



Allen Mill

Expansion and Experiment 1795 to 1847

Sometime in the mid 1680's, George Bacon, a mining adventurer, built a smelt mill near Allendale, on the land of Sir John Fenwick, Lord of the Manor of Hexhamshire.

Despite the Manor being purchased in 1689 by a renowned Newcastle merchant and major lead mine adventurer, William Blackett, he did not need Allen mill, as some years previously he had built a larger mill at Dukesfield on the Devils Water.

So Allen mill was left to work for the smaller mining partnerships, soemtimes leasing the mill, sometimes just paying for hearth and mill space .

This continued for over a century , until in the late 1790's there was a significant change in the thinking at WB Lead, and the lease of Allen mill, due for surrender in 1795, was taken in house.

Alan Blackburn 2015



Allen Mill

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Quite why the attention of such a large business should turn to a worn out and delapidated little mill on the river Allen is uncertain. The fact that the nearby estate was now for sale, giving rights to both banks of the river, and thus a large and reliable power source, was undoubtedly a significant factor, but there were others.

With mine output rising, extra capacity was needed, especially in refining the lead for silver production. Interest was also being shown by some gentlemen trained in the new science of chemistry, in the roasting of ores before smelting to allow better release of the lead from the base ore. Both these processes needed furnaces and a nearby coal supply, for which the mill was well situated.

So the focus of WB Lead turned to rebuilding Allen mill, to cover the extra smelting and refining capacity it needed.

What started out as a convenient way to obtain extra capacity would develop, over the next fifty years, into the premier mill of the WB Lead Co, and one of the largest in the country.

A Blackburn 2015

Allen Mill 1795-6

Spring of 1796. Purchase by Beaumont of Low Mill Estate with Corn Mill opposite Allen Mill, for £1260

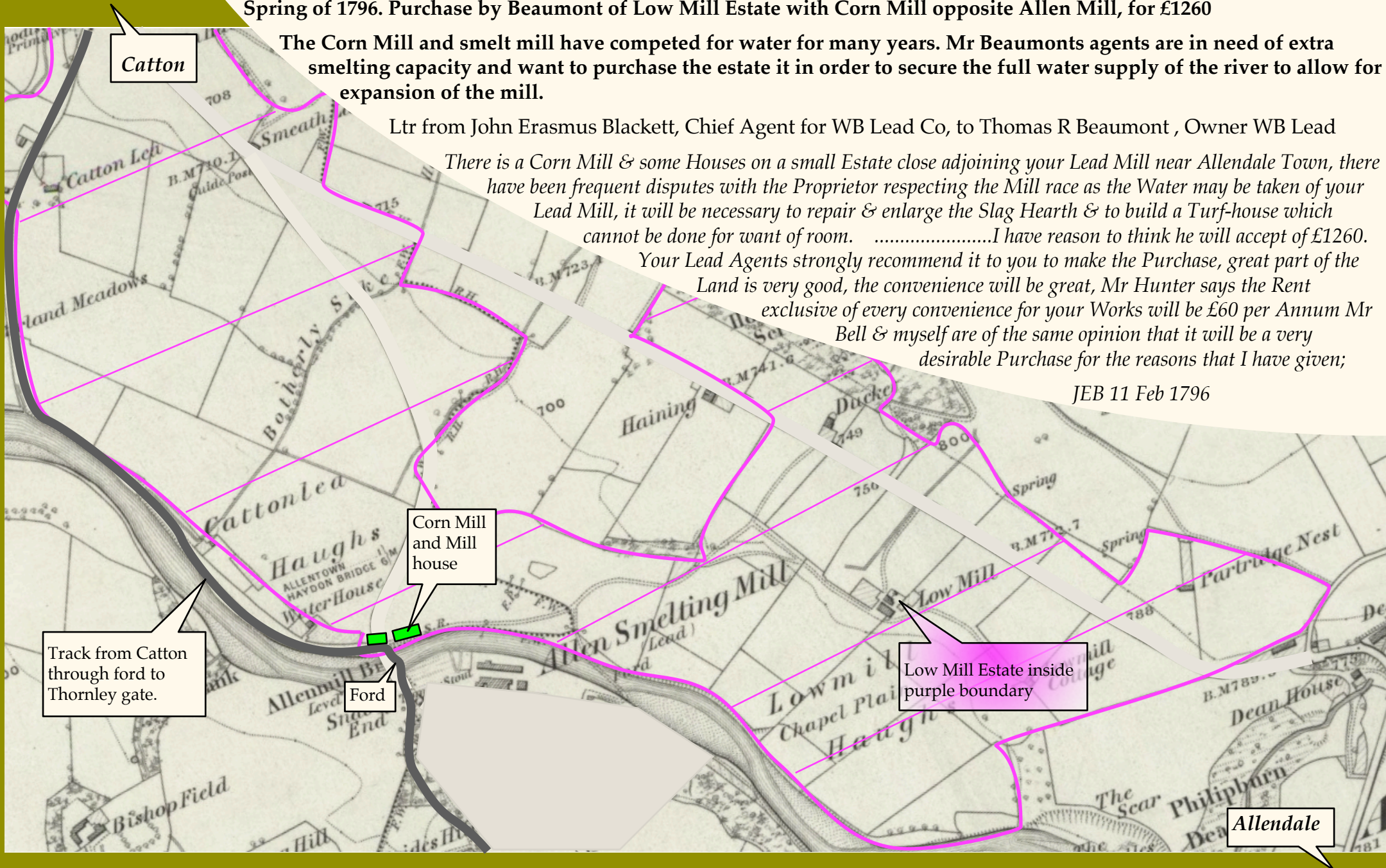
The Corn Mill and smelt mill have competed for water for many years. Mr Beaumonts agents are in need of extra smelting capacity and want to purchase the estate it in order to secure the full water supply of the river to allow for expansion of the mill.

Ltr from John Erasmus Blackett, Chief Agent for WB Lead Co, to Thomas R Beaumont , Owner WB Lead

There is a Corn Mill & some Houses on a small Estate close adjoining your Lead Mill near Allendale Town, there have been frequent disputes with the Proprietor respecting the Mill race as the Water may be taken of your Lead Mill, it will be necessary to repair & enlarge the Slag Hearth & to build a Turf-house which cannot be done for want of room.I have reason to think he will accept of £1260.

Your Lead Agents strongly recommend it to you to make the Purchase, great part of the Land is very good, the convenience will be great, Mr Hunter says the Rent exclusive of every convenience for your Works will be £60 per Annum Mr Bell & myself are of the same opinion that it will be a very desirable Purchase for the reasons that I have given;

JEB 11 Feb 1796

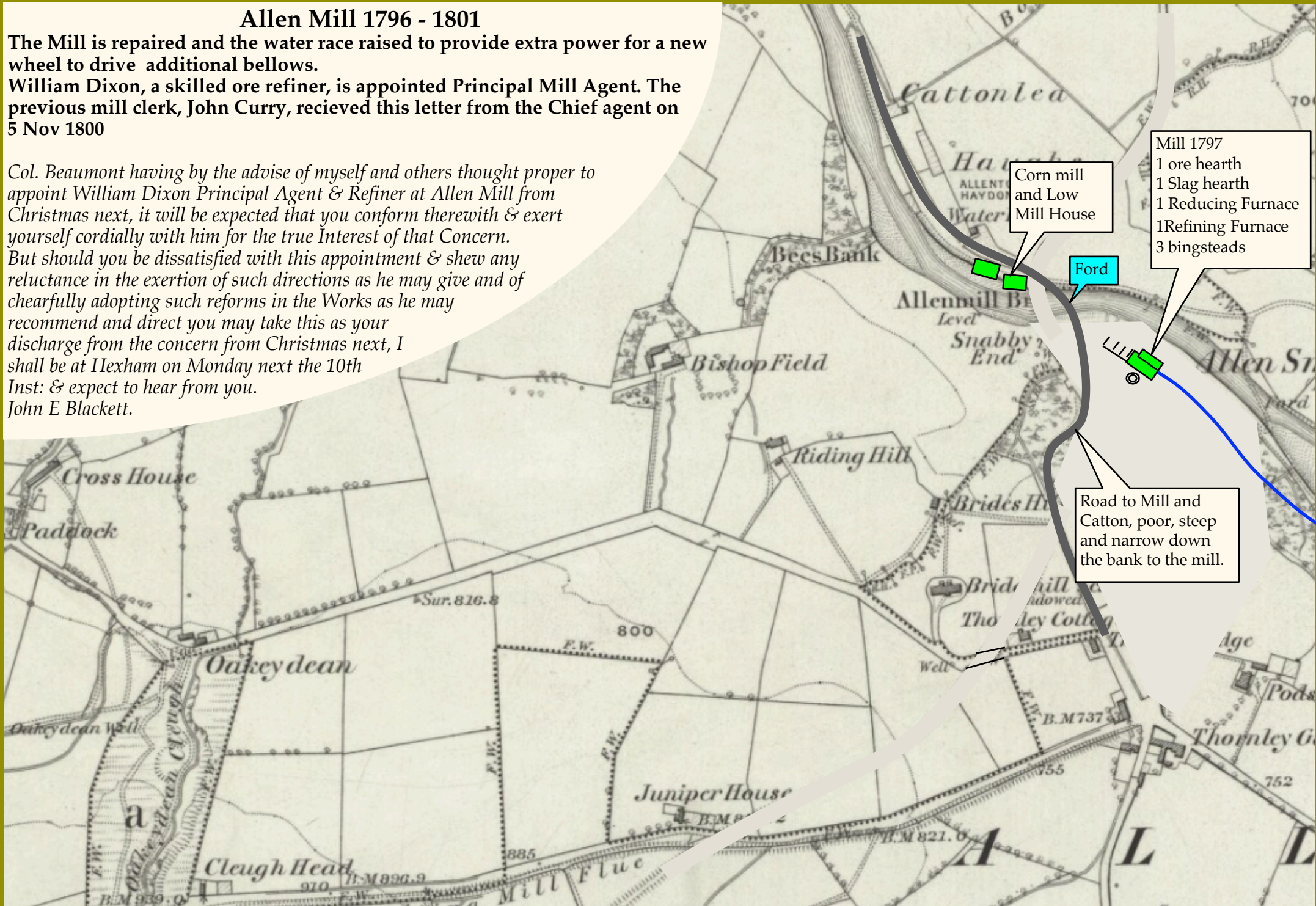


Allen Mill 1796 - 1801

The Mill is repaired and the water race raised to provide extra power for a new wheel to drive additional bellows.

William Dixon, a skilled ore refiner, is appointed Principal Mill Agent. The previous mill clerk, John Curry, recieved this letter from the Chief agent on 5 Nov 1800

Col. Beaumont having by the advise of myself and others thought proper to appoint William Dixon Principal Agent & Refiner at Allen Mill from Christmas next, it will be expected that you conform therewith & exert yourself cordially with him for the true Interest of that Concern. But should you be dissatisfied with this appointment & shew any reluctance in the exertion of such directions as he may give and of chearfully adopting such reforms in the Works as he may recommend and direct you may take this as your discharge from the concern from Christmas next, I shall be at Hexham on Monday next the 10th Inst: & expect to hear from you.
John E Blackett.



Allen Mill 1800-1808

New replacement water wheel fitted, and new cylinder bellows to blow 2 new ore hearths. Refinery closed for rebuilding .

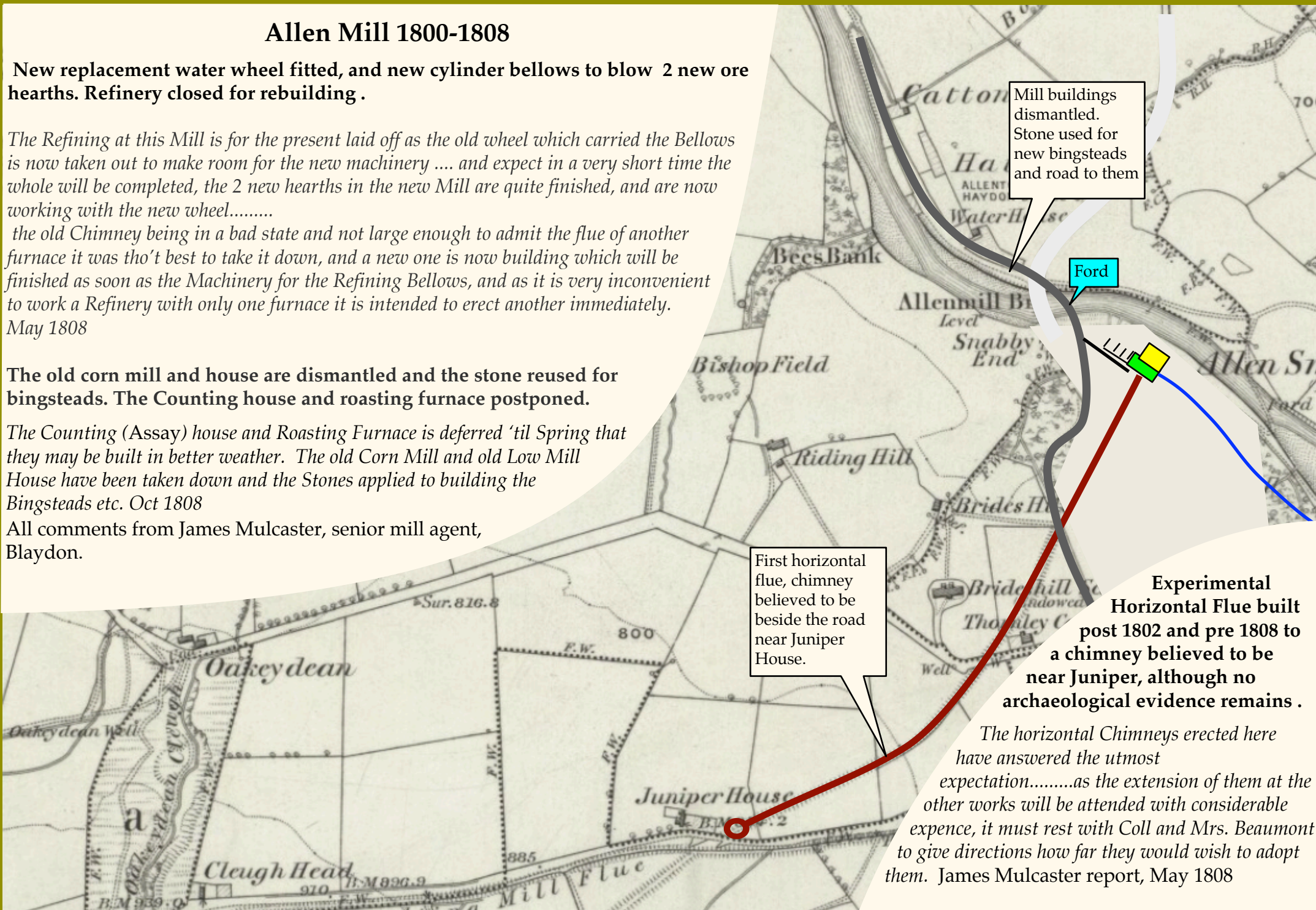
The Refining at this Mill is for the present laid off as the old wheel which carried the Bellows is now taken out to make room for the new machinery and expect in a very short time the whole will be completed, the 2 new hearths in the new Mill are quite finished, and are now working with the new wheel.....

the old Chimney being in a bad state and not large enough to admit the flue of another furnace it was tho't best to take it down, and a new one is now building which will be finished as soon as the Machinery for the Refining Bellows, and as it is very inconvenient to work a Refinery with only one furnace it is intended to erect another immediately.
May 1808

The old corn mill and house are dismantled and the stone reused for bingsteads. The Counting house and roasting furnace postponed.

The Counting (Assay) house and Roasting Furnace is deferred 'til Spring that they may be built in better weather. The old Corn Mill and old Low Mill House have been taken down and the Stones applied to building the Bingsteads etc. Oct 1808

All comments from James Mulcaster, senior mill agent, Blaydon.



Allen Mill 1808 - 1821

Four new bingsteads finished with access road. Two new ore hearths to be completed in 1810. The design of the mill means they will be built near the existing ones, and connected to the horizontal flue. With five ore hearths this will be about it's maximum capacity.

The Roasting Furnace & two additional Bingsteads have been finished there & two more in hands will be as many as wanted for the use of the three east Hearths, a Peat, Coal & Cinder House will be wanted Wood & Stones have been provided for two new Smelting Hearths, but the season being so far advanced, the building them has been postponed untill the Spring James Mulcaster 28 Oct 1809

I must beg the favor of your drawing the attention of Mr Cockshutt to the dimensions of the Cylinder Bellows intended for Allen Mill, that no time may be lost in extending Power so indispensibly necessary for Smelting the Ore, to which the Mills in their present state are inadequate;

The two new refining furnaces to the South will have a new chimney alongside the mill, as will the two new roasting furnaces on the North side.

a very considerable quantity of Commn. Bricks will be wanted for the Chimnies which it is desirable to have made near the Mill,

Since last year the new water wheel axle has been making odd sounds, but is now cured.

Wm. Robson has had another job at the Wheel Axle tree & cured the crackling noise formerly observed, in his & Dixon's opinion the defect is perfectly cured.

5 ore hearths
2 refining furnaces
2 roasting furnace
1 reducing furnace
4 new bingsteads,
Peat, coal and
cinder house

2 new
chimneys

Due to
it's success in
recovering lead,
the horizontal
chimney is extended
to Cleugh Head.

The Quantity of Lead recovered from the Horizontal Chimnies continues so considerable that a chimney of much greater dimentions and height in imitation of one which has very well succeeded at Langley Mill..... has been here constructed to the height of about 60 feet, & the Horizontal part of the Chimnies made to return once oftener.... Cockshutt to Diana Beaumont 1811

To return once oftener is to go twice the distance, so the end of the first chimney should be around halfway, ie near Juniper

New flue extension
to Cleugh Head.

