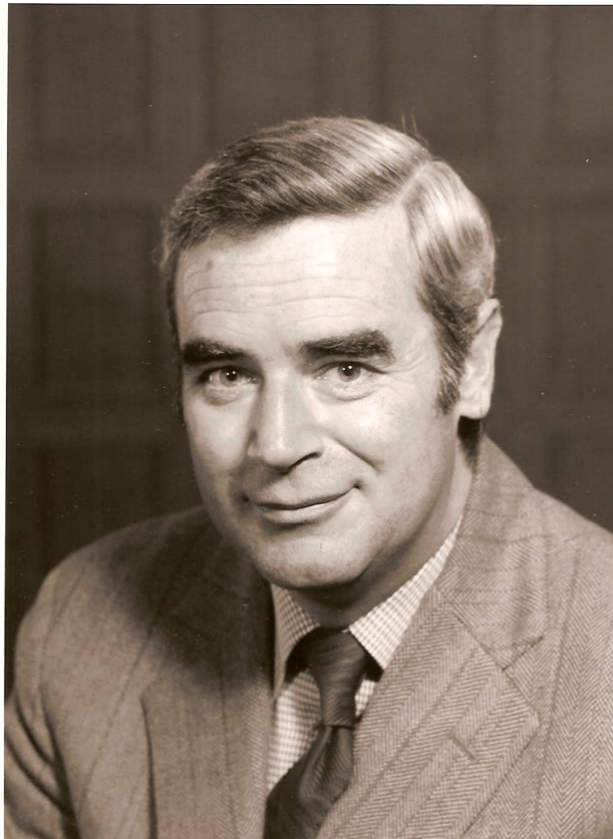


David Brierton

An Appreciation



In his 25 years with Tilhill, David Brierton was a dominant influence in shaping the company's philosophy, beginning in the early 1960s by providing the driving force behind the growth of the new Scottish operation and culminating in the detailed negotiations which led to the company joining Booker in late 1984, and as they say – the rest is history.

David was described at the time by one of his senior colleagues as a man with the enviable quality of being able to 'fire on all cylinders at all times'. There is no doubt that his boundless energy, enthusiasm, meticulous thoroughness and mastery of both the practical and financial sides of forestry served the company well.

David's legacy was to grow Tilhill into the UK's leading forestry management company with long-established district offices throughout Britain, from North Scotland to the South of England.

Known affectionally as DB, David was born in Inverness in 1932, brought up in Stirling and went to school at Dollar. He studied for a B.Sc. in Forestry at Edinburgh University, graduating in 1955.

Like many young graduates of his generation, the choice of a first job lay between the Forestry Commission and the Colonial Service. DB chose the latter, taking on the challenge of overseeing 250,000 acres of natural pine forest in Cyprus. With the Colonial Service being wound down, DB returned to Scotland, accepting a job as an assistant regional manager with the Co-operative Forestry Society (Scotland) Ltd., which was the forerunner of the Scotland Woodland Owners Association Ltd (SWOA). After Cyprus, life back home seemed humdrum by comparison, so DB emigrated with his family to Australia and secured a position with the Queensland Forest Department. However, to his intense disappointment he found himself office bound in Brisbane rather than being in the wilds of the Australian forests.

DB had heard on the grapevine that Tilhill founder Archie Aitkins, was planning to expand his activities into Scotland and wrote to him applying for the Scottish Manager's job. To his delight Archie was bold enough to take him on without first interviewing him and DB was sufficiently disenchanted with life in Australia to return to Scotland for a second time.

Tilhill was then a very small company comprising several modest-sized subsidiaries in what eventually became Southern Division and the tree nursery. Once the concept of expanding into Scotland had formed in Archie Aitkins' mind, he was happy to delegate responsibility for the logistics of the operation to someone he knew only by reputation.

His faith in DB proved to be well-founded. Based at Tilhill Forestry (Scotland) Ltd's one-and-only office in Jedburgh and with only one forest estate to manager at Minto for the Duke of Abercorn, DB set about the painstaking task of building up the business. "Forestry Management in Scotland was ripe for expansion at that time," he recalled, "for the only real competition was from SWOA. In the early sixties, people were looking for the kind of service we could give and the business built up gradually, partly with new acquisitions by existing Tilhill clients and partly by being retained by the traditional estates to handle their forestry management."

Within a year of DB's joining Tilhill as Managing Director in Scotland, a second office opened in Elgin following the acquisition of woodlands in Morayshire by a client and the following year the Scottish headquarters opened at Tulliallan in Kincardine-on-Forth, moving to Old Sauchie at Bannockburn in 1966. Under DB's energetic and capable guidance, Tilhill in Scotland was well and truly on its way. DB was appointed a director of the parent company, then called Tilhill Forestry Advisory Ltd. in 1965 and Managing Director in 1976 until he retired in 1987 - the longest serving MD in the company's history.

The list of appointments DB held during his years in forestry are clear proof – if proof were needed – of the knowledge and wisdom he brought to the industry :-

- DB was a past member of the Council of the Institute of Chartered Foresters
- DB served as one of the six-man Windblow Action Group from 1968-1971 to co-ordinate harvesting, haulage and marketing of windblown timber following the hurricane which hit Scotland in 1968 – the report on which is covered in Windblow Scotland Forests 1968 – Forest Memories Picture No: 4454 - <https://www.forestrymemories.org.uk/picture/number4454>
- DB was a director and latterly deputy chairman of Scottish Timber Products Ltd. from 1971-77 and was one of those with the vision to set up the Cowie particleboard factory
- For over a decade DB was a member of the Regional Advisory Committee of the Forestry Commission's mid-Scotland Conservancy
- DB was Manager of the Council of Timber Growers UK
- From 1981, DB was a member of the Scottish Forest Products Development Group. The latter organisation, with membership drawn from the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Forestry Commission, the Scottish Office and TGUK, acted as the catalyst for the setting up of Highland Forest Products in Inverness and the Kymmene-Stromberg project at Irvine (now Caledonian) – at the time, the largest single inward investment ever attracted to Scotland.

DB retired from Tilhill in 1987 and moved back to Cyprus with his wife Joyce, often returning to Scotland in the summer months. Eventually DB and Joyce moved back permanently to Scotland to live on the island of Islay, for which they both had great affection.

DB's own story can be found in an interview with Val Petitt, editor of Tree Scribe No 22
<https://www.forestrymemories.org.uk/picture/number6190>

There is no doubt that DB was instrumental in creating the culture and philosophy that developed within Tilhill during his tenure as MD, with staff having a very strong business loyalty helped by a close knit company structure.

It is this legacy that DB will be remembered by those who knew and worked with him.

DB passed away on the 8th March 2001 on the island of Islay.