

*'He is here, he is there, he is everywhere'*  
1888-1917

**A**lthough he was running two businesses, James Jones still found he had time on his hands. There was a restlessness to him in his prime, he was always looking for new opportunities, never content with the progress he had made. Although he became an immensely respected figure in the Scottish timber trade, he could probably have turned his hand to anything. If his father had run a small chemical works (the first chemical works in Camelon appeared about the time James Jones was born), James would have done just as well with it. He was, above all, a businessman.

But he was not much of a trailblazer or pioneer. His restlessness was tempered by a streak of caution, a combination which led him to take a close personal interest in his businesses, making sure that everyone knew the final say in any development was his. This was fine when he was young, enthusiastic and ambitious, but created difficulties for others as he became older, more cautious, more autocratic. His success came from standing back, watching others, carefully and patiently weighing up the pros and cons, preparing himself well in advance before launching a new venture. He had grown up with the timber business, he had worked in the nail trade and, for his next project, he learned from the progress of the firm in which the brother of James Forbes was involved.

Dobbie Forbes & Co, established in 1872, was one of many iron foundries which sprang up around Falkirk during the second half of the nineteenth century. The industry dominated the local economy. By 1900 it employed 40 per cent of Falkirk burgh's male workforce. The prosperity of the late Victorian age, when real wages were rising, combined with the rising population, created an apparently limitless

demand for the products of the light casting industry. The Victorians loved cast iron. While it had strength, it also had the ability to take almost any shape. By the 1860s, according to industry's historians, John Gloag and Derek Bridgwater, 'every conceivable piece of equipment for buildings was produced in cast iron: gates, railings, verandahs, grilles, treads and risers and complete stairways, columns, windows, pipes, rainwater goods, manhole covers, heating and cooking appliances, baths, mantels and, in addition, tables, chairs, umbrella stands, vases, clocks, lamps and ornaments of every kind and almost of any size'. Another historian of the industry, Basil Tripp, commented that 'the extent to which light castings were used was the measure of material progress'. The Falkirk foundries produced all these items and more but made a name for themselves by specialising. David Bremner, writing about the industries of Scotland in 1869, remarked that in the Falkirk foundries, 'fire-grates and stoves form a large portion of the produce of several establishments'. Nimmo's History of Stirlingshire, published in 1880, listed not only the Carron Company and the Falkirk Iron Works, the two largest of the foundries. Westwards along the canal bank were the Grahamston, Parkhouse and Camelon iron companies with the Union Foundry at Lock 16 and the Port Downie and Forth & Clyde iron works. Eastwards lay the Abbot's, Gael and Etna foundries. Close to the North British railway at Grahamston were the Callendar and Vulcan foundries. The local paper counted 25 foundries in the area in 1892, employing 8,600 men and making 8,000 tons of castings every month.

The new foundry was built on land right next door to Dobbie Forbes & Co and James Jones took as his

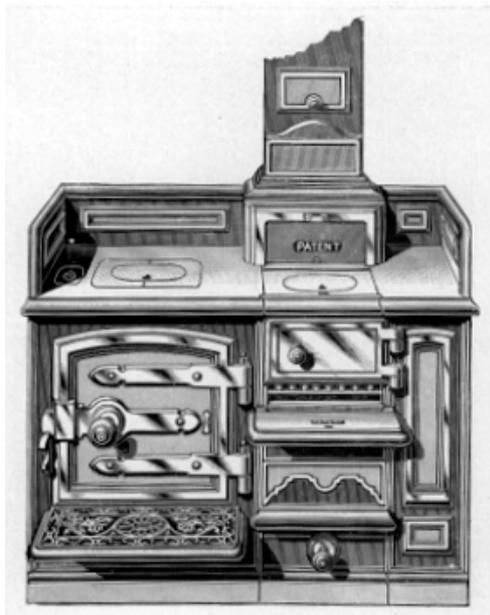
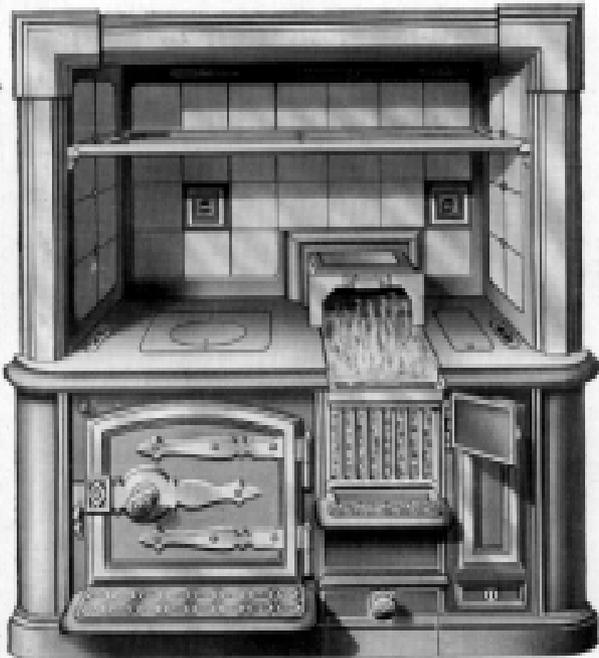
*A group of Falkirk cast-iron foundry workers with the tools of their job and some typical examples of ornate cast-iron work.*  
(Courtesy of Falkirk Museum.)



junior partner the firm's cashier, Dermont Campbell. James Forbes, badly let down in his other business dealings by partners less reliable than James Jones, had left the firm when he emigrated with his family to Australia in 1885, writing that he intended to 'trade in castings to a certain extent in James Jones's name'. The Torwood Foundry (Torwood is a small village just outside Larbert) was opened on 10 February 1888. On two acres of land lying adjacent to the sawmill, the partners had erected two buildings to house, in the first, a moulding shop and, in the second, a fitting shop, pattern shop and warehouse. A cupola was erected for melting iron, the blast coming from a fan driven by the sawmill steam-engine. Jones & Campbell, as the partnership was called, intended to turn their castings into mantelpieces, grates, stoves, cooking and heating appliances and ornamental castings. The *Falkirk Herald* reported that 'the furnace was tapped by Master Tom Jones [the 14-year-old eldest son of James Jones], and the pots of glowing metal seethed and bubbled in the

moulding shop for the first time'. The new foundry, under its manager, George Binnie, enjoyed early success. In the 1890s profits twice paid for the enlargement of the moulding shop and for the erection of new warehouses as demand for goods increased.

By 1898, when Alex Rhind joined the firm, about 80-90 men were employed. The fitters, he recalled, were 'a fairly tough lot'. Apparently, they often did no work at all on Mondays and Tuesdays, spending all their time instead in the Station Hotel. On one occasion, the foreman fitter was sent to bring them all back but failed to return. Rhind was then despatched, discovering, as he put it, that the foreman too 'had joined the happy throng'. On the other hand, it was said that they squeezed as much work into the rest of the working week as anyone else did in a full six days. Working conditions were in any case quite hard. The foundry was poorly lit, with paraffin lamps hung along the walls, and without any heating. From Monday to Friday the men worked from 6.30am until



*Several best-selling pre-war products from the Torwood foundry – the 'Rosebery', 'Trilby' and 'Nansen' ranges with 'The Nelson' umbrella stand. The fussy design of these cast-iron products was typical of their time.*

5.30pm and on Saturdays from 6.00am until 1.00pm. There was a break of 45 minutes for breakfast and an hour for lunch (half an hour on Saturdays).

Jones & Campbell produced a remarkable range of products, typical of many similar foundries of the time. They had several lines of kitchen ranges, grates, bath boilers and portable stoves, most of them with topical names to appeal to the public. 'Trilby' was taken from the popular novel of the period by George du Maurier, 'Rosebery' was the name of a leading Liberal politician and one-time prime minister, 'Nansen' came from the famous Norwegian polar explorer. Among the firm's general castings were air bricks, ashpans, doors for bakers' ovens, wheels for barrows, cradle rockers, clothes posts, dumb bells, fenders, foot scrapers, frying pans, garden rollers, garden furniture, plumbers' pots, pulleys and blocks, irons, skylights, stop-tap boxes and umbrella stands. The list seemed almost inexhaustible. One umbrella stand was called the 'Nelson', described as 'a very fine piece of workmanship', but, with a representation of the admiral himself atop the stand, an extravagantly ornate piece of work too typical of many castings of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Even the humble solid-fuel kitchen range was ornately cast with any number of complicated projections. But customers seemed to love them. After all, most middle-class homes could afford to employ at least one maid to clean them. There was little market research. At Jones & Campbell, this took the form of rival designs seen by salesmen on their travels, scribbled on the back of order forms or a customer's letter-heading for the foundry's skilled craftsmen to copy. Some years later, in 1907, Peter Forbes Jones, whose main interest lay in Jones & Campbell, bought a competitor's boat stove to analyse what made it sell so the foundry could develop one like it. The foundry was prepared to imitate anything which sold. In 1910 Peter obtained a chair from the Electric Theatre, the cinema in Falkirk, and produced a tin pattern from it. In 1913 the firm considered making soil pipes for the first time. Customers often asked the firm to modify existing models for them. All this led to confusion over priorities in the pattern shop so, in 1909, it was

made clear that preference should be given to designs which would lead to repeat business or produce economies rather than to specials for customers. In fact, most designs remained the same for years and years, as did the technology for producing them.

Jones & Campbell sold goods through merchants all over the country, opening an office in Glasgow in 1901, sending travellers to Wales and across to Ireland. Senior members of the firm, including Dermont Campbell, regularly travelled to Birmingham and London in pursuit of orders or overdue payments. Commission agents were used, including appointments in South Africa in 1908 and Australia in 1909. There was a little advertising. Apart from the voluminous catalogues, which were circulated to architects as well as merchants, colour leaflets were printed for individual ranges. The firm targeted areas where house-building was underway. In 1908, for instance, the firm offered to supply grates to the North British Railway for 60 houses they were building at Methil in Fife, an offer the railway company rejected.

The Torwood Foundry did well during the first two decades of the 1900s. There were rising sales, profits and dividends for the firm which had been incorporated in 1906. This impressive record was only occasionally interrupted. In October 1911 a serious fire gutted both the grinding and engineering shops, throwing 40 fitters and grinders out of work. The fire was reported to have been 'the most disastrous fire that has ever occurred in Larbert'. Within 20 minutes of a yardsman on the Caledonian Railway spotting the flames, 'the place was a raging furnace', putting the Larbert sawmill and timber yard in danger. Workers dashed out to help the fire brigades from Falkirk and Grangemouth. From eyewitness accounts, many workmen were at the heart of the blaze, fighting to control it, and some were lucky to escape with their lives, scrambling to safety as the building began to collapse, scattering bricks, iron and wood among them. The dairy next door was set alight, its owner, Miss Drew, being severely burned as she struggled to evacuate distressed cows from the byre with the help of workmen. The terrified pigs in the

dairy (they were fed on skimmed milk left over from making cream) refused to budge and had to be caught and carried out. By daylight large crowds were assembling, keeping the police busy with crowd control, to view the twisted girders which could be seen amidst the still raging flames.

Other less dramatic interruptions to production were caused by the economic cycle, but most of the uncertainty in the years just before the First World War came from the unstable state of labour relations. This was a national phenomenon with strikes at the docks, in the mines and on the railways. All these threatened to disrupt production at the Torwood Foundry where iron and coal was stockpiled whenever a strike seemed likely. Sometimes workers at Jones & Campbell had to be laid off when the docks and railways were closed. Sometimes strike fever spread to the foundry itself. The industry was notorious for its poor working conditions with men often labouring in poorly lit and badly ventilated workshops, stifling in the summer and freezing in winter, despite the heat from dozens of braziers. At Jones & Campbell electricity was supplied to the foundry in 1911 and electric lighting installed two years later. In the summer of that year, 1913, moulders and pattern-makers went briefly on strike. There was one week's holiday a year, at the time of the local tryst or fair. Everyone received a bonus twice a year, in the summer (which would help to cover the unpaid holiday week) and in the New Year. The latter ranged from £5 (£300 today) for the works manager to five shillings (£15 today) for the office-boy. Around this time average weekly earnings for men in the light castings industry were 31s 4d (£95 today), compared with 26s 5d (£80 today) in sawmilling.

In general, orders were plentiful, jobs were secure and there were scarcely sufficient goods in stock to meet demand. To cope with all this business, extra pattern workers were taken on and laid off as required. By 1914 annual sales were about £70,000 (£3.8 million today), net profits £8,000 and a generous dividend of £7,000 was being paid to shareholders. The Jones family held more than 70 per cent of the

shares, the Campbell family holding the balance. Dermont Campbell enjoyed the respect and trust of James Jones and was appointed managing director of the business when it became a limited company in 1906. His position and his relationship with James Jones brought him special treatment. Provided he remained managing director and retained a certain number of shares, he was regarded as having exactly the same number of shares as James Jones and his family although this concession was personal to him alone. At the same time every board resolution for a period of 10 years from incorporation had to be agreed by both James Jones and Dermont Campbell. James Jones took a deep personal interest in everything that went on but was happy to allow Campbell to get on with his job. It was a blow to the business when Campbell died suddenly in January 1914.

Although Campbell's son, Donald, took his father's place on the Jones & Campbell board, he was not so highly regarded, justifiably as events turned out. James Jones had five sons (one dying at the age of two) and it was his second son, James Forbes Jones, known as Jim, born in 1878, who took over the day-to-day running of the firm. Jim, who had started work with the timber firm, in charge of the bark peelers, had been responsible for the operation of the foundry for several years, Campbell concentrating on sales and administration. James Jones's third son, Peter, born in 1880, assisted his brother. James's two other sons, his eldest, Tom, born in 1872, and his youngest, John Cumming Bruce Jones, born in 1882 and known as Bruce, were also directors of the foundry company, but their main interest was in the timber business.

All four boys began to come into their own during this period, although achieving the freedom to carve out independent roles within the business cannot have been easy. Their father, already in his mid-seventies by the time of the First World War, refused to let go of the reins. He was still full of energy. A newspaper profile from 1908 referred to him in terms similar to Baroness Orczy's famous creation, the Scarlet Pimpernel, 'he is here, he is there, he is everywhere'. The problem was that 'everywhere' was



*This early photograph is very faded but it shows timber being ferried across the river on a cable operated by the youngster and bearded man in the foreground. The three heavy horses will drag the logs from the riverbank to the sawmill.*

exactly where his sons seemed to find him. When he was presented with a testimonial in 1913 for his leadership of the campaign to prevent the burgh of Falkirk from swallowing up Larbert, Stenhousemuir, Carronshore and Carron, he remarked that 'my family, particularly my sons, could see nothing but a stupid, conceited and self-willed old man in me ... it would be an object lesson to them that other people, quite as able to judge, thought differently'. Although James Jones was described as a courteous man with 'a rich fund of pawky humour', and his remarks might seem to be self-mocking, the way in which the words are phrased suggest they were a sharp barb deliberately aimed at his sons. There are hints of an ageing autocrat from some of the admittedly limited surviving evidence. One of his grandsons, who stayed at Torwood Hall, the Jones's family home in Larbert, for two months every summer, later recalled that his grandfather was 'a complete dictator'.

Another grandson remembers being told how James often made life difficult for his eldest son, Tom. The occasional paternal criticism surfaces in the minutes of board meetings.

Control had become a habit with James Jones. When the timber business became a limited company on 31 March 1905, James and Tom became joint managing directors but James, as permanent chairman, had two votes plus a casting vote just to ensure his authority was never in doubt. He expected a lot from his sons and took pride in their achievements. There is no doubt that he was an affectionate father who was always keenly interested in everything his sons did. It was just that he made life a lot more difficult for them than it needed to be.

Board meetings, held monthly, had very specific agendas, focused primarily on day-to-day management issues rather than policy or strategy. The list was nearly always the same – debtors (one overdue



*The photograph of this magnificent oak and the band of sawyers who felled it probably dates from around 1900. Note the four-man sawing team in the foreground. Two will pull on the saw itself while two heave on ropes attached to each end of the saw.*

account in 1911 was from none other than A & R Brownlie of Earlston, now BSW and James Jones's largest rivals), the position at the bank, bills receivable and payable, weekly sales and purchases, stocks needing selling, orders and contracts, new plant and any necessary improvements, weekly timber purchases, expenses, cash sales, sawmill performance and carting costs. (At the foot of one page, in red ink, is the note, underlined, 'Horse feeding – get cost per horse', indicative of James Jones's sharp eye for detail where costs were concerned.)

The directors were scarcely overpaid. James Jones received £3 15s (£200 today) a week and his son Tom £3 a week with an annual bonus of around £50-100 if profits were any good. The other two, including Bruce who worked full-time in the timber business, had to wait until the end of each year to see if they were voted anything at all.

The two most able boys were Tom and Jim. At least, as the two eldest sons, they were the ones who were allowed to shine. Tom made his mark on the timber business. His father, although he occasionally

torpedoed his son's ideas, nearly always stood by his son's judgement. He had, after all, taught him everything he knew about the measurement and valuation of timber. When Tom at the age of 16 was sent to value and buy a large lot of timber in Ross-shire, the owner allowed him three day's grace on the purchase so James might inspect the timber himself. James refused, placing his confidence in his son.

Tom was a great enthusiast for timber grown in the Scottish forests. For instance, he used it to build a house for the Larbert mill foreman in 1911 and for his own seaside home in Spey Bay. The latter, called Larch House and constructed wholly of Scottish larch, is still standing today, substantially unchanged. The family used it as a holiday home for many years and there was also a constant stream of visitors. In the early 1920s one visitor turned up in a chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce. Tom's three sons, Jim, Tom and Reid, aged between 13 and 9, took an instant dislike to the visitor. They waited until the chauffeur had fallen asleep outside the house in the sunshine and then all three of them climbed into the car and drove

*Larch House at Spey Bay about 1923. Tom Bruce Jones is seated at the centre of the group of Jones Buckie staff with his three sons, Jim, Reid and Tom, in front of him. Being held up behind him is his daughter Margaret while his wife, Edith, is the lady at the rear of the group in the distinctive fur-collared coat.*





*This group is interesting because many of the men are shown with the tools of their trade. On the left stands a man with an oil-can and a shovel to pile up the sawdust to fuel the steam engine. Next to him is a man with an axe while three more hold circular saws. Two of the seated men hold rules for measuring timber while the smartly dressed bowler-hatted man is presumably the foreman. On the right are two men with double hand saws, the bearded man in the cap having a heavily bandaged finger (losing a finger or two was an occupational hazard for sawyers). The man on the far right is perhaps the engine-man, holding a poker for keeping the steam-engine fired up.*

it all the way to Buckie before they were caught. Young Tom and his own family later spent their summer holidays there from the end of the Second World War until the late 1950s. The company's current chairman, another Tom, remembers being compelled to take an icy dip before breakfast every morning in the chilly waters of the North Sea.

David Leith, who served the firm for 60 years after joining as an office-boy in 1900, painted a portrait of Tom Bruce Jones during his speech at the company's centenary celebrations in 1938. Tom, Leith recalled, was 'the dynamic force which extended the business right and left, adopted new methods and made the

whole business hum'. He was quick, bold, decisive, hard-working, did not tolerate shirkers but was generous with those who worked hard. Once he made a promise, he carried it out, regardless of cost. Like his other brothers, he was a keen sportsman, being an enthusiastic cricketer and ardent curler. But this was not a complete picture. There was another side of Tom Bruce Jones, as a man of literary and artistic interests, who was friendly with many of the major Scottish painters of his day, including William Russell Flint. He wrote pamphlets on issues such as the relationship between life and work and was full of ideas for improving the world around him. A list

jotted down in a notebook in December 1922 included the creation of a toy factory to provide jobs for unemployed soldiers, streamlining the delivery of coal from the mines to make it cheaper for the consumer and building new roads in the Highlands which 'would open up all our beautiful West coast to all our people & would bring the English and Americans in shoals to Scotland in the summer and autumn months'.

Alex Hogg joined the firm a year before David Leith, the first of three generations of the Hogg family to work for the firm. When he started work, there were just five staff in the sawmill office - himself, Benjamin Meikle, the cashier, Willie Rennie, Willie Samuel and James Malloch. As well as the Larbert mill and one close to the collieries at Portobello, the firm had four portable mills out in the woods. Bruce Jones joined in the same year as David Leith at the age of 18 and remembered that the Larbert saw-pit was still being used to reduce the largest logs to a size the circular saws could cope with. John Rennie, who came as an office-boy in 1903 as had his father before him, found the sawmill office was little more than a two-room shack. He remembered 'the horses stamping their feet in the stable next door and the rats amusing themselves when [we] were working late'. Women were not allowed to show their face beyond the office door, not even to sweep the floor.

The number of forest mills multiplied during the early 1900s. In Scotland there were eight mills from the Cromarty Firth in the north to the Borders in the south while the firm had established mills even further south in Cheshire. In 1906 the firm took over a small sawmill, employing six men, on the harbour-side in the small fishing port of Buckie on the north-east coast of Scotland. It was a purchase which showed how the attention of James Jones to even the little things could pay off handsomely. With one of his men, he travelled to Aberdeen where they intended to stay overnight before proceeding to Buckie for the auction of the yard next morning. Several other interested bidders were staying at the same hotel. It was already snowing when the two men took a walk

before dinner and the weather was worsening. James decided that they should pack their bags at once and catch the last evening train to Buckie, leaving the opposition to their drinking in the hotel. They reached Buckie just as the weather was closing in and cutting off the town. As a result, the two men found themselves the only serious bidders at the auction and James bought the yard for a fraction of the price expected.

Four years afterwards, work began on a slipway personally financed by James Jones and each of his sons. The idea was to build and repair local wooden fishing boats to provide a useful outlet for sawn timber from Larbert, with oak for the keels and larch for the boatskins. The slip, built to a patent design, had berths for 14 vessels and by July 1911 the first drifter was being repaired. James Jones & Sons had already been supplying timber for ship-building for some years. Perhaps the most famous vessel with which the company was involved was the *Discovery*, the ship which took Captain Scott and his team on their exploration of the Antarctic between July 1901 and September 1904. The ship, which withstood being trapped in the ice for many months, suffering scarcely any damage at all throughout the entire expedition, was built substantially from oak supplied by James Jones. Most of the oaks came from the Riddle estate at Lilliesleaf and Dupplin Castle in Perthshire while the stern post, measuring 24 inches square, was cut from a tree grown at Herbertshire Castle at Denny.

James Jones had personally lent the company part of the purchase money for the Buckie mill. Although turnover was rising - by 1914 the timber business was making sales on a par with the foundry - margins were slim. Working capital for timber purchases or capital for investment was often scarce. On the other hand, Jones & Campbell, extremely profitable, was almost awash with cash. So the prosperous foundry began making a series of loans to the less well-off timber business. In 1908 Jones & Campbell lent James Jones & Sons nearly £5,000 (about £300,000 today). Further short-term loans were made in 1909. In 1910 Jim, James Jones's second son, pointed out that James Jones & Sons 'could do

with some money at present & ... we might as well have 5 per cent on the money lying in deposit at Bank’.

While this financial assistance became especially crucial at a later stage, the two companies remained entirely separate and independent of each other. But, with the two businesses operating from neighbouring sites, and having their major shareholder in common, it was not surprising that other decisions were also sometimes made in their joint interests. In April 1912, for instance, when the decision was made to build a railway siding, the justification for the cost of £1,000 was ‘in order to get wagons through to Furnace and to James Jones & Sons in order to save cartage on material for the former and an annual charge for extra working costs for the latter payable by Jones & Campbell’. The siding was in operation by early 1915.

In the same year as the Buckie mill was purchased, Bruce Jones, who had been working in the Larbert office, was despatched to organise felling operations in Ireland. The company started with a mill at Warrenpoint to work small lots in the district around Newry. Bruce travelled the length and breadth of the country, by bicycle and train, from County Down and County Donegal to Wicklow and the Shannon in search of suitable stands of timber. Alex Hogg and James Malloch joined him to look after the mill established at Wicklow. Bruce later remembered how ‘we even entered the precincts of Dublin and felled many trees in Phoenix Park which were sawn at Scribbleston Sawmill’. By 1914 James Jones & Sons had six mills in Ireland with around 250 men. Much of the timber was shipped back to England and Wales in the round where it was supplied to Cumbrian iron ore mines and Welsh collieries.

In 1907 Tom Bruce Jones negotiated a contract to fell, saw and remove timber from the Earl of Tankerville’s Chillingham estate, near Wooler in Northumberland. The firm won a second contract early in the following year. The Earl, like a number of large estate owners, affected by the agricultural depression, was in financial difficulties, aggravated by his inability to curb his own extravagant spending. With

bankers and creditors pressing him for payment, he asked James Jones, through Tom, whether he would be able to help him out. The links between James and the Earl became sufficiently close for James to guarantee part of the overdraft he agreed to arrange for the Earl with the Clydesdale Bank. As *The Times* later noted, while James agreed to help out of genuine sympathy, he was also ‘in some degree influenced by “the glamour of the nobility”’. He had absolute faith, he wrote in December 1907, of the Earl’s integrity and honesty. Partly this was because he had been so persuaded by his son. James would later write to the Earl that he only agreed to become a guarantor through ‘my yielding to the earnest entreaties of my generous, confiding and optimistic son whose confidence, sympathy and affection you had won’. The sum James guaranteed was £5,000, which may not seem much, but would be worth over £300,000 today. The deal proposed between the bank, James Jones and the Earl gave James and his son considerable influence over the financial management of the Chillingham estate.

Problems began before the deal had been finalised. From the spring through to the summer of 1908, the Earl continued to spend beyond the substantial annual allowance of £2,500 which he had agreed (his wife, the Countess, would not contemplate restraint since it was beneath her station in society). The proceeds from the sale of the Earl’s orchid collection, the value of which had been grossly overestimated, should have gone to the bank but instead went into the Earl’s pocket. James grew more and more exasperated to the extent that he, usually a strict observer of the Sabbath, wrote to the Earl and his wife on Sunday 15 May 1908 in strong terms, warning them that ‘they who spend more than their income are taking the high road to ruin & dishonour, if not even destruction itself’. As a result of the Earl’s actions, the bank refused to finalise the overdraft facility and James, who had been advancing money to the Earl, withdrew his guarantee. The breakdown in their relationship was fostered by the new solicitor retained by the Earl who persuaded him that James Jones and his son had been swindling him, using the



(1)



(2)

These three photographs were taken on the Chillingham estate in Northumberland at the time of the celebrated 'Battle of Chillingham'. The first shows a group of James Jones's men outside the sawmill erected on site. The second shows the devastation caused by the Earl of Tankerville's men at the Jones sawmill in Church Wood, Chillingham. The final picture shows (third left) James Jones, scarf around face, perhaps from injuries received in the scuffles, looking in disgust at the local constabulary who did nothing to prevent the violence and criminal damage perpetrated by the Earl's men that autumn day in October 1908. The tall young man fourth from the left is Tom Bruce Jones.



(3)

promise of the guarantee to gain a bargain price for the estate timber. (The guarantee in fact came after the first of three timber contracts with the Chillingham estate.) The Earl called James Jones a liar and a thief to his face. And the newly appointed agent for the estate began to find fault with the company’s felling activities. In September 1908 the Earl decided that he no longer wanted James Jones & Sons cutting down his trees even though contracts had been signed and the timber paid for. He insisted the company left the estate. The company refused. On 27 October came the so-called Battle of Chillingham when the Earl’s agent, in the presence of the local police, sent in men to remove the forestry workers by force. James and his son were present when the attack began, protesting in vain to the local constabulary to protect their men. In the eventual court case, the judge recorded how the Earl’s men had ‘forcibly ousted the Messrs. Jones and their men from the Chillingham estate, wrecked their sawmills, disconnected and carried away parts of their machinery, tore down their bothies, scattering the contents, including the men’s clothing, in the mud ... led off their horses ... scattered their stacks of timber, and did other acts of wilful and unnecessary damage to their property’. Even in 1907, when deference was a way of life in the countryside, the judge said that it was ‘almost incredible’ that such action ‘should have been tolerated and assisted by the police’.

Tom Bruce Jones even spent a night in the local police cells. The day’s events had exhausted even his vast reservoirs of sympathy and patience. From his cell he wrote a letter withering in its understatement and measured tones to the Earl. ‘I am indebted to you for one of the cheapest night’s lodgings I have ever had. I am as comfortable here as I was when a guest under the roof of Castle Chillingham early this year. Let me say at once, my Lord, that I am not angry with you. I am merely vexed that you, a Peer of the Realm, should stoop so low. I prayed for you once at your own earnest request. Tonight I shall ask our Gracious Father to forgive you.’

This violence so incensed both James and Tom that they sued the Earl, asking for an injunction to prevent

him from interfering with the execution of the contract. The Earl fought back, asserting that damages alone should be a sufficient remedy. Mr Justice Parker, who heard the case in the summer of 1909, poured scorn on the claims made by the Earl and called the action perpetrated in his name ‘high-handed and illegal’. In all except the most minor point, he found in favour of James Jones & Sons and described James Jones as ‘a scrupulously honest witness’. In an editorial, *The Times* on 12 July 1909 described the tale as ‘a warning how temper and lack of business habits may obscure the true position of something, and how relations begun in a friendly spirit between honourable men may drift into strong antagonism’.

Back in Scotland the firm was sawing timber at places such as Lilliesleaf, Gifford, Darnaway, Drumbowie, Roseneath and Sleepieshill. Close relationships had already been forged with several large estate owners, including the Dukes of Argyll, Roxburgh, Buccleuch, Richmond & Gordon and Fife, the Marquises of Lansdowne, Linlithgow, and Tweedale, and the Earls of Wemyss, Rosebery, Rothes, Seafield, Moray, Kinnoul and Haddington. In 1909 the company took over the timber business run by Henry Young at Kirriemuir. This included three forest mills in the Atholl district with a significant lot of oak and larch on the Atholl estate. (Most of the timber being felled by James Jones at this time was hardwood.) The local newspaper reported that ‘as [James Jones & Sons] purpose carrying on the work energetically, the local woodmen and carters, who are numerous in the district, will benefit accordingly’. James Malloch was brought back from Ireland in 1910 to run the Portobello mill when it ran into difficulties. He was the only mill foreman to enjoy a profit-sharing agreement.

At Larbert the shack was replaced with new offices in 1908, the same year in which it took delivery of three new steam-wagons. As the *Falkirk Herald* reported, James Jones & Sons ‘have recently introduced, for the first time in the timber trade in Scotland, the haulage of timber by the light tractor engine, and they propose developing this mode of



*These two photographs from about 1910 show the Big Mill at Weddersbie, west of Collesie, in north-west Fife. The view of the mill shows logs, stripped of their bark during their hillside descent after being felled, strewn across the landscape waiting to be sawn. The sawmill itself is surrounded by neat piles of sawn timber ready to be transported by horse and cart to the nearest railway station.*



haulage’. Two years later it was at last agreed to try out a typewriter in the office. Electric lighting was installed in the sawmill in 1911 and the mill itself was reconstructed in 1913 when a Ransome band-saw was acquired. The firm even engaged a consultant to advise on the reconstruction at a fee of 10 guineas a day. Rivals had already begun to specialise, some, for instance, establishing their own joinery departments in an attempt to add value to a commodity product and increase profits. In 1910 James Jones made its first steps in this direction when it began creosoting railway sleepers and poles (one customer was the Scottish Central Power Company). The railways and mines also figured prominently in the company’s list of customers, including the North Eastern Railway, the Caledonian Railway, the Highland Railway and the Wemyss Coal Company.

By 1914 James Jones & Sons had at least 11 mills in operation on the British mainland, employing approximately 400 men and using 80 horses. With sales of nearly £70,000 (£3.8 million today), almost as much as the foundry, the company was probably the leading British timber merchant in the country. By comparison, for example, the firm of A & R Brownlie had sales of just £16,000 (£865,000 today). On the other hand, James Jones could not compete with the multi-purpose merchants, handling both imported timber and British timber, operating large mills close to major urban areas. Brownlee & Co, owned by the Forrest family, was the largest such business in the UK. On a 14 acre site in Glasgow located between the Forth & Clyde Canal and the railway, it had also acquired other similar businesses across Scotland. But the timber trade as a whole remained small. In 1907 it accounted for just 2.6 per cent of gross output and 3.4 per cent of employment in the UK. The percentages were only slightly higher for Scotland where timber employed 35,000 men (4 per cent of the workforce) and turned over £7.6 million (3.8 per cent of gross output).

On 3 August 1914 Britain declared war against Germany. In West Bridge Street in Falkirk, long queues of eager young men began to form. They were waiting to sign up for the armed forces at the

local recruiting office. Britain had declared war on Germany. Trains left Falkirk station carrying hundreds of territorials who had been called up. Later Captain Jim Forbes Jones would join them. The board of Jones & Campbell met on the day war was declared, the heading in the minute book reading ‘European War’. Its impact was immediate. Part of the works was taken over for the temporary accommodation of men joining the colours. The foundry reduced operations to three days a week at first, then four days in September. There was concern over stocks of iron and coke since shipping was at a standstill and sales were hampered because the railways south of London, one of the company’s best markets, had been closed to all civilian traffic. With the bank rate shooting up to 10½ per cent, the directors decided not to press late payers too hard. They also agreed to make weekly payments to the wives and dependants of men serving with the forces.

In September 1914 Jones & Campbell won the first of a series of contracts for ovens and stoves from the War Office. In the spring of 1915 the warehouses were extended to enable three more railway wagons to be loaded under cover. In September, the works started making hand-grenade cases for the first time. By the end of 1915 the company had orders for six months in advance. Jim Forbes Jones, who returned on leave every six months, continued to take part in board meetings both at the foundry and the sawmill. While his brother Peter was already assuming most of the responsibilities for running the foundry, Jim, as managing director of a major business, was indignant he had been called up. This, he told his colleagues, gave the lie to the politicians’ statements that the business of the country had to go on. With the introduction of conscription in May 1916, Peter was applying for the exemption from military service for key employees.

At the timber business, Tom Bruce Jones had a busy war. The Government had failed to foresee any need to regulate the timber trade. Without regulation, prices rose to unprecedented levels as the demand for timber soared under wartime conditions. Specu-

lators entered the market and many woods changed hands several times, the price rising on each occasion, before the timber was felled. Firms like James Jones & Sons, with their limited capital reserves, found it difficult to cope with such price rises, especially after credit restrictions had been imposed. Few firms were in the fortunate position of James Jones & Sons with a related business like Jones & Campbell willing to make loans at reasonable rates of interest.

Many timber workers left the industry for military service. James Jones & Sons alone saw more than 100 workers join the forces. For example, five of Willie Rennie's seven sons served in the Great War. Two of them were decorated. Ebenezer won the Military Medal but lost his life in the final phase of the war. Peter was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous bravery in 1915. Tom Bruce Jones sent him a cheque 'as a little recognition of your bravery' and hoped for his 'speedy and safe return from the War'. Tom later recalled how 'Scottish woodmen responded in 1914 to the bugle call so well that we were soon badly crippled. The remainder of our men (and in that respect too much credit cannot be given to the middle-aged woodmen of Scotland during the war), when they realised the urgency of the position, responded magnificently'. Early in 1916, just as there was increasing pressure on British timber companies to produce more timber, Bruce Jones joined the same regiment as his brother, the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. Jim Jones, at home on leave in November 1916, remarked during a debate on labour shortages that 'after the war was over, we could not do enough for the brave men who had stood in the trenches knee deep in mud, and were under fire and under possible nerve and body trying conditions, and he trusted the long continued pleasant relations which had always existed between the firm and its employees would always continue'.

Supplies of imported timber almost vanished as the war at sea intensified. British timber became the nation's lifeline. Tom Bruce Jones rose to the occasion splendidly. Under his direction, the family business made a vital contribution to the war effort. More prominently, as president of the Home Timber

Merchants' Association of Scotland throughout the war, he played a key role in organising the effective supply of British timber. Together with his brother Peter, he was part of the delegation which met the new prime minister, Lloyd George, at the end of 1916 to assure him that the British timber trade could rise to the challenge of meeting the nation's need for timber. He also used his considerable personal charm to persuade the prime minister that it was a nonsense



*Many members of both companies, family and staff, saw active service during the First World War. Pictured here in 1916 are Lieutenant J C Bruce Jones and Sergeant Peter Rennie. Rennie won the Distinguished Conduct Medal; Bruce Jones suffered serious shrapnel wounds which affected him throughout the rest of his life.*

for the War Office to withdraw reserved status from timber workers. The decision was reversed.

The Government appointed a Timber Buyer, Montague Meyer, and the British trade supplied timber through the Home Grown Timber Committee, later the Timber Supplies Department. In 1917 Lloyd George created the Timber Control, under James Ball, to regulate all timber purchases and prices. It was obvious that most of the timber required by the Government would come from the Scottish forests. Tom Bruce Jones liaised closely with his counterparts, Adam Nimmo and Colonel Sutherland, in the Coalmasters' Association and the Timber Supplies Department. The Scottish timber trade supplied more timber during the war than the rest of the country put together. The largest single individual contributor was James Jones & Sons, with 60 million square feet of timber out of a total of 141 million, even though the company ended its felling operations in Ireland after the Easter Rising in 1916.

One of the greatest sources of timber for the company was the Binn Hill at Huntly on the estate of the Duke of Richmond & Gordon. The timber was bought by Tom Bruce Jones. His son, also Tom, later wrote that this was probably 'the largest and most significant [purchase] in the history of the company'. James Jones & Sons had bought standing timber from the Duke for many years and he became a personal friend of Tom Bruce Jones. When Tom and his family were staying at their house at Spey Bay, the Duke would often join them for picnic lunches when they were fishing the river.

The company felled timber at the Binn Hill from 1916 until 1934, operating at least 12 mills on different sites. The chance to purchase this extensive area came by chance. Taking Tom Bruce Jones round the Binn, the Duke had heard the sound of trees being felled. He was annoyed that the local factor had not consulted him about who should fell the trees. Returning to Fochabers, he instructed his head factor to negotiate the sale of the entire plot to James Jones & Sons. There was so much that it took three weeks for John Rennie and others to complete the timber valuation. The deal included other land in addition to

the Binn as well as three farms of 1,500 acres. To make things easier for the tree fellers, a two foot narrow gauge railway for horse-drawn wagons was laid down through the forest. The work was overseen by Willie McEwan, a hard-bitten, hard-working, efficient foreman who recruited first-class local labour. A creosoting plant was built a mile outside Huntly for treating railway sleepers and there was also a large joiner's shop.

The catch to this prize possession only hit the company after the war. Tom Bruce Jones bought the Binn when wartime prices for standing timber were at their peak. This alarmed Tom's brother, Bruce, who must have been at home on leave. He was already concerned about his brother's tendency to buy timber at any price. Hearing that Tom was leaving by train from Larbert to conclude the deal with the Duke, he rushed down to the station to urge caution. Tom ignored his brother's protestations. As a result, when prices collapsed after the war, the company was left to nurse a substantial loss on the considerable volume of timber which remained. It would be a significant factor in the company's inter-war problems.

James Jones & Sons sent timber to the railways, shipbuilders and munitions factories for sleepers, trench poles, scantlings and huttings. By far the largest proportion of timber went to the mines for pit-props. This national effort was an extraordinary achievement but one which left the UK's reserves of standing timber precariously low. This was recognised in the Acland Report of 1916 whose proposals for a national forestry policy resulted in 1.8 million acres of conifers being planted over the next eight decades, two-thirds during the first 40 years. The 1919 Forestry Act created the Forestry Commission and established the pattern for post-war forestry practice. Tom Bruce Jones's contribution was recognised with the award of the OBE. The Association later displayed its gratitude by presenting him with a full-length portrait, which still hangs on the stairs of the offices in Larbert.

Some of the timber felled at the Binn was shipped around the coast to Buckie where Jones Buckie Slip & Shipyard was heavily involved in Admiralty work

during the war. The firm was turned into a private limited company as the Jones Buckie Slip & Shipyard Ltd in 1916, initially with a number of local shareholders, notably the Duke of Richmond & Gordon, although they all fell by the wayside over the years. Much of the yard's work was repairing patrol boats for duty in the North Sea but new drifters were also built under Admiralty contract. It was reckoned that between 1914 and 1918 400 vessels were repaired and fitted with armaments at the yard. Jones Buckie, where Peter Forbes Jones was joint managing director with his father, also launched the small 40 foot *Torwood*, the first motorboat built at the yard, in September 1917.

The foundry, whose production came under Government control during 1916, suffered a serious loss with the death in April the following year of Jim

Jones. Wounded in action, he was convalescing when he fell ill with appendicitis. He might have survived had he chosen to travel home for his operation. He refused. He died on 25 March in a military hospital at Etaples in France at the age of 39. 'The cheerfulness and bravery shown by him in his last hours', noted the minutes, 'when his brothers Tom and Peter were present with him had been quite remarkable and afforded no little consolation to all the family.' A further consolation for the family was that Bruce Jones survived his time at the front despite receiving wounds so severe that they affected him for the rest of his life. Even a long convalescence during the summer of 1917 did not render him fit to return to active service. Instead, towards the end of the year, he came back to James Jones & Sons to give his eldest brother some much needed assistance.