

PLEDGE ON JOBS AS MILL CLOSES

A LONG-established Stroud cloth manufacturer today announced plans to close a mill in Minchinhampton, and invest more than £1 million in new hi-tech equipment for another factory.

All production at Winterbotham, Strachan and Playne's Longfords Mill will transfer to Cam Mills at Dursley. But company managing director Mr. Peter Hardy pledged there would be no compulsory redundancies.

The 60 employees at Minchinhampton would be encouraged to transfer to the Dursley site 15 miles away, where new machinery will be installed over the next 15 months.

Yarn production and weaving will be concentrated at Cam Mills, say the company, who make tennis ball, billiard and industrial cloths. They will spend up to £1.2 million on nine new looms and other

by Chris Rees

equipment.

The Longfords Mill site is likely to be redeveloped or sold.

"There are considerable economies from operating on two sites rather than three, which gave us the scope to invest in more hi-tech plant," Mr. Hardy added

"Skilled textile workers are extremely precious, and we hope to persuade all the Minchinhampton staff to go to Cam Mills."

This latest investment comes on top of £2 million spent on dyeing and finishing equipment at the company headquarters at Lodgemore Mills, Stroud.

Winterbotham — part of the Bradford-based Illingworth Morris group — employ 380, and had a turnover of £14 million last year. Each week they make enough cloth to cover 1½ million tennis balls.

The three original companies merged in the 1920s.

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