

Holmes Mill



Today the site of what was once Shepherd's Holmes Mill is, at the time of writing, the now vacant unused Bacup Leisure Hall or Hub. Two mills had occupied this site and been known as Holmes Mill number one and Holmes Mill number two. What was known as Holmes Mill number two was actually the earliest of the mills and was originally built in 1849, by John Howorth and John Dawson partners of Waterside.

Following a disastrous fire in 1878, the mill was bought by George and James Shepherd who had built Holmes Mill number one 17 years earlier on land adjacent to it. Throughout the cotton famine, the Shepherds had managed to keep their workforce from having to claim parish relief, by spreading out the work. The effort shown by James and George Shepherd to keep their workers in pay was rewarded in March of 1865 when the employees of Holmes Mill presented the brothers, each with a copy of "Cassels Illustrated Bible" together with a letter that read: ***Gentlemen, We the work people, take the present opportunity to present each of you with a copy of "Cassels Illustrated Bible" as a token of our sincere esteem. We desire to express to you our sentiments which impel us to take this step. "You have been to us kind masters and the utmost good feeling has ever existed between us. That this mutual amity may be perpetuated is one of our most ardent desires, and we believe the more this feeling is fostered, will master and servant alike be benefited. Your conduct towards us during the great commercial depression of 1862-1864, has been worthy of imitation by many of the manufacturers in Lancashire.***

You have at great risk used the most strenuous and unceasing efforts to keep us employed when many of our fellow men were suffering the most terrible privations through lack of work caused by the disastrous war in America. While many have suffered complete shipwreck we through the blessing of God descending on your efforts have been comparatively sheltered from the storm. For this inestimable boon we feel most grateful. Etc. Signed on behalf of the work people. John Shepherd, Thomas, Hindson, Wm.Greenwood, John Harrison. February 25th, 1865.

By 1868 James Shepherd Senior had retired from the business to concentrate on farming his land of 24 acres, leaving the running of the mills to his sons George Jnr and James Jnr who oversaw the erection of a new weaving shed in 1886.

It was announced in 1927 that G&J Shepherd Ltd was to close their spinning departments at Holmes Mill. Within a couple of weeks of my Great Grandfather's retirement, who worked there as an overlooker, in 1929 the Mill had been put up for auction after 75 years of cotton manufacturing.

Four years later the new owners Messer's J.H Schofield Ltd of Rochdale made an approach to the Council with the view of making Holmes Mill into flats and the building of Dwelling Houses the council rejected any such move. The part known as No1 mill was taken over by Maden and Ireland as a closing room in November 1934.