

MEMOIRS 1964

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STONE THAT HURT TOE BROUGHT RICHES

The Northern Echo, Darlington.

WE ARE INDEBTED TO THE EDITOR OF THE NORTHERN ECHO,
DARLINGTON FOR GIVING US PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE
THIS ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE PAPER ON MONDAY
17th. FEBRUARY 1964.

“Who did first discover that there was ironstone in the Cleveland hills? There is a popular local myth that it was Mr. John Vaughan, one of the original partners in Bolcklow Vaughan and Co. (the predecessors of Dorman Long).

The story goes that he was shooting in the hills when he stubbed his too against a piece of stone which was so hard and heavy that it hurt. He picked it up and found it was ironstone.

Many doubts have been cast on this version and it seems fairly clear that the existence of Cleveland ironstone was known before Mr. Vaughan’s discovery, if, indeed, there is any truth in that story.

Originally small quantities of ore were collected from the beach at Skinningrove where the Cleveland ironstone seems to outcrop.

Mr. George Okey, of 69 Heythrop Drive, Middlesborough, claims it was his great-great-grandfather, Mr. S.F. Okey, who discovered that Cleveland ironstone existed in workable quantities.

[24]

He has a cutting from The Northern Echo dated May 31 st, 1884, reproducing a letter written to the editor by the same Sam Fred Okey which includes a pay bill for 1847.

This shows that £7 17s 6d was paid to six gatherers and loaders and four carters for collecting and transporting 94 tons of ironstone found on the beach.

Two glasses

Later he acquired the rights to work ironstone from a landowner Mr. A.L. Maynard, who took him inland and showed him where there were large quantities of ore. He agreed to pay a royalty of 6d a ton to Mr. Maynard for the working rights, a concession which he made over to Mr. James Burlinson.

Mr. Okey records that after witnessing the signing of this contract he returned to Middlesborough to catch a train home to Witton le Wear but he thought he would call at the offices of Bolcklow and Vaughan to show them a sample of ironstone.

He saw Mr. J. Vaughan and told him that he had seen a seam between five and six feet thick. This surprised Mr. Vaughan who doubted whether this was possible.

But Mr. Burlinson either did not know he was on a good thing or was so dilatory in working the Maynard concession that he had not started work on the deposits by the following year.

After being prodded by Mr. Okey, Mr. Burlinson still made no move and accepted Mr. Okey's advice to transfer his concession to Rosebys.

Asked what he would take to transfer the rights, Mr. Burlinson replied, 'A glass of brandy and water', and later he settled for two glasses of brandy and water.