

THE WORLD-WIDE CONTACTS OF MODERN ALRESFORD INDUSTRY

by

Jack Orr.

The casual visitor to New Alresford finds it a pleasant country town. He may walk up West Street and be impressed with its large number of antique shops. He will turn into the fine tree-lined Broad Street and admire the handsome residences. the ironmonger's shop and the old book shop. He may visit one of our six inns. or seven if he is prepared to hazard the traffic of East Street. All the while he will be unaware of the dozen or more light industries which flourish in Alresford and have world-wide contacts. These he would find if he Went down the Dean or along New Farm Road into Prospect Road, or to the Station Yard. In the Dean he would find P.I. Corrosion Engineers, L.R.E., Warwick's, Huxley's and Taylor's amongst others. Crossing to Jacklyn's Lane he would find the offices of Gascoigne Gush and Dent. Proceeding along the Avenue and into New Farm Road he will discover more industries. Turning off into Prospect Road he will find Etchmasters and Seaglass. Returning to the end of New Farm Road he will see the factory of Gush and Dent, whose world-wide distribution of their tubular steel farm equipment was described in the first issue of Alresford Displayed. Right at the end of the road he will come upon Polybuild. He has still to return to the Station Yard if he wishes to visit Alresford crafts.

P.I. CORROSION ENGINEERS LIMITED

This firm operates near the top of the Dean. They seek to fill a gap in the service offered by Consulting and Contracting Engineering firms by providing protection against corrosion of oil, gas and Water pipes. jetties and offshore structures. Their business is the design and supply of Cathodic Protection equipment (Cathodic Protection is a method of preventing corrosion using d.c. electricity on underground and underwater structures). Experienced corrosion Engineers advise on paint and coating procedures to be used in conjunction with cathodic protection. Equipment inspection and on site installation is regularly carried out by their staff either in the U.K. or overseas. Corrosion surveys have been carried out throughout Iran in Teheran, Shiraz, Isfahan, Abadan, Ahwaz, and Bander Shapour. Work has also been undertaken in Gibraltar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt. Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Pakistan and South America.

An interesting development carried out by a subsidiary company, P.I. Specialist Engineers. Limited, is in the Variable Geometry Vertical Axis Wind Turbine - in fact windmills. In these energy conscious days What better source of power than wind - abundant and free? They can be used for generating electricity or pumping Water. Most wind turbines revolve about a horizontal axis, as did older ones. However there are considerable advantages to be obtained if the turbine rotates about a vertical axis. Most significantly, it does not matter from which direction the wind blows. There is a hill top test site north of Bishops Sutton near Gundleton.

It was in 1975 that Dr. P.I. Cosgrove of Reading University proposed the concept of the Variable Geometry Vertical Axis Wind Turbine. P.I. saw the exciting potential of the device in 1976 and now have completed engineering it for commercial production. They are already used in Orkney, Sweden and the Caribbean to provide lights on rocky islands, and the company is now producing machines for Botswana, Australia and China.

Truly a worldwide business originated in Broad Street, Alresford.

L.R.E.

L.R.E. a subsidiary of L.R.E. (Munich) has recently been established in the Dean. The technical manager, Mr. Fuller, from Seattle, is responsible for the design and manufacture of the principal product, a switch panel keyboard. He says that there is a genuine need In the aerospace industry

for a robust reliable keyboard which can be used on aircraft, land vehicles, and in other applications where extreme conditions exist. He feels that their technology is advanced enough to keep ahead of their rivals and the new factory in Alresford will help to maintain this lead.

The keyboard is already used in the Rapier Missile System, by the Royal Navy and in the Mirage 2000 Aircraft. The commercial manager is Mr. Hann and he looks forward to great expansion with half of the production going overseas. So far their export sales have been limited to Europe.

HUXLEY'S OF ALRESFORD AND STAINES

In the past if we had problems with our grass cutters we no doubt would have visited this firm in the Dean. However they now deal only with professional users. It is interesting to find that they have World-wide connections. They are the sole U.K. agents of Eastman Turf-care equipment, a division of the outboard marine Corporation. Nebraska. U.S.A. Huxley's themselves manufacture attachments for the Eastman trucksters and some have been sold in Europe. They are also sole concessionaires for the Royer soil shredding equipment which comes from Pennsylvania. If you wish to get rid of tree stumps they will sell you a Little David grinder made in the States by Josiah Industries and imported from New York. All that is left of your tree stump is a hole and a pile of wood chippings.

WARWICK BROS. (ALRESFORD) LIMITED

Warwick Bros. (Alresford) Limited was formed during 1955 by the brothers S.A. and D.E. Warwick, although originating from small beginnings the company is still privately owned after 25 years.

The business, providing full employment for 23 local people, is mainly engaged in the manufacture of agricultural trailers. Although catering mainly for the home market trailers have been exported to such places as Japan, Iceland, Nigeria, Canada and Australia.

The Warwick brothers have also recently branched out into the hotel business becoming the owners of the Swan Hotel in West street, whilst son Derek combines his occupation as works manager with professional car racing, this year competing in his first Formula one Grand Prix season.

We learn since going to press that Warwick's have secured a contract deliver half a million pounds worth of trailers to Nigeria.

TAYLOR'S OF LONDON PERFUMERY CO. LIMITED

If you enter this factory in the Dean your nostrils are assailed with sweet perfume. The 'Flowers on the Forest' come to mind:

"Sae bonny their blooming,, their scents the air perfuming,
But now they are withered and wede all away."

The petals are not withered but rather dried and made into potpourri. The products of this firm find their way all over the world, Europe, the States, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. There are connections with the Virgin Islands in the West Indies and even Norfolk Island in the Pacific.

C.L.C.

Built in 1969, the large Warehouse and offices of the Christian Literature Crusade are situated near the bottom of the Dean. C.L.C. is hardly an industry in the sense that they manufacture

anything. but they have a world-wide distribution. from here in Alresford, of the Christian literature of evangelical publishers. Their warehouse has one of the largest stock of all varieties of bibles in the country.

They have centres throughout the U.K.. but the British Headquarters are in the Dean. Overseas centres operate all over the World, mostly in former colonial territories. but also in Argentina and Japan. over 130 countries are being reached through mail order service to missionaries.

Public or private appeals for funds are not made. The organisation relies on voluntary funds, and no salaries are paid to their dedicated workers.

ETCHMASTERS LIMITED

The elegant etchings on copper made by this firm in Prospect Road Will be familiar to everyone in Alresford. It all began in a converted cinema where the first Etchmaster was produced using a zinc bucket which is said still to be extant. The etching was a perfect miniature reproduction of a medieval Church brass. which is still on display in the office. This unique product was later to enjoy acceptance and praise from all parts of the globe.

Four years later a brand new studio and factory was built to satisfy the ever growing demand for Etchmasters. Skilled artists and technicians painstakingly recreate the Wonderful work of the old master engravers as well as that of contemporary artists by an etching process and polishing technique that is exclusive to Etchmasters.

One etching of the Fulling Mill hangs on the wall of a house in Colorado Springs. In fact they go all over the world and the firm has been a member of the International Export Association since 1971. They export to the West Indies. the Arab States, Japan, France, Denmark and Sweden. A large number of etchings were done for the World Wild Life Association. Import taxes have hindered exports to Australia, New Zealand and U.S.A. Prices in U.S.A. have been high and the firm feel they have not yet got the right representatives. However it is interesting to know that they did 5000 copies of Lionel Barrymore's sketches.

SEAGLASS LIMITED

Makers of glass reinforced plastics in Prospect Road, this firm is a subsidiary of Westerly Marine Construction Limited of Waterlooville with offices in Hamble. Here are constructed the hulls of boats made from G.R.P. and these can be seen in the yard awaiting transport. In G.R.P. fine filaments of glass are introduced into plastic to toughen it. G.R.P. is widely used for such products as luggage, fishing rods, furniture, car bodies and for boat hulls as here in Alresford. The glass fibres are extremely fine and yet have a tensile strength as great as that of high quality steel. To make use of this strength the fibres must be combined with plastic which forms a strong bond between the fibres. As can be imagined the construction of this composite is highly skilled; - yet it is done in Alresford and some of the resulting hulls find their way to Europe and the States. One such hull, a Bowman 57, skippered by John Ridgway, sailed on a round-the-world race. Smaller racing yachts are moulded and these have won various championships.

POLYBUILD LIMITED

This firm at the end of New Farm Road are manufacturers of horticultural tunnels and multispanns, and have been established for five or six years. To the uninitiated these tunnels are polythene covered greenhouses. The frameworks are constructed of basic hoop and stanchion sections which are fabricated in this Alresford works from high quality British structural steel, and the frameworks are then covered with polythene sheets. A special sheeting has been developed in association with I.C.I. designed for excessive sunlight conditions met in the Middle East.

In the U.K. the greenhouses are extensively used in the growing of tomatoes, lettuces, cucumbers and other vegetables. A multispan system consisting of several adjacent tunnels has been developed with the cooperation of a number of nurserymen for the professional grower. Additional uses for the tunnels are as low-cost all purpose buildings, and as such have been used for timber drying and even storage of dynamite!

Desert and agriculture are generally incompatible but greenhouse technology is changing that. In cold climates greenhouses are used to provide heating, but in hot and humid regions they are used to create controlled environment. The combination of heaters and evaporative cooling pads under temperature controlled automatic systems means that all kinds of crops can be grown in hitherto unusable areas. Saudi Arabia is growing salad crops in this way, and Qatar has achieved self-sufficiency in several varieties of fruit and vegetables.

Polybulk export their tunnels to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Tanzania, Libya, Kenya and Madeira.

ALRESFORD CRAFTS LIMITED

This firm has its headquarters in the Town Mill at the bottom on Mill Hill. The present building dates from 1893. An additional floor has been added with a new mansard roof and the upper storeys adapted as living accommodation. The firm also owns the Station Mill, originally designed as a seed store. Here are made the well-known soft toys and dolls. A carding machine combs and straightens the fibres of non-inflammable synthetic material used for stuffing the toys, and the bodies are cut out in fabric by machine. The first floor is devoted to making and dressing dolls, On the opposite side of the workroom are the "Dress-makers" making under-garments, dresses and bonnets. The heads, lower arms and legs are made of china in the Ceramics Department housed in buildings near the Town Mill on the site of an old tanyard. The large number of soft toys are produced on the next two floors. On the second floor the animal bodies are sewn together by machines. On the top floor under the rafters the bodies are stuffed and the remaining seams sewn by hand. The toys then descend a long chute to the ground floor, are taken to the Town Mill for inspection, and packed for children and collectors all over the world.

To return to our casual visitor. If he has followed us thus far, he must be amazed at the variety and number of industries in Alresford and the above survey is by no means complete. He will be equally astounded to find that their products go to every corner of the globe. Perhaps even the people who live in Alresford are not aware of all these enterprises in remote corners of the town, and of their world-wide connections.

The number of employees in these industries is not greats totalling about 170, but 72% of these are local people. It is to be hoped that the measures proposed in the 1981 Budget to give help to small industries will enable the firms mentioned to expand further. Perhaps some new industries may be developed. All of which will, hopefully, increase the number of Alresford people employed by them and enable them to expand still further the world-wide contacts of modern Alresford Industry.

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