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