

Beardmore clean-up to be finished in a few weeks

Only about half an acre is left of the original old Beardmore settling beds, and this half acre will be completely dried out and filled within a few weeks.

This work comes ahead of schedule—with a Ministry of the Environment order, which gave a deadline of November 1, 1975, for two old sludge beds which covered seven and a half acres to be filled in.

Believed to be a main source of obnoxious odor, the huge filter beds have been covering acres of land behind the tannery for as many years as anyone can remember. They used to be an integral part of the old method of waste disposal.

However, four years ago Beardmore built its own sewage treatment plant, much the same as the town of Acton system. The town could not accept Beardmore effluent in its system.

All Beardmore sewage is disposed of right on the 400 acre property. (Only two washrooms in the plant, including the industrial building, are connected to town sewers!)

Filter beds are no longer needed, explains John Greifeneder, but they remain most down into their depths of over 30 feet in some places. It was from this concentration of old sludge that the objectionable odors emanated.

particularly on hot nights of summer. Wind direction also played a part in the problem. Mr. Greifeneder, superintendent in charge of upper leather tanning, gets the company's accolades for his planning of the project now nearing its conclusion.

"He's been the real driving force behind it," his associates say. The plant and its systems have been researched and studied and checked by inspectors from different governmental departments many times. As a result a work order was issued by the Department of the Environment and the plant has been keeping pace with the order since.

Beardmore president Peter Dunham expects the work will be finished ahead of schedule.

For two years, trucks have been carrying loads of fill to the bleak site of the last two

open filter beds—the ones destined to be filled. It was simply a matter of filling over the top, either. The moisture was too deep for that.

Deep holes were dug in the settling beds so the moisture could drain from the bottom—as much as 50 gallons a minute, some days. As the liquid ran from the bottom through gravel filters, the top gradually dried out and caked like the surface of a desert.

Then, Beardmore waste, garbage such as trees and fill were carted in load after load and dumped to bring up to the level of the land.

A huge heap of garbage awaits what officials call happily "the last push," when the change has ceased.

Topsoil is being placed over the settling beds, and grass grows on most of the acreage rehabilitated already. As early as 1969 some of the old beds reverted back to nature.

No. 2 settling bed (Barney's pond) is already drained and covered. No. 4 bed (Somerville pond) is completely overgrown. No. 3 bed (Dival pond) was scraped, cleaned and reshaped to make the new aeration pond.

The No. 1 bed is the last one to be filled. It covers seven and a half acres when the program began. All these filter beds were in use together at one time years ago. Now only an estimated one per cent of this area remains open.

The "black water" ponds will remain. They contain the bark liquor—salt water and spent vegetable tan liquors—drained from the tanning process which is pumped from the plant in a separate pipe line.

The system of disposing of the "black water" has been modified this summer by Beardmore. New terraces have just been built.

These long shallow ponds,

constructed by heavy equipment operators, will be flooded with black water. The bark extract will decompose with the soil, making good top soil. The previous system had a series of furrows separated by ridges and men had to work constantly to make sure the earth ridges did not break. This system had been in use for many years.

The new method will do away with this hard outdoor work. Beardmore has a full tertiary treatment sewage disposal plant, similar to the town of Acton's.

The company has asked the region of Halton to accept their effluent into the proposed new Acton plant. It has been suggested the town take 250,000 gallons, seven days a week.

The region turned down the request, but Halton Hills council has asked the region to reconsider.

The treatment plant at the tannery, in use for three years now, processes 300,000 gallons of effluent five days a week, plus 50,000 gallons a day of black water.

If the effluent went to the town plant, there would be no more spraying on the fields south of town.

Cost is an important factor in the company's hope to transfer to a new expanded town plant. Many acres of Beardmore land are tied up in spray fields. Maintenance cost and taxes are important factors.

Primary disposal is housed near the plant buildings, with a pump house and huge tank which divides the effluent into two parts. The liquid drains up over the top of the tank, and the solids sink to the bottom.

Two pumps send the liquid to the aeration plant—the next, secondary stage.

The solids go into a nearby building into a sludge press. Here they are compressed



Aerial view showing the effluent treatment system at the Beardmore plant.

before being dumped. This solid waste is 80 percent lime and contributes to good growing soil. The secondary treatment

plant consists of a pump house and huge outdoor pool with surface aerators.

From here the liquids go to the tertiary system, which is the spraying in the fields which is often visible from the highway.

The town's tertiary stage also involves spraying.

No spraying is done in the winter, during which time the effluent remains in three huge winter storage bowls. Storage capacity is 30 million gallons!

Spraying is also only done when the grass is growing since there is high transpiration through the grass.

Beardmore, tanners since 1844—have had to contend with waste disposal problems from that time.

Tanning was this town's second industry, after the inevitable mill on the stream. The first tannery was built here about 1840. The Beardmore family, then in Milton, took over the tanning business here in 1865.

Their name has been closely associated with the town since and thousands have

been employed there over the decades. (This year's tax bill amounted to \$147,517.53.)

The smell of the plant, wackclothes and the filter beds is a familiar one.

The company located here because of two necessities—hemlock bark and good water.

The hemlock bark is all gone and imported materials are used in its place: quebracho from South America, and chestnut from France. The extracts are shipped here in large quantities.

But there is still plenty of good water, drawn daily from the company-owned lake, from their own springs, and from the town.

Fairy Lake, which the company owns and allows the town to use, is 80 acres of water. It could supply the company with 500,000 gallons a day.

Recent locating of a well at the side of the lake caused fears the lake water level might drop, and this is a problem not yet resolved. Company-owned springs

could provide 250,000 gallons a day, and the town 200,000 a day.

Total water needs are about 400,000 gallons every working day. But water consumption was down rather years ago than it is now.

Waste disposal problems at the plant have sometimes hit the headlines in the country's daily press.

One costly experiment took the form of a disaster.

Effluent had been collected in a pond when a dam broke, sending the liquid coursing down Black Creek, causing flooding and pollution. Experimentation on that pond is long abandoned, the

city now completely overgrown with brush.

Quarries in other ponds are the property and to be filled.

There are 60 employees at the tannery industry, 340 in production and 50 in office and supervisory capacities.

It is one of the most diversified tanneries in the world producing shoe leather, leather, upper leather, power transmission belting and specialty leathers.

Upper leathers include handbag and glove leathers, and patent.

Specialty leathers become harness, bridles, shoe and handbag linings.

Barrett urges mock disaster test for EMO

Oakville Mayor Harry Barrett thinks Halton's Emergency Measures Organization should stage a mock disaster.

He was commenting on a report from Chief Administrative Officer Ernie Reid. The report asked for council endorsement of an organizational chart that sets out the various roles of individuals and agencies in the case of a peacetime disaster within the region.

Mayor Barrett recalled calling EMO for assistance a few years back. "That was a greater disaster than the disaster we had in the first place," he said.

Barrett told how the truck was immobilized and useless because it had no battery and no current licence plates.

He urged Reid to organize a mock disaster to see how efficient the operation is. "Are we playing toy soldiers or will it work? Personally I think it's a waste of time."

Barrett said the organization should either prove its worth or be scrapped.

Mr. Reid explained a group of 12 people met for an hour and a half each month to plan the organization. He noted there wasn't a lot of time being spent on EMO but insisted the organization could be of great benefit in time of need.

Halton's Administration Committee endorsed the plan as presented. It goes before council today.

14 The Acton Free Press, Wed., August 20, 1975

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