



Winterbottoms Walk Mill, now Wire Mill, 1910

WALK MILL, OXSPRING



The mill, well known locally as Winterbottoms, was at one time the site of a fulling mill or walk mill. This gave rise to the name, WALKER, a person who walked the cloth by trampling it underfoot, scouring it so it became thickened and felted before being hung out on the tenter hooks to dry. This finishing process, or milling was later done by machinery. The mill wheel was attached to a shaft which raised and lowered a pair of huge heavy hammers alternately to thump the cloth placed underneath.

As early as 1306 mention was made of Robert de Oxspring granting Henry de Rockley two parts of his fulling mill with water course and dam. From a weir near Kirkwood the 230 yard goit, once frequented by trout, flows down the valley, with Walk Bank Wood on the north bank, to reach the mill. At the Oxspring Manor Court in 1549 a fine of 6d was imposed on a man fishing in Walk Mill goit.

In 1722 Frances Wood, senior appears on the Bosville rent list paying £7.8s.0¹/₂d and 4s.7¹/₂d land tax. He died aged 79 in 1722 and was followed by John Wood who lived until 84 years old.

Early that century it was suggested that it would be of benefit to build a Cloth Hall in Penistone. John Wood of Oxspring, fulling miller, Frances Batty of Batty Mill, fulling miller, and Thomas Hobson of Hobson Mill, fulling miller, made a bond with Aymor Rich and George Walker. They were bound in the sum of £40 not to full or mill any cloth from any clothier who had not entered the agreement for establishing a meeting at Penistone on 8th December 1743.

As a result of this a Cloth Hall was built by the Wordsworths in 1763. Sadly the success of this venture was short lived and by 1812 it was converted into shops. The building still remains today as Clark's Chemists.

Thomas Kenworthy appears as fulling miller paying £10.10s for a half year's rent to Bosville in 1776. He died aged 82 in 1792. At this time George Haigh was working as fuller who, when he died in 1846 aged 79, had spent 55 years in the trade.

On the militia list of 1806, four clothiers were mentioned living in Oxspring, John Booth 28, John Denton 36, Edward Godward 31 and John Woodcock 28. These people would no doubt use the facilities at Walk Mill to prepare their cloth for sale at the market.

J.N. Dransfield writes that Hannah Rayner who married Thomas Darwent went with her husband to work for the Bradley family at Walk Mill. James Bradley, senior, died in 1807 aged 40 at the fulling mill.

Viaducts were built spanning the valley, over the mill, the railway opening to Silkstone in 1854. It has been suggested Woodbank House may have been used for a beer house at that time. Up to this period clothiers had still needed the services of the fuller but this was to change. New inventions at the end of the previous century meant more processes could be accomplished by machines. As a result of this the days of the clothier and hand loom weaver were numbered and some mills ceased to be cloth mills.



Oxpring viaduct

HOLMFIRTH DIVISION

Mill Race
220

Walk Mill
Bank
219

218

221
1.715

3.467

5.412

7.745

Oxspring
Wire Works
220a
353

Wood

181
.856

179
2.298

180
962

183
.993

671

603

654

S.P.

S.B. B.M. 654 B

S.P.

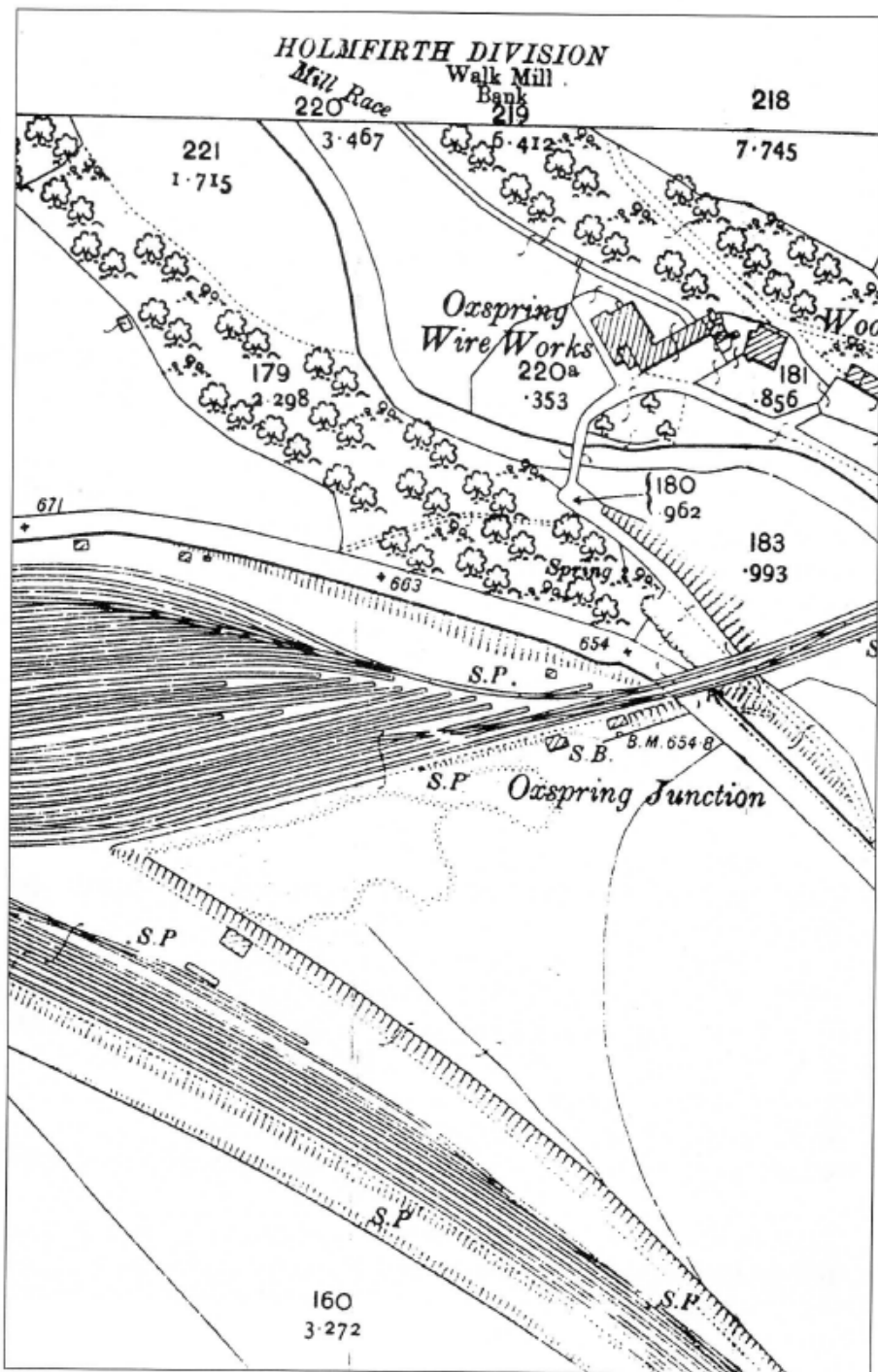
Oxspring Junction

S.P.

S.P.

S.P.

160
3.272



Bosville offered his estates in Oxspring for sale in 1830 but it was some years later when Thomas Edward Taylor of Dodworth Hall purchased the mill and some of the farms in that area.

George Wordsworth came with his family to New Mill in Thurgoland from Derbyshire about 1852. One of his sons, Joseph William Wordsworth, probably a descendant of the poet then came to Oxspring and rented the premises as a wire manufacturer about 1862. He was well established by 1871 with a wife and six children employing six men and ten boys. He was on the Oxspring School Board in 1883. He died in 1903 aged 68.

Next came George Winterbottom from Dodworth in 1888 to found the firm of George Winterbottom and Co. In 1896 a steam engine was purchased using water from the River Don flowing down the goit to work the wheel. Production of wire for needles and fish hooks took place, the material being brought from Sheffield by rail to Penistone and then by horse-drawn vehicles.

From 1894 to 1904 George was on the Oxspring School Board. When he died in 1905 he was succeeded at the mill by his two sons, William Jolly and Arthur, and later by grandsons then nephews and the in-laws. One of the Wordsworths, Joseph Hessey had worked at the wire mill for 28 years when he died in 1926. Winterbottoms purchased the works in 1926 from the Taylor family.

In September 1931 after a severe storm the river overflowed to a depth of three feet putting the boiler fires out. At this time, the wire produced was sent to C.F. Milward's of Redditch for the making of needles of varying sizes and for different purposes.

A fire in the wood behind the works in 1933 caused great concern. Children from Oxspring School were taken down to the works to observe the water wheel working in 1939. It was dismantled about 1947. The steam engine was replaced by an electric one by 1953. The goit, a source of enjoyment for children, remained until 1964, when a severe storm caused havoc once again.

The weir was broken consequently the sluice gate giving access from the river had to be sealed off and the goit was gradually filled in.

During the 1940s the business was extended so stainless steel could be included. It became a limited company in 1949. Eadie Bros. Holding Ltd. of Paisley took over the Company in 1970 and continued to progress reaching the firms centenary year in 1988.