

## **GROWTH CONTINUES AS FORESTRY COMPANY TURNS 50**

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LEADING forestry business Scottish Woodlands Ltd has marked its 50th birthday by publishing an anniversary book, planting a celebration woodland and increasing its profits by 20 per cent.

*The Wood and the Trees: A History of Scottish Woodlands Ltd and its People* tells the story of the company, which is unique in the sector as it is 80 per cent owned by its employees. It also links the story of the business to the wider development of the modern forestry sector, through a combination of personal interviews and detailed documentary evidence.

The book recounts the co-operative roots of Scottish Woodlands before it became a commercial company in 1967, right through to its current status as a sophisticated forestry business turning over more than £70 million.

It recalls the drama of two management buy-outs, in 1986 and 2005, and landmark moments such as the great windblow of 1968 and the 1988 Lawson Budget which removed forestry from the B&D tax schedules which underpinned the planting boom of the 1970s and 80s.

There are also chapters on major cultural changes in the forestry sector, including a chapter called *The Hard Road to Hard Hats*, which charts the shift in health and safety culture over the last 50 years.

The book has a strong focus on key figures in the Scottish Woodlands story, right through from The Hon Jamie Bruce and Dennis Crawford OBE, respectively the first Chairman and Managing Director of the commercial company, to Tom A Bruce Jones, Chairman from 2005-2016, who is described in the book as “the white knight” who devised the plan for the second management buy-out in 2005.

However, it also emphasises the role of all the company’s employees, with one chapter called *The People People: A Different Kind of Company*. Scottish Woodlands Ltd currently has more than 140 employees, with around half having shares in the business.

The book concludes with Ralland Browne, Managing Director of Scottish Woodlands Ltd, looking to the future – and reflecting on the close links between the company and the growth of the wider forestry sector.

“It is striking how our own history has mirrored that of forestry in Scotland,” said Mr Browne, who succeeded Colin Mann in April 2016. “We became a commercial company in 1967, the year of the last Forestry Act - and as we turn 50, a new Forestry Bill is coming before the Scottish Parliament.

“There have been ups and downs along the way, but the company and the wider forestry and wood-processing industry are both in good health in 2017 - and we are optimistic for the future, with a strong focus on driving up tree planting rates.”

A copy of the anniversary book was presented to all staff at Scottish Woodlands' AGM at Crieff Hydro, Perthshire, on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Its annual results for the year to 30 September 2016 showed turnover up almost £1 million to £70.358m, with profits rising from £1.315m to £1.575m, an increase of 19.77 per cent.

Scottish Woodlands Chairman Tom R Bruce-Jones, also joint Managing Director of sawmiller James Jones & Sons Ltd, a 20 per cent shareholder in Scottish Woodlands, said: “The Brexit vote and US election result have created uncertain macro conditions which could impact for a long period of time. The strengthening of the Euro after Brexit has, however, made domestic processors more competitive.

“Politically [in Scotland], there appears to be a focus on new planting and restocking and it is hoped this impetus will continue as well as providing the platform for stronger investor confidence in forestry.”

To mark the company's 50th anniversary, Ralland Browne helped to plant a celebration woodland of 50 new trees at Crieff Hydro, with Resort Operations Director Russell Crighton. Mr Browne has been planting trees at Crieff Hydro for almost 30 years and won prestigious forestry award The Dulverton Flagon for his work there as a young forester in 1991.

“The company's relationship with Crieff Hydro goes back well beyond then, and I estimate that we have planted at least quarter of a million trees here,” Mr Browne said. “Crieff Hydro has been a great client and it was the natural place to plant the 50th birthday celebration woodland - and to host our AGM.”

Mr Browne added: "The book ends with Tom A Bruce-Jones saying that forestry is an industry where it is not always crucial to be fast-moving – and that continuity, loyalty and excellence are important in keeping the confidence of clients. He says that Scottish Woodlands Ltd has achieved that rather well.

"That's why it was right to come to Crieff Hydro to mark our 50th birthday with people who really matter to us – one of our long-term clients and our staff. Our people make the company and we have tried to reflect that very strongly in the book."

Scottish Woodlands Ltd is headquartered in Riccarton, Edinburgh, but has 16 other offices covering Scotland, from Castle Douglas in the south-west to Strathpeffer in the Highlands, as well as operations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The book project was overseen by previous Managing Director, Colin Mann, who is now Deputy Chairman of Scottish Woodlands Ltd.

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