

NEW WORK IN OLD MILLS

HALIFAX: DEAN CLOUGH INDUSTRIAL PARK

1. Ernest Hall OBE began life in the depressed '30s in a home so poor that the best room in it was only lit by a skylight. His father was unemployed. But his family retained its dignity. He says of those times 'I saw life full of opportunities'. Today two careers later, those of concert pianist and millionaire developer, he is the most extraordinary 'Park Keeper' and 'business engine' in Britain.
2. The Dean Clough factory was the pride of Halifax: the biggest local employer, using one and a quarter million square feet of factory space and producing renowned carpets. After 150 years it failed through the '70s and in 1981 it closed.
3. When Ernest Hall bought Dean Clough in 1983 the town prophesied doom and failure for his idea. Today 700,000 square feet are used by 200 new businesses.
 - the remainder (550,000 square feet) is contracted to be used
 - the businesses employ 1,500 people
 - hopelessness has been turned into confidence and enthusiasm.
4. The recipe in Halifax includes several useful ingredients for our inner city policy pudding:
 - a. Government money need not be the answer. Ernest Hall has received no grant aids or tax relief, though filling a

handful of the factory units are some MSC and Government Enterprise agencies.

- b. A bright, positive approach which includes an imaginative cross-fertilisation with the arts gives confidence, boosts morale and helps investors and bankers believe in a project. Comparing the bright colours and picture-hung walls of Dean Clough with the dismal and depressing Government so-called Enterprise Agency in Cleveland is to compare success with failure.
- c. Attitudes are everything. Mr Hall said to me 'I had sufficient motivation and confidence. I wanted to affect how people thought'. He has done that. A 24 year old man employing his father and grandfather on his printing presses had gone from nothing to a turnover of £100,000 in 3 years. He agreed when Mr Hall said 'Build up self-esteem and confidence and ability follow it'.
- d. Economic success can go hand in hand with less crime. When the factory was taken over in 1983, vandalism was rife. Windows had to be replaced every few weeks. Today even the protective guards have been taken off the windows. Vandalism has been beaten.
- e. A collection of enterprises can be a self-generating and organic group. Among the 200 businesses are architects, designers, business resources, even a travel firm, a wine bar and restaurant feeds the larger manufacturing and commercial businesses.

You would find this concept a winner. We recommend a regional visit. Now we know what can be done we would be negligent not to encourage its repetition.

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