

STAVELEY HALL/MILL

Report by The Field Walking Group 1992

Visible remains.

In the wood on the left of Hall Lane, (Map Ref 473993) about 400 m. north of Barley Bridge are three sites marked A, B and C on the map. They are in a coppice wood, and are heavily overgrown.

At A, are the bases of parts of the walls of two rectangular buildings one 6m x 3m and one ?3.5m x 3m. These buildings are parallel to the Hall Beck and on a steep bank about two metres above the beck. South of them is a possible third building. North of the larger building is a rectangular depression 2.4 m wide, filled at the bottom with loose rubble and vegetation. This depression or pit is exactly at the western (lower) end of a roughly defined channel which by-passes the waterfall on the Hall Beck. The sides of the pit are of rough but solid masonry 1.5 metres high at one side, and the channel ends at a natural rock face 2.5 metres high overlooking this pit. The channel which we interpret as the head race of a mill is marked on the 1858 OS map.

At B is a tumble of loose stones covering an area perhaps 8x6m. It is about 10 m. from the Hall Beck on gently sloping ground. We noted that the Tower of St Margaret's Church is clearly visible from this position.

At C is another loose tumble of stones, but some semblance of a wall base and corner, and curved "walls" defining an irregular shape c.2.5 x 5.2m. A rusted piece of corrugated iron suggested that the structure may have had some fairly recent agricultural use. As at B there were some large stones, clearly brought here for a building of some importance, and perhaps reused.

Documentary Evidence

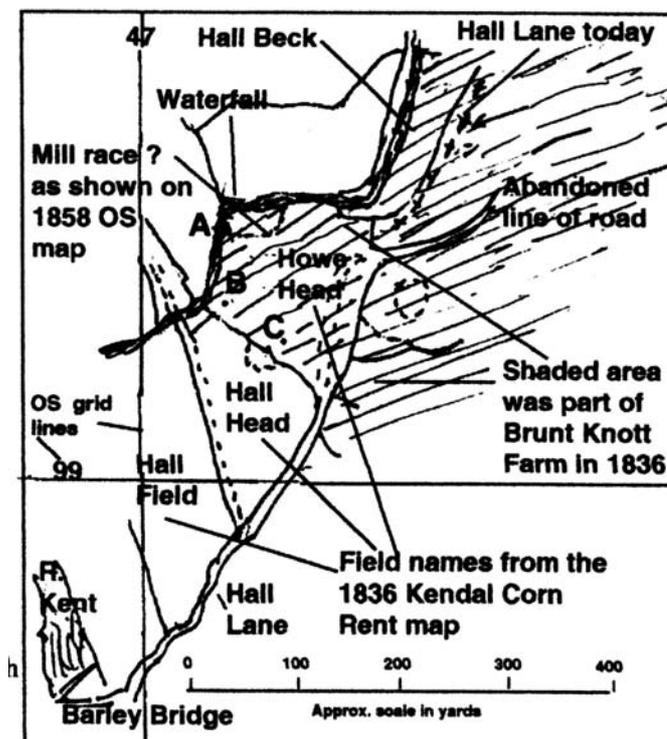
1. Thomas Machell, writing in the 1690s., "Staveley Hall in Over Staveley, a quarter of a mile North of the chapel, has been called the manor house of Upper Staveley, which is now fallen, nothing being standing but the wall which belongs to Mr. Will Birket, being on his tenement and in that part which belongs to the Crown."¹

2.1612 Manorial Court Roll². Admission of William Birkett to two tenements, former tenant Peter Birket his father, rent 12/5 and to half a fulling mill rent 5/3.

3.1635. Court Roll of King's part of the manor

(Marquess Fee)³ George Birket admitted on death of his father William to a message & tenement called Staveley Hall rent 40 shillings. Fine £6.

4.1635-1763 Manorial records of all three sections of the Manor. Frequent references to the Birkets of Brunt Knott, who held land of all three lords. eg' 'Mr William Birket of Brant Knott £2 rent for lands and 8/4 for fulling mill 1679."



"Widow Birket [Elizabeth - William died 1698] of Brunt Knott 15/4 for lands and 3/4 for a fulling mill." (These are held of different lords, and are presumably different lands and mills, but they establish clearly that the Birkets of Brunt Knott whose lands included the former Staveley Hall, owned fulling mills.)

5.1836 Kendal Corn Rent map⁴ - a. Brunt Knott farm lands, owner Abraham Banks, tenant James Robinson, include the area we examined, as shaded on map.

- b. Gives field names "Hall Field" "Hall Head" (see map)

6. 1323 Inquisition Post Mortem⁵ "Marmaduke de Thweng held at his death in the hamlet of Staveley 8 tenants at will who render 33s. yearly; a park, the herbage of which yields 10s. yearly; a fulling mill which renders 6s.8d yearly..."

7. John Somervell 1930⁶. "HAW WOOD SMELTING MILL.

The remains of this old mill are found by following the lane running NE from Barley Bridge, turning in by a gate on the left and bearing SW through the wood. Some of the walls are still standing about 4 ft high, and the foundations of other walls can be traced. Mr W J Knowles, who guided me to the mill was told by an old man of 80 that he remembered a clearly defined millrace leading from Haw Beck... but the thick coppice makes it impossible to trace this now... This doubtless was the place where the lead obtained in the deep mine at Staveley Head was smelted."

Discussion

Our site A is obviously what Somervell took to be a lead smelting mill. There is no other evidence to support what is simply a guess on his part, and it seems more probable that the lead from Staveley Head was taken to the smelt mill marked as "Old Smelt Mill" on the 1858 05 map just north of Scroggs Bridge (also mentioned by Somervell) This site is much more accessible by road than our site, and equally near woodland for fuel and water-power to drive bellows.

The various "Hall" names - field, lane and beck, suggest fairly strongly that an area very near the one we examined was the site of Staveley Hall. The distance from our sites B and C to St. Margaret's Church tower is half a mile, not a quarter as stated by Machell, but he was writing before the fixing of the standard mile. Elsewhere he gives the (1100 yards) distance from Ings Chapel to St Anne's, Grassgarth as "a quarter of a mile" If he had looked around from our site for a landmark nothing is more likely than that he would have chosen the "chapel". So it is reasonable to suppose that the ruined hall he describes was on our site B or C or nearby, and that the stones we observed were once part of its wall.

Successful 17th century yeomen like the Birketts naturally mixed textile work with sheep farming. Cloth woven from their own or their neighbours' wool clip had to be felted and cleaned in the fulling mill. There is a probable potash kiln site (for making the soapy "lye" needed for filling) 200m further up Hall Lane and a field called "tenter bank" where the cloth could be hung to dry about the same distance due east. It is likely, therefore, that the rectangular buildings at A are

those of Birkett's fulling mill with the wheel pit beside it. In the opinion of Mike Davies-Shiel the dimensions are about right.

Whether this mill is the original Staveley mill mentioned in document 6 is less certain. Somervell assumes that the 1323 mill was at Barley Bridge, but gives no evidence for this other than 1930s hearsay. The large weir at Barley Bridge was built in the 1780s, but there was then an earlier mill on the east bank⁷ which may be the 1323 mill. But let us assume that we are right in placing Staveley Hall on our site. Marmaduke Thweng, or his steward, probably built the Hall as a centre for the administration of the manor and as a lodge from which Thweng and his friends could hunt the deer in Staveley Park. In the early fourteenth century the local textiles were beginning to be important, helped on by the spread of fulling mills. People in our area were moving down from the higher ground - the Over Staveley common fields lie another half mile up Hall Lane from our site. There was as yet no village of Staveley - the chapel was only begun in 1338- and though there was probably a ford where Barley Bridge is now, it was not necessarily the natural site for a mill in those days. Our site, on the other hand, was perfect, with a considerable natural water-fall and a bend in the river. The Hall Beck has a large catch-meat area including Skegges Water, and offered an ample flow for the simple mill of the time. And the steward or bailiff could keep an eye on this valuable asset from the Hall nearby.

So it is reasonably probable that our site A is what is left of the 1323 mill after nearly 700 years of change and decay. We can state much more confidently that Staveley Hall was somewhere on our site, and that site A was William Birkett's fulling mill.

Notes

1. Machell in Ewing *The Antiquary on Horseback*, Kendal 1963. p.108
2. Levens mss. Box 7 Kendal Record Office (KRO)
3. Public Record Office (PRO) SC2/207/1 19
4. KRO
5. Farrer *Records of Kendale*, Kendal 1923 I p.319
6. John Somervell *Water-Powered Mills of South Westmorland* Kendal 1930 pp.8-9
7. Abstract 1834 quoting lease 1784, Barley Bridge Mill Documents in KRO