

ANYTHING
ANYWHERE
ANY TIME



100
YEARS
OF THE
HILLS
FAMILY
BUSINESS



by Anne Hayes





A 100-year adventure

OVER the past couple of years we have been thinking about how we might celebrate the coincidence of the new millennium with the centenary of our business. In doing so, we came to realise how little of our history we actually knew. Such information as existed was dispersed between the (increasingly jaded) memories of some of the more senior members of the family. So it seemed a sensible step to ask Anne Hayes, as a respected local journalist, to pull together all the strands and to take a “warts and all” look at how we have arrived where we are today.

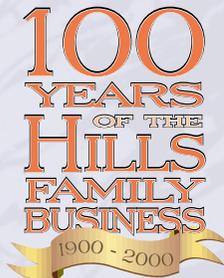
We have published the outcome not because we think this family business is any greater or more unusual than any other but because we think it is fairly typical of an era in which enterprise was built on adventure. It is, therefore, a story which we think is worth the telling.

The business which my grandfather founded a century ago has certainly been an adventure, evolving from brick manufacture through transport, to gravel, waste and property with the odd excursion into areas such as tyres, farming, ready-mixed concrete and builders merchants. “Anything, Anywhere, Any Time” was certainly an appropriate motto.

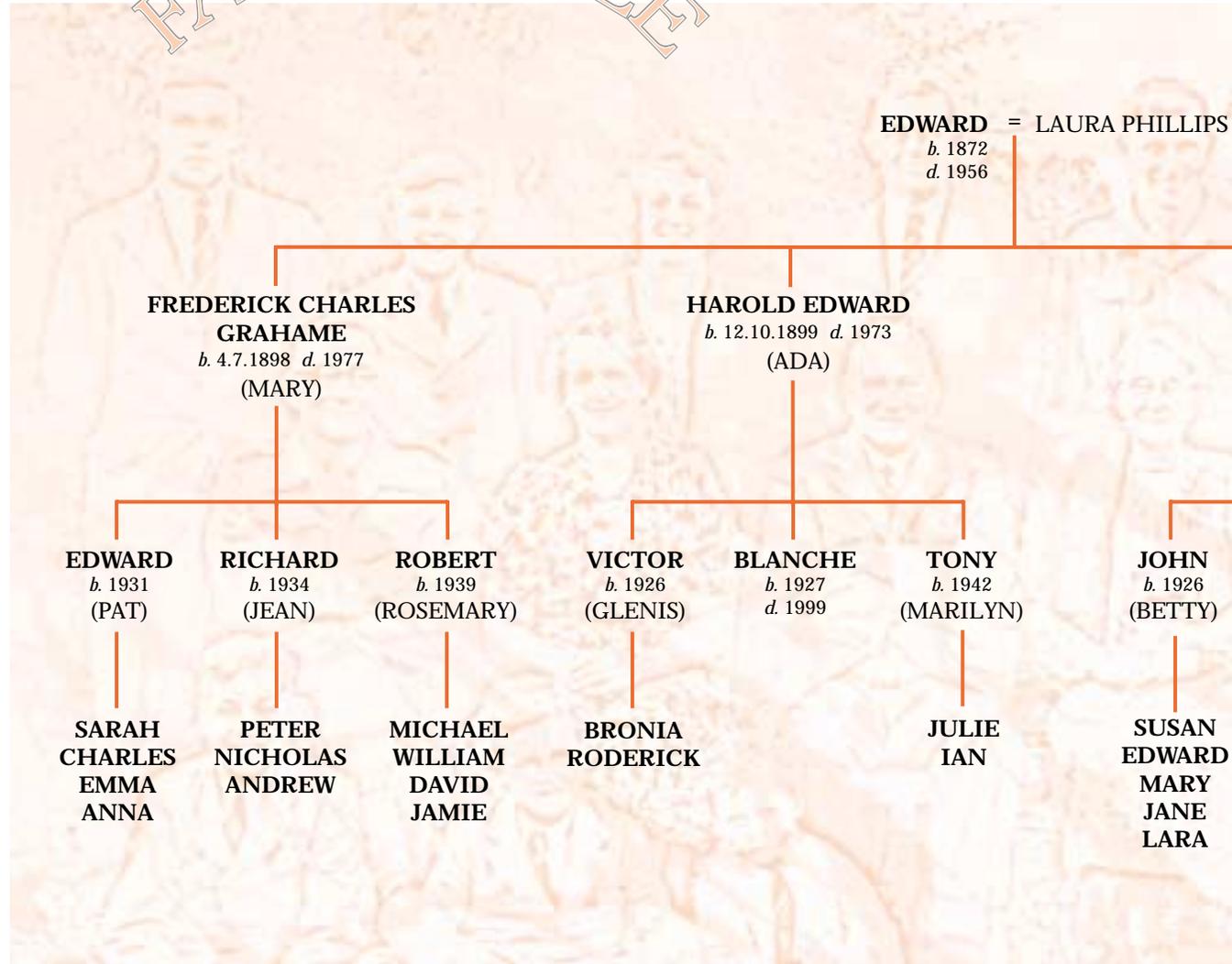
There have, inevitably, been good times and tough times but I would like to think that the spirit which brought the company into being is still burning strongly. If that is the case then it is due in no small part to the colleagues who have committed their careers to the Hills family business. Whether in the warmth of the boardroom or on a much less hospitable site, our thanks go to all of them.

We move into the new millennium as a strong business now focused very firmly on three key activities – aggregates, waste and property. Our greatest asset in those or any other sectors which fate takes us into over the next 100 years will undoubtedly be our people.

Robert Hill
Chairman



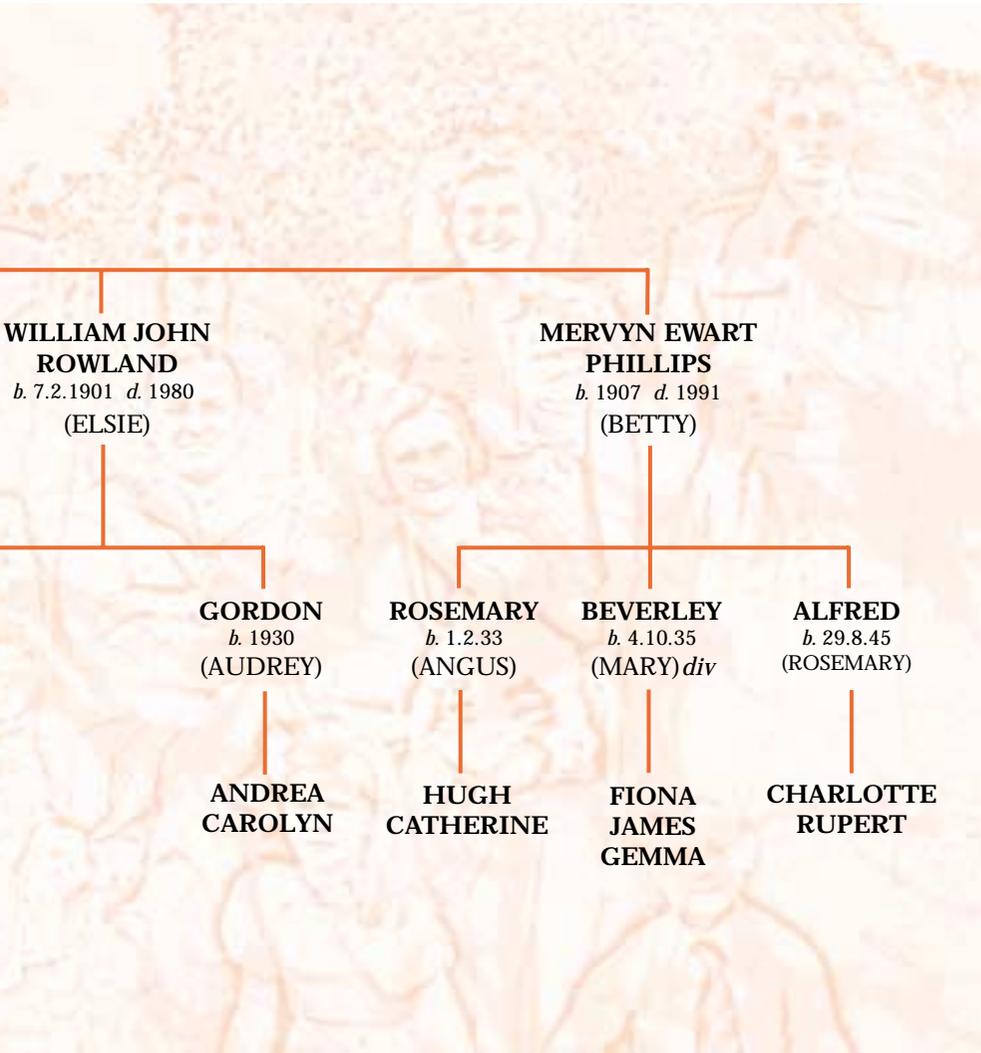
FAMILY TREE



Author's acknowledgements

The opportunity to research and write the Hills company history – of which this publication is a summary – has been a fascinating one. As I hope these pages demonstrate, the Hill family and the loyal team they have gathered around them have made an indelible mark on local history and the landscape.

My thanks go in particular to members of the family and to past and present members of the Hills management team and workforce. Others who have helped me greatly include the Rev Dr F Fuller of Stratton, Swindon; Mrs Olive Boulton; Geoff Cottle;



Roger Brown of the Cotswold Water Park Society; the Cirencester and Swindon reference libraries; the Swindon Society; the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England; and the Natural Environment Research Council.

I am grateful to Alfred, Beverley, Robert, Tony, Edward, Richard and Victor Hill, Cyril Hares and to everyone who entrusted treasured pictures to me. Barrie Hedges of French Jones was responsible for the original concept and Malcolm Henwood for the design.

Anne Hayes

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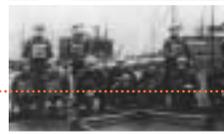
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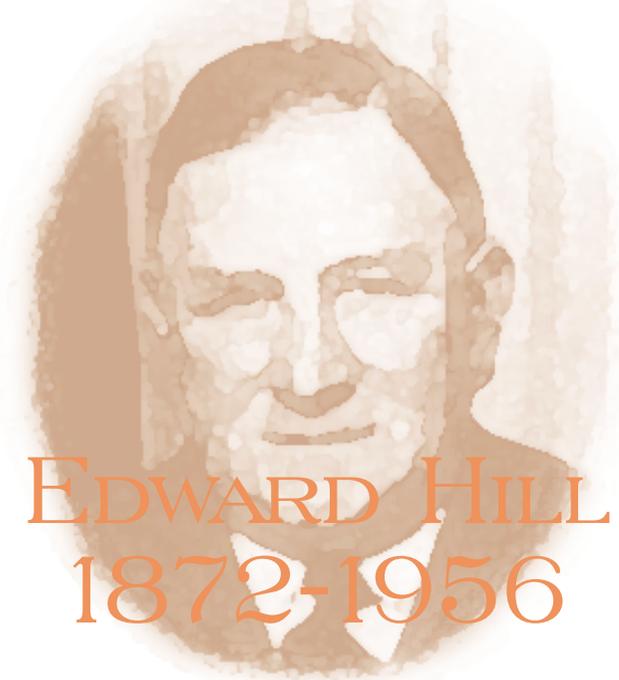
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A NEW ENVIRONMENT

FAMILY FOUNDATIONS



EDWARD HILL
1872-1956

THE Hills work hard and play hard. For the last 100 years those two characteristics combined with energy, enterprise, affability and confidence have been the hallmarks of the Hill family in business.

It's a special blend which has enabled the family to weather the ups and downs of business life and emerge united and successful into the second millennium.

Family feeling is strong among the Hills but by no means exclusive. Non-family members have always been valued within the business. It's that astuteness and generosity of spirit which has kept the company afloat when many other businesses have foundered on a desire to "keep it in the family".

Based for most of the last century in Swindon, the company has grown from a one-man business into a multi-million pound concern



A Hill family portrait taken in the late 19th century. Edward is second on the left, back row

Photo courtesy of the Rev F Fuller



Edward Hill (centre) and his four sons, from left to right, Grahame, Rowland, Mervyn and Harold



Edward Hill in 1918

based in Marlborough. From making bricks, it has progressed through a multiplicity of building operations to focus on aggregates, waste disposal and recycling, and house building.

The Hills family business began with Edward Hill, a strong enterprising individual. His leadership and shrewdness propelled the company on its way to today's success and a future in tune with the new millennium.

Report in the Swindon Evening Advertiser of Friday, August 24, 1956

The annual Clay Pigeon Club dinner, at the Kings Arms, Swindon, 1951. Left to right, Mervyn, Rowland and Grahame Hill are the Moonrakers – a much enjoyed feature of Hills events and family gatherings



Through its independence and integrity and the loyalty of its workers, the family has provided the foundations of many buildings and landmarks in the region today – from motorways to the Cotswold Water Park.

Throughout, the family has produced capable sons who have carried the company into the fourth generation. Edward Hill fathered four sons, three of whom were to play a major part in the business – Grahame, Harold and Mervyn. All lived and breathed the business, and when they weren't doing that they were playing cards, tennis, bowls, music, duck shooting or doing their bit for the community.

Their sons – Victor, Tony, Beverley, Richard, Robert and Edward – played and still play their roles in the business, along with executives the Hills were unafraid to promote and trust. Men like Harry Boulton, Stan Goss, Don Howard, Alan Pardoe and others.

Rowland, Edward's third son, left the business during the war to pursue a farming life at Broome Manor. The family retained its interest in farming and country pursuits for many years.



Preamble.



The Agreement made this nineteenth day of August One thousand nine hundred and ten Between The Great Western Railway Company (hereinafter called "the Company") by Thomas Henry Rendell their Chief Goods Manager and Agent of the one part and Edward Hill of Burton in the County of Wilts Brick Manufacturer (hereinafter called the Licensee) of the other part Whereas the Licensee has requested the Company to ... and to allow him to construct and lay down the ... in hereinafter described for the convenience of the traffic to ... Works of the Licensee situated at Burton aforesaid and the ... to comply with such request upon the terms and ... **Now therefore it is hereby mutually**



THE first member of the family to establish himself in Swindon was Edward Hill, the company founder's father who came from near Weston-super-Mare. His family had long been involved in brick and tile-making and with boats, in Somerset.

Edward settled in Stratton St Margaret in the middle of the 19th century, and married a local girl, Emily Iles. He gave up hauling coal in barges and worked as a master craftsman at Stratton Potteries. Later, he managed three local brickworks. The family became Primitive Methodists and eldest son, William, was well known as a preacher.

The bold spirit of the family was clearly demonstrated by Edward's second son, also Edward. In 1891 at the age of 19, he and a friend spent two years in the United States, working for a time in a brickworks – an episode which was to influence much of his later thinking about brick production.

There is a family legend that Edward worked as an engine driver for the Great Western Railway. What is certain is that soon after his return from America he took on the management of the Transfer Brickworks in County Road, Swindon.



Stacking the continuous kiln at Purton, left to right, R. Bastin, G. Woolford, A. Kinnet and K. Zeleck

Purton Brickworks, run for many years by Harold Hill and later by son Victor



By 1900, at the age of 28, he was working for himself at the Morris Street Brickworks in Rodbourne. Six years later Edward acquired three brickworks – at Kingshill, at Badbury and at Purton. By then trading as E Hill, he never looked back.

The Purton works was to become the main brickworks of the growing company. In the years before the First World War Edward made an agreement with GWR for the use of rail sidings close to the claypit to speed the despatch of his products. Other improvements were made and Purton villagers soon had a new landmark – a 100ft brick chimney.

The 1914-18 war proved a significant period for the company. As well as stimulating increased brick production, it led to diversification and the start of Hills fleet of lorries, both steam and petrol-driven. After the war, Edward began to dig gravel in South Cerney; prospecting for gravel was to become a major part of his life. He also bought or leased a stone quarry at Stratton, Cirencester.



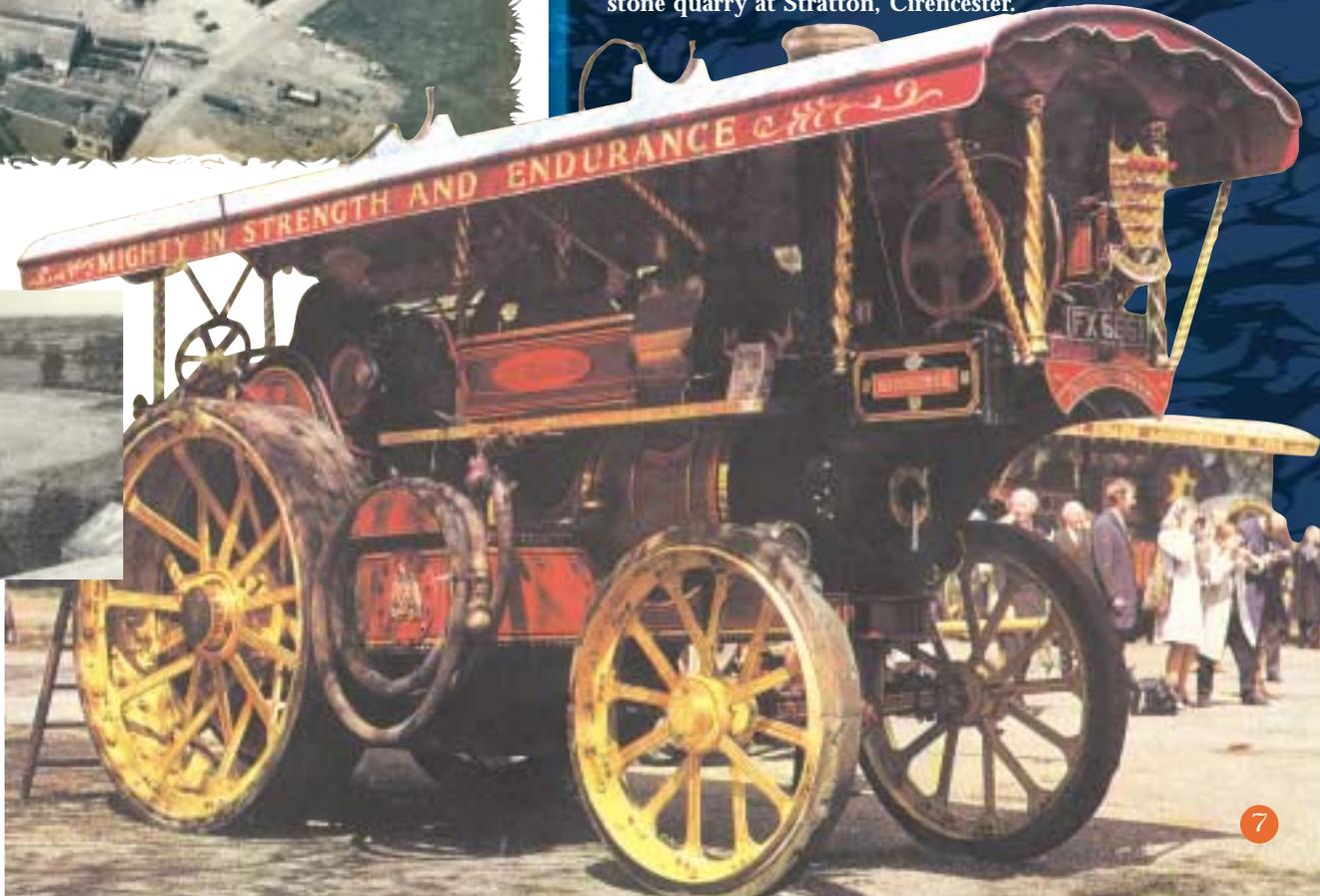
The clay pit at Purton



The Earl Kitchener



Chimneys at Purton



£1,000 Gift For Town's Spitfire Fund

Swindon Father and 4 Sons' Handsome Contribution

A GREAT impetus has been given Swindon's Spitfire Fund by the donation of £1,000 by a Swindon father and his four sons, one of whom obtained a commission in the army and has now attained the rank of captain. The donors are Messrs. E. Hill and Sons, the well-known product concrete manufacturers.

Town F.C.: his four sons are Mr. F. C. Grahame Hill, Capt. Harold E. Hill, Mr. W. J. Roland Hill, dairy farmer, and Mr. Mervyn E. P. Hill.

The cheque for £1,000, which was handed to the Mayor of Swindon (Coun. E. H. Hastings) by Mr. Raymond Thompson, director and general manager of Swindon Press Ltd., on behalf of the donors, sends the town's fund up to a total of £2,140.

HELPING THE FORCES

In making this splendid contribution to the town's effort, Mr. F. C. Grahame Hill observed that the members of the family felt that anyone in a position to pay practical tribute to the fighting forces for their magnificent work should do so in the utmost of their ability. They were happy to make this contribution and thanked Providence for what might be regarded as the favourable position of the nation at the end of a year's warfare.

"To assist his worship the Mayor's fund seems the most practical and useful way of giving expression to our views, and we hope that other Swindon firms may be moved in a similar manner."

LITTLE GIRLS' "SHOP"

Another inspiring example of practical patriotism is provided by three little girls, Betty Johnson, of 11, Broad-street, Swindon, and Rhona and Ema Bell, who to-day handed the Mayor £1 ls. for the Spitfire fund. This money was raised by means of their own creative industry and readiness to make sacrifices.

They busied themselves making and selling dolls' clothes for which purpose they have erected a stall in their back garden. They have also sold most of their own toys.

Donations for the Spitfire fund should be sent to the Mayor of Swindon, Civic Offices, Swindon.

FIERCE ATTACK ON FRENCH COAST

Flashes From Boulogne to Dunkirk

Throughout the night and early this morning British bombers made extensive attacks on the French Channel ports. The attacks stretched for miles. The flashes of the exploding shells were easily seen stretching from Boulogne to Dunkirk, and the heavy tramp of the explosions was felt over this side of the Channel. The enemy put up a heavy anti-aircraft barrage and firing on the bombers but without effect. The bombs kept dropping for considerable periods of the night along the whole stretch of the coast line from Boulogne to Dunkirk.

The bombardment was by far the heaviest and fiercest of the last attacks made during the past few nights.



Kingshill Home Guard c1941.
Mervyn Hill is fourth from left, front row
Photo: D. Bedford/Swindon Society



Swindon ARP men with a display of household air raid shelters c1942.
The shelter was erected by E Hill & Sons
Photo: A. Beaney/Swindon Society



THE war years in Swindon are brought vividly alive through the diaries of Grahame Hill, Edward's son, for many years managing director and chairman of Hills.

As in 1914-18, the conflict ushered in a period of frenetic activity for the partnership, as it then was, consisting of Edward and three of his sons – E Hill & Sons – based at Kingshill.

The family was at the heart of wartime activities

in Swindon and the surrounding area. Owing as they did a large number of lorries which were requisitioned by the Army, the family business also received a liberal petrol allowance for essential activities such as hauling gravel and timber for new aerodromes, excavating foundations for wartime factories and supplying air raid shelters.

The brothers set up the Kingshill Home Guard which most of the employees joined and which occupied much of the time of Grahame and

The Kingshill or Hills Home Guard show off a new gun at the tennis courts at Okus



Photo: D. Bedford/Swindon Society

How the Swindon Evening Advertiser told the Spitfire story on its front page on September 6 1940

The Hill family in 1943 with four members in uniform. Back row, fifth from left, Mervyn Hill; back row, far right, Victor Hill; second row left, Grahame Hill in Home Guard uniform and second from right, Harold Hill



off Tunisia, but survived to return to Kingshill after the war.

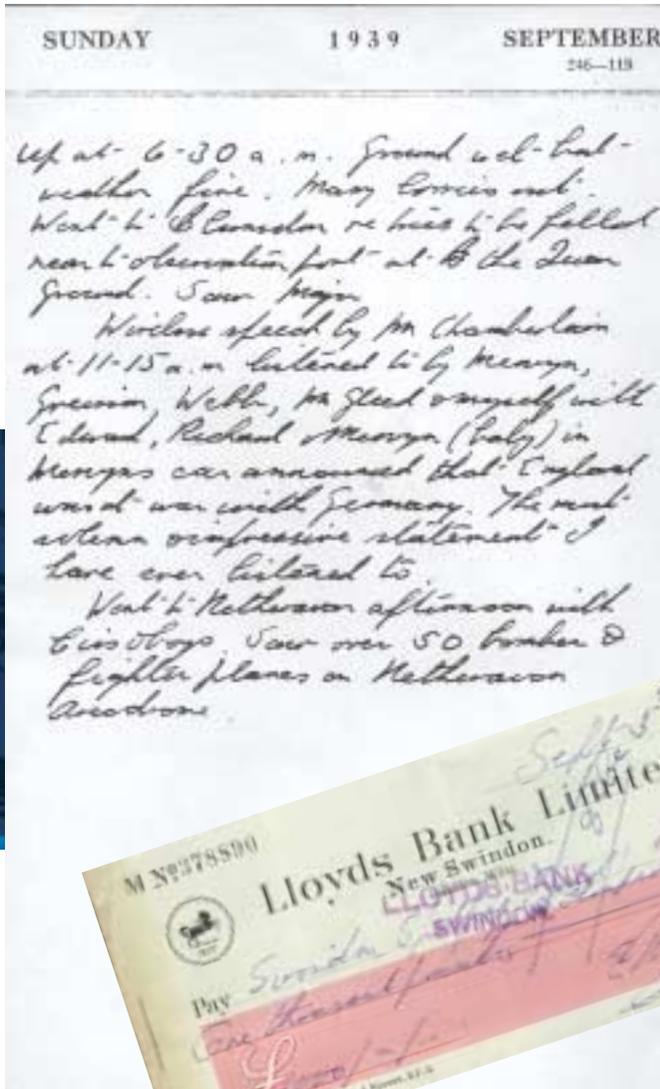
Most aspects of living under wartime conditions are revealed in the diaries – the air raids, Churchill's speeches, the shortage of sweets, of silk stockings. Mervyn was kept busy helping the company to make do and mend and keep costs down by extending the working life of vehicles and machinery.

The business acquired Barton Court at Kintbury, near Newbury, later to become very important for Hills during the war. There is a diary note for D-Day June 6, 1944, in which Grahame says he and a friend were inspecting the roof of the new property when they saw

glider planes leaving from local aerodromes for France.

In May 1945, a party to celebrate the end of the war was held in Hills field at Okus, Swindon.

Extract from Grahame Hill's diary for September 3 1940 – the declaration of war: Grahame kept his diary throughout his life until his death in 1977



Mervyn – Harold was on active service with the Army in Europe. Their patriotism led to the donation of a £1,000 cheque from the company to the Swindon Spitfire Fund in September 1940.

During this time, gravel digging and prospecting began in earnest at Newbury and both Harry Boulton and Stan Goss, two memorable names in Hills lore, joined the company. Another employee, Peter Carver, was reported shot down



Beverley Hill as a schoolboy helping with earthmoving on a USAAF tractor at Hills site at Lower Way, Thatcham, Newbury, 1945

The cheque which the Hill family sent to the Swindon Spitfire fund in 1940

TRAMPING AND HAULING

ANYTHING
ANYWHERE
ANY TIME



In the 1960s Hills offered a HGV training service at Badbury brickworks. John Parker instructs



First prize - a 1920s photo of a Hills lorry taking part in a carnival procession displaying the firm's motto at the time: Anything, Anywhere, Any time. Harold Hill is on the right

IN the years after the war, the Hills transport fleet flourished in terms of its diversity, size and efficiency. Former drivers remember the period with mixed affection and astonishment at how hard they worked.

By 1957 the business, which had become a limited company three years earlier, operated around 100 goods vehicles. A London transport base was set up and two companies were formed - Hills Haulage (Swindon) Ltd and Hills Haulage (London) Ltd.

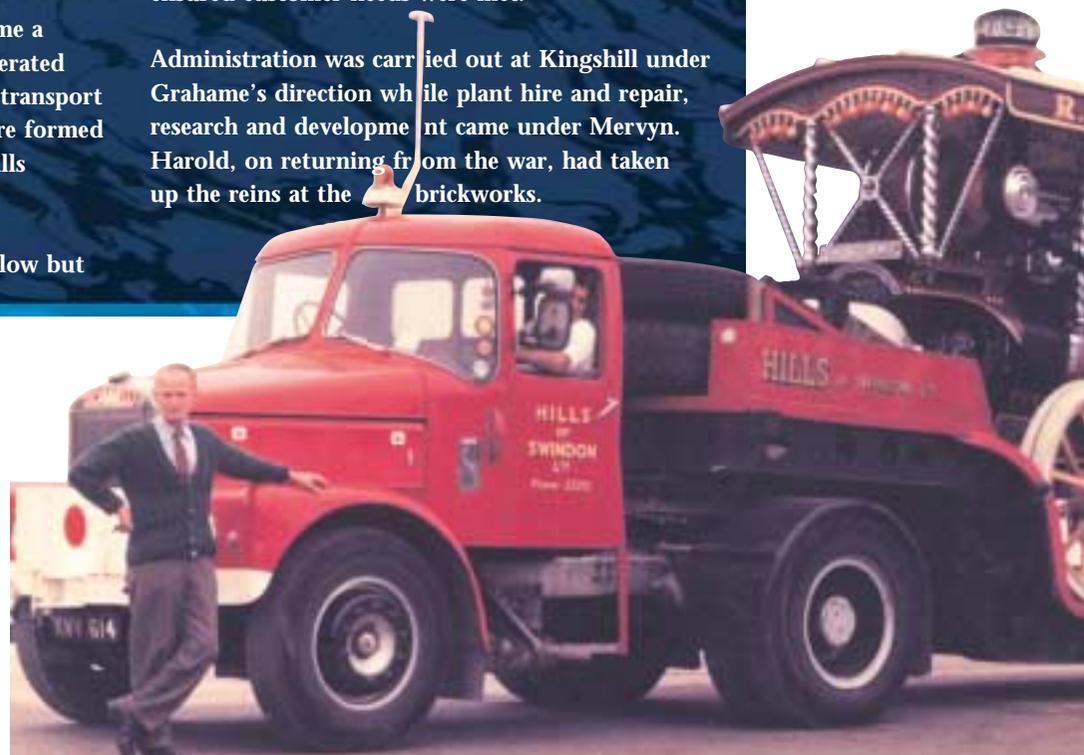
Growth between 1954 and 1969 was slow but

investment continued in plant, vehicles and gravel land. Sand pits at Calne and Newbury; gravel pits at Lacock, Newbury and South Cerney; precast concrete works at South Cerney; block-making at Purton; and brickworks at Purton and Badbury ensured customer needs were met.

Administration was carried out at Kingshill under Grahame's direction while plant hire and repair, research and development came under Mervyn. Harold, on returning from the war, had taken up the reins at the brickworks.

Earl Kitchener, used by Hills in the early part of this century and pictured here in scarlet glory when owned by the showmen, R Edwards & Sons Ltd

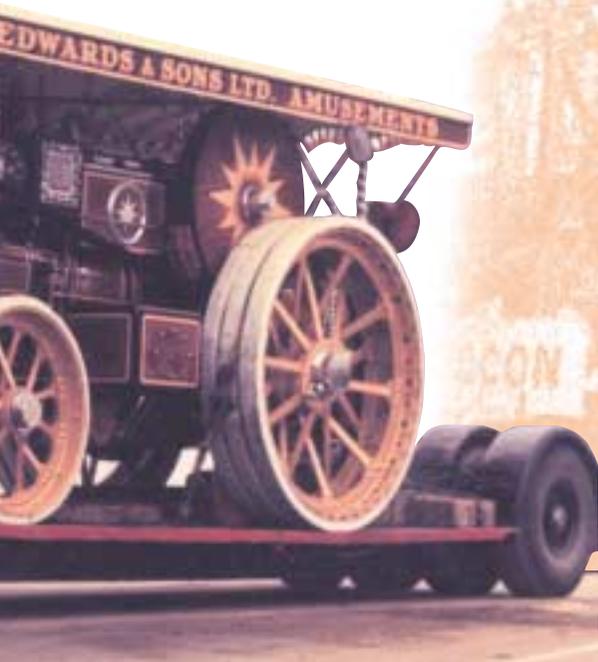
Photo taken by Roy Thomas of Swindon Camera Club



A Drott excavator being lowered into the tunnel beneath Swindon Station in the 1960s. Driver Cyril Hares has vivid memories of operating this machine as trains thundered by overhead



Background picture shows mobile crane at work erecting a steel framed building in Regent Circus, Swindon, in the 1960s



*Hills driver George Sanger and the 1938 Bedford lorry he drove for many years
Photo lent by his son, Brian Sanger of Chiseldon*



An early brick delivery vehicle from the 1920s. This four-wheel drive lorry had a mechanised container for tipping its entire load



Cyril Hares clearing a site at Moredon, Swindon, ready for new housing, 1963



This period saw the birth of Hills Tyre Services Ltd (Tyresoles), which supplied reconditioned tyres for the fleet and customers. Another associated company, Vaculug Southern Services Ltd, provided retreaded tractor tyres. Richard Hill was the leading force behind these two successful subsidiaries.

In 1960 some of Hills vehicles were fitted with two-way radio by Mervyn, a radio enthusiast from his youth. The installation was ahead of its time but could create havoc as Grahame noted in his diary: "Radio communications causing chaos in front office".

When the concept of ready-mixed concrete burst on the building scene in the 1960s, Hills became involved and subsidiaries were formed – Mixconcrete Swindon, Mixconcrete Newbury, Mixconcrete Devizes and Mixconcrete Bristol.

A feature of the years immediately after 1945 was the employment by Hills of German prisoners of war and later of Italian workmen, some of whom stayed on in Swindon to form the nucleus of the town's present day Italian community.



THE QUEST FOR GRAVEL

A Ruston Bucyrus Excavator with grab loading an "S" type petrol Bedford 6 ton tipper at the Broadway Lane North Gravel Plant, South Cerney



AGGREGATES have been the base of Hills activities throughout its existence. Digging and prospecting for sand and gravel were constant preoccupations of the Hill family.

The early memories of their offspring are often of sitting in the back seat of Dad's or Grandpa's car and being driven off to South Cerney or Newbury or to a spot in the middle of nowhere while the adult Hills prodded the ground or bored holes.

At the start of the new millennium, the Cotswold Water Park is the most important gravel extraction site in the South West. The lakes formed by gravel digging have become nationally important for wildlife and for sport.

Hills has been active in the area since 1919 and was probably the first mineral extractor to dig there closely followed by another Swindon firm, Bradleys. Hills still operates in the water park where it has substantial aggregate reserves. Extraction began seriously during the war years when the first lakes were being formed.

Frozen gravel lake at South Cerney in the winter of 1962-63



Harold's son, Tony, who joined the business in 1960 recalls that the first large lake, Lake 17, was wet-dug by dragline and the aggregates loaded onto barges. Tony was at South Cerney during the severe winter of 1962-63 when the ice on the lake was so thick cars could be driven across it. Later, dry digging was introduced, water was pumped out of the pit so the operator could see what he was digging.



Early processing of sand and gravel



An early dragline excavator at work

As soon as the lakes were created they were used for fishing or boating. Lake 17 was let to the Bristol Hydroplane Racing Club and there was fishing and jetski racing on Lake 21. Hills decided to run the leisure activities as part of the business and in 1971 the Cotswold Marina Company was formed.

Despite the great activity of the 1960s, the decade was an unsettled and worrying period for Hills financially, although the coming of motorways to the Swindon area proved a boon thanks to the high demand for sand and gravel. Robert, Grahame's youngest son, joined the company after qualifying as a chartered accountant and became managing director in 1968.



Cotswold Marina, once a gravel pit, Broadway Lane, South Cerney

EXPANSION



Builders merchants counter, Kingshill, Swindon



Lorry from Bristol Depot



Builders merchants yard, Kingshill, Swindon



Sage & Down, Worle Quarry

For easy REFERENCE In your BUYERS or
SITE OFFICE

STOCK ITEMS
AVAILABLE FROM THE
KINGSHILL
Builders Merchants Depot

HILLS OF SWINDON
Kingshill,
Swindon,
Wilts.

A non-family member of great significance to the company, Don Howard, was appointed director and general manager in 1969.

His appointment ushered in a period of expansion and of increased profitability. Together with Robert, he also changed the management ethos – the main thrust was that future family members should be content to receive dividends rather than jobs.

Unprofitable operations were improved or sold. Brickworks were closed, at Devizes in 1968 and at Badbury in 1970 but the land was retained. Accountancy procedures were improved; the company divested itself of the long distance haulage companies; plant hire was reorganised and the servicing workshop was scaled down.

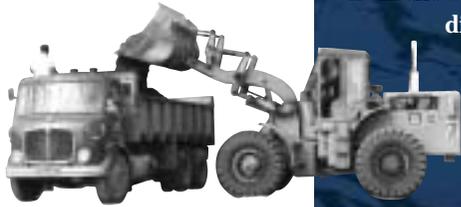
from building sites. Instead, investment was made in more specialised waste disposal facilities – skips for hire.

Perhaps the most important theme of the 1970s was expansion. It began with the purchase of T F Coke (Cheltenham) Ltd, then T S Thomas & Sons Ltd of Chepstow and Tintern. Sage & Down Ltd of Worle, near Weston-super-Mare. Lulsgate Quarry, south of Bristol, was also bought to supply roadstone materials.

The purchase in 1975 of Broadmoor Brickworks in Cinderford, was to prove a catalyst. The brickworks bought liquid propane gas to fire the kilns direct from Shell at a vastly cheaper price than Hills was paying at Purton where its supplier was Calor Gas.

Gas tanks were installed at Purton and gas bought direct from the oil companies. In 1976, Robert persuaded two independent distributors to buy their own bottles to be filled by Hills. These were Handygas, of Swindon, and Sungas which distributed gas in Bristol. Hills went on to buy both in 1978 and 1979. By 1987, following the setting up of a South Wales depot and the acquisition of Everygas Ltd in Devon, the Handygas empire stretched from South Wales through the Thames Valley to Devon.

Two years later, multi-national oil companies were competing to buy companies such as Handygas. BP made Hills an offer it couldn't refuse.



Using the dry digging method, a tractor shovel can dig and load in one operation



The non-investment in transport marked the end of the traditional "muck away"

Working at the Lulsgate quarry face near Bristol



Shareholders and directors at the 80th anniversary dinner at the Goddard Arms Hotel, Swindon



Hills bought Handygas in 1978



ALL AROUND THE HOUSE

Swindon building chief dies



MR GRAHAME HILL, chairman of Hills of Swindon, president of Swindon Amateur Light Operative Society, and keen bowls player, died on Wednesday after a game of bowls.

Mr Hill, 78, lived next door to the Westcot Bowls Club premises in Bowling Green Lane, Swindon, where he took part in Wednesday's game. After returning to the pavilion, he was taken ill and collapsed.

He was chairman of Hills of Swindon Ltd, builders' merchants, founded by his grandfather at the turn of the century. He had been president of the Bowls Club for 12 years and was a county player. He had been president of SALOS ever since it was founded more than 25 years ago.

He was a past president of Swindon Rotary Club, the Rotary District and the Swindon business and professional club Probus.

He had been deputy chairman of Swindon magistrates for a number of years and was chairman of Swindon Old People's Housing Society.

He was also a Freeman of the City of London and member of the Worshipful Company of Carmen. He was a director of the New Swindon Building Society and a member of the Institute of Directors.

He leaves a widow, Mrs Mary Hill, and three sons. Mr Robert Hill is managing director of Hills, Mr Edward Hill runs Hills farming company at Kintbury, and Mr John Hill is joint managing director of an associated tyre company and a remould sub-

THE major profit contribution in the 1970s and 1980s was earned by Hills Building Supplies. After the war the "heavyside" division was developed and carried a wide-ranging stock of drainage pipes, bricks, cement, timber and other materials.

The operation was based at Kingshill and had gradually evolved over a long period as builders brought in waste to dump in the worked-out claypit so that the area could be filled and levelled and storage sheds erected. All had been done in a spasmodic fashion as, thanks to the diversity of Hills operations, drivers and other employees could always be found work filling in the yard if there was a slack period.



Hobsons Choice Opening: from left to right, Victor Hill, Eric Morecambe, Edward Hill, Glenys Hill, Tony Hill and Lyn Hill



Hills of Swindon's new showroom. Peter Ball, brick sales manager, sorting bricks in the brick library

Gold Award scheme gets under way

Let Hills help plan your kitchen

If you've decided you would like your kitchen to look like a modern one, in this case, Hills will send an expert planner to talk to you in your own home, where the planner can see what you need and suggest the best.

Whether you plan to have your kitchen at home, or in a service, it's completely free of charge for our obligation to help you. Throughout our Improvement Centre simply to provide it free of charge, every time when you visit us.

Chief planning designer
Hills Kitchen Advisory Service is headed by our own Mr. Richard Hooley, our chief planning officer. Come along to Hills and tell him about your kitchen as it is now, and how you'd like it to be. He'll advise you on not only how you can achieve it, but also on the make of kitchen units that would best suit your needs, and also on how much it is likely to cost you.

In your own home
Explaining the layout of your kitchen, taking measurements, and more.

Standard Cupboards, Lengths 4' to 10'
Flat Shelves, 4' x 4", 8' x 4' x 1", 4' x 1"
Cupboards, 8' x 4' x 1", 8' x 4' x 1", 8' x 4' x 1"
Gutter and fittings.
Square Hole and Louvers, Red and Buff.

Hills HOME IMPROVEMENT CENTRE

ERIC MORECAMBE COMES TO SWINDON FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER!

Eric Morecambe is to appear at Swindon - at Hills!

It's a great cover-up.

BERGER EMULSION

NEW to YOU

Front cover and pages from the free Hills Home Improvement Centre newspaper

Go to work on an Egg - with a pot of paint

LETTER FROM OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dear Reader,

The policy we are adopting at our new Hills Improvement Centre is old-fashioned, but we think it's one that will give you down well with most people today. Our aim is simply to keep our customers happy.

How do we hope to do this? By offering a choice of products that is wider than any other you'll find in this area. By keeping our prices down to the minimum on all lines, not just a select few. By employing highly qualified sales people who will not only serve you with a smile, but will also be ready to advise and help you if that is what you want. And by encouraging you

Asbestos
Standard Cupboards, Lengths 4' to 10'
Flat Shelves, 4' x 4", 8' x 4' x 1", 4' x 1"
Cupboards, 8' x 4' x 1", 8' x 4' x 1", 8' x 4' x 1"
Gutter and fittings.
Square Hole and Louvers, Red and Buff.

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2' x 7'
crate,
mix, Mason
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12" wide. By
7 1/2", 9 1/2" dia
and Powder
in lengths
Gutter and
fittings
Caskin
Granite Chippings
Granite Setts
Gully Gratings
Galv. Angle Beads

Plain and tapered.
1" to dust, 1 1/2" to dust, 1", 1 1/2", 1 3/4" clean.
6" x 4" in random lengths.
Large variety of sizes.
8' lengths, for plastering, etc.

Galv. Plaster Stop
Beads
Gyproc Cove
8' and 10' lengths.
10' and 12' lengths. Adhesive for same.
Mark if S/S in stock.

Quarry Tiles
9" x 9", 8" x 8", 4" x 4", and fittings.

PERSIMMON HOMES

HILLSIDE PARK SWINDON

Nursery Sheets
Plastic Gutterings
Plastic Soil Pipe
Paving Slabs

PERSIMMON HOMES

The Windsor



COUNTY PARK
BUILDER'S MERCHANTS

Office/Workshop/Storage Units
£1,500/1
2,300/1
FOR SALE or TO LET

Hills

Brochure front cover for County Park

- Chains (Door)
- Curtain Wire
- Door Furniture
- Door Pulls
- Drawer Pulls
- Handles
- Hooks, Staples
- Holdfasts
- Bullocks
- Generals
- Postal Kn
- Pulleys
- Sash Co
- Springs
- Stops
- Ventila

HILLS OF SWINDON LTD
Kingshill Swindon Wiltshire

STOCK ITEMS Available from the Kingshill builders merchants depot

For easy reference in your Buyers or Site Office

A brick library was built there in 1971, containing 400 types of facing bricks. There was further expansion in 1976 when a second depot was opened at Brislington.

The company, always alert to current trends, was in the vanguard of the booming DIY home improvement era with the launch in 1977 of the Hills Home Improvement Centre, again at Kingshill. This first venture into the retail trade, was opened by comedian Eric Morecambe.

Everything was stocked here from a tap washer to a bathroom suite as well as items for the garden – in all a total of 22,000 light and heavyside items were available to the public.

Grahame Hill died shortly after the opening in May 1977 but lived to see the company regain its profitability. His death brought to an end any involvement in the business by the sons of the founder. Mervyn had retired in 1972 to live in Gozo, Malta, and Harold had died in 1973. Robert became chairman of the family company at the age of 38.

Thanks to the hard work of this elder generation the company was bequeathed a substantial land asset base.

In the 1980s Hills put the merchandising operation up for sale after attempts to boost it had failed due to market forces.

The builders merchants was relocated to County Park in Shrivenham Road and bought by Keyline. Patio Centres closed while Hobson's Choice moved to County Park, which was retained as a property investment. Hills moved its headquarters from Kingshill to Marlborough in 1990 into offices on the old Ailesbury Arms Hotel site.

The sell-offs coincided with a market boom which revealed the potential of the Kingshill site. In 1991, a joint venture was negotiated with Persimmon Homes and the last house was sold in 1997.

HILLS DELIVERY SERVICE FREE WITHIN 25 MILES

We're where we've always been - and open to everyone

Free Parking

TIME FOR VALUE Hills HOME IMPROVEMENT CENTRE

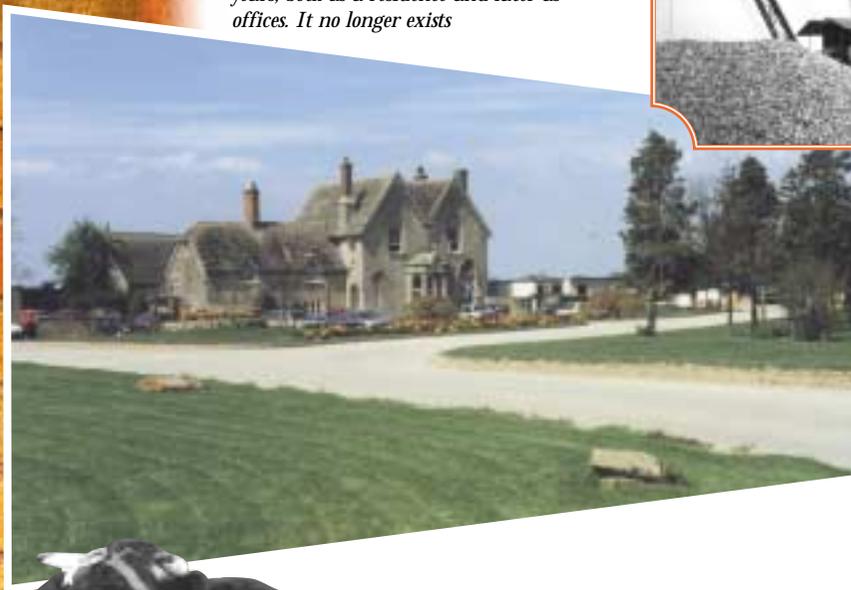
RANALAH

HILLS OF SWINDON LTD

Builders Merchants
Kingshill Swindon Wiltshire

GOODBYE AND HELLO

This lovely old house close to Purton brickworks was used by Hills for many years, both as a residence and later as offices. It no longer exists



The former Hills gravel site at Thatcham has become an industrial estate



The end of Badbury brickworks

Islip Roseman – championship winner from Hills Farms



This Bellis & Morcom Marine steam engine was bought in 1953 and used at Purton Brickworks until 1977 when diesel engines were installed. It is to be renovated as a millennium project and will be put on display in Purton



A NEW direction which was to lead to the company's greatest prosperity to date was taken in 1968 when Hills purchased its first skip vehicle – the basic tool of waste disposal. Soon the company had acquired a fleet of skips run in conjunction with plant hire.

Holes in the ground, particularly worked-out clay pits, had always been valuable for filling with builders' rubble and, as house building increased, for the disposal of household waste.

Compactor on Volvo F6 skip vehicle, Swindon, Brunel Centre



Beverley Hill, mainly involved with planning applications and licences, also helped the company realise the potential of skips



Other, and older, parts of the business came to an end. Hills Farms Ltd – Barton Court at Kintbury, High Penn Farm at Calne and West Marsh Farm at Purton – was wound up in 1984 when its managing director Edward Hill, Graham's eldest son, retired.

One-by-one the brickworks closed, squeezed out by the large brick-makers operating nationally. Devizes went in 1968, Badbury in 1970 and finally, Purton in 1977. The Thatcham gravel site, near Newbury, became an industrial estate and 110 acres of land were reclaimed at Badbury. Purton proved a valuable landfill site and a source of impermeable clay for projects such as lining the restored Kennet and Avon Canal. Today, the Purton site also houses an industrial estate, Hills transport depot and a recycling centre.

As the financial restrictions of the 1980s pushed the company overdraft to unacceptable levels, the workforce was reduced at the Kingshill workshop. Welford pit, near Newbury, was sold, as were Broadmoor brickworks, Hills Readymix Ltd, Sage & Down Ltd and the Thomas group of companies.

Hills decided to increase aggregate reserves and boost the building supplies side. Two major gravel sites were bought in 1984, at Shorncote and Faringdon. But the push on the merchanting side, all based at Kingshill, came to nothing.

Alan Pardoe became managing director in 1992, with Robert Hill as chairman. Under their direction, the company has concentrated on a narrower but profitable range of activities. Today, family ownership and management go hand-in-hand, with the shareholders knowing more about the business than perhaps they ever had before.

FRAMING TODAY'S BUSINESS

Transport of newly excavated aggregates for processing



Head office in Marlborough

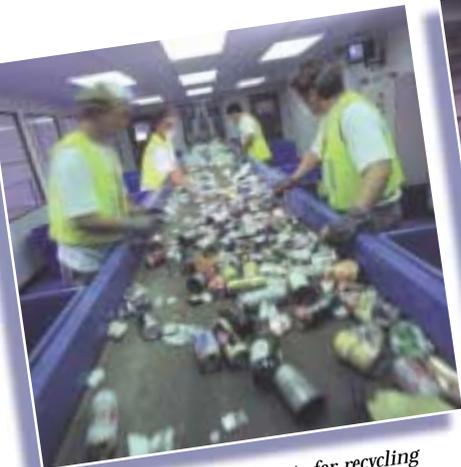


SINCE 1992, the business has experienced a new style of management. Managers are allowed to manage, memos are few but a lot of talking goes on. Family members – the shareholders – are kept fully up to date with what is happening.

In 1997, the company changed its name to The Hills Group Ltd, shaking off the by then inaccurate identification with Swindon. Wiltshire is still the main hub of activity as are, to a more limited extent, Gloucestershire, Berkshire and Oxfordshire. With the purchase in 1998 of Roger Constant & Co, Hills

expanded into Worcestershire.

Its prosperity is based on three strands – aggregates, waste disposal and property. With the change of title the company was restructured around these three spheres of operation. The main trading company is Hills Minerals & Waste Ltd, with trading divisions, Hills Aggregates and Hills Waste. Hills Property Ltd operates the other principal trading company via its house building arm, County Homes, and contracting side, Olivemead Developments.



Separation of waste for recycling



The Hills waste recycling centre at Compton Bassett



Metals baled and ready for recycling



A customer-orientated waste management and recycling service



High standards of housekeeping are maintained on gravel sites



Quality properties built by County Homes

Managing director Alan Pardoe meets the Wiltshire Waste Warrior, figurehead of the company's recycling initiative



A typical landfill operation

Hills Aggregates, one of the largest regional suppliers of sand and gravel to the construction industry, runs seven quarries on six sites: Shornote; Latton (a joint venture with Aggregate Industries); Stourport, Worcestershire; Tubney Woods, near Oxford; Bowling Green Farm, Faringdon; and Compton Bassett, near Calne. In addition, large aggregate reserves are held by the company, mainly in the Cotswold Water Park.

The group's second major sphere of operation is waste management. It runs a comprehensive waste and recycling business covering a wide swathe from Chippenham to Newbury and Salisbury. In 1996, the company's careful approach to waste disposal and land restoration was rewarded by a 20-year contract, worth £55 million, to handle the disposal and recycling of waste from most of Wiltshire.

A major feature of the contact is Hills commitment to recycling and reclamation. By the end of the fifth year of the contract, 2001, the group has to have found ways of dealing with 25 per cent of waste by means other than landfill. To achieve this a major recycling facility was constructed at Compton Bassett, opened in 1998 by MEP Caroline Jackson.



A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Robert Hill and Alan Pardoe join Prince Charles for a visit to an organic farm project supported from landfill tax

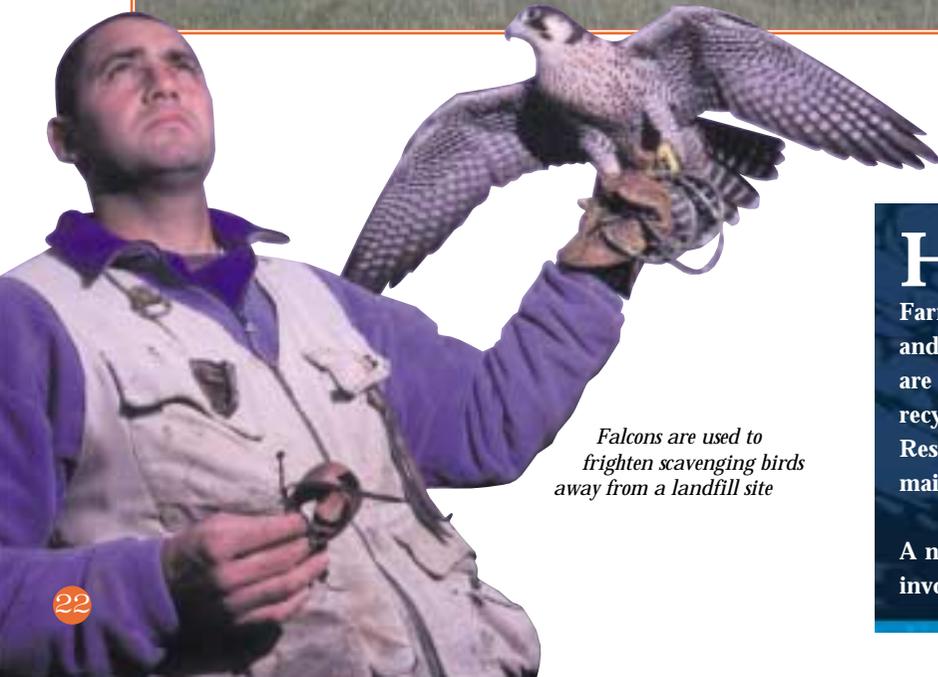


Cows graze on restored farmland



Returning the Purton landfill site to agriculture

Strict environmental controls are maintained on all sites



Falcons are used to frighten scavenging birds away from a landfill site

HILLS operates landfill sites at Barn Ground, near Ashton Keynes; Chapel Farm, off Blunsdon Hill, Purton brickworks and Tubney Woods. Space is precious and Hills are at the forefront of waste minimisation and recycling initiatives in its operating area. Restoration and after-care standards are maintained at a high level.

A natural follow-on from waste disposal is Hills involvement with green issues, particularly in

the Cotswold Water Park. The Cotswold Water Park Society, which manages the park, endorses the company's responsible approach to extraction in aiding the evolution of an attractive new environment.

For each site the company has a five year after-care programme. After this, the site becomes eligible for an industry award and to date Hills has four major awards for restoration work in the water park.



Traditional methods such as reed beds help to protect water quality on a waste site



A serene restoration in the Cotswold Water Park

Celebrating a Sand and Gravel Association restoration award



The group has taken full advantage of legislation which allows it to allocate funds, which would otherwise go to landfill tax, to local green causes such as the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, the Cotswold Water Park Society, Purton Community Hall and Compton Bassett church. Other sponsorships include the regeneration of part of Braydon Forest, Purton; the Swillbrook nature reserve; and upgrading canal locks and the pumping station at Wilton.

The third and most recent plank of the business meant a significant diversification when Hills went into the construction business. True to founder Edward's dictum not to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, or compete with its customers, the family had never been builders. In 1998, however, it bought out builders Olivemead Developments and today, under the name County Homes, has sites under construction throughout Wiltshire and is aiming for a £8 million turnover by 2001.

Since focusing on three core activities, the company has expanded greatly and is now better placed than ever with 15 years still to run of the Wiltshire Waste Contract, a booming house building side and excellent reserves of aggregate and landfill space.

There are no plans to sell or to go public and a representative of the next generation, Michael, Robert's son, has already entered the business. The future looks rosy.



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