

The make up of Riddochs when I joined was Alex., Willie as partners and their brother Wyness. Alex. was responsible for the procurement of standing timber for the firm's needs, Willie was responsible for production and general public relations, Wyness was responsible for the office and the accountancy work so he was my direct boss. The firm consisted of permanent sawmills at Stoneyford Forres, Glassgreen Elgin, Boghead Fochabers, Newe Strathdon, Markethill Turriff and 22 small portable mills scattered all over the Northeast of Scotland. There was a planting and fencing department with tree nurseries at Aberlour and Craigellachie this department alone employed 50 to 60 employees in total there was about 400 employees. They had also 2 bulldozers used in making forestry roads all in all quite a busy firm. At this time the Office consisted of Peter Milne head clerk, Willie Geddes cashier, Margaret McEwan secretary, Mrs Young, invoice typist, Isobel Reid, telephone sales clerkess Willim Loggie cost and purchase clerk, Elizabeth McIntosh office junior, Margaret Bruce, and Janet Cowie were new employees.

The office at Tarryblake was small and overcrowded and new premises were necessary and on searching around a new office was found the old manse at Mannochhill just outside of Rothiemay. The present occupier was finding the manse too big and an arrangement was made to convert our present office back to being a house and exchange places with Mr McKenzie this was done in April 1954.

The managerial staff at Riddochs at this time were apart from the Riddoch family as follows:-

T.H.Woolridge General Manager.

John Morison Area Manager Forres

Gordon (Tom) Beange Area Manager Elgin

Willie MacPherson Area Manager Huntly and Turriff

Willie Munro Area Manager Strathdon

Robert Thomson Area Manager Aberlour

Ian Richards Manager Nursery and Planting and Fencing.

Assistants to the above were George Kemp, Ian Durno, John Tough, Fred Davidson and Donald Scott.

The Company's main line of business in 1954 was mining timber, fencing timber, boatbuilding timber, boxmaking timber.

The sawmills at Stoneyford (later Balnaferry), Boghead (later Mosstodloch), Glassgreen, Markethill and Newe produced battens and boards and boatbuilding material. The mining and fencing materials were mainly produced at the portable or semi. portable mills scattered all over the Northeast of Scotland.

It was decided that we required a machine that could cope with our invoicing and wages. A machine was purchased from Data General and we were taken down to London to get acquainted with the workings. The machine was a great success and we were getting our invoices out the following day which meant that our cash flow improved greatly. It was quite a slow machine using a card system and we had two ladies working in two hour intervals.

In 1974 we built a new sawmill at Corpach Fort William incorporating all the modern techniques of automation this was at the onset described as the most modern and largest sawmill in Britain turning out 1000 cubic meters per week. The mill was opened by Prince Charles and attended by hosts of specially invited guests with no expense spared. This mill being computer controlled meant that the head office which by now had moved to Reidhaven Street in Elgin had to be equipped with a state of the art computer. The machine installed was an up to date high capacity Data General machine which required a room to itself temperature controlled with a direct line to Kilmallie. This meant another weeks training in London.

The new Elgin Office was a big house which had to be converted to suitable offices. There were 9 rooms and suitable kitchen and toilets and no expense was spared in furnishings. It was a comfortable working environment but I was having uneasy feelings that between Kilmallie and our new office we were overspending and with Kilmallie taking too long to reach the required production things could not justify our expensive methods. The company was now owned by Simon Fraser of Generation Securities who was getting too little support from his fellow directors and the continued increase in staff mainly in the accounting department (4) accountants. At this time we had separate departments Sales, Timber Purchasing, East Production, Kilmallie Production, Engineering Dept. and general office and all were intent in trying to be the most important part of the company something had to go.

Another disaster to hit Riddochs was the miners strike with the result that our stocks were very quickly getting out of hand with the result our mill at Kinnoir had to change to producing fencing timber but this could only carry on for a short period of time and production had to stop.

The miners strike lasted for almost a year 1984-1985 and did enormous damage to the timber industry. The Coal Board did try to help the industry by buying stocks of mining which the timber merchant held in their yards for delivery once the strike ended but it was not enough and the merchants through the Home Timber Merchants began to look for other markets. It took a long time to get reorganised and many timber merchants went out of timber production for good.

It had to happen and it did the Bank pulled the plug and the most embarrassing thing happened and in the summer of 1985 Riddochs Of Rothiemay went BURST the receivers were called in Grant, Thornton of Glasgow. What an uproar this caused all the creditors were phoning regarding their unpaid accounts and although we sympathised with them there was nothing we could do.

The Receivers headed by Stuart White kept the firm going as a going concern and all the staff were kept on working for the receivers. Stocks had to be taken at all the mills and valued and as the receivers had no experience in the timber trade we were necessary to keep them right. The former directors were all banned from the office except for Mr MacCaskil probably the wrong choice as it turned out. The receivers first responsibility was to make the best deal for the creditors and the business was put on the market as a going concern there were one or two interested to acquire the firm at scrap value prices. Maccaskil and the receiver managed to get Generation Securities Ltd of London to make a successful offer and they set up a new company under a new name of Riddochs Ltd. with Macaskill as managing director a decision they were later to regret.

The new company offered only for the East Coast part of Riddochs the Kilmallie mill was sold separately to Smith Timber Merchants of Kirkoswald.

Generation Securities were the same people that went under the name of Development Securities the McAlpine Family.

This arrangement was never going to be a success with Macaskill in charge and although we continued to trade quite successfully for a few years what with the continuing quarrels with the London end always looking for better and questionable figures being supplied and Macaskill urging that the board should dispose of the company the Board eventually made Riddochs Ltd available for sale.

Macaskill tried to find funding to take over the company not knowing that there was another interested party waiting in the wings and eventually Riddochs was sold to James Jones Ltd From Larbert.

When Jones took over the decision of what staff were to be kept on and on the advice of Maccaskill I was to be made redundant and he would manage to do my duties but common sense prevailed and I was retained as Office Manager

The office at Elgin was sold by the receivers and we were allowed to stay until we found other premises which we did eventually at an empty office in the industrial estate at Mosstodloch the suited quite well being close to our Mosstodloch Sawmill, meantime our staff had dwindled to Graham Dey accountant and computer wizzard, Me, Ann Milne, Carol McNee, and Kathleen Greig with Alan Clark as Salesman with control

from Larbert. Neil Sneddon of Jones was overall manager. The mill management was Jock Copland at Mosstodloch Sandy Mitchell at Kinnoir and the Harvesting responsibilities were taken over by Jones this was the best thing that could have happened for the good of Riddochs.

Over the next few years Riddochs improved greatly for especially for the workforce better conditions and wages. At last Riddochs was in the hands of people that knew the timber trade even although it was our great rivals over the years namely James Jones Ltd Larbert. Although James Jones was not happy about our small orders for the local farming customers in the Northeast it was agreed to continue our local methods for the time being.

After a period of time and we were progressing satisfactorily plans were made to modernise our mills begining with our mill yards which were just a mess of mud so large areas were cleared and hard cored and in some areas were either tarred or concreted.

When Jones bought Riddochs from the receivers Mosstodloch consisted of the following:-

- Strachans Mill

- Smiths Mill

- Larch Mill

- Small Drying Kiln

- Treatment Plant

- Hangar where the re-saw was used for small orders

- Timber Shop for small orders

- Mill Office (Small and dingy)

- Maintainence Shop.

As of now (1999) there is now a high capacity modern Mill where logs arrive in are peeled cross-cut into suitable lengths through the mill all untouched by hand offcuts into chips nothing wasted with ready markets for all classes of timber, bark, chips and sawdust. There is a modern office built from the firm's own timber fully equiped with all modern computerised office machinery and things look to be in place for a successful future.

PRODUCTS AND PRICES SOLD BY GEORGE RIDDOCH
Extracts from an old ledger dated 1888-1891

5/8" Larch barrel heading	52/6 per 1000 ft
Half barrel staves	50/- per 1000 ft
3/4" Spruce heading	69/- per 1000 ft
Haddock staves	30/- " "
Fence posts	25/- per 100
Sawing posts	4/- per 100
Larch fence posts	26/- per 100
122 feet of 3/8" boards	4/- 3pence
50 feet of 1/2" boards	2/- 9pence
28" x 1/2" staves	32/6 per 1000 ft
25" x 1/2" staves	30/- " "
Herring barrel staves	60/- " "
Railway sleepers 8' x 8" x 4"	8 1/2 pence each
Rails 12' x 4" x 1 1/2"	4 1/4 pence each
Trams 4' x 7" x 3 1/2"	3 1/4 pence each
Trams 4' x 6" x 3"	3/6 per 72 ft
Trams 3' x 6" x 2 1/4"	3/3 " "
Trams 4' x 5" x 2 1/2"	2/6 " "
Larch sleepers 9' x 9" x 4 1/2"	2/4 each
9' x 8" x 4"	1/8 "
8' x 8" x 4"	1/4 "
Larch poles 14' x 6" top dia.	3/10 "
12' x 5 1/2" top dia.	2/6 "
Larch sleepers 7' x 7" x 3 1/2"	11d each
Plough handles 2	3 d each
Egg boxes	1/9 each
Yoke 1 Swingletrees 2	2/-
Cart shafts 1 pair	5/6
Wood for 1 cart frame	5/6
Strainers	1/6 each
Firewood blocks	11/- per ton
Wood for 6 harrows	15/-

Piece of ash	5' x 14" x 3"	3/-
Larch plank	9' x 10" x 3 1/2"	3/-
Barrow feet	1 pair	8d
Larch streaching posts		1/- each
Oak	24 1/2' x 14 1/2" side	1/9 per ft
Oak for boatbuilding		1/9 per ft
Larch for boatbuilding		1/4 "
Filloes	4 gang	£2
Spokes	4 sets	£1 : 2/-
3/4" Barrel staves		55/- per 1000 ft
3/4" Barrel heading		55/- per 1000 ft
Brushwood	22 loads	11/- total
Larch posts	June 1888	26/6 per 100
Larch posts	February 1889	27/6 per 100
Streaching posts	March 1889	1/3 each
Scantlings	5" x 2 1/2"	1/6 per 100 ft
	7" x 2 1/2"	2/- per 100 ft
Slab deals	300 ft	12/- lot
Larch rails	12' x 4" x 1 1/2"	6/- per 100 ft
Rafters	12' x 5 1/2" x 2 1/2"	1/- each
Ash filloes	13	2/- lot
Wood for 4 barrow wheels		5/- lot
Beech planks		1/3 per cuft
Ash planks		2/- per cuft
Sawing	3 days and 7 hours	18/6 lot
Sawing	5 days and 5 hours	£1 : 7 : 6d
Larch flooring	4" x 1 1/2" 326 lin ft	19/6 lot
Harrow bills	2 off	1/- lot
Rick posts	8 dozen	18/- lot
Sheep stakes	53 number	6/7 lot
Larch rails	10'6" x 3" x 1 1/4" Caledonian Ry.	5d each
Larch rails	6'6" x 6 1/2" x 3 1/2" " "	8d each
Sleepers	9' x 10" x 4 1/2" G. N. S. Ry	1/8 each
Larch plug for mill dam	18" x 11"	1/10 each
Ash for cart shafts		6/6 each
Larch stall posts	8'6" x 7" x 7" 5	£1 : 2 : 6d lot
Elm	5'6" x 3" x 2 1/2" 2pcs	1/4d lot
Larch	18" x 5" x 3"	3d
Hire of horse	6 hours	4/10d lot
Telegraph Poles	22'	3/4d each
	30'	5/6d each
	36'	7/2d each

	20'		3/1d each
	24'		4/2d each
Pit Sleepers	3'6" x 5" x 2"	Willhall	15/9d per 100
	3' x 5" x 2"	Dechmont	13/3d per 100
Larch Sleepers	9' x 9" x 4 1/2"	Motherwell	2/7d each
Larch Props	5"	Kelty	23/- per 100ft
	4"	Plains	16/6 per 100ft
Boards	3/4"		6/- per 100ft
	1/2"		5/- per 100ft
	1"		7/- per 100ft
Bark	Stirling		50/- per ton
Larch Posts	5'6" x 6" x 3"	Shettleston	7 1/2d each

The timber sales were spread over a wide area with a large volume of mining, boxmaking and barrel timber going to South merchants by rail.

The Fishing industry must have been very busy around this time and the recorded merchants in the Northeast of Scotland as follows:-

Alex. Stephen & Sons 69 St. Peters Street Peterhead

James Stephen & Co Peterhead

Wm. Andrew

John Morrison

G T West

R Reid

Robert May

Buchan & Robertson

Thomas Robertson Gardenstown

Baillie & Knowles Stonehaven

John Innes Fraserburgh

Grant & Innes Portknockie

Alex. Flett Buckie

John Donaldson Portknockie & Peterhead

Messrs Gerry Buckie & Peterhead

G. Bruce Portknockie

William Wood Cullen

J. M. Thomson 16 Cross Street Fraserburgh

A. Brown & Co Peterhead

McKenzie & Stephen

R. Reid

R. W. Hutcheson

John Sinclair

G. Stephen Boddam

Geo. Downie Whitehills

Alex. Goodbrand Portknockie

John Mitchell Peterhead
 Alex. Wiseman Gardenstown
 William Still Gardenstown
 Mr Ingram Gardenstown
 John Gunn 80 Main Street Buckpool
 G. W. Wiseman Gardenstown
 Messers Overall & Coy Peterhead
 William May Fraserburgh
 Lewis Thomson Fraserburgh
 J. S. Davidson Peterhead
 John Bisset Fraserburgh
 Chas. Anderson Cullen
 G. B. Davidson Peterhead
 James Johnstone Buckpool (Cooper)
 Alex. Wood Lossiemouth
 R. J. Sutherland Portsoy
 Alex. Flett Findochty
 R. C. I. West Macduff
 D. Taylor High Street Stonehaven
 Mr. Chalmers Buckie
 Kenneth McDonald Cullen
 J. Mair & Coy Peterhead
 Alex. Watt Pointlaw Aberdeen
 Andrew Noble Fraserburgh
 Mr. Lumsden Peterhead
 P. Buchan (Jnr) Peterhead
 J. & J. Scott Peterhead
 J. & S. Boyle Peterhead
 Alex. Grant Cullen
 A. Robertson Peterhead
 James West Gardenstown
 Cocker & Coy Lossiemouth
 George Craigen Gardenstown
 Wm. Andrew (Jnr) Peterhead
 H. Munro Banff
 Heslop King & Coy Peterhead

The above is a sample of fish related companys who bought timber for either fish boxes or barrels and quite a large volume was supplied.

At this time there were quite a few boatbuilders using hardwood and larch:- George Duncan Macduff

J. Grant Gardenstown
 George Innes Portknockie

J. & W. McIntosh Portessie
W. & G. Stephen Gardenstown
J. B. Smith Iainstown Buckie
George Smith Buckie
Stevenson & Coy Macduff
Scott & Yule Fraserburgh
Alex. Wood Lossiemouth

Mining Timber and various other sawn timber were supplied through the dreaded agents some who survived until my time in the industry :-

Addison, Armstrong & Coy Sunderland
Angus Bain Stornoway
Robert Brownlie Newmains Carluke
Charles Calder & Coy Newcastle
Calder & Coy Glasgow
John Denholm & Coy Bo'ness
J. S. Smith Dymock & Coy 95 Bath Street Glasgow
James Kennedy & Coy 69 Buchanan Street Glasgow
Stewart & Love 140 Hope Street Glasgow
Lewis Miller Crieff
A & G. Paterson St. Rollox Glasgow
Adam Wilson Auchinleck Ayrshire

Also during this period large quantities of Railway Sleepers, Fencing Posts and Telegraph Poles were supplied to the Great North Of Scotland Railway Coy at Aberdeen, the Caledonian Railway Coy St. Rollox Glasgow and the Highland Railway Coy Inverness.

This is a sample from a massive ledger book mostly written in beautiful copperplate probably with quill pens still well preserved today.