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## OXSPRING CORN MILL

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In 1086 Oxspring was mentioned in the Domesday Book; possibly the earliest site was to the north side of the River Don consisting of farmsteads. Also recorded is Roughbitchworth which at that time was a separate manor with its small community of farms. The two are now combined to form the present village.

A corn mill was mentioned in Henry III's reign (1216-1272) owned by Matthew de Oxspring, son of Richard. In time there were no male heirs so after 1470 William's two daughters inherited. They married Eyres of Hathersage so in due course one share was leased to Nicholas Eyre, continuing for three generations in that family. One of the Eyres sold to Sir Thomas Rockley who died in 1534 and the latter sold his share to Sir Godfrey Bosville in 1517. By 1547 Godfrey Bosville purchased the other share from the other branch of the family.

The mill was leased in 1475 to Richard Wybsey of Cleckheaton for fifty three shillings and four pence and twelve hens.

On a knoll overlooking the valley Godfrey Bosville erected a 'Lodge' locally called the Manor House where he held some of his courts. It was mentioned in his will 1580 where he refers to furniture there. Sadly it deteriorated having been tenanted by the Pashley family as late as 1861 and consequently collapsed early in the twentieth century.

Thomas Oakes, steward for the Bosvilles, stated in 1645 that none of the lord's tenants should carry corn to grind, other than at the lord's mill, and the miller should not take excessive tolls or waste corn. Here Godfrey Bosville, grandson of the previous Godfrey, built a new mill, as a stone was found with the date 1652.

Crossing the River Don was the Whilley Bridge or Willow Bridge as it is called today. It was mentioned in 1640 as in need of repair

since it was the packhorse route between Lancashire and Yorkshire. Members of the parish were required to do the repairs or be subject to a fine of £10, not easily found in those days. It was a humpbacked bridge with low walls so the baskets or panniers, often of wicker work, carried by the horses could pass over them without damage. They travelled in strings. The first horse had bells on its collar to give warning of its approach, in case of horses coming in the opposite direction, since there was little room for passing on this narrow route.

Later in 1706 a gratuity of £10 was awarded, probably by some grateful person who realised the value to trade in keeping the bridge in good repair. Even in recent times 1988 the need for repairs was

PRICES RULING IN FIFTEENTH CENTURY	
BEEF $\frac{1}{2}d.$ PER POUND	WAGES
BREAD $\frac{1}{2}d.$ PER 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ LOAF	MASON) 6d. PER DAY
ALE $\frac{3}{4}d.$ PER QUART	BRICKLAYER) WITHOUT FOOD
WINE $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ PER QUART	MASTER CARPENTER)
WHEAT 8d. PER BUSHEL	PLUMBER) 4d. PER DAY
OATS 4d. PER BUSHEL	GLAZIER) WITH FOOD
BEANS $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ PER BUSHEL	CARTER) £1. PER YEAR PLUS
(PORKER) PIG 1/9d.	SHEPHERD) ALLOWANCE & CLOTHES
FAT SHEEP 1/-	AGRICULTURAL WORKER) 5 <sup>PER YEAR</sup>
BULLOCK 5/-	BAILIFF £1.6.8. PER YEAR
COCKEREL & 13 HENS 1/2	ALLOWANCE & CLOTHES 4 <sup>PER YEAR</sup>
FAT GOOSE 2d.	FEMALE SERVANT 10 <sup>PER YEAR</sup>
	ALLOWANCE & CLOTHES 4 <sup>PER YEAR</sup>
	WOMEN WORKERS
	2 $\frac{1}{2}d.$ PER DAY WITH FOOD
	4 $\frac{1}{2}d.$ . . . WITHOUT FOOD
FREEHOLD LAND	
GOOD MEADOW LAND 4 <sup>PER</sup> ACRE	
ARABLE LAND 3 <sup>PER</sup> ACRE	

*Prices prevailing in Tudor times, from a plaque in the Old Weaver's House, Canterbury.*

again evident to keep this piece of history in the picturesque setting for future inhabitants to enjoy.

Going north up Willow Lane to join trackways to Huddersfield, Wakefield or Barnsley, traces of the old flagged path or causey are noticeable. In the opposite direction southwards into Rough-birchworth the route led to the salt trail on the ridge from Cheshire to Rotherham.

From this, down the steep hillside over Unsliven Bridge, routes into Derbyshire could be joined.

There were no route maps to follow, consequently travellers were relying on guide stoops, posts or crosses to indicate which direction to follow. Local innkeepers gave help but winter storms made many journeys hazardous or even impossible.

Near Willow Bridge 450 yards below Walk Mill was a goit, 880 yards long controlled by a sluice gate to fill the dam by the corn mill, last used early in the twentieth century. From this mill a tail race of twenty yards returned the water to the river. On the hearth tax-returns of 1672 Christopher Green was registered as a miller amongst the twenty three households who paid tax.

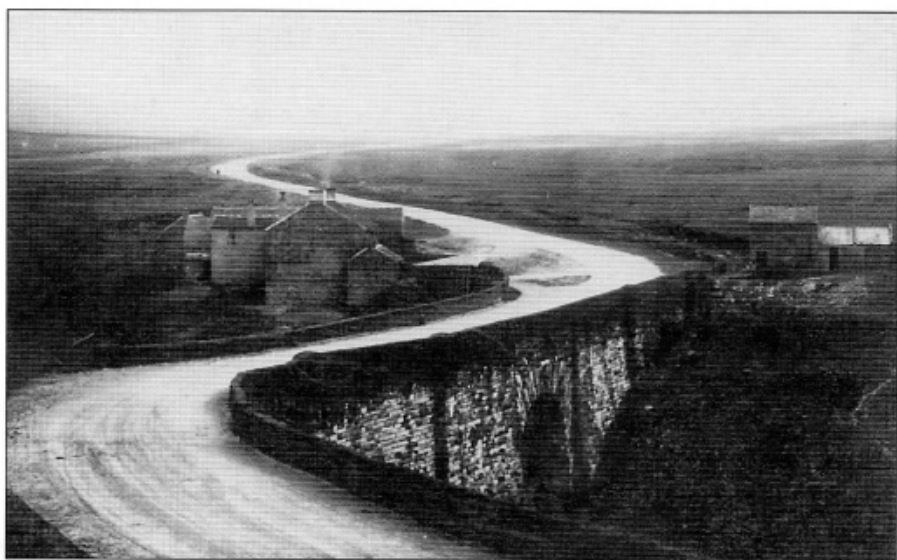


*Willow Bridge, Oxspring*

A lease was granted in 1684/5 for thirteen years, with £25 rent to be paid annually by Francis Wordsworth of Stainborough and Silkstone, miller of the Oxspring Mill with two stones and two kilns.

During the eighteenth century improvements to roads took place as turnpikes were established to assist trade between the counties. Hostelrys were built to cope with increased traffic, with sheds adjoining where horses could be fed and watered while their drivers had refreshments, as at Saltersbrook.

Long broad wheeled wagons came into use conveying goods over the hills. These were drawn by eight or ten horses or even oxen while the driver, mounted on his own horse or pony, used a long whip to urge the team on. Adam Eyre states that the oxen were often shod like horses being used as beasts of husbandry. Bridges were only 12 to 16 feet wide at this time and had to be widened to cope with larger wagons and carts. Even recently bridges have been altered and strengthened to take the strain of juggernauts—such is the march of progress. Counties were responsible for their own repairs and improvements. Tolls were collected in each manor, charges varying according to type of wagon or number of animals thus increasing the cost of goods transported.



*Miller's Arms, Saltersbrook, 1910*

Martin Stanley, senior, died at Oxspring Mill in 1741 aged 54 years, followed by his son, also Martin, who died in 1774 aged 60 years. Cornelius Bower, yeoman, died in 1767 aged 36 years preceded by his wife who died of a fever in 1745 after being visited by the apothecary, Arthur Jessop of New Mill. Most probably Bower Hill takes its name from that family.

On the militia list of 1806, William Moodey aged 24, James Rolling 36 and John Rolling 34 are listed as millers in Oxspring. Earlier in 1802 John Rolling conveyed an organ from Wakefield to Penistone Church free of charge. He was evidently kindly disposed to the people because in bad times he let the cottagers have one stone weekly of wholemeal, 'Rolling's Grist', at cost price. An owner of oxen he put them into the shafts of a carriage to drive to Wharnccliffe Craggs on special occasions.

He was a great believer in the nutritious value of oatmeal and saw that his family partook of different variations instead of white bread and jam, the diet of many at that time. He was no doubt influenced by being able to produce oatmeal in his mill. Of course the cook could make a variety of tempting dishes, like porridge, oatcakes, or havercakes, bread and biscuits since shops had little to offer as food was home baked in the country.

John Rolling married and had a daughter Elizabeth and two sons, John Thomas and Henry. The sons attended the school at Netherfield House, run by the Minister Rev. George Harrison (1814-1829) who taught gentlemens' sons. Netherfield Congregational Chapel, where he was minister, was opened in 1788 but closed in 1981 when it was amalgamated with St. Paul's to form what is now St. Andrews.

Across the River Don, on the south side John Rolling erected a steam corn mill in 1828. A ball was held to celebrate the opening when the local gentry were invited. Mrs Eyre, mother of Mrs Thomas Tomasson of Thurlstone Mill, opened the dancing with Mr John Rolling. As the population of Oxspring in 1821 was only 241 consisting mainly of farmers I imagine some of them as potential customers would be invited. Guests would travel by horse-drawn carriage, horseback or on foot to join in the festivities.

An insight into the life of the times was given by John Scholey, constable of Penistone, who stated that William Thorpe, jack of all trades, killed pigs for John Rolling, being paid four quarts of ale for each one, and he killed six in a day. Most households with land

kept a pig and drank ale or beer since tea or coffee was too expensive for the working class.

Bosville held a sale of his property in 1830 so John Rolling purchased the mill for £7,000 but died soon afterwards in 1831, aged 65, leaving the farm and mill to his two sons.

After the death of John Rolling an inventory and valuation was done by Lancasters in September 1831. Household goods, plates, linen and china, books, prints and pictures, wearing apparel with wine and liqueurs were well noted and valued giving a total of £149.9s.7d—quite a large sum in those days. His home had three front bedrooms, the best one with a closet, one back bedroom and a servant's bedroom. There was a sitting room, dining room, kitchen, back kitchen, cellar and pantry.

His son John Thomas Rolling, a well built man, standing six feet two inches tall had varied interests. He kept blue game fowl which bred successfully for a number of years after his death. In 1912 Mr J.N. Dransfield, his sister's son presented seven old Cock-fighting Spurs to Penistone Grammar School Museum so John Thomas Rolling was evidently involved with his birds in this sport, perhaps at Cock Pit Lane, Penistone. He enjoyed the Penistone Hunt and paid Bosville shooting rights at Oxspring and Midhope, at one time £100 per year. This was followed by Dransfields taking over and keeping a hound. He became a Guardian of the Poor in 1849 and a member of the Agricultural Committee when it was formed in 1854.

Wagons left each weekday to take oatmeal to customers in Lancashire, Cheshire and Derbyshire going via Saltersbrook. There they met other travellers and could store goods in the outhouses if necessary. Bacon was taken with them and given to the landlord, Edward Taylor, as was cheese from Cheshire, and cooked in a pot to make a shared meal before they returned. Sometimes wagons could be stuck in drifts on the moors for several weeks as no road clearing took place then.

It appears that John Thomas was responsible for obtaining orders and paying for goods in exchange by carrying money in his saddlebags, as he traversed the moors over Woodhead often a two day journey. Consequently he had a number of hair-raising experiences. When he was accosted by a woman with a veil asking for a lift on the wagon, as the wind blew he saw whiskers on her chin, so dropped his glove asking for it to be picked up. As this was

being done he rode off at speed hearing her whistle to companions nearby. He discovered a pistol in her basket realising how fortunate he had been.

Nearer home in Penistone, as he was leaving via Church Hill he was stopped by three men. Two of these he knocked down and walked backwards to the *Rose and Crown* where the men followed. The landlord, Mr Senior offered a bed for the night but John Thomas Rolling borrowed a gun and set out without any more trouble although at that time there were no houses till Kirkwood was reached.

Business was improving as George Tinker, James Savage, Luke Bilbrook, Thomas Hunter, Joseph Lumb, David Edley, Benjamin Denton, along with John Thomas and Henry Rolling were all employed at the mill in 1841. The building of the railway was only to be of use for a short time as the halt at Oxspring, opened in 1845, was closed in 1847. Of course goods could easily be conveyed to Penistone Station if so desired.

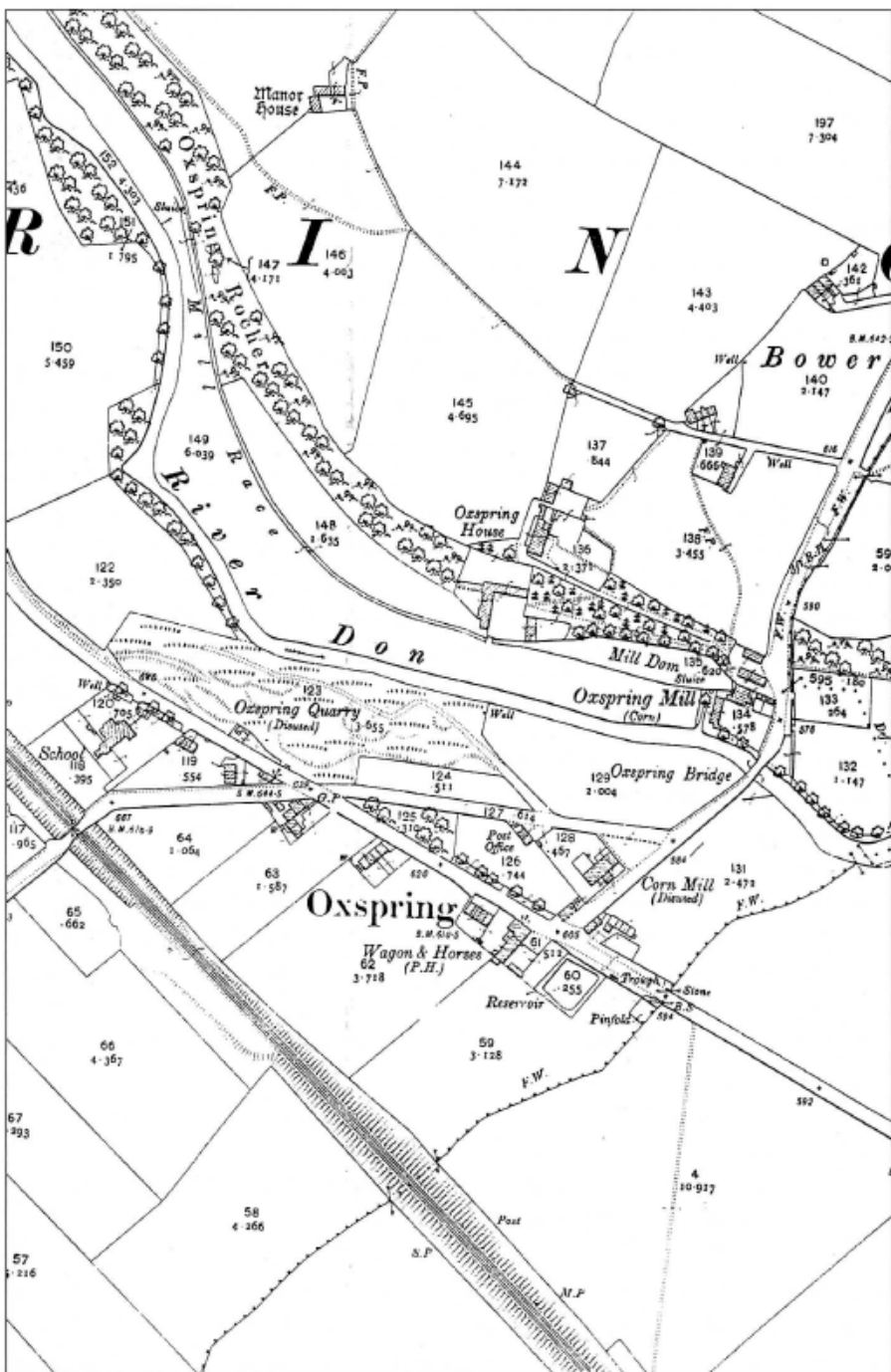
On the 1851 Census Henry Rolling with wife Elizabeth and two children was the corn miller with ten workmen while John Thomas was living at Oxspring House, having a farm of 201 acres and a housekeeper, being a bachelor. The following year they decided to dissolve partnership. A sale was held 23.2.1852 of live and dead stock, implements, wagons, carts, farm requisites, millstones, hay, straw, turnips and potatoes.

The death of John Thomas Rolling in 1865 aged 50 years meant he left his estate, Oxspring House and farm, to his sister Elizabeth who had married John Dransfield, solicitor of Penistone. They came to reside there in 1867 after Henry's death.

Henry Rolling employed 3 men on the farm and 7 men and two boys in the mill, 2 of the 7 men being carters in 1861. Sadly Henry died in June 1866 also aged 50 years. In October a sale of 14 horses, 15 beasts, 41 pigs, implements, farm carriage and harness was held on one day, while the mill, office, hay, corn etc. was sold on the second day.

John Dransfield who followed exhibited at the Agricultural Shows winning prizes, one a silver plated cruet frame for showing sheep.

John Dransfield, wife and two sons resided there in 1871 and son Thomas Henry became the farmer of 160 acres and corn miller, employing 5 men and continuing working as miller in 1891 till after the death of his parents, John in 1880 and Elizabeth in 1897.





During this period the quantity of home grown wheat was diminishing due to the importation of cheaper grain from Canada where more and more was being grown. In 1881 about 3 million acres of wheat were sown yearly in this country. This dropped to half in 1895 and even less by 1910. As a result of this, trade at the mill declined and Oxspring House and the estate was put up for sale in 1902 but was withdrawn at £4,400.

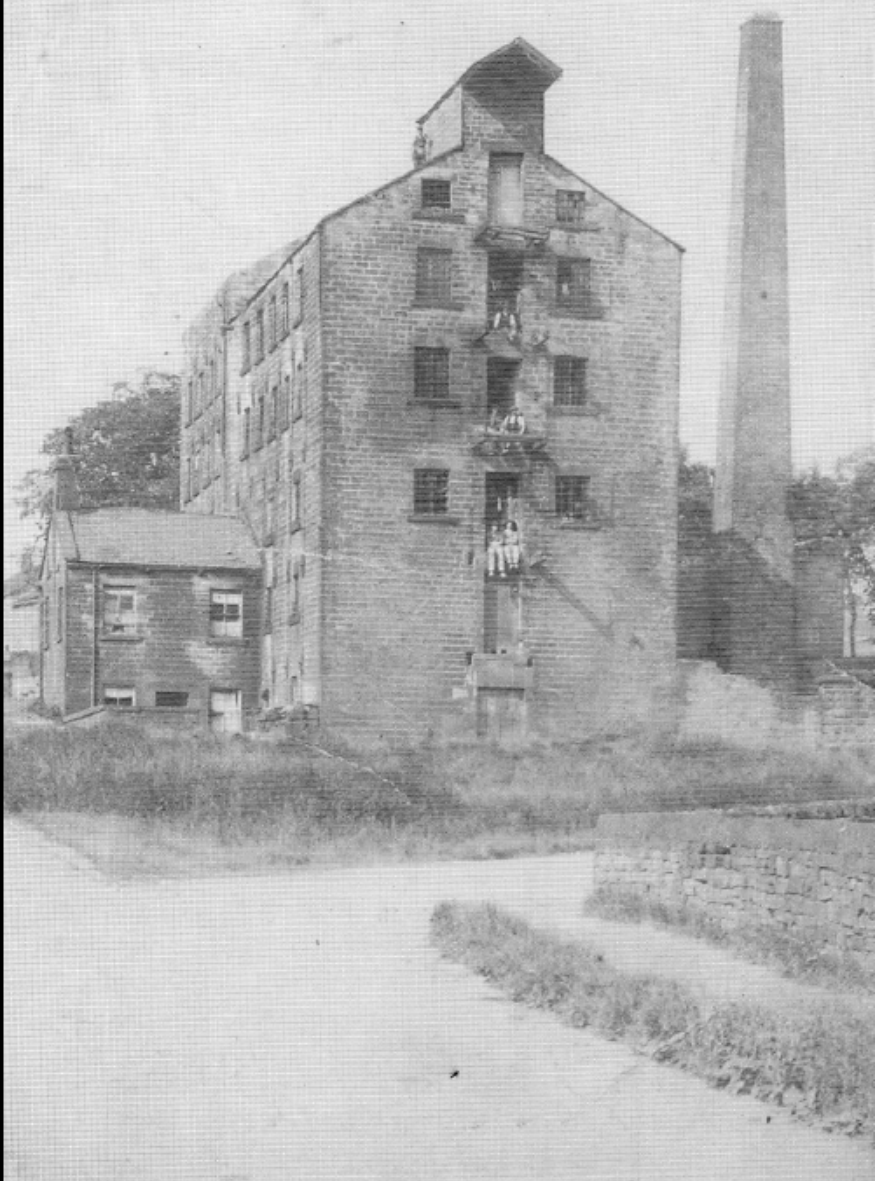
The steam corn mill built in 1825 on the south side of the river received water from a small reservoir near the *Waggon and Horses*. Apparently this was fed by an aquifer the other side of the railway which was culverted to reach the dam where it was controlled by a cistern in one corner. Water was diverted under the road to the mill in order to make steam, the engine being situated at the back. From the mill it was piped under the road, across the field and thence back to reach the River Don.

In 1856 the mill was burnt causing much damage as 10,000 tons of grain was lost. Eventually it was restored and later leased to John Ness Milnthorpe and Thomas Willis Stones. The latter was connected with Cubley Brewery but died in 1901, followed by J. George Stones who died in 1910. On the 1881 Census it was used as a malt kiln where the grain was steeped and allowed to sprout then dried for brewing ale. At this time Robert King and James Riches were employed as maltsters.

In 1903 Charles Hector Webb came from Crane Moor where he had a business as a grocer, to lease the Oxspring Corn Mill with capital of £300. The dam was filled each day by opening the sluice just below Willow Bridge and then closed when the amount of water contained in the dam would work the wheel for one day. At first he transported coal, corn and stone by horse and cart to make a living for his family. Later, being mechanically minded, he built a lorry from spare parts.

His son Hector, born in 1905 soon became an assistant and at the age of twelve started to learn to drive, gaining permission from the local constable at the age of sixteen proving he was competent. In 1908 the steam corn mill was offered for sale but withdrawn at £300. Later C.H. Webb had a third share in this in 1917 with use of the reservoir and the right to block and destroy it, also the drains.

John Milnthorpe conveyed to John Ness Dransfield land, 1 acre, 1 rood, 3 perches, east of Oxspring Bridge, north of Oxspring Mill,

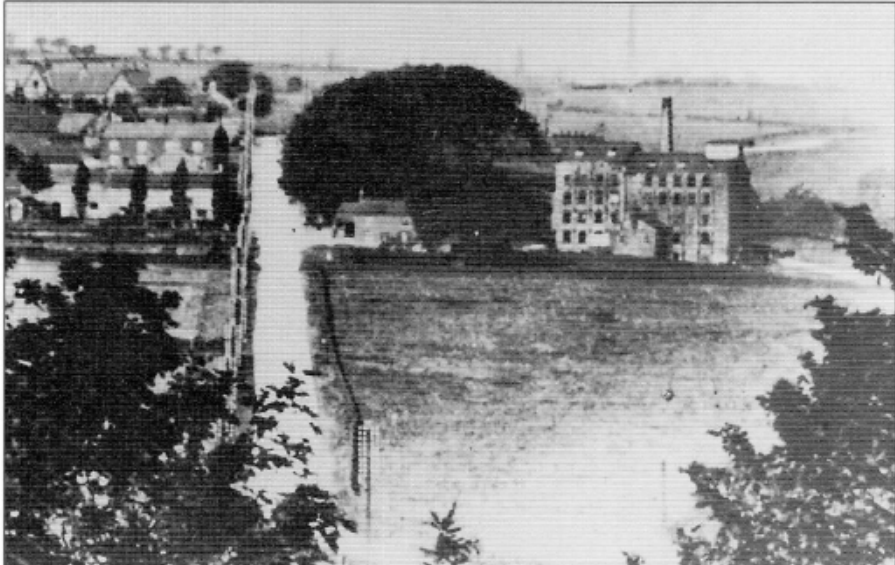


### *Oxspring Corn Mill*

south of the Sheffield Penistone Turnpike, also building erected by John Rolling as corn mill, then malt kiln, two cottages built by John Rolling and occupied by Mrs Wade and John Lockwood. The office converted into a cottage was tenanted by Mr George Peaker in 1922. This property was then purchased by the firm of Gittus and converted into four houses now known as Bank View.



*Oxspring Weir*



*Oxspring Steam Corn Mill, c. 1910*

The reservoir remained until the nineteen sixties, being a source of interest and enjoyment to the local children for its pond life. It is thought that rubble from the Stocksbridge road widening scheme was used to fill and level it.

When the corn mill was put up for sale in 1915 C.H. Webb purchased it with 5 cottages and 123 acres of land in 1916 borrowing £2,750 to do so. In 1918 he spent £500 improving the cottages.

A fire was discovered on 12th July, 1923 at 10.30 am at the Corn Mill while Charles Hector Webb and his son were in the garden. The main building where large stores of corn were kept was in flames. Stocksbridge Fire Brigade was summoned since the Penistone firemen were already busy at the Assembly Hall. The call was received at 11.05 am by the Stocksbridge Brigade who took just twenty minutes to arrive but to their dismay found their own engine on fire. Unfortunately the damage to the 1652 mill was estimated at between three and four thousand pounds. Both properties mentioned had formerly been owned by Mr J.N. Dransfield.

£1,600 was received from the Insurance Company but £600 was claimed by the mortgagees in reduction of the mortgage. Consequently a new mortgage was negotiated of £3,500 to rebuild

the mill in 1924 and the balance was repaid on the first mortgage. He opened a quarry but his vehicles were not strong enough though he had an order for stone for Scout Dyke which had to be transported by T.B. and H. Firth.

Unfortunately, one Sunday while Hector's son was greasing and repairing machinery, the wheel began running, slowly his right arm got pulled in up to his shoulder. It was two hours later before his father came searching for him. Sadly this was a great loss as he spent six months in hospital, but on his return he quickly learnt to drive with one hand.

In March 1926 he ordered a new Ford 7 Lorry costing £99 but it was not delivered till July. Therefore only 500 tons of the 2,000 tons of stone originally ordered were delivered. As a result Charles Hector Webb became bankrupt, owing £2,839.11s to his creditors. In January 1927 the machinery and effects of the property were handed over to Mr. Winter.

Oxspring House was let and farm sold while the mill became ruins, the stone being used elsewhere. The dam was filled in and became a field used for pasture. The narrow humpbacked road bridge to Barnsley was replaced in 1964 with a higher wide bridge, the old one being retained as a lay by. Improvements at the cross roads meant the toll bar was demolished in 1969 to accommodate modern traffic. The last vestiges of the mill being finally covered, the river pollution from Bullhouse is being treated. With the heavy rains, it may mean the return of fish and other wild life in the near future.

