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► by Tom Collins

A CENTURY NOT OUT

Book. Vicon: 100 Years of Agricultural Machanisation by Arthur Nutbey. Hardback. 72pp. £23.95. Published by Consus Media. Available from Classic Tractors, Low Green Farm, Hutton, Driffield, East Yorkshire, YO25 9PX. Tel: 01377 270209

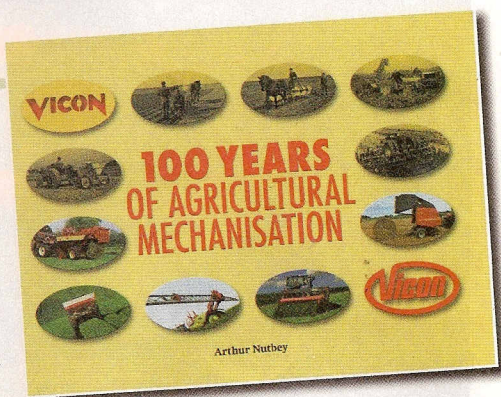
Vicon is a major player in agriculture and a brand of the Kverneland Group, but its origins can be traced back to the start of the 20th Century and farmer's son and threshing contractor Hermanus Vissers.

His sons developed his business after his death, first building threshers and straw balers that impressed the contractors of Holland with their smooth running and clean results.

When World War two arrived, imports of machinery stopped so the brothers expanded their manufacturing and thrived because farming had become so important during the conflict.

It was at this time that a teenage errand boy came up with the company name. With his finger he wrote VICON on the forge's chimney hood (Vissers Construction Nieuw-Vennep). He was rewarded with a silver coin.

The full story of Vicon is told with plentiful illustrations in this book by Arthur Nutbey who worked for the company for 25 years in Nieuw-Vennep and has made good use of his old contacts there to produce the definitive history so far.



The book is divided into 13 chapters, each dealing with a single aspect of the story. One, for instance, tells us about the development of the Vicon-Lely side rake which first brought the company to international attention and developed into the Acrobat, of which more than a million have been sold.

Another chapter deals with innovations in beet harvesting and tillage, there's another on fertiliser spreaders (including a photo of the original home-made spreader that inspired Vicon's developments) while another details Vicon's journey into electronics, which started with its HP 1600 high density baler in 1979.

But this book was published in honour of the company's centenary so, as well as the development of agricultural machinery, Arthur considers the development of the company and its journey to becoming part of Kverneland.

Vicon's history of innovation and current standing makes this an enjoyable read for anyone interested in agricultural machinery.

ANCESTRAL TRAILS

DVD. Land of Our Fathers; A modern arable farming story. 95 minutes. £16.99 +£1.75p&p. Available from Second Sight productions, tel: 01621 817114.

This is the story of how Lodge Farm on the Norfolk/Suffolk border came into the hands of the Barker family and how the young Barkers have turned it into an environmentally friendly business.

The farm is interesting in itself as it formed part of a big estate that once held a Tudor mansion that the family has gone some way to excavating.

The driving forces in the business now are cousins Patrick and Brian who initially looked elsewhere for careers because they reached the age for farming when it was going through one of its downturns – this time driven by foot and mouth.

Farming was in the blood, however, and the lads' mission now is not only to run a farm that is friendly to wildlife, but to explain how

to do it and how it makes business sense.

Their way of cutting hedgerows, for instance, not only provides a varied wildlife habitat, it also saves them labour and fuel costs. And they are not afraid of new technology and equipment – they run a modern fleet and are preparing for GPS next year.

This is where hippy dream meets hard-nosed business and it seems to be working – perhaps it is the blueprint for the future, as they believe it is.

There is ample information in this DVD to help you decide for yourself.

