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## GASKELL \& CO HISTORY

From the very beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the North West of England had been at the very heart of the manufacturing boom, with Lancashire becoming a world renowned area for textile manufacturing. It was against this backdrop of exciting development that in 1902 at the age of 26, Thomas Gaskell, founder of Gaskell \& Co, started out on his own as a felt merchant having gained experience in the felt-making industry. It was with some trepidation that he took this step, but within a fortnight he decided it had been a wise move and that success was certain. So much so that he discussed his convictions with his fiancée and she agreed to marry him forthwith.

At first, he worked from home and stored his stock in their drawing room. In fact, they had to sell the drawing room suite to make room. It was probably well for Thomas that such a step had to be taken before the first bloom of matrimony had worn off!

As a man, Thomas Gaskell had many things in his favour - good looks, a splendid sensé of humour, a fondness for sport and af flair for conversation. These attributes combined with his knowledge of the industry madde him a natural salesman. In early 1903 , the busin was relocated from his drawing room andifinto a small wabrehouse where it remained inti|l 1913 a smal warenouse where it remained unt
before moving again to larger premises. (i. By this time, Gaskell \& Co were merchanting a variety of products including underfelts, stair pads and mattress pads.

As the business continued to expand, Thomas was joined by R. H. Hartley who was appointed a director in 1913 and remained with the company until his retirement in 1958 and who assumed responsibility for all of the administration work within the business. Throughout the 1914/18 war Gaskell \& Co supplied various government ministries and enlarged their circle of contacts.

The business progressed rapidly and in 1920 Thomas was joined by the elder of his two sons, Eric Gaskell, followed by his second son Douglas who joined in 1923 and went on to become Chairman of the company right through into the 1960's.
Early in 1923, Gaskell's old mill had been burn out and they moved into new premises of around 25,000 $\mathrm{ft}^{2}$ at Lee Mill in Bacup, By the over $500,000 \mathrm{ft}^{2}$.of warehousing and prodiction space.


Partial disaster struck in November 1956 when Peel Mills completely burnt out. Later that year, they purchased Wycombe Fillings Ltd at Todmorden and in 1957 Rhoden Mill in Oswaldtwistle. Production of Foamalux, Foamafelt andVelvetread underlays were moved ? Foamafelt andVelvetread underlays were moved
to the $90,000 \mathrm{ft}^{2}$ facility. On 7th July 1958, Mr T. Duncan Gaskell was made a director becoming the third generation Of the family to do so joininga business which.
since its beginhings, had been. one of constant since its beginnings, had been one of constant
expansion and continual growth. bartnership with Tranter Carpet Manufacturers partnership with Tranter Carbet Manufacturers axminsters for the residentiat market Gas axminsters for the residential market. Gaskell
became one of the first manufacturers of narrow
width axminster designed to match became one of the first manufacturers of narrow
width axminster designed to match over a 12 foot width. The business experien growth over the years, becoming involved in the production of woven rugs which were marketed worldwide particularly long pile rúg's supplied worldwide particularly long pile rư's supplied
to IKEA in sweden. In addition to this, Gaskellaiso became a market leading supplier of narrow use in pubs and clubs.
 1973 saw Gaskell's further expansion in carpet with the purchase of Hothfield Mill at Carlon
where it began production of tufted carpet for the first time. At Carlton the residential range . स्प = unique product based on natural yarns and unique product based on thr

By this time the axminster manufacturing plant at Rishton was entirely focused on the contract market and was joined in 1976 by Andrew Gaskell. The fourth generation of the family to be involved with the business. He had gained valuable experience of the contract market through his own business interests outside of the group. Gaskell worked hard over the next 10 years to establish axminster qualities within the wider leisure market in the UKwhich until then had been dominated by Wilton Products.

The other side of the Gaskell business remained true to Thomas Gaskells ron true to Thomas Gaskell's roots in the felt industry, producing needlefelt carpets and market evolvis business grew with the contract, tiles into tufted via the production of needrefe tiles into tufted tile manufacturing. In the early 1980's, the Gaskell businesses were restructured with the Broadloom business becoming Gaskell Mackay and the felt and tile büsinesses Gaskell Textiles Limited.

By 1985 Gaskell Mackay had strengthened their position within the UK leisure sector and were now producing one third of all the carpets supplied to pubs and clubs, largely narrow width and broadloom products going into the hotel sector.

In 1999 Gaskell Plc had become one of the most successful listed companies in textile
manufacturing turning over inthe region of $£ 50$ million whilst having experienced an almost constant growth throughout it's 97 year history.

## HUGH MACKAY HISTORY



Central Scotlan Central Scotland, Kidderminster and Yorkshire
are recoonised as the traditional carpet are recognised as the traditional carpet ${ }_{2}$ producing centres of the Britishilsles. Yet it is known that a cottage carpet making industry existed in Durham in the 18th century, and that existed in Durham in the 18 th century, an
around 1815 a factory was in production around 1815 a factory was in production
alongside the River Wear in the city. In 1903 this factory ceased production and most of its equipment and goodwill were sold. It's former manager, together with 20 redundant weavers, set to work to ensure that the art and craft of carpet making would not be lost to Durham. The manager's name was Hugh Mackay.

Eleven looms were installed in one of the sheds on the existing Durham site and work began. He produced Wilton carpeting of a quality he called Yakcam (Mackay backwards), which is still in production today

In 1906. Hugh Mackay was joined by his son L. H. Mackay and a partnership was eventually formed. In 1921 Mackay's of Durham became a private limited company. The business grew fast and ranges of Wilton patterns were soon on display at furnishing stores from Hull to Berwick. It was not long before any newly married couple's home in north east England was considered incomplete without at least one 'Durham' carpet.

A turning, point in the history of Hugh Mackay's came in 1929 when they installed a five-frame Wilton loom at the successful North East Coast Exhibition. This loom was operated by the then Prince of Wales, the beginning of a long and successful relationship with the Royal family that still exists to this day. Awareness of 'Durham' carpets increased, demand followed suit, and showrooms opened in Glasgow, London, Leeds Manchester and Birmingham. In 1935 the production of Axminster quality carpets was added to the Hugh Mackay range and a new building built to house the facility. With the outbreak of war in 1939, Mackay's had in 36 years achieved recognition as one of the world" great carpet makers.

In 1953, under the guidance of L. H. Mackay and his son John, Mackay's became a public company, quoted on the Stock Exchange of Newcastle upon Tyne, and six years later the London Stock Exchange granted them


1969 the great fire of Durham struck. On Monday 5th May fire ravaged Mackay's factory and brought Wilton production to a virtual standstill. Buildings were destroyed, component parts were lost, and looms were severely, damaged. Local businesses and trades gave immediate assistance, carrying out work and fabricating temporary structures, and nine days after the fire, seven Wilton looms were back in operation again. In August of the same year, the majority of Wilton patterns were once again being produced. Customers - who also gave their support generously during this time - were sent special binders and then monthly mailings of patterns as they became available. This crisis had proved one thing: whilst Mackay's have been making good carpets they've made some good friends too:

In 1970 a 140,000 sq ft factory at nearby Dragonville, on a site which the company had owned since 1957, was completed and all Wilton production, including additional looms, was moved to this new facility. This left space on the Durham site to increase and improve
the Axminster production; the two factories together being amongst the best equipped and organised of their kind in the world at that time.

The company continued to prosper with ever growing prestige and in 1972 Hugh Mackay was awarded the Royal Warrant. This prestigious äccolade undoubtedly helped to seal further orders for specialist carpets both from within the UK and abroad.

By 1976 the Dragonville site was re-organised and expanded in order to house the entire production and associated processes from both sites In addition to this UK base, Hugh Mackay also opened showrooms and offices in. Hamburg.

In 1999 work began on a new state-of-theart 170,000 $\mathrm{ft}^{2}$ manufacturing facility on green land on the outskirts of Durham city. This was essential to maintaining the company's stance in the face of ever increasing competition. By the spring of 2000 the new facility was fully occupied and launched Hugh Mackay into the new millennium and into the company's second century.

## GASKELL MACKAY

The dawn of a new millennium brought with it new challenges for the entire British manufacturing industry and carpet was no exception. Competition from low cost overseas manufacturers, the increased popularity of other types of floor finishes and improved global communication ensured that traditional manufacturers including both Gaskell and Hugh Mackay needed to re-evaluate the principals that had served them well for the previous century.

## From 2000 to 2005 both companies

 experienced significant change. The break up of Gaskell Plc saw their operating divisions becoming private limited companies and refocusing on their specialist areas of operation. Hugh Mackay similarly rationalised their business to focus on core markets and specific strengths. Both companies used their experience in manufacturing to innovate via new production programmes to focus on flexibility and design excellence aimed at satisfying the ever increasing demands of today's contract environment.These changes saw both Gaskell Carpets and Hugh Mackay Carpets brought together and subsequently purchased by Whitestone Weavers to become Gaskell Mackay Carpets in April 2006.
the sourcing and supply of all types of floor coverings from across the globe focusing on flexibility and a strong ethos of customer service.

The purchase of Gaskell Mackay was a significant step in the planned growth of the Whitestone Group bringing together two highly regarded British carpet companies and investing in their future to ensure that the traditions of both companies are allowed to flourish in today's ever changing market. Since their inception Gaskell Mackay have gone from strength to strength in product development, design innovation and diversification into new markets. In April 2008 the business was relocated to Whitestone's new state of the art warehousing and distribution centre in Hartlepool, capable of supporting the groups planned activities for many years to come.

So, from humble beginnings Gaskell Mackay can trace their roots back well over 100 years, a history of which they are rightly proud. Equally the company can look forward to a bright future where their traditional values complemented by design flair, product innovation and future investment will mean that the names of Thomas Gaskell and Hugh Mackay will remain synonymous with quality British carpets for future generations to enioy









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