

# Sad finale for a family firm

by Janet Brice

THE ex-chairman of Bentley Piano's today spoke of his anguish at the decision to sell the company.

David Grover sold the famous piano-making business last week to Whelpledale, Maxwell & Codd Ltd with the loss of 35 jobs.

His family had run the business, at Woodchester, near Stroud, since 1911. In that time it has produced more than 160,000 pianos for musicians around the world.

## Effort

Today Mr Grover said he hoped the Bentley's piano brands would survive.

Mr Grover and his wife Jenny – who was also a director – decided to sell the company despite a concerted effort by three directors to mount a buy-out.

Many of the skilled employees have served the firm for more than 40 years and have been made redundant with no hope of securing another job.

In a bid to fight the sale of the company, workers demonstrated outside the factory gates recently and



## ■ Flashback to the workers' protest earlier this month.

started a petition against the factory's closure.

However, in a statement Mr Grover blamed the recession for his decision. "The depth and length of the current recession has produced the worst peacetime trading conditions in 60 years and slashed demand to a level at which production, in its present framework, cannot be sustained.

"For more than a decade demand for locally-made Bentley pianos has been reduced by competition from piano producers in countries with cheaper labour and other production costs," he said.

Mr Grover said after careful consideration the management buy-out proposal had contained too many uncertainties to be acceptable.