

WORLD FARMING LEANS ON ALRESFORD (THE STORY OF GASCOIGNE, GUSH & DENT)

By
BRIAN GUSH

The well-known Alresford company, Gush & Dent Ltd., was incorporated in 1948 and then operated from small premises in New Farm Road as repairers of agricultural machinery but by 1950 this activity gave place to manufacturing tubular steel farm gates. During the ensuing six years the Company developed a wide range of tubular steel farm equipment covering all types of animal penning, feeding equipment and animal handling structures, including also every variety of penning for cattle markets with which the great majority of cattle markets in Britain are now equipped.

These products were marketed with very considerable success and the Alresford factory was trebled in area in 1954 and doubled again in 1956 when it also became apparent that vastly more business could be secured if factories were established nearer to all the farming communities throughout Britain. Successively, factories were set up at Penrith, Leek, Torrington (Devon), Perth, Llandybie (South Wales) and Bury St. Edmunds and a small similar business in Lincolnshire was acquired. Premises at Bramdean were purchased and a factory set up there to develop the manufacture of steel pallets for industry.

Nor did the Company lose sight of the possibility of developing similar activities in Europe which it inaugurated by the formation of a French subsidiary with a factory at Le Neubourg in Normandy.

Meanwhile the Company Headquarters remained firmly based in Alresford and became established in a new office block which it built in Jacklyns Lane where it remains to this day.

By 1962 it became clear that to continue the rapid expansion of the Company's business it would be desirable to have the backing of a powerful organisation able to provide almost unlimited financial support and Thomas Tilling Ltd. were invited to acquire a majority shareholding which they duly agreed to do, subsequently acquiring the remainder of the equity in 1967. The day-to-day running of the business was left in the hands of the existing Board of Directors and Thomas Tilling appointed one of their Directors as Chairman — an arrangement which worked to everyone's satisfaction.

In 1968 the founder and Managing Director for 20 years, Mr. G.B. Gush, retired and was superseded by Mr. Peter Bell who had been recruited to the Company some three years previously with this appointment in view.

Shortly after the change, Tillings acquired the business of Geo. H. Gascoigne Ltd., a public company well known as one of the largest manufacturers of milking machines and parlours in Europe as well as other products in tubular steel which would considerably broaden the range of agricultural equipment already offered by Gush & Dent Ltd. The two companies were then amalgamated under the name of

Gascoigne Gush & Dent Ltd., with several subsidiaries each controlling one aspect of the company's business.

Building on the firm base of the amalgamation of these two very successful companies Mr. Bell has, with the fullest support of Thomas Tilling Ltd., broadened the base of the Company both as far as its products are concerned and the countries in which it operates.

The Company's agricultural interests now offer a complete range of equipment and services to the livestock farmer throughout the world. The Company can provide all the farmer's needs for buildings and equipment, whether his interests are in dairy farming, beef rearing, pig farming, sheep and goat farming or poultry rearing.

The Company's engineering interests, which have been developed from handling and storage equipment, now include Kee Klamps, castors and wheels, castings, cradle runway systems, dock levellers and many other products.

The Company also has distribution interests in both the United Kingdom and Overseas, selling not only the Company's own products but also other engineering, horticultural and agricultural sundries.

The Company, with its 29 subsidiary companies operating from over 50 locations in 12 different countries, now employs over 3,000 people.

The major operating company in the agricultural sector is Gascoigne Gush & Dent' (Agricultural) Ltd., whose main interests are in milking equipment, the original Gush & Dent tubular equipment and silos and slurry storage tanks. The Company's biggest interests:, in agriculture are in France where four French companies now outsell the original British company by 2 to 1. The major companies in France are Gascoigne S.A. and Soco Melotte ; S.A., both concerned with selling the Group's complete product range, and Samas S.A., a large manufacturing company in Eastern France making slurry spreader tankers.

Gascoigne companies in Spain and Holland market the complete range of agricultural equipment in those countries. The Company has two other major subsidiaries, A/S Funki of Denmark and Gascoigne Sudstall of Germany, manufacturing between them a complete range of piggery and poultry equipment and slurry pumps. Other companies operate in Austria, Switzerland, the U.S.A. and Canada.

The Company's major engineering subsidiaries are Gascoigne Engineering Ltd., Gascoigne Industrial Ltd., Revvo Castor Company Ltd. and Hilmor Ltd. The original industrial factory of Gush & Dent at Bramdean still plays an important role in the engineering activities of the Company.

Not only does the Company carry out very considerable business through its own overseas subsidiaries, it has very important export markets throughout the world. Major export orders have been secured in Japan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Hungary, Korea, Bulgaria, USSR, Libya, Algeria, Nigeria, Sudan, Egypt and many other countries. The Company's equipment is used by Kings and Presidents throughout the world and the company is -privileged to be the holder of the Queen's Royal Warrant.

Perhaps we citizens of Alresford, quite a number of whom have played a part in making the Company successful, may take pride in the fact that this world-wide concern started from quite small beginnings in Alresford and, despite its growth into a major international business, is still controlled from those offices in Jacklyns Lane.