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## DAWSON MILL

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Nestling in a hollow on the borders of Oxspring and Hunshelf lie the ruins of a homestead known as Dawson's Mill. Its origin seems obscure but, as it lies in the manor of Roughbitchworth, it could have begun life as a meal mill worked by the Dawson family at some period as it is similar to one found in New Hall Wood, near The Green, as you go from Bolsterstone to Unsliven Bridge. The house, late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century, was situated by the stream with a small dam still showing traces of a wheel race and goit.

Captain Adam Eyre mentions in his diary 9.2.1647 visiting John Dawson and spending sixpence for ale, on his way back from Thurgoland though no more information is given about his work. Later in 1654 John, son of John Dawson, was baptised at Penistone Church.

In 1665, as a tenant of the Wortleys, a John Dawson paid 15s.0d rent for 10a.1r.27p of land. On reading the Hunshelf enclosures I discovered Blackmoor was once called Dawson Common and had 92 acres which in 1813 were allocated to the Honourable J.A.S. Wortley-Mackenzie but this was then in Hunshelf. Considering the extent of the common, adjoining Dawson Mill on the other side of the stream, the owner was a man of means at that time.

Until 1686 the township of Oxspring and Hunshelf had one overseer, then it was divided and two overseers were appointed possibly due to an increase in population. An agreement in 1602 between Richard Wortley Esq., and the freeholders of the commons was hoped to be dissolved by Mr Sydney Wortley in 1687 which led to many disputes.

As before, Bosville having purchased the manor of Oxspring in 1547, became involved in the quarrel with the Wortleys which

69  
3·776

712

67  
3·293

730

B.M. 1314

Stone

Lane

56  
2·980

57  
5·216

rchworth

Common

55  
408

51  
11·192

54  
3·926

Rough birchworth

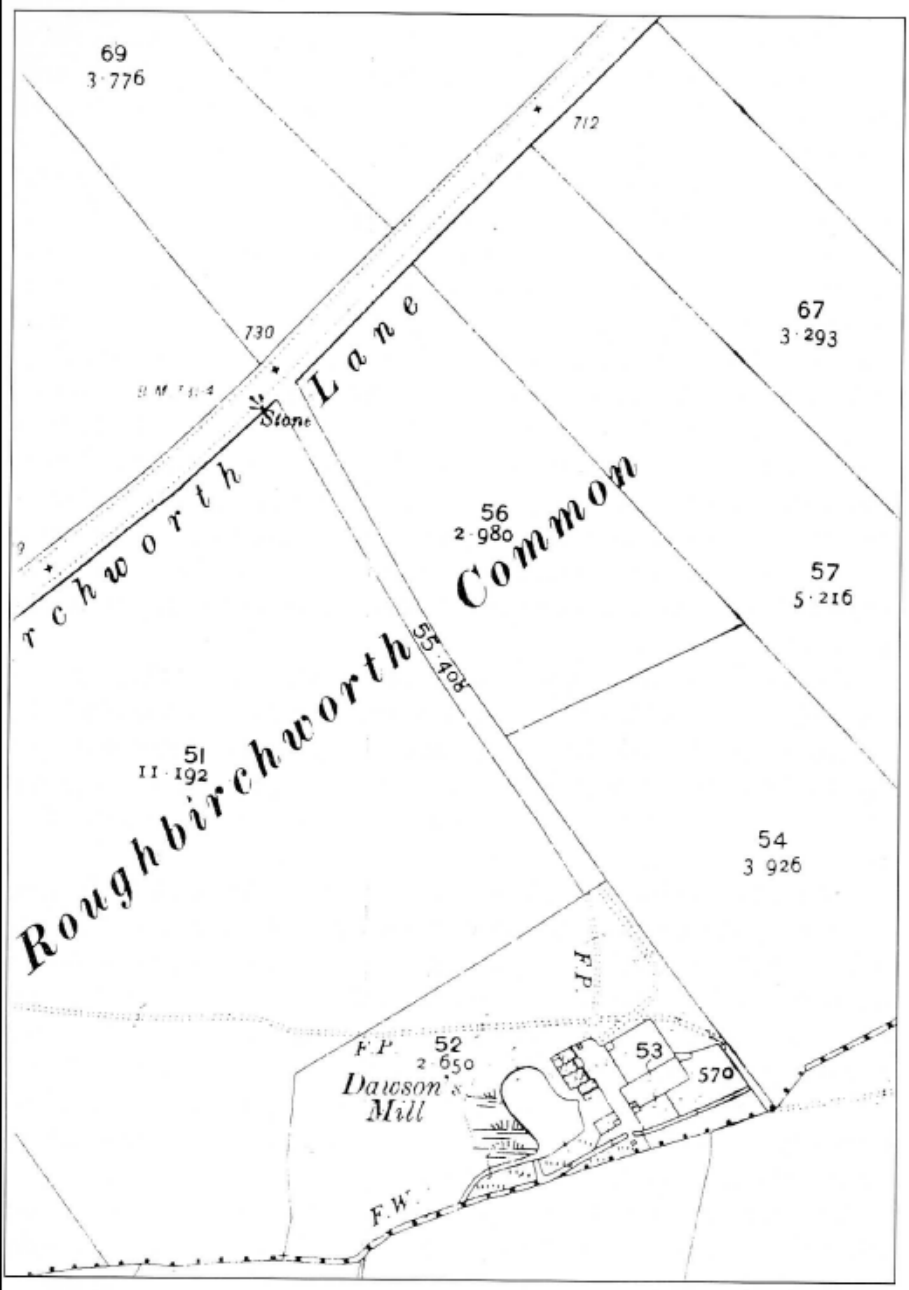
F.P.

F.P. 52  
2·650  
Dawson's  
Mill

53

570

F.W.



continued for a number of years. This was followed by further disputes over boundaries with the Fenton's of Underbank Hall, starting in 1738 and finally being settled by arbitration in 1756. As a result 5 stones were marked by Bosville to indicate the extent of his manor and walls were built eventually similar to those at the park at Gunthwaite.

Sam Pearson, the tanner higher up the slope, had lands in Rough-birchworth paying four shillings yearly for rent to Bosville. Meanwhile Joseph Broadhead, of Unsliven Bridge, had a messuage called Dawson House in the holding of Edward Bramald blacksmith in 1700 until after 1710, when he was a witness in the Wortley disputes.

The Camm family then dominated the scene, as in 1722 Robert Camm paid £5.0s.8d rent plus 3s.9d land tax to Bosville. On his death in 1728 he was recorded as a wiredrawer. Michael Camm died in 1765 followed by William in 1777. The latter has a gravestone in the churchyard at Penistone which reads: 'To the memory of William Camm, late of Dawson Mill who died the first day of March 1777 aged 80 years'.

The dwelling house now had changed its outbuildings use to wire mill. William Camm was paying £9.5s rent to Bosville in 1776 before his death. John Camm followed as wiredrawer, noted on the list of militia 1806 as were Benjamin Downing aged 37 also Benjamin Moore aged 31. Evidently a thriving little industry was being built up.

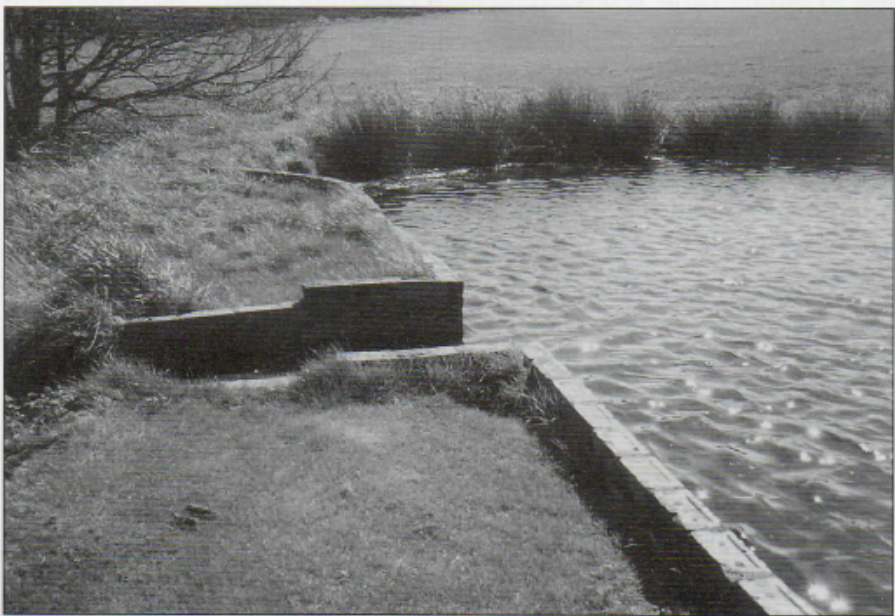
John Camm joined the Wortley Farmers Club in 1804, and voted in 1807. John Camm had the tenancy at Plumpton, milling, or fulling cloth, since his name appeared in the Wainwright accounts many times 1798 to 1801 being paid 3s.6d for his work. During the 1820s John Reyner lodged eight years with Benjamin Downing wire drawer, at Dawson Mill. Before the enclosure there was no gate across the highway as the commons were open to all. When the water was low and the wheel could not operate in the summer season the men would go hay making.

A Joseph Camm of Beverley, possibly a relative, left £400 for the education of girls in Penistone in 1823. At this time Michael Camm followed and when Bosville put his estate up for sale in 1830 he purchased five lots for £3,810, a total of 89 acres. It seems that more changes were taking place as in White's directory 1835 and 1837 Joseph Booth was a woollen manufacturer at Birchworth Mill.



*Dawson Mill ruins, 1997*

*Dawson Mill Dam*



In 1852 John Beckett, a farmer, utilised one of the buildings for the grinding of bones, after the Napoleonic Wars of 1815. Previously bones were used to fill up cart ruts but now this had changed and they were ground up to spread on the land as manure or fertiliser. A William Beckett of Roughbitchworth who died in 1844 aged 85 years was well known as the father of Barnsley Market.

Michael Camm, farmer, died in 1864 aged 76 years having been organist at Penistone Church for 40 years. His blower was John Johnson, who being reproved by Mr Camm for neglect of duty, retorted it was not Mr Camm alone who played the organ, but both of them together. He stopped work until Mr Camm admitted it was so. Although other members of the family continued to farm, work at Dawson Mill appeared to cease. The estate in the hands of trustees was in time put up for sale. My great-grandfather John Watts when residing at Dean Head bought a freehold close of land from them.



*Camm family grave*

### *Upper Don Watermills*

Dawson Mill had a number of uses in its life time but in the Census returns from 1841 the house and cottage were let to different tenants. Later next century it became ruins though the dam and part of the buildings still remain today. A bungalow was built overlooking the site about 1925 which is still occupied.



*Dawson Mill*