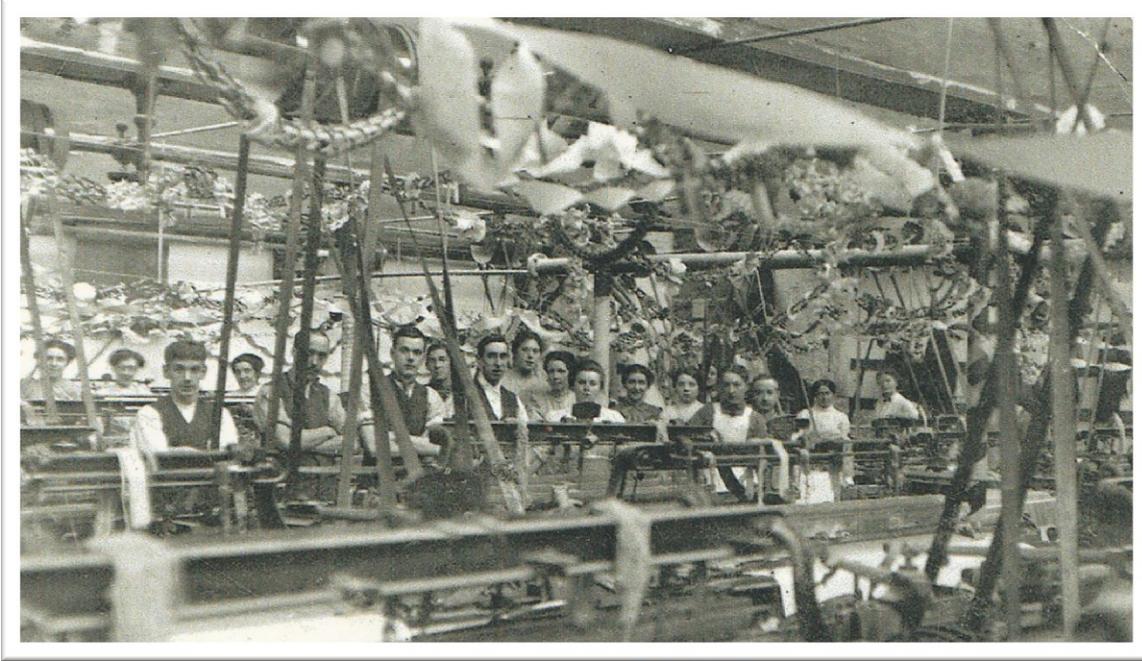


Forest Mill



Built-in 1854 by James Howorth and Brothers again starting out life quite humbly James was a teacher before starting his firm after his mill in Water was burnt down he returned to Bacup and built Rockliffe Mill in 1842. The mill was bought early in 1900 by Messrs Riley brothers of Manchester and Blackburn high-class tailors and cotton spinners.

The mill was to be fitted with the most up to date machinery and was to start production about March or April 1902. The Riley brothers were fined in 1905 for having unfenced looms and in the same year the mill was once again put up for sale. Thomas Houghton purchased the mill in October 1905 at which time the mill held 2,688 spindles and 400 looms and although Mr Houghton held a religious service to consecrate the building in September 1905 which lasted for two hours this did not stop the various accidents and fires that took place during its lifetime as a cotton mill.

Forest Mill was bought by Bacup Town Council in 1964 the council then leased the mill to the firm of Due Mill a subsidiary of Durie & Miller who held the mill until 1974.

In November 1974 the coping stones of the circular Forest Mill chimney were removed and five years later in September 1979 demolition of the rest of the chimney began in order to make way for a garage. The base of the chimney was 16ft and by the end of September, the chimney which was encased with bands of red steel had been reduced to half its height and remained this way for some weeks. However by the end of October, the demolition of the chimney was complete.

In 1977 the main building was taken over by The Valley Refrigeration & Shopfitting Ltd.

Accidents and Fires at Forest Mill. January 1906 John Openshaw aged 16 of Back Irwell Street Bacup, had his left arm caught in a machine, it was so badly mutilated that it had to be amputated below the elbow. July & November 1906 The mill suffered five fires four of them in one week, all the fires did

little damage. 1906 A 54-year-old man was hurled around the shafting in the weaving shed suffering two broken legs. October 1928 Joseph Kirkland, of 18 Croft Street, Bacup had his hand severed about two inches above his left wrist in the combing room.

September 1930 George Coles of 17 Riley Street, Bacup saves the mill from being flooded by braving the torrential waters of the River Irwell, during one of the worst floods to hit Bacup. He had noticed water flowing over the top of the weir and went across to raise the sluice gates, but owing to the great force of the water he had to make a second trip, with the aid of a rope tied to himself by P.C Walsh.

After strenuous energy he managed to open the sluice gates and saved the mill from being flooded.

The Ghost of Forest Mill, Mr Jack Edge stated that he had seen the ghost of an old woman operative, who had supposedly died in the mill at the age of ninety and it was believed her name was Agnes, she was supposed to have left money in the mill

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