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Operating Company — L.W. Hoyle Ltd
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HENRY BROWN and CO: Celebrating 125 years



An aerial view of Henry Brown and Company's timber yard and joinery factory in Morley St, New Plymouth.

Reunion helps mark 125 years

The New Plymouth timber business of Henry Brown and Company celebrates its 125th year of business this year.

Managing director Don Brown claims the company to be among the country's oldest — certainly of those still operating.

And the descendants of company founder Henry Brown's family have chosen both family and staff functions to mark the occasion.

A cocktail evening for staff, clients and suppliers to the business was held in the city last night and a family reunion has been organised for October 21 and 22.

That reunion has attracted about 200 family members from New Zealand and Australia, said Don Brown, New Plymouth.

And although family connections in the US are unable to attend they have also expressed interest, he said, and videotapes of the celebrations will be sent to them.

Later in the year staff at the New Plymouth timber yard and joinery factory will be shouted out to a meal at a city restaurant.

Henry Brown and Company's operations over the years have touched many parts of Taranaki and the King Country.

The company established itself through sawmilling in Taranaki's early years and at the beginning of this century was ranked among the largest sawmilling operations in New Zealand. Its joinery products were in demand throughout the country.

But as timber became cheaper to buy than produce its business focused more on the joinery and end uses for the timber.

Founder Henry Brown's enthusiasm and business activities earned him a reputation as one of Inglewood's pioneers.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

On this occasion of our 125th Anniversary I would like to pay tribute to all our very loyal staff, who over the years have made an immense contribution to our success. Also to our valued clients, who have supported us so well. Five generations of Browns have been continually involved in the business and have enjoyed friendly, lasting relationships with both clients and suppliers. Our history has been closely linked with the people of Taranaki and to a lesser extent the King Country. With an economic recovery imminent in this area we now look forward with you to a prosperous and exciting future.

Don Brown






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Manager: ROSS BROWN

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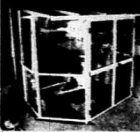
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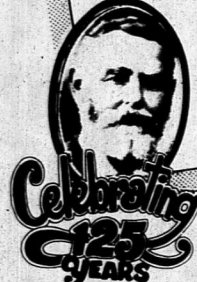
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The story of Henry Brown and Co is as much a family history as that of the development of a business firm. The two are inextricably linked.

With the exception of two partners in the early years, the business has been owned and run by the descendants of Henry Brown.

The story began in November of 1868 when the Rev Henry Handley Brown left England with his family to satisfy an ambition to carry out missionary work in the colonies.

His son Henry, who turned 16 on the voyage, was among 10 of his 11 children accompanying him and was to found the timber firm to carry his name 125 years into the future.

The Brown party arrived off New Plymouth in March 1869, and within a month had leased a property at Omata. The Rev Brown named this Brookwood.

In 1869 hostilities with the Maori flared up, but due to the respect Rev Brown had earned with the local tribe, his family was among the last to move to safety in New Plymouth.

Henry Brown, the son, served with Sir Harry Atkinson's Taranaki Bushrangers and saw several engagements with the Maori forces. In 1863 he was made an Ensign in the Taranaki Volunteer Rifles and by 1865 had made lieutenant.

In quieter periods during that time he gained experience as a carpenter and builder.

In 1865 the Rev Brown purchased 2000 acres (800ha) of land at the foot of the Pouakai Ranges at the top of the Carrington Rd. There he built a large two-storey home, naming the property Welbourn after his birthplace in England.

Soon after the initial purchase his son set up a sawmilling business on the property which was to grow into the flourishing timber business of the future.

In 1867 Henry Brown married Harriet Brooking of New Plymouth and 15 months later their son



Henry Brown watches over today's company activities from the photograph behind present managing director Don Brown.

Francis Henry Brown was born.

After nine years of milling, the economic timber had been felled and processed and Henry Brown moved his operation to the young township of Inglewood.

The vital rail link had just been completed and the new mill was established at the junction of Harthouse and Mountain Roads.

The Moa Block provided the timber for the mill and the timber reserves sited to the site alongside the rail line with a private siding meant its rapid growth to become one of the largest sawmills in the country.

A large joinery factory was opened in conjunction with the mill and produced in addition to doors, windows, frames and the like, butter boxes and cheese crates for the burgeoning New Zealand dairy industry.

year saw the Inglewood mill electrified but, allaying the fears of the town, it was rebuilt a short time later.

Frank Brown joined his father at the new operation, having completed an engineering apprenticeship in Auckland and spent time at the Waitara freezing works as assistant engineer.

His engineering experience was a bonus for Henry Brown who proceeded to develop and modernise the mill. Electricity was introduced via their own generating unit driven by a nearby stream.

Henry Brown used this latest experience to help Inglewood become only the sixth town in the country to receive electric power.

Charles Alier was taken on as manager of the New Plymouth yard in 1880 and the next year was taken in as a partner in the business, which became Henry Brown and Company. He died in 1918 and his place was taken by Edward Tille. They are the only two outside of the family to have had a holding in the company.

Milling over the years saw the local timber reserves depleted and transport of the raw material to the mill became a problem. The mill closed in 1914.

Henry Brown had interests in a number of smaller mills although he did not control them. They supplied much of his timber needs.

But the business aspects of the company began to take priority and by 1925 Henry Brown and Co was

out of sawmilling. Company operations and its head office were based in New Plymouth with its large timber yard and joinery factory.

Henry Brown died in 1921 and Frank Brown took over as chairman of directors.

The third generation joined the firm in 1925 when Frank's son Handley was taken on. In 1929 Frank's sister Ethel was made a director, and Handley was also appointed one in 1933.

Frank Brown died in 1934 and Handley took over the company.

The depressed years of the early 1930s meant a hand-to-mouth living for the company, but substantial reserves built up earlier carried them through.

Another Henry, Frank's son, became a director from 1937 although he did not take an active part until 1946, following service with the country's air force.

In 1939 an Inglewood branch was re-opened and was managed by another son, Robert Brown.

Wood reserves from 1939 were taken by the government for war needs and promises to replace them after the war were not kept.

The need then for timber led to the opening of a sawmill at Manunu near Taumaranui by Henry Brown and Co, Handley's son. Don, today's managing director, managed this mill from 1957. He joined the firm in 1950.

In 1963 his brother Ross joined the staff and by 1967 was New Plymouth timber manager.

The Waitara timber yard operation was sold in 1951 and the company's business focused on New Plymouth, Manunu and Inglewood. But in 1954 it took a major shareholding in the Omata Sawmilling Co.

Don Brown became a director in 1962 and Ross Handley in 1964.

In 1970 Handley Brown retired as managing director and Don Brown took up this position. Handley remained chairman of directors until his death in 1983 when Bob Brown chaired the board.

The 1970s saw company operations consolidated in New Plymouth. Moves were a combination of economics and disaster.

In 1977 the Omata mill interests were sold, although the land was retained, and the following year saw the closure of the Inglewood yard and factory.

A major fire at Manunu in 1981 resulted in the destruction of the mill and in 1982 the remaining equipment and land was auctioned off.

A late venture into sawmilling was undertaken with a partnership in the Toka Sawmilling Co in 1983 but this was wound up in 1987.

Bob Brown retired as chairman of directors earlier this year and Don Brown now leads the current Henry Brown and Co operations.



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in the timber trade

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The apprenticeship papers of Ben Weston, Henry Brown and Company's oldest surviving former employee, attract the interest of this group. From left, they are Ross Brown, Don Brown, Bob Brown and Ben Weston. Ross Brown is a company director, Don Brown is managing director and Bob Brown is recently retired as chairman of directors of the company. Ben Weston worked for Henry Brown and Co from 1921 to 1971.

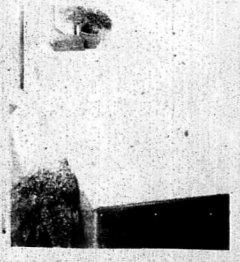
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HENRY BROWN and CO: Celebrating 125 years



Henry Brown and Company's staff are pictured at left in the Morley St timber yard in New Plymouth.

The horizontally stacked timber reflects the present-day use of forklifts to move the stocks about.

The picture below shows the vertical stacking which was a feature of the yard years ago when manhandling was necessary.

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