

History of Wallace McDowall Ltd

Back in 1968 a young man, Bill Slattery, who hailed from Glasgow, left the Army and decided that he could see a future for himself designing and manufacturing in the metal business.

Along with a business acquaintance, Archie McDowall from A&J McDowall in Ayr High Street Bill rented a vacant shed from John Wallace & Son's, an agricultural business in Ayr and began "tin bashing" in earnest.

To aid the venture, Bill then went on to purchase some second hand sheet metal equipment from another Ayr business, Mair & McCartney.

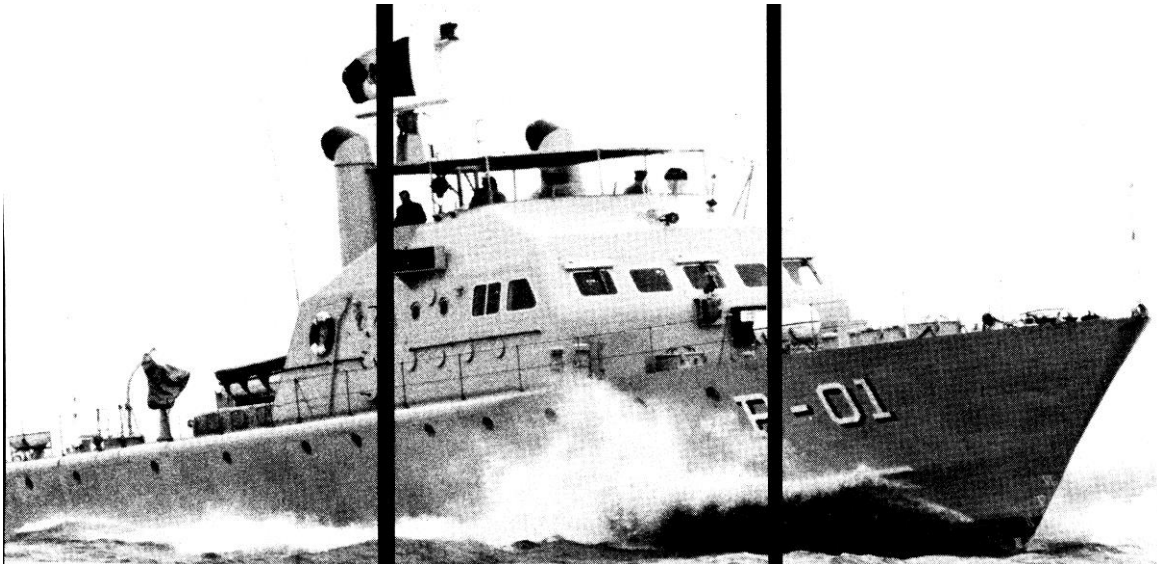
Wallace McDowall Ltd was then incorporated on 10th April 1969 by Bill Slattery and the business began to develop, particularly in the agricultural sector.

Bill was full of ideas and thoughts of improvements, one of the first of which was an expandable grain silo which proved a great success with local farmers.

After a few year of trading Bill moved to much bigger premises in Smith Street, Ayr.

Wallace McDowall Ltd then went on to design and develop several other projects. These included a patented slurry spreader for the agricultural business and roll formed beams for the mining and tunnelling industry.

Bill, never one to shy away from a challenge, also went on to very successfully redesign and build the superstructure for a Naval patrol boat. This radical redesign led to an order for a further three boats.



Over the next few years the business continued to grow and take on different types of work including spiral ducting, ventilation systems and facilities work in businesses such as Digital equipment, Grants distillery, local sawmills and the Morrison's chain of supermarkets.

In 1983 Wallace McDowall went on to develop a full range of Void Property protection screens and doors. This proved very successful and the premises became too small and for growth the business relocated to Kyle Road in Irvine.



From there the business continued to expand and develop a full range of security doors for the housing market taking advantage of the need for secure entry systems requested by local authorities.

In 1995 the company was sold to Motherwell Bridge Ltd who saw a huge business potential by expanding the security products into the rental market. However, Bill very quickly decided he did not like the direction the new owners were taking and decided to buy the company back from them a year or so later. At the same time Bill and his son in law, David Corson also bought over Newton Welding, a structural steel fabricator and erector that had recently gone into receivership. The business was then relocated to York Street in Ayr.

Two years later the newly formed "Newton Group" expanded again, this time it bought out a local machining company, RBC Engineering, which was based in Troon and continued to expand into other markets including its patented portable goal systems. These proved very successful and many thousands have been sold to Football clubs across the UK over the last 24 years.

In 1998 Wallace McDowall appointed a new Managing Director, Jim Wilson, to expand into the Sub-Contract sector with the aim of supplying into global companies such as Hyster, Terex and Caterpillar. The need for space resulted in a move across the street into an 18,000 sq ft. factory and the installation of the first Trumpf flatbed laser along with a range of supplementary equipment to support this venture.

Over the next 3 years the sub-contract business expanded rapidly and it was obvious that the existing security door and facilities business did not really fit well together.

In 2002 The Managing director, Jim Wilson along with one of the existing shareholders, Bert McKay, agreed with the other Directors to negotiate a management buyout from the Newton group taking the former machining business of RBC engineering with them. This was successfully concluded in March 2002 and the company now became focused purely in the growth of the Sub-contract Fabrication and Machining business as it continues to do today.

From its conception, the business has grown from 40 employees to 200, increased turnover from £2.2M to £13M and moved from 18,000 sq. ft. premises in Ayr to its present 120,000 sq. ft. premises in Monkton.

The company now produces a vast number of components and products to businesses around the world. These customers cover almost every sector of manufacturing and range from automotive, agricultural, material handling, oil and gas sectors to mention a few. Bill's entrepreneurial spirit is alive and kicking as the company has also continued to design, develop and mass produce customers own products, such as dog transit boxes and portable salt spreading gritters.

Wallace McDowall Ltd as it stands today has seven industrial flatbed lasers (a mix of CO2 and fibre) and two CNC punch machines capable of running 24 hours a day, several of which, with the help of automation, run unmanned throughout night shifts and weekends. These feed a whole range of other machinery including CNC lathes and CNC machining centres with three axis right through to full five Axis capabilities.

The fabrication department alone now employs over 40 welders and has four Robotic Weld cells to cope with fabrications up to 3 tonnes in size.

The components are then finished through two automated powder coating lines before shipping or final assembly to exacting standards and customer expectations.

Of course the real heart of the business is built around the 200 skilled people, many of whom have been with the company for more than 30 years. Without their support, efforts and hard work the business would not be a success story it has been, not only to survive but to prosper over the last 50 YEARS.

The company is currently being led by the four Directors Jim Wilson, Logan Collins, Derek Johnstone and Billy Wilson who, along with company secretary Yvonne Ward, have between them over 125 years' service with the company.