

MILLSTONE MAKING AT YARNCLIFF IN THE REIGN OF EDWARD IV

By ROSAMOND MEREDITH

Among the Weld Mss deposited in the Bodleian Library are several little fifteenth-century cash books, written in English, emanating from the Eyres of Padley. In one of these (C19/4/1) one of the Eyre brothers has jotted down millstone accounts. They relate to the Eyres' millstone working at Yarncliff (here spelt Ernclyf — from O.E. Earn = eagle) in Padley manor, during the sixth year of King Edward IV (1466). Which of the brothers kept the account is not stated; Ralph Eyre of Offerton seems a possible candidate.

The booklet was probably one of several, for there were clearly sales and payments before and after those mentioned here; or perhaps the outside pages have been lost. The back and front pages are very much rubbed and in places indecipherable.

The writer and his brother, Robert Eyre the second of Padley, apparently shared expenses and profits of the millstone working on a 50-50 basis and the entries consist of payments of wages and receipts from sales, jotted down to keep the record straight between them. There are also a few entries concerning another brother, Roger. The terms of employment of two millstone makers, William Wethington and Jankyn Stonhewer, are recorded and the following workmen are also named in the course of the accounts: Richard Merel, Roger Merslond, John of Peneston, John and Richard Barker, and Richard Wright. The wage or 'hire' paid seems clear enough from the contracts: three shillings for a pair of draught (or finished) millstones, while from Wethington's second contract it appears that for unshaped or untrimmed stones the payment was two shillings and sixpence. However, we read that he was to have as much from brother Robert, and each three shillings paid by the writer was 'for my part'; these statements rather suggest that the full remuneration may in fact have been six shillings for finished, and five for untrimmed, stones — though in that case profit would have been small on a pair of stones sold for seven shillings in the Edge. Wages were paid partly in advance. Wethington, in his second contract, was engaged for a stated period.

The following purchasers of millstones are noted: Roger qWetcrofte or qWethecroft, Richard Paton, Roger Buccrasse, Jac of Townay, William the son of Merlege, the miller of Loughborough and (partly unreadable on the back page) perhaps John (Pye) of Baslow. The number of stones purchased is not clear in every case, but Jac of Townay had two pairs, Roger qWetcrofte four stones on one occasion, Merlege twenty-one or -two stones, Paton ten stones, Buccrasse two pairs as well as a pair of old stones and the miller of Loughborough two pairs. Engagements were made for the stones to be ready by a certain date some time ahead. The price may have been settled by bargaining. In general it was about one mark (thirteen shillings and four pence) for a pair of draught stones but at the work-site ('in the Edge'), only seven shillings. Payment was often made by instalment. Paton had paid only half of his purchase money (less one shilling) when the surviving account ends. Merlege, Townay and the miller had completed their payments. qWetcrofte and Buccrasse had completed their main payments but some odd sums remained apparently unaccounted for. In some cases the small change given appears to have been discount.

The standard merchantable size of stones (chapman's ware) was fifteen hands and sixteen hands across for the upper and nether stone respectively. How far afield the stones went is clear only in the case of the miller: to Loughborough, presumably. Jac of Townay is unlikely to have come from Flanders, but more probably from Nottinghamshire, where Tournai/Turney was an established surname in the Middle Ages.

The millstone quarries at Stanage in Hathersage are believed to be of long standing and

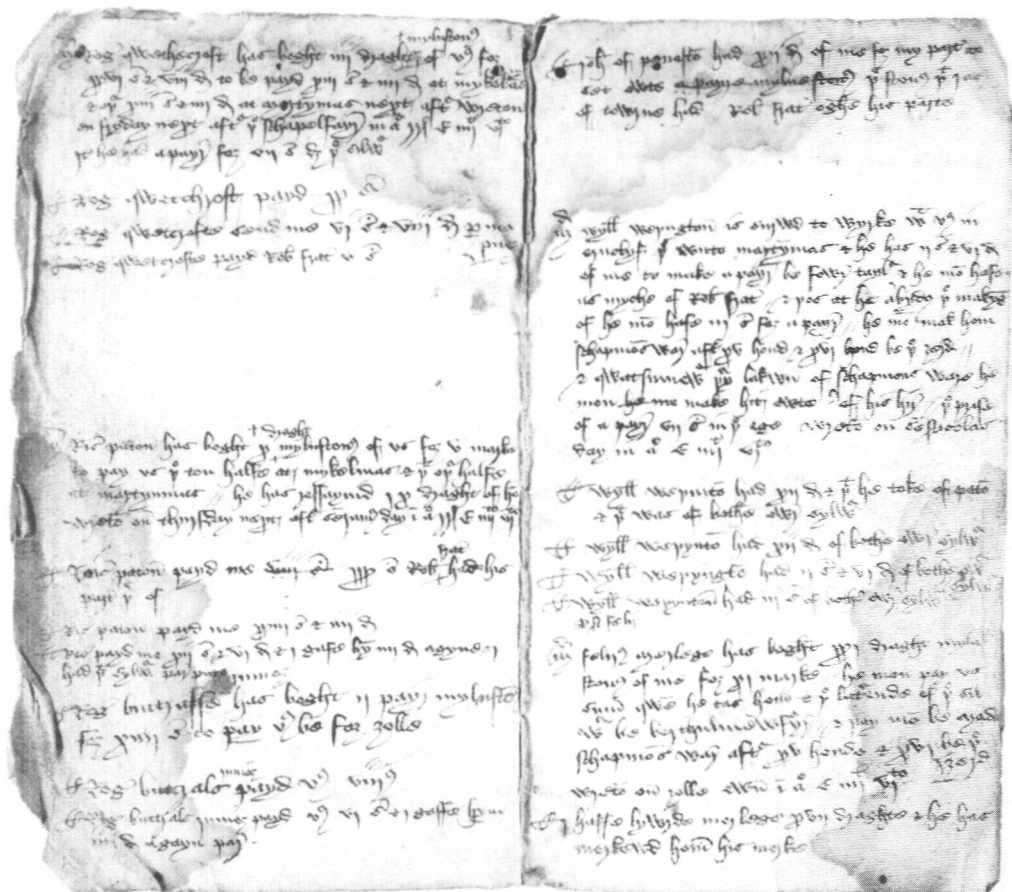


Plate 1 Pages 4 and 5 of Ms. D.D.Weld.c.19/4/1. (Courtesy of the Bodleian Library, Oxford)

were probably more productive than those of Yarncliff. The millstone edge in Hathersage manor was also probably being worked about this time, for in a rental of the manor in 1475 Nicholas Eyre held a millstone quarry. The accounts printed below appear, however, to be a unique record of millstone quarrying in Hathersage parish in the Middle Ages.

A NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION

The manuscript is an early example of cash accounts recorded in English. Unfortunately it is impossible in ordinary print to indicate the use of the thorn or barred 'd', or the old letter g/y written like a capital Z. Otherwise the original spelling has been transcribed, with a modern rendering, where necessary, given in italics and in parenthesis; eg: lywrd [*delivered*]. Abbreviations have been extended (except in the case of dates and conventional words such as It = item); but a final flourish to a word, which may or may not indicate a final 'e', has been ignored. The ampersand, invariably used in the original, has been transcribed as 'and', except where it is used in sums of money, e.g. ii s. & vi d. where it has been omitted. Christian names, nearly always given in shortened form, have been rendered in full, except in the case of Jac, which is perhaps open to doubt, though almost certainly plain Jack; 'ma',

short for master, has been transcribed as Mr.

Capitalisation has been modernised and minimal punctuation added where necessary. Words divided in the original have not been run on, eg: a nother, be fore. Doubtful and obscured words have been given in parentheses.

The spacing of the lines on the pages of the original is irregular, but an extra space is usually left where a new matter begins. These wider spaces between lines have been followed in the transcript.

To give a better idea of the original text a double page has been reproduced as a plate.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Keeper of the Western Manuscripts at the Bodliian Library, Oxford, for permission to publish the transcript of MS. D. D. Weld C19/4/1 and the facsimile of pp. 4-5 of the document.

TRANSCRIPT OF BODLEIAN LIBRARY MS. D. D. Weld C19/4/1

(p1)

- Md. Wylliam Wethyngton shall wyrke with us in Ernclif [Yarncliff] and make mylstones and he shall haffe iii s. [before] to make a draghte and thay schyn be schapmons ware after xv hond and xvi be the schyghte of Richard Paton.
- It. William of Wethyngton had iii s of me for my parte.
- It. William of Wethingeton had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Wylliam of Wethyngton had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Wylliam Wethyngton has lywrd [delivered] iii payr and he had made a nother per that are [not abyll]. [*Perhaps 'not able' = 'not suitable'*].
- It. William Wethyngton had ii s. of me for my parte.
- Item he had xii d. of me for my parte.
- The following two lines are too rubbed to transcribe letter by letter:*
- It. Wylliam of Wethington had iii s. of me for my part.
- It. Wylliam of Wethington had iii s. of me for my part.

(p. 2)

- [Md.] Jankyn Stonhewer shall wyrke with us in Ernclife to make mylnstones and he mon haffe iii s. for a draghte be fowre to make a draghte and thay mon be schapmons ware after xv hond and xvi be the schyght of Richard Paton.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. be fowr of me for my parte.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. of that Mr Peton lywrd me.
- It. Jankyn Stonhewer had iii s. of me for my parte.
- It. Richard Merel had iii s. of me for my part not quit.
- It. Richard Merel has mad me a payr that he aghte [ought = owed] me my selfe of old d[eb]et par[-] for the per.

(p.3)

- It. Richard Merel had xii d. of me not quit.
- It. Richard Merel had ii s. of me for my parte per felius [*the son of*] Merslon[d].
- It. Roger qWetcrofte payd me xii s. for mylnstones that he boght of Robert frater [*brother*] and he is be hynde xx d. That xii s. I had my selfe.
- It. Richard Merel had iii s. of me for my parte not quit.
- It. Roger Merslond had iii s. of me for my parte not quit.
- It. Roger of Bucrass payd x s. and of that Roger and I had one vi s. vi d., he the ton halfe and I that other part, for the old stones that he boght of me and Roger frater. Robert and I had one iii s. vi d. D[eb]et ii s. for the payr owns [*once*] more. I had that iiis. vi d. all.

Md. Jac of Towrney has boghte ii payr of mylnstones of us for xvi s. and we mon set hom owte.

It. Jac of Towrney has payd us xvi s. per Mr Richard Paton par [-]. Robert had his parte ther of.

(p 4)

Md. Roger qWethecroft has boght iiij draght mylnstones of us for xxvi s. viii d. to be payd xiii s. iiij d. at mykelmas and other xiii s. at martynmas next after. Wreten on Fryday next after the Schapelfayr [*Chapel Fair: 7 July*] in anno RR E iiiiti vi^{to}. [1466]. It. he had a payr for vii s. D[ebet] the silwer.

It. Roger qWetchroft payd xx s.

It. Roger qWetcrofte send me vi s. viii d. per Mr [pue?].

It. Roger qWetcrofte payd Robert frater v s.

Md. Richard Paton has boght x draght mylnstones of us for v marke, to pay us the ton halfe at mykelmas and that other halfe at martynmas. He has ressayvid ix draght of hom. Wreten on Thursday next after senjames day [25 July] in anno RRE iiiiti vi^{to}. [1466]

It. Richard Paton payd me xxx s. Robert frater had his part ther of.

It. Richard Paton payd me xxiii s. iiij d.

It. Richard payd me xii s. vi d. and I gafe hym iiij d. agyne. I had that sylwer par Paton junior.

It. Roger Buccrase has boght ii payr mylnstones for xiiii s. to pay us be for Yolle [*Yule*]. Roger Buccrase junior payd us viii s.

It. Roger Buccrass junior payd us vi s. and I gaffe hym [iiii?].d. agayne par [-].

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It. John of Peneston had xii d. of me for my part to set owte [a payr of mylnstones — *crossed out*] the stones that Jac of Towrne had. Robert frater oghene [*owes*] his parte.

Md. Wylliam Wethington is surwd to wyrke with us in Ernclyf wntou martynmas and he has ii s. vi d. of me to make a payr be fowr tayl[ur] [*trimming or shaping?, from Fr. taille, as in tailor; the ending of the word is unclear.*] and he mon hafe as myche of Robert frater. And thos at he abydes the making of he mon hafe iii s. for a payr. He mon mak hom schapmons ware after xv hond and xvi hond be the yerd. And qWatsumewer thay lakwn [*lack*] of schapmons ware he mon make hit owte of his hire. The prise of a payr vii s. in the ege [*Edge.*], Wreten on senNicholas day [6 December] in anno E iiiiti vi^{to}. [1466].

It. Wylliam Wethinton had xii d. and that he toke of Paton and that was of bothe owr sylwer.

It. Wylliam Wethynton had xii d. of bothe owr sylwer.

It. Wylliam Wethynton had ii s. vi d. of bothe owr sylwer

It. Wylliam Wethynton had iii s. of bothe owr sylwer per Nfelii [*sons of Nicholas (one of the Eyre brothers)*].

Md. felius Merlege has boght xxi^l draght mylnstones of me for xi marke. He mon pay us sum qWen he tas hom and the latterende of the silwer be berthulmewfayr [*Bartholemew's Fair; 24 August*]. And thay mon be made schapmons ware after xv hond and xvi hond be the yerd. Wreten on Yolle ewn [*Yule even*] in anno E iiiiti vi^{to}. [1466]

It. I haffe lywrde Merlege xvii draghte and he has merkewd hom his merke.

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It. Wylliam Wethynton had vi s. of bothe our sylwer.

It. Wylliam Wethynton had a stone wolle and he mon set ower iii s. viii d. for that in werke.

It. Wylliam Wethynton had iii s. of bothe our sylwer

It. Wylliam Wethynton had xviii d. of bothe our sylwer

- It. John Barker had xiiii d. of bothe ovr sylwer.
 It. he had ii s. vi d. of bothe ovr sylwer and he wyrks with Wethington after his hir.
 It. John Barker had viii d. of bothe ovr sylwer
 It. John Barker had ii s. of bothe ovr sylwer.
 It. John Barker had x s. of bothe ovr sylwer.
 It. John Barker had xii d. of bothe ovr sylwer.
 It. John Barker had iii s. of bothe ovr sylwer. *[In margin]* To the ladie rent.
 It. John Barker had iiiii d. of bothe our sylwer.
 It. John Barker has boght a cowe of me and he mon make me iii payr of mylnestones for
 hyr be martynmas.
 It. John Barker had xvi d. of bothe ovr sylwer.

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- Md. my suster Robert wyffe lywrd a payr mylnsto[-] of xvii hond and sche toke viii s. for
 thos. And thos wer of Stonhewer makynge of the laste yer.
 It. the mylner of Lughtbrghe [*Loughborough*] boght a payr mylnstones of me and he
 payd me viii s. for home. And I gafe hym ii d. agayne. And those wer of Wetyngton
 and John Barker makeynge of this yer. I had al that sylwer.
 It. Wylliam Merleg has payd me iii£ xiii s. iiiii d. and d[ebet] as myche.
 It. he payd Robert Eyr frater as myche.
 Md. Wylliam Wethington has tan the smethe stone in Ernclufe to wyrke of me and he
 mon haffe iii s. to make a draghte, the ton halfe mon be of xv hond and that other of
 xvi schapmons ware. He has iii s. in hond and that John Wryght is surte fror.
 Richard Wright is his felow.
 It. Richard Wright had ii s. vi d. not quit. He sayd hit was v d. mor.
 It. Wylliam Wethington had xvi. d. [not quit *crossed out*]/Robert had hit per Mr
 [M---- son?] *[In margin]*
 I mon pay Richard Barker iii s. for hym.
 He payes a ston in the Rekunynge that he was be hynde of the laste yer that John
 Barker and he wroghte to geder.
 It. Richard Wryght had v s. Item he had ii s. vi d.
 Item he had ii s.

(p. 8)

- [One line too rubbed to read, as are several words in the following:]*
 Md. John [Pye?] of Baslow had [----] draght mylstones of me to [bed?] owte from the
 smethe stone to the [----d] low for xii s. a draght and he had ii s. vi d. in hande.
 It. Wylliam Wethington had vi d.
 It. Wylliam Wethington had ii s. vi d. He sayd he had mad iiiii draght at the
 Schapelfayr.
 It. Richard Wreght had mad [no] more.
 It. the mylner of Lughtburghe had a payr of thos that Wethington and Wreghte made.

FOOTNOTE

1. Perhaps a further i under edge of stain, making xxii.