

Managing director post for Ian Kirk at expansive-minded Downhole Products



(L-R) Ian Kirk and Bill Barron

One of the three founders of Downhole Products, the Aberdeen-based company which is a world market leader in oilfield equipment, has been appointed managing director following the buying over of the company by US-based Varel International.

Ian Kirk's appointment comes as Downhole Products continues to defy worldwide recessionary trends with an on-going success story in which it is steadily expanding its global sales operations, creating new jobs, and increasing turnover by around 30% year-on-year.

Downhole Products, whose world headquarters is at Badentoy Park, Portlethen, near Aberdeen, designs, manufactures and markets a wide range of technologically-advanced oilfield tools used in the construction and completion of oil and gas wells.

Its leading products include high-end centralizers and reamer shoes for use in the running of well casing and completion strings. Sales of its new product "Grippy" control line protector clamp have just topped the 250,000 mark – earning the company more than £5million in the past three years.

With turnover rising above £15million last year, Downhole Products has seen its export earnings more than double during the past four years, and it now generates more than 95% of its total earnings from out with the UK – bringing vital revenue to the UK as the pound sterling continues to be weak against the US dollar and Euro.

This export achievement saw the company recognised last year by winning the coveted Queen's Award for Enterprise in the International Trade Category.

Ian Kirk (54), a qualified mechanical engineer, was one of the co-founders of Downhole Products, along with Bill Barron and Alistair Clark, when it was launched in 1994 from a small office above a motor cycle dealership in the village of Peterculter, near Aberdeen. The three Aberdonians' first product was the Spir-O-Lizer centraliser which notched up sales of more than £1 million in the first year of operation.

Downhole Products moved to its current world HQ at Badentoy Park, in 1997, and in 2003 doubled its manufacturing capability. It has a global network of bases in key oil and gas markets

and a team of distributors in 26 countries, spearhead by having its own sales staff strategically placed in the USA, Asia and the Middle East.

This has enabled the company to cultivate long-term relationships with major operators and service companies which has earned it a reputation for reliable service and quality technology with its products being used successfully in every major oil and gas region in the world.

The company, which has increased its staff to more than 40 people, has promoted Patrick O'Donnell from sales manager to business development manager with a worldwide remit. He will concentrate on introducing Downhole products to new markets while Ian Kirk and executive director Bill Barron will spearhead the sales operation from the Aberdeen headquarters. O'Donnell, who has been with the company for 10 years, was at one time a professional football player with Sunderland FC.

Ian Kirk said: "We now have agents in 26 countries and we are increasing our turnover by around 30% each year. We are capitalising on the fact that our relationship with Varel International Energy Services has provided Downhole Products with financial and operational support which is helping us accelerate growth in both existing and new market places, as well as increasing our capability to deliver innovative solutions for our customers in major oil and gas countries throughout the world.

"There are many synergies between the two groups that are giving rise to new innovation, job security and new employment opportunities. We are working hard to maintain the highest standards in product quality and customer care in responding to market demands at home and abroad, and are determined to attract more business – especially in the Middle East and West Africa."

The company now has three major overseas bases with its own staff in place with the announcement that Alex Macgregor, currently in the sales division in Portlethen, is being posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in September as regional manager for Asia where a new larger base has been established. It has had a presence in Houston, USA, since 1992, now headed by Marcus Gregson-Brown, who transferred from Aberdeen, while Martin Pirie moved from Aberdeen last year to head up the Middle East operation in Bahrain which is also moving to a larger base. ■