

Tales of Deepdale Corn Mill



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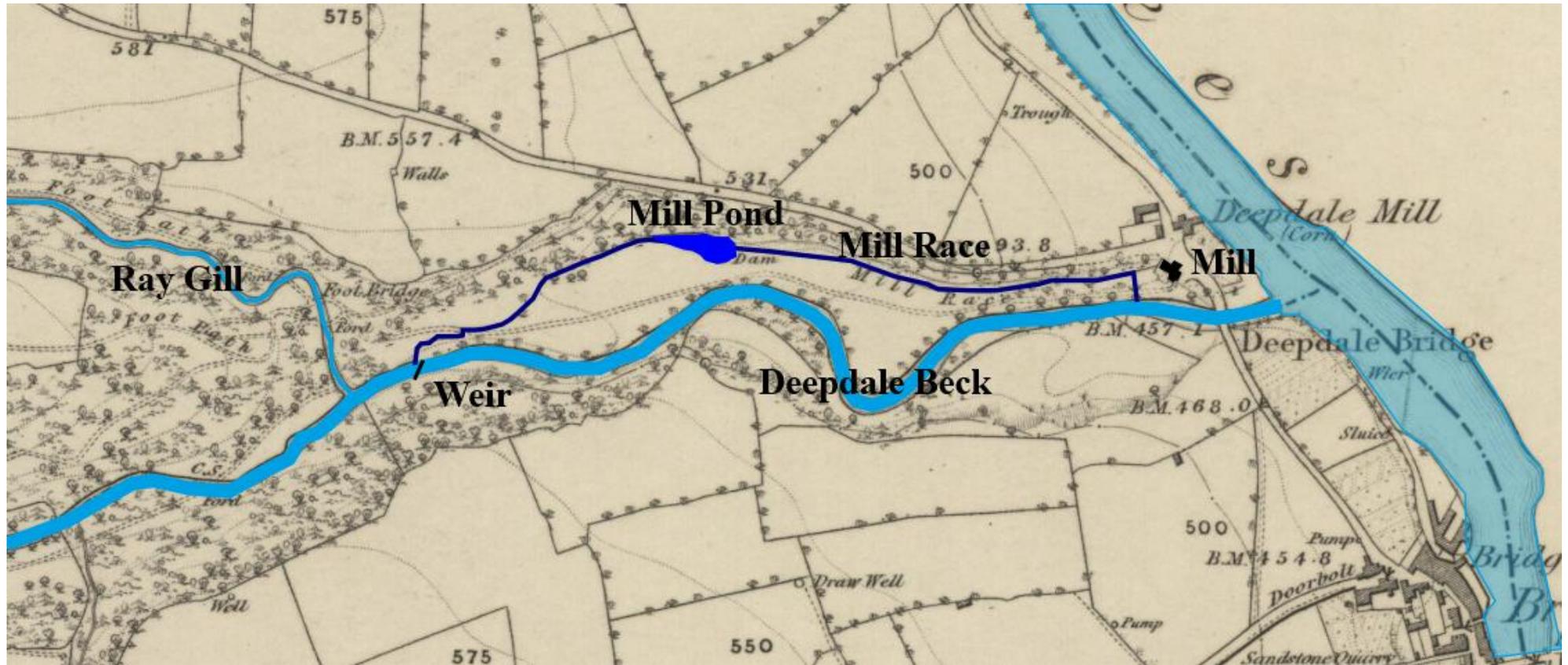
The corn mill at Deepdale was at the roadside near the gate onto Lartington Lane, and operated for several hundred years. Water was taken from a weir on the Deepdale Beck further upstream, and flowed along a narrow millrace to a mill pond and then on to the Mill, where the water powered the machinery that ground the corn. There would have been several different arrangements over the years. Today, very little can be seen. The Mill and the weir have left no trace, though the millpond and the millrace, which are both silted up, can still be discerned. The plan on the next page shows how they appeared on an 1898 Ordnance Survey map.

The most interesting remains of the Mill are a number of short anecdotes and tales, some funny, some sad, reported in the Teesdale Mercury over the years. These are mainly notices of births, deaths and weddings, court cases and auction sales. They are reproduced here, in chronological order.

Millstones were once quarried from the hard rock in the upper part of Deepdale between Cat Castle and the High Pond. One which was left behind can still be seen under a crag by the footpath.

The Mill concentrated on corn and oat meal, leaving the more industrial work to the larger mills on the Tees. The millers seem to have also operated a smallholding, with livestock and hayfields in Deepdale and nearby. A variety of other trades were followed by the Parkinson Family, who ran the Mill for most of its recorded history. They were either very enterprising, or perhaps they struggled to make a living from just the Mill.

The cover picture is a Nineteenth-century French postcard drawing of a water-powered corn mill, perhaps similar to Deepdale Mill, of which no illustrations have survived.



The Mill, millpond and millrace as on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map, coloured and labelled for clarity.

1803 Mr Prudah, who lived at Deepdale Mill, recited, and possibly wrote, a poem "Gathering of the Teesdale Legion". The Teesdale Legion became part of the Durham Light Infantry in 1809. The "colonel brave" in the poem was J B S Morrit, after whom the Morrit Arms is named.

1827 Thomas Thwaites was the miller.

1854 Ordnance Survey map shows the Mill, but not the weir.

1857 John Ewbank is in court on 26th August, accused of assaulting Mary Ann Gowland of Deepdale Mill.

1858 Henry Ainsley sold his livestock, hay and vegetables by auction on 10th November.

1862 Henry Ainsley is still the miller. The Mill was broken into by Thomas Nelson and his small son, of Startforth, and they were caught making off with a bag of oatmeal. The magistrates said that the theft "was probably for want of food", and sentenced Mr Nelson to six weeks hard labour. Life was hard in those days.

1870 Mr Ainsley appears to have died, as on 5th January his executors sell his livestock, hay, tools and a "phaeton". A phaeton was a sporty open-top horse-drawn buggy with large wheels, popular at that time. On 27th April, his furniture is sold.

1873 The Parkinsons appear to have been running the Demesne Mill, on the Tees near Deepdale Mill, but then sold out to John Rudd.

1873 The Teesdale Mercury records "On Saturday afternoon a number of persons assembled in Mr Richard Hall's field near Deepdale Mill to hear a singing contest between the brown linnets of Edward Watson and Robert Caine. Mr Robert Parkin officiated as judge. At the conclusion, the prize, 10 shillings, was awarded to Caine"

1875 George Robinson leaves the Mill on the eighth of May and sells his furniture and chickens.

1877 George Parkinson was fined 3 shillings for using a "beam and weight" that gave short measures.

1879 George Parkinson, miller, was seriously injured when the wheel of a laden waggon passed over his body.

1880 Elizabeth Bainbridge of Deepdale Mill married Jackson Alderson of Bridge End at Startforth Church on 19th May.

1880 Miss Parkinson of Deepdale Mill advertised her services for “dressmaking and plain sewing” in the Teesdale Mercury.

1885 R Parkinson advertises as a wheelwright.

1885 Paying guests may have stayed at the Mill.

1886 Action against the quartermaster of the third battalion Durham Light Infantry.

“The next case involved an important point in law. The plaintiff was George Parkinson, of the Deepdale Mill, and the defendant Quarter-master Byrne, of the 3rd Battalion Durham Light Infantry, whose headquarters are at Barnard Castle. It appears that the defendant, who did not answer the summons, is the owner of a large black retriever dog, and on the 1st of August last the animal had attacked a calf belonging to the plaintiff. Parkinson had twice spoken to the defendant about the matter, and, on each occasion, he had promised to come down and see to it. He had not done so, and plaintiff called in Mr Trery who had placed the damage at £3, for which sum he now sued.—

The Judge: Have you left any notice of this claim with the commanding officer?

Plaintiff : Yes.

The Judge : To whom

Plaintiff I sent my son-in-law.

The Judge : To whom did you send your son?

Plaintiff : I went to him and told him about his dog, and he said that he would come and see to it. I told him again, and he said he would come. I then took Mr Trery with me, and he said he would not pay it.

The Judge: You have no business to issue a summons against him without giving him notice in writing, as he is attached to Her Majesty's standing forces. You have not given him that notice, and I must carry out the law. Therefore I am bound to non-suit you.”

1888 Mr Parkinson advertises a “Coup Cart” for sale in the Teesdale Mercury on 25th April. A coup cart has closed ends and sides, and was used for the transporting and tipping of hay or dung.

1888 Mrs Parkinson advertises a sitting room and bedroom to let in the Teesdale Mercury on 15th August.

1888 Four small boys, aged 9 and 10, were fined 3 shillings each for damaging grass while playing cricket in a Deepdale Mill field. A lot of money, in those days.

1897 Mr George Parkinson dies aged 81, on 7th January.

1898 The Ordnance Survey map shows the mill at NZ0453216664, close to Lartington Lane.

1898 The Ordnance Survey map shows the weir on the Deepdale Beck and the millrace.

1900 Barnard Castle Council started proceedings against George Parkinson for “keeping pigs within 51 feet of a dwelling”.

1913 Ordnance Survey map shows the weir, but neither the millrace nor the Mill.

1913 Annie Parkinson, widow of George Parkinson, died at Balliol Street.

1952 Ordnance Survey map shows no signs of the Mill, millrace or weir.



The remains of the Millpond, now full of Yellow Flag Iris, with the dam in the background.



**The remains of the millrace, now lined by Alder trees,
near the small oval pond next to the main track.**



An unused and abandoned millstone, about 1.60 metres across, viewed from above, quarried in the upper part of Deepdale