Tree Scribe

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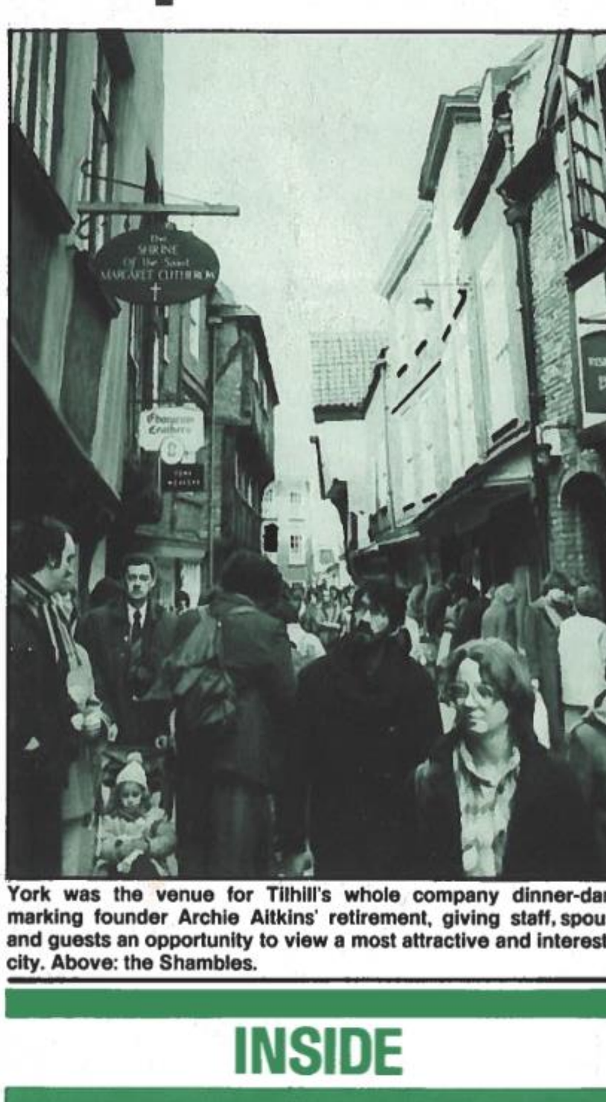
Expansion is in national interest



York was the venue for Tilhill's whole company dinner-dance marking founder Archie Aitkins' retirement, giving staff, spouses and guests an opportunity to view a most attractive and interesting city. Above: the Shambles.

'**A CONTINUING** expansion of forestry is in the national interest' said the Secretary of State for Scotland in making the Government's long-awaited statement on forestry policy to Parliament on December 10th 1980.

Tilhill, which has played its part in the lobbying and lead-up work culminating in the statement, greatly welcomes the very positive attitude towards forestry adopted by Ministers and which follows a very thorough review of the industry behind closed doors in Government departments.

Other extracts from the policy statement include –

With the projected rise in demand for timber into the next century and with the world's forests likely to come under increasing pressure, the Government believe that long-term confidence in both forestry and wood processing industries in this country is fully justified.

We look for a steadily increasing proportion of our requirements of timber to come from our own resources.

We see a greater place for participation by the private sector in new planting.

In line with this approach the Chancellor of the Exchequer had the previous day confirmed that no change would be made to the present income tax arrangements for forestry. The Chancellor said that while he had considered the matter in the light of comments from the Public Accounts Committee he recognised the important part woodlands taxation plays in encouraging private sector investment and the importance of stability in the tax arrangements in maintaining confidence in a long-term industry.

The more controversial parts of the Government's policy statement deal with sales of assets by the Forestry Commission and the winding down of the Dedication Schemes.

As part of the Government's aim to reduce public expenditure, the Forestry Commission is to be required to rationalise its holdings and raise cash by selling a proportion of its woodlands and land awaiting planting, the funds realised being used to reduce the Commission's annual grant-in-aid attributable to its Forestry Enterprise activities.

There is little doubt that, if the Commission offers for sale productive woodlands of good yield class with no strings attached, there will be a ready response from the market. The demand both from institutions and individuals presently exceeds supply.

However this does not create any additional resource for the nation, and to the extent that funds which might otherwise have gone into private planting are diverted into buying Commission woodlands the wealth creation opportunity is diminished. Again, sales with lease-back arrangements to the Commission have been mentioned: this is an untried field but the market's response to this ploy must today be considered doubtful.

It does appear that cash realised by the Commission from sales of forestry assets will be lost to the forestry industry as a whole, unless there is an imaginative plan (as yet unrevealed) to recycle the money, for example by way of increased planting grants for the private sector.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the plan for the sale of Commission assets is the introduction of short-term political considerations into the long-term business of forestry, a particularly unwelcome aspect if it provokes counteraction in the future from a Government of different political hue.

Following the scrutiny under the auspices of Sir Derek Rayner of the administration by the Forestry Commission of grant-aid for private forestry, the Government has concluded that it is too expensive to administer the Dedication Schemes and a new grant structure is proposed from October 1, 1981, aimed to be simpler and with a minimum of legal formalities.

It can readily be understood that the ill-conceived Dedication Basis III is too expensive to administer, although the reasons

to page 8

INSIDE

Nigel Gray looks back

Nigel Gray, that well-known personality in the shooting world, looks back over thirty years with the Game Conservancy and notes with satisfaction the progress made towards reconciling the interests of the gamekeeper and forester. Now retired he continues to advise on the interactions of game and woodlands in close association with Tilhill's Southern division.

PHEASANT SHOOTING as an incentive to plant woodland is certainly not a new concept. It started in the 1860s with the development of the breech-loading shotgun which enabled sportsmen to shoot at many times the rate of the muzzle loaders available up to that time.

Driven pheasants were now much in demand and in greater numbers. And so there was suddenly a need for new coverts specially planted to hold fairly large numbers of pheasants.

Though after World War I planting for game continued on a much reduced scale, the gamekeepers still tended to reign supreme in the woods. This was the root of many of my problems when I first started work at the ICI Game Research Station at Fordingbridge in 1950. 'Commercial' forestry was not the 'in' thing and to mention game or shooting in the presence of the dedicated forester was very risky indeed.

So the pendulum swung the other way to produce different extremes which were eventually to provoke a reaction from another quarter — the conservationists. At Fordingbridge we certainly had our difficulties in the 1950s and early 1960s but they did concentrate the mind wonderfully. We were stimulated to study the woodland requirements of pheasants much more precisely and then see how we could fit them into modern forestry planning.

It fell to me to carry out most of this work and intensely interesting it has been. In the first place it was necessary to quantify our needs. Any mention of game was likely to produce the immediate reaction that 'we might as well forget about *real* forestry if we're going to talk about shooting'. In other words, most people considered game coverts and forestry to be alternatives whereas we were quite sure that intelligent planning could make the two work together providing each knew what the other's requirements were.

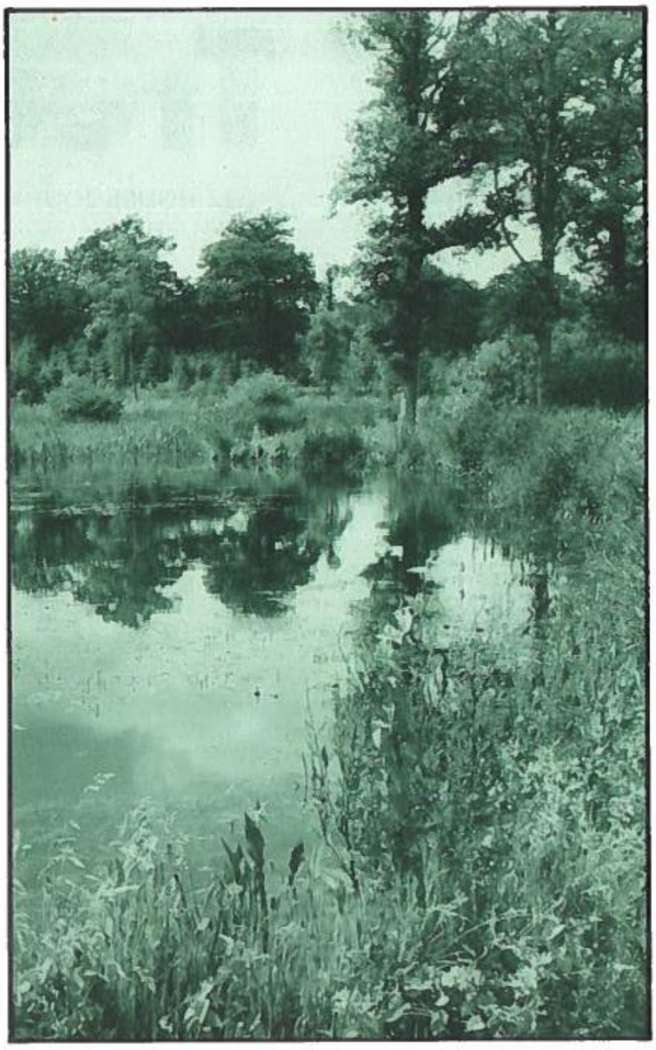
By and large I think we have been successful in this process although there are still gamekeepers and foresters who are too inflexible to accept any compromise.

The financial restrictions of the 1970s and the rise in land values have resulted in much more cost-conscious planning. The size of plantings has been much reduced and the one or two acre game spinney is now the most popular choice rather than the four to five acre covert of earlier more expansive times.

This reduction in scale has made it even more important to ensure that the design of the modern game covert or spinney is as efficient as possible because there is no room for unproductive areas as there would be in a big wood.

The best land for game coincides with the best arable areas of Britain and here any form of forestry obviously has a low priority. Where the farm and forest adjoin somebody has to lose — either the farm through shade and moisture competition from the trees, or the forest by maintaining an unproductive fringe area. Few people would favour the forest in this situation but the woodland edge is a very important area for game production (both pheasants and partridges).

If it is efficiently designed it will protect the farm headland and make the idea of planting an



area of woodland much more acceptable to a farming landowner.

The design of coverts and spinneys has also been greatly simplified. Elaborate plans with a multiplicity of species all requiring different management are doomed from the start. Indeed it is very difficult to get any form of management undertaken unless it is self financing (by marketing thinnings for example) and if it is 'only for the pheasants' then it is a non-starter.

Management of existing woodlands is often sadly neglected and never more so than in the smaller spinneys and belts that are such a vital landscape feature in lowland Britain. When neglected these areas usually hold few pheasants, whether wild or reared, and yet they can usually be dramatically improved with a little management. In this respect the needs of the pheasant can often be used to stimulate the return of these small areas to productive forest — and even preserve them from the thoughtless use of the bulldozer.

'Conservation' is now very much the fashionable thing to be in. Alas, there are many people today who think that the whole process, even the word itself, has just been invented to hold at bay the development of farming and forestry. Nothing could be further from the truth — farmers, foresters and game managers have always been concerned with conservation. Without it there would be no farmland, forest or gamebirds left.

No one plays a more significant part in conservation than the sporting landowner. It may be true that he retains a spinney, or plants a new one, principally for pheasants or foxes but he cannot do so exclusively for them even if he wished to and many other species, flora and fauna, enjoy the benefit.

Today, after 30 years in this field, I like what I see. Maybe we are much restricted by financial restraints and the priorities of food production but we can put aside the selfish extremes of the pheasants and those unfortunate attempts to convert some of our most handsome woodlands into a poor man's version of Scandinavia. Forester, farmer and game manager can work together in an intelligently balanced manner for a common aim, rather than the factional absurdities of the past.

And that common aim should be high farm production, high pheasants and tall trees within the context of a handsome landscape full of living creatures.

Civic Trust and BALI commend Jedburgh riverside walk

THE RIVERSIDE walk, Jedburgh, landscaped by the Scottish division's Borders branch, has received a commendation from the Civic Trust Awards scheme 1980 sponsored by the Midland Bank, in addition to an award of merit from the British Association of Landscape Industries.

Both bodies heaped praise on the scheme for opening up a valuable new facility to the residents of Jedburgh.

Designers of the scheme were architects Derek Lovejoy and Partners and it was carried out by Tilhill for Roxburgh District Council.

Only 20 commendations and four awards were made by the Civic Trust from the 139 entries from all over the United Kingdom and the comment in the Civic Trust's own journal needs no embellishment.

'A complete transformation from dereliction into exciting public open space has been effected with considerable variation in interest throughout its comparatively short length. Going downstream, the serene snaking river is bounded by well-landscaped grassy banks, and where it runs under the old stone bridge it is considerably enhanced by the black tubular handrail and the well proportioned terrace houses.

'It continues along its way past upgraded industrial buildings — once the reason for the river's suffocation — and then dramatically encounters an awe-inspiring eroding cliff face with phantom-like trees and roots.

'Delightfully incorporated into the walk are 'keep fit points' of simple but effective design evidently used by young and old. 'Jedburgh must be a better place since the scheme was executed and as the landscaping matures it will become even better.'

The opportunity to create the riverside walk came with the closure of the North British Rayon Mills and the construction of a bypass road and new bridge, Roxburgh DC recognising that the riverside was an asset to the town previously buried by industrial development and neglect.

The landscape architects were briefed to prepare a design for the reclamation and conversion to recreational open space. This included a riverside walk from the southern edge of the town to the northern edge.

Work on the site has included earth mounding, bank stabilisation, the construction of stone retaining walls, fencing, tarmacadam and whinstone paths, sitting areas, lighting, soiling, seeding and tree and shrub planting. Total area treated is approximately 55,000m².

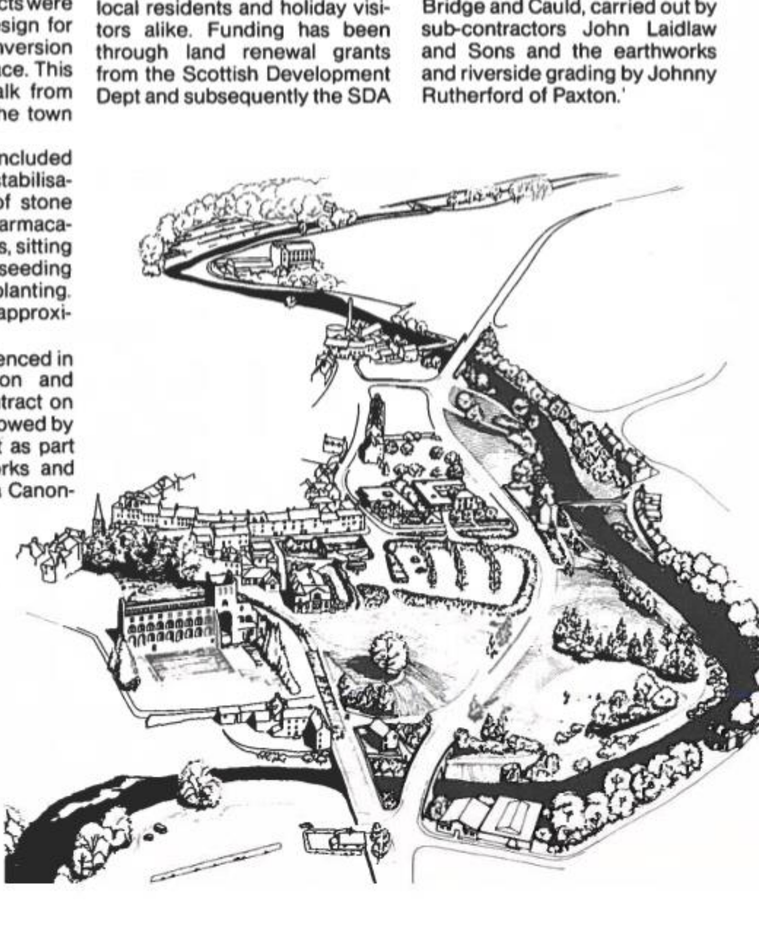
The first works commenced in 1973 with a demolition and ground preparation contract on the Rayon Mills site, followed by landscaping carried out as part of the by-pass roadworks and further phases between Canongate Bridge and Station Bridge in 1979.

BALI says: 'The later works forming the riverside walk itself have had the dramatic effect of opening a new pedestrian route through the town in quiet pleasant surroundings as an alternative to walking beside the busy Newcastle-Edinburgh trunk road.

'The new walk is proving to be overwhelmingly popular with local residents and holiday visitors alike. Funding has been through land renewal grants from the Scottish Development Dept and subsequently the SDA with additional money from local authorities.'

Scottish division southern area manager Bryson Middleton, himself a Jedburgh resident of long standing said: 'We feel honoured to have won these awards and are very pleased with the popularity of the walk with local people.

'One of the outstanding features of the scheme is the masonry work at the Canongate Bridge and Cauld, carried out by sub-contractors John Laidlaw and Sons and the earthworks and riverside grading by Johnny Rutherford of Paxton.'



BOB STILLINGER graduated from the University of Idaho with a degree in forest products in 1943. He then went to war as a deck-officer on a sub-chaser. Back home in Idaho he worked for two years as a management trainee in a large sawmilling and forest products company, but feeling the need for further education he went 'back to school' and took the master's and doctorate degrees in wood science technology.

Research work at the Oregon Forest Products Research Centre seeking ways to achieve more complete utilisation of the tree — including sawdust, shavings, slab wood and other 'waste materials' to produce particle board and fibre board — led to the post of research director.

After seven years of research he went back to industry as the technical director of a large plywood plant in Oregon where a dry-process hardboard plant was being built to utilise the plywood waste veneer.

He was promoted to technical and research director of the company and moved further up the ladder in the same role for the Oregon division of new owners, responsible now for seven different plants.

Next move — in 1962 — was to become technical adviser to a large independent forest products company about to build what was then to be the largest particle board plant in the world and to help Ken Ford the president plan expansion across the range of products, including lumber, plywood, particle board and added-value products.

In '65 he became general manager, and two years later president of a Texas-based company with three particle board plants in North Carolina, Wisconsin and Texas. A further takeover led to the offer of the presidency of a troubled plastics company, so between '70 and '75 he controlled the production, sales and finance of a company producing expanded polystyrene products including industrial packaging, cups, food containers, etc.

But he was not done with the forest industry: Bison Werke asked him to join them as a consultant in North America, where he was involved in economic feasibility studies, sales presentations, trouble shooting and updating equipment technology.

Then came the Cowie connection.

Caberboard managing director Dr Bob Stillinger, 60 this year, h crucially important Scottish enterprise. With continuing respon Tree Scribe editor David Reade talked to him 'en route' in a Lon

IN LATE '77 my German bosses told me that a large particle board plant in Scotland which they had designed and built in 1973 had gone into receivership. They stated they would be making an offer for the assets of this company and if successful would I take over as MD to see if it could become a profitable operation.

In February 1978 Bison Werke became the new owners of STP and the company was renamed Caberboard.

Q. Were some of the causes of STP's failure apparent when you took over?

Several problems led to the failure of the original company: problem one was the financial structuring of the company, burdened with a tremendously heavy debt-load, in conjunction with a disadvantageous price structure and a union which encroached on management functions. Overmanning in the plant was another factor with 375 employees in the company. After very careful evaluation of all the jobs, including staff, we reached the conclusion that the company should be operated with 153 employees — exactly the number we did start up with. Everyone realised I was trying to cut the entire company down to a level where it could operate efficiently.

Q. How did you 'sell' the package to the unions?

The unions initially felt strongly that the plant could not be run with the numbers we had specified. I said 'Let's try! — I'll be the first to recommend additional manning if any operation is proven unsafe, or if production and quality are affected'.

The parent company was prepared to invest money to update machinery where necessary. The first year, although the plant was only 4½ years old, we spent £850,000 to improve the overall position.

Each year since then we've spent between £300,000 and £500,000. It's my basic philosophy that we must keep up-to-date with new technology and replace obsolete equipment.

1978 was not a good year in the market-place for particle board. We were getting a great deal of pressure from other UK particle board manufacturers to curtail our production because prices were so low. 'We're all in this together' was their line.

But in my best judgement it was not in Caberboard's interest to do this. By running the plant at capacity and by keeping manning levels down we should be able to compete even in a depressed market with all the imported boards.

One of the reasons we could keep on working at maximum production levels while our competition in the UK was cutting down and running on short weeks was because we were by then an efficient operation.

Q. In spite of the higher prices for raw materials than overseas competitors pay?

In spite of that.

And we're now in that situation again. We're still running the plant, with an overtime schedule, prices are very bad and raw material prices have continued to increase year after year. But we've learnt that as long as our sales organisation can sell our production, even at depressed prices then we're still better off to run the plant at its maximum capacity than to curtail, cut-back and operate at lower levels.

Q. Are you operating at break-even?

It depends what you mean, how you handle your depreciation costs and so forth.

In the current market situation and charging full depreciation expense based on replaceable cost of assets we are not operating at a break-even level. But we have a positive cash flow.

Depreciation should be charged based on the replaceable cost of the plant, not on the basis of what we paid for it. We have to evaluate our total operation on the assumption that if this were a new plant, could we make money with it? Our whole objective is to make money as if it were a brand new plant.

Q. So you can lean a little on the fat of a normally tough costing policy to see you through the hard times?

That's right. That's exactly the situation we're in now. One of the difficult things at the present time is to convince the people that we're not making money. Because when you're shipping all you produce they think you must be making all kinds of money.

I'm a great believer in all the employees having a steady income each week and that the company has to take the ups and downs of profit based on the market situation.

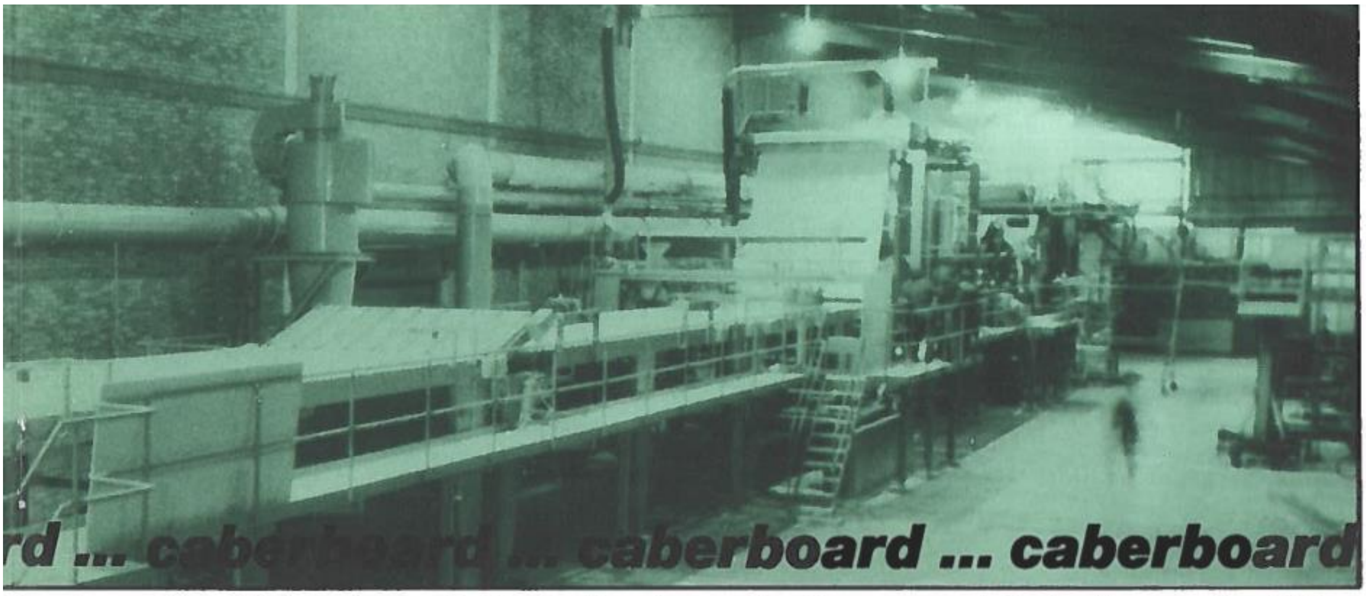
I feel very strongly that morale is much higher if everyone can come to work every day.

Q. Was not the introduction of a £6M medium density fibre board plant an exceptionally courageous act, coming when it did?

Well, I guess it does seem courageous. But I like to look long-range rather than short-range. Where do we want this company to be ten years from now? We made the decision to go into the MDF plant before the present recession, when, a couple of years after setting up, it was obvious that Caberboard could be a viable operation. Even at that time our management group was asking itself: where do we want to go from here?

Do we increase particle board capacity, or introduce a new product? I had witnessed the very successful growth of the MDF industry in the States over a period of 14 years. MDF products were coming into the UK from there and from New Zealand, our MDF products could be sold in our established particle board market — these were important factors in making the final decision.

And we would be the first MDF



has been the driving force behind the dramatic turnaround in fortunes for this nsibilities on both sides of the Atlantic he shows no signs of slowing down. ondon hotel.

plant in the UK.

We realised that with a brand new product the financial risk would be greater than expanding existing product lines. But by spreading our product range we would be less vulnerable to market oscillations.

Q. Could the raw materials cost differentials change, in your view? With more UK wood becoming available and with more difficult terrain to work in Canada and the States, could UK cost-levels relatively improve?

I've been most interested to note the way the Forestry Commission and private wood suppliers are staying up-to-date with harvesting techniques. But timber stocks in the States are healthy and I can't see a cost advantage moving our way in the next few years.

Q. Is it fair to say that Bison Werke was forced to step in to save the operation to see their money back?

That's a good question, and of course it always upsets me a little bit when people feel that way. I think it's unfortunate that since Bison Werke was one of the major creditors in the bankrupt company people assume that they went in to salvage their financial interest.

But consider that they paid in excess of what they were owed. Unless they felt the company could be successful, just to buy it and sell it to someone else was quite a risk — here's a company that's gone broke, perhaps the manning levels couldn't be straightened out and the unions dealt with in a harmonious way.

I think it's fair to say this was the largest multiple opening particle board plant Bison had ever built. They had made quite a reputation for themselves with smaller, single opening plants and so perhaps there was an element of 'face-saving' to convince the world they would build large as well as small.

On the other hand their basic philosophy over the years has been to own different types of particle board plants world-wide — Canada, Germany — which they could use as demonstrations of their engineering and plant-building capability.

They felt very strongly that the reason for the failure of the predecessor company was not that the plant was improperly designed and the operation could be very successful. We wouldn't be spending £6M on a MDF plant if we were going to sell it.

Q. Do the six basic factors you highlighted in your address to the Institute of Wood Science conference change emphasis, or priority depending on what country you operate in? *(They were money, materials, machines, men, management and marketing.)*

No. You've got to get them all right wherever you are to be successful.

Q. How does it apply in Scotland?

We've got some real disadvantages in our location in Scotland. First of all the major markets for our products are 300 — 500 miles from our plant so haulage costs do not favour us.

Another aspect of the industry is that with the present total UK particle board production we can still only supply one third of the market consumption in the UK. The result is that imports must come in to satisfy the market demand. Getting our share can be difficult at times.

Currency rates are constantly changing creating trading conditions not met with in the States.

On the other hand, one of the things that disturbed me a great deal when I first came here was the feeling that the UK government needs to protect UK industry, that we need some protection against the so-called 'dumping' which obviously does take place.

This was hard to accept. Our market situation in that respect is not much different from the States. It's competition whether it's between Oregon and Georgia, or the UK and Sweden. It's the plant that runs an efficient operation and has good people that has the best chance to be successful.

On dumping, I just don't believe the government should protect an inefficient industry. If an efficient industry cannot make a profit because of predatory pricing, or dumping, then you have a serious situation.

Perhaps the government has to step in with a subsidy on raw materials. But I'm not comfortable with any form of grants and aid. A company has to run its business and stand on its own two feet.

Q. What about market development, where should the industry go? You quote the per capita particle board figure as much lower in the UK than elsewhere in Europe.

This is to me one of the major areas for development in the UK. We're near the bottom of the European list. But I see encouraging changes taking place — the increasing use of timber frame construction which opens up more opportunities for the use of particle board, mirroring Germany and Sweden.

Within ten years that trend will start to pay off in the UK.

I think the industry as a whole through the United Kingdom Particle Board Association needs to do some real aggressive promotional work. This is difficult. We have a smaller share of the market and there's a tendency to begrudge dollars spent on promoting markets which will favour the importers.

We need to find a practical means of taxing anyone entering this market and make them pay for promotional costs which expand the market.

One of the weaknesses is that although we've good standards set up for our products there's no enforcement.

We have a good British standard for particle board flooring but unless products coming in from other countries meet these standards complaints about quality discredit the whole industry.

Q. So this whole area of standards, marketing, identity and promotion needs looking at as a comprehensive package?

Absolutely right. And if we're going to expand the total market, we've got to put that package together and we've got to pay for it. It has to be financed by anyone coming into this market place — Spain, Norway, Sweden, Germany, or whomever.

Q. How do you run the job from the USA?

My stock answer is this: we have built up a very strong management team and Bison Werke asked me if I would stay another three to five years. I said 'no' for purely personal family reasons. But after seeing success come out of failure, and learning of the parent company's plans to grow and expand I said I want to be part of it.

So I said: 'Let's give it a try'. And it's been a real pleasant surprise to me. I don't believe performance has suffered at all, though it may seem a little unorthodox.

I might not be here eighty per cent of the time. But I get a lengthy telex once a week containing production and sales data and there's always the telephone if anyone needs to consult over a major decision.

But if you have surrounded yourself with good strong people who like responsibility and to make decisions on their own, then the management team will manage even in my absence.

Q. How can you be sure you pick the management members with potential?

At the beginning it seemed a bit of a gamble: you had an American running the team, a German works manager, an English sales manager and a Scottish controller.

That's some mixture, and that was one of my major jobs the first year — to evaluate people and make sure there were no weak links.

'Mr Tilhill' says goodbye

Archie and Margot Aitkins get a farewell present of silverware at the York dinner-dance, 34 years after Archie founded Tilhill.

ARCHIE AITKINS, founder and chairman of Tilhill, has retired on reaching his 70th birthday.

Archie, as he is known to lords and commoners alike, has had the supreme satisfaction of creating Tilhill and building it over the years and throughout the country into the respected force in British forestry it is today.

Born the son of a doctor in the Indian medical service he was educated at Heriots and took his degree in forestry at Edinburgh University where he graduated in 1933. Thereafter he became a lecturer in the forestry department of Aberdeen University.

During the war he was attached to the personal staff of Lord Beaverbrook for whom he formed the greatest admiration and respect. Without doubt this period of his career was one of some stimulation. Not only was he exposed to the 'great and the good', learning no doubt they are as human as the rest of us, but also Beaverbrook's style and panache greatly impressed the young Scots forester who also learned that 'he who dares, succeeds' and that enterprise can be both challenging and rewarding.

This is the spirit in which he launched himself into private forestry in the south of England after the war, being encouraged to form his own company in 1947 which in 1948 was incorporated under the name Tilhill Forestry and Advisory Company Ltd.

Archie was ambitious for the development of private forestry and not least for his own company. He tells how he sought to register the name 'British Forestry Company' but was told at the time that 'British' was being reserved for the titles of nationalised industries. So he settled for naming the company after his first house in Tilford.

Business was picking up after the war. The wartime neglect of estates and woodlands was being put right. Forestry consultants were not uncommon in the field. Archie conceived the idea that what was really required was not only the advisory and consultancy knowhow but also the provision of practical services — supplying the plants, doing the planting, marketing the timber — a pattern later to be copied by others. From the beginning the company had its own nursery and as the business grew Archie recruited practical foresters, men who knew not only what needed doing in private forestry but how to do it.

Each year since the earliest beginnings has seen growth and today the company covers the length and breadth of the country from fourteen operational centres. In Archie's final year as chairman turnover exceeded £5 million.

While Tilhill has required most of his energies time has to be found for much active work for the benefit of the industry as a whole. Some of the bodies which have benefited from his individualistic contribution have included TGO, SWOA, FCGB, the technical subcommitee of HGTAC and the regional advisory committee for southeast England. His services to forestry were recognised by the award of the OBE.

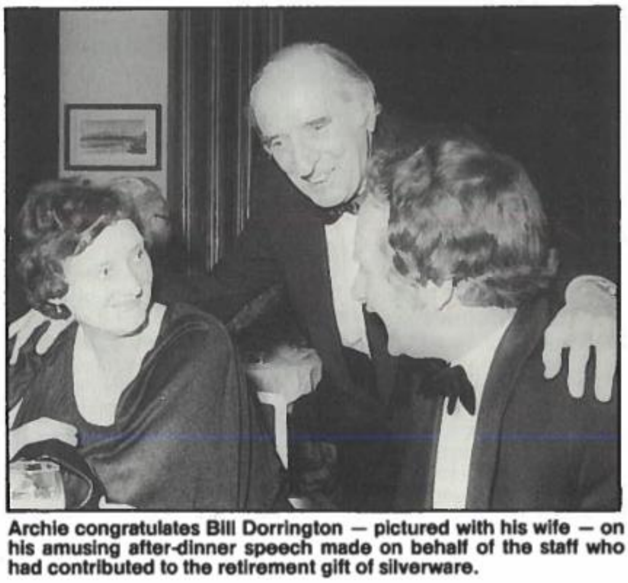
Many clients and business acquaintances have become good friends and all will speak warmly of the welcome they have received in Archie's home where, together with Margot, his pleasure in entertaining good company found its best expression.

For his retirement Archie and Margot are moving house all of four miles from Greenhills to Farnham — close enough, says Archie, still to hear all the good news from Tilhill.

The directors made a presentation to him at a farewell lunch at the Connaught and the staff met in his honour at a dinner-dance in York at the end of March where on behalf of the staff Bill Dorrington (top, left) made a presentation of silverware.

All involved with Tilhill will agree that Archie can feel justifiably satisfied with achieving what he has always sought for Tilhill to do — a good job well done.

Willie and Jean Telfer from Old Sauchie in exuberant mood at York.



Archie congratulates Bill Dorrington — pictured with his wife — on his amusing after-dinner speech made on behalf of the staff who had contributed to the retirement gift of silverware.

CONTRACTS

Scottish division

EAST YORKSHIRE BRANCH CONTRACTS WORTH £90.902

Tyne & Wear County Council

Greenside Quarries — grass seeding, forestry planting, fencing and maintenance (£8,643).

Felling By-pass — site preparation works, fencing, whip planting, maintenance (£14,185)

Hedworth — site preparation, fencing, whip planting, maintenance (£16,069).

Gateshead By-pass — site preparation, grass seeding, fencing, planting and maintenance (£30,529).

Commercial Road, Sunderland — site preparation, shrub bed preparation, tree planting, shrub planting and maintenance (£10,397).

Cleveland County Council

Whinney Banks — whip planting and Maintenance (£5,729).

A.Monk and Co.

ICI Tees-side — palisade security fencing and gates (£5,350).

ARGYLL BRANCH

Awarded fencing contract on Mull by **Wm. Tawse and Co** (£7,000).

LOTHIANS BRANCH:

£7,000 landscape contract for deer fencing and tree planting, at Dunbar Works for **Blue Circle Industries.**

CENTRAL LANDSCAPE BRANCH

Have been awarded three contracts by **Wimpey,** for landscaping Claddens Housing Estate (£11,000) and Bluebell Apparel Factory, Falkirk (£8,000) and a seeding contract (£5,000).

SOLWAY BRANCH

Awarded two planting and maintenance contracts by **Greater Manchester Council** (£20,000).

HIGHLAND BRANCH

Landscaping works at Nigg Oil Terminal, Easter Ross, for **British National Oil Corporation,** £90,000 contract for tree and shrub planting at offices and grass-seeding and turfing of oil tank farm, with maintenance.

Southern division

LANDSCAPING SECTION

£98,000 contract from the **Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council** for landscaping a recreation area at Basingstoke.

£78,000 contract from the **Southern Water Authority** for landscaping new sewage works at Fareham.

£55,000 contract from the **London Borough of Hounslow** for landscaping a recreation area at Hounslow.

£32,000 contract from **Wickens and Sons,** for landscaping a housing development at Bracknell.

£11,000 contract from a private school for landscaping work at **Petersham.**

£10,000 contract from **Bovis Homes,** for seeding and planting at Reading.

ANGLIA BRANCH

£15,326 contract from **Norfolk County Council** for landscaping work.

SOUTH EAST BRANCH

£16,500 contract from **YJ Lovell (Southern)** for landscaping a superstore at Hastings.

£8,750 from **Heron Homesteads** for landscaping Eden Vale dvelopment at East Grinstead.

£7,500 contract from **Seismograph Services (England), Keston,** for landscaping new computer building.

MARCHES BRANCH

£9,137 and £8,962 contracts from **Hereford & Worcester County Council** for landscaping projects at March and Leominster.

People and Places

Congratulations to A C Griffiths of the Landscaping Section, who successfully applied to become an associate member of the Landscape Institute in January 1981.

Best wishes to Harry Bray, senior foreman in the Landscaping Section, who retired on March 3 after seventeen years' service with Tilhill.

Anglia branch welcomed Neil Austen on transfer from South West branch on December 10, and Dick Hoare, who began his forester appointment on March 2. Formerly, Dick worked for the Tasmanian Forestry Commission and on private estates in Scotland.

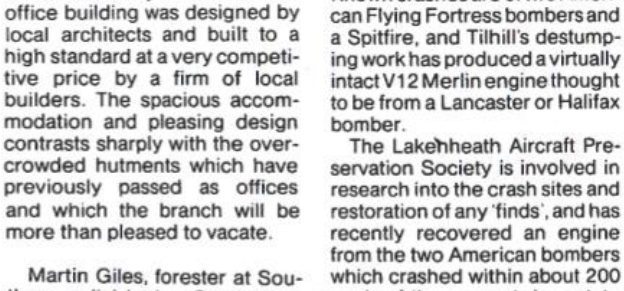
Anglia said goodbye to Alison Sayers on March 31, when she left to take up V S O work overseas.

A G Griffiths

NEW OFFICES AT CULFORD

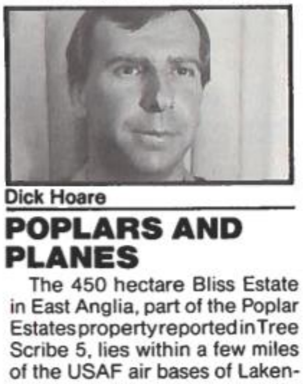
Anglia branch moved into smart new custom-built offices (below) overlooking the nursery at Culford early in March. The office building was designed by local architects and built to a high standard at a very competitive price by a firm of local builders. The spacious accommodation and pleasing design contrasts sharply with the overcrowded hutments which have previously passed as offices and which the branch will be more than pleased to vacate.

Martin Giles, forester at Southern division's South-West branch, has passed the recent NDF examination and has been promoted to assistant branch manager.



THE HEATH FRITILLARY BUTTERFLY

South-East branch are cooperating with the Nature Conservancy Council in an effort to preserve the habitat of the Heath Fritillary butterfly which occurs within chestnut coppice areas in the Blean Woodlands, Kent. Following the demise of the Large Blue, the Heath Fritillary is classed as the most endangered species of butterfly in the UK. The larvae feed on cow-wheat *(Melampytum pratense)* which flourishes particularly in the light phase of coppicing and along ride margins. This calls for special treatment of selected coppice areas if the habitat, and therefore the butterfly, is to be preserved.



Dick Hoare

POPLARS AND PLANES

The 450 hectare Bliss Estate in East Anglia, part of the Poplar Estates property reported in Tree Scribe 5, lies within a few miles of the USAF air bases of Lakenheath and Mildenhall. RAF Feltwell, a war-time bomber base is similarly close by.

The area witnessed intense aerial activity during World War II and several plane crashes occurred on the land now occupied by the poplar plantations. Known crashes are of two American Flying Fortress bombers and a Spitfire, and Tilhill's destumping work has produced a virtually intact V12 Merlin engine thought to be from a Lancaster or Halifax bomber.

The Lakenheath Aircraft Preservation Society is involved in research into the crash sites and restoration of any 'finds', and has recently recovered an engine from the two American bombers which crashed within about 200 yards of the present day estate office and farm buildings.

Hopefully all the deadly cargo carried by these planes was deposited on the other side.

Chairman of TGGB James Galbraith talks to Tree Scribe

The Honourable James Galbraith, chairman of Timber Growers Great Britain, a deputy chairman of Timber Growers Scotland, and a director of Buccleuch Estates gave an exclusive interview to Tree Scribe, responding to questions about the Government's intentions for the forestry industry.

'**WE SEE NO** reason why the Forestry Commission should not be empowered to sell land as well as buy. But we are concerned that the Forest Authority remains big enough to carry out its function properly.

'As long as the government of the day could not force the Forestry Commission to divest itself of a disproportionate amount of its assets — and we hope to see safeguards against that — then flexibility is not a bad thing. As a result of the proposed rationalisation, it should become a slimmer, but still fully effective organisation, with, I hear, a new commercially orientated Forestry Commissioner.

MARKET LIMITS

'But in fact you can't sell more than the market will carry and nobody knows what that is. Some people argue that foreign interests should be kept out, but one must leave it to the Forestry Commissioners, who are responsible people, to decide the correct sales policy.

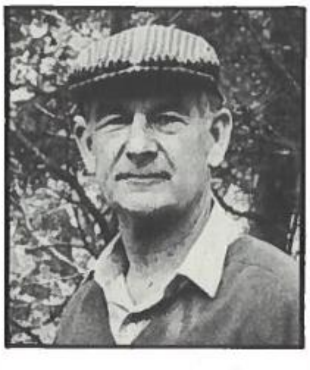
'We are worried that the rush to legislate has produced a gap between the ending of the old grant scheme and the beginning of a new one, of which we know little or nothing as yet.

'We in the TGGB expect to have talks in April and much depends on the line ministers will take as a result of the advice the Forest Authority gives them.

PLANNING PROTECTION

'As to the form any replacement for Dedication should take, I feel that something with less legal complication would be advantageous. So long as the new proposal contains the elements of longterm importance to both sides provided by the old scheme, with adequate protection against indiscriminate tree preservation orders and planners in general, it should represent a step in the right direction.'

'To the extent the investment opportunity in forestry is taken up by pension funds the man in the street paying a few pounds a week gets a stake in our industry, widening the investment base and throwing additional responsibility on the forestry management companies to



show the way to success.'

INSIDE VOICE

'As the private sector is to have greater responsibility we begin to feel that there may be a case for stronger representation within the Forestry Commission, although relations with the Forestry Commission have never been better and there is an excellent interchange of view at present. The commissioners are constrained by Civil Service procedures which can hinder full discussion of matters where government policy is involved. As the private sector will be concerned with more than fifty per cent of the business we should be more closely consulted and involved in the range of important questions which affect the industry as a whole.'

Expansion is in national interest —

from page 1

for this have more to do with the consultative process associated with Basis III than the costs of the legal formalities. The proposed phasing-out of Dedication Basis II, which has a long and respectable history, is much to be regretted. It could be that the costs of dismantling Basis II will exceed those of maintaining it.

Entry to Dedication and transfers of ownership with continuing entitlement to grants stop at June 30, 1981. It seems a contradiction that a Government that has pledged its support for an expansion in private forestry is to leave the industry in a hiatus until October when the new grant scheme is to take effect.

No details of the new scheme are available although it is envisaged that the consultative procedures will be made less cumbersome. On the same day as the Government made its policy statement the Forestry Commission distributed a consultative paper on grant aid and felling licences.

In common with all other interested organisations Tilhill has responded to the invitation to comment on the proposals, and has emphasised that planting grants should relate to establishment costs and require to be revised annually and that the consultative process developed with Basis III requires to be streamlined.

The Government has said that it looks to planting continuing at broadly the rate of the past 25 years, with a greater participation by the private sector. Over the past 25 years the average of all planting, by the state and the private sector, afforestation and re-stocking, has been 38,000 hectares per annum and the private sector's share over the same period has been 40 per cent. Increased participation by the private sector would seem to imply a level of at least 25,000 hectares per annum. In the last year for which statistics are published, the year ended March 30, 1980, the total of all private planting was 11,167 hectares. If the Government is serious in its intent, then it does seem that private planting has to be facilitated. In simple terms that means enhanced planting grants and much more ready 'clearance' of afforestation proposals in the hills and uplands. There is little doubt that the private sector will respond to these stimuli, producing the private investment in this vital natural resource.

Roger Mathews on the fork lift offers up a load of sitka bound for Griffin Estate, Aberfeldy, to Roger Denham, who sees it safely aboard. Sister Scania rig is seen behind, ready loaded, backed by the new cold store.

The 26½ft container with its 18ft trailer can accommodate 70 new-design crates — twice as big as the old ones — and with a total load/off load flexibility plants can be removed as required at various stages of a journey yet maintain even load distribution because of the facility to off load from any point along the side of the vehicle.

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