



A LASTING IMPRESSION



The Royal Highland Show has a funny way of going full circle in the lives of those who attend it, as **Douglas Ross** found out

It is not uncommon for the sights, sounds and smells of the illustrious Royal Highland Show to spark the fire in a young farmer or agriculture enthusiast which leads them back as an exhibitor. This was the case with Jock Bryce, owner of Bryce Suma, one of the most trusted brands in post driver manufacturing. Jock can recall being brought to the show by his father, a farmer in the Borders at the time, in the 1960s. He recalls looking up with awe at the level of excellence with which exhibitors showed their prized livestock and machinery.

Fast forward to 2014 and Jock returned to the Royal Highland Show and this time he is not just admiring the machinery. Instead, he is a seasoned show exhibitor, having shown his original machinery since 1997, with a slew of gold and silver awards under his belt, and prepared to receive that year's Gold Award for Technical Innovation.

"I remember so well going around the Royal Highland Show with my father when he took me down the sheep and cattle lines", recalls Jock. "All the animals were so well turned out and presented for judging.

"The show was renowned worldwide as a showpiece for the very best of livestock. Seeing all the rosettes and award tickets made me look up to these exhibitors and it highlighted to me what can be done through dedication and commitment.

"Then there was the parade in the ring where the best of the very best did their circuit and line up in front of huge crowds as they bid their farewell for another year."

Jock attributes these early experiences, of witnessing perfectionists being rewarded for their drive and unwavering commitment to their trade, to his own successes. Raised on a farm in the Borders, the Bryce family were forced to sell their farm, animals and equipment as they hit hard financial times when Jock was just 22.

This upheaval turned out to be the catalyst for Jock, who was forced to go out into the world and stand on his own two feet.

"It's only once your back is against the wall, and someone is pointing the barrel of a gun at



your temple that you have to dig deep and be resourceful. It was losing the family farm that was my trigger and realising that you have absolutely nothing to fall back on with only £25 to my name," explained Jock.

"My father always used to preach self-discipline and I was always very determined. So, if you take self-discipline, push yourself, go that wee bit extra, do things you don't want to do, you carry on a wee bit longer. Now if you are determined as well, and throw in the fear of failure, that really stirs things up.

"So if you've got self-discipline and a determined character (I always have to win, I'm never a quitter, it's just in my blood), it's those traits plus the fear of failure that have made me what I am today.

"I had to go out there and I didn't want to be looked upon as being a failure. So, you had to go out there, and you were driven.

"Driven is the word that sums it all up. It's something that is in you. It's a force that is there within, waiting to strike when events change in

life. That's what happened with the farm."

After leaving the farm, Jock began his new life taking on several different roles on different farms in the Borders and West Perthshire. With these experiences Jock made the leap to go out on his own and did so by doing lambings, clippings and fencing. Opportunities arose and his business quickly flourished where a heavy involvement with big bale silage, treated straw and a herd of suckler cows all took part in a growing enterprise. It was in fencing that his innovative spirit first began to become apparent as he would regularly create and manufacture machinery to help him fence the miles upon miles of hill farm land.

It was here where the perfectionist mentality, which he had admired in the exhibitors as a boy, really came to the fore in his profession in addition to those that he worked amongst up Kale Water.

Despite innovating from an early stage, Jock's journey to becoming a global manufacturer and distributor of cutting-edge post drivers didn't begin until 1977 when he took a gamble and brought his designs to the marketplace. Jock now has 13 patents to his name.



Over the last 21 years Bryce Suma has become one of the most trusted brands in agricultural machinery, cultivating a client base not only in the UK but as far out as North America, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Russia, South Africa and throughout Europe. But Jock knows you can't rely on top quality work alone, if you want to sell your product you need to get the word out, and if you want the word out you better get to the Royal Highland Show.

You don't do business with everyone you speak to at the show, according to Jock, but what you do is make a connection which plants the seed into those future customers' minds.

"A guy might be thinking of changing a baler next year. So, when he goes to the Highland Show this year he'll be having a look at balers.

"He'll be doing his homework so come next year he's ready to go to the Highland Show again and just batten it down to one or two makes and upon that connection he made a year ago he makes a decision.

"Sometimes it's not just a year. It's two years, three years, four years. But that initial link with us, the seller, has never been forgotten.

"What we find with a lot of the buyers from overseas who come to visit us or buy from us, there's guys there we've met and some we haven't. There are people who have track machines in North America, who have never met us. And

they part with their money before the machine even leaves here, so they have a great level of trust in us.

"We would never not do the Highland Show, it's a very prestigious event and you get the cream of the crop on show to visitors who want to see the best of Scotland's machinery, livestock and produce. And if you're interested in livestock then you're interested in fencing, so you see there are always links and threads." Progress and development is ongoing and so with a new post-driver to be unveiled at this year's Royal Highland Show and their thirteenth shed build in progress, things don't stand still with Bryce Suma.

Bryce Suma is very much a family affair as Jock's wife Jennifer, and their sons Andrew, aged 48, Stuart, 37 and Ian, 45, have grown up being involved in the business. Andrew and Stuart remain involved with Ian now running his own carpentry business. Jennifer can be found in the office and she is very much an integral part of the Bryce Suma team.

Jock explained: "It's wonderful that we all click. We all have the same determination and discipline to succeed and that's what works so well.

"My work is my hobby and when that's the case you never work a day in your life."

This year Jock and wife Jennifer hope to be able to take some well-earned time to actually see the Show, leaving sons Andrew and Stuart to take over the reins.

Left: The Bryce Suma stand at the Royal Highland Show

Middle: Jock and wife Jennifer Bryce with their three Gold Awards all achieved in the same year

Top right: Bryce 180 Pro Tracked Gold-winning machine fencing off the site at Tyndrum where mining operations are to be resumed

Bottom right: Andrew Bryce concludes a deal with a customer at the Royal Highland Show