

## Merrie England in Toronto

The aristocratic lifestyle of mediaeval rural England can now be enjoyed in Canada, thanks to an unusual and ambitious venture by a British building company, R. Durtnell & Sons Ltd. of Brasted, near Westerham, in Kent, reports *Canada-United Kingdom Trade News*, April 1978.

The company plans to sell a limited number of genuine antique oak-framed houses and barns for construction in Canada.

The first impressive example — a massive 45-room mansion on a two-acre site in Toronto — is now rising above the banks of the River Don. The house, twin oast roundels and garage block, which incorporates staff quarters, has been designed in the traditional English rural style. The builders shipped two ancient oak structures from England, one certified as dating from 1655, which form the main structural frameworks of both the house and the garage block.

Each beam, column, stud and rafter was carefully treated, crated and re-erected in a manner as faithful as possible to the original style. The roof has genuine antique hand-made clay tiles from England, and genuine antique components have been shipped wherever possible.

### Grand scale

As an example of the blend of ancient and modern techniques, the oak window frames were made in England and shipped to Canada, together with their handmade double glazed leaded light windows.

There are nine bedrooms, six bathrooms, including a small suite in the rear oast tower which is accessible only by its own staircase, a ballroom, a billiards room, a wine cellar, a sauna and athletic area, several games rooms and a tennis court (floodlit) near the garage block.

The main driveway, with anti-frost underground heating, also boasts handmade English wrought iron gates and leads to the cobbled front courtyard.

### Traditional finish

Before shipment, the builders carefully surveyed each building, labelling each piece of oak for later reference. Each member was then examined and any necessary repairs or replacements carried out, always with oak of like age.

The complete oak structures were then



*Twin oast towers (centre), once used for drying hops to make beer in England, now occupy a prominent position on Toronto suburban property.*

treated with methyl bromide to comply with Canadian import requirements before finally being treated with preservative. The finish of the structural oak timbers is unsawn or hewn, as is traditional in English country houses of the sixteenth century.

The oast towers, which were used long ago for the drying of hops for ale making, have been widely converted for domestic use. The cowl on the towers are working examples, imported from England. At harvest time in Kent fresh hops were

piled three or four feet deep on the upper slatted floor of the oast over a slow burning charcoal fire. The traditional cowl or chimney on the conical roof revolved to leeward to keep out the elements and after several days, the dried hops were collected and used to give British beer its particular taste.

As most old buildings in Britain are under strict preservation orders, only a few buildings like the Toronto mansion can be shipped abroad — or disturbed in any way.

## Home information system

Bell Canada of Montreal, Southam Press Ltd. and Torstar Corporation, both of Toronto, are co-operating in a pilot demonstration of a home information system, which, through existing telephone lines, can provide information from a central computer at the viewer's call.

The project will use technology provided by Bell-Northern Research Ltd.

The system, of a type known generally as Videotex, will be installed in a demonstration early next year. It will be limited to a connection between a terminal consisting of a home television set, a key pad similar to that of a typewriter and a computer. A spokesman for Bell Canada said the demonstration would be used to conduct a larger market study in 1980, in which systems may be connected to selected home users.

Videotex allows a home or business user to call and receive information from a computer which types out the replies. The home television is connected so that words or graphic information can be displayed on the screen.

### Type of information

Southam and Torstar will provide the information for use in the project. "One of our biggest problems is to decide what information people want," the spokesman said. Among the possibilities are weather and travel details. But subscribers may eventually have access to a wide range of news, entertainment, advertising and other information.

The Federal Government's Department of Communications recently announced the development of a new Videotex system that would allow direct terminal-to-terminal communication without the need of a central computer.