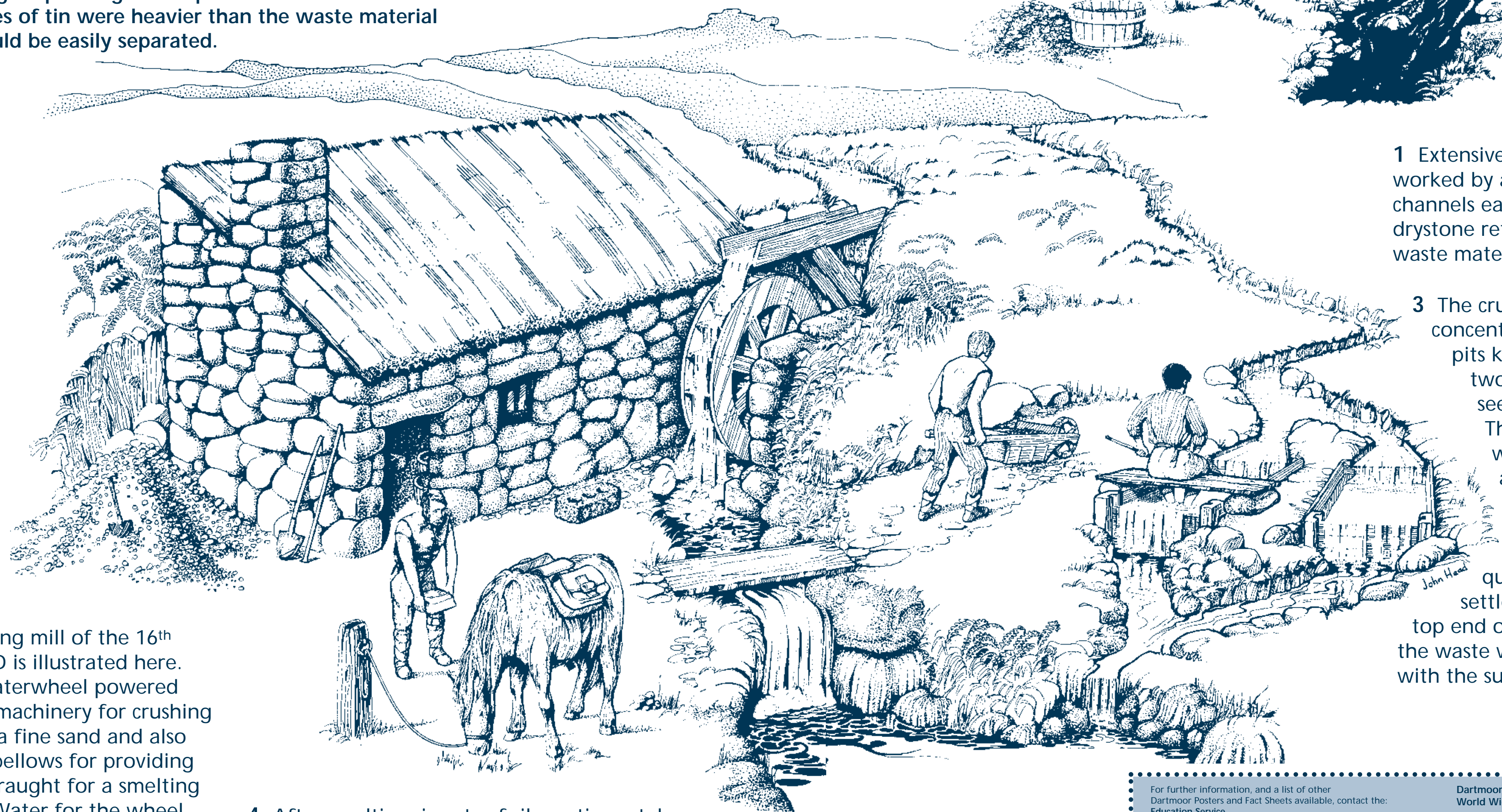


Tin-working on Dartmoor (1)



Dartmoor Poster

Tin working on Dartmoor is recorded from the 12th century AD. The rich pebbles of tin ore (cassiterite) were washed out of the lodes higher up the hillside and accumulated in the river beds over many thousands of years. The earliest method of extraction was by tin streaming, a process similar to gold panning and dependent on the fact that the pebbles of tin were heavier than the waste material and so could be easily separated.



2 A blowing mill of the 16th century AD is illustrated here. A small waterwheel powered stamping machinery for crushing tin ore to a fine sand and also powered bellows for providing a forced draught for a smelting furnace. Water for the wheel was brought in an artificial leat taken from the river further upstream.

4 After smelting, ingots of silvery tin metal usually weighing between 100-200lb (43 - 86 kg) were taken to one of the four 'coinage' towns of Chagford, Ashburton, Plympton and Tavistock for assaying and payment of the royal tax.

1 Extensive areas were often worked by a system of parallel channels each defined by a drystone retaining wall with waste material thrown behind it.

3 The crushed tin ore was concentrated in rectangular pits known as buddles, two of which can be seen in this illustration. The base of the pit was gently sloping and the tin ore, mixed with waste and water, flowed over it. The best quality heavy tin settled out near the top end of the buddle, while the waste was carried away with the surplus water.

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