

Timber and much more ...
A Family History of James Jones & Sons

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A FAMILY HISTORY OF
JAMES JONES & SONS

Nigel Watson



St Matthew's Press

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Foreword

The recording of a company's history is probably often left too late so that many personal stories and anecdotes are lost. That is certainly the case with James Jones & Sons Ltd. Belatedly, however, we asked Nigel Watson to undertake this task for us to mark the 100th year of the company's incorporation and the 167th year of trading according to the records. I wish to thank Nigel for his work which he has conducted in a truly professional and good-humoured fashion.

In the context of the Scottish sawmilling industry ours is a unique story with the close family connections with the foundry and boat-building businesses, and our direct involvement over the years in forestry, wood pole manufacture, joinery, engineering, pallet and packaging manufacture and timber building systems. We also have our close connection with Stella-Jones Inc. in Canada and our recent investment together with Stella Group in the telecommunications construction industry in Italy.

There is too through these pages an extraordinary record of long service and loyalty to the company which continues to this day. This applies not just to the various branches of my own family but also to numerous other families whose members have served for several generations and for over 50 years in each one. Many of them are mentioned in these pages and I would like to pay personal tribute to them and to all our employees past and present whose efforts have allowed James Jones & Sons to be where it is today.

My father personally presented, I believe, 34 awards for 50 years service with the company. His predecessors must have presented many more, and I have also made several. We recently reached a point where it was impossible for any employee to serve for fifty years and so generously reduced the qualifying period to 40 years!

I am hugely happy that I returned to Scotland in time to have four years working in James Jones before my father died. That enabled me to learn at first hand the contribution he made within the company and the affection our employees had for him. He was enormously respected through all sectors of the industry as was evidenced by the list of people attending his memorial service which reads like a 'who's who' of the whole industry.

Succession planning perhaps was not a priority in the company when I arrived in 1979, but I am pleased to say today as some of us senior people come close to retirement that we have an excellent team of managers throughout the business to take James Jones & Sons Ltd forward and build on what their predecessors have so well achieved.

I am proud of our company and all its employees and I hope you will enjoy this record of our past.

tom a bruce-jones cbe
Spring 2005

Acknowledgements

It has been a great pleasure researching and writing the story of James Jones & Sons, thanks to the friendly and hospitable way in which I have been helped by so many people. I shall miss travelling the road north to Larbert!

I have been helped by many people and this book is theirs as much as mine. I must first recognise my debt to T D Bruce Jones whose previous history of the Jones family companies was a fundamental source for this book.

I would like to thank all those who kindly agreed to be interviewed – Airlie Bruce-Jones, Tom A Bruce-Jones, Tom R Bruce-Jones, Roderick Jones, T D Bruce Jones, Michael Leslie, Jock Armstrong, Eddie Balfour, Bill Baillie, Christine Ferguson, Sandy Hogg senior, Sandy Hogg junior, John Kissock, Bill Nicol, Ian Pirie, Sandy Mitchell, Jonathan Richie, Willie Smith, Neil Snedden and Robin Stevenson.

Roderick Jones not only gave me access to the archive of Jones & Campbell but he also very kindly took me to see the Union Inn, Torwood Hall and the ruins of Dunmore Park. Tom A Bruce-Jones, Roderick Jones and Robin Stevenson were also particularly helpful in reviewing the draft text. For the illustrations in the book, I am grateful to Airlie Bruce-Jones, Tom Bruce-Jones, Roderick Jones, Michael Leslie, Ian Pirie, Sandy Hogg senior and Christine Ferguson for their help. Some of the pictures came from the History Research Centre at Callender House in Falkirk, part of the Falkirk Museums service, and I am grateful to the staff at the Centre for the kindly and efficient assistance they gave me. I must also thank Lesley Masterson whose friendly help did much to ensure things ran smoothly throughout the project.

Any mistakes which remain can be laid only at my door.

nigel watson
Spring 2005

‘What is thy father going to make of thee, James?’ 1838-1888

Just think how different our lives would be without wood. In one form or another it surrounds us, from cricket bats and coffins to walking sticks and window frames, from barrels and billiard cues to telegraph poles and toothpicks, from fences and flagpoles to jigsaw puzzles and joists. Wood is indispensable. The books and newspapers we read, the notebooks and pads on which we scribble, none of them could be produced without wood. Tyres, textiles and tooth brushes all feature cellulose made from pulped wood. The best hardwood can be transformed into the finest furniture to grace our homes while softwood has many uses, from joinery and construction, including the roof trusses and floor joists in many modern houses, to the boxes and pallets used everyday for the delivery of almost anything you can name.

We have always been greedy consumers of wood in the UK. Once upon a time, some five thousand or more years ago, two-thirds of the British countryside was covered in a forest so dense, very few flowering plants could survive beneath it. Yet although the population of the British Isles was barely a million at the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the Book's compilers discovered that just 20 per cent of England was still wooded. As the population continued to grow, as towns were developed and houses built, trees were cut down without any thought for the needs of future generations. As a sea-faring nation, the merchant fleets trading across the oceans and the navies sent into battle consumed colossal volumes of hardwood. Even so, the country was still able to meet the demand for timber from its own resources.

All this changed with the industrial revolution, particularly with the huge expansion of the mines

and the coming of the railways, both industries with apparently insatiable appetites for timber. With one or two exceptions, little consideration had ever been given to replanting so Britain now looked overseas, initially to the colonies and then closer to home, for additional supplies of wood. With larger ships bringing greater loads into British ports, the railways transported these imports all over the country at a relatively low cost. Enterprising men opened up as timber importers in the major ports. In Scotland, ports on the west and east coasts imported timber from North America, the East and West Indies, Russia and Scandinavia. There was good money to be made, often at the expense of the small wood merchants based in the hinterland. In 1845 one survey listed just 80 sawmills in Scotland, supplying local markets with timber for building, fencing, gates, carts and agricultural implements. The domestic industry became the poor cousin in the timber trade and many estate owners preferred to keep local timber merchants well away from their woodland, where gamekeepers tended pheasants and herds of deer. By the end of the nineteenth century as little as five per cent of the country's timber needs came from British timber.

The First World War shattered all complacency over the state of the nation's forests. As German submarines made imports almost impossible at the height of the war, officials realised with alarm just how little timber was being grown at home. This led directly to the creation after the war of the Forestry Commission, charged with simultaneously developing a national timber reserve within state forests and encouraging the expansion of private forests. This decision could not have been more timely. A



generation later another world war witnessed the sawmilling trade perform almost super-human feats in supplying the bulk of the country’s war-time timber. But this was achieved only by plundering the forests, creating a lean time for the industry in the post-war period as it waited for inter-war plantations to mature. This was exacerbated by a complete transformation in the market for British timber with the decline of the mining industry and the collapse in demand from the railways.

Today the total area of forest and woodland in Britain amounts to some 12 per cent of the land. Conifers, such as spruce, larch and pine, account for two-thirds of this area, hardwoods, especially oak, beech, birch and ash, the remaining third. Trees in the UK grow faster than trees in, for instance, Scandinavia, reaching maturity in about 40 years. In Scandinavia a tree will require about 60 years to mature and as long as 200 years in Russian forests. Despite the better quality of these longer maturing trees, UK merchants can still compete on price and customer service. Planting by the Forestry Commission and private landowners, combined with the more efficient utilisation of timber through modern technology and mill management, means that British timber now accounts for over 20 per cent of the UK’s softwood timber requirements. In the next 20 years or so, as the volume of maturing timber reaches its peak, the domestic industry has the potential to meet as much as 45 per cent of UK demand although this presents a challenge, given overseas competition, which cannot be underestimated. It is a challenge, given the scale of the capital investment required to remain competitive, which only a handful of businesses are in a position to meet.

More than a century ago, the UK timber trade, both the import side and the home-grown side, consisted of dozens and dozens of small operators. Today, as in many other long-established industries, only a handful of businesses dominate the market, partly through chance, partly through forward-thinking. But the sawmilling industry has always been relatively small. It was not even included in a review of Scottish industries published in 1869 and cannot be

found in a book on British industries published in 1933. Today its share of the £7 billion market for wood and wood product manufacturing is £500 million. To put this into some perspective, the value in the same year of food, beverages and tobacco produced in the UK was £77 billion, of textiles and textile products £12 billion. Perhaps because of the small size of the industry, the leading sawmilling firms are still essentially family businesses which have charted a successful course through the seas of a notoriously volatile sector over several generations.

One of these is James Jones & Sons Ltd whose history now spans five generations of the founding family. Based in Larbert, near Falkirk, in Scotland, the company, chaired by the fourth of five Toms in the family, operates six sawmills from Mosstodloch in the north of the country, to its most modern mill at Lockerbie in the south, as well as a construction component manufacturing business in Forres and a pallet and packing case company in Cheshire, and employs 470 people. For well over a hundred years this family-owned and professionally managed firm has played a leading role in the timber trade and today it is the second largest home-grown timber business with substantial timber-related interests in Canada.

The story, although not the business, begins with the first Tom Jones who began selling timber in the small town of Camelon, down the road from Larbert, in 1838. Tom, baptised Thomas, was born in Kincardine, on the shores of the Firth of Forth, in 1814 but his father, John, was Welsh. According to family legend, he had settled in Kincardine some 10 years or so earlier, where he was supposed to have had a carpenter’s yard, building and repairing sailing boats. It was usual in those days for carpenters to buy their own timber from the woods and John became an expert in assessing and valuing trees. This was a skill he passed on to his son who was sent to work a few miles away in Camelon. Tom employed his boat-building skills and timber expertise for the Wilkie family who made canal barges. Within a few years he had established his own timber business.

By then he was already married, to Agnes some 12 years older than Tom. Their first child, a daughter,

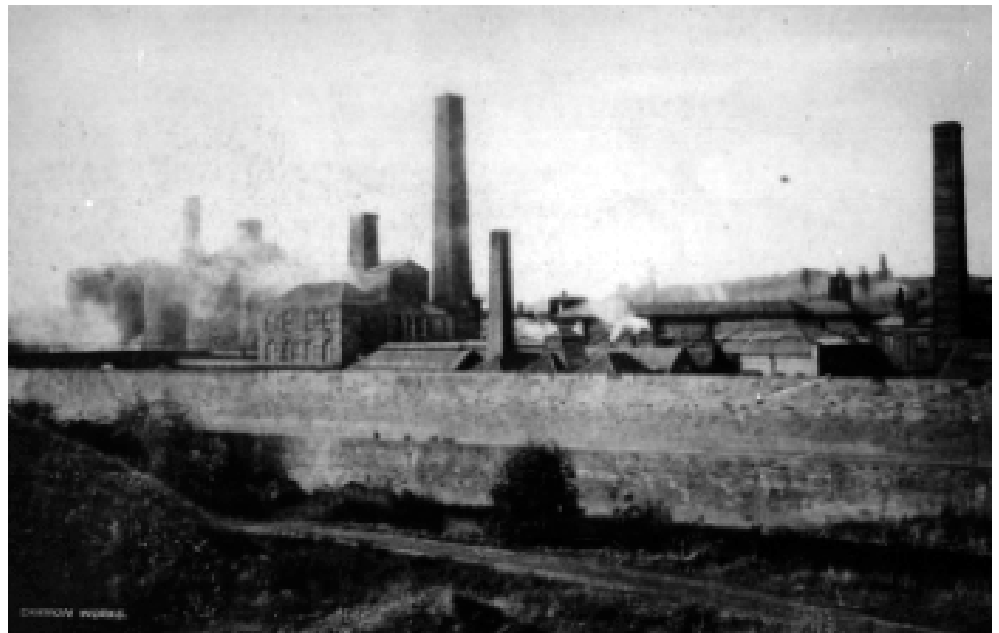


The Union Inn at Camelon, home to Tom Jones, sandwiched between the Forth & Clyde and Edinburgh & Glasgow Union Canals, viewed from Lock 16.

A steam barge travels down the canal on the right but very faintly to the left hand side of the Inn can be glimpsed railway wagons.

The railways led to the decline of the canals and the railway companies eventually took them over.

(Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)



A view of the works of the Carron Company which dominated Camelon from its foundation in 1759. (Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)

Isabella, was born in 1837, followed by James in 1840. Isabella took from her grandmother’s family her middle name of Bruce which has been transferred down the generations to the present day.

Tom seems to have carried on with his timber business even after he bought the Union Inn in Camelon in 1849, a building still used as an inn today, situated right next to the Edinburgh & Glasgow Union Canal. There are also references to him farming at nearby Glenfuir. He may well have found being an innkeeper a more congenial occupation for he seems to have been a man who enjoyed life. His grandson, many years later, remembered a tale told by his own father, James. He had been measuring oak trees on a local estate when Tom ‘suddenly threw his measuring book down and said to his son, “You may carry on, I forgot about the crow shoot at Dunipace’, and with that remark he hurried away’.

The first canal reached Camelon in 1790 with the completion of the Forth & Clyde Canal. It had been talked about for years. The event which played a major part in bringing it to fruition also changed Camelon and in fact the whole of the area around Falkirk for ever. In 1759 the Carron Iron Company

was established in Camelon. Carron produced cast iron, making everything from cannons and cannon balls to kettles and teapots. Cast iron, after Abraham Darby’s pioneering work at Coalbrookdale in the early 1700s, demanded coal for smelting the iron ore. Both were in plentiful supply around Falkirk. With more than a thousand employees by the 1770s, Carron’s impact on the area was huge. It dwarfed Camelon whose population was less than a thousand even in the 1830s and turned Larbert from a tiny hamlet into a town of more than 4,000 inhabitants by the 1840s. A number of employees went on to open up their own foundries and iron founding would dominate the lives of local people for two centuries.

With the support of the Carron Company, which saw the advantages of a canal for the cheap transport of raw materials and finished goods, the Forth & Clyde Canal was built. The locals were not best pleased. Just having overcome the trauma imposed by the arrival of Carron, with the changing – not for the better – working and living conditions this brought, as well as the initial influx of skilled English workers who started the business off, they were now overwhelmed by a temporary army of navvies on a

The open bascule bridge on the canal at Camelon.

A steam barge is passing through the bridge while another barge offloads its cargo of timber at a canalside warehouse. James Jones would undoubtedly have made use of the canal for the shipment of timber.

(Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)



project which threatened the jobs of the local carters.

But the Forth & Clyde boosted the fortunes of at least one timber firm, an importing business, Brownlee & Co, at the western end of the canal, by providing access to cheap transport for supplies of timber from Scandinavia and Russia. In the east the canal terminated at Grangemouth. No sooner was it finished than ideas were suggested for a canal joining it from Edinburgh where there was a demand for a cheaper means of carrying coal. After long arguments (and the interruption of the Napoleonic Wars), work began in 1817 and the Edinburgh & Glasgow Union Canal opened in 1822. It joined the Forth & Clyde at Camelon in a dramatic fashion, descending 110 feet through 11 locks at the point half a mile from where the Falkirk Wheel now stands. The new canal enjoyed only a brief period of peak activity, carrying 200,000 passengers in 1836, before the arrival of the railway in 1842. This too was the heyday of the Union Inn, built specifically to cater for the thirst and hunger of all those who stopped off at Lock 16 while in transit from one side of the country to the other. When Tom Jones took over the inn, trade was already quieter although the Forth & Clyde remained important until the First World War.

The Carron Company spawned a host of associated businesses and created an industry where working conditions were even harsher than in the iron foundries. In 1790 William Cadell set up the first nail making business in Camelon. One of the first managers of the Carron Company, he had been involved in the nail trade in England. It was, according to Ian Scott in his history of Falkirk, 'a hard, heavy and ill-rewarded business' in which young boys slaved 12 hours or more every day just to make enough nails to earn a living wage. The trade grew and became important but the nailers, housed in often squalid conditions, had a reputation for hard living and drunkenness. By the mid-1840s more than 250 men and boys were employed in the trade in Camelon alone. By comparison, there were just three sawmills, all former cornmills, whose water-powered circular saws turned out wood for barrel staves, packing boxes and construction. As well as the 45



James Jones (1840-1926) at the peak of his business career.

men working in the mills, there were 10 pairs of sawyers in four wood-yards, paid by the foot for the timber they cut with their frame-saws.

Deciding there were more opportunities in nails than timber was a sign of James Jones's entrepreneurial instincts as well as his independence. At the age of 21 he was already running his own business as a nail manufacturer. Perhaps the impulsiveness of youth had blinded him to the impact which machines were having on the hand-made trade. He certainly had a choice because even at that young age he had already spent several years with his father in the timber trade.

James was an unusual young man, strong in mind and body. His father wisely kept him at the local

school until he was 14 years old. This in itself set him apart from his peers, many of whom had already been working full-time since the age of 10 or even earlier. Until 1867 the only Act of Parliament affecting child employment outside the mines and textile factories limited children aged between 9 and 12 from working more than 48 hours a week and those from 13 upwards to a maximum working week of 69 hours. If they still had any energy, they were also expected to have two hours schooling a day. So it was not surprising that a bluff Yorkshireman, Tom Trueman, who lived locally, should ask the young boy: ‘What is thy father going to make of thee, James? Is he going to make of thee a gentleman by keeping thee at school all the days of thy life?’ Trueman had saved the young boy’s life. James was a strong swimmer, often diving into the canal for lock-pins, but his confidence had got him into difficulties. Fortunately Tom was on hand to rescue him. Later James himself saved a young child from a similar watery fate.

Leaving school at last, he went to work in the office of a local nail making firm, Fairbairn & Co, but within

two years suffered an eye infection so bad that it rendered him almost blind and made him acutely short-sighted for the rest of his life. His father took him out of Fairbairn’s office and sent him into the fresh air of the forests. Although his eyesight gradually returned, it troubled him for the rest of his life. There were times when he feared he would permanently lose his sight and he even practised finding his way from his home at Torwood Hall to the Larbert sawmill with his eyes closed just in case. On one occasion he confided in his eldest son, Tom, who was only thirteen at the time. Tom asked his father if he would continue the timber business. ‘Most certainly, my boy,’ replied James, ‘and, as you grow bigger, we will make the business grow bigger.’

James himself spent several years learning the timber trade with his father before deciding to capitalise on the profits to be made from making nails. He took as his partner, James Forbes, a slightly younger man. They were obviously good friends, each of them taking a romantic interest in the other’s sister. James Forbes eventually married Isabella Jones



These half a dozen men, mainly elderly, obviously impoverished, represented the last of the Camelon nailers when this photograph was taken around 1900. James Jones alone had employed around 20 men at the peak of his nail-making business. (Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)



Collieries like this one, the Herbertshire colliery, near Denny, not far from Larbert, were common throughout Scotland at one time and represented one of the timber industry's biggest customers for several decades. Pit-props can be seen stacked up outside the colliery buildings. (Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)

while James Jones married Margaret Forbes. As a result, James Jones's fourth son, Peter, was given the middle name of Forbes which, like Bruce, was handed down from generation to generation.

Jones & Forbes thrived in premises at the dockyard by Lock 16. By 1871 the two partners were employing 46 men and boys. By contrast, the family timber business, which James took over from his father, who had died in the previous year, employed only 10 men.

Machine-made nails led the hand-made nail manufacturers to concentrate on producing horse-shoe nails. In 1871 the Camelon Nail Works, as the partners described their factory, advertised for a horse-shoer and jobbing blacksmith 'to go to the country. A young unmarried man preferred'. Jones & Forbes marked their nails, which were sold not only

at home but also overseas in New Zealand and Canada, just with the letter 'J', perhaps a sign of Jones's dominance in the partnership, perhaps to avoid confusion with Fairbairn. The business also produced rivets, spikes and railway dogs. The two men must have been aware that this was a venture with a limited life as machine-made nails ate away at the remaining market for hand-made nails. But James Jones's nail business lasted for nearly 30 years. It employed 20 men in 1881 and was still soliciting orders in 1888.

During the 1870s, as the hand-made nail trade slipped into terminal decline, James Jones became serious about the timber business. When James Forbes left the partnership for a new venture, James Jones combined the nail-making and wood merchant-

ing businesses. The latter concentrated particularly on fencing timber. James Jones began to spend more time and money on building it up. It was only now, for instance, that he decided to move the timber yard from Camelon, by the canal, to Larbert, by the railway. The Scottish railway boom had taken place in the 1840s although trains came to Larbert only in 1850. The supremacy of the railways was made plain when the Edinburgh & Glasgow Union Canal was taken over by the North British Railway in 1865 and, two years later, the Forth & Clyde Canal was acquired by the Caledonian Railway. For timber merchants, the railways were already hugely important

customers, consuming wood as hungrily as they did steel for rails and iron for rolling stock. As well as sleepers, the railways needed timber for their vast numbers of freight wagons. In 1890, for instance, the Caledonian Railway alone possessed 63,000 of them. James Jones had been distracted from all these opportunities by his nail-making business. Many firms had already beaten him in securing sites adjacent to the railways where sidings and marshalling yards might be built so that they could take advantage of the railways’ ability to open up more distant markets. He began to catch up in 1874 when he moved his timber yard to a large site close by the



The station at Larbert around 1910. Sales of timber for sleepers and railway wagons were a major source of income for timber firms like James Jones & Sons from the late nineteenth century until the late 1950s. For many years the railways were also the main source of transportation for timber in bulk and the opening of Larbert station was the principal reason why James Jones established his sawmill in the town. (Courtesy of Falkirk Museums.)

station at Larbert. At the same time he also moved house, to Elmbank in Larbert, at the opposite side of the railway line. It is said that he often used to walk straight across the line to the sawmill rather than take the longer journey round by the railway bridge.

From the Larbert mill, he could cart his timber across the road for despatch by rail. If he was selling timber to the railways, he could sell more of it because the trains would carry it to stockyards further away. A surviving invoice from June 1887, for instance, shows him sending railway sleepers by rail from Larbert to Buckhaven. In the same way he could increase his sales of mining timber by sending it to collieries beyond the local market. But if the railways made it possible to send out more sawn timber (and bring in more unsawn timber), he had to have the means to process greater quantities of timber more quickly. So the Larbert mill became James Jones's first steam-driven sawmill although he retained the traditional saw-pit for sawing the more valuable hardwoods. In 1881 the mill employed 33 men and two boys.

Among them was William Rennie, the first of several members of the Rennie family to work for James Jones. Rennie, whose father John had married the sister of James Forbes, was 12 when he became an office-boy in 1873. He was, remembered his employer, 'a rather sharp' little boy, one eager to learn both in the office and out in the woods where James Jones trained him in the art of valuing standing timber, as unfelled trees were known in the trade. In

time Willie tutored James's eldest son, Tom, in the same art. Tom later remembered how, 'as a boy I followed at his heels, looking at standing timber for many a day'. Eventually becoming manager of the Larbert mill, Willie Rennie was from the mould of timber trade managers and foremen familiar to many – a reserved man, staunchly independent, always unable to bring himself to ask a favour from anyone – but also fiercely loyal, autocratic and without any regard for popularity. Many of these characteristics he shared with his employer. With several generations of the Rennies working for the business over the years, the family was typical of many others, both within James Jones's business and within businesses all over the country. Labour was perhaps not as mobile within rural areas and rural industries as within the larger towns and cities. A major ambition for many families was to see their offspring in settled and secure jobs. The concept of working for several employers during your career was completely alien to most. Security often outweighed other considerations, like pay and conditions. If you could find an employer who took a paternal interest in his workers, at least you stood a chance of receiving some allowance, always at your employer's discretion, when you fell ill or became too old to work any longer. James Jones, for all his autocratic ways, appears to have been one of them.

'He is here, he is there, he is everywhere'
1888-1917

Although he was running two businesses, James Jones still found he had time on his hands. There was a restlessness to him in his prime, he was always looking for new opportunities, never content with the progress he had made. Although he became an immensely respected figure in the Scottish timber trade, he could probably have turned his hand to anything. If his father had run a small chemical works (the first chemical works in Camelon appeared about the time James Jones was born), James would have done just as well with it. He was, above all, a businessman.

But he was not much of a trailblazer or pioneer. His restlessness was tempered by a streak of caution, a combination which led him to take a close personal interest in his businesses, making sure that everyone knew the final say in any development was his. This was fine when he was young, enthusiastic and ambitious, but created difficulties for others as he became older, more cautious, more autocratic. His success came from standing back, watching others, carefully and patiently weighing up the pros and cons, preparing himself well in advance before launching a new venture. He had grown up with the timber business, he had worked in the nail trade and, for his next project, he learned from the progress of the firm in which the brother of James Forbes was involved.

Dobbie Forbes & Co, established in 1872, was one of many iron foundries which sprang up around Falkirk during the second half of the nineteenth century. The industry dominated the local economy. By 1900 it employed 40 per cent of Falkirk burgh's male workforce. The prosperity of the late Victorian age, when real wages were rising, combined with the rising population, created an apparently limitless

demand for the products of the light casting industry. The Victorians loved cast iron. While it had strength, it also had the ability to take almost any shape. By the 1860s, according to industry's historians, John Gloag and Derek Bridgwater, 'every conceivable piece of equipment for buildings was produced in cast iron: gates, railings, verandahs, grilles, treads and risers and complete stairways, columns, windows, pipes, rainwater goods, manhole covers, heating and cooking appliances, baths, mantels and, in addition, tables, chairs, umbrella stands, vases, clocks, lamps and ornaments of every kind and almost of any size'. Another historian of the industry, Basil Tripp, commented that 'the extent to which light castings were used was the measure of material progress'. The Falkirk foundries produced all these items and more but made a name for themselves by specialising. David Bremner, writing about the industries of Scotland in 1869, remarked that in the Falkirk foundries, 'fire-grates and stoves form a large portion of the produce of several establishments'. Nimmo's History of Stirlingshire, published in 1880, listed not only the Carron Company and the Falkirk Iron Works, the two largest of the foundries. Westwards along the canal bank were the Grahamston, Parkhouse and Camelon iron companies with the Union Foundry at Lock 16 and the Port Downie and Forth & Clyde iron works. Eastwards lay the Abbot's, Gael and Etna foundries. Close to the North British railway at Grahamston were the Callendar and Vulcan foundries. The local paper counted 25 foundries in the area in 1892, employing 8,600 men and making 8,000 tons of castings every month.

The new foundry was built on land right next door to Dobbie Forbes & Co and James Jones took as his

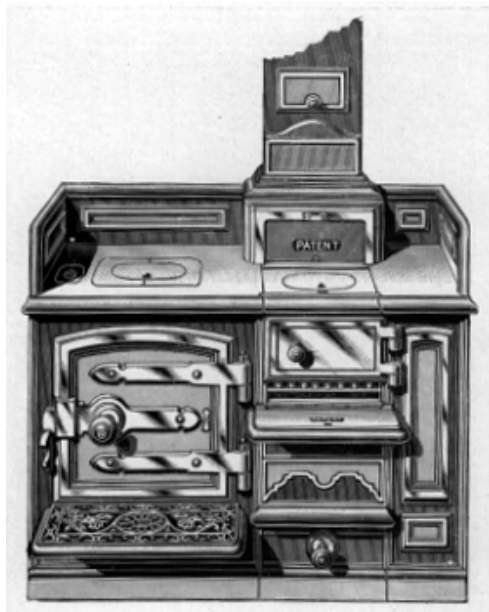
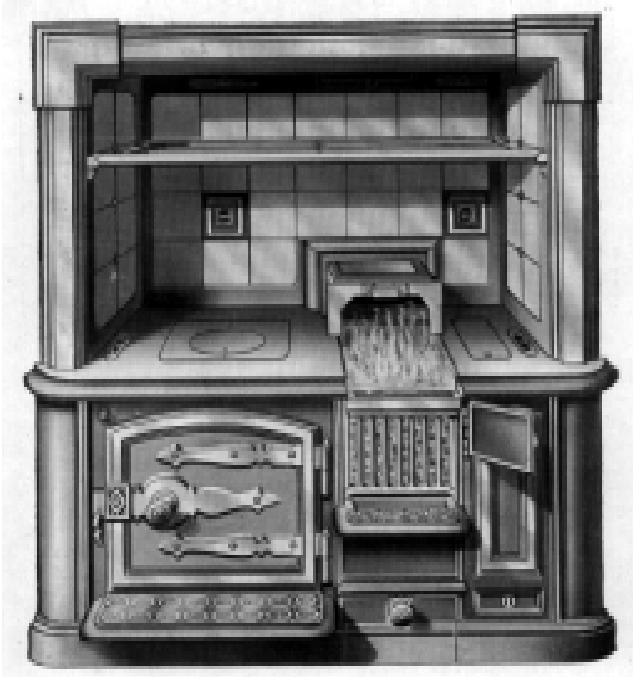
A group of Falkirk cast-iron foundry workers with the tools of their job and some typical examples of ornate cast-iron work.
(Courtesy of Falkirk Museum.)



junior partner the firm's cashier, Dermont Campbell. James Forbes, badly let down in his other business dealings by partners less reliable than James Jones, had left the firm when he emigrated with his family to Australia in 1885, writing that he intended to 'trade in castings to a certain extent in James Jones's name'. The Torwood Foundry (Torwood is a small village just outside Larbert) was opened on 10 February 1888. On two acres of land lying adjacent to the sawmill, the partners had erected two buildings to house, in the first, a moulding shop and, in the second, a fitting shop, pattern shop and warehouse. A cupola was erected for melting iron, the blast coming from a fan driven by the sawmill steam-engine. Jones & Campbell, as the partnership was called, intended to turn their castings into mantelpieces, grates, stoves, cooking and heating appliances and ornamental castings. The *Falkirk Herald* reported that 'the furnace was tapped by Master Tom Jones [the 14-year-old eldest son of James Jones], and the pots of glowing metal seethed and bubbled in the

moulding shop for the first time'. The new foundry, under its manager, George Binnie, enjoyed early success. In the 1890s profits twice paid for the enlargement of the moulding shop and for the erection of new warehouses as demand for goods increased.

By 1898, when Alex Rhind joined the firm, about 80-90 men were employed. The fitters, he recalled, were 'a fairly tough lot'. Apparently, they often did no work at all on Mondays and Tuesdays, spending all their time instead in the Station Hotel. On one occasion, the foreman fitter was sent to bring them all back but failed to return. Rhind was then despatched, discovering, as he put it, that the foreman too 'had joined the happy throng'. On the other hand, it was said that they squeezed as much work into the rest of the working week as anyone else did in a full six days. Working conditions were in any case quite hard. The foundry was poorly lit, with paraffin lamps hung along the walls, and without any heating. From Monday to Friday the men worked from 6.30am until



Several best-selling pre-war products from the Torwood foundry – the 'Rosebery', 'Trilby' and 'Nansen' ranges with 'The Nelson' umbrella stand. The fussy design of these cast-iron products was typical of their time.

5.30pm and on Saturdays from 6.00am until 1.00pm. There was a break of 45 minutes for breakfast and an hour for lunch (half an hour on Saturdays).

Jones & Campbell produced a remarkable range of products, typical of many similar foundries of the time. They had several lines of kitchen ranges, grates, bath boilers and portable stoves, most of them with topical names to appeal to the public. 'Trilby' was taken from the popular novel of the period by George du Maurier, 'Rosebery' was the name of a leading Liberal politician and one-time prime minister, 'Nansen' came from the famous Norwegian polar explorer. Among the firm's general castings were air bricks, ashpans, doors for bakers' ovens, wheels for barrows, cradle rockers, clothes posts, dumb bells, fenders, foot scrapers, frying pans, garden rollers, garden furniture, plumbers' pots, pulleys and blocks, irons, skylights, stop-tap boxes and umbrella stands. The list seemed almost inexhaustible. One umbrella stand was called the 'Nelson', described as 'a very fine piece of workmanship', but, with a representation of the admiral himself atop the stand, an extravagantly ornate piece of work too typical of many castings of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Even the humble solid-fuel kitchen range was ornately cast with any number of complicated projections. But customers seemed to love them. After all, most middle-class homes could afford to employ at least one maid to clean them. There was little market research. At Jones & Campbell, this took the form of rival designs seen by salesmen on their travels, scribbled on the back of order forms or a customer's letter-heading for the foundry's skilled craftsmen to copy. Some years later, in 1907, Peter Forbes Jones, whose main interest lay in Jones & Campbell, bought a competitor's boat stove to analyse what made it sell so the foundry could develop one like it. The foundry was prepared to imitate anything which sold. In 1910 Peter obtained a chair from the Electric Theatre, the cinema in Falkirk, and produced a tin pattern from it. In 1913 the firm considered making soil pipes for the first time. Customers often asked the firm to modify existing models for them. All this led to confusion over priorities in the pattern shop so, in 1909, it was

made clear that preference should be given to designs which would lead to repeat business or produce economies rather than to specials for customers. In fact, most designs remained the same for years and years, as did the technology for producing them.

Jones & Campbell sold goods through merchants all over the country, opening an office in Glasgow in 1901, sending travellers to Wales and across to Ireland. Senior members of the firm, including Dermont Campbell, regularly travelled to Birmingham and London in pursuit of orders or overdue payments. Commission agents were used, including appointments in South Africa in 1908 and Australia in 1909. There was a little advertising. Apart from the voluminous catalogues, which were circulated to architects as well as merchants, colour leaflets were printed for individual ranges. The firm targeted areas where house-building was underway. In 1908, for instance, the firm offered to supply grates to the North British Railway for 60 houses they were building at Methil in Fife, an offer the railway company rejected.

The Torwood Foundry did well during the first two decades of the 1900s. There were rising sales, profits and dividends for the firm which had been incorporated in 1906. This impressive record was only occasionally interrupted. In October 1911 a serious fire gutted both the grinding and engineering shops, throwing 40 fitters and grinders out of work. The fire was reported to have been 'the most disastrous fire that has ever occurred in Larbert'. Within 20 minutes of a yardsman on the Caledonian Railway spotting the flames, 'the place was a raging furnace', putting the Larbert sawmill and timber yard in danger. Workers dashed out to help the fire brigades from Falkirk and Grangemouth. From eyewitness accounts, many workmen were at the heart of the blaze, fighting to control it, and some were lucky to escape with their lives, scrambling to safety as the building began to collapse, scattering bricks, iron and wood among them. The dairy next door was set alight, its owner, Miss Drew, being severely burned as she struggled to evacuate distressed cows from the byre with the help of workmen. The terrified pigs in the

dairy (they were fed on skimmed milk left over from making cream) refused to budge and had to be caught and carried out. By daylight large crowds were assembling, keeping the police busy with crowd control, to view the twisted girders which could be seen amidst the still raging flames.

Other less dramatic interruptions to production were caused by the economic cycle, but most of the uncertainty in the years just before the First World War came from the unstable state of labour relations. This was a national phenomenon with strikes at the docks, in the mines and on the railways. All these threatened to disrupt production at the Torwood Foundry where iron and coal was stockpiled whenever a strike seemed likely. Sometimes workers at Jones & Campbell had to be laid off when the docks and railways were closed. Sometimes strike fever spread to the foundry itself. The industry was notorious for its poor working conditions with men often labouring in poorly lit and badly ventilated workshops, stifling in the summer and freezing in winter, despite the heat from dozens of braziers. At Jones & Campbell electricity was supplied to the foundry in 1911 and electric lighting installed two years later. In the summer of that year, 1913, moulders and pattern-makers went briefly on strike. There was one week's holiday a year, at the time of the local tryst or fair. Everyone received a bonus twice a year, in the summer (which would help to cover the unpaid holiday week) and in the New Year. The latter ranged from £5 (£300 today) for the works manager to five shillings (£15 today) for the office-boy. Around this time average weekly earnings for men in the light castings industry were 31s 4d (£95 today), compared with 26s 5d (£80 today) in sawmilling.

In general, orders were plentiful, jobs were secure and there were scarcely sufficient goods in stock to meet demand. To cope with all this business, extra pattern workers were taken on and laid off as required. By 1914 annual sales were about £70,000 (£3.8 million today), net profits £8,000 and a generous dividend of £7,000 was being paid to shareholders. The Jones family held more than 70 per cent of the

shares, the Campbell family holding the balance. Dermont Campbell enjoyed the respect and trust of James Jones and was appointed managing director of the business when it became a limited company in 1906. His position and his relationship with James Jones brought him special treatment. Provided he remained managing director and retained a certain number of shares, he was regarded as having exactly the same number of shares as James Jones and his family although this concession was personal to him alone. At the same time every board resolution for a period of 10 years from incorporation had to be agreed by both James Jones and Dermont Campbell. James Jones took a deep personal interest in everything that went on but was happy to allow Campbell to get on with his job. It was a blow to the business when Campbell died suddenly in January 1914.

Although Campbell's son, Donald, took his father's place on the Jones & Campbell board, he was not so highly regarded, justifiably as events turned out. James Jones had five sons (one dying at the age of two) and it was his second son, James Forbes Jones, known as Jim, born in 1878, who took over the day-to-day running of the firm. Jim, who had started work with the timber firm, in charge of the bark peelers, had been responsible for the operation of the foundry for several years, Campbell concentrating on sales and administration. James Jones's third son, Peter, born in 1880, assisted his brother. James's two other sons, his eldest, Tom, born in 1872, and his youngest, John Cumming Bruce Jones, born in 1882 and known as Bruce, were also directors of the foundry company, but their main interest was in the timber business.

All four boys began to come into their own during this period, although achieving the freedom to carve out independent roles within the business cannot have been easy. Their father, already in his mid-seventies by the time of the First World War, refused to let go of the reins. He was still full of energy. A newspaper profile from 1908 referred to him in terms similar to Baroness Orczy's famous creation, the Scarlet Pimpernel, 'he is here, he is there, he is everywhere'. The problem was that 'everywhere' was



This early photograph is very faded but it shows timber being ferried across the river on a cable operated by the youngster and bearded man in the foreground. The three heavy horses will drag the logs from the riverbank to the sawmill.

exactly where his sons seemed to find him. When he was presented with a testimonial in 1913 for his leadership of the campaign to prevent the burgh of Falkirk from swallowing up Larbert, Stenhousemuir, Carronshore and Carron, he remarked that 'my family, particularly my sons, could see nothing but a stupid, conceited and self-willed old man in me ... it would be an object lesson to them that other people, quite as able to judge, thought differently'. Although James Jones was described as a courteous man with 'a rich fund of pawky humour', and his remarks might seem to be self-mocking, the way in which the words are phrased suggest they were a sharp barb deliberately aimed at his sons. There are hints of an ageing autocrat from some of the admittedly limited surviving evidence. One of his grandsons, who stayed at Torwood Hall, the Jones's family home in Larbert, for two months every summer, later recalled that his grandfather was 'a complete dictator'.

Another grandson remembers being told how James often made life difficult for his eldest son, Tom. The occasional paternal criticism surfaces in the minutes of board meetings.

Control had become a habit with James Jones. When the timber business became a limited company on 31 March 1905, James and Tom became joint managing directors but James, as permanent chairman, had two votes plus a casting vote just to ensure his authority was never in doubt. He expected a lot from his sons and took pride in their achievements. There is no doubt that he was an affectionate father who was always keenly interested in everything his sons did. It was just that he made life a lot more difficult for them than it needed to be.

Board meetings, held monthly, had very specific agendas, focused primarily on day-to-day management issues rather than policy or strategy. The list was nearly always the same – debtors (one overdue



The photograph of this magnificent oak and the band of sawyers who felled it probably dates from around 1900. Note the four-man sawing team in the foreground. Two will pull on the saw itself while two heave on ropes attached to each end of the saw.

account in 1911 was from none other than A & R Brownlie of Earlston, now BSW and James Jones's largest rivals), the position at the bank, bills receivable and payable, weekly sales and purchases, stocks needing selling, orders and contracts, new plant and any necessary improvements, weekly timber purchases, expenses, cash sales, sawmill performance and carting costs. (At the foot of one page, in red ink, is the note, underlined, 'Horse feeding – get cost per horse', indicative of James Jones's sharp eye for detail where costs were concerned.)

The directors were scarcely overpaid. James Jones received £3 15s (£200 today) a week and his son Tom £3 a week with an annual bonus of around £50-100 if profits were any good. The other two, including Bruce who worked full-time in the timber business, had to wait until the end of each year to see if they were voted anything at all.

The two most able boys were Tom and Jim. At least, as the two eldest sons, they were the ones who were allowed to shine. Tom made his mark on the timber business. His father, although he occasionally

torpedoed his son's ideas, nearly always stood by his son's judgement. He had, after all, taught him everything he knew about the measurement and valuation of timber. When Tom at the age of 16 was sent to value and buy a large lot of timber in Ross-shire, the owner allowed him three day's grace on the purchase so James might inspect the timber himself. James refused, placing his confidence in his son.

Tom was a great enthusiast for timber grown in the Scottish forests. For instance, he used it to build a house for the Larbert mill foreman in 1911 and for his own seaside home in Spey Bay. The latter, called Larch House and constructed wholly of Scottish larch, is still standing today, substantially unchanged. The family used it as a holiday home for many years and there was also a constant stream of visitors. In the early 1920s one visitor turned up in a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce. Tom's three sons, Jim, Tom and Reid, aged between 13 and 9, took an instant dislike to the visitor. They waited until the chauffeur had fallen asleep outside the house in the sunshine and then all three of them climbed into the car and drove

Larch House at Spey Bay about 1923. Tom Bruce Jones is seated at the centre of the group of Jones Buckie staff with his three sons, Jim, Reid and Tom, in front of him. Being held up behind him is his daughter Margaret while his wife, Edith, is the lady at the rear of the group in the distinctive fur-collared coat.





This group is interesting because many of the men are shown with the tools of their trade. On the left stands a man with an oil-can and a shovel to pile up the sawdust to fuel the steam engine. Next to him is a man with an axe while three more hold circular saws. Two of the seated men hold rules for measuring timber while the smartly dressed bowler-hatted man is presumably the foreman. On the right are two men with double hand saws, the bearded man in the cap having a heavily bandaged finger (losing a finger or two was an occupational hazard for sawyers). The man on the far right is perhaps the engine-man, holding a poker for keeping the steam-engine fired up.

it all the way to Buckie before they were caught. Young Tom and his own family later spent their summer holidays there from the end of the Second World War until the late 1950s. The company's current chairman, another Tom, remembers being compelled to take an icy dip before breakfast every morning in the chilly waters of the North Sea.

David Leith, who served the firm for 60 years after joining as an office-boy in 1900, painted a portrait of Tom Bruce Jones during his speech at the company's centenary celebrations in 1938. Tom, Leith recalled, was 'the dynamic force which extended the business right and left, adopted new methods and made the

whole business hum'. He was quick, bold, decisive, hard-working, did not tolerate shirkers but was generous with those who worked hard. Once he made a promise, he carried it out, regardless of cost. Like his other brothers, he was a keen sportsman, being an enthusiastic cricketer and ardent curler. But this was not a complete picture. There was another side of Tom Bruce Jones, as a man of literary and artistic interests, who was friendly with many of the major Scottish painters of his day, including William Russell Flint. He wrote pamphlets on issues such as the relationship between life and work and was full of ideas for improving the world around him. A list

jotted down in a notebook in December 1922 included the creation of a toy factory to provide jobs for unemployed soldiers, streamlining the delivery of coal from the mines to make it cheaper for the consumer and building new roads in the Highlands which 'would open up all our beautiful West coast to all our people & would bring the English and Americans in shoals to Scotland in the summer and autumn months'.

Alex Hogg joined the firm a year before David Leith, the first of three generations of the Hogg family to work for the firm. When he started work, there were just five staff in the sawmill office - himself, Benjamin Meikle, the cashier, Willie Rennie, Willie Samuel and James Malloch. As well as the Larbert mill and one close to the collieries at Portobello, the firm had four portable mills out in the woods. Bruce Jones joined in the same year as David Leith at the age of 18 and remembered that the Larbert saw-pit was still being used to reduce the largest logs to a size the circular saws could cope with. John Rennie, who came as an office-boy in 1903 as had his father before him, found the sawmill office was little more than a two-room shack. He remembered 'the horses stamping their feet in the stable next door and the rats amusing themselves when [we] were working late'. Women were not allowed to show their face beyond the office door, not even to sweep the floor.

The number of forest mills multiplied during the early 1900s. In Scotland there were eight mills from the Cromarty Firth in the north to the Borders in the south while the firm had established mills even further south in Cheshire. In 1906 the firm took over a small sawmill, employing six men, on the harbour-side in the small fishing port of Buckie on the north-east coast of Scotland. It was a purchase which showed how the attention of James Jones to even the little things could pay off handsomely. With one of his men, he travelled to Aberdeen where they intended to stay overnight before proceeding to Buckie for the auction of the yard next morning. Several other interested bidders were staying at the same hotel. It was already snowing when the two men took a walk

before dinner and the weather was worsening. James decided that they should pack their bags at once and catch the last evening train to Buckie, leaving the opposition to their drinking in the hotel. They reached Buckie just as the weather was closing in and cutting off the town. As a result, the two men found themselves the only serious bidders at the auction and James bought the yard for a fraction of the price expected.

Four years afterwards, work began on a slipway personally financed by James Jones and each of his sons. The idea was to build and repair local wooden fishing boats to provide a useful outlet for sawn timber from Larbert, with oak for the keels and larch for the boatskins. The slip, built to a patent design, had berths for 14 vessels and by July 1911 the first drifter was being repaired. James Jones & Sons had already been supplying timber for ship-building for some years. Perhaps the most famous vessel with which the company was involved was the *Discovery*, the ship which took Captain Scott and his team on their exploration of the Antarctic between July 1901 and September 1904. The ship, which withstood being trapped in the ice for many months, suffering scarcely any damage at all throughout the entire expedition, was built substantially from oak supplied by James Jones. Most of the oaks came from the Riddle estate at Lilliesleaf and Dupplin Castle in Perthshire while the stern post, measuring 24 inches square, was cut from a tree grown at Herbertshire Castle at Denny.

James Jones had personally lent the company part of the purchase money for the Buckie mill. Although turnover was rising - by 1914 the timber business was making sales on a par with the foundry - margins were slim. Working capital for timber purchases or capital for investment was often scarce. On the other hand, Jones & Campbell, extremely profitable, was almost awash with cash. So the prosperous foundry began making a series of loans to the less well-off timber business. In 1908 Jones & Campbell lent James Jones & Sons nearly £5,000 (about £300,000 today). Further short-term loans were made in 1909. In 1910 Jim, James Jones's second son, pointed out that James Jones & Sons 'could do

with some money at present & ... we might as well have 5 per cent on the money lying in deposit at Bank’.

While this financial assistance became especially crucial at a later stage, the two companies remained entirely separate and independent of each other. But, with the two businesses operating from neighbouring sites, and having their major shareholder in common, it was not surprising that other decisions were also sometimes made in their joint interests. In April 1912, for instance, when the decision was made to build a railway siding, the justification for the cost of £1,000 was ‘in order to get wagons through to Furnace and to James Jones & Sons in order to save cartage on material for the former and an annual charge for extra working costs for the latter payable by Jones & Campbell’. The siding was in operation by early 1915.

In the same year as the Buckie mill was purchased, Bruce Jones, who had been working in the Larbert office, was despatched to organise felling operations in Ireland. The company started with a mill at Warrenpoint to work small lots in the district around Newry. Bruce travelled the length and breadth of the country, by bicycle and train, from County Down and County Donegal to Wicklow and the Shannon in search of suitable stands of timber. Alex Hogg and James Malloch joined him to look after the mill established at Wicklow. Bruce later remembered how ‘we even entered the precincts of Dublin and felled many trees in Phoenix Park which were sawn at Scribbleston Sawmill’. By 1914 James Jones & Sons had six mills in Ireland with around 250 men. Much of the timber was shipped back to England and Wales in the round where it was supplied to Cumbrian iron ore mines and Welsh collieries.

In 1907 Tom Bruce Jones negotiated a contract to fell, saw and remove timber from the Earl of Tankerville’s Chillingham estate, near Wooler in Northumberland. The firm won a second contract early in the following year. The Earl, like a number of large estate owners, affected by the agricultural depression, was in financial difficulties, aggravated by his inability to curb his own extravagant spending. With

bankers and creditors pressing him for payment, he asked James Jones, through Tom, whether he would be able to help him out. The links between James and the Earl became sufficiently close for James to guarantee part of the overdraft he agreed to arrange for the Earl with the Clydesdale Bank. As *The Times* later noted, while James agreed to help out of genuine sympathy, he was also ‘in some degree influenced by “the glamour of the nobility”’. He had absolute faith, he wrote in December 1907, of the Earl’s integrity and honesty. Partly this was because he had been so persuaded by his son. James would later write to the Earl that he only agreed to become a guarantor through ‘my yielding to the earnest entreaties of my generous, confiding and optimistic son whose confidence, sympathy and affection you had won’. The sum James guaranteed was £5,000, which may not seem much, but would be worth over £300,000 today. The deal proposed between the bank, James Jones and the Earl gave James and his son considerable influence over the financial management of the Chillingham estate.

Problems began before the deal had been finalised. From the spring through to the summer of 1908, the Earl continued to spend beyond the substantial annual allowance of £2,500 which he had agreed (his wife, the Countess, would not contemplate restraint since it was beneath her station in society). The proceeds from the sale of the Earl’s orchid collection, the value of which had been grossly overestimated, should have gone to the bank but instead went into the Earl’s pocket. James grew more and more exasperated to the extent that he, usually a strict observer of the Sabbath, wrote to the Earl and his wife on Sunday 15 May 1908 in strong terms, warning them that ‘they who spend more than their income are taking the high road to ruin & dishonour, if not even destruction itself’. As a result of the Earl’s actions, the bank refused to finalise the overdraft facility and James, who had been advancing money to the Earl, withdrew his guarantee. The breakdown in their relationship was fostered by the new solicitor retained by the Earl who persuaded him that James Jones and his son had been swindling him, using the

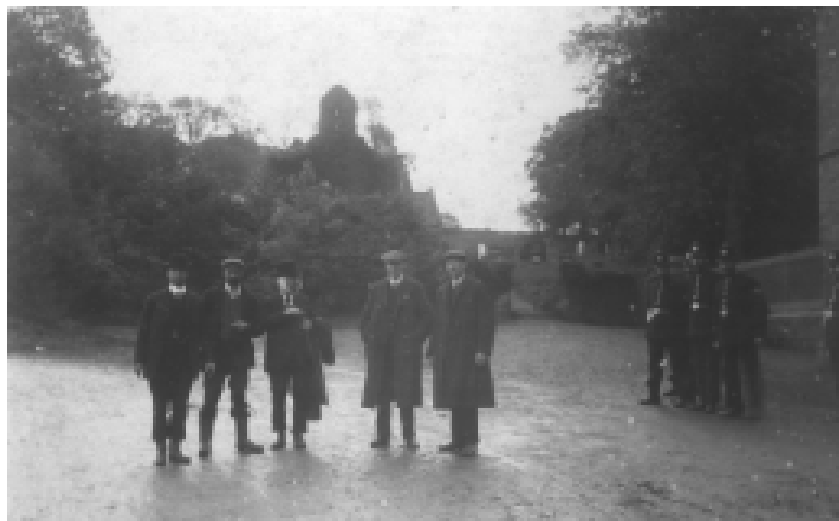


(1)



(2)

These three photographs were taken on the Chillingham estate in Northumberland at the time of the celebrated 'Battle of Chillingham'. The first shows a group of James Jones's men outside the sawmill erected on site. The second shows the devastation caused by the Earl of Tankerville's men at the Jones sawmill in Church Wood, Chillingham. The final picture shows (third left) James Jones, scarf around face, perhaps from injuries received in the scuffles, looking in disgust at the local constabulary who did nothing to prevent the violence and criminal damage perpetrated by the Earl's men that autumn day in October 1908. The tall young man fourth from the left is Tom Bruce Jones.



(3)

promise of the guarantee to gain a bargain price for the estate timber. (The guarantee in fact came after the first of three timber contracts with the Chillingham estate.) The Earl called James Jones a liar and a thief to his face. And the newly appointed agent for the estate began to find fault with the company's felling activities. In September 1908 the Earl decided that he no longer wanted James Jones & Sons cutting down his trees even though contracts had been signed and the timber paid for. He insisted the company left the estate. The company refused. On 27 October came the so-called Battle of Chillingham when the Earl's agent, in the presence of the local police, sent in men to remove the forestry workers by force. James and his son were present when the attack began, protesting in vain to the local constabulary to protect their men. In the eventual court case, the judge recorded how the Earl's men had 'forcibly ousted the Messrs. Jones and their men from the Chillingham estate, wrecked their sawmills, disconnected and carried away parts of their machinery, tore down their bothies, scattering the contents, including the men's clothing, in the mud ... led off their horses ... scattered their stacks of timber, and did other acts of wilful and unnecessary damage to their property'. Even in 1907, when deference was a way of life in the countryside, the judge said that it was 'almost incredible' that such action 'should have been tolerated and assisted by the police'.

Tom Bruce Jones even spent a night in the local police cells. The day's events had exhausted even his vast reservoirs of sympathy and patience. From his cell he wrote a letter withering in its understatement and measured tones to the Earl. 'I am indebted to you for one of the cheapest night's lodgings I have ever had. I am as comfortable here as I was when a guest under the roof of Castle Chillingham early this year. Let me say at once, my Lord, that I am not angry with you. I am merely vexed that you, a Peer of the Realm, should stoop so low. I prayed for you once at your own earnest request. Tonight I shall ask our Gracious Father to forgive you.'

This violence so incensed both James and Tom that they sued the Earl, asking for an injunction to prevent

him from interfering with the execution of the contract. The Earl fought back, asserting that damages alone should be a sufficient remedy. Mr Justice Parker, who heard the case in the summer of 1909, poured scorn on the claims made by the Earl and called the action perpetrated in his name 'high-handed and illegal'. In all except the most minor point, he found in favour of James Jones & Sons and described James Jones as 'a scrupulously honest witness'. In an editorial, *The Times* on 12 July 1909 described the tale as 'a warning how temper and lack of business habits may obscure the true position of something, and how relations begun in a friendly spirit between honourable men may drift into strong antagonism'.

Back in Scotland the firm was sawing timber at places such as Lilliesleaf, Gifford, Darnaway, Drumbowie, Roseneath and Sleepieshill. Close relationships had already been forged with several large estate owners, including the Dukes of Argyll, Roxburgh, Buccleuch, Richmond & Gordon and Fife, the Marquises of Lansdowne, Linlithgow, and Tweedale, and the Earls of Wemyss, Rosebery, Rothes, Seafield, Moray, Kinnoul and Haddington. In 1909 the company took over the timber business run by Henry Young at Kirriemuir. This included three forest mills in the Atholl district with a significant lot of oak and larch on the Atholl estate. (Most of the timber being felled by James Jones at this time was hardwood.) The local newspaper reported that 'as [James Jones & Sons] purpose carrying on the work energetically, the local woodmen and carters, who are numerous in the district, will benefit accordingly'. James Malloch was brought back from Ireland in 1910 to run the Portobello mill when it ran into difficulties. He was the only mill foreman to enjoy a profit-sharing agreement.

At Larbert the shack was replaced with new offices in 1908, the same year in which it took delivery of three new steam-wagons. As the *Falkirk Herald* reported, James Jones & Sons 'have recently introduced, for the first time in the timber trade in Scotland, the haulage of timber by the light tractor engine, and they propose developing this mode of



These two photographs from about 1910 show the Big Mill at Weddersbie, west of Collesie, in north-west Fife. The view of the mill shows logs, stripped of their bark during their hillside descent after being felled, strewn across the landscape waiting to be sawn. The sawmill itself is surrounded by neat piles of sawn timber ready to be transported by horse and cart to the nearest railway station.



haulage'. Two years later it was at last agreed to try out a typewriter in the office. Electric lighting was installed in the sawmill in 1911 and the mill itself was reconstructed in 1913 when a Ransome band-saw was acquired. The firm even engaged a consultant to advise on the reconstruction at a fee of 10 guineas a day. Rivals had already begun to specialise, some, for instance, establishing their own joinery departments in an attempt to add value to a commodity product and increase profits. In 1910 James Jones made its first steps in this direction when it began creosoting railway sleepers and poles (one customer was the Scottish Central Power Company). The railways and mines also figured prominently in the company's list of customers, including the North Eastern Railway, the Caledonian Railway, the Highland Railway and the Wemyss Coal Company.

By 1914 James Jones & Sons had at least 11 mills in operation on the British mainland, employing approximately 400 men and using 80 horses. With sales of nearly £70,000 (£3.8 million today), almost as much as the foundry, the company was probably the leading British timber merchant in the country. By comparison, for example, the firm of A & R Brownlie had sales of just £16,000 (£865,000 today). On the other hand, James Jones could not compete with the multi-purpose merchants, handling both imported timber and British timber, operating large mills close to major urban areas. Brownlee & Co, owned by the Forrest family, was the largest such business in the UK. On a 14 acre site in Glasgow located between the Forth & Clyde Canal and the railway, it had also acquired other similar businesses across Scotland. But the timber trade as a whole remained small. In 1907 it accounted for just 2.6 per cent of gross output and 3.4 per cent of employment in the UK. The percentages were only slightly higher for Scotland where timber employed 35,000 men (4 per cent of the workforce) and turned over £7.6 million (3.8 per cent of gross output).

On 3 August 1914 Britain declared war against Germany. In West Bridge Street in Falkirk, long queues of eager young men began to form. They were waiting to sign up for the armed forces at the

local recruiting office. Britain had declared war on Germany. Trains left Falkirk station carrying hundreds of territorials who had been called up. Later Captain Jim Forbes Jones would join them. The board of Jones & Campbell met on the day war was declared, the heading in the minute book reading 'European War'. Its impact was immediate. Part of the works was taken over for the temporary accommodation of men joining the colours. The foundry reduced operations to three days a week at first, then four days in September. There was concern over stocks of iron and coke since shipping was at a standstill and sales were hampered because the railways south of London, one of the company's best markets, had been closed to all civilian traffic. With the bank rate shooting up to 10½ per cent, the directors decided not to press late payers too hard. They also agreed to make weekly payments to the wives and dependants of men serving with the forces.

In September 1914 Jones & Campbell won the first of a series of contracts for ovens and stoves from the War Office. In the spring of 1915 the warehouses were extended to enable three more railway wagons to be loaded under cover. In September, the works started making hand-grenade cases for the first time. By the end of 1915 the company had orders for six months in advance. Jim Forbes Jones, who returned on leave every six months, continued to take part in board meetings both at the foundry and the sawmill. While his brother Peter was already assuming most of the responsibilities for running the foundry, Jim, as managing director of a major business, was indignant he had been called up. This, he told his colleagues, gave the lie to the politicians' statements that the business of the country had to go on. With the introduction of conscription in May 1916, Peter was applying for the exemption from military service for key employees.

At the timber business, Tom Bruce Jones had a busy war. The Government had failed to foresee any need to regulate the timber trade. Without regulation, prices rose to unprecedented levels as the demand for timber soared under wartime conditions. Specu-

lators entered the market and many woods changed hands several times, the price rising on each occasion, before the timber was felled. Firms like James Jones & Sons, with their limited capital reserves, found it difficult to cope with such price rises, especially after credit restrictions had been imposed. Few firms were in the fortunate position of James Jones & Sons with a related business like Jones & Campbell willing to make loans at reasonable rates of interest.

Many timber workers left the industry for military service. James Jones & Sons alone saw more than 100 workers join the forces. For example, five of Willie Rennie's seven sons served in the Great War. Two of them were decorated. Ebenezer won the Military Medal but lost his life in the final phase of the war. Peter was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous bravery in 1915. Tom Bruce Jones sent him a cheque 'as a little recognition of your bravery' and hoped for his 'speedy and safe return from the War'. Tom later recalled how 'Scottish woodmen responded in 1914 to the bugle call so well that we were soon badly crippled. The remainder of our men (and in that respect too much credit cannot be given to the middle-aged woodmen of Scotland during the war), when they realised the urgency of the position, responded magnificently'. Early in 1916, just as there was increasing pressure on British timber companies to produce more timber, Bruce Jones joined the same regiment as his brother, the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. Jim Jones, at home on leave in November 1916, remarked during a debate on labour shortages that 'after the war was over, we could not do enough for the brave men who had stood in the trenches knee deep in mud, and were under fire and under possible nerve and body trying conditions, and he trusted the long continued pleasant relations which had always existed between the firm and its employees would always continue'.

Supplies of imported timber almost vanished as the war at sea intensified. British timber became the nation's lifeline. Tom Bruce Jones rose to the occasion splendidly. Under his direction, the family business made a vital contribution to the war effort. More prominently, as president of the Home Timber

Merchants' Association of Scotland throughout the war, he played a key role in organising the effective supply of British timber. Together with his brother Peter, he was part of the delegation which met the new prime minister, Lloyd George, at the end of 1916 to assure him that the British timber trade could rise to the challenge of meeting the nation's need for timber. He also used his considerable personal charm to persuade the prime minister that it was a nonsense



Many members of both companies, family and staff, saw active service during the First World War. Pictured here in 1916 are Lieutenant J C Bruce Jones and Sergeant Peter Rennie. Rennie won the Distinguished Conduct Medal; Bruce Jones suffered serious shrapnel wounds which affected him throughout the rest of his life.

for the War Office to withdraw reserved status from timber workers. The decision was reversed.

The Government appointed a Timber Buyer, Montague Meyer, and the British trade supplied timber through the Home Grown Timber Committee, later the Timber Supplies Department. In 1917 Lloyd George created the Timber Control, under James Ball, to regulate all timber purchases and prices. It was obvious that most of the timber required by the Government would come from the Scottish forests. Tom Bruce Jones liaised closely with his counterparts, Adam Nimmo and Colonel Sutherland, in the Coalmasters' Association and the Timber Supplies Department. The Scottish timber trade supplied more timber during the war than the rest of the country put together. The largest single individual contributor was James Jones & Sons, with 60 million square feet of timber out of a total of 141 million, even though the company ended its felling operations in Ireland after the Easter Rising in 1916.

One of the greatest sources of timber for the company was the Binn Hill at Huntly on the estate of the Duke of Richmond & Gordon. The timber was bought by Tom Bruce Jones. His son, also Tom, later wrote that this was probably 'the largest and most significant [purchase] in the history of the company'. James Jones & Sons had bought standing timber from the Duke for many years and he became a personal friend of Tom Bruce Jones. When Tom and his family were staying at their house at Spey Bay, the Duke would often join them for picnic lunches when they were fishing the river.

The company felled timber at the Binn Hill from 1916 until 1934, operating at least 12 mills on different sites. The chance to purchase this extensive area came by chance. Taking Tom Bruce Jones round the Binn, the Duke had heard the sound of trees being felled. He was annoyed that the local factor had not consulted him about who should fell the trees. Returning to Fochabers, he instructed his head factor to negotiate the sale of the entire plot to James Jones & Sons. There was so much that it took three weeks for John Rennie and others to complete the timber valuation. The deal included other land in addition to

the Binn as well as three farms of 1,500 acres. To make things easier for the tree fellers, a two foot narrow gauge railway for horse-drawn wagons was laid down through the forest. The work was overseen by Willie McEwan, a hard-bitten, hard-working, efficient foreman who recruited first-class local labour. A creosoting plant was built a mile outside Huntly for treating railway sleepers and there was also a large joiner's shop.

The catch to this prize possession only hit the company after the war. Tom Bruce Jones bought the Binn when wartime prices for standing timber were at their peak. This alarmed Tom's brother, Bruce, who must have been at home on leave. He was already concerned about his brother's tendency to buy timber at any price. Hearing that Tom was leaving by train from Larbert to conclude the deal with the Duke, he rushed down to the station to urge caution. Tom ignored his brother's protestations. As a result, when prices collapsed after the war, the company was left to nurse a substantial loss on the considerable volume of timber which remained. It would be a significant factor in the company's inter-war problems.

James Jones & Sons sent timber to the railways, shipbuilders and munitions factories for sleepers, trench poles, scantlings and huttings. By far the largest proportion of timber went to the mines for pit-props. This national effort was an extraordinary achievement but one which left the UK's reserves of standing timber precariously low. This was recognised in the Acland Report of 1916 whose proposals for a national forestry policy resulted in 1.8 million acres of conifers being planted over the next eight decades, two-thirds during the first 40 years. The 1919 Forestry Act created the Forestry Commission and established the pattern for post-war forestry practice. Tom Bruce Jones's contribution was recognised with the award of the OBE. The Association later displayed its gratitude by presenting him with a full-length portrait, which still hangs on the stairs of the offices in Larbert.

Some of the timber felled at the Binn was shipped around the coast to Buckie where Jones Buckie Slip & Shipyard was heavily involved in Admiralty work

during the war. The firm was turned into a private limited company as the Jones Buckie Slip & Shipyard Ltd in 1916, initially with a number of local shareholders, notably the Duke of Richmond & Gordon, although they all fell by the wayside over the years. Much of the yard's work was repairing patrol boats for duty in the North Sea but new drifters were also built under Admiralty contract. It was reckoned that between 1914 and 1918 400 vessels were repaired and fitted with armaments at the yard. Jones Buckie, where Peter Forbes Jones was joint managing director with his father, also launched the small 40 foot *Torwood*, the first motorboat built at the yard, in September 1917.

The foundry, whose production came under Government control during 1916, suffered a serious loss with the death in April the following year of Jim

Jones. Wounded in action, he was convalescing when he fell ill with appendicitis. He might have survived had he chosen to travel home for his operation. He refused. He died on 25 March in a military hospital at Etaples in France at the age of 39. 'The cheerfulness and bravery shown by him in his last hours', noted the minutes, 'when his brothers Tom and Peter were present with him had been quite remarkable and afforded no little consolation to all the family.' A further consolation for the family was that Bruce Jones survived his time at the front despite receiving wounds so severe that they affected him for the rest of his life. Even a long convalescence during the summer of 1917 did not render him fit to return to active service. Instead, towards the end of the year, he came back to James Jones & Sons to give his eldest brother some much needed assistance.

‘Often difficult and never easy’
1917-1945

Tom Bruce Jones was in his prime as the war came to an end. He had established himself as the leading figure of his generation in the British timber trade and was at the helm of the largest business in the industry. He appeared to have thrived on his hard work during the war. John Spark, who joined the Larbert office at the age of 15 in 1924, found he was ‘a most energetic person and always on the go. People had to look out to be on top of their jobs when he was about’. Sometimes when he was travelling on the train from north to south or vice-versa, he was so busy he did not have the time to get out at Larbert. Instead David Leith met him on the train and travelled with him to Stirling or Perth, discussed the matters he wanted attended to, and took the next train back to Larbert.

Tom was full of ideas for the future of the company. He wanted to maximise the use of the Binn Hill property by extending the farming operations and establishing windmills and water-powered turbines to create energy. Among his aims for the Scottish timber trade was the creation of a first-class seed bank from first-class trees. He was convinced that since the timber trade had saved the nation in wartime, the nation in gratitude would keep on buying British timber. Adopting the latter for building, he was certain, would play its part in underpinning freedom, peace and comfort by providing some of the ‘homes fit for heroes’. He was passionate enough on the subject to commission an architect to design a house built completely from timber. The company built a prototype and displayed it at the Highland Show in Stirling and the Ideal Homes Exhibition in Glasgow in 1921. The sections had been constructed within a month and the house could be erected in 11



Tom Bruce Jones OBE (1872-1924). This portrait was a gift from the Home Timber Merchants' Association of Scotland in 1921 to mark the contribution made by Tom Bruce Jones as president during the First World War.

days. The weather-boarding, joists, couples, partition timber, flooring and lining were made from larch, spruce and Scots fir. Doors, windows and ornamental mouldings were also made from Scots fir and shingles and roof boarding from spruce. It could be built one



The James Jones larch house erected on site for the Royal Scottish Aboricultural Society Forestry Exhibition at Stirling in July 1921.

room at a time and when complete boasted five bedrooms, a living room, scullery, bathroom and lavatory. The James Jones timber house, it was claimed, would last for 150 years. The passion of Tom Bruce Jones comes through clearly in the pamphlet produced to extol the house's virtues. It must have been written by Tom himself and combines his belief in the advantages of British timber with his Utopian vision of the future, strangely retrospective and conservative in tone, a picture painted by a countryman at heart: 'This is not a house for one class, but for all classes. It is a real democratic house, equally fit for the wealthy, the middle class and working class ... is it not a house fit for heroes to live in? ... Does not this Home Timber House go a long way towards solving the vexed housing problem? ... Common sense in these modern days says, "give us a house far enough off the public street and roadway where we may escape, with our wives, families and friends, the dust, din, and danger of modern traffic, and where we can

grow vegetables and flowers, and, if disposed to do so, can produce our own bacon and eggs"'. Out of his belief in timber for housing came the company's joinery division in 1923 and the construction of timber houses on the south side of Torwood Avenue in Larbert in 1924 (the northern side followed in 1928).

The optimism of this cultured, charming, vigorous man took several knocks after the war. Firstly, there was no renaissance in British timber. Tom Bruce Jones believed that 'for tough elm, hard beech, and plane tree, durable larch, Scots fir, spruce and silver fir, Scotland's woods have no equal'. But 450,000 acres of woodland had been stripped during the war. The boom and slump which followed damaged the economic fortunes of many timber businesses, both those working in the British trade and importers. The British trade was further harmed by the resumption of imports at rock bottom prices. Employment in the Scottish timber industry, which had been 35,000 in 1907, fell to 24,000 in 1924 and 17,000 in 1935. The

prolonged inter-war depression in agriculture, combined with the impact of death duties, brought many estates to the verge of ruin. Some were sold off and split up while others, out of financial necessity, neglected woodland management and did little replanting. Although the Forestry Commission built up a state-owned holding of 434,000 acres between 1919 and 1939, this represented only 10 per cent of UK standing timber while private planting rates fell far short of pre-war rates. A forestry census taken in 1924 revealed that half the country’s woodland was unproductive, reserves of mature softwoods were low and reserves of hardwoods, although significant, were generally not high quality.

As far as James Jones & Sons was concerned, the company’s wartime profits were eroded by wartime taxation, it made huge losses in the post-war slump and never really recovered before the Second World War. The accumulated deficit racked up by the company, combined with almost uninterrupted losses, meant that dividends were paid on neither the ordinary nor the preference shares from 1920 until 1939. By the end of this period the patience of shareholders was being severely tried. A provocative letter from one shareholder, Mrs Ross, a daughter of James Jones, to her brother, Bruce, who chaired the timber company, in 1939 produced a hurt response: ‘he felt very much the lack of sympathy from the Preference Shareholders for all he had done for the Company and he knew that if he could possibly let them know all the facts, there would never have been such a letter written’.

In fact James Jones seems to have suffered more acutely than the trade in general. For instance, A & R Brownlie failed to make a profit only twice between 1920 and 1935. James Donaldson & Sons, a firm of timber importers based at Leven and Tayport, lost money only three times. Brownlie, with sales in 1922 of £24,000 (£900,000 today), was much smaller than James Jones; Donaldson, with sales in the same year of £139,000 (£5.1 million today), was a business of much the same size. But James Jones, where sales in that year were £150,000 (£5.6 million today), lost money in all except three years between 1920 and

1936. While Brownlie managed to make average profits of £1,000 (£45,000 today) on an average turnover of £26,500 (£1.2 million today) between 1922 and 1935, James Jones lost on average £2,000 a year (£90,000 today) on average sales of £165,000 (over £7 million today). The worst loss recorded by the company was £41,000 (£1.25 million today) in 1921. Scottish industry in general endured terrible times between the wars, but even so enjoyed a period of revival (with the exception of the cotton industry) between 1922 and 1929.

What made James Jones’s performance worse than the average was the crippling burden of standing timber which had been bought too dearly and could only be sold cheaply. The main source of this was the enormous stand of timber on the Binn Hill, but matters were not helped when Tom Bruce Jones carried on spending money on expensively priced standing timber during the post-war boom. Tom no doubt found his brother Bruce as well as his father taking him to task. The brothers together also found their father reluctant to relinquish the reins.

For all these reasons, Tom found his vision for both the family business and the trade unattainable. He must have found the dismal outlook for timber profoundly depressing as prices collapsed in the early 1920s. His health, which had stood up so well to the rigours of the war, began to suffer. Ill with pneumonia, he sailed from Southampton with his brother-in-law and the family doctor to convalesce in the warmer climate of Madeira at the end of 1924. Then, suddenly, by telegram, the family in Larbert were informed that Tom had died on the island on Tuesday 9 December. Publicly, the cause of death was given as pneumonia. In fact, Tom had taken his own life, throwing himself from a steep cliff path. Perhaps his illness was much more serious than anyone had been told. Perhaps he found it impossible to see a clear way through the problems surfacing in the business at home. Probably it was a combination of both which made him decide to end his life in such a sudden and tragic way. While the nature of his death was known among his brothers and their families, it was never revealed to his own children and never

talked about within the wider family. It came as a great surprise to his grandson, Tom, when he heard about it for the first time from his cousin Bruce and later confirmed the story from his own investigations while on holiday in Madeira.

Two years later Tom's father died at the age of 86, having outlived his two eldest sons. James, who had lived for many years in Torwood Hall in Larbert, had continued to come into the sawmill office at Larbert every day. He was almost blind in his last years and John Spark, the young office-boy, was often asked to lead him home at the end of the day. He left moveable estate valued at £83,000 (worth about £3.3 million today). The boys jointly took over the estate their father had bought only recently, Dunmore Park, near Airth, several miles from Larbert, which had formerly belonged to the Earls of Dunmore. James's will caused consternation in the family by the unequal division of his wealth between his two sons and his five daughters. The sons – and Tom's widow, Edith – received nearly £12,000 each, the daughters less than £3,500 although two of the daughters inherited property which took the value of their share of the estate to some £5,500 each. A more equitable arrangement, which almost evened up the distribution, was achieved in 1929.

Bruce Jones was left as chairman of the timber company. He once summed up his approach to management as 'to decide what is wanted, lay down a policy, but after that have confidence in your subordinates; don't interfere in details, and let them get on with the job. If you have trained and chosen people well, they will never let you down'. This is an approach which the company still follows today. Bruce Jones was a man who could talk to anybody from the aristocrats who owned the private estates to the fellers in the forest. He had married into the wealthy Clydeside ship-owning Dunlop family. His wife's father, Sir Thomas Dunlop, was one-time provost of Glasgow. Bruce and his family lived at Glenbervie, just outside Larbert, a large Victorian mansion and estate leased from the Carron Company. He was a man with a delightful sense of humour. Spotting an employee he knew was



An inter-war portrait of J C Bruce Jones (1882-1953), chairman of James Jones & Sons Ltd from 1926 until 1953.

regularly smuggling out small quantities of timber from the mill under his coat, he remarked 'He's away a different shape again tonight!' He told the story of how he met a group of young boys on his way into work who were running along the road with wooden turning wheels they had clearly pinched from the mill. He stopped and asked them where they had got them. He was tickled by their response – 'Come wi' us and we'll show yer!' He had a habit of dispensing pandrops from his waistcoat pocket to staff in the office or out in the yard. Very occasionally some of them might find not a pandrop in their hand but a pound note. One member of staff noted that 'his manner is so kindly that a great many of them come to him with their personal troubles. One moment he

may be dealing with their matrimonial affairs, the next with bereavement, or it may be housing problems ... He can always find time to help'. These were qualities people would find inherited by his son, also Bruce.

Bruce found taking over the running of the company from his brother extremely difficult. The family found themselves strapped for cash to such an extent that Bruce even sold his share in the Dunmore Park estate to his brother Peter who lived in the mansion house with his own family. Peter enjoyed breeding pedigree shorthorn cattle (he became renowned as a cattle judge) but they were an unprofitable venture. Peter could afford to continue supporting them, Bruce could not. His son remembered his father saying that he preferred to lose his money in other ways. But the brothers were close and Bruce never hesitated to confide in or ask advice from Peter.

The timber business changed little between the wars. The experiences of Willie Smith who joined the firm aged 14 in 1933 and Sandy Hogg, son of Alex, who joined at the same age in 1936 were typical of many who worked in the Scottish timber trade. Willie's grandfather, father and uncle already worked for James Jones and Willie was born in a timber house at Denholm near Hawick in the Borders. His childhood was marked by frequent moves from one sawmill to another. When he was two or three, the family moved with the sawmill to Invergordon where Willie's uncle, Willie Kerr, was in charge. The company would buy up entire estates, taking the timber and selling off the land. The family lived in Invergordon Castle, now demolished, where the billiard room was used as an office. Three years later, the family left Invergordon for the Blackadder estate. Willie is clear that such frequent moves were disruptive for his education – at some village schools he found himself ahead of the class, at others he was behind. Willie's father left the firm for the merchant navy, sailing in and out of Grangemouth on oil tankers. The family moved to Nisbet where Willie Kerr was responsible for several local mills. Later he took charge of the Larbert sawmill and it was there where young Willie's family eventually moved.

Willie began work at the age of 14 in a sawmill at Jedburgh where he was placed in charge of the steam engine. This began a lifelong love affair between Willie and steam (today he is a renowned exhibitor of steam engines all over Scotland) even though he had to be up at six every morning, cycling six or seven miles to the mill to light the engine ready for the day. A Dutch-oven fired the engine, fuelled by sawdust. Another Willie, Willie Rennie, who was in overall charge of the outside mills, later remembered that 'virtually the whole sawmill could go on a lorry and the motive power, a steam engine, was towed behind'. The whole mill could be dismantled, transported, re-erected and back in operation again within a week. In the days before electricity was available for these remote mills, illumination came from naphtha flares which were not always reliable. The naphtha container had to be heated up in the fire before use, but the flare often went out as the container cooled down and it was very susceptible to draughts.

Moving to another estate bought by the firm, the Ballochrain estate, Willie Smith moved into his first bothy, the temporary, portable wooden huts which were home to Scottish forestry workers felling and sawing trees in remote locations. The mill at Larbert made bothies in kit form, ready to assemble on site, an exercise which took two or three days. Willie Kerr preferred to build his own, larger versions. From Jones & Campbell came the woodcutters' stoves used to cook meals. (The firm's catalogue advertised the 'Woodcutter' as 'designed for bothies, caravans and for general heating in country districts where wood is the main fuel'.) When Sandy Hogg first experienced bothy life, he learned how to cook for the first time. He and his companions managed to get a couple of pigeons which they plucked and put in a pot over the fire to cook. But they had forgotten to gut the birds. The dish turned out to be more like soup, recalled Sandy, although they still ate it. The stoves, in a timber building, were an obvious fire hazard and it was not unusual for bothies to be burnt out. Toilet facilities were primitive, often communal and often no more than holes in the ground. Water was taken by the pail from the supply laid on for the steam



The strain of extracting heavy logs from this wood on the Haining estate near Selkirk is telling on this heavy horse, led by a young Willie Smith with G Baptie in the background. The picture dates from around 1940.



This wintry scene from the 1930s shows a typical forest sawmill located right next to the standing timber and surrounded by sawn timber. In the bitter cold, the steam engine is working hard.

engines in the mill. Men were usually up early to get the stove going for their breakfast and cook something for their lunch. The bothies could be very cold in winter although Willie Smith remembered a simple form of insulation involving timber boards lined with brown paper.

At Ballochrain, like most mills in those days, the men could not have done their work without the horse. They were often Clydesdales, big, heavy, powerful horses able to drag felled timber out of the forest or pull loaded four-wheeled bogies. Willie took his turn to look after the seven horses at Ballochrain. They were fed with oats and hay at 5.30am, cleaned and harnessed an hour later to be ready for starting work at 7.00am, stabled and fed at 5pm, cleaned again and bedded down with sawdust at 8pm. Some of the older horses could not lie down and slept standing up, supported by a strong rope slung behind them. At Larbert Sandy Drysdale and Jimmie Clarke worked as blacksmiths, turning out four pairs

of horse-shoes an hour for the Clydesdales. Tractors began to appear in the late 1930s. Before the widespread adoption of pneumatic tyres, the ruts created by solid-wheeled vehicles, bogies as well as tractors, was a source of friction with landowners and local authorities. At Fotheringham, near Kirriemuir, the insistence of the estate led to a mile and a half of rails being laid down, using a converted Model T Ford as a tractor to shunt wagons up and down.

Some operations could be very complex. In a larch wood at Whiting Bay on Arran in the early 1930s the logs were taken from the hillside into the glen by horses and then onto the beach by railway. While some of the timber was cut up for pit-props, larger logs were sent elsewhere. When the puffer, or small steam boat, could not be beached, the logs were dragged into the water by horses, roped together in groups of six and rafted by rowing boat to the puffer lying offshore. As well as the timber, the firm had a market for larch bark for a while, which was stripped



A Ford Model T engine powers this locomotive on the light railway constructed to ferry timber at a site on Arran in the 1930s.



The interesting aspect of this picture is the timber bothy in the background, the portable home for many timber workers and their families as they moved from one wood to another.

when the sap was running, dried and flayed. For some years the firm also shipped timber round the coast on the *Torwood*, a larger successor to the first vessel of that name, which was operated by the firm as a coaster and could carry up to 180 tons of timber.

The best wood, the finest hardwoods, was not sawn but sold in the round. You tried to bogie sufficient logs to the roadside to make up one lorry-load every day. The timber was hauled to the station either by a team of horses or by the steam-lorries and traction engines belonging to local haulage contractors. Willie Smith remembered how the felling of one enormous oak on the Blackadder estate caused terrible trouble as a team of horses took it down

through the village to the station. It turned out that the tree weighed more than 14 tons.

Life was hard but hearty. The days were long. One worker recalled that during the summer they would begin at seven in the morning and often not get to bed until after midnight. 'We were that tired, the bed collapsed and we slept on the floor.' Sandy Hogg remembered that, without mechanical aids, working in the forests was physically very tough. It was 'all shoulder work' for the woodcutters who were known from their capacity for hard work as 'horses with two legs'. A hill down to the sawmill would give some relief. Four men would be required to fell a large beech. Two would remove their belts and hook



Lorries superseded horse and cart and the railways between the wars as the main form of haulage for timber. Here are two James Jones lorries, one piled high with logs and the other with sawn timber.



Two photographs showing work underway at the Larbert joinery works in the late 1920s. The man in the bowler hat in the centre of both pictures is the manager, Mr Steel.

them around each end of the saw to allow all four to pull on the saw together. A tree, depending on size, could take from half an hour to two hours to fell. At the mill, where softwood and the tops from trees sold in the round were sawn up for wagon bottoms, sleepers and pit-timber, the circular saws were all sharpened by hand. Band saws were used but mainly in the permanent mills. The reason for preferring circular saws, considered David Leith in 1938, was ‘owing to the limitations imposed by the temporary nature of the work, and the continual shifting’. Sawyers often lost fingers, it was an occupational hazard, while woodcutters ran the risk of being crushed.

Everyone would join in together and help each other. There were plenty of characters working in the forests. At Balloch there were two Irish woodcutters, the brothers Jimmy and Geordie Plant. Like many woodcutters, they were hard-drinking men. There was little else on which they could spend their money even though the local pub was often several miles away. (The link between these mills and the outside world was the grocer’s van, calling once a week, which carried messages back from the men.) Willie Smith was in charge of the mill and insisted that the brothers should finish their woodcutting before they set off for a drink because he knew he would have difficulty getting them back again. Often the men had spent their weekly wages on drink before they had been paid. But in this case, when Willie Kerr turned up to ask the brothers if they would like an advance on their wages as usual, they replied that they needed ‘damn all. That nephew of yours is working us like slaves’. One man told Willie Rennie how the carters working at a sawmill at Garston Eggerness in Wigtonshire in the mid-1930s would pop into the local pub and leave their horses waiting outside. The horses eventually lost patience and made their own way home, often chased by the irate – and tipsy – carters. Mill foremen were feared and respected. Willie McEwen ignored Sandy Hogg’s outstretched hand when he arrived at the Huntly mill, greeting him with the words, ‘If you’re big enough, I hope to hell you’re good enough’, before turning on his heels.

At Larbert the joinery division, under manager George Steel, clad always in bowler hat, black jacket and striped trousers, employed a couple of hundred men. It was successful enough to win a number of timber housing contracts in central Scotland but all this ground to a halt with the depression. One man recalled that ‘out of the workforce, all that was left was another time-served apprentice and myself with the foreman, Mr Easton’. This small band turned their hands to making greenhouses and garden huts for sale to the public, as well as farm ladders. Better times found the plant and machinery being updated to make doors. Employment rose once more as the demand for housing returned and the division turned out tens of thousands of doors under a new manager, Mr Lochhead. During the depression of the early 1930s, to provide alternative employment, the department built a number of large glasshouses which were erected at Larbert. Here, tomatoes and later a wide range of flowers and vegetables were grown for many years until they were closed in 1971 after three years of losing money. Another small business which ran between the wars was the creosoting and pole business managed by David Leith on a site near Dunmore Park.

The office staff at Larbert had grown to some 16 by the time John Spark joined as an office-boy in 1924. By now there were four women on the staff, Cathie Robertson, Margaret McGregor, Jessie Taylor and Ruby Smith. The collieries were such an important part of the firm’s business that every Wednesday a small group from the office, usually including first Tom Bruce Jones and later Bruce Jones, would visit the Royal Exchange in Glasgow to meet the colliery buyers. The firm dealt with several collieries in northern England as well as those in Scotland. Among the more unusual customers was the Coventry car-maker, Armstrong Siddeley, supplied with Scotch fir to make running boards. Alex Hogg dealt mainly with the collieries and often visited individual mines. A childhood accident had deprived him of his ability to write but he had developed the most phenomenal memory in compensation. When he returned to the office from

This rare picture of office staff at Larbert dates from around 1928 and shows (back row, left to right) R Lang, Margaret McGregor, John Donaldson, John Spark and Miss Robertson; (middle row) an unidentified lady and Charlie Hogan; (front row) Andrew Towers and James Malloch.



securing new orders, he would recite all the details to his secretary.

'Business was often difficult and never easy', recalled Bruce Jones about the inter-war years. This was an understatement. The timber business teetered perpetually on the brink of financial disaster. The situation was summed up when the directors confessed in December 1931 that they 'hoped business would improve, our turnover was good, but in order to please our customers, and retain their trade, and goodwill, we were forced to sell at exceptionally keen prices'. The only thing which saved the business was the profitability of Jones & Campbell. Although the businesses were entirely separate, they had overlapping boards so the family directors of one company knew what was happening in the other. Jones & Campbell had to ride to the rescue of James Jones & Sons as early as 1921-22, when the latter found itself without the cash to pay for over-priced forward contracts of standing timber which had fallen due. So

acute was the situation that the business was faced with liquidation. Jones & Campbell bailed out James Jones & Sons with a loan of £50,000 (now worth £1.5 million). In similar circumstances, further loans of £25,000 (£890,000 today) followed in 1924 and £28,000 (£1.2 million today) in 1926. Interest was charged at just half a per cent over the rate charged by Scottish banks on their deposit accounts yet James Jones & Sons was never in a position to repay either capital or interest. By August 1932 the total sum outstanding amounted to more than £112,000 (£6.5 million today). It was understandable that, as a note prepared on the saga later described, this situation gave the directors of both companies 'the most serious concern'. A solution had to be found. Bruce Jones and his brother, Peter, were particularly concerned that the next generation should not have to be faced with such an unenviable legacy. An interim answer came with the transfer of land and property worth £44,000 from James Jones & Sons to

Jones & Campbell in partial settlement in 1933. Four years later, when James Jones & Sons at last returned to profit, it was agreed that should this trend continue, the company would consider converting the loan into shares. Yet, despite this desperate state of affairs, scarcely a man lost his job in the sawmilling business. Such security was rare, particularly during the depression, and partly accounts for the fact that so many men worked so long for the firm. In 1938, when the firm celebrated one hundred years in sawmilling, 13 men from the Rennie, Kerr, Fraser and Forsyth families, were in attendance, with more than 600 years of service among them.

Peter Forbes Jones was an open-minded, approachable and generous man. Like his brothers, he was a fine sportsman. As a footballer, he played both for Stenhousemuir and for Queen's Park. He was in the Queen's Park team, an amateur club still strong enough to play First Division football, which played against Celtic at Hampden Park on the day the ground opened in 1903. With his wife, Nancy, he lived a very comfortable life at Dunmore Park, the splendid Tudor Gothic mansion built in the 1820s to the designs of William Wilkins, the architect of the National Gallery in London. Here he raised his internationally renowned pedigree shorthorns. His life-



Peter Forbes Jones (1880-1944). He was in sole charge of the foundry from 1917 until his death. Jones & Campbell enjoyed its most prosperous period under his leadership, enabling the firm not only to ensure the survival of James Jones & Sons, but also allowing Peter to live in style at Dunmore Park.

style was possible thanks to the remarkable run of profits made at Jones & Campbell. His earnings in 1925, for instance, were the equivalent of nearly £110,000 today, while in 1934 he drew the equivalent of almost £400,000. (Incidentally, it was probably Bruce's salary as a director at Jones & Campbell which threw him a financial lifeline. In 1934 his earnings from the company would be worth £70,000 today.) In addition the company's shareholders between the wars enjoyed steadily rising dividends on their ordinary shares. He had to work hard for his money and it was hard work which eventually killed him. Peter Forbes Jones steered Jones & Campbell almost single-handedly from 1917 to 1944. With the loss of several directors from the business, he had become chairman, managing director and company secretary (as well as joint chairman of James Jones & Sons) by 1930. This was not entirely of his own choosing. With the death of James Jones in 1926, the company had lost four directors in twelve years. Dermont Campbell's son, Donald, was a dead loss. Personal problems led to his estrangement from his wife and children, he gossiped about the financial affairs of the business and, the company's minutes recorded in 1938, 'was now a menace to the good name of the firm'. He was removed from the board in 1937. Peter's own son, Forbes, and his nephew, Jim, joined the board in 1934 but they were only in their early twenties.

There was a ritual to the announcement of the annual results from Jones & Campbell between the wars. Peter Forbes Jones would begin by describing the absolutely appalling economic situation, either nationally or internationally, as well as the stiff competition the company faced from its rivals and the lower margins this inevitably created. Having unsettled the shareholders, he would then announce glowing results and increased, or at the very worst, unchanged dividends. For example, in 'the terribly bad times' of 1921-22, the firm recorded the remarkable net profits of £47,000 (£1.7 million today) on sales of £153,000 (£6.7 million today). In 1930-31, at the height of the depression, a year which he described as 'one of the most disastrous ones on

record', Jones & Campbell still made £25,000 (£1.4 million today) on turnover of £174,000 (over £9 million today). Although the business was relatively small, it was very profitable.

Profits, after the taxman and shareholders had taken their cut, were left mainly as cash in the bank rather than reinvested in the business. In 1921 cash and investments, in today's terms, were worth £1.9 million; in 1940 they were worth the equivalent of £3.4 million. By 1939 the foundry, although busy, was old-fashioned, still relying on hand-moulding like many other British foundries. It would be easy to criticise such an approach over such a long period. With the benefit of hindsight, it had happy advantages all round. Firstly, it allowed Jones & Campbell to save James Jones & Sons. Secondly, the company's cash reserves made significant reinvestment possible after the Second World War when a younger generation of the family began to take the business into new avenues.

The company's financial success was not unusual; the rest of the Scottish foundry industry enjoyed similar prosperity from the mid-1920s, mainly thanks to the post-war house-building boom. But the type of house going up was very different from the typical Edwardian house. Income tax, now at what seemed the oppressive rate of 25 per cent, had squeezed the middle classes. They no longer had the funds to employ several servants or maintain large houses. Jones & Campbell adapted to this changing market. 'What was the reason for our exceptional success?' asked Peter Forbes Jones in 1932. 'Having a good clientele and attending to them all the time. In addition, the expense we went to in replacing old patterns with new was having something to do with it.' An example of this from the early 1920s was the 'Bungalow Belle' – 'Breakfasts for the early riser can be speedily cooked by the 'Bungalow Belle' and the Hot Water got for Bath or Scullery purposes in a short time'. The best-selling solid fuel stove was the Belle Portable range. In 1932 the firm took a stake in the Scottish Enamelling Company, operating from land adjacent to the foundry, taking complete control in the following year. This enabled Jones & Campbell to



The 'Belle' range, of which the 'Belle' Portable Cooker was the most popular, was the best-selling series of kitchen ranges for Jones & Campbell between the world wars.

extend the finishes it offered on the goods it produced. While cooking and heating appliances made up most of the firm's output, it continued to produce an enormous range of other products, including rain-water and soil goods, skylights, air-bricks, towel rail brackets and general castings of all descriptions. The fickle taste of the British public was the reason given for developing such a wide range of patterns.

Peter Forbes Jones was a shrewd businessman. He had to have faith in his own instincts, for the company did not have the systems in place to review whether or not the policies he adopted were working. There were no management accounts and several months elapsed between the end of the financial year and the completion of the accounts. The results were usually a revelation to the directors who often

expressed surprise at how well the business had done. Peter pursued a cautious course, insisting on economy at all times. Reserves could never be too strong, he insisted, since they might be essential to see the firm through difficult times. He was eagle-eyed, seizing the moment to secure favourable contract prices for raw materials, carefully watching customer accounts as well as rivals. He began transferring distribution from rail to road, which was more competitive and caused less damage to goods in transit. He was always reluctant to lose any of his 250 or so workers and often pursued turnover at smaller margins to keep the works fully employed. The foundry seems to have avoided the unrest at other foundries as wages were cut and short-time working introduced. And he resisted all overtures to join the combines, which emerged to bring together many of the smaller foundries in an attempt to raise productivity, increase efficiency and remove excess capacity. Allied Ironfounders, formed in 1929, included several Falkirk foundries, among them Dobbie Forbes & Co. So did Federated Foundries, established in 1935. The historian of Allied Ironfounders noted that the creation of the combine enabled it to survive the depression; but then so did Jones & Campbell, smaller and independent.

The Second World War did less for Jones & Campbell than it did for the other businesses in which the Jones family was involved. Initially the firm was confronted by a shortage of men, materials and official contracts, but went on to make thousands of stoves and ranges for the Ministry of Supply and the War Office. For example, in 1944 the firm supplied 13,000 portable ranges and 600 combination grates for civilian use and 1,500 field ranges and 10,000 heating stoves for military use. Scottish Enamelling produced over half a million shell cases. Excess profits tax was levied on profits in excess of peacetime profits, but Jones & Campbell, thanks to its high level of pre-war profits, was not much affected by this, unlike James Jones & Sons, as we shall see.

Overtime was worked and women were employed but these measures never really compensated for the

lack of skilled workers. In February 1944 Peter Forbes Jones wrote to his son, Forbes, on military service overseas, that John Reid, the general manager, 'is never out of trouble with labour difficulties just now, and demands from the men and so on, but he gets over them. He has learned now to have patience and perseverance, and there is always a way out of the difficulty, but the men are difficult. Of course, it was the same in the last war. Most of the young fellows were away and the ones that were left seemed to take advantage of the position and knew that we could not do without them and their demands rose accordingly. The same thing is happening again, but I am not worrying about it. It will come all right after the war when we get all you fellows home'.

Jim Bruce Jones, the eldest son of Tom Bruce Jones and a director of Jones & Campbell, was also serving overseas. He was killed in action with the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders in the summer of 1943 during the attack on Long Stop Hill, near Tunis. He had volunteered to be sent from brigade staff to the front where officers were in short supply.

Peter Forbes Jones had made repeated requests to the authorities to release Forbes from military service so that he could help run the foundry but each request fell on deaf ears. Peter, suffering from angina, worked harder than ever during the war, ignoring his doctor's advice to take things more easily. He died suddenly on 17 June 1944. The board, in tribute, recorded that 'he gave his life for his country just as surely as if he had been killed in the front line'. Only now did Forbes, a major in the Royal Artillery, who had been decorated with Military Cross for service in Malta, return home. He found a foundry where the workforce was old, war-weary and unproductive and the plant was old-fashioned and worn-out. Forbes turned his mind towards modernisation. He knew it would require all his commitment. It was for this reason that he declined the captaincy of the Scottish cricket team for which he – and his late cousin Jim – had played before the war.

Up at the shipyard in Buckie the war was a boon. Jones Buckie Slip & Shipyard had had a miserable time between the wars. From the early 1920s on-



Steam drifters sit on the Jones Buckie slipway awaiting repair in 1925.

wards, it was constantly struggling. As Bruce Jones recorded, 'no ships were built and the shipyard was practically idle'. The fishing industry was forever in the doldrums, competition was keen, credit to customers was extended for longer and longer. The result was that the firm, which had to lay off men, was almost crippled by bad debts. The flow of work from the Admiralty during the Second World War was a huge relief, but the effect of excess profits tax was to make the reduction of the deficit built up by the firm very difficult and it had not been cleared by the time peace returned.

British timber production was seen as critical in winning the war. Unlike the First World War, a great deal of preparation was done before war broke out. Landowners, timber merchants and the Forestry Commission collaborated to prepare a schedule of prices for standing timber and carried out a census to establish the extent of available timber, sawmilling capacity and labour. The trade was controlled through a department of the Timber Control and, for

the purposes of production, England was divided into areas and Scotland, which enjoyed a fair degree of autonomy, into divisions.

Instrumental in maximising Scottish timber output was Tom Bruce Jones, second son of the late Tom Bruce Jones. He first worked in the business at Huntly in 1930 and became a director in 1936. Like his brothers, Jim and Reid, who had just taken over the joinery division, he joined up during the first months of the war. This left his uncle, Bruce, as the only remaining director at the timber business. Bruce realised how important timber would be for the country and succeeded where his brother had failed in requesting the return of his nephew Tom from the army. Tom lost both his brothers in action. Scarcely three months after Jim Bruce Jones had been killed, Reid lost his life during the Sicily landings in the autumn of 1943.

No sooner was Tom released from the forces than he was elected, as his father had been, as president of the Home Grown Timber Merchants' Association of

Scotland. Holding the office throughout the war, he earned the respect and admiration of his peers. He was a gregarious man, full of charm, who had the ability, inherited from his father, to speak to anyone at any level. When a presentation was made to him when he stepped down, one speaker, noting the predilection of the trade to be 'selfish and ruthless', remarked on the fact that Tom had treated all firms, large and small, 'with a surprising impartiality'. It was surprising that his contribution was not officially recognised as his father's had been in the previous war although he did belatedly receive the Queen's Silver Jubilee medal in 1977. He thought little of it for it very quickly disappeared and has never been seen again.

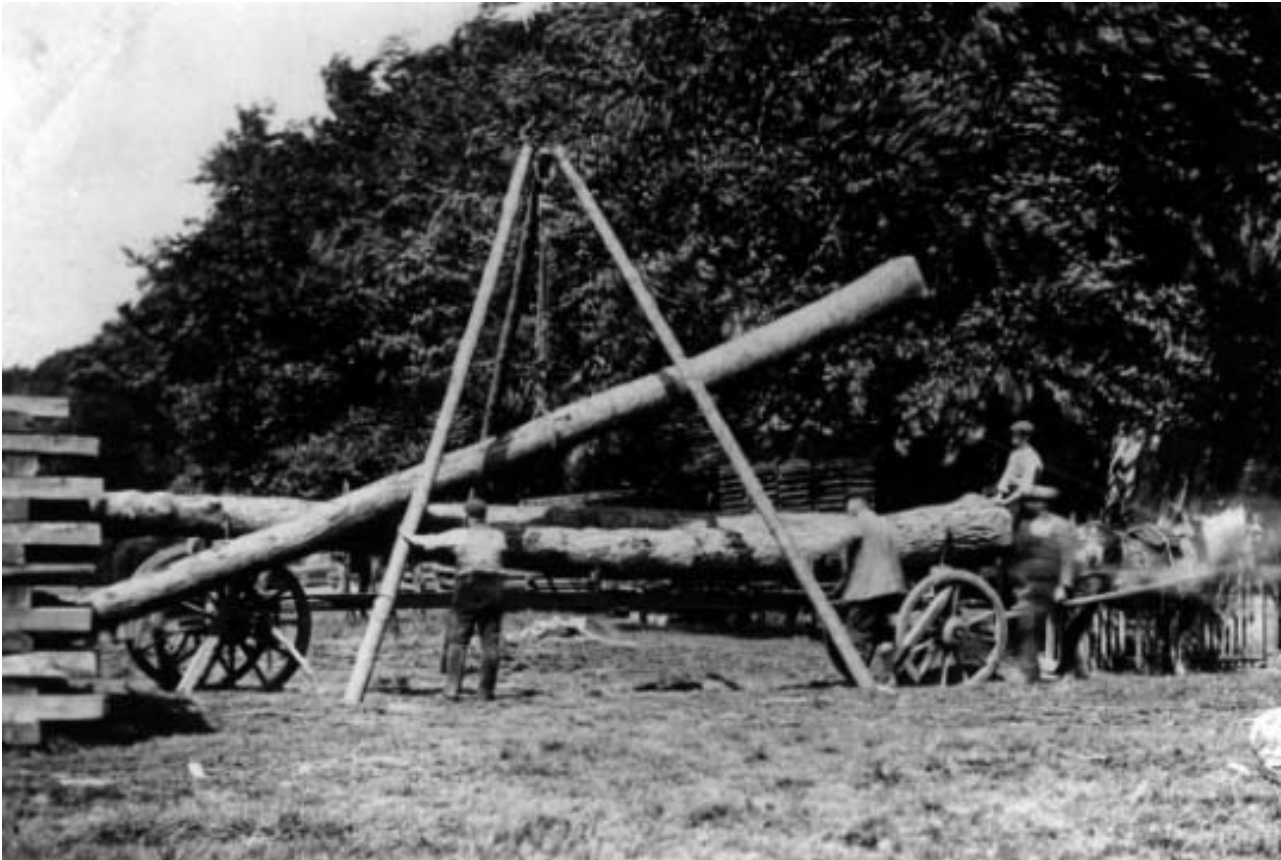
The achievement of the UK timber trade was phenomenal. Only four per cent of the country's timber needs had been supplied domestically in 1939 yet by the end of the war the British timber trade was supplying 60 per cent. Firstly, while arrangements were being made with Canada, British sawmillers managed to increase monthly supplies of pit-props from 1 million cubic feet to almost 6 million within nine months. As the Battle of the Atlantic intensified, the focus switched to sawn timber and almost every target set for the trade was exceeded. More labour was recruited and the Women's Timber Corps created in 1942. The workforce rose from barely 14,000 in 1939 to a peak of 73,000 in 1943 with many jobs becoming reserved occupations. After 1943 the emphasis moved again to conserving shrinking

stocks and as imports resumed in 1945 production of British timber was allowed to decline. By the end of 1945 60 per cent of UK softwoods and 40 per cent of hardwoods had been felled. What was left was not only poor quality but also difficult to extract. James Jones & Sons, planning for post-war production, gloomily forecast it would not exceed a quarter of pre-war figures.

In Scotland the trade increased output from 9.7 million cubic feet of softwood and 1.5 million cubic feet of hardwood in 1940 to 15.8 million and 3.7 million respectively in 1943. In that year the largest single producer in the UK was James Jones & Sons, whose 36 mills supplied 1.8 million cubic feet of sawn timber, 691,000 cubic feet of sawn mining timber,



The wartime labour force in the forests was supplemented by young women, members of the Women's Timber Corps, popularly known as the 'Timber Jills'. Willie Houston, in this 1943 photograph, looks more than happy to be working with the two young women, Amy and Kitty, on either side of him.



Willie Callaghan is the carter at the Invergordon estate in this picture of the traditional way of using shear legs to load timber onto a jankers cart. The Second World War saw more and more horses replaced by tractors and other vehicles.

510,000 cubic feet of round mining timber and 795,000 cubic feet for conversion and as telegraph poles. This was a remarkable effort, achieved in spite of the fact that much of the firm's newly recruited labour force, which rose to 600, was not a patch on the quality of those who had joined the forces at the very beginning of the war. Sandy Hogg, who was responsible for overseeing five mills, Tomintoul, Grantown-on-Spey, Kingussie, Glenlivet and Dufftown, found some mill foremen were taking advantage of lax wartime supervision while there were too many cases of petty corruption and excessive drinking. Bruce Jones travelled widely on his special petrol allowance (which enabled him to bring back home fresh eggs, chickens and pheasants) but it was

impossible for him to make visits to the company's widely dispersed mills as often as he would have liked. Tom was heavily involved with the Timber Control, as was David Leith, who later became general manager in 1944. Other managers, such as Sandy Hogg, were scarce. Exceptional measures were taken in 1941 to prevent the departure of James Forsyth, in charge of operations around Larbert. He was guaranteed a bonus of £100, given an increased salary and provided with a rented house in Kincardine.

By now James Jones & Sons was beginning to outstrip Jones & Campbell. In 1939 the company's sales and profits were £250,000 (£9.4 million today) and £17,000 (£644,000 today) respectively. By 1943,

they had reached £605,000 (£17 million today) and £32,000 (£911,000 today). Even so, the company could not afford to increase its operations on the scale demanded by the government, even though turnover and profits rose from the equivalent of £12.8 million and £870,000 respectively in 1939 to £17.5 million and £925,000 in 1943. This was because the extra profits made on rising turnover went entirely to the taxman because of wartime taxation. Instead, the extra plant required to open more mills was hired from the government as part of an industry-wide scheme. Bruce Jones later remembered that 'war too gave a tremendous impetus to mechanisation and poor Dobbin at last, to a large extent, was displaced by the Iron Horse'. Despite this scheme, the firm's capital base was no longer adequate and it was borrowing excessively from the bank. Riding to the rescue once more in the summer of 1944 was Jones & Campbell, lending James Jones & Sons £30,000 for one year at a beneficial rate of interest.

During the war both companies finally resolved the problem of what do with the pre-war loans which James Jones had still not repaid to Jones & Campbell. There was some tension before an agreement was reached, with those directors most attached to Jones & Campbell seeing any conversion of the loans into shares as a chance 'if necessary to dictate policy', while those on the other side of the fence were insistent that any settlement should continue to ensure that 'they should retain control of the company'. Implemented at the end of 1945, the result, with

Jones & Campbell holding 40 per cent of the shares in James Jones & Sons, later diluted to 32 per cent in 1950 after a rights issue, gave directors of the former a significant influence but ensured directors of the latter did indeed retain control. But the foundry business had little confidence in the timber business, for the directors immediately wrote off two-thirds of the value of their investment in James Jones & Sons.



The war stimulated new ways of doing things. Here, at Corgarff in June 1949, a crane is used to load logs onto a James Jones Albion lorry. R Adams is on the left and D Jardine on the right.

'Many calamitous matters' 1945-1967

The long term outlook for the British timber trade after the war may have been gloomy but initially firms like James Jones & Sons enjoyed something of an Indian summer. There were two main reasons for this in Jones's case. Firstly, stocks of timber had been husbanded in the later stages of the war in anticipation of the post-war surge in demand. Secondly, the firm, as Bruce Jones put it in 1949, was 'very quickly off its mark' in securing a large part of the German timber being imported into the UK as reparations. In the late 1940s James Jones & Sons spent almost £400,000 (about £9 million today) on purchasing imported German timber, which represented about half of all the timber purchases made by the company. As a result James Jones & Sons enjoyed record turnover and profits in 1947-49, passing the million pound sales mark for the first time in 1948. In 1949 the profits made by the company allowed the payment of a substantially improved dividend and the creation of a small pot from which to pay older employees a small pension on retirement. By then German timber imports had come to an end.

Sandy Hogg was closely involved with the clearance of German woodland after the war. Seconded to the North German Timber Control, he secured supplies of timber not only for export to the UK but also for 24 German coastal sawmills. He instructed a thousand prisoners-of-war in the art of tree felling and sent them to fell trees in the forests once preserved for shooting and hunting. He was so successful that his commanding officer asked the company to allow him to remain in Germany for a second year. His CO wrote that 'his sawmill record out here is the best for the zone, he being the only

man who has achieved his target and he has in fact exceeded it'. Sandy eventually returned home in 1947.

Bruce Jones knew in 1949 that within two or three years, the business would require 'very careful supervision'. The lack of British timber, combined with competition from overseas, made life much more difficult for sawmillers. Shortage of working capital and reliance on bank borrowing plagued the business throughout the 1950s and 1960s as Bruce Jones and his nephew, Tom, tried to balance the need to purchase scarce standing timber with limited financial resources. The joinery business became the first victim in this perpetual struggle. It had been losing money for some time. A temporary reprieve in 1950 to see whether it could at last return to profit was to no avail and it was closed in March 1952.

Financial difficulties created tension between the executive directors, Bruce Jones and Tom Bruce Jones, and the non-executive directors, Forbes Jones and, later Bruce Jones's son, T D Bruce Jones. Essentially, it was a tussle between Tom Bruce Jones, with his natural instinct to buy as much suitable timber as possible, and Forbes and T D Bruce Jones who kept trying to restrain him. Tom Bruce Jones was often buying up estates, a practice prevalent after the First World War and repeated after the Second, as the cheapest way of acquiring timber. The company purchased timber widely, in places like Dunkeld, Lochnaw, Largo, Arniston and Melville. As stocks rose, the non-executives grew more and more concerned. In July 1951 the board agreed that 'the executive directors should continue to exercise their utmost discretion meantime and maintain their policy of selective buying only'. For the first time a



Men from James Jones & Sons hard at work on the dangerous tangle of fallen timber left by the windblow of 1953 in Aberdeenshire.

professional accountant, David Miller, was appointed with responsibility for finance and administration. Management responsibilities were reorganised, with Tom Bruce Jones taking sole control of production. At the same time, the company also divided the ordinary shares into two categories. Every 100 ordinary shares were turned into one 'A' share with voting rights and 99 'B' shares without voting rights. Ostensibly this was done to enable the female members of the family to hold shares. In fact, it was really to allow J C Bruce Jones to hand on shares to his son and daughters without losing control. It also achieved the purpose of concentrating control of the business, through the voting shares, in the hands of the directors.

Although margins were falling, the company was still profitable in the early 1950s, a great contrast with the debilitating times of the 1920s and 1930s. Then the company over-reached itself. The reason was the great windblow which brought down millions of trees all over north-eastern Scotland in January 1953. Bruce Jones, at the company's annual general meeting later that year, remarked how 'the great gale' had 'among the many calamitous matters arising in its wake, set the Home Timber Trade a problem the magnitude of which is unprecedented and unparalleled in my own life time's experience'. The storms which wreaked havoc in Scottish forests sank the Princess Victoria, the ferry from Stranraer to Larne, with the loss of 120 lives. The devastation in the forests seemed to act as magnet for every sawmiller in the country. As the largest of them all, and with such long-established and close relationships with so many estates, James Jones & Sons was inevitably at the forefront of the clearance operations. At Ballogie, for example, half a dozen steam-driven portable sawmills were erected, with a canteen, 14 houses and between 20 and 30 bothies for 130 men at Potarch, between Aboyne and Banchory. Complete with running water, electricity and toilets, this temporary village, known as Jonesville, was finished in two months. (One of the foremen was John Kissock whose son eventually became joint managing director of the company.) On the Darnaway estate,

where an estimated one million cubic feet of timber had been blown down, Nissen huts were converted into accommodation. All over the area James Jones & Sons either erected new mills or transferred existing mills to cope with the work load. Sandy Hogg calculated that after the windblow the firm was operating 23 sawmills north of Larbert, having begun with just seven. They were in action for three years with the exceptions of those at Ballogie and Ballindalloch which were accidentally burnt down.

It was an expensive episode for James Jones. As well as the cost of moving mills and men in the first place, there was the cost of taking the mills down again three years later. Labour costs rose as demand outstripped supply. The hours involved in measuring and valuing fallen timber were more than matched by the time taken to saw and extract the timber, often from the most difficult and inaccessible situations. Since there was too much timber for many of the forest mills to cope with, there was also the cost of sending the sawn timber to mills outside the area. These were heavy expenses which the company failed to recoup from timber sales. Partly, this was because there was so much timber that there was a glut on the market. Although the principal buyers, the National Coal Board and the British Railways Board, made a point of buying as much timber as possible from the windblown area, prices still dropped. Another reason was that a number of unscrupulous merchants (remember how a former president of the trade association had described the trade as 'selfish and ruthless') from outside the area had taken a number of estate owners for a ride. On the other hand, Tom Bruce Jones, who was in charge of operations, acted in the role of white knight. James Jones & Sons had been established in the area for a long time and built up harmonious relationships with many estates which he wanted to sustain after the windblown timber had been cleared. But some estates, desperate to claw back the losses they had made in dealing with other merchants, did not see Tom as a white knight. For them, he was simply a soft touch, an easy way of getting some of their money back.

The company recognised its predicament early on. By the end of June 1953 the directors agreed that no more windblown timber should be purchased except where 'consistent with preserving connections'. Struggling to contain spiralling costs, they tried to obtain a clearer idea of the costs of running each mill, results were broken down by department for the first time, and stronger control was exercised over timber purchases and labour costs. Bruce Jones, commenting to shareholders on the fact that the overdraft had risen by £100,000 as a result of the crisis, gallantly defended the company's actions: 'Your Company now stands heavily committed but in view of the National Emergency character of the situation and in view also of the Company's pre-eminent position in the Home Timber Trade, I submit that there was no alternative to the role assumed and to the large scale action taken'. But as a result the company made a loss for the year of £57,000 (£1.2 million today) on a marginally larger turnover of £1.2 million (£20 million today).

Bruce Jones died on Christmas Day 1953. Three years before, on 1 May 1950, the company had

celebrated his achievement of 50 years' service with a remarkable event. A series of special trains and coaches brought 2,000 employees and their partners from all over Scotland to the stations serving the Clyde. Arriving at 9am, some people had travelled for more than five hours but, according to one newspaper, 'they sang and whistled all the way from the stations to Bridge Wharf'. There, every one of them was greeted by Bruce Jones, clad in tweed coat and cap, as they boarded the coastal cruisers, *Duchess of Hamilton* and *Queen Mary II*, which would take them to Rothesay and the Isle of Bute. When the ships reached Rothesay, the celebrants had the choice of remaining on board to eat or taking lunch in one of the 21 hotels booked by the firm. All kinds of entertainment were laid on during the afternoon for those not wishing to continue the cruise around the Kyles of Bute. Christine Ferguson was one of those on the cruise. She joined the office in Larbert after leaving school aged 14 in 1947 and, with a break to raise a family between 1960 and 1967, worked for the company until her retirement in 1993. At Rothesay she and her friends, who loved dancing, had

On a damp day in May 1950 2,000 people from James Jones & Sons gathered to sail down the Clyde as part of the celebrations of their chairman's 50th anniversary with the firm. Among those waiting to board are, at the far right, Tom Bruce Jones and his wife, Ray, with their children, young Tom, in the kilt, and his older sister Patricia, known as Tish. On Tom Bruce Jones's right stands his nephew Airlie.





The Larbert office staff in 1950 – Christine Ferguson, who joined in 1947 and retired in 1993, was able to name everyone in the group
 (back row, left to right) Helen Campbell, Jean Clarke, Annie Stewart, Robert McArthur, Isabel Allison, Isa Bennie;
 (front row, left to right) Beatrice Roberts, May Morris, Rose Binnie.

intended to take the opportunity to dance away the afternoon only to discover that the ballroom was nothing but 'a bleak hall with a few records'. Instead, they hastened back to the boats to carry on the cruise. High tea was provided on the return journey before a very weary crowd of people were returned whence they came. Sandy Hogg remembered that some of these tired travellers were nevertheless not terribly eager to go home. Leading one group of revellers from the boat to the station, he turned round to discover that they had all peeled off, following the foreman into the nearest pub. It was not easy retrieving them all.

It is difficult to conceive of many businesses today, especially a relatively small one as James Jones & Sons then was, organising such a major social event. But Bruce Jones saw this and other events as an important way of bringing together all his employees, so often scattered all over the country. In fact staff from James Jones & Sons often joined with employees from the other family businesses at the annual dinner dances which started after the war, initially held at the Plough Hotel in Stenhousemuir.

There was a close-knit relationship among staff at Larbert. For Christine Ferguson, 'the staff were real family, like brothers and sisters' and the office was 'friendlier than some families'. There were always presentations when someone was married or retired. For instance, the joiners would always make clothes poles and rolling pins for the girls as wedding presents. On the other hand, these were the days, Christine remembered, when women were always paid less than the men. As she says, 'the men got salaries, the women were paid in sweeties'. The men had Christmas bonuses, the women did not (it was hardly compensation that occasionally Bruce Jones, 'a darling person', would slip Christine a 10 shilling note). She took evening classes to learn shorthand and improve her typing but when the time came to take her examinations, her manager, Jimmy Spark, John's brother, refused to allow her the time off.

One of the last projects initiated under the chairmanship of J C Bruce Jones was the construction of a new head office for the business. This was long overdue. In a memorandum written in an attempt to obtain an additional licence for building materials



A happy group at the celebration of J C Bruce Jones's 50th anniversary with the firm in 1950. Enjoying a joke are (left to right) Tom Bruce Jones, J C Bruce Jones and David Leith.

which remained scarce until the mid-1950s, it was stated that the original office building was 'dingy, decrepit, densely overcrowded, drab, dull and poverty stricken in appearance; it lacks a decent toilet and cloakroom space and facilities; it is deficient in reception, boardroom, audit, executive and staff facilities - nor is there any space for provision of any of these; it is veritably a spider's web with human denizens instead of flies, yet, withal, it is the head office, and the only office, from which the vast network of the company's business is controlled'. The new offices, built on a site further up the road, were a huge improvement. Opened in 1954, they remain the head office of James Jones & Sons today.

Tom Bruce Jones assumed the role of chairman after his uncle's death, remaining as managing director. He was supported by David Leith, the general manager, who became the first non-family director of the business in 1953. His special responsibility was running the telegraph pole business which moved from Dunmore to Leven in 1951, taking over an existing business with a large Post Office contract. The new yard, under managers Alec Munro and Hugh McKay, was brought up to

date and by the early 1960s was regarded as one of the most efficient and best equipped in the country.

Tom Bruce Jones and David Leith could not cover all the mills in the company. This reinforced the sometime fierce independence of many long-serving mill foremen who became more and more averse to what they regarded as interference in the way they ran things. Where competent and able foremen were in charge, this did not cause too many problems. It was a different matter in those mills badly run by less able foremen.

Overall sales remained much the same but profits were increasingly unpredictable. There were many pressures on the sawmillers. Too many of them pursuing too little timber simply drove up buying prices. Selling prices were depressed because of the purchasing power of the two monolithic nationalised industries, compounded by the continuing perception of the inferior quality of British timber (which was sometimes true, sometimes false). In the late 1950s, mining timber accounted for half of all British timber sold by the firm (this rose to 60 per cent in the early 1960s). The National Coal Board used its muscle to keep prices down, refusing to pay Scottish



The James Jones head offices in Larbert were completed in 1954. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)

suppliers a decent price while importing more expensive French timber to maintain a balance between supply and demand. It was impossible for James Jones to resist such pressure since the company was so dependent on Coal Board orders. The company sent most of its mining timber south of the border although it succeeded in increasing sales to collieries in north-east England, which did help to reduce transport costs. Railway orders amounted only to 18 per cent of sales, halving again over the next few years. British Rail was changing from wooden to steel wagons, ceasing to repair and scrapping the former while closing all its own sawmills. The directors concluded in March 1958 that 'apart from Sleepers, for which there was an unlimited demand, we have never been so badly off for Railway orders'. The knock-on effect for the company was that the better quality timber usually taken by British Rail now had to be downgraded and sold at a lower price. Boat wood, for the slip at Buckie, and timber for government departments each formed 9 per cent of sales, with the balance made up by softwood boards and battens, fencing, quality hardwood for furniture and special round timber. One-third of sales still came from hardwood.



Poles stacked at the Leven yard with a travelling crane in the background. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)

James Jones & Sons made big losses in 1956 and 1958. Falling turnover and pressure from the bank to reduce borrowings gave greater impetus to cut the company's costs and become more efficient. An early casualty was the small import business the firm had run since the end of the war. After the joinery department had been wound up, the import business continued to supply timber to the building trade. Its largest customer was George Wimpey & Co. (It also supplied Scots Pine and silver birch from the Huntly and Aboyne areas for a brief period for use as roof

trusses.) It was too small to make money although the executive directors, confessing that they did not have a very good case but wary of the volatile home trade, resisted closure for some time. But there was no capital to expand the business to the level needed to make a proper return and it was closed ('as quietly as possible', instructed the board minutes) in October 1958.

In 1955 the company still ran more than 30 sawmills and employed nearly 1,200 men. There were mills in places like Glentinar, Ballogie, Kincardine, Glamis, Craigo, Edzell, Balcaskie, Oakley, Penicuik, Lilliesleaf and Raehills. By comparison, A & R Brownlie ran less than a dozen mills. Most of Jones's mills still operated with steam-driven machinery, several never made money and a number were badly managed. Over the next few years the company proceeded to overhaul management, improve financial administration, shut down loss-making mills and modernise production.

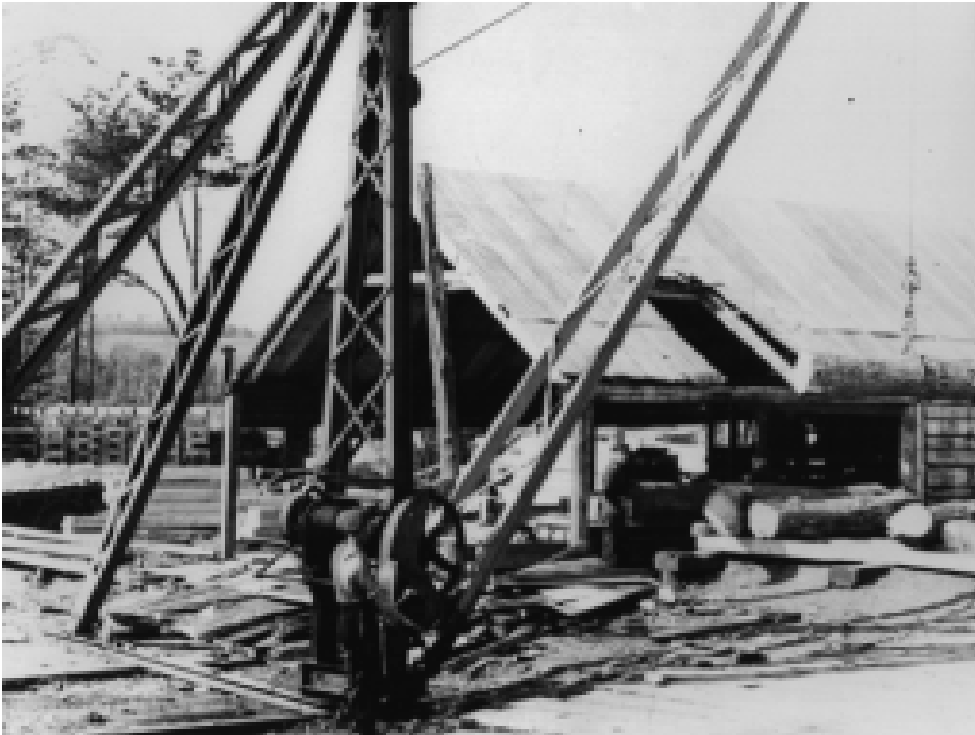
An effort had already been made to reform the way outside mills were managed. In 1953 area supervisors were created to exercise greater control over them. In 1956 they became area managers, with Willie Rennie in Fife and the Lothians, Sandy Hogg in the north and Raymond Aitchison, a cousin of Tom Bruce Jones, in the south-west. Airlie Bruce-Jones, whose father, Jim, had been killed in the war, was despatched to sort things out at mills where there had been intractable management problems. He joined the company after school in 1955. It was not what he wanted to do but he was told in no uncertain terms that he had no option. His uncle Tom needed him since the only other active members of the family, Forbes and Bruce, were running the foundry. Having returned to the business after national service in 1958, he was sent a year later to take over what the board described as 'our most unsatisfactory Sawmills at Kirkcudbright and Castle Douglas'. At the former, the previous long-serving foreman was dismissed for running a fish merchant's business alongside the timber business, suspicion having been aroused by the smell of the mill lorries! This was not an isolated incident. The foreman at the Castle Kennedy mill was



This is the interior of the new sawmill with a Stenner bandsaw installed at Castle Kennedy in 1951.

sacked for setting up a firewood business with his wife. His vain defence, the directors heard, was that 'he had had a difference of opinion with his wife over this venture'. At the Drymen mill, a large volume of timber went missing and the police were called in to investigate.

Forbes and Bruce Jones had raised concerns about the way the business was being managed in 1957. They urged greater co-operation between different parts of the business which was hindered because no one knew what their exact responsibilities were nor to whom they were accountable. Costing systems became more sophisticated under Bruce Jones who took over as company secretary and finance director



A James Jones sawmill, typical of many sawmills throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, with manually operated derrick crane loading a log onto the log feed. The hole in the roof occurred when a sheet crane was removed to allow the crane to take out a log which had fallen off the log feed.

in 1957, splitting his time between the timber business and the foundry. He had always been mistrustful of the way the mills seemed to operate without proper financial controls. Too many mills in the late 1950s were still purchasing timber at prices which were too high to earn any return. By 1961 cost statements were being prepared for every mill.

In 1959 the board asked John Glegg, the newly appointed general manager, to prepare a development plan for the company, bearing in mind its likely future production. John had joined James Jones as an office-boy in 1933. After serving with distinction with the Gordon Highlanders in the war, he had assisted David Leith before taking over the running of the import business. Then in 1959 he stepped in as a temporary general manager for Jones Buckie. The shipyard had begun building fishing vessels again after the war although much of its work during the 1950s was for the Admiralty, mainly building mine-sweepers and motor launches. Jones Buckie also

jointly operated with individual fishermen three motor fishing vessels, the *Steadfast*, *Carinthia* and *Sheryl*. In 1956 a small slipway in Lossiemouth, operated by John Dunn & Co, was acquired. But the Admiralty programme came to end in 1958 and the workforce, which had been as high as 200, fell back to 80 men. It was now that John Glegg stepped in as temporary manager until a new manager, Lieutenant-Commander Robert Young, was appointed with a brief to find new markets for the yard.

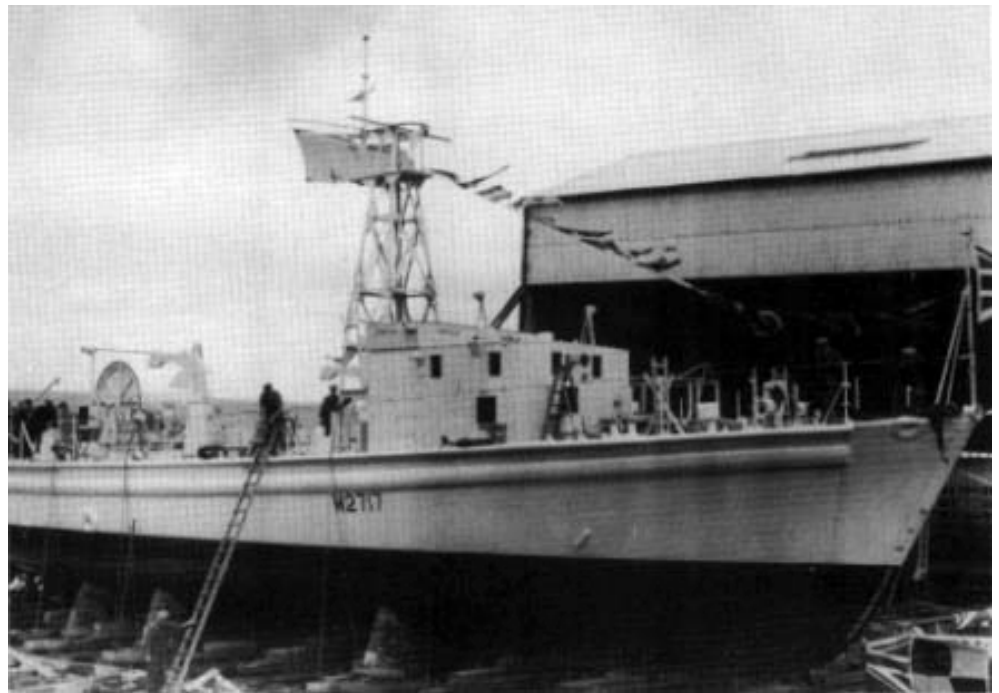
During this period John Glegg became Tom Bruce Jones's right-hand man. Succeeding David Leith as general manager in 1959, he was appointed to the board three years later. It was said that together Tom and John 'made a splendid team, complementing one another'.

By the time John Glegg was asked to draw up his report, mill closures had already reduced the company's workforce to less than 600 and contractors were being more widely used for harvesting timber.

(1)



(2)



(1) The 43 feet long motor fishing vessel, Valena, built in 1948, was typical of the fishing boats built by Jones Buckie in the 1940s and 1950s; but the yard was also kept busy by orders during the 1950s for several Admiralty minesweepers (2)



Above: Tom A Bruce-Jones spent time working at Loch Monar in 1961. Trees were being felled since a proposed dam would have flooded the woods. The timber had to be rafted down the loch since there was no access road.

Left: The reconstruction of the Larbert sawmill was completed in 1962. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)



The directors of James Jones & Sons Ltd in the 1960s who complemented each other so well – (left to right) Forbes Jones, T D Bruce Jones, Tom Bruce Jones (chairman) and John Glegg.

The electrification of the sawmills had been accelerated during the 1950s and all except two, Castle Douglas and Edzell, had been converted by the end of the decade. Tractors, tracked vehicles and lorries were already widely used and the firm began acquiring army surplus vehicles such as Leyland Hippos and AEC Matadors. Woodcutters adopted chain saws in the early 1950s and later in the decade fork lift trucks appeared to move timber to the saws. The first chain saws, which required two men to operate them, were despised by the woodcutters who hated their bulkiness which made it almost impossible to cut trees sufficiently low down the trunk where much of the best quality timber was to be found. But they greatly approved of the one-man saw which saved them so much time.

A number of new mills were opened. One was acquired at Forres in 1954 and another was started near Helmsley in the North Riding of Yorkshire in 1956. The latter supplied oak for many years to Robert Thompson of Kilburn, famous for his furniture marked with a mouse carved out of the wood, and known as the 'Mouseman'. The boardroom at Larbert contains a fine 'Mouseman' board table and sideboard. At Larbert, after years of discussion, the mill was modernised in the early 1960s, under John Glegg and Airlie Bruce-Jones, when an automatic band mill was installed. Arising from John Glegg's survey of the business, the board agreed that larger, modern mills, preferably closer to centres of population, should replace some of the smaller, older mills. So, in 1962, a new site was leased at Aboyne for the development of a mill to replace the existing ones at Aboyne and Stonehaven. Another site, a former aerodrome, leased from the Forestry Commission, was taken at Heathhall, near Dumfries, where a new mill was completed in 1964, replacing those at Kirkcudbright and Raehills.

An important role in this modernisation programme was played by the expanding engineering shop at Larbert. For instance, the successful implementation of the electrification of the mills was due to John McDonald, the foreman electrician at Larbert. Just after the war the engineering shop had consisted

of a small wooden building where steam engines were overhauled and a blacksmith was still employed. Here too were a joiner's shop and an electrician's shop, which Bill Nicol had joined as an apprentice in 1946. He would play a leading part in expanding the company's involvement in engineering which was spearheaded by another newcomer, Bill Baillie, who arrived in 1948. The chief engineer at the time was Douglas Muirhead, but Bill Baillie was appointed to look after the maintenance and servicing of the growing number of motor vehicles as well as mechanical plant. As the harvesting requirements of the business changed, with smaller trees, mainly softwood, he realised the need for better machinery. Crawlers, slow and expensive, were replaced by four-wheel drive vehicles which could deal with standing timber more quickly and effectively. He also appreciated that simply fitting a winch to a small tractor could multiply its capacity as much as five times. Ex-army vehicles, converted at Larbert from petrol to diesel, were fitted with standard winches which could pull logs fore, aft and sideways and load



This six-wheel Foden, in operation at St Mary's Isle in Kirkcudbrightshire around 1960, was converted for harvesting use from an ex-RAF lorry by James Jones's engineering workshop. The lorry was cut down, the cab rebuilt and a winch fitted. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)



The engineering division developed a very successful Unimog franchise, adapting the vehicles for several uses, including snowploughs, as seen here. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)

them onto trailers. With a growing workforce often on overtime, body-building, servicing, repairs and inspection work were taken on for outside customers. In 1964 the expanding department moved into the building previously occupied by the joinery works.

The ingenuity displayed by Bill Baillie and his team turned the engineering department into an important and profitable part of the business as it began selling its products and services outside the company. Airlie Bruce-Jones was asked by the board to capitalise on this engineering ingenuity. For the directors, depressed about trading conditions but full of hope for the future, this represented one opportunity for diversification which the company could afford. It was clear that harvesting machinery marketed in the UK had been developed with overseas conditions in mind and was unsuitable for Scottish forests. Airlie recalled that this lesson was learned by the company when harvesting equipment purchased from overseas failed within a fortnight of felling timber on the Ardverikie estate because it simply could not cope. Yet Bill Baillie and his staff were already adapting standard units, whether tractors or cranes or winches, and combining them to

create machinery ideally suited for operating in the forests. In August 1966 the engineering service division became a separate entity within the business. Collaboration began with manufacturers to improve the individual components and the division began to attract more and more outside customers. The division won several franchises, of which the most important were Unimog tractors and Igland winches. The division adapted the Unimog 411 chassis as a four-wheel-drive tractor, equipped with Igland winches, offering training courses for operators. In 1967 Airlie Bruce-Jones joined the board of James Jones & Sons.

Despite all these modernising moves, the company continued to lose money although not on the same scale as the losses incurred during the late 1950s. Despite the rationalisation which had already taken place, the company's borrowings were once again causing concern by the mid-1960s. As the board minutes recorded in October 1966, 'the Company had never made a Profit on its Home Timber operations for more than 10 years, but even in 1964, when the Company had made a Profit of over £20,000, there would not have been a Profit ... had not some of the timber worked been in the books at a low and unrealistic valuation ... something drastic would have to be done as quickly as possible'. By the end of 1967 the company had closed half its mills although output, thanks to investment in modernisation and larger mills, had dropped only 15 per cent. The company was left with main mills at Forres, Aboyne, Kirriemuir, Larbert and Dumfries, while the smaller mills at Ardross, Melville, Stranraer and Helmsley would remain open only so long as they made money. Although turnover was less than a million pounds in 1967, significantly lower in real terms than it had been in the 1950s, James Jones & Sons returned to profit. It was small – just £5,000 (about £56,000 today) – but it heralded a period of unprecedented profitability.

Forbes Jones and Bruce Jones were absorbed by a similar situation at Jones & Campbell. Forbes Jones was an even-tempered, mild-mannered man, always

concerned about the welfare of his workforce, full of robust common sense, happy to delegate but with a keen eye for detail. Bruce Jones, who joined the business from the army in 1946, was 10 years younger. He had graduated in economics at Cambridge before joining the Royal Artillery, like his older cousin, concluding his service with a year in Palestine. He had intended to qualify as a chartered accountant but, taking the advice of his last commanding officer, he returned to the family business, keen to understand what made it tick, and studied for qualification as a chartered secretary in his spare time. The works manager since 1940 had been John Reid, who had taken the place of his father. Reid became the first non-family director of the foundry in 1954. In 1945 Jones & Campbell employed another four members of the family – David Reid, in his seventies, worked in the dressing and passing shops, Bobbie Reid looked after the pattern shop, Willie Reid was in charge of production and Alec Reid worked in the despatch department.

In 1945 there were 1,800 foundries in the UK, producing more than 2 million tons of cast-iron every year and encompassing as wide a range of goods as ever. Jones & Campbell had plentiful orders, initially stimulated by the post-war housing programme and the government's advocacy of solid fuel as the most economical form of heating, but the foundry was in urgent need of modernisation.

Mechanisation was the main priority for Jones & Campbell and the post-war seller's market gave the firm the breathing space it needed to re-equip. During the late 1940s and early 1950s sweeping changes were made to the foundry. A new dressing shop and new mechanised moulding shop were built, operations in the original buildings were re-organised and the buildings themselves refurbished. Improvements were made for the company's 400 workers. Heating was installed in the moulding shop, lighting was improved and showers and lockers provided for the men. The company had already instituted a contributory staff pension scheme. The offices, damaged by fire in November 1950, were also overhauled. New cupolas, with the necessary handling and other

ancillary equipment, were ordered in 1952 and in operation by 1954. Between 1946 and 1954 the company spent at least £100,000 on buildings, plant and equipment, establishing a post-war pattern of continuous investment. The problem was, that after a brief period of increased profitability, this would be accompanied by largely diminishing profits.

This was partly because the company was always having to adjust to a constantly changing market. As the old ranges fell out of fashion, Jones & Campbell developed new cookers, boilers and ovens, including the first Torglow continuous-burning, fuel-saving room heater. Launched in 1949, this became the company's best-selling and most profitable range by the mid-1950s. But, as Forbes Jones noted in 1954, 'the amount of Cast Iron used in a modern house compared with a pre-war house was very small'. This time, wrote Ian Scott, Falkirk's historian, 'the housing boom was no lifeline for the foundries – technology and taste had changed and new materials filled the kitchens and bathrooms of the huge housing schemes – and the slow decline [of the industry] began to accelerate'. With over-capacity in the industry, competition became intense. Forbes was confident that the company would hold its own in the solid fuel space and water heating market but he recognised, as the company's financial performance faltered, that 'we need another line of production to increase our turnover and so spread our overheads'.

So the company invested in the manufacturing of rainwater and soil goods, such as pipes, gutters and connections, which had been made at the foundry for a time between the wars. Costing as much in historic terms as the total previous investment made since the war, this gobbled up the company's cash and led to the sale of many of the company's investments. But, after an initial loss, the first since the foundry had been established, caused by technical problems when the pipe plant went into production in 1957, it seemed as if all this investment was justified – in 1960, for instance, sales reached £700,000 (£9.7 million today) with profits of £41,000 (£570,000 today). In fact cast-iron pipes and guttering were already being superseded by plastics. Polyurethane pipes were



This aerial view from around the 1950s shows the Torwood foundry and the Larbert sawmill & yard.

introduced in the UK in 1955 and PVC pipes made their first appearance in 1960. At the same time the traditional heating appliance market was continuing to shrink. Forbes Jones was acutely aware of these challenges and was always casting around for other opportunities. In 1960, he told shareholders that he had found one. 'As you all know,' he told shareholders, 'BMC [British Motor Corporation] are coming to Bathgate [near Glasgow]. They will be buying in many component parts from Scottish factories, and high on the list is iron castings. The firms in the Birmingham area [where BMC had factories] who are making these castings just now are doing their utmost to be allowed to expand and to send up castings to Bathgate from Birmingham. There is a challenge to Scotland here and we ought to be able to do something about it.' Jones & Campbell took up the challenge, ordering a new moulding plant in 1961 with the intention of supplying auto-

motive castings to BMC. But BMC, already plagued with problems at Bathgate, were following a safety first policy of taking components from their existing suppliers in the Midlands. The next few years were anxious ones for the business. Traditional markets were waning, new ones had yet to come to fruition. Although sales reached almost one million pounds in 1966, the company reported a loss of £20,000, and this was followed by falling turnover and a larger loss of £82,000 in 1967. Forbes Jones even suggested to shareholders in that year that the best way forward for the company 'might well be a merger with a large firm or group which could use our production facilities to the full'. In fact the company had already made the breakthrough it wanted into automotive components in February 1967 with an order for brake drums from Albion Motors in Glasgow. At the same time further prospects were enhanced when the Rootes Group established a factory at Linwood, near





Above: Workers at Jones & Campbell putting together gas cookers around the late 1940s. Changing tastes meant that cast-iron cookers and ranges, once staple products of the foundry, began to fall out of fashion after the Second World War. Instead the foundry turned to alternative products, including rainwater goods.

Facing page: These two group photographs date from the 1950s. The first dates from 1953 and shows several managers from James Jones & Sons with visiting inspectors from the Welsh Coal Board. With the value of timber plummeting after the 1953 windblow, James Jones needed all the help they could get and the Coal Board, one of the company's biggest customers, agreed to take as much of the windblown timber as suited their purposes. (Back row, left to right) Alan Pirie (foreman at Aboyne), John Kissock (manager at Ballogie estate), Sandy Hogg, John Donaldson (Larbert office), unknown Welsh inspector; (front row) Willie Rennie (second from left), John Rennie (fourth from left, Larbert office).

The second, taken at Airlie House in Larbert in 1951, shows staff from Jones & Campbell with (fifth row, left to right) Jimmy Mitchell, John Logan, David Seaton, John Gilchrist, John Reid, John Spalding, T D Bruce Jones; (fourth row, left to right) Ian Mathew, J Forbes Jones, Dick Taylor, John Morrison, Sandy Bulloch, Douglas Muirhead, Alex Rhind; (third row, left to right) Andy Young, John Turnbull, Alec Arthur, Duncan Hannah, George Wallace; (second row, left to right) Milly Lees, Irene McPherson, Mrs Howden, Joan Crawford, Tommy Crawford, Jackie Paterson; (front row, left to right) Helen Mackie, Jean Bodman, Margaret Adam, George Graham, Jean Strathearn and George Binnie.

Glasgow. This gave the board the confidence to sanction the order of a mechanised moulding line dedicated to castings for the automotive industry. At the same time the company had welcomed Roderick Forbes Jones, Forbes's son, and Lindsay Rennie, who both joined Jones & Campbell in 1966. There had never been any pressure on Roderick to enter the family firm. Having studied at McGill University in

Canada, he had qualified as a chartered accountant in Edinburgh and was working in South Africa when a letter inviting him to return arrived from his father. He became company secretary in 1968 and a director two years later. Lindsay Rennie, a qualified metallurgist with extensive experience in the foundry industry, took over the post of works manager in 1966 and joined the board in 1967.

'A very difficult and hazardous enterprise' *1967-1984*

For Jones & Campbell, the next few years would be very difficult. Bruce Jones, in his history of the business, wrote that 'the company had embarked on a very difficult and hazardous enterprise'. Between 1966 and 1972 Jones & Campbell lost money six years out of seven. In 1968 the company did not pay a dividend for the first time in its history and none was paid until 1974. In 1969 Forbes Jones was insistent. 'We are convinced that our policy is right. The alternative was to do nothing and accept the gradual run-down of our traditional business.' Over the next few years the foundry struggled to raise production standards, plagued by high scrap rates, technical problems, labour disputes, colossal rises in the price of raw materials and a depression in the industry. At the same time, Bruce Jones, who became managing director in 1971, was indefatigable in his pursuit of new business, winning orders from customers such as Perkins Engines, Rootes, Leyland and even Scania in Sweden. By 1973 automotive castings accounted for more than three-quarters of the foundry's total output. Although decent prices for these orders were hard to come by, and the increase in turnover between 1967 and 1973 was marginal in real terms, nevertheless the company returned to profit at last in the latter year, the first in a decade long sequence of unbroken profitability. Forbes Jones, addressing shareholders in 1974, was passionate about the importance of the UK iron foundry industry. 'There would simply be no engineering industry without us. Farming, fishing and transport would all be back to the methods of at least 100 years ago. No electricity could be used or even generated. Coal mines could not operate. Textile and paper mills would cease to exist. Sanitation

would be back to the primitive. A huge part of our exports would disappear. In short, any modern nation must have iron castings, without them our whole economy and way of life would collapse.'

A return to profit encouraged the foundry to embark on an ambitious investment programme to make it among the most competitive in Europe. More than £2 million (£7.6 million today) was spent on automated moulding lines, electric holding furnaces and an automatic pouring unit. The result was a six-fold rise in productivity and improved quality. Most of this investment was completed just before the worst economic recession since the 1930s. Record sales for the foundry in 1979 were followed by four years of reduced turnover, plummeting profits, widespread price-cutting and job losses. Employment at the foundry fell from 342 in 1979 to 185 in 1983. The British automotive industry was in decline, taking only 400,000 tons of castings in 1982 compared with one million tons in 1975. Major customers either cut back their orders or went out of business. The process of rationalisation within the UK foundry industry had already begun – the 1.6 million tons of castings produced in 1981 was the lowest in over 30 years and compared with four million tons in 1965 – and now gathered pace. Foundries were closing at the rate of one or two every week, one casualty being the closure of the Dobbie Forbes & Co foundry in 1978, one of more than 24 Scottish foundries to disappear since the war. Only the massive investment made in the 1970s enabled Jones & Campbell to survive.

In 1979 Forbes Jones celebrated 50 years with the foundry. His cousin Bruce remarked that Forbes 'has always been far-sighted, considerate and understanding with everyone, and has created that happy



*Moulds being created
(brake drums for Albion
Motors in Glasgow); and
hot metal being poured by
hand into the moulds
before the advent of
automatic moulding in
1982.*



The Queen visited Jones Buckie on 5 July 1982 as part of her visit to the region. She is seen here with T D Bruce Jones while John Richardson, the yard's general manager, accompanies the Duke of Edinburgh. BCK 55, Amaryllys, is under repair in the background.

atmosphere and team spirit so essential to success'. It was a well-deserved tribute. Forbes died suddenly barely 18 months later. Six months later, in the summer of 1981, Graham Campbell was appointed engineering manager and became the first member of the Campbell family for some years to take an active role in the management of the business. He came to the company after experience in the South African foundry industry, having graduated from Glasgow University in mechanical engineering.

Forbes Jones had been distressed in the months prior to his death by the events surrounding the dismissal of the managing director of Jones Buckie, who had been in office just a year. His predecessor, Robert Young, had done a valiant job in seeing the shipyard through the 1960s and 1970s. It had not been easy, with a declining fishing industry, unpredictable

government support and loss-making repair work. Attempts to create economies of scale by merging with the adjacent yard run by Herd & Mckenzie failed because the latter was doing quite well and its owner saw little benefit from a merger. But Young found a small niche for the firm in motor yachts and orders for these kept the business going. By the late 1970s, however, the firm was once again losing money on shipyard operations. In 1978, for instance, profits came from any source – grants, fishing, the sale proceeds from the company's stake in one of its trawlers – other than trading. Young was recalled, turned round the company's finances and re-established good relations with workers and customers. With better productivity and improved control over costs, the company returned to profit in 1982. In the meantime John Richardson, whose experience encompassed the Royal Navy, marine surveying and



work for a builder and repairer of fishing vessels, was recruited as general manager in 1981. He became managing director in 1984.

Compared with the travails of the foundry and the shipyard, the fortunes of James Jones & Sons during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s were in complete contrast. This was partly because the engineering division, under Airlie Bruce-Jones, was in its heyday. The windblow of 1968 had proved to be a great opportunity for the engineering division as the demand for timber handling equipment rose sharply. Multiple franchises were acquired, for cranes, winches and other products, while, under Bill Baillie and Bill Nicol, the engineering workshop turned out specially designed machinery, many of their initiatives being copied by others. By 1971, proclaimed a leaflet advertising James Jones & Sons as forestry engineers, 'a high proportion of all the off-road forest vehicles in use in the UK softwood industry incorporate either our products or are of our own complete design'. Ultimately the engineering division, of

Above: *The Spey Mercia, built in 1966, was one of the series of Spey motor yachts which helped to keep the Jones Buckie yard going during the 1960s.*

Right: *The Jones Buckie yard from the air in 1968.*



which Airlie became managing director in 1977, captured 80 per cent of the UK market. Many machines were sent overseas. This stemmed initially from the agreement Airlie had concluded with Iglan for James Jones, through a new business, Iglan-Jones, to sell Iglan products throughout the English-speaking world. Under Nander Robertson, who took over sales when he joined the business in 1968, other markets were opened up and the division sent machinery to places like Australia, Bhutan, Canada, Cyprus, France, Guatemala, Israel, Portugal, Malawi, South Africa and Thailand. This also involved training operatives either overseas or at Larbert. Bill Nicol, for example, recalls spending two weeks in down-town Athens, fitting Norwegian-built half-tracks to ordinary tractors for the Greek government and, with an interpreter, spending time in Antalya on the south coast of Turkey, training mechanics employed by the Turkish forestry service how to extract timber using Unimogs fitted with winches.

The ingenuity of the engineering workshop was extensive. Many one-off machines were built. A Cranab crane was adapted for use with an hydraulic power chisel for a firm of Edinburgh steeplejacks to dismantle chimneys in built-up areas. There was a 20-ton pole trailer with an hydraulic crane log-lift and hydraulic stabiliser legs towed by a specially adapted Ford tractor with a domed cab to give a better view when the trailer was being loaded. Gantries and overhead cranes were made for Glen Light Shipping, which ran along rails in the bottom of the timber cargo boats plying between the islands and mainland. A small hydraulic crane was made for handling red-hot castings on the automatic moulding lines at Jones & Campbell.

The division did not have things all its own way. Its success inspired competition. Manufacturers began to market and sell their own products in the UK and elsewhere. The engineering division was being squeezed out of the market. This became apparent during the recession of the early 1980s. The division lost money in 1981 and, unable to regain its previous eminence, continued to lose money over the next five years. But profits generated in the 1970s had

made an important contribution to James Jones & Sons as a whole. The company had never relied entirely on sawmilling, its activities having included creosoting, telegraph poles and joinery. All of them, including the engineering division, had grown out of the original business and this was a tradition the company would perpetuate in the future.

The pole business also started to blossom during this period. Most of the raw poles for manufacturing and treatment were bought in Finland but in the mid-1960s the company had persuaded the Post Office, its biggest customer, to begin taking some British poles. The Leven yard was consistently very profitable and rising profits made from poles became particularly important for the company during the difficult years of the early 1980s.

The core sawmill business had its ups and downs. Wood waste was now identified as potentially valuable and the mills at Aboyne and Forres developed links with the new pulp mill at Fort William (this was short-lived, closing in the early 1980s) and the chipboard factory at Cowie. Investment in modernisation continued in the 1970s under the direction of John Glegg, who had become joint managing director in 1971, with further improvements at Aboyne and Heathhall and the updating of Kirriemuir and Forres. This was overdue. Sandy Hogg junior who joined the business in 1971, the third generation of his family to do so, found Kirriemuir was still operating a Forresian circular saw small log line. Modern timber extraction equipment was acquired and new lorries were purchased with hydraulic self-loading equipment for carrying round timber to the mills. Many of these changes were introduced to save labour costs. The directors recognised, as the board minutes record in 1974, that it was important ‘to maintain the Company’s productive capacity and competitive position in the timber trade’. At Forres, for example, a bandmill and an automatic re-sawing line, each operated by one man, were installed. Conveyor handling of timber was also introduced. This pattern of development culminated in the development of a new mill at Alness, near Inverness, in 1979. In fact, this was badly timed and Alness was never



(1)



(2)



(3)



The visit of Princess Alexandra to the mill at Forres in 1982. The chairman, Tom Bruce Jones, introduces his wife, Ray, to the Princess with Tom A Bruce-Jones, his wife Stina and Sandy Hogg senior waiting in line. Obscured by the Princess is the Lord Lieutenant, Captain (later Sir) Iain Tennant.

successful since the type of machinery used by the mill became obsolescent with the simultaneous appearance in the UK of more sophisticated equipment from Scandinavia.

Sawmill operations remained profitable, particularly during the high inflation of the mid-1970s when the company was able to benefit from tax savings gained from stock relief. But turnover and profits often reflected the state of trade in general rather than the performance of James Jones & Sons in particular. The selling price of British timber was tied to the price of imported timber which dominated the

market. So when record profits were made in 1978, the main reason was not a huge increase in volume sales (which rose five per cent) but soaring selling prices which multiplied the profits realised from timber bought at much lower prices. The risk was that the reverse would also occur. And despite the lessons of the past, this is exactly what happened in the early 1980s. The recession which affected Jones & Campbell and Jones Buckie so severely also savaged the UK timber trade. Many long-established firms went out of business. In 1981 James Jones & Sons made a record loss of £367,000 (£865,000 today) on sales of nearly £7¹/₂ million (£17.7 million today). As prices collapsed, influenced by a flood of cheap imports from Scandinavia, Russia, Portugal and Canada, the company was left with stocks of timber bought at much higher prices. John Glegg, president of the Scottish trade association at the time, complained that it was impossible to buy timber cheaply enough to make a profit.

At least James Jones & Sons had the strength to survive this result. And it acted as a stimulus for change which in fact was already underway as a result of the appointment of Tom A Bruce-Jones, the

Facing page: These three photographs show the degree of activity carried out by the James Jones engineering division between the late 1960s and early 1980s – (1) the engineering division workshop busy with conversion work in the 1970s (2) the bulk of the division's work involved harvesting machinery and the division marketed one of the first modern harvesters, the Makeri from Finland, in the late 1970s – a thinnings tractor is at work in the foreground with the harvester behind (3) the division's reputation also brought in a lot of one-off work, such as the machinery for Glenlight Shipping in 1981, seen here unloading timber. (Nos 2 & 3 courtesy of Airlie Bruce Jones.)



The butt of this chestnut, from the Glamis estate, weighed 23 tons, one of the heaviest trees ever handled by James Jones & Sons. Looking on in 1978 are (left to right) Willie Rennie, Willie Smith and Michael Leslie. (Courtesy of Airlie Bruce-Jones.)

son of the chairman, as joint managing director in 1979. A younger generation of managers had already begun to emerge within the firm. Among them was Michael Leslie, the grandson of J C Bruce Jones, who joined the company in May 1971. He came to the company with several years' experience as a land agent, having trained at Cirencester and qualified as a chartered surveyor. After training in every aspect of the business, including several visits to Scandinavia, he became manager of two small mills at Oakley and Melville, later taking over responsibility for felling and milling as area manager for central Scotland. His colleagues as area managers were Sandy Hogg senior in the north and John Kissock in the south. John Kissock, like Sandy Hogg, came from a family with strong links to James Jones & Sons. His father, also John, had joined the firm after the Second World War, becoming a mill foreman and ultimately acting as harvesting manager for the area around Forres. After he died suddenly in 1981, his position was taken by Sandy Hogg junior. John Kissock junior was persuaded by Tom Bruce Jones and Sandy Hogg senior to study forestry at university and in 1974 became the

first forestry graduate to join the firm. He too spent time working in different parts of the business before being given the task of overseeing the redevelopment of the mill at Forres in the mid-1970s.

Tom Bruce-Jones junior was expected by his father to enter the business as soon as he was old enough. But he won a place from school to Lincoln College, Oxford, and decided to take it up. His father told him he would be wasting his time but an uncle, Alasdair Drysdale, a Cambridge graduate, persuaded Tom senior to allow his son to take up his place so long as he came back to the firm. Tom spent time working for the firm during his vacations, including rafting timber down Loch Monar, west of Inverness, under Sandy Hogg senior, where the midges were 'absolutely hellish'. But working in the office at Larbert, where he was treated as the chairman's son, made him realise that he wanted to carve out a career through his own initiative.

The culture at Larbert was, for Ian Pirie, who joined as a management trainee in 1976, old-fashioned and reverential – 'it seemed as if the late Victorian era was still hanging on into the 1970s'.



The Larbert sawmill was busy until it closed in 1983. The yard, seen above with the visiting forestry delegation from China in 1980, was full of logs and the sawmill was capable of handling substantial lengths of timber, as seen here in 1981 with the travelling crane carrying a 55 foot long Douglas Fir beam.



This was a view shared by Robin Stevenson, who came to Larbert in 1978 as a management accountant. He found too much of a divide between the boardroom and the rest of the staff with few people having any idea about how the business was performing.

It was in international business where Tom Bruce-Jones junior developed his own career. He worked first for the largest international firm of timber brokers, Price & Pierce, which he found to be 'an extraordinary training ground with very good people, good management, loyal staff, a very friendly atmosphere and an excellent work ethic'. He spent time in Scotland, Finland and British Columbia before returning to London to become general manager, and later a director, of the firm's wood pulp company. He had expected to spend only two years away from the family firm but in fact 18 years elapsed before he returned in an executive capacity. His father thought he would never come back.

His next post was with Georgia Pacific, the US forest products company, specifically to create and run the company's European sales operation. He enjoyed the experience hugely and built up a

significant business. But for a variety of reasons, including a reluctance to move to the USA, he decided to take up his father's open invitation to come back to James Jones & Sons. With his extensive experience of the international forest products trade and international business, he had something to offer which no one else at Larbert possessed. He had already been a non-executive director since 1974 and in December 1979, as the company faced its worst trading period for more than 10 years, he joined John Glegg and Airlie Bruce-Jones as the third joint managing director.

He learned much from John Glegg who took him under his wing. The first major project in which he was involved was the development of a modern mill at Dumfries based on the latest technology. John Glegg had already been thinking seriously about this

and took Tom with him to investigate machinery in Sweden, Germany and Portugal. Tom's father would have preferred to see the development take place at Aboyne, his favourite mill location, but it was the Heathhall mill which needed modernisation. At Heathhall, where Ian Pirie had been sent, there were two mills operating in tandem, one sawing timber into batten sizes for carcassing, the other, with double slabber and re-saws, turning out pallet wood. It was very typical of the mills of the time. (Ian remembered that the cost of his board and lodgings consumed almost all of his salary – 'the company was bloody miserable when it came to remuneration' – so he plucked up the courage to ask John Glegg, when he next visited the mill, if the company would cover his accommodation costs. His request did not fall on deaf ears – they paid half.)

Reporting the decision to create a new mill at Dumfries to shareholders, Tom Bruce Jones senior noted that the new mill, which would cost more than

£1 million and have an estimated annual output of 22,000 cubic metres, would be 'the first mill of its kind to be built in the United Kingdom'.

The chairman was able to see the first log being processed when the mill opened at the beginning of September 1984. Three months later, on 23 December, he died after a short illness at the age of 73. He had spent 53 years with the firm, having been a director for 48 years and chairman since 1953. The youngest president of the Scottish trade association, he served not only during the Second World War but also for a second term in 1964-65. He was in several respects a chip off the old block. He had inherited the affable personality of his father. He loved the forests and was never happier than when visiting the mills. He served on several committees of the Forestry Commission and on forest visits was well-known and popular for dispensing generous measures of pink gin from his portable bar in the boot of his car, before being driven off by his faithful chauffeur, Gavin.



Gavin Stephen, on the right, for many years the chairman's chauffeur, seen here with Willie Smith, the long-serving sawmill manager at Kirriemuir.

There were also times when, just like his father’s relationship with his brothers, Tom’s relish for buying timber almost regardless of the price sometimes got him into trouble with his cousins. But he never resisted the inevitable. He presided over the rationalisation of the business, the closure of the small forest mills and the concentration of production in larger, fixed, up-to-date mills, a process which was moving up a gear with the opening of the new mill at Dumfries. He was always receptive to his son’s views on change and recognised that the way in

which the business was managed had to be altered. He certainly made an impact on those he met. His colleagues noted that he ‘had become perhaps the best known and outstanding character of the Scottish home timber trade. Tom had great charm and a captivating manner which endeared him to people in all walks of life ... He had an unusual capacity for making friends and establishing relationships which over the years have been of immense help to the company’.

'A time of huge change'

1984-1998

The early 1980s heralded, in the words of Jock Armstrong, who later joined the James Jones board as a non-executive director, 'a time of huge change' in the UK timber trade. Many long-established timber companies and other related businesses disappeared because they could not adapt to the transformation taking place in both the saw-milling and imported timber trade. These changes were so extensive that they utterly transformed James Jones & Sons. At the end of this period, the timber business, through capital investment, management changes and entrepreneurial opportunism, emerged stronger than it had ever been before. The contrast between the performances of the timber business, foundry and shipyard grew even more marked as Jones & Campbell and Jones Buckie were overwhelmed by the forces inexorably undermining the UK engineering and fishing industries.

For Jones Buckie, it seemed at first as if brighter times had arrived. But such optimism was misplaced, based as it was upon a new EU fisheries agreement. This brought several new orders and created a record profit for the business but once again orders for fishing vessels proved unpredictable. The company had already been squeezed out of the competitive market for yachts. The firm began building steel-hulled vessels, the hulls towed to Buckie from Hull where they were made. Orders were placed for fish-farm boats and the company built a small fast-ferry for the island of Foula. The latter was not a success. Although built exactly as designed, the design was unable to cope with the rough waters between Foula and the Shetlands and the ferry never actually entered service. As orders for fishing vessels ran out, Jones Buckie had to rely on seasonal repair

work, which was not an efficient or economic way to run the yard. Two further attempts to merge with Herd & McKenzie met with failure during the 1980s but in 1991 the latter, which had already changed hands once, approached Jones Buckie. A deal was done and the yard became part of Jones Buckie in January 1992. Both yards now handled more than half of all the repair work for the RNLI in Scotland. But repair work alone would never sustain the business. New orders were essential and several were successfully completed. Then disaster struck in 1994. An order for a fishing vessel was taken on at a keen price in competition with a subsidised Spanish yard so that employment could be maintained at Buckie until the repair season. A serious estimating error was made which resulted in a substantial loss on the contract. This was compounded by other errors. Inaccurate estimating and poor contract supervision (one major repair job on which the yard had incurred significant expense was allowed to leave the yard without any payment) damaged other work, including repairs, carried out at the yard. With a loss of more than £461,000 (13 per cent of turnover) and substantially reduced net assets, the minutes of the last directors' meeting on 12 December 1994, having noted 'the damage resulting from the disastrous contracts '505' and '506', as well as other badly priced refit contracts and continuing bad debt problems', recorded the agreement of the directors 'to approach Lithgow Holdings with a view to discussing the sale of the company'. For Roderick Jones, keeping the yard going had proved to be 'more effort than it was worth'. It was too much of a distant distraction when managing the foundry was itself complex enough. But Lithgow was understandably



(1)



(2)

In 1988 the Faithful (1) was the first steel motor fishing vessel built at Jones Buckie; the 30 metre Shapinsay ferry (2) was built in 1989 for the Orkney Islands Council.



The yard at Jones Buckie in the 1990s when the company was carrying out repairs and maintenance for the RNLI.

reluctant to commit itself to a deal when the business was struggling. The end came in 1996 when the Clydesdale Bank suddenly and unexpectedly withdrew the company's overdraft. This happened when Roderick was on holiday, having, he thought, secured the finances of the business for the time he was away. The bank made its decision when the overdraft was at its lowest level for some time – Jones & Campbell, of which Jones Buckie became a subsidiary in 1989, had contributed a sum towards wages at the yard which, it had been agreed with the bank, would be repaid. A strong letter, citing the long relationship between Jones & Campbell and the bank, was despatched and the bank returned the sum in question. But the withdrawal of the bank's support led to the inevitable. The receiver was called in and began the process of winding up the business (which

is still incomplete today). Lithgow ultimately acquired the assets of the business from the receiver.

At the foundry, Jones & Campbell bucked the general trend by making small profits during the worst of the recession of the early 1980s only to chalk up losses of more than a million pounds in the three years after 1984. Customers resisted price increases, material costs rose, there were technical problems arising from the pursuit of more complex business, production was plagued by unreliable machinery and too many foundries were competing for a share of a shrinking British automotive market. There were also worrying signs that global sourcing was having a damaging impact on the business. Bruce Jones in 1986 pointed out that 'We are in the volume part of the foundry industry and in much the most competitive sector. A buyer does not bother to comb



Jones & Campbell continued to make solid fuel heating appliances until 1977 although the rights to the last of them were sold only in 1989. This advertisement from the late 1970s depicts the Torglow range.

Europe and the world for cheaper castings if only 100 parts, or even 1,000 parts, are involved, but if it is 5,000 and more it is a different story'. In 1986, Jones & Campbell, one of the most modern foundries in the country, recorded its second successive loss of some half a million pounds, approximately 10 per cent of turnover. In that year the foundry became part of a new holding company, Jones & Campbell (Holdings) Ltd. With serious doubts about the future of the foundry, this was done to protect James Jones & Sons, in which Jones & Campbell held a third of the shares, should the latter collapse. It was the holding company, not the trading company, which now owned the stake in James Jones.

In 1986 Roderick Jones, who was also financial director at James Jones, succeeded Bruce Jones as the foundry's managing director, the latter remaining chairman. Two years later Graham Campbell joined the board as works director and Lindsay Rennie became joint managing director. After the major reinvestment of the 1970s and 1980s, making major gains in productivity was becoming more and more difficult. On the other hand, the company did win orders from several new customers, including Atlas Copco in Belgium, one of the world's largest manufacturers of compressors. The result was a return to

profit in 1988 when the foundry made more than £400,000 (£660,000 today) on record sales of nearly £8.2 million (over £13 million today). Thanks to another major contract in that year from JCB, the foundry achieved another record sales figure of £9.9 million in 1989 with a further rise in profits. At the same time, output of 16,000 tonnes was more than twice that of 1980 but had been achieved with the same number of employees. Also in 1989, more than a century after the foundry had first begun producing ranges and stoves, the rights to the last of the company's heating appliances were sold.

All this came to an end because of the weakness of the British economy in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Static turnover and falling margins produced huge losses of more than £1.6 million between 1990 and 1993. Roderick Jones recalled warning the business might not last. The bank commissioned a report on the viability of the foundry from a firm of international accountants which concluded that, while the bank had sufficient security, the long-term future of the business was in doubt and it had to be asked whether the company should continue trading.

Part of the losses stemmed from the decision in the middle of all this to acquire another foundry. In 1991 Jones & Campbell bought from the receiver the



Above: The automatic moulding line installed by Jones & Campbell at the Torwood Foundry in 1981.



Right: Workers assembling cores for automotive components at the foundry.

foundry which had been operated in Ayr by a small public company, James Dickie plc. It quickly became apparent that the Ayr foundry was a drain on the company's increasingly scarce resources. The foundry was closed in 1992 and the machinery was transferred to Larbert. Fortunately, the company was able to sell the four-acre foundry site in Ayr for redevelopment which recouped all the costs and losses shouldered by Jones & Campbell. The foundry also retained Dickie's major customer, Cummins.

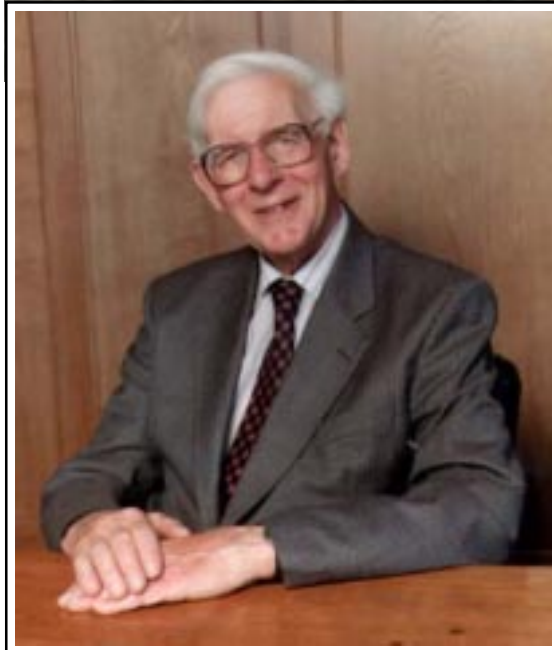
In the meantime, the fall in interest rates and the exchange rate as Britain withdrew from the European Monetary System worked in favour of the foundry's customers and enabled Jones & Campbell, after four years of losses, to achieve four years of rising sales and a resumption in profits. Turnover rose from £9.2 million in 1993 to £15.4 million in 1997. In the latter year, output broke all records to reach 18,200 tonnes. Bruce Jones was able to retire in 1995 from the company he had joined 49 years earlier in the belief that it had gained a new lease of life. But the company was now faced with a new problem. The foundry could not cope with the pressure of rising demand and suffered from production problems and increasing scrap rates as it struggled to meet the higher quality standards demanded by customers. When JCB transferred its business, which represented 16 per cent of the foundry's turnover, to Turkey in 1997, the company was able to replace this with new orders for tractor castings from Agco (Massey Ferguson). The loss of the JCB business was a sign of worse to come as rising exchange rates encouraged international customers to seek out cheaper castings outside the UK. Setting up production for the Agco contract cost the firm money. The situation was aggravated by the technical problems which came from the installation of a new £2 million hotblast cupola equipped to meet the provisions of recent environmental legislation which replaced the units dating from the 1950s. In 1998 Jones & Campbell, as profits almost disappeared, had to reduce the working week, slash costs and make more than 100 employees redundant.

In contrast, the period in which Jones & Campbell plunged into almost terminal decline saw James

Jones & Sons multiply its turnover by five. Profits, which averaged £700,000 between 1985 and 1992, rose to an average of £3.5 million between 1993 and 1998. This occurred in the face of extraordinary changes in the trade which forced many timber firms, on both sides of the UK timber industry, out of business. As far as the sawmilling trade was concerned, James Jones & Sons were left at the top of the tree, alongside the company's eternal rivals, BSW Timber (formerly A & R Brownlie).

Such success was not straightforward. During the 1980s and early 1990s the sawmill side of the business was rebuilt. This involved simultaneously not only the phased modernisation of the mills and the expansion of production capacity but also a totally different approach towards sales. The company had to learn how to win orders from the private sector after half a century supplying timber to the state-owned mines and railways. This market completely disappeared during the 1980s. Change had been underway since the 1950s but accelerated sharply as more and more mines were closed in the aftermath of the miners' strike in 1984. The railways were already using steel for wagons and concrete for sleepers. The new markets lay in pallet wood and construction timber. Pallet wood was the only real market for the increasing volume of sidecuts produced by modern sawmills where improved sawing techniques created the better quality timber demanded by the construction industry. One or two of the major timber importers were seizing the opportunity presented by the steadily rising use of timber for new housing. Brownlee & Co, for instance, set up a network of branches throughout Scotland in the 1980s to service the construction industry, an example later emulated by another importing firm, Mallinson Denny. At the same time smaller merchants were either going out of business or being swallowed up by larger firms which, as they grew in size, began to exercise their influence by demanding ever more stringent quality standards.

It was a tough scenario for James Jones & Sons. Tom Bruce Jones senior and John Glegg had already accepted the need for a change in approach. Tom



Above: Staff from Jones & Campbell gathered on the occasion of the retirement of T D Bruce Jones from the company in 1995 with (front row, left to right) Bill Wilkinson, Ian Mathew, Graham Campbell, Roderick Jones, Mrs Patricia Bruce Jones, T D Bruce Jones, Lindsay Rennie, Aileen Ironside and John Wilson; (second row, left to right) George Mallice, Jean Bodman, Louisa Bissett, Hannah Finlay, Margaret Adam, Diane Craig and Helen Ballantine; (third row, left to right) Alex Arthur, Tommy Crawford, Jim McWilliams, David Morrison, Linda Waugh, Lillian Kerr, Avril Waddell, Hugh Lauder and George McFadyen; (fourth row, left to right) Barrie Munn, Charles Wilsdon, Neil Nisbet, Alistair Nimmo, George Dick, Ian McPherson, Bill Layburn, Willie Moir, Michael Dunn, David Young, David Kemp, John Blades, Graeme Young, John Campbell and Brian Sheehan.

T D Bruce Jones on his retirement as chairman of James Jones & Sons in 1995.

Bruce-Jones junior, as managing director, had already identified the key members of the new management team. John Kissock, with his expertise in production, and Michael Leslie, adept at managing harvesting and supply operations, were promoted to the main board in 1985. At the same time, recognising the limited career prospects previously available in the company, Tom Bruce-Jones created several divisional directors. This worked well, giving opportunities in particular to Robin Stevenson in finance, Ian Pirie in sales, Alastair Millar in the pole division and Wilson Paton in the engineering division. With John Kissock in charge of the sawmills and Michael Leslie running timber buying and harvesting, this completed the shift from a geographically-based system of management to one based on functions. With new technology demanding greater technical knowledge, the company also pursued the recruitment of graduates to create a pool of talent for future promotion based on merit and placed a greater emphasis on internal management training. Within a few years, the directors could reflect that 'we have a good team of keen young middle managers'. This, together with the much more open and informal management style fostered by the managing director and his senior colleagues, helped to transform the attitudes of staff working in the mills.

The complete overhaul of the company's approach to sales was led by Ian Pirie. Tom Bruce-Jones quickly identified Ian as 'an obvious salesman' even though he had never been involved in selling. So, when Tom suggested to him that he should take charge of the company's sales organisation from Larbert, he was very reluctant. He had spent several years running the company's mill at Helmsley in North Yorkshire where he had met his wife, bought a beautiful house, raised a family and settled down.

He was eventually persuaded and, returning to Larbert, rapidly appreciated the scale of the task he had been given. Two days training with John Spark, the long-serving sales manager, Ian Pirie recalled, 'was more than enough'. John Spark, with an agile mind for figures, was a cantankerous character. On one occasion he had called Ian Pirie at Helmsley and

begun shouting at him down the phone. Ian put down the receiver, went out of the office, organised a lorry driver, returned, picked up the receiver, and answered 'Yes' to John Spark who had never even noticed Ian's absence. By the time Ian Pirie returned to Larbert, John Spark had just started using a dictaphone. When he received the first batch of letters typed up by his secretary from his dictaphone tapes, he began exclaiming that they were all wrong. His exasperated secretary brought up the dictaphone, switched it on and told him that she had typed exactly what he had said. 'That's maybe me speaking,' John Spark replied, 'but it's not what I'm saying!'

Taking over sales was, remembered Ian Pirie, 'a monster task'. With mining and railway orders in decline, the company had just begun processing timber at Forres and Dumfries for carcassing. This was a new market, requiring a new sales approach. The breakthrough came with orders from Mallinson Denny, the company's first major merchant customer. Although historical prejudice made selling construction grade timber difficult in Scotland, it was much easier in England where merchants, such as Howarth, Mallinson Denny and Jewson, were willing to try it. One of the key reasons for the company's success was the decision to become one of the first timber companies in the UK to adopt machine stress-grading on a major scale. Another was the organisation of mill tours for potential customers. Part of the tour involved visiting harvesting operations under the then manager, George Perry, whose confidence and enthusiasm was infectious. The same enthusiasm emanated from other members of the team, including the Dumfries manager, Brian Thompson, and still remains an important characteristic of the firm.

Between 1981 and 1989 James Jones & Sons doubled production of sawn timber. Much of this stemmed from the new mill at Dumfries and subsequent improvements made there during the 1980s. The company wanted to repeat the process at Aboyne, planning to use similar technology and even less labour. When the new mill at Aboyne, under



This presentation to John Spark in 1974 to mark 50 years with the company was just one of many made to a succession of long-serving employees. Gathered here are (left to right) Airlie Bruce-Jones, John Glegg, Tom Buist (foreman at Forres sawmill), Robert McArthur (manager of the pole division), John Spark (sales manager), Morton Scott (sales clerk), Tom Bruce Jones, James Richardson (buyer), John Donaldson (foreman at Larbert sawmill), James Spark (assistant company secretary), Robert Barnes (foreman at Helmsley sawmill), Sandy Hogg (area manager for the North), George Young (foreman at Heathhall sawmill) and Roderick Jones.

manager Francis Wilbur, was commissioned in May 1990, the company increased its total sawn timber output by 25 per cent.

With the investment at Aboyne costing approximately £3 million, the company was running short of capital from its own resources and stretching its bank borrowings to the limit. In 1989 net borrowings were in excess of £2½ million. With construction timber accounting for 60 per cent of the company's sawn timber sales within five years, there was a paramount need for further investment to improve the quality of service to the emerging merchant market, something

encouraged by at least one of the company's major customers, Mallinson Denny. For instance, it was important, with the introduction of new regulations, for the company to invest in drying kilns for timber. There was every indication that customers would welcome this facility and kilns were planned not only for Aboyne but also for Dumfries. But where was the capital to come from for this and other investments?

Part of the answer was from the profits being generated by the pole division based at Leven. Although sales were a fifth to a quarter of mill sales, the profits made by the division were often equal to

or more than those from the mills. The performance of the pole division under Robert McArthur and later Alastair Millar had sustained the company during its difficulties in the early 1980s so when the opportunity arose to expand the business, it was seized quickly. James Jones had been in pursuit of Christie & Vesey, a major rival based at Grangemouth, for some time. When the business was put up for sale in 1985, Tom Bruce-Jones and Roderick Jones swiftly arranged a deal with Hunter Timber, with the latter taking over Christie & Vesey and selling on the pole business to James Jones. (The speed with which James Jones conducted its decision making left its rivals for Christie & Vesey on the starting blocks.) The deal allowed James Jones to manufacture and treat telephone poles at Leven and electricity poles at Grangemouth and significantly strengthened an already very profitable business.

At the same time it had become clear during the mid-1980s that the best days of the engineering division were over. Sales had been declining for several years and in December 1984, after four years of losses, the board gave the division two years to return to profit. This did not happen and after a substantial loss in 1986 a disagreement over future plans for the business led to the resignation of Airlie Bruce-Jones as joint managing director, although he remained as a non-executive director of the company. This left Tom Bruce-Jones as sole managing director. The restructured business had little connection with the rest of the company's operations and a management buy-out was arranged which led to the sale of the business, under the name Outreach, to Wilson Paton and his colleagues in 1990 who continued to run the business at Larbert until relocating to new premises in Grangemouth ten years later.



This meeting of managers from James Jones & Sons was held at the Dunblane Hydro Hotel in June 1988 and shows (left to right) Michael Leslie, Jackie Pirie, Syd Watt, Willie Clason, John Kissock, George Perry, Ian Stewart, Sandy Pirie, Sandy Hogg, Ian Gray, Rob Colley, Peter Ross, Robin Stevenson, Gordon Lindsay, Neil Snedden, Kenny Dobie, Brian Thompson, McLean McLeod, Ian Pirie and Tom Bruce-Jones

It was in the summer of 1990 that Jock Armstrong joined the James Jones board as the first non-executive director from outside the family. He had had a long and successful career in the motor industry, notably in east Africa, before developing Mallinson Denny's business in Scotland and the North of England as managing director. He would give the board important guidance in many of the key decisions the company would take during the next 15 years.

The proceeds from the sale of Outreach came in handy for James Jones since the proposed kilns at Aboyne and Dumfries were not the only investments planned by the company. The company, having acquired Christie & Vesey, was eyeing up another pole business in Ireland called PDM. The parties were close to a deal in 1987 but Tom Bruce-Jones began to have doubts about the stability of the Irish economy and allowed the rival thwarted over the Christie & Vesey deal to become the successful bidder. This was fortuitous since funds were spared for a much more important acquisition two years later. The company had made an unsuccessful offer in 1985 to acquire two mills, Kinnoir and Mosstodloch, operated by Riddochs Ltd in the north of Scotland. The business was placed on the market again in 1989, having been largely neglected during the intervening period. Sandy Mitchell, mill manager at Kinnoir, recalled that, as far as the previous owners had been concerned, 'not one of them had a clue'. This time James Jones bought the business for significantly less than the price offered in 1985 although it was clear that the mills at Mosstodloch and Kinnoir were in desperate need of investment. Neil Snedden, who became general manager at Riddochs Ltd, remembered the poor condition of both mills. Several years before, Tom Bruce Jones senior had been invited to look round Kinnoir. He arrived at the mill in his gleaming Jaguar only to register dismay at the sea of mud in front of him. Nothing daunted, he summoned one of the men who drove a front bucket loader up to the gate which picked him up and deposited the James Jones chairman at the mill office.

Riddoch employees at Mosstodloch were particularly suspicious of their new owners, convinced that the mills had been bought only to shut them down. But the company recognised that the Mosstodloch site had much more potential than Jones's nearest mill at Forres. In fact from the early 1990s the company agreed that the latter would be closed and the former redeveloped along similar lines to Dumfries and Aboyne. The impact of the two latter mills on the business cannot be underestimated. In 1994, for instance, as productivity continued to rise at both mills, they accounted for more than half of the company's total sawn timber production of 175,000 cubic metres. Yet the redevelopment of Mosstodloch had still not been completed by that year.

There were a number of reasons why this was postponed. Firstly, there was the financial pressure brought about by the recession of the early 1990s. There was little anxiety about the company's trading performance. James Jones & Sons sailed through the recession by raising output albeit at the cost of lower margins for sawn timber sales. Once again profits from the pole division made an important contribution to the overall performance of the company. In 1992, for instance, sawmill operations made profits of less than £900,000 on sales of £18.7 million; the pole division contributed more than £900,000 on sales of only £5.4 million. The issue which did cause concern was the level of the company's borrowings. This worried the company's bank so much that in 1992 it refused to allow James Jones to borrow the £800,000 required to buy a small Scottish pallet manufacturing business.

Because of these financial constraints, there were always conflicting priorities for the available investment funds. The bank's reluctance to approve any further borrowing by the company forced James Jones to delay major investment at Mosstodloch (although both Kinnoir and Mosstodloch were partly upgraded through plant recycled from other Jones mills). Having spent £1 million on the Aboyne kilns, which came into use in March 1992, the company discovered that customers refused to pay the premium for using them so they were promptly



Gianni Chiarva and Tom Bruce-Jones on the floor of the Montreal Stock Exchange on the first day's trading of shares of Stella-Jones Inc on 29 June 1994.

mothballed and the kilns planned for Dumfries postponed. Nevertheless, the advantages of kiln dried timber became increasingly obvious to the industry, especially since the grading of wet timber would be forbidden from 1 March 1995. The Aboyne kilns were in full use within a couple of years and kilns at Dumfries were commissioned in 1995.

In the same year that the Aboyne kilns were finished, Tom Bruce-Jones persuaded his fellow directors to approve an investment in an overseas

business about which some of them were less than enthusiastic. There was a feeling that it was risky and unnecessary, which, in the light of trading conditions, the reaction of the bank to the company's borrowings, and the need for further UK investment, was understandable. Concerns were also expressed that it might be difficult to manage such a business at a distance, even though it was within the firm's experience, or that at the very least it would consume a lot of Tom Bruce-Jones's time.

Through the pole division, Tom Bruce-Jones had come to know Gianni Chiarva who ran Stella SpA, Italy's largest pole business, based in Cuneo in northern Italy. Both companies bought timber poles from Finland. The two men got on famously. An off-the-cuff invitation, as Tom was leaving a meeting with Gianni, made him stay and talk over the possibility of taking a stake in a joint venture to acquire a similar business which was for sale in Canada. This was the wood preserving division of Domtar Inc, formerly the Dominion Tar & Chemical Company, based in Montreal. Tom managed to persuade the board to let him travel to Canada to assess the potential of the business and he returned even more convinced that it was too good an opportunity to turn down. The Domtar treatment business, with four huge sites in Nova Scotia, Quebec and British Columbia, was worth C\$30 million and had about 40 per cent of the market for railway ties (as sleepers are called) and poles. In addition, at a time when poles from Finland were over-priced because of the volatile exchange rate, the Domtar business had valuable cutting rights, giving them access to a secure supply of poles which had export potential. The board agreed with their managing director's assessment and the joint venture, called Stella Jones International after the participants, acquired the business from Domtar on 30 June 1993. James Jones had a 49 per cent stake in the acquisition, which was renamed Stella-Jones Inc, at a cost C\$2.95 million. The acquisition caused all sorts of ructions in Canada where local businessmen protested loudly at the fact it was passing into overseas ownership even though they had been given an equal opportunity to

Tom Bruce-Jones took this photograph on his first visit to Domtar in Canada in June 1992. The truck carrying poles 120 feet in length is at the New Westminster pole treatment plant in British Columbia.



buy the business but had refused to do so. A year later Stella-Jones Inc was floated on the Canadian stock market, raising more than C\$15 million, and reducing James Jones's interest to 35 per cent.

While all this activity was going on, the firm took the chance when it came up to complete its coverage of the UK pole market, another investment which took precedence over Mosstodloch. Burt, Boulton & Haywood Ltd, based in Newport, had historical links with Domtar through the firm's involvement with the Canadian railroads in the late nineteenth century. The firm's owners approached James Jones & Sons towards the end of 1993 and the sale of Burt, Boulton & Haywood was concluded the following August for £2.1 million. The take-over required the approval of the Monopolies & Mergers Commission since it gave James Jones 60 per cent of the total market in the UK, leaving the company with just one rival, Calders & Grandidge, part of Meyer International.

At last, in 1995, the company completed the transformation of Mosstodloch by creating a new modern

sawmill at an initial cost of more than £4 million. The mills at Forres and Alford, together with other saw lines at Mosstodloch, were closed with several key members of staff transferring to Mosstodloch. With three large Scandinavian-style sawmills, James Jones retained a strong presence in the main markets for British timber, namely construction timber, fencing and palletwood, each of the mills cutting timber for its own specialist market. Another notable development was the growing importance of chips, sawdust and bark, the sales of which now became the responsibility of senior manager Roger Thornton. Previously treated as waste, these products now brought in valuable income, accounting for some 15 per cent of sales by value. It was becoming more and more important to maximise revenue from every part of each tree as the price of the company's sawn timber followed the ups and downs of the massive quantities of imported timber flowing into the country each year.

The combined turnover from all the company's operations in 1995 was more than £38 million with a

profit of £3.7 million. In the same year Bruce Jones, who had been non-executive chairman of the business since the death of his cousin in 1984, stepped down after 45 years on the board. He had always been constructive in his criticism and enthusiastically supportive of the business. Tom Bruce-Jones succeeded his cousin but as executive chairman. Two years later the board was reorganised with the appointment of Michael Leslie and John Kissock as joint managing directors. Roderick Jones, the finance director since 1974, relinquished his position in favour of Robin Stevenson but remained as a director and company secretary. Ian Pirie also joined the board as sales director.

The contribution of the company to the wider industry was reflected in John Kissock's appointment as president of the trade association, now known as the UK Softwood Sawmillers Association. During his term he had been instrumental in forging an alliance with the British Timber Merchants Association to create the UK Forest Products Association. In 1996 Tom Bruce-Jones, who had also served some years earlier as president of the Scottish trade association, became the first member of the UK timber processing industry to be appointed as a Forestry Commissioner, spending six and a half years in the post.

In 1997 the company achieved record sales of more than £44 million with profits of over £4¹/₂ million. Shareholders had for some years been enjoying rising dividends which now stood at £1.75 a share. This was a far cry from the desperate days of the inter-war years and the gloomy period which stretched from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. The company's consistent profitability percolated through for the benefit of employees whose remuneration was rather better than it had been in the days when Ian Pirie first worked for the company. Having had a staff pension scheme since 1945, the company's prosperity allowed the introduction of a pension scheme for hourly paid workers in 1997.

Half the profits in that year once again came from the pole business. Yet as the year drew to a close Tom Bruce-Jones suggested to the board that the time might be right to sell the pole division. Unsurprisingly there was some scepticism about this suggestion but as discussions continued, it became clear that this was an idea with some merit.

Past, present and future 1998 Onwards

The pole business had been enjoying the benefits of an exceptional replacement programme by BT and the electricity companies. This was coming to an end and Tom Bruce-Jones was concerned that work would eventually dry up. It was also likely that the market would become more and more competitive since Finnish suppliers were already selling finished poles in other countries. With the margins made by the pole business dependent on the volume of trade with its Finnish suppliers, this was a serious consideration. The board appreciated their chairman's concerns so he approached the company's main supplier, Metsäliitto, in March 1998. While fully aware of the market situation, they saw it as an opportunity to strengthen their own business and a deal was completed in three months. James Jones's timing was immaculate. The downturn in the UK pole market came even more speedily than Tom Bruce-Jones had anticipated. If the deal had been delayed for six months, the business would have been worth substantially less, if not impossible to sell.

The sale proceeds gave James Jones the advantage of being able to invest in the expansion of the business at a difficult time in the trade which prevented rivals from doing the same. Nineteen-ninety-eight was one of the worst ever years for UK sawmillers as prices for sawn timber fell, many UK sawmills ceased production and outlets for chips and sawdust also came under pressure. This was the knock-on effect of the economic recession sweeping across Europe and the Far East, combined with high timber production in Scandinavia, increasing imports of Baltic timber and the rising value of sterling. James Jones was able to increase output by seven per cent during the year

which was just as well since profits from sawmilling fell by 40 per cent to less than a million pounds. In fact, profits would have been even worse without the company's close operational control, constant attention to material prices and stock levels, close links with customers and staff commitment and loyalty.

The company struck out in a completely new direction. It decided to invest in manufacturing. Engineered timber flooring systems had already been developed as an alternative to traditional floor joists in North America and had captured 75 per cent of the market. They had several advantages. In particular they were much easier and speedier to install on site, saving time, money and materials, were designed to be stronger than traditional joists so that longer and lighter beams could be used, and, when used appropriately, could increase the amount of useable roof space. A Partners In Technology research programme, between the Timber Research & Development Association (TRADA), Brian Robertson, representing Nexfor, and John Kissock, was set up which satisfactorily proved the principles involved in engineered wood products. As a consequence, Brian Robertson began to develop the idea commercially, supported by James Jones & Sons since the company appreciated the opportunities presented by engineered floor systems, especially in the much larger English construction market. The company also recognised that such systems posed a threat to the more traditional graded construction timber supplied by mills like Dumfries and Aboyne. In fact, with big section timber becoming much scarcer, a Canadian company, Nascor Inc of Calgary, Alberta, had been marketing an engineered timber floor system in the UK since the mid-1990s. So in 1998



The James Jones Timber Systems Division is based at Forres.



The I-Joists flooring system made by James Jones Timber Systems Division has been installed in houses all over the UK.

John Kissock negotiated a licensing agreement with Nascor, which gave James Jones sole manufacturing rights in the UK, and a phased capital investment programme was approved. A suitable site was obtained in Forres, the first employees recruited and Brian Robertson appointed as general manager of what became the James Jones Timber Systems Division and the first plant of its kind in the country. One critical difference with the marketing of the system, known as I-Joists, was that James Jones insisted on devising its own design software specifically for the UK market (the Nascor system was based on North American specifications).

James Jones entered the market just at the right time. The UK construction industry was waking up to more innovative methods, particularly those which made savings in labour and materials. I-Joists struck a chord and proved remarkably successful. Initially British timber was used to obtain the necessary regulatory approvals, but insufficient quantities of the required grade were available. The Forres factory has since used imported timber for all except the centre part of the product. It quickly became clear that demand justified further investment and in 2003 a finger-jointing line and further manufacturing line were added. The system is marketed

today through national distributors all over the country with technical and engineering support provided from Forres with a dedicated support team serving the UK market. Today James Jones Timber Systems is a supplier to the five largest UK house-builders, turns over more than £10 million annually and has a 30 per cent share of a market which still has enormous potential. As competition has grown, new products, such as roof- and wall-panel systems, are being developed by James Jones Timber Systems to capitalise on the early success of the Forres factory.

With increasing investment, sales and employment, the Timber Systems Division of James Jones became the direct responsibility of a main board director. This was Tom R Bruce-Jones, the son of the chairman, who in July 2002 became the first member of the fifth generation of the family to join the business. As a teenager, he had spent several summers working in the company, particularly at Alness. He also worked for a year at the Helmsley mill between leaving school and going up to university, earning enough to travel to Australia and the Far East before taking up his place to read history at Newcastle University. In 1990, after graduating, he joined the Shotton Paper Company, then one of James Jones's largest customers for pulp logs and chips. Within a year he was transferred to the UPM sales office in London where he sold newsprint to national and regional newspaper publishers. In 1995 he was invited to join the team implementing the Aylesford Newsprint project in Kent, a joint venture between SCA and Mondi. Having established a sales network for newsprint in France, Germany and Holland, he decided to study for an MBA at Imperial College, London. This was followed in 1997 by a period with Enron where Tom helped to set up Enron's European derivative trading desk for pulp and paper products. This was very successful and expanded worldwide, diversifying into the steel sector. By the time Enron collapsed in 2001, Tom was a director of Enron Industrial Markets. He spent several months helping PricewaterhouseCoopers to wind up outstanding financial contracts. For some time, however, he had been talking with John Kissock about coming back to

James Jones on the understanding he would be able to make a contribution. Armed with his experience in management as well as a wider view of the forestry product sector, he returned to the company in the summer of 2002 and was appointed a director in July that year.

At the same time as the I-Joists business was being developed at Forres, the company's sawmill operations were taking another step forward. The time had come to replace the Heathhall mill. It was proposed to install a sophisticated computer-controlled small log processing line in a second ex-hangar leased on the Dumfries site. Instead the company had the chance to acquire 32½ acres on a large site being developed for industry by the local enterprise board adjacent to the M74 at Lockerbie. This was a much more attractive proposition. The land was purchased in November 1999 and over the next 10 months more than £7 million was invested in the site. The new line producing timber for pallets, fencing and carcassing, designed to extract the maximum value from every log, was commissioned in the late summer of 2000. Unique in the UK, employing groundbreaking techniques, including 3D scanning and profiling, and capable of processing more than 12,000 logs a day, it turned Lockerbie, with just 26 staff, into the most productive sawmill in the country.

Linked with this scheme were concurrent negotiations for the purchase of a pallet making firm based at Golborne in Cheshire. Unit Pallets, owned by Gil Covey and Mike March, was already an important pallet wood customer, a key market for James Jones. The acquisition of Unit Pallets, completed in April 1999 for £1.2 million, gained for James Jones a secure outlet under the company's control for 40 per cent of its pallet timber. This would remain the most important advantage even though the business had difficulties making a profit in a competitive market.

Each of the sawmills operated by James Jones is dedicated to processing timber of a specific type for specific purposes, dependent mainly on the size of log and the use for which the timber is intended. This includes the smaller, more traditional, more labour intensive mills, such as Kinnoir and Kirriemuir,



The saw line at the Mosstodloch sawmill, opened in 1995.



The saw line at the Lockerbie sawmill, opened in 2000.



A James Jones truck being loaded with timber in the North of Scotland.



A James Jones truck loaded with sawn timber at the Aboyne sawmill.



Kinnoir is one of the smallest of the company's sawmills. Like Kirriemuir, Kinnoir deals with timber of a random length unsuitable for processing anywhere else within the company.



Packs of processed timber under snow in the yard at Aboyne.



Top two illustrations: *Modern harvesting practice – a modern harvester, seen here on the Forrest estate in Galloway, operated by one man does the work which would have needed 20 men a century ago; the modern forwarder, pictured at work in the forest at Strathnaver in Sutherland, can reach places even horses would have found difficult.*

Middle right: *Modern sawmilling – the control room at the modern sawmill run by James Jones & Sons at Lockerbie is a million miles away from the unsophisticated sawmills of the past.*

Middle left: *The Unit Pallets plant in Cheshire is a major consumer of timber processed by James Jones & Sons.*

Bottom left: *Prince Charles visited the Aboyne sawmill in 1999. On the left is sawmill manager Francis Wilbur and on his right Iain McKenzie.*

which deal with the poorer quality, or random length and large logs unsuitable for processing anywhere else. Over the last five years there has been significant investment at Mosstodloch and Aboyne, where Eddie Balfour is manager, mainly to improve the presentation of the company's products. The next project in the company's rolling capital investment programme is the expansion of the Lockerbie site to provide secondary processing facilities, including kiln drying, grading, planing and timber treatment, using the latest technology. A second phase will involve the creation of a new larger sawmill. The complete scheme involves capital investment of about £18 million, partly funded by the sale of the company's remaining land at Larbert.

The company's harvesting section keeps the mills supplied with whatever specification and volume of timber they require. Michael Leslie and his small team of five managers are not only responsible for the harvesting of approximately 400,000 tonnes of timber a year, but also for the purchase of logs delivered to the mills by outside contractors and for the logs sold at roadside to the company by the Forestry Commission. The Commission supplies more than half of the company's timber, much of it through long-term contracts, and the company maintains strong links with private estates, again having long-term contracts with several of the larger owners. In 2004 total timber purchases will be about 700,000 tonnes, of which 530,000 tonnes will be logs. With the company's expansion during the last decade, the James Jones harvesting team now manages twice the volume of timber handled by the company in the early 1990s. With managers spending little time near the company's offices, mobile phones have proved to be particularly important. Control of harvesting and haulage, together with contact with outside suppliers, is critical and the hands-free phone in the car is now an essential part of the job.

With more than 40 contractors employed in harvesting and timber extraction, the company has about a hundred current timber harvesting sites, of which over half are being worked at any one time. Most of the timber obtained by James Jones is

harvested by self-employed contractors who make the most efficient use of their very expensive machines. The modern harvester, which can cost more than a quarter of a million pounds, is a supremely efficient machine, felling a tree, stripping the branches and carrying out cross-cutting in one operation, leaving a mat of branches to support its weight as it works its way through the forest. A grapple crane forwarder collects the timber and stacks it in piles at the roadside. Transport logistics are vital with so much being delivered to the mills every year. Most of this is carried out by contractors although some of the 38 specialised lorries in use today are owned by James Jones & Sons. In the north of Scotland the green lorry with the white 'J' is a familiar sight on country roads.



Roderick Jones and his son Alex outside the Torwood foundry during its final days in June 2003.



Members of the No 2 line crew at the Torwood foundry on 14 May 2003 coring up the last mould to be cast. Among them are John Guzik, the general manager, on the right with Jimmy Gibb, the core shop manager, behind him and, on the left, Tom O'Donnell, the No 2 line manager.



The last metal being melted before the closure of the foundry in 2003.

James Jones & Sons has always been at the forefront of the industry in health and safety and environmental matters. In the 1990s the company was the first to appoint full-time health & safety and environmental managers whose responsibilities cover all operation areas from the forest to the finished product.

The financial success of the company throughout the 1990s financed the dividends paid by Jones & Campbell (Holdings) Ltd with its significant stake in James Jones & Sons. It also facilitated the winding down of Jones & Campbell in 2003 when the foundry finally ceased business after 115 years. The outlook had seemed more hopeful at the end of the 1990s. Although more customers were switching to overseas suppliers for their castings, the foundry had managed to reduce production without losing money. In 1999 Jones & Campbell made £460,000 on sales of £9.8 million which was a reasonable return in the circumstances as prices continued to fall and two UK foundries closed each week. But this was impossible to maintain as the company lost more customers. In 2001 the foundry lost almost half a million pounds, the first loss since 1993. The final hammer-blow came in the following year when Agco, the foundry's second largest customer, announced it was transferring production from Coventry to plants in France and Brazil. This immediately sliced 20 per cent from the foundry's turnover which was already below £9 million. The business was unsustainable and closure was inevitable. The last thing Roderick Jones wanted was a repeat of the fiasco involved in closing down Jones Buckie. James Jones & Sons was able to repay the debt it owed to the foundry business for the financial support it had given the timber business in earlier days. In 2002 the timber company paid a special dividend of £8 a share and agreed to purchase the foundry site so that Jones & Campbell could be wound down in an orderly way.

The closure of the foundry was announced on 6 November 2002. Production was phased out over several months to make the most of existing raw material stocks, complete contracts, and allow customers time to make alternative arrangements. Trading

losses were avoided by the long overdue imposition of price increases which ironically customers had little choice in the circumstances but to accept. The Torwood foundry ceased production on 14 May 2003. Processing and the despatch of castings were completed by the end of June. At the final annual general meeting of Jones & Campbell in October 2003, Roderick Jones noted that 'the UK foundry industry had been in long-term decline. Jones & Campbell had outlasted many competitors and certainly all those in Scotland, owing to a change of direction in the 1960s. Even in the last month more UK closures had been announced. We could be proud of the Company's history and achievements over four generations'.

For James Jones & Sons another welcome income stream was the dividends flowing from the company's investment in Stella-Jones Inc. Tom Bruce-Jones, as chairman of Stella-Jones Inc and chief executive officer for several years, had spent rather more time in Canada than he had anticipated, mainly dealing with several senior management problems, but this burden lessened after the appointment as president in June 2001 of Brian McManus. The business has expanded organically and through the acquisition of several competitors. In the first nine months of 2004, sales reached almost C\$100 million with record pre-tax profits of C\$9.4 million.

Also through Gianni Chiarva of Stella, James Jones & Sons had taken the opportunity in 2000 to take a small stake in the Sirti Group, an Italian telecommunications construction business, being acquired by a consortium from Telecom Italia.

Tom Bruce-Jones's contribution to the timber industry was recognised with the award of the CBE for services to forestry in 2003. In the same year, for services to Finland, he was created a Knight (1st Class) of the Order of the Lion of Finland. He had been honorary consul for Finland in Glasgow and the West of Scotland since 1994. Further recognition of the role played by the company within the industry came in January 2005 when John Kissock received the OBE. Under the leadership of Tom Bruce-Jones and his fellow senior executives, James Jones & Sons has



Tom Bruce-Jones received the CBE for services to forestry in the 2003 New Year's honours list. He is seen here outside Buckingham Palace with (left to right) his daughter, Caroline, his wife Stina and his son Tom R Bruce-Jones after the investiture in July 2003.

Stella-Jones Inc's Truro pole treatment plant at Nova Scotia in Canada. With space no object, sites like Truro cover vast areas, in this case 27 hectares.

The largest of the plants in area is Delson in Quebec where the site measures 66 hectares.



taken impressive steps to consolidate its position as the second largest business in the UK-based timber industry. The expansion of the sawmills, the development of Timber Systems and the acquisition of Unit Pallets have helped the company to increase sales from £37 million in 1998 to more than £60 million in 2004. In the difficult trading conditions of the last few years, the company has reaped the benefits of continuous investment and more efficient management by first maintaining and then steadily increasing operating profits. Some 60 per cent of turnover still comes from the company's sawmills which makes reinvestment critical for future profitability although the board are always aware of the need for such investment to make a proper return. The result has been substantial increases in productivity in the sawmill business. In 1980 output was 40,000 cubic metres; in 1998 191,000 cubic metres; and in 2004 300,000 cubic metres. At the most labour efficient mill, Lockerbie, productivity is 3,000 cubic metres per man. Customers, principally large national chains such as Jewsons and B&Q, have become as demanding in the timber industry as they have in any other sector. Quicker delivery and greater standardisation of products, cut to customers' specifications, require from the company better co-ordination between timber harvesters and the mills and increasing technical sophistication. Technology has been allied with high standards of production, effective salesmanship and keen customer service, all essential for the company to remain competitive in a market dominated by timber from overseas.

The businesses founded by James Jones and managed by his descendants have made an invaluable contribution over five generations to industry and employment throughout Scotland. Family businesses which survive more than two or three generations have always been rare. Those, which like James Jones & Sons, are still flourishing in the fifth generation are exceptional. James Jones & Sons is even more unusual in that it is a business which is still expanding. Today it is perhaps more vibrant, more progressive, more entrepreneurial than it has ever been since

the days of the founder himself. In fact, James Jones and his great-grandson, Tom Bruce-Jones, the current chairman, appear to have more in common than first appears for they both share the entrepreneurial instincts and opportunism of the true businessman which has driven the business forward in two very different eras.

But it should never be forgotten that James Jones & Sons would never have survived without the support of Jones & Campbell. Globalisation and the decline of manufacturing in the UK led to the demise of the foundry but in its incredibly profitable inter-war heyday, it helped to keep the timber firm afloat. This was just one aspect of what have generally been the beneficial relationships between succeeding members of different generations of the family in business.

With a shared vision for the businesses, assisted by their overlapping membership of the boards of the main businesses, family members have given each other mutual support. While the mutual financial assistance between James Jones and Jones & Campbell is one example, another would be the complementary relationships between Tom Bruce Jones and J C Bruce Jones in one generation, between J C Bruce Jones and Peter Forbes Jones in another, and again between Forbes Jones, T D Bruce Jones and the second Tom Bruce Jones. In the first instance J C Bruce Jones tried but failed to restrain his brother's instinctive opportunism. In the second the relationship between J C Bruce Jones, left to manage a business almost undone by his brother's actions, and his elder brother Peter was crucial to the financial survival of James Jones & Sons. In the third, the second Tom Bruce Jones, reflecting on the lessons of the past, took the advice of his more cautious cousins and their combination led to the gradual modernisation of the post-war business and its return to profit.

Few family businesses have been able to prosper through the talents of family members alone. The Jones family have always recognised this. Even the autocratic founder appreciated the capable managerial skills of Dermont Campbell. In succeeding generations, non-family members have played key roles in the management of the business, from



The board of James Jones & Sons Ltd: (left to right, standing) Airlie Bruce-Jones, Jock Armstrong, Robin Stevenson, Ian Pirie, Roderick Jones, Tom R Bruce-Jones; (left to right, sitting) Michael Leslie (joint managing director), Tom A Bruce-Jones (chairman) and John Kissock (joint managing director).

David Leith and John Glegg to John Kissock, Robin Stevenson and Ian Pirie. Today one of the company's key advantages, according to Jock Armstrong, is the strength and dynamism of its senior management. There are, of course, countless others, woodcutters and sawyers, joiners and engineers, mill foremen, managers and office staff, who have contributed towards the success of the company. Many of them, in fact most of them, spent the greater part of their working lives with the same company, a tradition which still lasts.

That so many employees have spent so long with the same firm says something about the ethos of the business. In the timber division, for instance, 20 per

cent of the current 310 employees have recorded service of 25 years or more. In times long since past, long service happened because few people changed jobs during their working lives, because there were often fewer opportunities for men brought up to work in just one industry. But that cannot be all. The amazing celebrations organised by J C Bruce Jones in 1950, bringing together so many people from all over Scotland, give an indication of the importance the family has always attached to its employees. True, sometimes the money could have been better, the conditions improved, but, as Ian Pirie recalled, even when he was underpaid, if you were committed to the business, the directors were committed to you.

And, at the same time, the perpetuation of this philosophy over the generations has been aided by the character of individual members of the family themselves. They have never given themselves airs, not even Peter living in his mansion house at Dunmore Park. They have always been capable of treating the laird and the labourer on equal terms, which they have managed to do through the lashings of personal charm with which most of them have been endowed and which so many others have spoken about.

Finally, as times have changed and business requirements have altered, there has been a willingness, sometimes enthusiastic, sometimes less so, to move forward. Perhaps this was seen most clearly, firstly, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, with the moves towards more modern production as it became clear that the firm's traditional markets were declining; and, secondly, from the early 1980s, when

the company overcame the final collapse of those markets by building up new ones, introducing modern Scandinavian mill technology and transforming the way in which the business was managed. The company has also shown an ability to put its experience of the timber industry to good use by moving into areas apart from but related to its core skills, such as the pole business in the past and the timber systems division today.

After five generations, through the wisdom of combining the talent of those both within and without the family, through opportunism tempered by financial realism, through a readiness to accept change, and through a recognition that progress never comes from standing still, James Jones & Sons is enjoying its greatest success. For family, management and employees, the challenge lies in maintaining this successful formula in the future.

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