

THE INQUISITION OR QUO WARRENTO OF 1288

by J.H. Rieuwerts

Abstract: The Inquisition is shown to have been the record of legal proceedings in a local dispute in the High Peak, rather than the original codification of the lead mining laws it is often claimed to be. It is almost certain that it was not held in Ashbourne, but at an unknown location called Esseburn in the High Peak.

The Inquisition or Quo Warrento dating from the year 1288 is well known to all students of Derbyshire lead mining. Printed references and local tradition usually suggest that it was compiled at the request of the Derbyshire lead miners by virtue of a petition submitted by them to Edward I for confirmation of their ancient rights and customs. The necessity for this course of action was said to be due to constant litigation between landowners and miners over the right to search for and work lead ore without hindrance from the landowners.

The purpose of this article is to re-appraise the purpose of the Quo Warrento in the light of 13th century Derbyshire lead mining, and in so doing an alternative theory is offered for its genesis and a re-location of the traditional site of the historic occasion. It is now suggested that a lead mining dispute between the years 1284 and 1287 may have been the indirect, if not the direct, cause for the holding of the Inquisition, in turn leading to the establishment of the Great Barmoot Court.

A BRIEF GLANCE AT THE INDUSTRY IN THE 13TH CENTURY

Lead production in Derbyshire was known from Roman times; there are occasional references in Saxon times, in the Domesday Book and beyond, and the trade was certainly well established and flourishing by the end of the 12th century. The recorded trade in smelted lead, not only to castles and religious houses in this country but also to France was very considerable. Additionally, the production of ore from the last decade of the 12th century and throughout the 13th century, in the High Peak alone, indicates a widespread area of operation, locally intensive. The production levels fluctuated somewhat, the lowest output being between 300 and 350 loads per year, more generally around 1000 loads per year and sometimes reaching 1800 to 2000 loads (Blanchard, 1971). That the Peak District miner was pre-eminent in his calling is amply demonstrated in that in the year 1294, no fewer than 337 miners were sent from the county to the Devonshire mines, followed by a further 400 between 1308 and 1333 (Cameron, 1959). The departure of a large number of men in such a short period can only mean lead mining was a major industry giving employment to many men.

ESTABLISHMENT OF MINING CUSTOMS

The foregoing serves to show the organisation of the lead industry at this time and together with earlier references suggests that some form of legal system was essential and operative from early times.

Lewis (1908) considered that the mining customs of the Stanneries, the Mendip Hills, the Forest of Dean, Derbyshire and Alston Moor were not the result of any Charter or Royal Grant originally, but developed from usage pure and simple and only later, i.e. in the 12th and 13th centuries, did the Crown inspect and codify these ancient customs. Their origin has been the subject of considerable debate and suggestions include a basic framework established during the Roman period of extraction, or one derived from the Saxons. One document states that the Derbyshire mining customs pre-date the Norman Conquest and that in the ninth year of the reign of William I the miners urged him to leave the law unchanged. The reference in Domesday to the payment of 5 cartloads of lead of 50 slabs each cartload, at the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), could well refer to an early form of Lot, or more likely, the Farm of the mineral duties. The payment was made for mines in the Manors of Bakewell, Ashford and Hope and was not repeated elsewhere, remaining mines probably being worked directly by the Crown. At the time

of Doomsday itself, the payment had been discontinued, and no doubt all mines at the time were worked directly by the King. Although Lot was normally paid in ore and not smelted metal, it should be noted that there is some evidence to suggest that William Peveril paid his Tithe in smelted lead and not in ore, although the latter was certainly being paid in later times (Kirkham, 1968).

From 1130 onwards there is more substantial evidence that at least some of the mineral customs were in existence. In that year Robert de Ferrars became lessee of the Farm of the Wirksworth mines and sixty six years later John Buche held the Farm for the mines in Bakewell Wapentake (Victoria County History, 1905). By 1216 the King leased the duties of Lot and Cope in Peak Forest, and through later centuries the lessee of the Farm became entitled to the Lot ore, Cope payments, meer dishes, etc., in return for the payment to the Crown of an annual rent.

By taking a lease of the Royalties the lessee would ensure close contact with the industry. He could mine the ore on his own account and, by establishing smelting boles, could control not only the smelting of the ore, but also the subsequent sale on the market. The lead merchant had well and truly arrived. As the rent for the Farm at this time was directly linked to the amount of Lot ore produced and to the Cope payments, there would seem to be little justification in being in possession of the Farm otherwise. Presuming that Lot was paid to the lessee of the Farm, even as early as 1130, this in turn indicates the right of search obtained and liberty for subsequent working of the meers of ground was in force for the benefit of miners.

At the end of the 12th century the Tideslow mines measured lead ore in loads (Blanchard, 1971) whether by standard dish is not known, but it again corroborates the evidence that a fixed proportion of the ore was taken as Lot. The Dish is mentioned in 1242.

The office of Barmaster would, of necessity, have been established as soon as an official was required for the measuring of ore and the collection of Lot and meer dishes. Whether the position was in existence in 1130 is not known.

An explanation of the possible evolution of the Great Barmoot Court from the small Barmoot Court and the Inquisition is given later.

THE INQUISITION

There are several versions available both in printed works and manuscript copies, all differing in content. The original document, now in the Public Record Office, was copied more than once. The Victoria County History (1905) refers to 'Latin copies' and the version printed therein was compiled from the original checked against a copy used in the House of Lords at the well-known Portaway Mine Case of the mid-18th century.

The Miners Guide (Anon. 1810) contains a somewhat different version, including the preamble and instructions to the Jury not in the County History version. Both sources comment that, in part, the original document was illegible. The earliest printed version seen by the author is that of the anonymous "R.A." (1645). This again differs somewhat from those already noted but makes no reference to the original being in any way illegible. Obviously the various versions depend not only on the translators but also on whether the original or a copy was being studied. Furthermore some writers have added to the original without any justification whatsoever. A blatant example of this is Stokes (1880-1) who stated that the Inquisition established the Barmoot Courts at both Monyash and Wirksworth. The document does not in fact refer to the Great Barmoot Court in any way, much less to either Monyash or Wirksworth.

This account will attempt to demonstrate that the customs set down were applicable only to mines within the High Peak. Articles 2 and 3 state that each meer was to be 32 yards in length, this being the length of a meer in the High Peak lead mining liberties. Only 29 yards comprise a meer in the Low Peak or Soke and Wapentake of Wirksworth.

The twelve jurymen summoned were all High Peak Men, though few can be linked with the lead mining industry. Some were undoubtedly men of substance and one is tempted to speculate that some of them were lead

merchants. The fact that the Sheriff of Derbyshire was assigned to summon a Jury with specialised knowledge, together with the importance of the issues involved, is no doubt sufficient to explain why these men were selected.

Clement de la Forde was a member of the Jury of 1287 when William de Hamilton's claims against Simon and Nicholas de Cromford were investigated. This Jury consisted of some men at least who were actually involved in lead mining (Wolley MSS. 6686, ff. 179d-180, Derbyshire Record Office). In 1305 he was Bailiff of the Forest of the Peak and in the time of Edward I owned lands in Blackbrook and Bowden (Burton, 1966).

Thomas Foliame (= *Thomas Fologaumbe*) owned 15 acres of land in Wormhill. The Foljambes of Tideswell were a knightly family and in the late 13th and early 14th centuries represented the County of Derby in Parliament (Burton, 1966).

William Hall(e)y (= *William Hawley*) was a witness with Clement de la Forde in 1305 to a rent grant in Burgh (Brough). He sat on an Inquisition at Wormhill in 1318 (Burton, 1966).

Peter de Rowland was a signatory in 1294 along with Richard Vernon, Vicar of Youlegreave to a deed about ownership of land (Youlegreave W.I., 1931).

William de Bradwell (*Braidewelle*), son of the smith, owned at least two acres of land in Bradwell in the second half of the 13th century (Evans, 1912). He sat on the 1287 Jury at Over Haddon regarding the Hamilton/Cromford dispute.

William de Wardlow (sometimes mistranslated as 'de Bradlow') was another man who sat on the 1287 Jury at Over Haddon.

None of the remaining six Jurymen have been otherwise traced.

The most common assumption, and that which directly led to the writing of this article, is that the Inquisition was the result of a petition by the Derbyshire lead miners to Edward I asking for confirmation of their ancient rights and mining customs, for the reasons already stated (Ford & Rieuwerts, 1975). Tapping (1854) commented that:

"to stop the trespass of the miners upon their (landowners) private lands ... the miners in the 16th year of the reign of Edward I petitioned that King to redress their grievances ..."

However, the Inquisition itself does not say so, neither does it claim to have been ordered by Edward I as a result of overtures from the miners. Careful perusal of the preamble clearly shows that it was brought by one William de Hamilton, the writ to the County Sheriff to summon a special, well informed Jury being issued by the Chief Justice, Hugh de Cressingham, and witnessed by Edmund, Earl of Cornwall (R.A., 1645). Two men, Reginald of the Ley and William Mennill, were assigned to supervise the Inquisition, taken by a Jury of twelve men. The Jury were to:

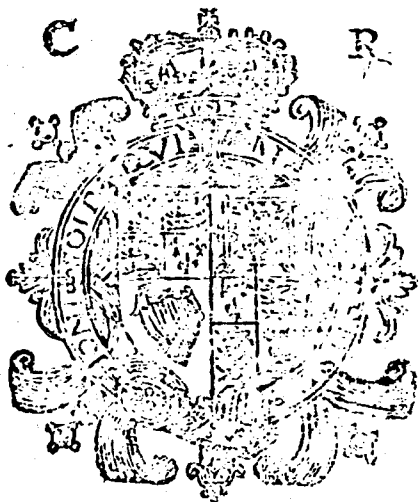
"inquire ... of the liberties which our miners do claime to have ... by what means and how and from what time and what warrent".

The Jury, appointed by the Sheriff of Derbyshire, did not answer all the above questions; possible reasons for this will be discussed in due course. Since the whole proceeding involved a Jury summoned by the Sheriff of Derbyshire, and with special knowledge of mining customs, clearly this placed it completely outside the Small Barmoot Court, held every three weeks at the mines. This Court dealt only with day to day disputes at the mines and continued to do so for centuries. Since no reference is made whatsoever to the Great Barmoot Court it seems very likely that at the time it was not so-called. Certainly, in later times, issues of a more involved nature were dealt with by the Great Barmoot Court. Pre-dating the Inquisition other juries had given verdicts relating to lead mining disputes, sometimes quite complicated in nature, but nowhere is there a reference to the Great Barmoot Court (V.C.H., 1905).

The 1288 Jury, consisting as it did of several wealthy and influential men with specialised knowledge of the lead mining customs, was the first so far as is known to set down any of them in writing. Although the customs do not appear to be complete, it is tempting to speculate whether the seeds for the establishment of a superior Court were sewn on this occasion.

THE
 Liberties and Customes
 OF THE
 MINERS.

WITH
 Extracts from the Bundles of the Exchequer and Inquisitions: taken in the Reigne of King EDWARD the first: and continued ever since, under the most favourable Kings and Queenes of this Kingdome of ENGLAND.



Printed by R. A. 1645.

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From the Bundles of the Exchequer,
 and the Inquisition of the yeare
 of the Reigne of King
Edward the first,
 the xvj.

Derby.

E *Dward* by the Grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, and Duke of Aquitaine; to the Sheriffe of the Countie of Derby greeting: Know yee that wee have assigned our faithfull and well-beloved *Reignald* of the *Ley* and *William* of *Mcnil* to inquire by the oaths of good and lawfull men of your Countie, by the which the truth may best be kown, of the liberties which our Miners do claime to have in those parts, and which they have hitherto used to have, and by what meanes, and how, and from what time, and by what warrant: And therefore wee do command thee, that at a certaine day and place which the said *Reignald* and *William* shall appoint thee, thou shalt cause to come before them, so many and such good and lawfull men of thy Bailiwike by the which the truth may there the best be knowne in the premisses by the enquire, and that thou have there the Writ. Witnesseth, our well-beloved Cousin *Edmund* Earle of Cornwall at Westminster, the xxviij. day of April, in the year of our Reigne the xvj. by *William* of *Hambleton*, and at the instance of *Hugh* of *Cresingham*. The day is appointed at Ashbourne upon Saturday next after the Feast of the *Holy Trinitie*.

An Inquisition taken at Ashbourne upon Saturday next after the *Holy Trinitie*, in the yeare of the Reigne of *Edward* the first the xvj. before *Reignald* of the *Ley* and *William* of *Meignill*; Of the liberties which the Miners of the said Sovereigne Lord the King in the Peake do claime to have in those parts, and which they have hitherto used to have in those parts; By what meanes, and how, and from what time, and by what warrant;

A 2

By

By the Oath of

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Thomas Foliame, | William of Bradlaw, |
| 2 | William Hawley, | Peter of Rowland, |
| 3 | Ralph Cotterill, | Richard of Longsdan, |
| | William of Longsdan, | Jur William son of the |
| 4 | John of Tearture, | Smith of Bradwall, |
| 5 | Clement of Ford, | 6 Henry Foliambe, |
| | | John of Longsdan. |

All Inrors.

Who say upon their Oaths, that in the beginning when the Miners did come to the field, seeking for a Mine and finding a Mine, they did come to the Bailiffe, which is called Barghmaster, and did desire (if it were a new field) that they might have two meeres of ground; that is to say one for the finding thereof, and the others by the Miners sine, viz. paying a meere dish of his first Oare.

2. And the Miners desired also in an old work of right to be measured to the said Miners, everie meere to contain foure measures, and the hole of the Mine to be seven foot wide or broad.

3. And every measure shalbe of 24. foot, and the King shall have the third meere next the Finder, and the other two meeres shalbe delivered to the worke-man; finder of the new Mine, by the Barghmaster.

4. And in an old field, every workman demanding such work, one meere in the field of our Sovereigne Lord the King.

5. And the King shall have the xiii. dish, or measure of Oare, which is called the lot.

6. And this hath been used; and for this our Sovereigne Lord the King shall find unto the Miners free ingress: and egress, into and from their mines, to carry and beare their Oare unto the Kings high-way.

7. And the Jury do say, that they are used for caving in mines, that our Sovereigne Lord the King shall have the buying of their Oare before all other, giving as another will.

8. And if the Miners have received any money of any other man before-hand for his Oare, then the Miners shall pay their dedts, without any let of the Barghmaster, so that this be with-

out fraud or deceit: or els the King shall have the oare before all other.

9. And the Jury say further upon their oaths, that it is, and shalbe lawfull, to the Miners, to sell, give, and assigne his grove or meere of ground, or any part thereof, without the licence of the King, or Barghmaster.

10. And this hath been used time out of memorie of man, in all the territories and liberties of the high Peake unto this time, save in a certain place there called *Man Dale*, in which place all buyers of Oare are prohibited to buy Oare, by the space of four yeares last past, by the Barghmaster.

11. And for what cause the Miners may maintaine their rights and customes above-said, the said Jurie do say, that the ancient custome of the mine is, that the Pleas or Courts of the Barghmaster ought of right to be kept and holden yearly upon the mines from three weeks to three weeks.

12. And the Jurie say upon their oaths, that if any Miner be slaine by any mis-fortune, that such Miner shall be buried without the view of the Coroners of the said Countie, by the view of Miners.

13. And if any person or persons be convicted of any small trespassse, he ought to pay for his amercement two pence, and that to be the same day paid: or else to double the same amercement, till it come to five shillings and foure pence.

14. If any bloud be shed upon the mine, the author shall pay five shillings and foure pence the same day, or else shall double the same everie day, till it come to an hundred shillings.

And, If anie Miner do anie trespassse under the ground to his fellow, he shall paie for his amercement five shillings and foure pence, and satisfie his fellow the full value of the trespassse.

That all Miners may lawfully sell their meare at pleasure.

An exception.

Courts of the Barghmaster to be kept every three weeks.

The Coroner of the Countie not to view the body of any Miner.

What fine is to be paid for smal trespassses.

Every bloudshed 5 s. 4 d.

For every trespassse made in another's meare

is 5 s. 4 d. for the recompence of the partie.

FINIS.

Of the new field.

An old worke and length of a meare.

The length of the measure.

The King to have a third meere in a new field.

The King is to have the thirteenth dish for lot.

For what cause lot is paid.

The King shall have oare, giving as much as another.

An exception,

Tapping (1854), in a footnote, stated that, as the proceedings were before two men who appeared to be neither officers of the Crown nor the mine, that no defence or opposition was made thereto and, therefore, the whole proceeding seemed questionable. He further commented that the Inquisition was very imperfect, several important customs being omitted. This latter point will be discussed in detail later.

Why then was the Inquisition necessary, and how did it become regarded by the 17th century, if not before, as the miners' "Charter of Rights", not only in the High Peak, but throughout Derbyshire?

EVENTS IMMEDIATELY PREVIOUS TO 1288

During the year 1287 a Jury (it is not clear if it was the Barmoot Court Jury) met at Over Haddon to hear certain complaints by William de Hamilton against Simon and Nicholas de Cromford (V.C.H., 1905). These men all appear to have been lead merchants. The Jury found that de Hamilton was entitled to one third of the royalty and mine from Taddington, Priestcliffe and Over Haddon by reason of the dower of Christian, who was the wife of one Adam de Gesemue. They further found that part of the ameracements of the Barmoot and the purchase of the Cope ore had been taken from him by Nicholas and Simon de Cromford from Easter 1284/5. The de Cromfords had the remaining two thirds of the royalty. Possibly, the most significant part of the Jury's findings was that the bailiffs of de Hamilton had wished to buy Cope ore in Haddon "during the time aforesaid", but were disturbed by the de Cromfords, and so could not buy it (V.C.H., 1905).

A comparison of the findings of the 1287 Jury with the contents of the Inquisition shows immediate similarities and a detailed examination has led the author to the conclusion that the Inquisition of 1288 was the outcome of the trouble dealt with by the Over Haddon Jury of 1287 relating to William de Hamilton.

The differences in the various versions of the Inquisition have already been discussed, but the earliest versions plainly state that it was held at the instigation of William de Hamilton (R.A., 1645).

The 1288 jury wrote down fourteen customs: significantly, many, if not all, relate directly to the disputes of the previous year. True, several were of a very general nature and could equally have applied to almost any form of lead mining dispute, but two very important differences emerge. Firstly, and as Tapping so rightly pointed out, several basic customs surely in existence at the time are not mentioned in any way. Secondly, and more importantly, the direct reference to the prohibition of ore buyers at Mandale Mine in Over Haddon Liberty would have been unnecessary in a code of mining customs. This latter observation appears to be the fundamental thread between the 1287 dispute concerning William de Hamilton's lead mining rights and the calling of a special jury by the Sheriff of Derbyshire to enquire into customs the following year.

The customs not mentioned in the Inquisition are as follows:

- a) No mention of 'nicking' a mine not in work, although articles 2 and 4 deal with old works.
- b) No mention of possession stows or alternative means of marking a miner's claim to his meers.
- c) No mention that a vein had to be worked progressively from meer to meer.
- d) The dish not specified or standardised in any way.
- e) The Barmaster to measure all ore before being sold.
- f) No mention of the right to wood or water, although this was a partial reason for the payment of Lot.

Comparison between the reasons for the 1287 Over Haddon jury being called and the actual customs recorded in the Inquisition can perhaps be best achieved by taking each point in the former and correlating it with the appropriate part of the latter.

1. *One third of the Royalty in Taddington, Priestcliffe and Over Haddon.* This payment, every thirteenth dish of ore measured, enabled miners to have free ingress and egress to their mines and, certainly in later times, access to water for washing their ore and free wood for the mine. The 1287 jury found that William de Hamilton was entitled to one third of the Royalty by reason of the dower of Christian, wife of one

Adam de Gesemue, but they did not put a value on the amount detained from him. Articles 5 and 6 in the Inquisition deal with the above, but did not deal with access to wood or water.

2. *One third of the mine in the same Liberties.* The findings of the 1287 jury are not absolutely clear regarding the above. In three cases they valued his one third share of one third of certain specified mines, total value $2\frac{1}{2}$ marks, plus one third of a quarter of a meer value $\frac{1}{2}$ mark.

In all probability the third parts of the mines represent the third meer or Lord's Meer, whilst the quarter meer was a primgap.

The lessee or Farmer of the mineral duties was entitled to the Lord's Meers as well as primgaps and 'odd yards'. If the above suppositions are correct then the Lord's Meers in question were valued between £1.0.6d. and £2.1.0d. Article number 3 of the Inquisition deals with the Lord's Meer but primgaps are not mentioned.

3. *One third of the 'findmeeres' in the same Liberties.* Two founder meers were given to a miner upon discovery of a new vein, the third meer being the Lord's Meer discussed above.

The miner gave one dish of ore to free his founder meers in a new vein, and one dish to free the founder meer in an old vein.

William de Hamilton had 6 loads, 6 dishes, of ore kept from him, as this represented his one third share - a total, therefore, of 180 dishes of ore had been given to free 180 founder meers of ground.

Presumably, the majority, if not all, of the dishes represented new mines being opened, indicating regular exploration and steady expansion of lead mining in the three liberties of Taddington, Upper Haddon and Priestcliffe.

Articles 1 to 4 in the Inquisition deal with freeing old and new meers.

4. *Amercements of the Barmote.* These are the various fines paid by miners to the Court for trespass on the surface or underground and bloodshed on the mine.

These amercements are dealt with by articles 13, 14 and 15 in the Inquisition.

5. *Royalty of Cope.* The Inquisition does not mention the work Cope, but merely refers to the miner's privilege of selling their ore to buyers other than the King, who had pre-emption on all ore mined, paying their debts to the ore buyer so as to avoid deceit.

The payment of Cope in later times was made by the ore buyers but it is known that in early times the miners themselves made the payment as Cope was a royalty due to the Crown or the Farmer. This again suggests that in this instance the Cope was in the hands of ore buyers, who in turn were the Farmers. That William de Hamilton and Nicholas and Simon de Cromford fitted both categories is conclusive enough.

William de Hamilton, it will be remembered, had wished to buy ore in Haddon, but his bailiffs had been prevented by the de Cromfords. This ore, the remainder after Lot had been extracted, was due for Cope payment if not sold to the King. The documents do not state why William de Hamilton's bailiffs had been prevented from purchasing the ore but here local tradition may supply the answers.

There has long been a tradition in the Over Haddon and Monyash districts that ore production at Mandale Mine was suspended for a period of four years due to the market being flooded with cheap lead (C.H. Millington, personal communication). The Inquisition does plainly state that ore buyers had been prevented from purchasing ore at Mandale Mine on the instructions of the Barmaster since 1284 but unfortunately does not elaborate on the statement. The evidence therefore points to a connection between the failure of William de Hamilton's bailiffs to purchase cope ore in Haddon from at least 1285, the reference to preclusion of ore buyers at Mandale Mine in Haddon Liberty from 1284 to 1288 and the local tradition about Mandale Mine being forced to close for four years. If indeed the ore production at Mandale Mine was considerable during this period, maybe William de Hamilton had attempted to purchase the larger part of the output and the de Cromfords had objected. Whatever the real cause of the dispute, there appears to be a very real connection between the events at Mandale Mine, the Inquisition and the trouble about cope ore in Haddon.

The King's pre-emption on all ore, the payment of debts to ore buyers and the Mandale Mine Saga are dealt with by Articles 7, 8 and 10 in the Inquisition.

The only Article in the Inquisition not having an obvious connection with the arguments between William de Hamilton and Simon and Nicholas de Cromford is number 12, dealing with death in a mine. Such an instance was dealt with by the Barmaster who viewed the body and determined the cause of death, as opposed to a Coroner.

THE MINER'S 'BIBLE' OR CHARTER OF RIGHTS

The Inquisition acquired familiarity to later lead miners throughout Derbyshire despite a lack of documentation for the next 260 years. The facts contained would be handed down by word of mouth for generations. During 1554 the Articles and customs for the Low Peak were examined by a Barmote Court jury and committed to paper but they were not printed until 1645, in a booklet which also contains an old Customary; although undated other evidence shows that it is pre 1513.

The High Peak customs were written down in 1601, but were not printed (Barmasters Collection, Chatsworth; in a series of Transcripts by George Eagle). The Inquisition was examined during the reign of James I at which time the original document was kept in the Tower of London, according to George Eagle (Barmasters Collection, Chatsworth). Edward Manlove's famous Rhymed Chronicle was published in 1653 but it dealt only with the Low Peak.

From the above it is obvious that access to their articles and customs would be extremely limited to most lead miners and one can appreciate why the original Inquisition became so important. Miners engaged in the numerous and protracted Tithe ore suits of the 17th century frequently quoted from the Articles and Customs, held to be undisputed fact both in the High and Low Peak although it has been shown conclusively that in fact the Low Peak was not included by the 1288 jury.

Undoubtedly the above series of events, together with the obscurity of the origin and true purpose of the Inquisition led to the oft quoted reason for its genesis, and also why miners throughout the King's field and the Private and Customary Liberties adopted its basic framework for their own customs. There is ample proof that mining customs existed in the Derbyshire lead mining field before 1288, but if any were ever committed to writing they have long since disappeared.

ASHBOURNE - THE SITE OF THE INQUISITION?

Finally an examination needs to be made regarding the site chosen for the historic meeting. If the assumptions made herein are substantially correct in showing that the Inquisition concerned the High Peak, it seems unlikely that a venue at Ashbourne in the Low Peak would have been chosen.

Evans (1912) referred to a location named Esseburn in the High Peak within the Royal Forest: a lease dated March 1486 from Henry VII to Sir John Savage of Castleton mentions the following places all within the Royal Forest of the Peak (modern spellings): Cookhill, Rowlee, Ashop, Alport, Westend, Edale, Castleton, Bradwell, Chinley, Shelf, Coombs, Tunstead and "the water-mill of New Myll with the meadow called Erles Meadow in 'Esseburn'", also the Lot and Cope of the lead mines in the High Peak, the fishery of the River Wye and all the rivulets within the Royal Forest. Esseburn has been translated as Ashbourne in almost all subsequent references to the Inquisition but it certainly does not prove that the Inquisition was held there and there is no valid reason why the present town of Ashbourne, situated in the Low Peak, well away from the lead mining areas, should have been chosen as a meeting place for twelve High Peak Jurors investigating a lead mining argument concerning a small area within the High Peak.

Furthermore, all available transcripts, e.g. those in the Wolley MSS., both in Latin and English prove beyond all doubt a location, now lost, called Esseburn existed within the Forest of the Peak towards the end of the 15th century and this would have made a much more logical meeting place for Jurymen living in that area rather than the present town of Ashbourne.*

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- * Editor's Note: "Esseburn" seems so illogical that it may well be that the original transcription was wrong and that Esseford or some other place is on the faded document in the Public Record Office. Would anyone who has seen this document and can confirm or deny this idea please contact either the editor or author?