

Tong Mill



A four-storey building, built-in 1834 by James Smith a sizer who came from Yorkshire. Three sons also came to Bacup with him William who started a business of his own at Greensnook Mill, Richard and Robert stayed with their father at Tong Mill and traded as Messrs Smith and Sons. James Smith lived at Bankside house where he died on the 1st May 1844. He had a large family consisting of 11 children only eight having survived, five daughters and three sons. One of the daughters Mary married William Sutcliffe of Hempsteads owner of the Yorkshire Street Corn mill, and one daughter Ann married Joshua Lord. When their father died Richard and Robert took over the business. Smith buildings comprising Brick Street and Clay Street the names derived from the area of Brickfield an area between Tong Lane and South Street.

The mill was enlarged in 1857 and weaving shed added in 1852. The mill was gutted and destroyed by fire in 1870 a portion being carried away by floodwaters in 1871. In 1871 the Smiths retired from the business and Mr Joshua Lord took over with his sons renaming the mill Joshua Lord and Sons. Following several meetings with their creditors it was decided to put the mill up for sale and so on May 1887 the mill was put up for auction. In March of the following year Richard Smith then aged 77 was found by his daughter in law in his study with a gash to his neck and holding a knife. The area around Tong Mill suffered severely throughout its life from the effects of the various floods that hit the town. In 1891 the waters forced up flagstones and water gushed to escape in a fountain that reached 20 foot high.

Tong Mill stood empty for about 12 years then in 1901 it was put up for sale again along with Oak House, various shops and cottages owned by the Richard Smith estates. On Christmas day 1902 a portion of wall surrounding Tong mill crashed to the ground completely blocking of Smith brow. The owner at that time was a Rochdale broker by the name of Thomas Rawstron. The chimney of Tong mill was pulled down brick by brick in 1903, and again in 1904 whilst still in the ownership of Mr Rawstron another wall at the back of the Conservative club belonging to the Tong mill weaving shed collapsed causing damage to the Con Club.

Work began clearing and cleaning Tong mill in 1904 when it was bought by several Bacup tradesmen. They became the Tong Mill Company Ltd. The directors being John Lord, George Priestley, Thomas Smith, Samuel Cooper, Joseph Pilling, James Crabtree and Heyworth and Hargreaves Sutcliffe. By 1919 Joshua Hoyle and Sons had acquired Tong Mill and had it until 1932 when it was sold to Beck and Whalley. Eventually the mill was separated into various usages. One floor being used by Mr John Tattersall for making shoes the other by printers Howard and Hargreaves.

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