

Bryce Suma – a business built on family dedication

By Zoë Wilson



Photographs by Rob Haining

SPENDING 45 years in one job may seem daunting for some, but when you have a successful, family-run business, which thrives on passion and commitment, time doesn't seem to matter at all.

That is the case for Jock Bryce, creator and manufacturer of award-winning Bryce Suma post drivers, and his wife, Jennifer, of Linton Hill, Morebattle, near Kelso, who, with a second generation helping build the business now in place, hopes to maintain its position as a pioneering manufacturer of fencing machinery.

This year, he will have what he calls a 40:20 anniversary – it is 40 years since he first started 'tinkering' with his own post driver design, and 20 years since he went the whole hog and introduced his first innovative and distinctive yellow Bryce post-driver to the commercial market.

Today, Bryce Suma, from its unpretentious base at Linton Hill, sells a range of post-drivers to more than 15 countries, and its revolutionary Bryce 180 Pro to, so far, 10 countries. But as well as that national and international sales success, the brand has also won a fistful of gold and silver medals, and Lamma awards, including a unique triple at the Royal Highland, Royal



THE BRYCE Suma team, Stuart, Jennifer, Jock and Andrew Ref:RH191217006

Show at Stoneleigh, and Royal Welsh, in 2006. A further Royal Highland Show gold was collected in 2014, but winning three Royal golds in one year was a historic achievement, and had never been done by any other company in the history of those prestigious events.

"That was such a wonderful achievement because we were up against the likes of JCB, Claas, McHale, etc, and even Michelin, who had just introduced a tyre that could go to 40km/h, and also work in the field, which was pretty

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Jock Bryce

ground-breaking at the time, so I was proud and delighted that we had been recognised for what we were doing," said Jock.

More recently, the innovative and versatile one-man tracked Bryce 180 Pro post-driver – which can rotate through 180 degrees and be driven in both directions, either from a cab-mounted rotating seat, or by hydraulic controls from the ground – won gold at LAMMA 2016, the UK's biggest show of agricultural machinery. But although it

has achieved national and international acclaim, it remains very much a local family business, and Jock and Jennifer's sons, Andrew and Stuart, are gearing up to continue the family tradition of producing premium machines for a highly competitive, international market.

"We are still in the same place that we started in, the same house, and the same area, and we still work just as hard as we did from day one," said Jock.

"We do everything ourselves and I am delighted that two of our sons are working with us in the company."

"Andrew started with us in 2009 and Stuart, who runs Bryce Groundworks, has been involved with building the new 180 Pro tracked machine, and will be taking a more active role in the build and fabrication side, going forward. Our other son, Ian, lives locally too, and has his own high-quality carpentry business."

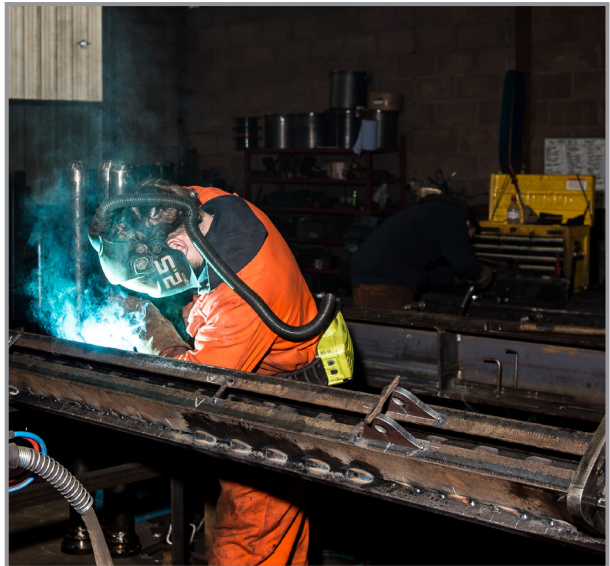
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As well as the family element, there are around 10 members of staff on a full or part-time basis and all are from the local area, with the various skills required for producing quality products.

"Our staff are at the core of the business, and they really



A GLITTERING array of the accolades, won by Bryce Suma products over the years Ref:RH191217007



IN THE workshop at Linton Hill, everything is hand-built and welded by a dedicated team Ref:RH191217011



RICHARD VERNON, of sponsors Hillhouse Quarry Group, presenting Jock Bryce with the gold innovation award for the Bryce Suma post drivers, and especially the Powershift HD180, at the Royal Highland Show in 2014 Ref:RH210614019



JOCK DEMONSTRATING one of his recent successes, the tracked Bryce Powershift 180 Pro fencing machine Ref:RH191217008

do keep everything going, and know the high standard of workmanship required. It couldn't work without them," Jock commented.

With regards to fencing, Jock knows what he is talking about. As a young man he was a fencer on 'hard, hill ground, armed with an 18 lb melle', which gave him an insight into what fencers needed to help them produce good work, under arduous conditions. Around 1m fencing metres later, it was this grounding, and his early life up Kale Water, and the men who worked with him, that would shape his creative career, designing and building some of the world's most durable and innovative fencing machines. From working with a handheld engine-driven auger, and then a tractor-mounted version, with a Pengo head for hard and stony conditions, Jock soon realised there must be better ways of doing this work, which was often on dangerous and on uneven territory.

From his early prototypes, some of them used on Bryce permanent electric fencing systems, to today's award winners, Jock said his approach has been the same: "No matter what I have been involved with, the job has to be done right, with attention to detail, and no messing. There is passion in what we do."

"For me, my work is also my hobby, and I think about it all the time – if you enjoy what you do, you will never work a day in your life."

"When I begin to put a new idea together in the fabrication shop, I have already made it umpteen times in my head, often in the wee small hours."

"I don't try to reinvent the wheel, I just try to make it turn a little faster."

As a farmer's son, farm manager and fencing contractor, he admired the

way Borders stockmen were always trying to improve what they did with their animals and their attention to detail: "That's what I try to do with metal. I try to go one step further."

His success in doing that is evident by the fact that he has 13 patented ideas built in to his machines, and innovations include an auto telemast, the rock spike transfer system, quadshift, for the hitting arm, and hydraulic rockspike swing engagement combination.

The medals we get awarded are for outstanding innovation and technical achievement, with the potential to serve the industry, and that's nice for us as the top shows are a shop window for these machines. However, having satisfied customers around the world means even more to the business.



STUART BRYCE is testing the product to make sure everything is working perfectly Ref:RH120118087



WORK ON another Bryce Suma post driver in progress in the workshop Ref:RH191217012

They can drive heavy metal piles and hole punchers, or put in big, heavy, straining posts in less than a minute.

"That all means fewer strokes, less wear, a faster cycle – and more profit for the operator. All controls are simple and basic because I'm not into electronics. The last thing an operator wants is an

electronic fault in the middle of a working day, stuck on a mountainside or some other remote rural location."

He also gives huge credit to his wife Jennifer and his sons, for being part of a great team together with a very able 'workforce' fabricating post drivers to the highest standard.

"Andrew and Stuart are now the main shareholders in the business, and with me at the age of 71, and with a pretty hard life behind me, it is now time to hand the baton over. Our business has been totally self-funded, and is run with dedication and massive commitment, and you only reap what you sow."

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**Contact Jock Bryce Mobile: 07970 730 567 or Andrew 07901 618 479
Tel: 01573 440314 Email: brycescotland@aol.com**

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