

## A VICTORIAN BUILDER IN PAINSWICK

Daniel and Henry Thomas Spring, father and son, lived in Painswick, Glos. during the reign of Queen Victoria. They carried out an extensive building practice, doing general repairs, funerals, carpentry, stonework and church alterations and repairs both in Painswick and surrounding area, and as far away as Newent and Oxenhall, Rudford and Bishops Cleeve.

The family lived at Whitehall and Fairview both pleasant houses still standing in Painswick. There is evidence that Henry Spring had done alterations to Fairview as there is a fine marble mantelpiece in the main bedroom with the date 1879 and his initials carved on it. Mr. D. Spring was parish clerk and sexton under Rev. Strong; in that capacity he had to provide wine and sacrament for the Communion, and arrange for the cleaning of the Church including the care and washing of the Church linen. His son, however, was a very keen member and preacher, of the Primitive Methodist Church, which had an active branch in Painswick. He was also insurance agent for the Sun, Fire and Life Assurance Co.

From the Spring account books one can see the cost of a pauper, medium and expensive funeral. Paupers were buried at a cost of £1. 7s. 6d. for 10, an account of a medium one for Mr. Clarke cost £3. 3s. 0d. which included an elm coffin trimmed with Britannia Furniture and 6 yds. flannel. They also did high class funerals, one such was the funeral of Mrs. Roebuck, which cost over £70. A total of four different coffins were made, each to fit one inside the others - a shell, one of beech, one of oak and finally one of lead. In the procession were the undertaker, coffinmakers and the hearse was pulled by four horses dressed in plumes. More horses with plumes pulled the carriages which contained the mourners and servants of the late Mrs. Roebuck. Crepe hatbands, gloves, silk hatbands, scarves and cloaks all had to be provided for the mourners, servants and clergy and parish clerk. Mr. Spring makes a special note that the best silk pall was to be used.

Amongst his church work he worked away from Painswick village, but in 1847 he was engaged on alteration to Painswick church, which included a new gallery with elm floor, panelling with new tops to pews - book rests and rails also fixing up Capt. Cox's pew. Other church restoration work included the Slad chapel, in 1830 (£261), Sheepscombe Chapel (£61) and organ (£70), and a wall round Newent cemetery built of stone he hauled from Postlip Quarry near Winchcombe to Newent at a cost of £1. 7s. 0d. per lugg. Repairs to Oxenhall church tower comprised putting up scaffolding and taking down the top of spire, repairing stonework and building buttresses and quoins, and building the side wall. In his notebook Mr. Spring states that when digging for the buttress of the tower, under the foundations he came upon the skeleton of a full grown man, about 4' below the surface. The foundation of the outside of the buttress was 3' down, the foundation of the original buttress was about 4' 6" down.

The firm carried out a deal of local building work, alterations, and new dwellings in Painswick, and also repairs and alterations to properties in surrounding towns. Around 1845 a lot of jobs include the installation of water closets, which cost around £20 each. He carried out a great variety of jobs, recorded in his account books. Among these he erected the platform for the hustings in the Parliamentary elections at Stroud. He made a wheelbarrow for a local labourer for the cost of 10s. 6d. and repaired a handloom for a weaver for 7s. 6d. He contracted for carpentry for the railway bridge at Tewkesbury, built a new house at Dry Knapps at Painswick which cost £347 for the outside stonework, and painted and glazed a doll's house for 14s. 6d.

The family carried out a great deal of work for Mr. Charles Baker, a surveyor of some note who lived in Painswick and did a lot of work in the Stroud area. Some general building work was done for him in 1832, which appears to have taken a long time to pay for. Three amounts were paid by cheque on account, and a hay rick was credited to him to the value of £21 in the end to clear the debt.

The family also carried out valuations of properties and households, upon the owners' requests. From these inventories it is possible to obtain a view into the contents and value of a Victorian household. Amongst the household furniture valued was that belonging to Rev. Way and included a rosewood table at £1, a piano at £10, an half tester bed and hangings at 15s. A farm valuation in 1860 included the value of 20 fleeces of wool at £10. 10s. Od., 2 wheel trap at £8. 10s. Od. and 4 milking cows at £36. 6s. 6d. also a 16 ton hayrick at £48.

When studying his gross turnover and profits over three years, Mr. Spring does not appear to be making much of a living. He had a few bad debts' which appear to take several years to clear if at all. His profits in 1840 were £35. 2s. 9d., in 1841 £65. 3s. 4d. and in 1842 £38. 18s. 3d. which only gives a total average profit of £46, 1s. 6d. per year. He appears to have been a good employer and when his workmen were employed away at outside jobs, say at Newent, there are entries in his books of payments to the wives and families remaining in Painswick.

J. Simmons

#### SOURCES

Glos. R.O., D1858, account books and specifications of Daniel and Henry Spring of Painswick, builders.