Watermills called *Twygrind*

Keith Briggs (pp. 10–11)

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**CPNE** *Cornish Place-Name Elements.*

**EPNE** *English Place-Name Elements, Parts 1 and 2.*

**PN BdHu** *The Place-Names of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire.*

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**PN Wo** *The Place-Names of Worcestershire.*

**PN WRY** *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Parts 1–8.*
Watermills called Twygrind

Keith Briggs

Several medieval documents refer to watermills called Twygrind or a similar name. Since these have never been cross-referenced in the literature, I collect here the relevant data and discuss the probable origin of the name.


2. A mill in or near Barton Mills in Suffolk: Togring c.1200, Berton Togrynge 1452 (Northeast 2001: p. 257, item 708) and Berton Togrynge 1457 (Tymms 1850: 13). An associated manor of Togring also occurs 13/4 (Copinger [c.1904]). This was apparently at some point a Templar property (Gervers 1982: xxvii).

3. One or two places in the East Riding of Yorkshire mentioned, but not located, by Smith: Twyngreyn 1190 (not certainly a mill); Mills of Twagrynd 1252 (PN ERY 324, 328).

4. An unlocated twygryndemill 1427 in Essex (PN Ess 586). Possibly the same as Twygrind near Saffron Walden in a late 13th-century deed (Berkeley Castle muniments BCM/A/2/6/21).

It is natural to assume that these all have a common etymology, but there are reasons for thinking that the second element was not originally the word grind, namely the spellings with final <-n> and <-g>, and the stem vowel written <-ey-> in Twyngreyn. The word looks instead to be the obsolete grain (of Scandinavian origin), in the sense ‘branch of fork of a stream’, which had typical ME spellings greyn(e) (OED s.v. grain, n.2). A mill with two water channels and two water-wheels is more plausible than a mill which grinds twice, and the name may describe some medieval technological innovation in water-mill design. There is an interesting variation between the feminine and neuter form of the numeral ‘two’ (OE
twā, tū) and the masculine twēge(n), and cases 1 and 4 probably contain the prefix twi- ‘double’, which also appears (for example) in the recurring place-name Twyford.

At Barton Mills in Suffolk, the River Lark twice divides into two branches: once at grid reference TL 708743, where there is still a mill; and formerly also at TL 718740 near Barton Hall, where the decayed northern branch is now only a parish boundary. It is likely that Twigrind mill was in one of these forks, and if so, this would confirm the etymology proposed here.

References


Tymms, Samuel, ed. (1850), Wills and inventories from the registers of the Commissary of Bury St. Edmunds, London: Camden Society.

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