

Howk Bobbin Mill, Caldbeck

Where is the mill?

The Howk Bobbin Mill is approximately 500m from the centre of Caldbeck village in the northern Lake District.

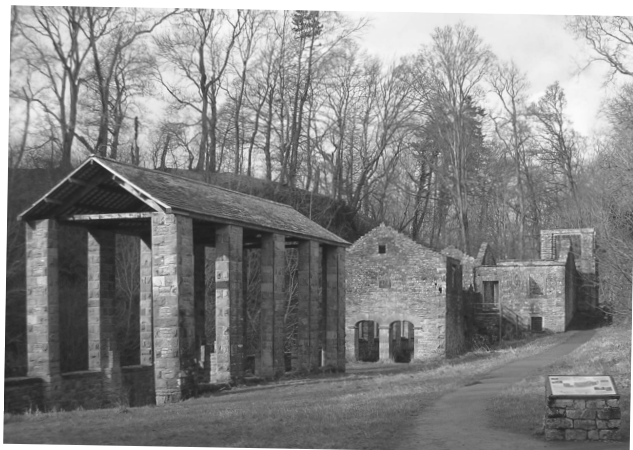
The mill stood on Howk Gorge. It was powered by the waters of Cald Beck as they passed through the Gorge.

Wood for the bobbins came from areas of ancient coppiced woodland in the valley and surrounding area. Raw materials and finished products would have been transported to and from the site by horse and cart.

Find the mill on an
OS map at grid reference
NY319398

A brief history of the mill

The Howk Bobbin Mill began production in 1857. Power was transferred from the beck to the mill by a huge water wheel, 42 feet 5 inches (13.1 m) in diameter. At the time this was said to be the second largest water wheel in the country.



Howk Mill today

Owners and managers

The mill was initially owned by John Jennings and leased to a Mr W.Helme who already owned Low Mill in Caldbeck.

The mill was later managed by a number of different people. John Wilkinson and his son took it over in 1908. The Wilkinsons managed the mill until it was forced to close in 1924.

What did the mill make?

The mill made many products in its time, mostly spinning and threading bobbins for

the cotton industry, in Lancashire and beyond. The mill was part of a much bigger worldwide cotton manufacturing process. It also made items for local use such as axe and brush handles, mole traps, washing dollies (long poles used to turn and stir laundry) and clog soles.

Who worked at Howk Mill?

The bobbin mill employed between forty and sixty people, including boys as young as ten years old. Most of the workers lived in and around Caldbeck village, either in family cottages or lodgings.

Glossary

Lathe – a machine tool that spins to cut, sand, knurl or drill materials like wood

Knurl – create a knob or ridge

Bobbin turner – someone who makes bobbins by shaping wood on a lathe

JOHN PROCTOR, bobbin turner

My life in 1871

Age:	16
Place of work:	Howk Bobbin Mill
Address:	Cornhill Cottages, Ratten Row, Caldbeck
Family:	father – Anthony Proctor, bobbin turner mother – Elizabeth Proctor siblings – George (13), Mary (11), Fanny (1)

Work life

"When I first started at Howk Mill I had to drill the holes in the bobbin blocks. You had to push the blocks onto the drill. If you weren't careful you could catch your hand – I've still got the scars.

The younger lads peel logs so that there's no bark left on them. This makes a nice smooth surface for making a bobbin. It's a hard job, twelve hours a day, six days a week.

It's cosy in the mill because we burn all the shavings from the lathes in the stoves. We have to watch the stoves carefully, as there have been fires in the past.

Now I work on the lathes turning the bobbins, with my father. When the bobbins have been turned they go to be dipped and polished."

Home life

"I live with my family in one of the Cornhill Cottages. There are six of us Proctors and we have a lodger, Max Alexander, who works at the mill. It's a bit cramped but Mam keeps it tidy.

On Sunday we get the day off. I help my dad with the garden round the back of the cottage. We grow vegetables and keep some chickens."



Workers at Howk Mill, c.1900

Scandal!

On 1 July 1882, John Proctor and his father Anthony were involved in a fight at the bobbin mill. The fight resulted in the death of Alexander Aitken, another bobbin turner at the mill. Anthony Proctor was charged with manslaughter, but at his trial in November 1882 was found not guilty. All charges against John were dismissed.

The fight was reported in the *Maryport Advertiser* on Friday 21 July, 1882.

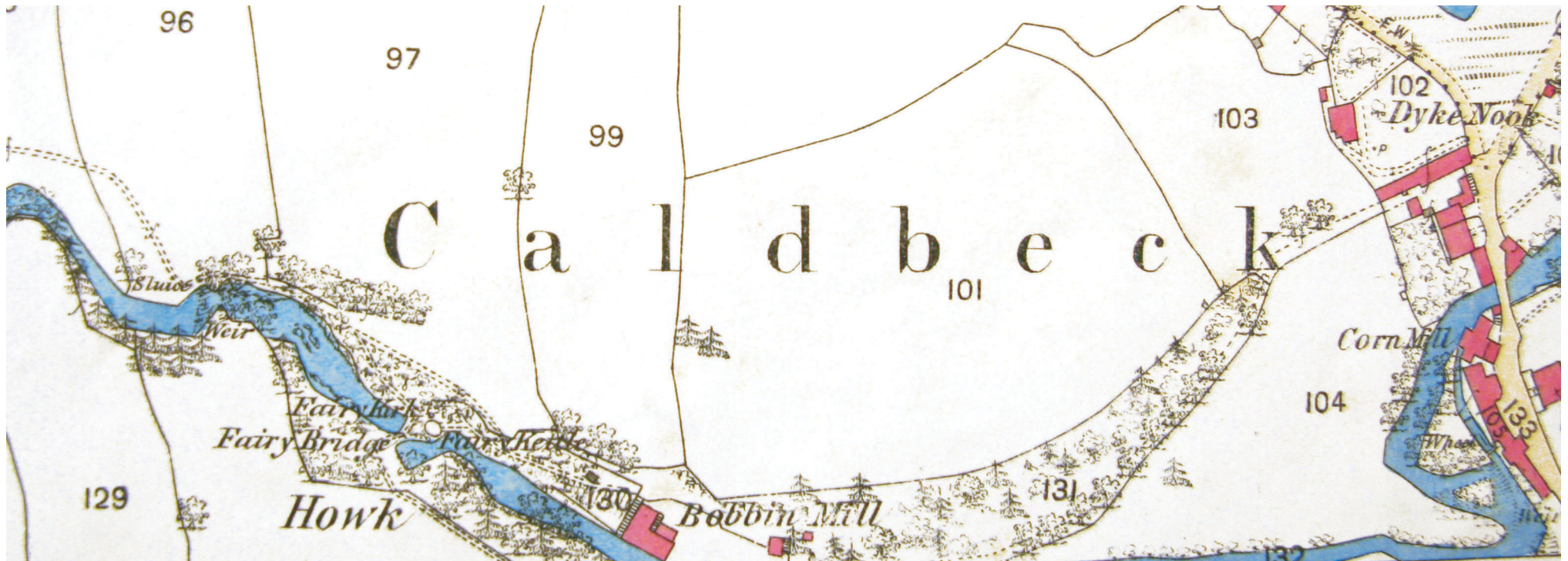
You could also investigate the history of
Stott Park Bobbin Mill & Staveley Mill Yard

Howk Bobbin Mill



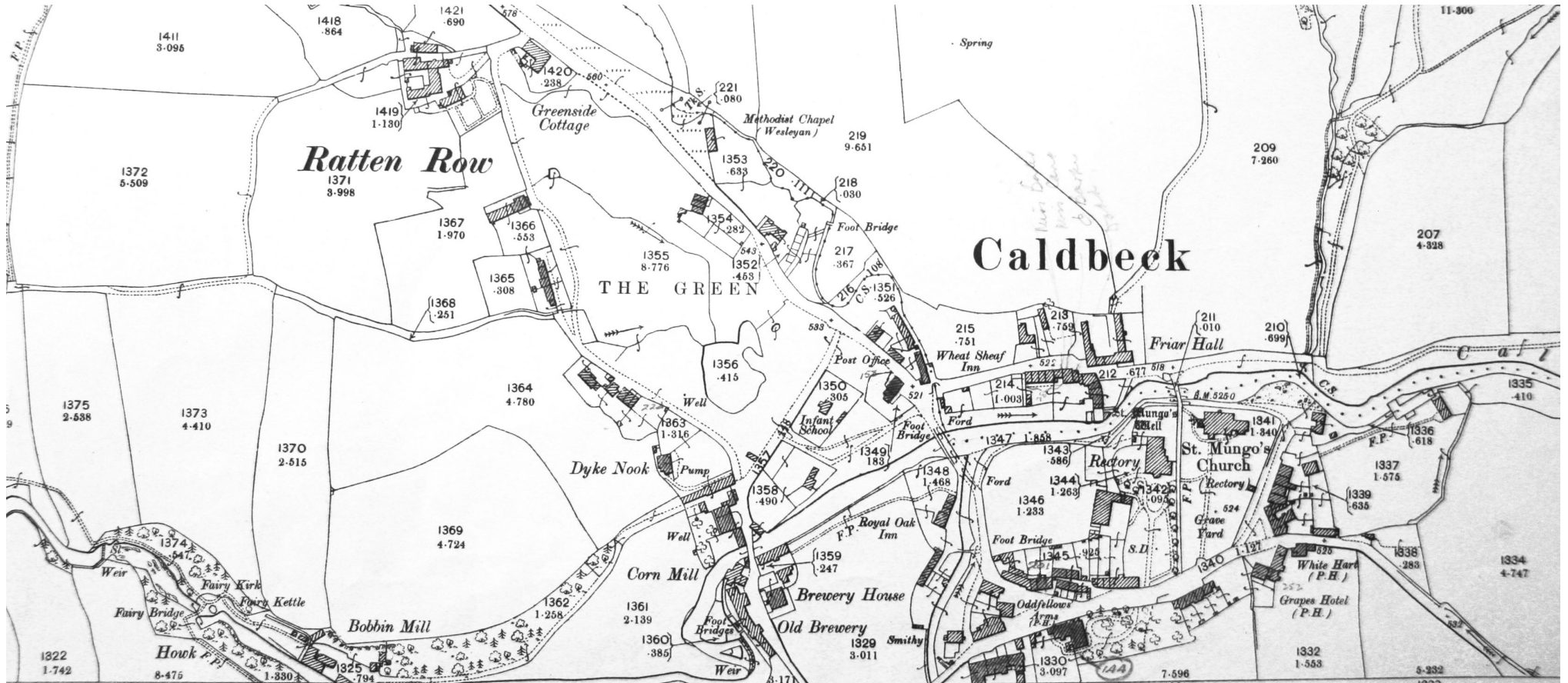
**From Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXVII, Cumberland
(1st edition, 1863)**

Howk Bobbin Mill

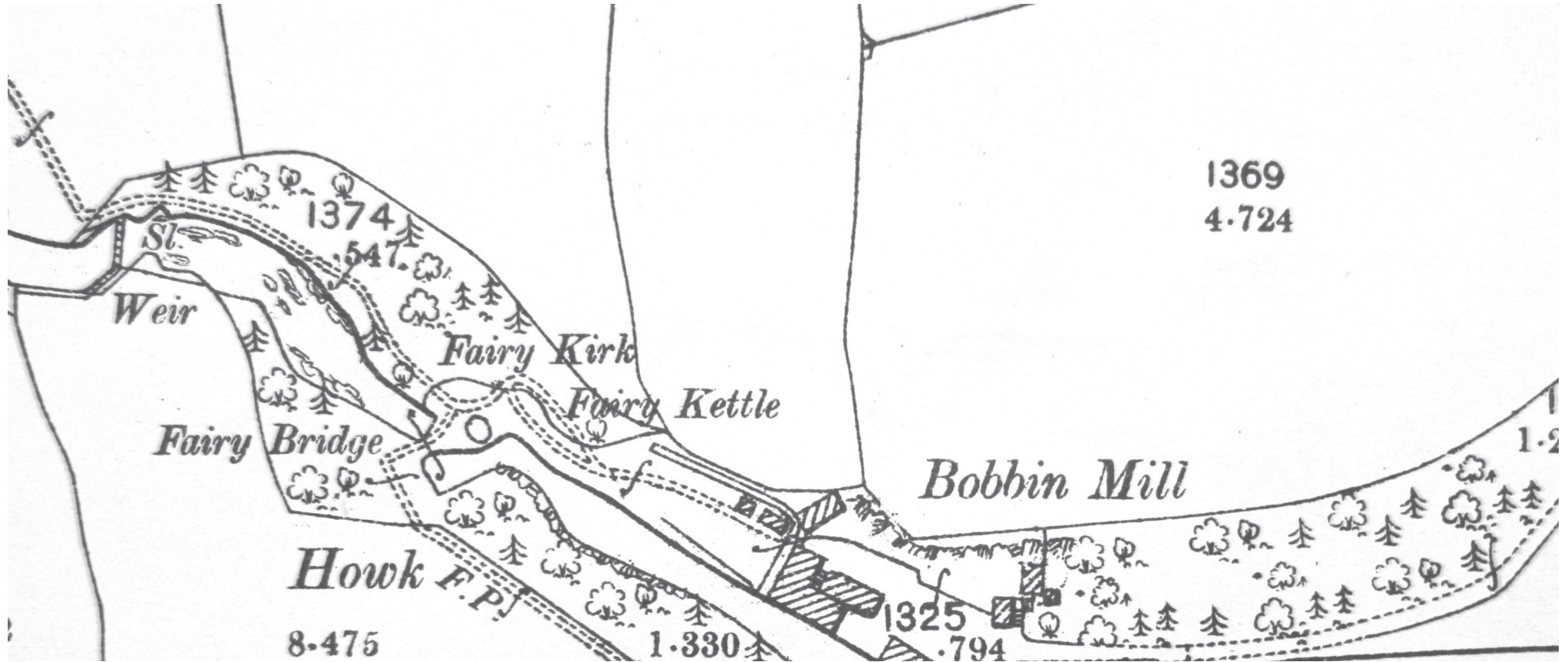


**From Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXVII, Cumberland
(1st edition, 1863)**

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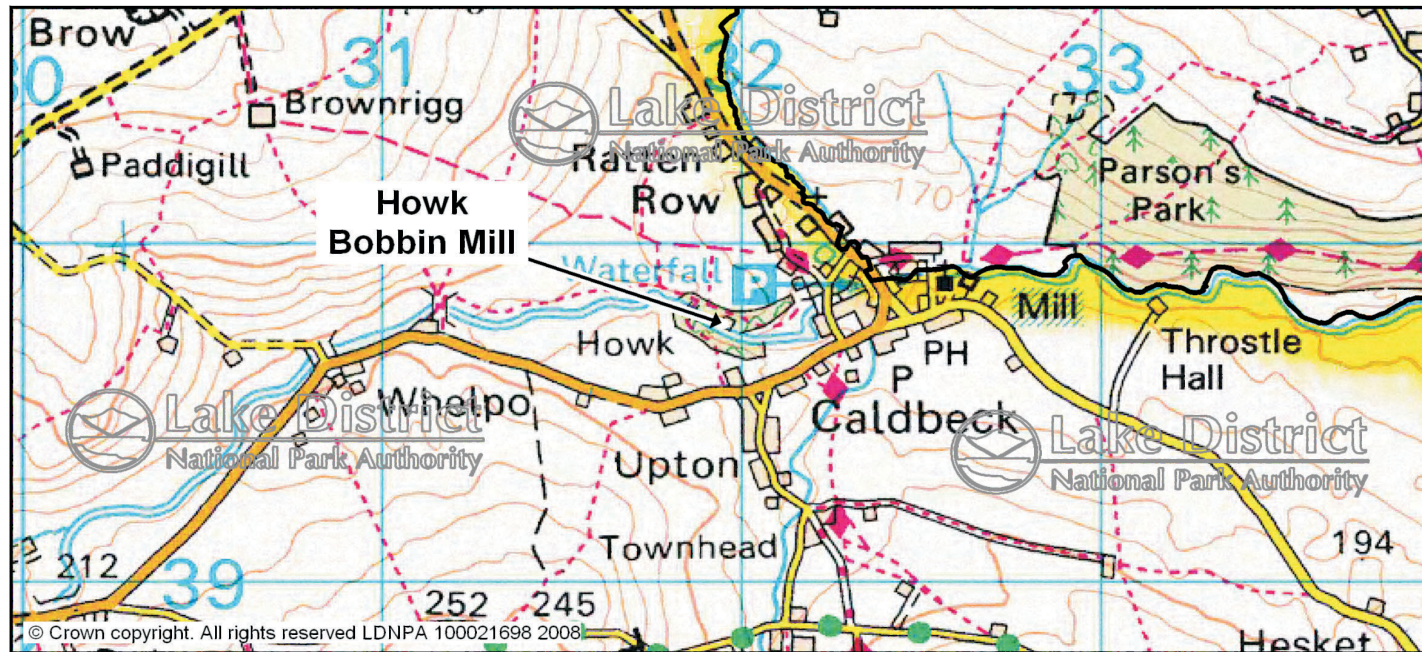


Howk Bobbin Mill



**From Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXVII, Cumberland
(2nd edition, 1900)**

Howk Bobbin Mill



From Ordnance Survey Landranger Series, Sheet 96, 2007

Howk Bobbin Mill



Workers at Howk Bobbin Mill, c.1900

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Bobbin Mill and the beck

Howk Bobbin Mill



The Howk Gorge

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Mill, interior

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Bobbin Mill and site

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Bobbin Mill and site

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Bobbin Mill, stairs

Howk Bobbin Mill



Howk Bobbin Mill, wheel pit