



Mary Murrell

meets

Hamish MacGregor



MacGregor Flooring in Hamilton, Scotland, is looking forward to celebrating its 25th anniversary next year.

DESPITE the weak economy, MacGregor Flooring is safe in the knowledge that its financial base is secure. 'That is because over the years the directors have ploughed profits back into the company,' says Hamish MacGregor.

'The deft management of our monetary policies by our company secretary and financial director Liz MacGregor has enabled the company to reach its current stable position.'

The company was set up in 1985, the result of a management buyout from Marley Floors when it decided to end its contract flooring operation.

Initially the MacGregor Flooring Company traded only in the Scottish market, but now it services clients throughout the UK, Eire and Europe and even further afield if necessary, such as in the Shetland Isles, the Falkland Islands and the Ascension Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Flooring is its core business. It supplies and fits carpet, carpet tiles, vinyl, lino and rubber floorcoverings, wood and laminate floors and can install raised access flooring. Folding partitions and handrails are also part of its portfolio.

The company works with major builders and property developers, local authorities, hospitals and schools, especially on PFI projects, hotels, conference centres, shops and prisons. It has invested in a CAD machine to shorten its response time to enquiries.

The original team has grown considerably. Kenny Smith formerly contracts manager is now contracts director. Hamish and Liz's son Crawford, who joined the company

Solid

foundation



Recent installations by MacGregor Flooring



18 months ago, is contracts manager. Vince Kerr, a former working manager, is contracts supervisor. Agnes Rogers as office manager ensures the smooth running of the office.

There are 45 fitters, 12 being apprentices at various stages in their training. 'The apprenticeships last four years, but we always give these trainees another year to fine tune their skills,' says Hamish. 'Every trade needs apprentices for the future. To have a successful company you need good people.'

All qualified fitters are CSCS certified.

'My philosophy is that in the flooring trade everyone has to work as a team. On the sites, we have four working team managers who are responsible for supervising the fitters and liaising with the clients. These men are all very capable people who have been on courses to enable them to do the job well. As a result we have a reputation for high quality work. Clients return to us again and again, so that now we are one of the top four contractors in Scotland.'

Recent projects include: the Clackmannanshire Community Hospital in Alloa, Stirlingshire for Robertson Construction; Motherwell College for Miller Construction; St Peter Apostle High School, Clydebank for Bam Construction; Langside College, Glasgow for Balfour Beatty; Anniesland College for Bam Construction; Portree High School on Skye for Morrison Construction; St. Mungoes High School, Falkirk for Ogilvie Construction and the National North Atlantic Air Traffic Control Centre at Prestwick for Laing O'Rourke.

Having worked in the 5 star St Andrews Bay Hotel and Spa eight

years ago, MacGregor Flooring is now carrying out a complete refurbishment for its new owners, the Fairmont Group. 'I feel it's a feather in our cap to have been invited back,' says Hamish.

Special one-offs have included a 50mm thick carpet for the mansion house of a sports personality, and a rug replicating a wallpaper design installed either side of a chimney breast.

In January 1993 the company joined the Contract Flooring Association, and supports its efforts to promote the highest standards of work within the industry.

Hamish was President of the CFA from 2005-07 and is still a member of its Council. He is also senior vice-president of the NSCC. He therefore has strong views on payments and retentions.

'Under the Construction Act it was agreed that companies should be paid within 30 days. On central and local Government contracts under the Office of Government Commerce ruling payment periods must not exceed 30 days but these periods have not been adhered to. The 30 days rule needs to be met especially in these difficult times when smaller businesses are finding their credit limits reduced by their banks.

'For the buildings for the Commonwealth and Olympic Games there is a discussion about shortening the payment period even more.

'With regard to retentions, this money should be paid as soon as it is due. Smaller sub-contractors often give up the fight to get their money as they do not have the resources to pursue the offending client, or fear a loss of business if they do.

'The current system is unfair. Reducing the retention from 5% to 3% on new contracts is a step forward. At least five years ago Construction Excellence (the Construction Industry Forum) and the Local Government Association stated that retentions should be phased out. Now is the time to make that happen and replace retentions with retention bonds.

'I thoroughly enjoy this industry as there are never two days the same,' says Hamish.

'It is challenging, particularly in Scotland, but through hard work and maintaining standards our company has become successful. I have every confidence that its success will be maintained.'

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