



### The Mill today

Heathy Lea Mill is situated in the steep sided valley of the Heathy Lea Brook about a mile east of Baslow. It is accessed by a short lane from the Baslow to Chesterfield Road: The lane crosses the brook to reach the mill on the far bank and continues uphill to join a track which earlier had been the 1759 turnpike to Chesterfield. The mill itself is a substantial three story building built of dressed stone. close to the downstream (west) side of the mill is a two story dwelling house. Several large outbuildings complete the complex.

The dam 100 metres upstream is still in reasonable condition with a leat leading to the mill. The small reservoir and leat are both filled with silt and overgrown.

Note - The better known Heathy Lea House is 600 metres downstream

### History

According to Crossely and Keirman Heathy Lea was originally the site of a lead smelter. The date it was built is not known but it must have been in the late 1500s or early 1600s. It is likely that the original buildings and mill pond were in the same place as today but no trace remains to confirm it. Again it is not known when the smelter closed. A possible date is the mid 1760s, when many similar sites became redundant after the introduction of the more efficient Cupola furnace. One such cupola was opened in 1760 only a mile away on the Baslow road to Owler Bar.

At the time the Lord of the Manor was the Duke of Rutland so records, if they exist, will be at Haddon Hall not Chatsworth.

Later it was converted to a corn mill. Again, dates are missing but it was certainly in use by the early 1800s.

In 1824 the Dukes of Rutland and Devonshire "Exchanged Lands". In the process Devonshire acquired the part of Baslow south of the present A619, including Heathy Lea Mill, which he transformed from farmland into an extension of his Chatsworth Park with shelter belts of trees. The valley of the Heathy Lea Brook became Jumble Coppice. All the former tenants were evicted.

Robert Marsden b1789 was the tenant at the time: Glovers Directory in its 1829 Baslow edition lists him as a miller still living in the village suggesting that was some years before the evictions were enforced. The 1951 census records Robert as a retired miller living with his family in Manchester.

### Outbuildings



View from south west. The house is on left with the roof of mill behind it

### Millpond and Dam



Sluice on right with the start of the leat to the mill

### The Marsden Family

The Marsdens were one of the two large extended families in the village in the 1700 and early 1800s. One branch was

John Marsden 1653-1730, farmer at "Whitlands" and publican at the Peacock (now the Cavendish Hotel)

John Marsden b1696

Robert Marsden 1725-1787

Robert Marsden b 1763

Robert Marsden b1789 Miller

Robert b 1789 was certainly the miller at Heathy Lea in 1820. It is not known when the family moved to Heathy Lea or the occupations of earlier generations. John Marsden b1679 might have been a Lead Smelter. His son Robert b 1725 might have been the first miller on site. This is conjecture but it was common for families to stay in the same place for generations.

It is interesting that a Robert Marsden is mentioned in the records of the Coal Mine at Robin Hood, which was only a few hundred yards upstream from the Heathy Lea Mill. In 1786 he advised about installing some water pumps, a suggestion that was put into action soon after. This Robert could well be the son of John and born in 1725 (above).

### The New Mill

The Marples were the other large family in Baslow. John Marples 1794-1874 was a millwright running a family business in School Lane Baslow. His youngest son

Robert 1831-1921 trained as a millwright. The Census records him as an apprentice in 1851, a miller and farmer at Heathy Lea Mill in 1861 & 1871, and a sawmill owner in 1881 which he ran until his death in 1921.

The old 1820s mill must have deteriorated significantly by the 1850s. At some time, possibly in the 1850s perhaps later, it was restored or completely rebuilt. John Marples was well placed to undertake the work, and he may have had his son Robert in mind as future miller. The conversion to the sawmill in the 1870s would have been straight forward,

In the 1920s or 1930s it was leased to the Water Board (now Severn Trent) to be used as a pumping station by Chesterfield Water Board, adding to its supply from Big and Little Barbrook and Ramsley reservoirs. At present (2024) it is having extensive repairs including a new roof. The house has at various times been leased to various individuals or organisations (e.g. Climbing Clubs).

Crossley and Kiernan (Derbyshire Archaeological Society Journal DAS 1992) note references to a lead smelting site at Humberley between 1616 and 1640. Today Humberley Brook ends at a point where it meets two other streams on the moorland near Stonelow. The stream continues down the valley and is now known as Heathy Lea Brook: in the 1600s it may have retained the name Humberly as far as Baslow. There had certainly been early lead smelting around this confluence but no sign or suggestion of a water powered mill. Lead slag has been found near the mill and a sample of silt downstream has a high lead content. They suggest that the present building is the most likely site of the early lead smelting mill.

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