

The staff newsletter of AJ Engineering and NEWCo

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AJE!

When I set AJ Engineering up, I had no experience of running my own business having just been made redundant by the demise of William Reid Engineering whose former fabrication workshops are now shared between Maclean's Highland Bakery and D&S Metals. I had started there as an apprentice fabricator/welder in 1971 and had 27 years, progressing from workshop to office.

AJE started out life in a rented 'shed' from James Jones Timber Systems. The building had been used for potato dressing by the previous owners Moray Estates and was fairly dirty and dusty but it had three phase power, a concrete floor and was dry.

I was the first AJE employee and Andy Roy (sadly now deceased) was our second employee. His first job was to make a pair of sliding doors as we needed to have forklift access to the building. Soon Davy Murdoch joined us in June that year followed on by Simon Hutchins and others, many of whom are still with us today.

Our offices were old Portacabins which were previously used by a toddler playgroup in Nairn and some of their marker pen drawings were still on the walls!

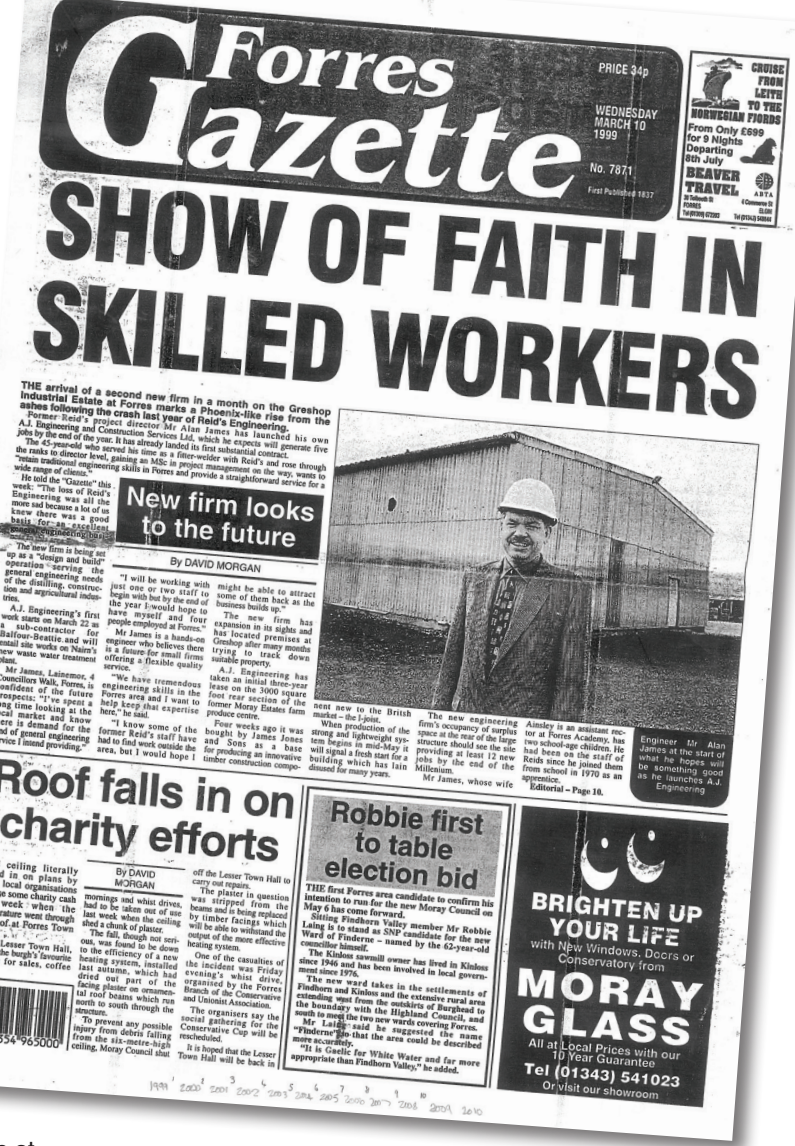
Two and a half years later James Jones gave us a pre-agreed 6 month notice to quit as they were expanding. Luckily, we were able to buy our present site right next door.

Planning for our large workshop was secured and Highlands and Islands Enterprise helped us with a grant to partly fund the building. We built the workshop in 2002 but we were still using our trusty Portacabins as offices. Ten years later our new offices were built and the cabins were put to good use on the Forres Rotary Bonfire.

Over the years there have been significant developments at AJE and we now have about 75 employees at Forres and a further 20 at NEWCo, in Fort William.

We will continue to develop and grow by being customer focused and meeting their needs, when and wherever.

This has been possible due to our multi-skilled staff and investing in training, plant and equipment. As a former apprentice, I firmly believe in the apprenticeship system and will



continue to do so as our fully trained former apprentices are the lifeblood of the company.

So, to celebrate 'the first' 20 years we are organising a variety of events throughout 2019. I do hope that all at AJE will be able to take part in this and support the nominated Charities that we will be fundraising for. Further details will be provided later.

Bridgeworks continue for AJE

OVER half a million pounds of work relating to two Scottish bridges has been secured by the team at AJ Engineering.

Contracted by The Spencer Group, AJE is continuing its works on the Forth Road Bridge and in the new year will begin a project on the Kessock Bridge in Inverness.

Leading the projects is Wilson Burnett who explained that this is the second time AJE has secured work on the Forth Road Bridge with The Spencer Group.

He said: "It is great to be back working on the Forth Road Bridge with The Spencer Group. The works on the Forth Road Bridge should be finished in February all being well. It has involved staff working away on site and we have needed people with specialist rope access accreditations too, due to the nature of the project."

AJ Engineering has fabricated three sets of stairs for seven new access platforms

for the project worth around £300k. The stairs have had to be lifted into place from a barge floating below the bridge in the Firth of Forth, whilst the platforms are being lowered from the maintenance roadway in parts and assembled at the required level.

The works on the Kessock Bridge will begin in early 2019 and involve fabricating a replacement of the inspection gantry. The inspection gantry is used to carry out examinations on the bridge.

Wilson explained the contract, also worth £300K will involve all skillsets AJE boasts. "Due to the nature of this work we will need to harness the expertise of our workshop team and the CNC shop and of course there will be work done on site too."

He added: "The existing inspection gantry is now 30 years old and has been condemned. As well as being able to inspect the bridge, the new gantry will



also be crucial for painting the bridge which is expected to take place over the next three years."

Wilson expects that the work on the Kessock Bridge will involve 12 members of staff and another company has also been contracted to handle the electrical and hydraulic works.

"Everything will be put together at our depot in Forres," explained Wilson. "We will be erecting a marquee in our yard and the electrical and hydraulic firm will work here to do the required testing. Following that, the equipment will be split into three loads and transported to the site."

Moray Dignitary puts AJE in the spotlight



AJE has been put in the spotlight by the Lord Lieutenant of Moray.

Lieutenant Colonel Grenville Johnston visited the headquarters of AJ Engineering where he was given an insight into the company's operations by managing director Alan James and general manager Graham Alexander.

The two-hour visit included a tour of the premises, meeting members of staff including the company's apprentices and project managers and also being shown the types of projects that the company handles.

Speaking about the visit, Lieutenant Colonel Grenville Johnston who was earlier this year made a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order said: "It has been an interesting visit and has given me a good knowledge of the types of work that AJ Engineering manages. I didn't know that the company has a CNC workshop. I imagined it fabricated only large structures, but I now understand that as well as that there is a lot of bespoke work that they carry out too."

Alan James said: "I am delighted that the Lord Lieutenant was able to come to AJ Engineering to see what we do and the variety and, in the process, meet the team, office and workshop-based staff."



Winter woolies

Staff at AJE went 'Festive' in December by wearing a winter woolly to help raise funds for Save the Children. For the second year, the staff donned their favourite festive garb and made donations to the charity. A total of £70 was raised for the charity.

