WHEN Mr J. Bland Short set up his blacksmith's business in Whitburn in 1797 it was in a 15th century building in East Street, with beams from the Spanish Armada.

Now, five generations of the family and an apprentice later, Shorts of Whitburn, now highly regarded sales and service specialists in grasscutting and horticultural machinery, have moved into £140,000 purpose-built premises on a sea view location in Mill Lane, opposite The Lodge public house.

Built on the site of the former Whitburn Colliery canteen, the new premises have a comprehensive workshop for professional grasscutting machinery and another for the domestic market.

There is a spares department, reception area and showroom, and spacious office accommodation.

When there was no son to carry on the family business, Mr Tony Chambers, who started as a 15-year-old apprentice with the firm, bought it out when he was 24.

And as a result of his expansion policies, the firm now employs eight technicians, and caters for the grasscutting needs of 90 North-East golf clubs, in addition to looking after local authorities, cricket clubs, colliery welfare schemes and the owners of domestic lawn mowers.

The firm are agents for Toro, the American grasscutters firm, and the staff have been on manufacturers' courses in places including New York, Chicago and Minneapolis.

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Established 1797
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