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THE EAST LAYTON COPPER MINE IN YORKSHIRE AND ITS COST BOOK

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The township of East Layton lies some six miles from Richmond and eight from Catterick, in the northern part of the North Riding. A rural township, it had a population of but 95 at the first national census in 1801, 120 in 1811 and 137 in 1821.¹ Possessed of workable veins of copper ore, in 1754 Layton is described as a place where “*copper is got*”, and its workings for copper as then old, very old, and ancient. Hornshaw, writing on the copper mining industry at nearby Middleton Tyas, suggests that the copper ore in East Layton was obviously not considered worth exploiting after the 18th century, but the present writer has recently purchased a volume of accounts which takes the story of copper mining at East Layton into that period and on some scale of expenditure of capital.^{2,3}

Output from the huge Parys Mountain copper mines in Anglesey fell from the early 19th century, as did the numbers of employees there - from 207 in 1806 to 122 in 1808 - and in 1812 only 383 tons of ore were produced at one of the mines there. Other British mines, especially but not exclusively those in Cornwall, were of course still producing copper ores. It was in the period of Anglesey decline that the mining venture at East Layton was made; one can but suggest a possible connection in relation to the new inadequacy of ore supplies. In fact, as Anglesey revived from 1813, so did its tiny counterpart at East Layton fail.⁴ Presumably at East Layton the (usual) sanguinity in relation to the potential of the ore applied to the mine.

The Layton venture was run on the cost book system popular in Cornwall, whereby capital was put up only as required, and our volume of accounts describes itself as the Cost Book of the mine. Such a Cost Book is a relatively rare survival in Yorkshire, where they were more often known as Reckoning Books. This one covers the years 1810 to 1813, although it also alludes back to 1806, when apparently the venture was begun. It refers at the mine’s end to “*the first Proprietors*” and the “*last*” proprietors, and it seems possible that this is the cost book of the latter group. As it describes expenditure alone, rather than income, it is likely that no ore was ever sold.

The business was probably run initially by William Clay, who was described as an esquire and who had an office in London, but Thomas Lumley & Partners ran the mine during the period of the volume under consideration. Lumley is hard to identify, but from the pedigrees he appears not to be of the Earl of Scarborough’s family. Thomas Wilkinson, an esquire, who was apparently connected with the mine, stayed with Thomas Barber, the land owner of East Layton and probably the major lessor of the mines, in 1810.

Between August 1806, when the mine was begun, and April 1810, when probably the partnership changed and certainly this new Cost Book was opened, £4284 3s had been

spent, £2316 5s 10d of that being in the first year's development. In 1810, Thomas Lumley & Partners placed an order with Boulton & Watt for a 50 inch, 8 foot stroke, parallel motion steam engine, of 53.3 h.p., to lift water 48 fathoms (88 metres), and the old engine was sold, after advertising seven times in the York and Newcastle newspapers.⁵ A new engine house was built in 1811, presumably to house the new Boulton & Watt engine. It seems to have cost but £15 for materials - perhaps including the old ones? - and £25 18s 8d for the masons' work. The partnership at East Layton used the Darlington bank from August 1806, presumably that of Jonathan Backhouse & Co., established in 1774.⁶

The land owners at East Layton were described in c1840 as being Charles Mitchell and William Collings esquires "*and several smaller owners*", and four East Layton freeholders had voted at the great Yorkshire election of 1807, including the then landowner Thomas Barker, who voted Tory.^{7,8} In 1810, the mine manager was Capt William Vivian, who maintained the Cost Book. He was paid a substantial three guineas a week and conducted the affairs of the partnership. The four labourers at the mine were paid 3s 6d a day in 1810. In the same year, coal was bought by the bushel from five dealers and two new slides for the engine were purchased.

From the autumn of 1810, the number of employees increased. A smith and a roper sent in accounts for their work done, while the labourers were joined by a carpenter on monthly wages. Considerable sums were spent on stone, brick and timber (oak, ash and elm), and on nails, and carriage to East Layton was a considerable extra cost. A mason was employed at 3s 4d a day (but only for five days), while the labourers worked between one and twenty-five days in the month. In the first quarter of 1811, the men and an apprentice worked for only between three and twenty days in the month, but in May 1811, presumably in anticipation of getting the new engine to work, the men were more fully employed. No reference is made to miners: perhaps they were employed on a "bargain" basis. Tallow and candles were bought and £5 was paid towards Messrs Boulton's account. The sum of 4s 8d was paid "*for Making underground Cloths*". Two enginemen seem to have been unsuccessful in their work and there were expenses to Newcastle "*getting an engineman*". George Taylor "*Engineer*" was employed at £4 a month, plus the cost of his lodgings. The new engine was got to work fully in December 1811, with celebratory drinkings. It was then operated by John Fenis & Co., at 75 shillings a week, but it also had to be "*watched*" (by others). Whilst watching normally means simply minding the engine or waterwheel, it is worth remembering that this was the period of Luddism.

By April 1812, the number of labourers had increased to 10, plus blacksmith and carpenter, and Capt Vivian (at three guineas) was assisted by Capt William Buxton (at two guineas, until his pay was reduced at the end of 1812 to 30 shillings and he left). The only reference to underground work, apart from payment for drills sharpening, is in 1811 when Foster, Caine & Co. were paid for driving a level 38 feet at 30 shillings a fathom, and when Thomas Pattinson & Co. (he was one of the labourers) were paid for driving north from the shaft 28 feet at £7 10s per fathom, and again for driving 35

feet 6 inches and 6 feet and 7 feet 6 inches at £13 a fathom. References are made to the purchase of powder (for blasting), and to cleaning the boiler.

The mine was last worked in December 1812, and on March 16th 1813 the engine and mine materials were sold at auction, after the circulation of a printed handbill by one Richard Richardson, auctioneer. I have found no advertisement in the Leeds Intelligencer or the The Times newspapers. The engine went to Cockfield Colliery, near Darlington. William Vivian was paid at the usual three guineas until June 19th, 1813.

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