

FORD MINE, NEAR GRINDON, NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

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Abstract: Excavation of a little known mine at Ford, near Grindon, south west of Ecton is described along with details of the known history based on recently acquired contemporary documents.

This mine was reopened during 1977 for the first time in perhaps a century or more. and, coincidentally, the excavators acquired mining papers relating to the North Staffordshire ore field. These papers included a mining lease of land at Ford.

The lease was of land owned by James and Daniel Smith, described as being farmers "of the Ford" in the parish of Grindon. Unfortunately, the land is not identified, but as the mine is on the only recorded vein in the area it may reasonably be assumed to be the one concerned. The lease, dated 26th October 1836 was to Edward Forbes of Douglas, Isle of Man. He was the father-in-law of Melville Attwood.

The lease was of "every the mines veins seams pipes groves rakes beds floats and holes of Lead and Copper Ore, caulk and Calamine and other Metals and semi metals and Minerals whatsoever that now are or which shall or may hereinafter be found...". This is so generalised that no actual mine may have existed prior to the lease. The latter was for 21 years at a yearly rent of 5/- (25p) and a royalty of 10%.

Attwood was a young man, very much an up and coming mining entrepreneur. He was born in 1812 at Prescott Hall in Worcestershire. The above lease was not the only interest Mr Forbes had in North Staffordshire. A lease exists (Kirkham / Porter Collection) between Edward Forbes and The Revd Sir Augustus Brydges Henniker, described as a Clerk and Baronet, for the exploitation of lead and copper mines in Grindon for 21 years from 1st September 1838. An annual rent and royalty was agreed as at Ford.

A draft lease dated September 1836 also survives between Forbes and John Lomas and George Salt. This relates to the Roylege Mine at Upper Elkstones.¹ It was on the same terms and conditions and there was a requirement to keep four men at work. It is known that Forbes was negotiating with Henniker as early as 10th August 1835 and there are indications that agreement for the Roylege mine had been reached at that date despite the actual lease being over a year later. Although the lease is only in draft form, it must have been signed for there is correspondence later relating to a breach of covenant about the requirement to keep four men at work. The history of the Elkstones area is currently under review by Porter and Kirkham and will be the subject of a separate paper.

Jim Rieuwerts has discovered that Attwood was working at Chrome Hill near Glutton Bridge. The Chatsworth Collection has a Hartington and the Granges Barmaster's Book with the following entry for January - June 1842 (page 45). It states "put Izaak Wain (for the use of Melville Attwood Esq) into possession of twenty meers of ground in an old vein situate upon Croome Hill - beginning at the side of the River Dove near an old level and all ranging northwardly from the said river. Also three cross veins". It must have been Forbes who introduced Melville Attwood to

Ecton, although this may have been as late as 1839 when he is understood to have returned from Brazil.² However what brought him to North Staffordshire is not clear. An Ecton account book for 1840³ states for January and February of that year "Ecton copper ores sold by Messrs Forbes and Co to Sneyd". The Whiston Account book⁴ shows the same purchases although the payment was made to Melville Attwood. In fact the earliest reference to Attwood in the Whiston accounts is 14th January 1840. Prior to that, all references to the Ecton account state "paid the Ecton Miners". The Whiston works seems to have taken all the local copper ore at this period and there is no reference to Ford, although there is a single reference to Grindon on 19th April 1837 when 2ton 15cwt 1qtr of ore was purchased from "Stoddard of Grindon at £2.2.6d per ton, 3.5^s produce". The amount paid was £5.15.10d. As the Forbes lease for the land held by the lord of the manor, Sir A.B. Henniker, is dated 1838, it seems possible that this could have related to Ford or possibly Hurst Low, see below.

By February 1840, the Ford Mine had turned out to be a disappointment: "the adjoining trial in Mr Smith's ground has turned out so very contrary to all expectations that I've no reason to expect it will be worth trying the ground of Sir Augustus" (Forbes to Messrs Cruso and Co, Solicitors, Leek). However a year later, Forbes was contemplating the float of a Company "for working more extensively the Ford Mines" (Forbes to Cruso). Whether this actually was successful is not known, but it seems doubtful.⁶

There is no evidence to suggest that Ford Mine was reworked after the Forbes venture terminated. Clearly Attwood was more interested in Ecton, following which he went to Cumbria and then to Nenthead before emigrating to the USA with his wife.⁷ Whether he was actually involved is unclear but there are two intriguing references in the Ecton Cost Book 1830-1860.⁸ These are: "20th May 1844 Sampson Sutton care of Mr Attwood's House during the arrest 7/-" and "January-April 1845 Mathew Redfern hay for Mr Attwood's horses during the arrest £3.0.0d".

The level was first visited by Lindsey Porter in 1972. There was a sizeable tip with a lot of water issuing from the rear of it, close to a small stream. There were samples of copper ore in the tip. Some of the latter has been removed recently. It consists of shaley dark limestone and shale but no mineralisation was found.

It was not possible in the time available to find the level entrance although we were left with a feeling that it had probably collapsed, maybe deliberately. It was felt that the water was issuing from a point above the level and work was abandoned in favour of a short shaft which was sunk above and to the east of where water was issuing. The shaft was about 100 feet from the pool of water which probably marks the sough tail. The point chosen was at the beginning of a long sunken trench, now partially covered by hawthorn scrub. The significance of the trench was

unknown, although divining rods seemed to indicate that it was above the level.

The shaft was sunk through soil and then shale to a depth of approximately seven or eight feet where the roof of the level was breached. The work was undertaken by Len Kirkham with various helpers. Permission to dig was given by the farmer, Mr Alcock and the diggers benefited from much advice, encouragement and even coffee provided by the adjacent land owner, Mr Dennis Middleton of Dairy House. He had been responsible for showing the level to Lindsey Porter in 1972.

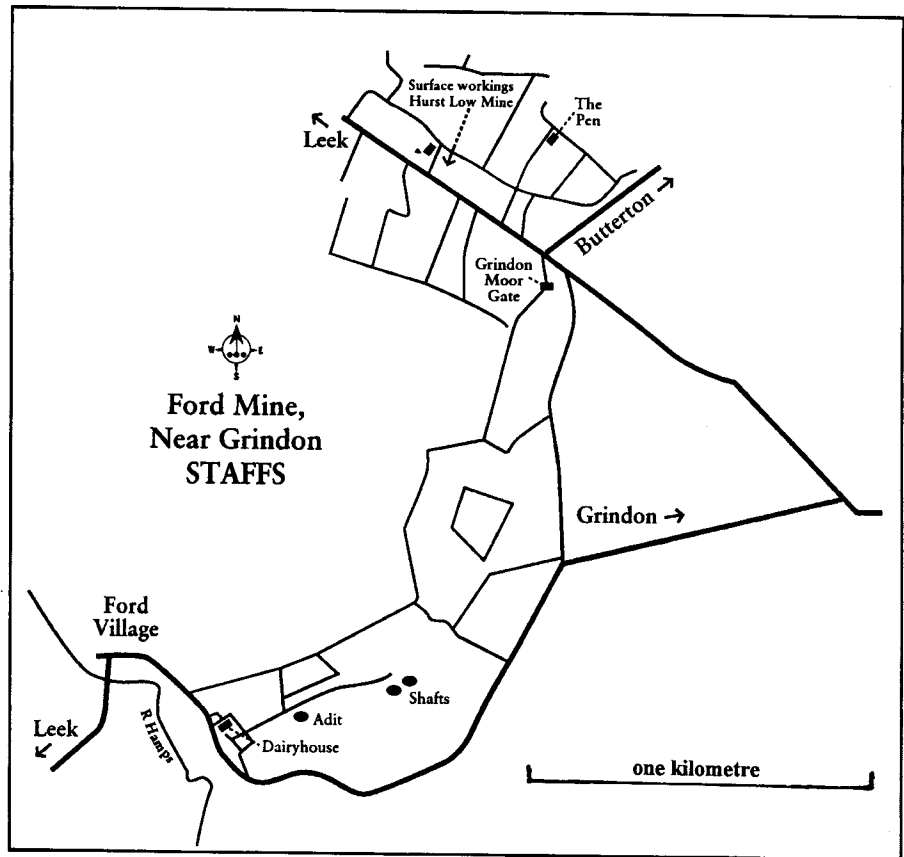
A significant quantity of water was syphoned away allowing access into the level. It had originally been strengthened by wooden supports from floor to roof and a horizontal section reinforcing the roof. Since the closure of the mine, the roof has collapsed creating a significant void above the timberwork. Presumably the collapse observed on the surface was associated with this. The level was penetrated approximately 200 feet to a blockage. It was possible to see further along the level to another fall at a further distance of 30 to 40 feet. The part of the level explored was primarily in beds of dark grey limestone with no sign of mineralization. The timber work was observed beyond the fall with a lot of ochre coating everything. The width of the level was initially about 4 feet wide, increasing to about 5.5 feet in the bedded limestone. The level had been drilled using explosives and the shot holes were approximately one inch in diameter.

The release of water from the level also allowed pent up black damp to move down towards the entrance. Further exploration was therefore abandoned and the entrance sealed. The level was photographed prior to withdrawal. Because of the existence of this gas, the mine should not on any account be reopened.

Exploration of the fields above the level revealed the existence of two possible shafts which could have been associated with the level. The mine is situated at the southern end of a vein marked on the Geological Survey map.⁹ The vein extends north to Grindon Moor where disturbed ground exists by the road to Grindon from Butterton Moor. Copper ore has been noted in the remaining tips in this area (see below).

Ford Mine was probably no more than a trial and it is not even known if it was financed by Mr Forbes himself or possibly his venture at Ecton. Clearly much exploratory work was being undertaken at this time - there were Companies exploiting Ecton, Dale and Mixon at this date for instance - and Mr Forbes would seem to have been a serious investor beyond the three principal mines in the ore field during the 1835-1845 period¹⁰.

At the northern end of the vein it passed close to Hurst Low, a tumulus. A document dated 22nd June 1844¹¹ states "Hurst Low Mine - at an end". The inference is that a Mr Richard Gaunt of Leek (lately deceased) had been a shareholder in the mine. He was also a shareholder in the Botstone Mine near Wetton Mill and in the Bourgoyne Mines at Ecton in the late 1830's. He may also have been a shareholder at Roylegde too.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the following members of Len's exploration team who never seem to tire of Len's promises that the next job will be a doddle: David Hopkins, James Kirkham and Peter Thompson. Also thanks to Mr Alcock, Dennis Middleton and Jim Rieuwerts.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to David Hopkins who unexpectedly died on 22 September 1998 aged 35 years.

REFERENCES

1. For earlier references to Roylegde see Robey, J.A. and Porter, L, The Copper and Lead Mines of the Mixon Area, Staffs, *Bull. PDMHS* 4:4, (1970) pp.272-73 and Porter, L. and Robey, J.A. The Roylegde and New York Copper Mines, Upper Elkstones, near Leek, Staffs, *Bull. PDMHS* 5:1, (1972) pp.1-9. Neither of these gives detail on the 1835-1840 period, however. A paper on the early mining history of the Elkstones area is in preparation.
2. Robey, J.A. and Porter L, *The Copper and Lead Mines of Ecton Hill, Staffs. Moorland*, 1972.
3. Ecton Cost Book, Matlock Local Studies Library, County Hall.
4. Kirkham/Porter Collection.
5. This probably refers to a yield of 3.5%; rich by current standards, but not by the yield from Ecton which was often much better than this. See (2) above.
6. Both references from the Kirkham/Porter Collection.
7. Deposition of Robert Greenhough in the Dale Mine law suit (Kirkham/Porter Collection. Details on this law suit is in preparation in a paper entitled Ore Dressing in the Manifold Valley.
8. Ecton Cost Book 1830-60, Derbyshire Record Office.
9. Map No 111.
10. Detail of the other mines in this area working in this period may be found in: Ecton Mine: see 2 above; Dale Mine: Porter, L. and Robey, J.A. The Dale Mine, Manifold Valley, North Staffs, *Bull. PDMHS* 5:2 1972. Mixon Mine: see (1) above. The activities at the Dale and Mixon mines during this period is currently under review.
11. Kirkham/Porter Collection

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