

## **Mike Davies, MD Air Services Tributes**

### **Professor Roy Brown**

I knew Mike for over 25 years and worked with him on some specific aspects of bracken control in Wales for about 4 years in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He had a deep commitment to his clients as a human being, as well as a contractor/advisor. My endearing memory was the high esteem the farming community held him in with many regarding him as a close friend and ally. He was aerial bracken control in Wales for many years and I will remember him as an affable human being, a good friend of Welsh upland agriculture and a committed and capable colleague.

### **Dr Roderick Robinson**

Mike was a valuable friend, colleague and mentor over many years.

In 1975, there were some 44 aerial-spraying contractors in the UK, mostly using fixed-wing aircraft. Few helicopters were then employed, being more costly to run but far better for work on hill land where most bracken is to be found. Mike successfully defended his operational territory in Wales against all-comers in a highly competitive business. He knew his customers well and the peculiar needs of the Welsh sheep-farmer that he always defended on a national level. He worked successfully in some of the hilliest parts of Britain, often remote and with limited access.

I shall never forget his words that, 'The greatest enemy of a sheep is another sheep': meaning that clearance of bracken on a sheep farm is always of benefit by providing more grazing for a given flock - and therefore better, healthier grazing, without necessarily increasing the size of that flock. Mike was a constant source of friendly advice and professional assistance. In the 1980s, on Coity Common, he conducted some of the first helicopter trials using RD Raindrop nozzles, as a means to reduce drift and increase spray recovery on the target. The results of that work set a precedent that he himself adopted thereafter and remains in-place as a standard for aerial use of Asulox today. I always regretted that Mike was unable to participate in the national spray-drift trials with helicopters in 1997. A trial site had been set-up in Wales at great effort and expense but, that morning, the exhaust fell off the helicopter designated for the work (illustrating the sort of issues that can ground an aircraft under CAA rules). It took all day to effect a repair and Mike's longstanding pilot, Peter Boitel-Gill, eventually arrived on-site with a full load ready to spray. At the very moment of touch-down, late in what had been a day of perfect weather, the wind suddenly changed direction by 90 degrees with all the test-gear now in the wrong orientation - impossible to correct before nightfall - and the work had to be abandoned and everyone sent home.

Mike was an enormous help in providing a constant flow of independent advice to the Chemical Regulations Division of HSE, especially in recent years whilst negotiating the current Operating Standards and other regulations concerning aerial spraying in the UK. This helped to avoid the ban on aerial spraying imposed by the EU and to establish the current procedures for continued use of Asulox in the UK, despite the EU's continuing refusal to re-register the product. Regrettably, the EU continues to impose its intransigence in these matters and Mike's

quiet words of authority will be sorely missed in the years to come - especially his wishes to keep our uplands a vital, productive element of British farming.  
Our thoughts are with Mike's family, especially his wife Beryl who was always present in the background with her vital, steady hand on the business accounts and the bottom line.