



M. Large marks 50-year milestone

COUNTY Antrim-based M. Large Tree Services is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2020. In that time, the company has grown from a sole trader to one of the UK's largest suppliers of new and used forestry machinery.

Founded in 1970 by Michael Large, the firm primarily did smaller-scale private felling jobs before quickly diversifying into tree surgery as there were very few tree surgeons in Northern Ireland at the time.

"I was always very innovative and had good engineering skills so was always looking for ways to be more efficient. We brought the first brushwood chipper, a Junkkari, into the country in 1981 and were recycling 100 per cent of our wood for horticultural or fuel use," Michael told *Forestry Journal*.

"Also, in 1984 we bought our first firewood processor from Richard Slatem and have seen firewood sales increase steadily ever since. Today we sell about 3,000 cubic metres of seasoned firewood annually. In the same year, our first sawmill was installed, and we began to mill timber from our tree work jobs."

By the 1990s, M. Large employed 40 full-time staff, including tree surgeons, surveyors and ancillary staff. It also became the first Arboricultural Association-approved contractor in Ireland in 1990.

"We were working for almost all the

substantial part of our business was surveying, mostly for our Planning Service who by then were protecting more trees by placing TPOs, which until then had been few and far between."

He continued: "In 1995 we began using and selling Greenmech chippers and this relationship has continued to this day. Realising that there was an increasing requirement for forestry and woodfuel equipment, we began importing and distributing a range of equipment including Hakki Pilke firewood processors, Thor log-splitters, Farmi, BMF, Palms cranes and trailers and many other brands throughout the UK and Ireland.

"Over the following years we diversified into other areas including crane hire, road haulage and warehousing. We also bought another large arboricultural company, increasing our staff numbers to around 80 at that time."

Michael has seen a number of changes in the industry over the past five decades, particularly with regard to skills shortages and health and safety.



we had a number of employees who were not operators in other words completing jobs," Michael said. "I believe the days of large tree directly employing workers will be gone."

One partial solution for M. Large is to use as much as possible of the machinery as much as possible, said.

"We have always had a plant, including radio-controlled cranes, and use these for tree work operations. Track-mounted cherry pickers are used on these bring their own problems, but I believe more have been killed or injured by inappropriate use of this equipment using conventional climbing use tree shears on both run-tracked excavators where there has without doubt increased well as safety.

"Our own brand, LMS, manufactured in Northern Ireland, proved popular since

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