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LAKE DISTRICT SLATE IN THE MID-18TH CENTURY

by John Goodchild

INTRODUCTION

The following letter, which gives an insight of the Lake District slate industry in the mid-18th century, was purchased by The John Goodchild Collection at Wakefield.

April 8th.

Sir

Your Mother was Informing me that a Gentelman of your Aquentance had been Inquiring after our Waistmoarland slate and that, you had sent, a letter to know the Expencc of it so she desired me to give you as True account as I Could because she knew that I had been Conserved In that way I was this last summer in Yorkshire at Hovingham near Malton lying on four score load for one Esq Worsley and at a nother place Caled wood end hall near Thirsk for one Esq Tobat a very large new bilding which took tow hundred and twenty load I was their til Christmas and we had all the slate of Robert Wilson of long sledail which I understand is a relation of yours a very honest Man and We give for the slate one shiling and Eyght pens pr load at the quarry and that load is sixteen stone weight and seventeen or Eyghteen load will be one of your Roods which I supose is seven yds squair that makes forty nine yds to the Rood and this slate we had Coming all by land the quarry man lyess it at Setberg for three shilings and Eyght pens pr load In Cluding the prise of the slate which is ten miles from the quarry that cost tow shilings and nine pens pr load more which we Call twenty miles furdur and then they Carid it in their own Wagins this is only to let you know What the Charg is at What distance for what way it must Come to you I Canot tell your Mother desired to be remembd to you and she has been very mutch out of helth of late but is got in good order again which is all at present from your frind and servant At Command Reginald Sharp” Letter addressed to Rev. Mr Atkinson, Thorp Arch near Tadcaster, Yorkshire. Calculations on letter relate to carriage by land via Settle, or Skipton, or by sea (including carriage from Long Sleddale to the ship) via Airmyrn and Tadcaster. Note says a ton of these slates will cover about 27 yards: Hawkshead fine slate (put on board at Greeod (sic)) will cover 23 or 24 yards per ton. This letter is not dated. Christopher Atkinson was vicar of Thorp Arch near Wetherby from 1749 to his death in 1774; major works had been going on at Wood End, Thornton le Street, about 1760, and also at Hovingham. The letter may have brought information relating to slate costs, required by the squire at Thorp Arch, William Gossip (1705-1772); Thorp Arch Hall still stands, but is undated by Pevsner.

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