

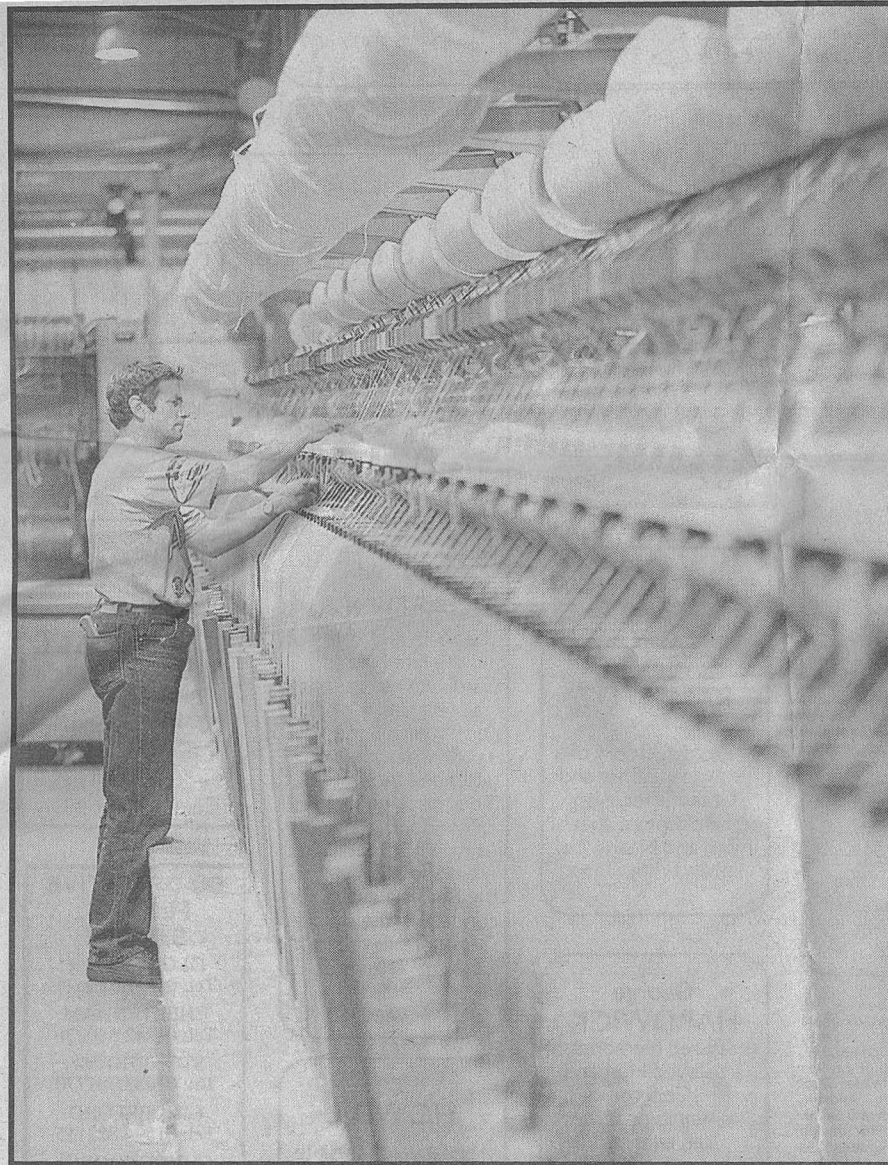
Carpet mill to shut doors on 4000 years

1/9/00

NDAY

TECHNICAL AT THE LIND COMPANY

sent to D...



■ Job losses: David Morris, who has 21 years service, is pictured working on the spinning yarn.

Photos: Paul Nicholls

A STROUD mill is to close with the loss of the dozen remaining jobs after a proud 400 year history.

Carpets of Worth at Ham Mill, in Thrupp, will shut this November, the company has confirmed, because of a long-term recession in its industry.

A working textile mill since 1599, the modern day Carpets of Worth employed nearly 100 people in the early 1990s and spun 28 to 30 tonnes of yarn a week, said general manager Roland La Porta.

But production was now down to around four tonnes a week and just seven shop floor employees and five staff, including Mr La Porta himself, were left he said.

Blamed

"We do close on November 10 as a production unit," Mr La Porta agreed.

"But no arrangements have been made for the mill buildings and the shop may remain open for a short period."

He blamed competition from foreign imports of carpet, from places like Belgium, and the fashion for alternative hard floor covering.

The Stroud factory spins raw wool into yarn which is then taken by lorry to Carpets of Worth in Stourport where it is made into carpets.

Nowadays modern carding and spinning processes are controlled by computer chips. But Ham Mill, built on the

EXCLUSIVE

by Jo Barber

River Frome, was first powered by three giant waterwheels and later by steam, and was founded on Stroud's rich textile heritage.

Records showed the historic six and a half acre site had reflected the rise and fall of the Cotswold textile trade over the centuries, said local historian Ian Mackintosh.

His charitable Stroudwater Textile Trust housed some of its restored by-gone textile machinery at Ham Mill and arranged public open days there, thanks to Carpets of Worth.

Mr Mackintosh said the trust were saddened by the closure announcement.

"Since the first educational tours in March 1993 several thousands school pupils and visitors have toured the ever growing displays guided by enthusiastic volunteers," he said.

The trust would now be moving out of Ham Mill, after its four remaining Wednesday tours this September, and was working on plans to open a new site next year.

"The trust is grateful to Carpets of Worth for allowing such a very unusual arrangement and for being so supportive over the years," said Mr Mackintosh.



■ Closing down: The entrance to Carpets of Worth, Thrupp, Stroud