

SKINNER'S MILL

by COLLEEN HAINE

There were 3 mills in Cranham where the Painswick Stream (formerly Wick Stream) rises which were not cloth mills, but in the old Painswick Parish, which went right down to the River Frome in Stroud, only one mill was never recorded in the cloth trade. This was Skinners Mill, also called at different times Taylor's mill, Springs Borough and Painswick Mill.

The earliest date it was mentioned was 1496 when Thomas Taylor was a tenant of the Lord of the Manor at Painswick for a water-mill, a messuage, and land in Stroudend Tithing at 39s. 8d. a year.(1) In 1548 Taylors Mill was described as "ruinous"(2), but in 1566 John Taylor had the mill,(3) and in 1641 Thos. Taylor had it.(4) Whether the Taylors were actually using it themselves all the time is not clear, but in 1675 Thomas Taylor took out a mortgage re. the water-mill and messuage, occupied by Edward Skinner, and it says "late in occ. of Thomas Taylor" so this shows that Thomas Taylor had been using it.(5) In 1683 Richard Clark was recorded for "Taylors Mill".(6) In 1698 the Rev. Edward Taylor leased it to Francis Hayward (alias Westropp) and the property is described as a Messuage, Mill House, Two Water Corn Mills and Land.(7) It seems that before long another relative owned that property because in 1741 John Taylor left all the property described as in 1698 to his wife Joyce and then to nephews John and Samuel Mills who were then occupying the property.(8) Two years later a mortgage was taken out by Samuel Mills and the property was described as in 1698, and a Mr Chandler was the tenant.(9) On the outside of this document "Springs Borough" was written, being the first time that name was used, and I have often wondered whether that was written later.

In 1746 Mr Chandler was still tenant and Samuel and John Mills still owners.(10) In 1749 the property was advertised "To be Sold" and was described as an estate called "Taylers" very near the town of Painswick, well tenanted at a yearly rent of £70. It was described as Corn Mills with a house, a homestead, 50 acres of land and common pasture for 50 sheep.(11) It does not seem to have been sold, as that same year, 1749, Samuel Mills leased it to John Pinfold who also had Salmon's Cloth Mill, but that does not prove that he used it for cloth, as most of our clothiers owned farms as well as mills and that one was probably useful just for grinding corn. No tenant is mentioned, but probably it was a man he employed.(12) Mr Pinfold was recorded for "Spring's Borough" until 1760 when Sarah Webb was recorded for it.(13)

In 1764 Samuel, John and Daniel Mills had a mortgage again for 2 Water Mills, a messuage and land.(14) In 1765 "Springs Borough" was advertised "To be Let". The property is described as lately rented by G Spring in Painswick, with a Grist Mill which had 1 pair of Welsh Stones and 1 pair of French Stones; a Dwelling House, and 50 acres of land. It was described on the Turnpike Road to Stroud, which in those days meant Stepping Stone Lane and the Wick Street, which was the only main road to Stroud until 1819.(15)

In 1767 Thomas Heart was admitted to "Springs Borough" at a of 14s. 11d., which was late in occupation of John Skinner and George Parker as tenants.(16) Sarah Webb was still recorded for "Spring's Borough" until 1770-71 when Mr Colbourne had it. That was because she had married him, and he continued to be recorded for it for many years.(17) They must have bought it as in 1799 Mr Colbourne was recorded as owner for the "Borough Mill" and Lane, and J Skinner as tenant.(18) It was of course, like many properties in Painswick, still copyhold from the Lord of the Manor. On a map of 1813 it was shown clearly where it still

exists now, and what is now just a footpath over fields was then "Horse Road to the Grist Mill".(19)

The Colbourne family continued to be recorded as owners for more than a century. On the large map of 1820 made by Charles Baker, even he made spelling mistakes. He spelt the owner's name as "Colboin" and the mill as "Burrow Mill".(20) On the 1822 Valuation of Mills, £75 is quoted, and Mr John Skinner for the Corn Mill,(21), and only the next year, in 1823, he died.(22) In 1825 John "Colborne" had the release of the copyhold premises by paying £1100 and it was still described as 1 messuage 2 water-mills and c.56 acres named "Spring's Borough" in Stroudend Tithing.

In 1830 the Rev. John Colbourne was the owner and John Skinner was tenant, probably a son of the previous one.(24) There was some confusion from 1837 to 1840 as a John Skinner and Thomas Skinner were both named for a "Painswick Mill". As one mill was in Edge Tithing and the other in Stroudend Tithing, it is possible to tell which mills were meant. Thomas Skinner was named for the "Painswick Mill" in Stroudend, where "Spring's Borough" had always been. The next mill upstream, which was also called Painswick Mill, still uses that name as a private house now.(25) On the Churchwarden's Lists from 1837 to 1844 John Skinner was recorded for Skinners Mill where the Rev. John Colbourne was still owner, so there seems to be some confusion.(26)

From 1844 to 1845 Wm. Pearce was quoted as tenant for Skinner's Mill.(27) Why this happened for just one year is not recorded, but after that John Skinner is again tenant, and continued to be recorded, possibly father and then son, to 1881.(28) The Colbourne family also had it, but in 1860 Mrs Colbourne was owner so evidently her husband had died.(29) She also must have died a few years later, as from 1875 Miss Colbourne, probably a daughter, was recorded as owner.(30) In 1881 the mill was named "Skinners Mill" and John Skinner named as a Mealman was employing 4 men and 1 boy, and that was the last date on which a Skinner was recorded.(31)

Only a few years later on an O.S map of 1885 the mill is named "Painswick Mill, Corn Mill".(32) That same year 1885 George Fawkes was recorded as tenant, and Miss Colbourne as owner for the Mill, House and Land named "Painswick Mill", at a rent of £141.(33) That was the last date when a Colbourne was found recorded. George Fawkes was still tenant for the mill in 1889,(34) and that was the last date a miller was recorded. In 1927 E.P.Fowler was recorded as a farmer at "Skinners Mill" although a map of 1903 had still named it "Painswick Mill".(35)

Personally, I knew Skinners Mill very well when I was a child, and during that time a farm worker lived in the old mill house, parts of which go back to the 16th century. He worked for Mr Harry Herbert, who lived at Sheephouse, and who had a large amount of farm land. We local children were often allowed to see corn being ground in part of the old mill, but that was only their own corn for their own cattle. An old water-wheel still exists there but is not used now, and part of the old mill buildings are now a dwelling-house, which was made there in 1980, and the ancient mill house is still used as a dwelling.(36)

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This is the only mill on the Painswick Stream in Painswick Parish that was never recorded in the Cloth Trade.

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