ART. XVI. – *Westmorland Slate at Buckland (Berkshire) and the Bath, 1754-9*

By JULIAN MUNBY

THE publication of two recent papers on the quarrying and transport of Westmorland slate has prompted a re-examination of some correspondence preserved at Levens Hall.[1] It concerns the slate quarries in Longsleddale, one of the manors acquired with the Levens estate by Colonel James Grahme in 1689, and which passed through his daughter to Henry Bowes-Howard, Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire.[2] Although the letters are concerned with a few events rather than the day-to-day working of the quarries, they provide a good description of the quarries at one time, and throw light on the problems of marketing the slate, and the ambivalent response to the demand from new outlets. In addition, there is new information on the building activities of John Wood the younger, of Bath.

Introduction

The slate quarries of Wrengill and Stockdalebank at the head of Longsleddale were in use from 1724 at the latest. Grahme used slate for the new South Wing at Levens in 1692-5, but it is not known whether it came from his own quarries; at the same time there is much evidence for the thatching of farm buildings, which raises the question of when the use of slate became more widespread.[3] Apparently, slate was not widely exported outside the region before about 1740, though the exact chronology of its general use is a matter for further research. In 1745 slate was ordered for Lord Suffolk's London house, and John Craven provides the first indication of its method of transport:[4]

> The Slate from your Lordship's Quarrys is brought to Kendall upon Horses Backs, because no Carts can Travel a great part of the Road, from Kendall to Millthorp [Milnthorpe] it is brought by the peat Carts, and the Carters from Kendall, which brings Goods from Millthrop Shipps at a less price than giving your Lordship's Tenants Beeffe and Ale, besides being under an obligation to the Tenants which I would Studiously avoid.

Although the Troutbeck Park quarries closed in 1755, and the start of the Seven Years War caused difficulties in freighting the accumulated stock, the Longsleddale quarries remained in business, were supplying slate for the Howard estate at Ashtead (Surrey) in 1792, and were still in use in the first half of the present century.[5]

The Longsleddale quarries were not run directly by the Levens estate, but leased out, though much information on their working in the middle of the century survives in the correspondence of John Martyr, the Levens agent, from 1754 until his death in 1759.[6] Martyr wrote regularly both to the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire and to the Countess Catherine, and to their son William Lord Andover.[7] For much of the time the Earl lived at Charlton, near Malmesbury in Wiltshire, and Lord Andover at Elford (Staffs.), so Levens had to be managed from a distance. Few details escaped the attention of Mr Martyr, whose extensive collection of letters and "fowl draughts" for this five-year period is a magnificent source for local activities. Martyr was first sent to Levens to deal

with the problems caused by the stewardship of Thomas Craven, whom he was soon to replace, and the affair of the slate quarries was not the least of the matters which led to Craven's dismissal.

Lord Andover's fictitious order for Slate

In September 1754 Lord Suffolk ordered Martyr to enquire into Craven's affairs, and investigate his building of a new house at Melling (some five miles south of Kirkby Lonsdale).[8] The first mention of slate comes in November, when Lady Suffolk asked Martyr to "make sly enquiries" into the slate quarries, as she had "much reason to believe we are much abus'd in our property in them", but had been "kept in the Dark".[9] Martyr replied to Lady Suffolk on 22 November:[10]

> As to the slate Quarrys – That called Wrangdale Gill was granted by Lease to Robert Wilson from the 2d of February 1724 for 12 years at £3 a Year, and Stockdale Bank (the other Quarry) was then let to one Anthony Bownas at £1.10.0 per Annum. In 1737 Wrangdale Gill was advanced to £11 a year & Stockdale Bank to £3.3.0 amounting in the whole to £14.3.0.[11] And in the year 1751 a Lease of both Quarrys was Granted by My Lord to Robert Wilson for 7 years at £14.3.0, the Old Rent. From whence it is obvious there is an Improved Rent of £9.13.0 in the year 1737 & not a single farthing from that time, nor can there be any additional rent 'til the Expiration of the Lease which will be in the Year 1757. This way of proceeding seems very extraordinary to me & more especially so – as I am informed by Postlethwaite the Customhouse Officer of Millthrop that there has been 300 Tonn sold by Robert Wilson one year with another for 4 years past to London, Portsmouth, Emsworth & many other places, whereas about fourteen years ago (when rent was raised to £9.13.0) this sort of slate was scarce known in London, or anywhere else, except in this Neighbourhood. If some other reports prove true that I have heard my wonder will cease, but I am not easily led away with Appearances, neither would I have your Ladyship, therefore avoid writing what does not carry a self-conviction. Superficial Enquiries will never do to attain the true knowledge, state & Condition of these slate Quarrys; Mines and Mosses, much circumspection & close application are required. Therefore suspend-writing anything more on this Head 'till I am fully satisfied . . . . . .
>
> *[postscript]*
>
> There is a parcel of very fine slate now lying at Dix's Wharf for My Lord Andover as Postlethwaite informs me & likewise says that Mr Craven told him there was 40 ton to be sent to Chester & up the River afterwards as far as it could go and then by land to Elford – but for further information in this particular I will write to Mr Hall.

The wharf was one mile west of Milnthorpe, on the Arnside road, where the former Dixes Inn and Ferry Cottage are next to a river channel in the bay. Evidently this was the most convenient landing place for Milnthorpe and Kendal, despite the long road haulage involved, as no other wharf is mentioned.

Martyr's inquiry of Mr Hall, the agent at Elford, does not survive, but in December the somewhat surprising answer was received from Hall "My Lord Andover knows nothing of the slate you mention, his Lordship neither wanting or desiring any".[12] For her part, Lady Suffolk "read with Astonishment the number of Slates provided for Lord Andovers use: I know it must be a great ly, and so it proves upon Enquirey, for Lord Andover writes me word he never order'd a Slate to be dug for him, or ever thought of ordering any".[13] In the light of such *prima facie* evidence, Martyr demanded of Craven

"What orders you had about the slate for Lord Andover?", and told Lady Suffolk that he had spoken to Robert Wilson and was aiming "to get Craven's Answer in *writing* concerning the fictitious orders of Lord Andover".[14] Martyr's method of dealing with the recalcitrant Craven was to send Tyson the gardener over to Melling and wait for his reply. Craven's immediate, if incomplete, response was that "My orders from Lord Andover about slate was to enquire what it would stand his Lordship bee a Ton at Chester, which I sent his Lordship, and never received any further orders about it". [15] The story seemed plain enough to Lord Suffolk, who wrote in January 1755.[16]

> The vast quantity of slate amassed together, At Crosthwaite [?], astonishes me, & on inquiry all the satisfaction you have got has been a gross Lye under which I feare some great fraud is concealed. This will require farther inquisition; to it, when those Quars of slate were let, to whom, for what term of years, & the reall annuall value of them. I am well assured the slate from Westmoreland is worth more than any in England or Wales at least o=7s=o a Ton.

Lady Suffolk also wrote in January "Cravens ordering that large Quantity of Slate in Lord Andovers name a proof and a very strong one in my opinion of his employing our Property for his own use. His whole Behaviour most shocking bad. I wish we were clear of him".[17] Craven had in fact been dismissed in December, though the clearing of his final accounts was to provide much trouble over the next few months.

Meanwhile, on 8 November 1754, the mining entrepreneurs John Davis, father and son of New Windsor, had been granted rights to seek metals, ores, coal and slate on the Levens estates for 21 years. The articles specifically excluded existing leases for mining slate and stone,[18] but on the very day on which their rights commenced, 25 March 1755, John Davis junior made an indignant demand of Martyr, attempting to stop Wilson from working the slate in Longsleddale:[19]

> knowing what Large Quantity of slate comes from Long Sleddale, to the Wharfes at London, from This Quarry worked By Mr Robt. Wilson, & this being the Time of the year that they Transport a great Deal, If not stopped, may so stock the ports and Wharfes near, which are of There Honour's premisses, that they Then cannot be stopped; for that Reason they should be Immediately stopped at the Quarrys, or else there Honours will be cheated of There proportion and so shall we & the other proprietors Likewise . . . We have sent to Mr. Hall, to Desire him to Joyne with us in Giving you Authority to stopp all Business, To put all work on a new foundation & Method, that there Honours may be satisfyed of all the produce of the several Manors according to the articles in the Writeings to have there proportional share . . .

Martyr's response to this outrageous request, which flagrantiy disregarded the terms of the lease, has not been found, but he wrote on 22 April to Lady Suffolk saying that he had learned the substance of the lease and would "be upon my guard".[20] The incident was not to be forgotten, and was but a prelude to subsequent events.

Lord Andover orders slate for Bath

The main part of the story begins later in the same year with a letter from Lord Andover, who wrote from Bath enquiring about provision of slate for John Wood:[21]

Bath October 23[d] 1755

Sir,

I desire you will as soon as you can send a very exact account and direct it for me at Mr Kings near the Cross Bath in Bath of the whole & separate Charges of Importing to Bristol the Westmorland slate, that is the Price at the Quarrys, The Carriage to Milthrop, wharfage there, freightage to Bristol, Loading & unloading & wharfage at Bristol; also The Quantity & weight of the slate that will do a square of Tyling, I mean a statute square, and how much (all charges paid) it may be laid down at Bristol for per Tun; I hope you will understand what I mean. The reason I give this trouble is because Wood the Architect has in mind to introduce the Westmorland slate in the Buildings here; pray send an answer as soon as you can which will oblige

yours

Andover

One can imagine the circumstances in which Lord Andover had foreseen the profits which might arise from the slate from his father's quarry being applied to the building boom at Bath, and being admired by all those resorting there in the season. John Wood the younger (1728-81), the leading architect in Bath after the death of his father in 1754, was at this date completing the Circus, begun in the same year.[22] Transport of the slate would be enabled by the Avon Navigation from Bristol to Bath, opened in 1727.[23] Martyr, as always, replied soon:[24]

To the Lord Viscount Andover at Bath 8 Nov. 1755

My Lord

On Saturday I received the Honour of your Lordship's letter dated 23 Instant and immediately applied to Robert Wilson & William Newby to know how much per Tonn they would deliver their best sort of slate on Board a Vessell at Milnthorpe; Also to Postlethwaite the Custom house Officer at Dick's Wharf to know the Expence of Freight from thence to Bristol and the Conditions were as follow, vizt:

The very best of slate (as aforesaid) will be delivered at 35 s. per Ton and if any should be broke in Carrying from the Quarry to the Wharf it will be thrown aside and the deficiency made up according to the size and weight thereof, for none will be put on Board but what is whole and sound – Moreover the slate will be carried in a small Vessell called a *Flatt* (without any additional Expence) to the Vessell that is to convey it to Bristol Provided she can't get so high as Dix's Wharf which is often the case at Hy-tides. The Freight to Bristol will be 12 s. per Tonn because of Insurance, otherwise it would be only 10 s. and consequently the Whole Expence to Bristol will be 47 s. per Tonn. One Ton with another will do two square & a half & the Weight of each square will [be] 8[c][cwt].

Robert Wilson & William Newby sell their best sort of slate from Wrangdale Gill Quarry (which is equal if not preferable to any [in] England) at Sadgill Yate (the nearest Place any Carriage come to the Quarry) after the Rate of 23 s. per Tonn, at Kendal for 30 s. and at Milnthorp for 35 s. in large quantitys for shipping – there are two other sorts of slate of less price that are used about Farmhouses &c. I am inform'd a Vessell of 60 Tonns or thereabouts will be the properest size to carry slate this winter time and I dare say it will be well stowed to secure it from Breaking. In short if Mr Wood aproves of the forementioned Terms and gives Wilson & Newby an Order I believe he will have no Reason to Complain of their Dealing unfairly with him for they are Both Persons of substance and deal largely. They have now about 50 Tons of the best sort of slate at Dick's Wharf at Milnthorpe & more will be sent very soon if required.

I hope your Lordship finds great Benefit from the Bath Waters, and that my Lady Andover is perfectly well as also Mr. Howard at Eton & Miss Howard at Charleton[25] and may continue so is the sincere wish of

My Lord

Your Lordship's &c.

J[ohn] M[artyr]

The slate was to be carted some 19 miles from Longsleddale to the wharf at Milnthorpe. The alternative route, via Lake Windermere, is mentioned in a later letter, but was hardly cheaper. The price of 23s. for delivery at Sadgill thus rose to 35s. at the wharf, carriage being 8.4d. per ton-mile to Kendal and 6.66d. thereafter. The costs can be compared with those from the Troutbeck Park quarries at the same time, where slate was sold at the quarry for 15s. a ton, could be put on board for the lower sum of 30s. a ton and freighted to Bristol for 10s. in peace time (perhaps not including insurance).[26] Lord Andover unfortunately let the matter rest for some months, and did not write again until the following summer:[27]

Sir, Bath June the 5th [1756]

Some Time ago I wrote to you about Westmorland slate. This is to desire you will send a ship Load of 40 Tun of the Best & Largest sizes for Roofing and take care it is Perfectly Good to Gloster; I remember the freight to Bristol insurance & all 12 s. per Tun, it cant be much more to Gloster; also send a ship Load of 25, 30 or 35 Tun Burthen of the Best slate also to Bristol for Mr Wood at Bath & give him a letter of advice when both of them will sail, but the 40 Tun must be shipd for Gloster. I Beg you will take care that it is all Perfectly good Because my Credit Lyes at stake which is all at Present

From

Your Freind

Andover

P.S. send an Immediate answer to this Directed for me at Charleton.

Martyr's reply was prompt.[28]

Lord Andover Levens 14 June 1756

My Lord

In order to Execute the Commands I received by last Post relating to slate I immediately applied to Robert Wilson and William Newby – who told me they had lately sent a large Quantity of their finest slate to Newcastle upon Tyne & have little now remaining on the wharf at Millthorp of that sort, but they are now working a very fine vein at Wrangdale Gill My Lords Quarry, & will certainly ship 40 Tun for Gloucester by the 1st day of August at furthest & 35 for Bristol the last week of the Month. They certainly will be very punctual as to the time of Delivery & will send the very best sort of slate as an inducement or introduction for the sale of more hereafter at Bristol, Bath &c. where they have long wish't for a Correspondence but more especially since I communicated the Contents of Your Lordship's Letter to them dated 23d Oct. 1755. I also enforced what Your Lordship wrote as to the size Goodness &c. and have prevailed with them to furnish the aforesaid Quantities of slate before any other Person's whatsoever, as they have Enough of the two Coarser sorts to supply the Neighbouring Country already. Moreover I shall I go occasionally to see the slate when it is delivered at the Wharf for shipping and will give Mr. Wood Letters of Advice when the Vessells sail . . .

The prospect of the slate being dispatched now raised the question of its application, and Lord Andover must have written for advice on this matter, about which Martyr now responded:[29]

My Lord Andover July 11th 1756

I have Engaged One Nodder that has done the Earl of Suffolks work many years [and] is as good a slater as any in Westmorland and has work'd at Hampton Court, St. James's the Manse [?] Bushy Park & abundance of Gentlemen's seats in Yorkshire & elsewhere provided his Terms are approved off, which are as follows, vizt.

To be allow'd Travelling Expences to & from the	
Place as also for loss of time in working each day	0. 2. 6
Work by the day 2 s. with his Board	0. 2. 6
By the Rood (that is) 49 square yards laid in	
Rafters & Pointed with Mortar	0.16. 0
Slating without Pointing	0.11. 0

And to set forward from hence on a weeks Notice at farthest.

Laying of slate on Rafters & pointed with Mortar is more Durable & Cheaper than Boards & was preferred by Ripley & Arundel belonging to his Majesty's Board of Works when Nodder was Employed at Hampton Court &c.[30] [The Oak Pins will last longer [than] Nails . . . *deleted]* . . . Nodder has Done the Earl of Suffolk's work for many years & I believe he will do his best if he is Order'd into the south. In Your Lordships next I humbly beg to the Particular Place he is designed for, because in this letter now before me it only mentions in Barkshire about 50 miles from Bristol. The slate that is now getting by Robert Wilson for Bristol & Gloster is somewhat different in Colour [one being of a Pearl Colour *deleted* but large & Good & he proposes to stow them seperately in the Vessells in order to work 'em seperately & not on the sane side of the Roof – The Reason why he does not send it all of one Colour is – the vein lyes so low that he can't get the water off & there is so much Rubbish to remove that it will require much Labour & time . . . .

No answer has survived, and on 15 July the young Lord Andover was tragically killed in a fall from a carriage.[31] Lady Suffolk was heartbroken and, for a while, was not fit to write about affairs, enjoining Martyr "as to Mines or any Thing trouble not my Head about them".[32] But when the slate failed to arrive in August, it was now the turn of John Wood himself to write:[33]

Sir Bath October 4, 1756

My good freind Lord Andover some time before his Death promised to send an Order for some slate for Sir Robert Throckmorton & myself. I should therefore be glad to know if he did so – Sir Roberts was to be sent to Gloucester & mine to Bristoll – if Sir Roberts is ready beg it might be sent with all Expedition & be so good as to Advise me of it & if mine not ready pray countermand the Order.

I am Sir, Your very humble servant

Jo: Wood

Thus was lost an opportunity of introducing Westmorland slate to the most fashionable resort in England. All was not lost, however, as Wood was engaged by Throckmorton on one of his few country house commissions outside Bath, at Buckland, just four miles east of Faringdon in Berkshire.[34] Sir Robert Throckmorton (1702-91), the fourth Baronet, of Coughton Court in Warwickshire and Weston Underwood in Buckinghamshire appears to have lived mostly at Weston (for which James Gibbs made designs) until 1757 when

work at Buckland had begun.[35] The manor had come to his father in marriage, and the old house still survives in the stable block. John Wood the elder (who died in May 1754) was perhaps as responsible for the design as his son, since he contributed to the surviving plans, and the house is more typical of his work.[36] As first built, Buckland consisted of a square central block with side pavilions (the house was later enlarged), very much a Palladian villa, and "was the most splendid of the smaller Georgian houses in the county".[37] Sir Robert's eldest son George was married in 1757, and the new house may have been built for him.[38] As an inhabitant of the elder Wood's Queen Square in Bath, Throckmorton's choice of architect was perhaps natural, and no expense was spared in building and fitting out the house, which may have been a factor in the choice of roofing material.

Martyr's reply to the inquiry is not preserved, but Wood wrote again a month later:[39]

Sir, Bath November 3, 1756

I rec'd your favour in due time but cou'd not Answer it before, not having seen Sir Robert Throckmorton for whom my Lord Andover bespoke the 40 Tun of slate which must be sent to Gloster to the care of Mr. Coal Ironmonger of that place.

As for my own part I am a good deal disappointed in not having the slate bespoke for me at the time it was promis'd as it was to have cover'd a Church which now is done with other materials. My intention of having slate from Westmoreland was to introduce that kind of covering in this City, being convinc'd it is the best of any in this Kingdom, but as we have been us'd to the Cornish slate & to a stone tile the produce of this Country, I am afraid it will be a difficult matter to persuade the Builders from their old Custom unless they see tis to their own advantage. & I cannot think they will be displeas'd if the Westmoreland Slate can be deliver'd at Bristol for 45 shillings a Ton as my Lord Andover assur'd me it cou'd by a Letter dated the 17th day of November 1755.

I shou'd be extremely glad for the sake of that Noble Lord to do all in my Power to recommend the slate and I am of the opinion that it will be greatly to the advantage of the Proprietors of the Quarries to send a large Quantity here and stand the Chance of the Markett. Altho' the slate his Lordship bespoke for me will not now Answer my intentions, yet I am so far from desiring the proprietors to be sufferers that if they will deliver the Slate to me at Bristol at the above Price free from all other Charges, & order the Captain at his arrival at that Port to send me notice, I will then order a sufficient Number of Barges to discharge him without any delay and Pay for the slate 6 months after its delivery.

I am, Sir, your most Obedient Humble servant,

Jo: Wood

The church in Bath that Wood was roofing at this date cannot certainly be identified, but may have been his own parish church of St Swithun's Walcot. . . .[40] Despite his disappointment in this instance, there was nevertheless enough work in hand for him to propose the dispatch of slate "to stand the Chance of the Markett", though it is not clear to what extent this opportunity was seized any more than the first proposal. The immediate reply to Wood has not been found, but matters were at last moving, and Martyr was at length able to announce the dispatch of Throckmorton's slate:[41]

To Mr. Coal, Ironmonger at Gloucester

Sir, Levens Decr. 5th 1756

Mr. Wood of Bath informed me by this letter Dated Novr. 3d. 1756 – That the forty Tons of slate intended for Sir Robert Throckmortons use was to be Consigned to yourself &c. –

Which letter I laid before Those that are Concerned in the slate Quarrys for their Instructions to Execute the Order. The ship fell down the River Kent yesterday and is now on her way to Bristol I suppose, and William Newby Desired I would Transmit the Inclosed to You.

I presume you will order the Conveyance of the slates from Bristol to Gloucester upon receiving Advice of their Arrival at that Port. In my letter to Mr. Wood I assigned the Reasons why the slate was not sent the latter end of August as proposed – For I assure you that Wilson & Newby had repeated Orders from me and I sent the slater that is employed for the Earl of Suffolk there several times to View and Weigh the slate & to expedite their sending it

I am &c.

[John Martyr]

However, the welcome news had not yet reached Wood, and on 18 December one Edwin Belk wrote, enclosing a copy of Wood's letter of 3 November, as he, "having received no Answer is afraid you never received it".[42] Martyr, who had replied, wrote again at once:[43]

Mr. Wood Levens 27 Decr. 1756

Sir,

On the 12th day of Decr. [i.e. Nov.] I acknowledged the Receipt of your letter relating to Delivery of Westmorland slate dated the 3d. of Novr. and the Purport of my Answer thereto was – That I had laid your letter before William Newby whose Resolution on perusal thereof was – To immediately send 40 Ton of slate to Bristol in a sloop called the *Penelope* For Sir Robert Throckmorton and as many more Tons as the Vessel would carry to the same Port for one Wyatt. And likewise I informed you Sir, that I would send Mr. Coal of Gloucester Advice when the sloop was Freighted & fell down the River, that he might convey the slate from Bristol designed for Sir Roberts use immediately after it arrived at that Port.

And on the 5th Instant I wrote accordingly to Mr. Coal and Inclosed the Bill of Lading of Forty Ton of slate for Sir Robert Throckmorton that Mr. Coal might take proper Measures concerning the same.

I am sorry that my letter as before mentioned should be intercepted & that you should be disappointed by the Delays of the Proprietors of the slate which was not in my Power to prevent.

I am &c.

[John Martyr]

No more was said of this consignment until it came to be paid for. The coverage of the 40 tons, at $2\frac{1}{2}$ squares per ton, would total 10,000 square feet,[44] and it seems likely that the slate now on the roof of the central block at Buckland is part of this cargo, seen off with relief by Mr Martyr some fourteen months after the first enquiry.

Letting the Quarries

Meanwhile, the potential of the slate quarries had come to the attention of Lord Suffolk, who in his last surviving letter to Martyr back in October had expressed interest in the future of the quarries:[45] "pray inform me of the circumstances & annuall Rents of the slate Quarrys, & whether they are held for a terms of yeares or annuall rent, since I am per[sua]ded the Rents of both, may be much advanced". The draft of Martyr's reply survives, which gives some further account of the quarries:[46]

My Lord November 4, 1756

. . . . . .

Wrangdale Gill & Stockdale bank slate Quarrys are let by Lease of Seven Years from Candlemas 1750 [i.e. February 2, 1751] to Robert Wilson for 14.3.0 a Year . . . . . But can't determine (as yet) what Rent may be advanced on granting another Lease because there's a stream of water & vast Quantitys of stones & Rubbish that are great obstructions to carrying on the works of Wrangdale Gill. The first must be Turn'd & the latter removed 'ere they can come at a fine Bed of slate which will require fourscore or a hundred pounds as it's supposed. The present Ten[an]t is very old but has made some distant Overtures for his son's taking it who is a Maltster & engaged in much Business otherwise. The best method of Letting these slate quarrys (I think) will be in publick sale to the best Bidder as there are many Persons employed in this sort of Business within 10 miles of the place and some of very good Fortunes.

Clearly Mr Martyr was not impressed by the slackness of Wilson and Newby over the supply of slate to Wood, and felt that a change would be beneficial, and might bring in a better rent. In the actual letter that he sent to Lord Suffolk he made a mistake in dating which is corrected in his next to Lady Suffolk:[47]

In my next letter I must humbly beg My Lord's Pardon for informing his Lordship that the Lease of the Slate Quarrys Grant[e]d to Rob[er]t Willson expired at Candlemas next, whereas it is at Candlemas in the year 1758. The error was Occasioned by the Old stile Date of Candlemas, the subsequent year not beginning til Lady Day.

The confusion was understandable, as the new-style calendar, with the year beginning on 1 January, had only been introduced in 1752. As the matter was not an urgent one, it was laid aside for some months. When it was raised again affairs had greatly changed for, in March 1757, Lord Suffolk died.[48] Now Martyr no longer had to serve two masters, and could deal directly with Lady Suffolk. She was not able to write to him until April, but then informed him "you are now to act intirely for me . . . My Fathers Estate now intirely in me for my Life, and what you can make of it is wholy mine . . . My Lord left me two Hundred Guineas for Mourning, and to begin the World with . . . you will receive my orders to send the Plate and Linen &c from Levens for my use, for I have not one Thing in the world but the Cloathes on my back".[49] Financial affairs were to trouble her for some months, though Martyr's sound management was a great support to her.

When the quarries are again mentioned, in September 1757, Martyr repeated the advice he had given Lord Suffolk that the best way of letting the quarries was a public auction "unless some Person in London thought it worth his while to Enter into Partnership with One in this neighbourhood in order to inspect and direct the Work, whilst he (the Other [partner]) should take care of selling it to the best advantage at London and elsewhere".[50] In October he provided a fuller account:[51]

Madam Levens Oct. 24th 1757

. . . . . .

As to your Ladyship's Slate in Westmorland – it is equal, if not preferrable to any in England. The Distance from the Quarrys to Dixes Wharf at Millthorp is [19] Miles and the very best sort will be delivered there and Shipp'd at 35s. per Ton – The same sort delivered at Kendal which is 7 Miles nearer the Quarry at 30s per Ton – and at Sadgill Yate the nearest place that carts come to the Quarry at 23s per Ton – the slate is brought from the Quarry on Horses, each

Horse carrying two Hundredweight, consequently one Ton is ten Horse-Load. A Ton will cover about two square and a half and each square will be about eight hundred weight.

As to what Profits have been made from the Quarrys by Rob[er]t Wilson the present tenant, it is impossible for me to Judge, or any one else *except* himself or those that are concerned in the Work. For sometimes many pounds are expended without gitting any slate, at other times several Tons are got at an easy Expence, just as the Veins lay and Rubbish and Water want to be removed. Instead of a Moiety or half share of the Profits (as mentioned in your Ladyship's letter) I don't think an eighth part will be given.

Consider – the Covenant in the Lease granted to Davis and Others, is only a 12th share of Mynes, Minerals, Slate &c – The Yearly Rent that has been paid [for the slate quarries] from the Year 1724 to 1732 was £4=10=0 – from that time to 1737 £5=2=0 and from thence to the present time £14=3=0 but how far it may advance when Lett from Candlemas next I can't say. Two persons have already Applied to me about taking these Quarrys and Others will, I suppose, but my Business is to get the best information I can of their yearly Worth, and to Represent the same to Your Ladyship, before I Lett them either in Publick or Private.

It is surprising these Quarrys were not excepted in the Lease Granted to Mr. Davis & others, as they were under Lease to Robert Wilson and not in My Lords Power to Grant them to any Person whatsoever during Wilson's Term. Mr Davis the Younger soon after the Lease was executed desired me to forbid Wilson from Working in the said Quarrys; But I assigned reasons to the same purpose as I have now done, which silenced him & the others concerned with him; And if they continue so, don't take any notice of *this Hint,* 'twill be time enough if they should intermeddle after the expiration of Wilson's Lease which is as Candlemas next

. . . . . .

Madam

Your most obliged and faithfull servant

Jn. Martyr

The point about the Davis lease is that it *had* excluded the quarries![52] Martyr received two letters following this, but only one survives, and it does not mention the quarries. However, Lady Suffolk must have sought further particulars for, in his next, he supplied more details:[53]

Madam Levens Novr 5th 1757

. . . . . .

Your Ladyship has only two Slate-Quarrys and Those are called Wrangdale-Gill and Stockdale Bank both lying within the Manor of Long-Sleddale – The first is much preferrable to the latter as to Quantity, Size and Finess of Slate, and is five or six times as profitable, although the present Rent is not four to one (vizt.) £11 to £3 3s. 0d. The Distance between Wrangdale-Gill & Dix's Wharf at Millthorp is about 19 Measured Miles and the Carriage of a Ton a Coals will be 13s 4d. or 13s. 6d.

Stockdale Bank is a little nearer than Wrangdale-Gill but the Carriage of slate is Rated the same. But the slate that is got at Stockdale Bank is heavier and coarser than that of Wrangdale-Gill and is chiefly used about Barns and other mean Buildings in the neighbouring Hamlets and Villages and not sent away by Shipping.

At Wrangdale Gill there is what is called London-Slate, Kettle-Dubb, and Nym-Tom – The first is very large, light, and fine colour'd fit for the Most Magnificent Buildings and is chiefly sent away by Shipping; The second is taken from the Bottom of the Quarry, of a good size and very durable, generally used for Farm-houses; and the 3d. is the Refuse of the other two, being very small and only fit for cottages, Pig-sties, or the like.

Windermer Lake is nearer to Wrangdale Gill Quarry than Dixes, and is Navigable, but not

to where the Tide flows, by 9 or 10 Miles; therefore the expence of Land Cariage to Windermer Water and from thence to the sea and putting the Slate on Board twice, is more than Land-cariage to Dixes and Shipping it there, Which Your Ladyship's present Tenant is very sensible off.

I wrote several times for a Copy or Abstract of the Lease Granted to Mr. Davis and at last I got a Copy in Davis's Hand-Writing which I have now by me, but as to the Covenants contained therein I was in no ways consulted . . . . . .

Your Ladyship's Most obliged and most dutifull servt.

Jn. Martyr.

The types of slate mentioned here are the same as at Troutbeck Park, except that Kettle-Dubb was there called "Country slate", and Nym-Tom was spelled Neam Tom; perhaps they were named after Kettle Crag in Langdale and Neaum Crag in Rydal.[54] No answer came on the matter of the quarries, and Martyr reminded Lady Suffolk a month later:[55]

As to the Letting of the slate Quarrys it is high time to come to a Resolution, the present Tenant's Lease expiring at Candlemas next. And I think the most advantageous way will be to Lett in publick to the best Bidder for the old tenant (Robert Wilson) may otherwise expect some favour as he has Rented it so many Years if I treat with him singly. I am well informed (since I wrote last on this subject) that his clear Profit of the slate after all expences are deducted is but 4s a Ton.

In her next letter the response at last came:[56] "As to the Slate Quarrys will abide by your Judgement intirly in letting them, so take the Opportunity and Manner you Think best, and most profitable". By then, however, Martyr had evidently decided there was no immediate need for a public auction:[57]

And as to the slate Quarrys if I continue for one year under the same Covenants I'll endeavour to let them at Candlemas to the Best Bidder to Make the most of them. There is little or no slate of account sent from Your Ladyship's Quarrys or any others in Westmorland to London during the War . . .[?] the Expence of Freight & Insurance is about 40s. per ton and the Delivery of it on Board a Vessel 35s. so that the whole amount will be upwards of Three pounds, and if I don't like the Rent that is offered, I'll let the present Tenant continue one year more under the several Covenants contained in his Lease which expires at Candlemas next. And certainly there will be opportunities in that time to let it to the best Advantage.

With the same delivery cost to the wharf of 35s. a ton quoted two years earlier, the freight (granted the greater costs of sending to London) had now risen from 12s. to 40s. on account of the Seven Years War, the effects of which have been discussed by Tyson.[58]

Martyr's proposal was acceptable to Lady Suffolk, who wrote in January 1758:[59] "I make no doubt but you will do the best for me in Letting the Slate Quarrys, and I Think you wise in not Engaging with Mr. Davis and his Workmen". Presumably Davis wished to extend his mining activities, had made a bid for the slate, and been rejected.

Finally the correspondence returned to Sir Robert Throckmorton whose slate was last heard of "falling down" the River Kent. On 1 January 1758 Martyr had written to Lady Suffolk:[60]

The 5th and 29th of June 1756 I receiv'd two Letters from the late Lord Andover with Orders to send 40 Tons of the largest and finest slate from Wrangdale-Gill Quarry to Gloucester. And in pursuance of such Orders I applied to Robt. Wilson (Your Ladyship's Tenant) for that quantity, which was shipp'd at Millthorp and Consign'd to Mr. Cole an Ironmonger at Gloucester

for Sir Robert Throgmorton's Use. And as Robert Wilson and William Newby have wrote to Sir Robert for Payment of the same amounting to seventy pounds, but have received neither Money or any Answer, & they imagine the letters did not come to his Hands – And beg'd I would Lay their Case before Your Ladyship; humbly presuming that you would take it into your consideration so far, as to remind Sir Robert of this Affair, or to inform me where to direct to him.

While Lady Suffolk could write to Martyr at length about money, she was not prepared to do so with Sir Robert:[61]

as to writing my self to Sr. Robert Throckmorton I had rather not. but he is a Man that worth and Good Character I d[a]re swear He never has receiv'd the Letters Robert Wilson and William Newby wrote Him. Sr. Robert and his Family [are] now at Bath and to Direct for Him at his House in Bath [is] the surest Place to meet with Him.

On 2 February 1758 Martyr told Lady Suffolk that he had written to Throckmorton, and in May was finally able to close the affair.[62]

PS I received a letter from Sr. Robert Throckmorton with a Bill payable to Robert Wilson (your Ladyship's Tenant) for 40 Tuns of slate but he complains that he is extreamly ill-used by this Wilson & Newby who are in Partnership for some Quarry – All that I know of the Matter is – That I enjoyned them to send the best slate the Quarry produced & sent the man I employed as a slater for your Ladyship to have it laid seperate & weighed ready for shipping, what Damage it receiv'd by removing from one Vessel to another or whilst it remaned at Bristol I can't Judge – but am very sorry Sr. Robert has reason to Complain.

There is no further information about slate in the remaining correspondence of Mr Martyr. By the following Candlemas he was too ill to do much about anything, and by the end of 1759 he was dead, a severe blow to Lady Suffolk in the loss of her most faithful agent. When the contract for a new lease was finally drawn up in January 1760 the terms were to be more advantageous. James Dowker, who replaced Martyr, contracted to let the Longsleddale slate quarries, "commonly called Wrangdalegill and Stockdale-bank" from 13 February for 20 years at an annual rent of £26, nearly double the old rent; as he reported to Lady Suffolk in early February:[63]

Mr. Thistlethwaite has taken the two slate Quarry's which the old Farmer had together in Lease for near Forty Years past. It will cost Thistlethwaite near One Hundred pounds to remove the Rubbish from the Quarrys which has been collected for many Years past, before he can work the same with success, which was the reason, that all the people who bid, insisted of a long Term, as they alledges it was too great a sum to lay out in the improvement of the Quarrys for a less term than Twenty Years. All the People in this Country say they are exceeding well let, and so it seems evident, as the old Farmer would not advance to above Twenty Guineas a Year, for in case he had seen a prospect of getting much money by them he would not have lost them for a small mater of rent.

Conclusions

The growth of the slate trade was eventually to transform the appearance of buildings throughout the country, but this only became possible when the huge commercialised export of Welsh slate got underway in the later eighteenth century.[64] Before then the use of English slate was limited to the areas of origin except in the better class of

buildings, though the information now available for Troutbeck and Longsleddale suggests that the export of Westmorland slate was increasing about the middle of the century, although it was being used in the late seventeenth century. Christopher Wren had apparently used the slate at Chelsea Hospital and Kensington Palace in the 1680s,[65] and the experience of Nodder shows that it had been used on major works in London and Yorkshire before 1740, though according to Mr Martyr, slate was little known in the south at about that date. The increase in wartime freight of Westmorland slate was noted by the Board of Works in 1744, but the cost was justified in the re-roofing of Westminster Hall in 1748 on account of the sale of the old lead.[66] In 1754 the Custom House Officer at Milnthorpe reported recent sales to Portsmouth, Emsworth and London, and the slate that was initially offered for Bath was actually sent to Newcastle-upon-Tyne by Wilson and Newby. John Wood's intention in Bath was to replace the Cornish and local stone slates with a better quality roofing material for his new buildings. The exact chronology of the growing use of Westmorland slate outside Cumbria is a topic that needs further investigation, and will perhaps best be pursued in well-documented building works, unless more detailed local sources come to light.

Richard Neve's *City and Country Purchaser* (1726) shows that at that date English blue slate was well thought of, but expensive, especially if laid on boards and mortar. The prices he quotes imply that slate (hung on laths) was actually comparable in cost with clay tiles, and much cheaper than lead.[67] Given that it cost the same to bring the slate by land from the quarry to the wharf as it did to ship it all the way to Bristol, the long distance was perhaps not such an important cost factor, so much as the organization of the trade. The problem for the owners of the stock of the abandoned Troutbeck Park quarry was finding the means to dispose of their slate, whereas for the quarrymen at Longsleddale the problem was producing the slate to meet demand.[68] As Mr Martyr wisely observed, a partnership between producer and salesman might have been the best form of management. No doubt the increased freight charges in time of war acted as a disincentive for the development of the London market (where there was a building boom in progress), but it does seem that the potential for a growing export market from Westmorland was missed in the 1750s. It is always possible that Robert Wilson, the lessee of Longsleddale, was not solely dependent on the income from the slate quarries, but his failure to respond to a clear demand is notable. Local sales of poorer quality slate, which at Troutbeck Park represented a third or more of the total production, may have provided a sufficient income. Wilson was also the lessee of Kentmere Head prior to 1756, but proves elusive in probate records.[69]

The letters printed above give such a clear description of the quarrying and transport of slate from Longsleddale that little can usefully be added, though comparison can be made with the Troutbeck Quarries for costs of transport (though there is no indication of whether long or short weights were being used in the figures for Longsleddale).[70] The initial quarry price at Sadgill of 23s. a ton will have included some two miles of packhorse carriage, which at Troutbeck cost some 13.3d. per ton-mile in 1755. Understandably, the ten-mile haul to Kendal, down Longsleddale, in 1745 on horseback, but probably later by cart, added some 8.4d. per ton-mile and brought the Kendal price to 30s. Carting to Dixes Quay (perhaps by a route east of the River Kent rather than along the as yet un-turnpiked A6) only added 6.6d. per ton-mile, making the final quay price of 35s., with no extra charge for lighterage. Nearly a third again was added to the quay

price in freight and insurance for Bristol at peace-time rates, whilst the onset of war more than doubled the price for London. In the case of Buckland, there was the additional cost of land transport from Gloucester, though the route via London and the Thames would have been preferable in peacetime.

Troutbeck slate, which involved discontinuous water transport in addition to land haulage, had a lower quarry price of 15s. a ton, but a final quay price of 30s., actually representing a greater transport cost as a percentage of the price, despite the product being cheaper. Coastal shipping costs were similar, in both cases affected by the increase owing to wartime conditions.

Finally there is the matter of the quarries and their part in the economy of the Levens estates. In negotiating the new rent for the quarries, Martyr was anxious to discover the quarrymen's profit, and eventually discovered that it was only some 4s. per ton, which seems rather low. Mr Martyr, in calculating the improved rent, was able to observe the loss of income from the failure to raise the rent sooner at the time of Craven's (possibly corrupt) renewal of the old lease. The near doubling of the rent that was finally contracted in 1760 indicates just how much the estate had been losing in previous years. Mr Martyr's new style of estate management affected all departments at Levens in his brief period of control before his untimely death, and had he come sooner or lived longer, the story of the slate quarries might have been otherwise. This is not the place to treat their later history,[71] for which more evidence will doubtless be forthcoming from the later papers as yet unexamined at Levens.

Acknowledgements

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Notes and References

[1] Blake Tyson, "The Troutbeck Park Slate Quarries, their management and Markets, 1753-60", CW2, lxxxiv, 167-90; R. David, "The Slate Quarrying Industry in Westmorland: Part One: The valleys of Troutbeck, Kentmere and Longsleddale", CW2, lxxxvii, 215-35.

[2] J. Nicolson & R. Burn, *The History and Antiquities of the counties of Westmoreland and Cumberland*, 1777, i, 133.

[3] Annette Bagot and Julian Munby, "All Things is Well Here" Letters from Hugh James of Levens to James Grahme, 1692-5 (CW Record Series vol. x, Kendal, 1988); see also letters at Levens of Tim Banks and other stewards.

[4] Craven to Lord Suffolk, 7 Jan. 1744/5 Levens, Box 8.2/8.

[5] Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", 170; Levens, Box F.7 (Robert Raws' accounts) and Richardson's letters to Lady Andover, 3 July & 5 Sept. 1792 (I owe these references to the kindness of Blake Tyson); for the later history of the quarries, see David, "Slate Quarrying", 231-2.

[6] Levens MSS, Box 8 contains over 400 letters for the years 1754-59 (list deposited in C.R.O. Kendal).

[7] The replies from Catherine Suffolk have been published: A. D. Bagot, "The letters of Catherine, Countess

of Suffolk and Berkshire, relating to Levens Estates. Part I", CW2, xlvii, 20-67 and Part II, CW2, xlviii, 168-84; many of Martyr's replies and "fowl drafts" were discovered subsequent to this publication.

[8] Levens, 8.3/1, 29 Sept. 1754; the house is still called Cravens.

[9] Bagot, "The letters part I", 23: Levens, 8.1/3, 9 Nov. 1754.

[10] Levens, 8.3/102, (draft, part omitted).

[11] Cf. Levens, Box 6.14/1-3 & 5.

[12] Hall to Martyr, 9 Dec. 1754, Levens, 8.3/40.

[13] Bagot, "The letters Part I", 24: Levens, 8.1/4, 15 Dec. 1754.

[14] Updated draft to Craven written on back of draft to Lady Suffolk, 22 Dec. 1754: Levens, 8.2/59 (fair copy 8.2/60).

[15] Levens, 8.2/58, 21 Dec. 1754.

[16] Levens, 8.3/6, 7 Jan. 1755.

[17] Bagot, "The letters Part I", 26: Levens, 8.1/6, 14 Jan. 1755.

[18] Levens, Box 13.31.

[19] Levens, Box 13.28.

[20] Martyr to Lady Suffolk, 22 April 1755: Levens, 8.3/109; see also his of 24 Oct 1757, below.

[21] Levens, 8.3/22.

[22] H. M. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840* (1978), 911-12.

[23] S. McIntyre, "Bath: the rise of a resort town, 1660-1800", in *County towns in pre-industrial England*, ed. P. Clark (1981), 211.

[24] Levens, 8.3/23 (Martyr's copy).

[25] Lord Andover's children: Henry (soon briefly to become Early of Suffolk and Berkshire), and Frances, who later married Richard Bagot.

[26] Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", 171, Fig. 2.

[27] Levens, 8.3/27.

[28] Levens, 8.3/28 (draft, here omitting deletions and repetitions).

[29] Levens, 8.3/29 (draft, part omitted).

[30] Richard Arundell, MP was Surveyor-General of the King's Works, 1726-37; Thomas Riply was Comptroller of the King's Works 1726-58: H. M. Colvin *et al.*, *History of the King's Works v. 1660-1782* (1976), 469; the most likely campaign at Hampton Court is that of 1731-4, *ibid.*, 180-1; work was undertaken at St. James's Palace in 1735-7, *ibid.*, 242-3; the "Manse" may be the Mansion House in London, built in 1739-43, Colvin, *Dictionary*, 248.

[31] [F. E. Paget], *Ashtead and its Howard Possessors* (Lichfield, 1873), 140-1.

[32] Bagot, "The letters Part I", 52: Levens, 8.1/34, 21 Aug. 1756.

[33] Levens, 8.3/278.

[34] Colvin, *Dictionary*, 912. Buckland is now in Oxfordshire.

[35] *Ibid.*, 344; A. S. N. Wright, *The History of Buckland* (1966), 45-7.

[36] Tim Mowl & Brain Earnshaw, *John Wood Architect of Obsession* (Bath, 1988), 176-8, referring to volume of Wood Drawings in Bath Reference Library, ff. 7-22, and designs printed in *Vitruvius Britanicus* IV (1767), pls 90-3.

[37] N. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Berkshire*, 105.

[38] Wright, *Buckland*, 47.

[39] Levens, 8.3/279.

[40] The church was repaired at some stage after the rejection of the elder Wood's grandoise plans for rebuilding, possibly by the younger Wood after his death, ex. inf. Tim Mowl, c.f., *Architect of Obsession*, 127.

[41] Levens, 8.3/280.

[42] Levens, 8.3/281.

[43] Levens, 8.3/282.

[44] $40 \times 2\frac{1}{2} \times 100 = 10{,}000$, the square being a standard builder's measure of 100 square feet (see letter of 8 November, 1755, above). Cf. Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", n. 22 etc.

[45] Levens, 8.3/19, 17 Oct. 1756.

[46] Levens, 8.3/273 (part omitted).

[47] Levens, 8.3/135, 2 Dec. 1756.

[48] Bagot, "The letters Part I", 59-60: Levens, 8.1/45, 24 Mar. 1757.

[49] Bagot, "The letters Part I", 60-61: Levens, 8.1/47, 9 April 1757.

[50] Levens, 8.3/156-7, 17 Sept. 1757 (draft dated 18th).
[51] Levens, 8.3/160 (as '20 Oct' draft, 8.3/158; part omitted).
[52] See at note 18 above.
[53] Levens, 8.2/162 (part omitted).
[54] A. H. Smith, *The Place-Names of Westmorland* (Cambridge, 1967), Part I, 206 & 211.
[55] Levens, 8.3/169, draft of 8 Dec. 1757.
[56] Bagot, "The letters Part II", 170: Levens, 8.1/61, 22 Dec. 1757.
[57] Levens, 8.3/172, draft of 27 Dec. 1757.
[58] Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", 171, Fig. 2 and note 21.
[59] Bagot, "The letters Part II", 171: Levens, 8.1/62, 14 Jan. 1758.
[60] Levens, 8.3/174, draft.
[61] Bagot, "The letters Part II", 172: Levens, 8.1/63, 21 Jan. 1758.
[62] Levens, 8.3/175; 8.3/190, 21 May 1758.
[63] Levens, Box 6.14/4, 10 Jan. 1760 (contract); Dowker, to Lady Suffolk, 4 Feb. 1760: Levens, 8.7/5.
[64] J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (1945), 65 (unchanged in subsequent editions).
[65] David, "Slate Quarrying", 215, after A. Clifton Taylor, *The Pattern of English Building*; for other early uses of slate (not necessarily from Westmorland), see Colvin *et al.*, *King's Works v*, 289, 315 and 385.
[66] *Ibid.*, 92 and 388.
[67] Neve (reprinted Newton Abbot, 1969), 191 (lead), 240 (slate) & 270 (tiles).
[68] Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", passim.
[69] David, "Slate Quarrying", 227; I am grateful to the Lancashire Record office at Preston for establishing this.
[70] Tyson, "Troutbeck Park", 171, Fig. 2. The only reference to customary measure is in Nodder's quotation, above.
[71] David, "Slate Quarrying", 231-3.