

NORTH AYRSHIRE WATERMILL SURVEY

Name of mill: Kaim Hill, Millstone quarry

Date visited: Circa 1980s

Address: By Fairlie

Surveyed by: Alastair Weir.
John McAuley and Gerrie
Hearn

Grid ref: NS220531

Present use:

Abandoned workings of a mill stone quarry on the western face of Kaim Hill. The quarry sits above the village of Fairlie, on the Firth of Clyde, from where millstones were 'exported.'

Photographs taken: At time of visit.

Notes:

See RCAHMS data on this site. The Statistical Account of 1842 states that there is a 'quarry of excellent millstones situated on Kaim Hill. Formed from a strata of breccia, white sandstone, minutely inter mixed with quartz occurs near the summit. Number of millstones produced annually is about 30. Estimated to be of excellent quality, taken great distances at home and a few are exported.'

See comments from the owner of Ardneil farm mill reference how they moved the stones from the quarry down the hill. See entry for Ardneil mill. The Statistical Account of 1951 still says under West Kilbride, hewing and polishing of millstones'.

Local sources say that the stones were originally cut in one piece and 'rolled down from the quarry.' Later the stones were made up from six to eight sections, 'cemented' together and all being held by an iron hoop. 'The stones varied in size from 3 feet (900mm) to 5 feet' (1.5m) and cost about £12.00.' It is also stated that some stones were exported to the West Indies and America. Were the stones for the West Indies used for crushing sugar cane?

The stones were supposedly rolled down the hill to Fence Bay, near Fairlie, and no longer there due to construction of the Hunterston coal port. (See also the entry for Hunterston/Poteath mill.) It is also said the stones were finished of at Fence Bay.

From the 'Topographical Account of the District of Cunninghame, Ayrshire', compiled about 1600 by Mr T Pont and published by the Maitland Club 1858 to quote. 'Kem (Kaim) hill. Long known for a quarry of excellent millstones. Till lately these were invariably formed of a single block of stone, but are now for the most part constructed of

a number of different pieces and hopped with iron in the same manner as French burrstones for flour mills.'