



**Norman
EmersonGroup**

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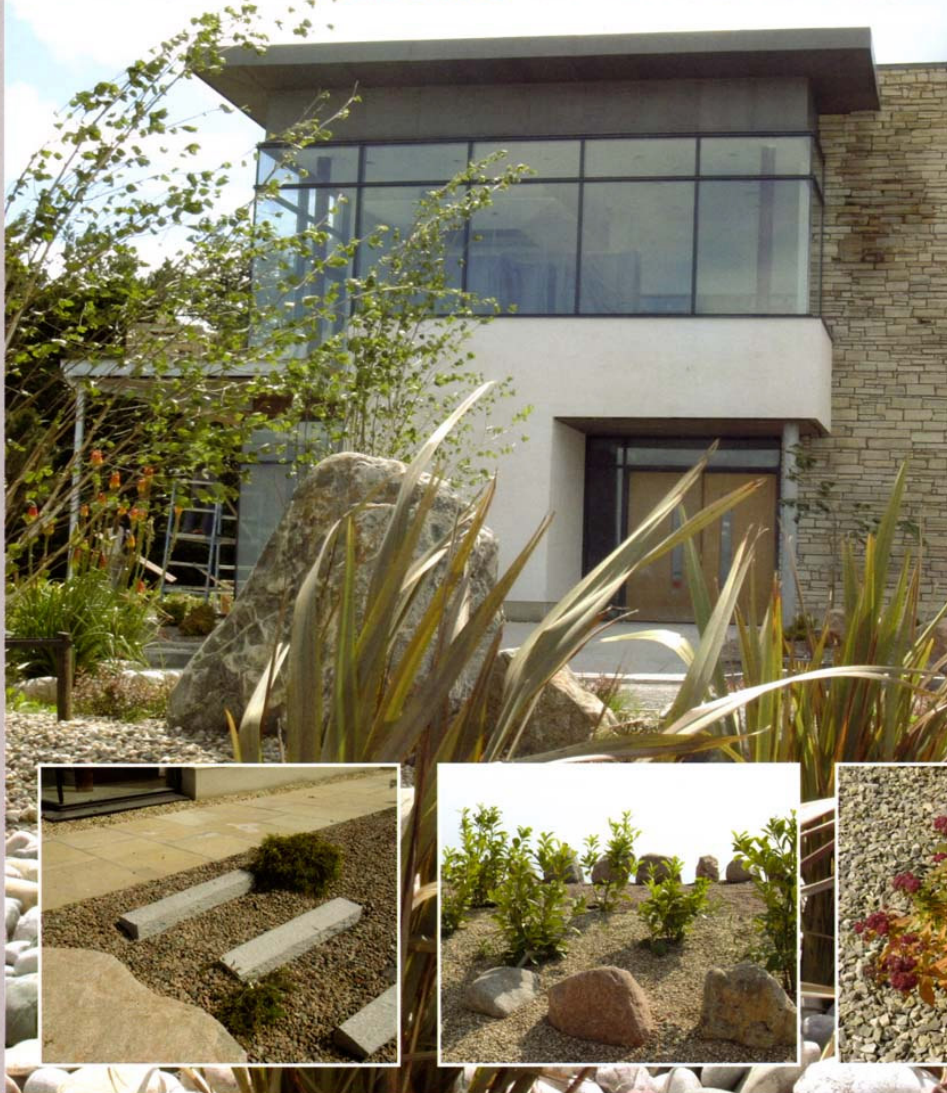
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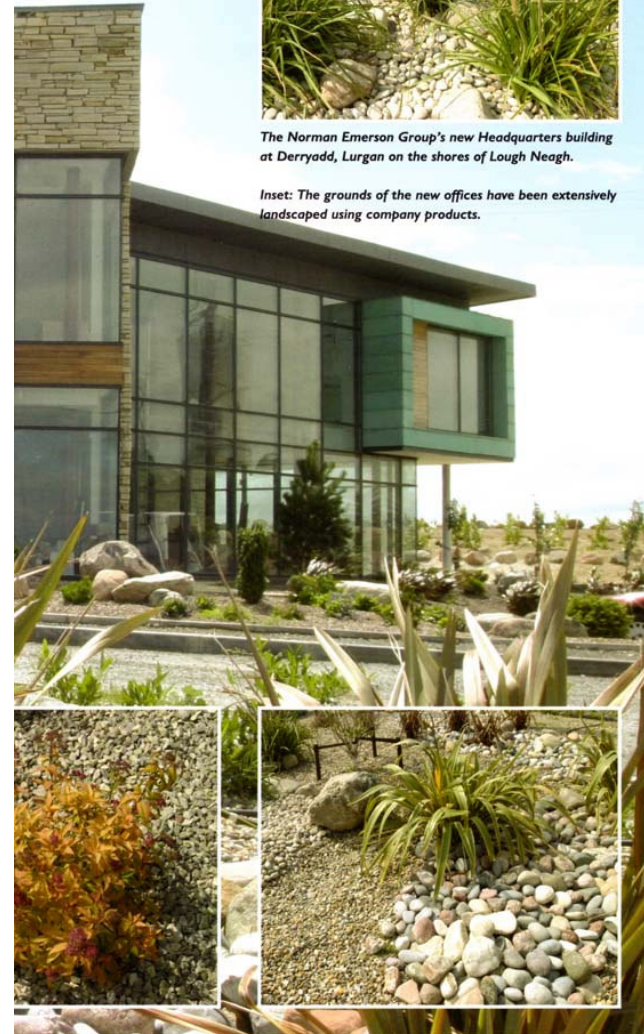
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The Norman Emerson Group's new Headquarters building at Derryadd, Lurgan on the shores of Lough Neagh.

Inset: The grounds of the new offices have been extensively landscaped using company products.



Norman Emerson & Sons Ltd has been at the forefront of the Northern Ireland construction industry for almost seven decades now, having morphed from a fledgling business determined to 'build on quality' into an esteemed establishment representing a 'Cornerstone Of Excellence' for a new millennium. From supplying the local construction industry with quality sand and gravel, ready mixed concrete and quarry materials, to providing a contracts service second to none, and enhancing gardens with its Natural Stone product range, the Company has in recent years diversified to such an extent that today the Emerson name is even associated with office supplies and giftware!

"It's been quite a journey," says Managing Director, George Emerson, who has just recently embarked on another ambitious journey as his Company assumed Group status. Varied business activities, carried out from several different locations across the island of Ireland, will now come under the umbrella of the 'Norman Emerson Group'.

In keeping with the Company's progressive attitude, a £2.5 million investment has been made in a new headquarters building and bagging plant facility at Derryadd in Lurgan. Designed by Lisburn based architects, Knox & Clayton, the new £1,000,000.00 headquarters building will not only house the Emerson management and administration team under the one roof for the very first time, but will also act as an impressive showcase for many of the Group's products.

From the Brazilian rose quartz that has been utilised as a focal point in the reception area, to the various hard landscaping and stone products that have been incorporated around the attractively landscaped grounds, the new building makes a clear Quality statement. It should therefore come as no surprise that the building works were overseen by another member of the Emerson family - Mark Emerson of MEC Ltd., a Magheralin-based civil engineering company founded and directed by Mark.

With a staff of more than 150 people, an exemplary product portfolio, and premises at Ardmore, Kinnegoe, Tullyhogue, Tandragee, Cookstown, Lurgan and Dublin, the Norman Emerson Group is not only well placed but perfectly poised for further growth and expansion!



Taking on Group Status

George Emerson believes the newly acquired Group status will add an additional dimension to the business: "We had developed the various strands of the business to such an extent that the time was right for such a move," says George.

Diversification and expansion has increasingly taken George and other members of the Emerson Group management team on business trips outside of the Province, particularly in relation to the development of the Natural Stone side of the business, and he believes that Group status will add to the overall appeal: "It's a good starting point in terms of communicating a compelling proposition to target audiences in international markets," says George. "Being introduced as the Norman Emerson Group immediately identifies scale – you are part of something that is much bigger than a single entity, and that can help in terms of grabbing attention. Of course, once you have secured that attention you must be able to deliver on your promises."

That is something to which the Company is well used.

PROCESSING SAND

The Norman Emerson Group emerged from humble beginnings in 1945 when Company founder, Norman Emerson Senior, began processing sand



Above: Norman Emerson Group managing director, George Emerson, centre, with company directors, from left to right, Norrie Emerson, Geoffrey Emerson, Kenneth Emerson, Alan Emerson and Kenny Crooks.

Below: The Bayshore. The Norman Emerson Group has three boats operating on Lough Neagh.

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from a field adjacent to his home in Ardmore. From there, the extraction of sand moved onto Lough Neagh and today the Group is one of only six companies with a commercial licence to extract sand from the Lough.

Norman Emerson's Lough Neagh department currently operates three boats on the Lough – the 'Norman', the 'Bayshore', and the 'Sunrise', ranging in load capacity from 300 – 500 tonnes.

The Company can supply numerous different types of sand for diverse end uses; this includes coarse sand for concrete, sharp sand for plasterwork, and fine sand for building or asphalt based courses. There is also considerable demand for Emerson sand within the leisure industry – the Group's silica sand is used on everything from golf courses and playing fields, to horse paddocks.

But what is it about Lough Neagh sand that makes it so special?

"It's the quality of the sand – the particle size is very uniform, and it's free draining," explains Sales and Marketing Director Kenny Crooks.

The excellent drainage qualities of the sand have been a major factor in securing supply to the new Nick Faldo designed golf course currently under



construction at the Lough Erne Golf Resort in Enniskillen. More than 40,000 tonnes of Emerson's sand is being used in the construction of the showpiece course which is set to become a major golfing destination.

"This is a very pleasing contract for the Group," continues Kenny. "As well as being a highly prestigious project, our



Top: Sand production at Ardmore Road, Derryadd.

Left: A sophisticated suction system is used for off-loading sand from the boats.

Above: Croke Park, Dublin. One of the many sports grounds where the company's silica sand has been utilised.



product was selected ahead of several other sands – it was a very thorough and detailed selection process.”

Emerson's sand is also the sand of choice amongst many other sporting organisations, and is featured on playing fields and sports grounds up and down the country, everywhere from Windsor Park, Belfast to Croke Park, Dublin.

NICHE MARKETS

The Company has also identified

niche markets producing Industrial Dried Sand which is used by a number of major manufacturing companies in the production of tile and floor grouts, specialist adhesives and cements. The growth of this side of the business has led to the purchase of three new bulk powder tankers in recent weeks – and that's on top of a new £1,000,000.00 sand drying plant that was installed back in 2005. As well as being available for bulk purchase Emerson sand is also supplied in tonne bags and 25 kilo bags.



Top: More than 40,000 tonnes of Emerson's sand is being used in the construction of the Nick Faldo designed golf course currently under construction at the Lough Erne Golf Resort in Enniskillen.

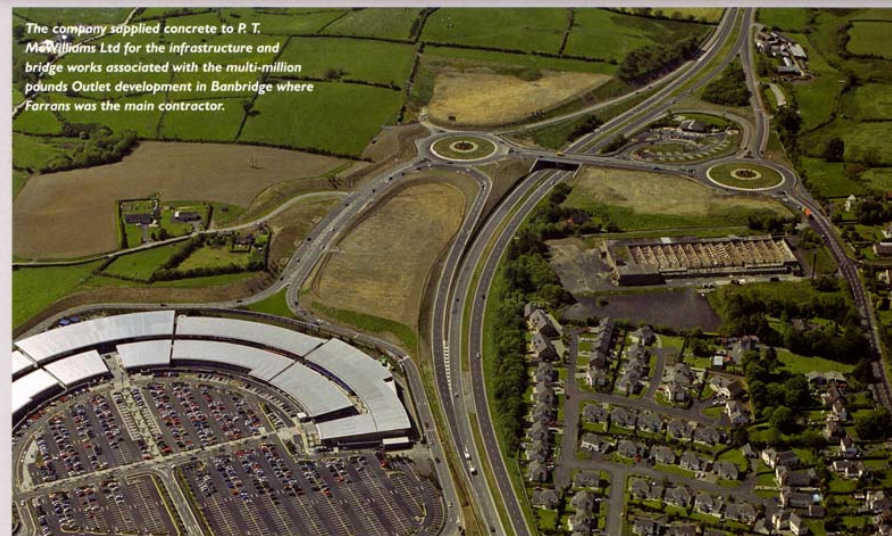
Above: A new artic and tipping trailer complete with the Group's revised livery.

Left: The company produces Industrial Dried Sand which is used by a number of manufacturing companies in the production of tile and floor grouts, specialist adhesives and cements.



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The company supplied concrete to P. T. McWilliams Ltd for the infrastructure and bridge works associated with the multi-million pounds Outlet development in Banbridge where Farrans was the main contractor.

“Consistency is a major factor with companies using sand in their manufacturing processes, and we are constantly meeting those consistency levels,” says George. This is underlined by the fact that the Group has a BS8555 Environmental Management Award for its Lough Neagh Sand, and is backed up by its own in-house laboratory facilities where testing is carried out on all Norman Emerson Group products.

The Company uses approximately 20% of its own sand for its ready-mixed concrete operations, which are located at Ardmore and Tandragee, and the Group also currently produces 2500 tonnes of aggregate per day from its quarry at Lisbane, Tandragee.

also recently been involved in a number of large scale water and sewage projects.

To service contracts both large and small, the Company has a sizeable fleet of over 200 vehicles, including truck mixers, tipper, artics, flat vehicles, vans and cars, and due to the sheer numbers involved, the upgrading of livery on all vehicles is a process which is being phased in. In an effort to ensure quality of service, the Group also utilises the services of a number of haulage contractors and owner drivers.

“We have worked in partnership with a number of haulage companies and owner drivers for many years now and

their support has been very effective in taking the business forward,” says George.

Right across the board turnover has increased on average by 10% per annum over the last five years. “That's the target that we set ourselves and that has been achieved year on year,” continues George. “The recent investment that we have made will hopefully help to underline the continuing commitment to our growing customer base and will assist us in terms of going forward and continuing to provide quality products combined with service excellence.”

CLIENT BASE

The Emerson Group's client base is extremely diverse covering numerous industry sectors, from civil engineering and road construction, to general construction, the agricultural sector, landscaping and the general public. Over the years the Group has been involved in many high profile contracts, with recent examples ranging from the supply of concrete for the bridge work associated with the multi-million pound Outlet project in Banbridge to the supply of rock armouring and concrete on the A1 carriageway improvements scheme between Loughbrickland and Newry. Norman Emerson Group has



The Group currently produces 2,500 tonnes of aggregate per day from its quarry at Lisbane, Tandragee.



The Ready Mix plant at Tondragee.



Work in progress by the Norman Emerson Group Contracts Division, which is headed up by Anthony McConville, contracts manager.



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Developing the Stone side of the business has been a **'Natural'** success

The development of the Natural Stone side of the business has been a major success story for the Norman Emerson Group. This came about primarily as a result of a Programme of Change which was introduced back in 1998. "We had always had this aspect to our

business but with the new Millennium approaching we took a more focused look at developing this side of the business further," explains George Emerson.

The process was helped along by the purchase of a fully dedicated sales office and showroom, along

Above: One of the showrooms at the Natural Stone Centre.

Product displays within the Natural Stone Centre.



with processing and storage facilities at 1 Annaloiste Road, Kinnego in Lurgan. Today, the Group is one of the leading suppliers of rockery, cobble, decorative and paving stone in Ireland – everything from mini bags of decorative gravel and glass, to water feature stones and fountains. The

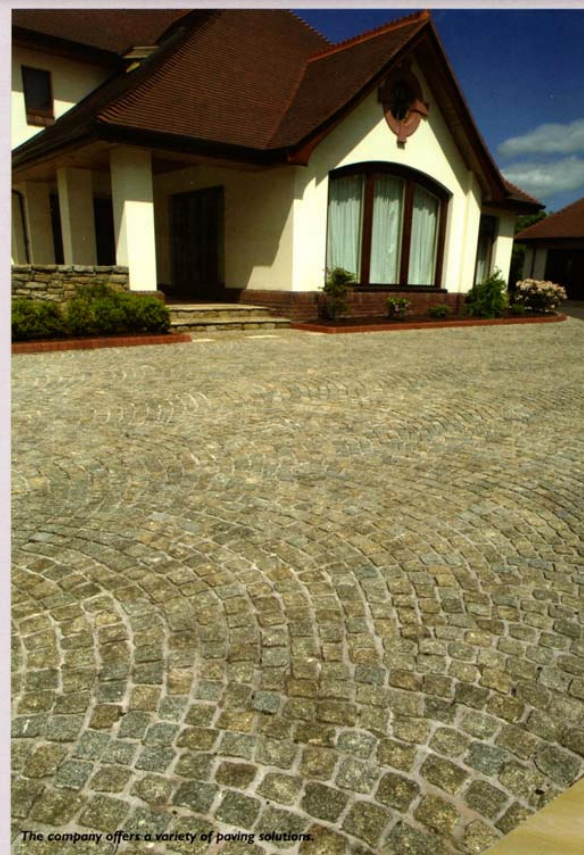
Company has put considerable thought and effort into developing this side of the business, and products are sourced from at least 15 different countries, and from as far away as the Americas, India, Turkey and China. Sales and Marketing Director Kenny Crooks is credited with much of the success for developing



the Natural Stone portfolio – “Kenny has been absolutely pivotal to the success of our Natural Stone range. His unfailing commitment to the Company throughout the years is commendable, and we value his input and drive,” comments Managing Director George.

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The company offers a variety of paving solutions.

BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

Over the last seven years the Company has worked closely with architects, garden designers, landscapers and clients in providing stone solutions and helping to create ‘beautiful gardens’. As the stone portfolio has grown in size there has been a considerable “add-on” aspect, with the addition of other specialist landscaping items such as fountains, lanterns and garden furniture, decorative pots and paving products. In terms of branding, as well as the Emerson name, which has always been synonymous with quality, the Group uses Natural Stone, Easi-Build and Gardeners’ Choice on its bagged range of products.

“There has been a tremendous interest shown in the use of natural products when it comes to landscaping work, and indeed building work in general over the last couple of years,” explains Kenny Crooks.

This is reflected in the number of high profile contracts that feature Natural Stone products, and indeed the transformation which has taken place within the Company’s Natural Stone showrooms over the last couple of years. There are impressive internal display areas at the Natural Stone Centre at Kinnego which have been



attractively laid out to complement the wide range of products on offer. Many of the fountains are featured as working displays, which provides customers with a full appreciation of ‘what’s on offer’.

PRESTIGIOUS PROJECTS

The Norman Emerson Group’s Natural Stone products are being specified in prestigious projects all over Ireland, on everything from domestic landscaping contracts to large commercial schemes. Recent examples range from landscaping works at the five star



Lyrath Estate and Spa in Kilkenny, to a newly created roof top garden at the Four Seasons Hotel in Dublin. Group products were also utilised on the new G Hotel in Galway.

"The G Hotel was very high profile because of the involvement of the well known hat designer Philip Treacy in its design," says Kenny.

As a member of the Association of Landscape Contractors of Ireland, the Natural Stone Centre is well known in the sector. The Norman Emerson Group is also a nominated preferred supplier of the Gardening Inside Out Group.

"In terms of marketing and promotion we have worked hard at endorsing our range of products to our target audience," explains Kenny Crooks. "We have built up good working relationships with contractors, landscapers, architects and garden centres throughout Ireland."

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

With the Natural Stone range well established in the local marketplace the Company is presently investigating other means of generating new revenue streams and is currently working in partnership with various multi-national companies throughout

Britain to launch the Natural Stone product range into the English marketplace.

By substantially increasing its geographical catchment area, the Norman Emerson Group is confident of further growing the business.



Part of the sales team, from left to right, Joyce Cunningham, Michelle O'Rourke, Greg McConville, sales manager, Kenny Crooks, sales and marketing director, Michael Blake, Stephen Compton and Jon Duff.

"As well as extending our areas of operation, we are constantly adding to our portfolio," continues Kenny. "We have added over 50 new products to our Stone range this year, including a large section devoted to paving solutions."

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Norman Emerson Group Going from strength to strength

Despite taking on Group status, the Emerson name remains very much to the fore and the strong family ethos within the business is paramount. The Company is headed up by George Emerson (Managing Director) and four of his five brothers – Norrie (Accounts Director), Alan (Technical Director), Geoffrey (Service Director) and Kenneth (Operations Director) – along with Kenny Crooks (Sales & Marketing Director), who joined the Board almost ten years ago. The family name within the Company looks set to carry on as the third generation joins its ranks – Norrie's eldest son Colin Emerson, as General Manager of the Group, has a pivotal role to play in co-ordinating and managing all aspects of the business.

"Our Company has benefited from Colin's dedication and skill for over eighteen years. He is very much a team player who has worked his way up to his position of General Manager, a role he fulfils conscientiously and thoroughly," says George of his nephew and 'right hand man'. Kenneth's son, Kenneth Jnr, assists with the Lough Neagh operation, Geoffrey's sons, Geoffrey Jnr and Graeme, work alongside their father in the garage, Norrie's youngest son, Glenn, assists in the running of Emerson Office Supplies, Alan's daughter, Norma works in Head Office, and George's youngest daughter, Kathryn works in admin while his eldest daughter Julie is his PA.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The Company's success has witnessed a marked improvement from 1998 when the senior team committed to a strategic process of continuous improvement across its range of business activities. The Company developed a series of five year plans focused on market, people and process improvement initiatives which has provided a road map for successful growth and expansion. Following the discipline of the European Foundation for Quality Management's Business Excellence Model, the business has ensured that it moves forward on a broad front with a balanced approach to development across its range of business disciplines. Effective



The Strategy Team, (seated) Norrie Emerson and George Emerson with, from left to right, Kenny Crooks, Conor Jordan, Alan Emerson, Colin Emerson and Lois Kennedy.

management of such an ambitious change programme is pivotal to sustaining a continuous improvement culture in the Company. Conor Jordan is responsible for strategic development within the Company, and as George comments, "Conor joined our Company in 1997 and has played a fundamental role in our strategic planning process. Placing 'strategic development' at the core of the Company's business approach has been, and continues to be, an essential key to success."

The Company has strengthened its links with Invest Northern Ireland in developing its improvement plans. Support from Invest Northern Ireland has assisted the drive for improvement of the Company's competitive positioning via financial assistance, expert advice and cooperation, and Norman Emerson Group has invested in excess of £10 million during the course of the last decade.

The development and implementation of strategic planning



The Norman Emerson Group Administration Team.



Members of the Emerson Office Supplies team, from left to right, Marty Timlin, manager, Glen Emerson, Gillian Stewart, Christine Wills and Harry Crozier.

A LASTING LEGACY

As the Norman Emerson Group continues to '...build on quality...', Managing Director George remembers where the Group came from: "This article would not be complete without mention of the people who laid the solid foundations of our Company – our father and mother, Norman and Peggy Emerson. The Norman Emerson Group as it stands today came about because of the vision, hard work and faith of Norman Senior. Today, at 87, he is debilitated by Alzheimer's, but the company stands in testament to what he has achieved. And, as Dad would tell you himself, it may never have been possible without the enduring love and support of our Mother, whose constant care for Dad, particularly latterly during his long illness, is inspirational. And we give ultimate glory to God, whose faithfulness brought us through the barren years of the late 80's and early 90's, and will sustain us in the years ahead."



Company founders, Norman and Peggy Emerson.

is assisted by monthly strategic improvement meetings focused on evaluating progress with the Business Improvement Plan. The process itself has been educational to all members of the senior team as short term pressures are discussed and evaluated in terms of the more medium term strategic direction of the Company. The Group has its own accountant, Lois Kennedy, who has been part of the Emerson management team for the last five years. Lois takes part in monthly strategy meetings along with George, Norrie, Alan and Colin Emerson, Kenny Crooks and Conor Jordan.

The strategy team is backed up by a dedicated management team – Greg McConville as Sales Manager has been with the company for more than 25 years, and Technical Manager, Stephen Dowds and Production Manager, Uel Parr are both long-serving members of staff. Other committed site managers include Lynn Clarke (Office Manager), Stephen McKeown (Plant Maintenance Manager), Anthony McConville (Contracts Manager), Gary Wilson (IT Manager), Gareth Morrison (Despatch Manager – mixers), John Buckley (Despatch Manager – haulage), John Bateman (Yard Manager – Kinnego), and Bob Wilson (Operations Manager – Tullyhogue). The recent diversification into office supplies and a retail town centre based gift shop has seen the development of Mark Turkington as Gift Shop Manager and Martin Timlin as Emerson Office Supplies manager.

"As the business has continued to grow we have put in place numerous support systems that are designed to enhance our efficiency and make us more competitive as a business," explains George. "We have invested heavily in our people, computerisation



Patrick Nesbitt operating the NIBC fleet management system.

and IT which supports the measures which we have in place in terms of monitoring our performance and growth."

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

A strategic approach has been implemented across key processes to drive out cost and improve effectiveness. From on-time delivery monitoring, production capacity performance reporting, sales forecasting to department performance reports, the business has implemented systems to assist its medium term strategic goals. A good example of how effective process improvement impacts on the business can be seen via the installation of a state-of-the-art fleet management system from local company NIBC Ltd. Used for the live monitoring of all deliveries, this has proved extremely effective. Commenting on the NIBC system George Emerson says, "We are delighted with the new system and have already witnessed immediate benefits across all departments. Using satellite navigation, operational staff are able to locate and advise customers of their deliveries and consignments, and our finance department is able to accurately manage billing and salary details. We are seeing real reductions in costs from all areas including mobile communication, administration, driver's time, fuel, office time and roaming costs."

PEOPLE COMPANY

George Emerson attaches great importance to his workforce: "We are very much a 'People Company', and every member of staff is fully

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committed to the Company and our endeavours."

Many members of staff can boast over 20 years of service; employees are highly valued within the Norman Emerson Group, and each individual's service is officially recognised and rewarded at 1 year, 5 year, 10 year, 15 year, 20 year and 25 year intervals.

Assuming ownership and accountability is high up on the Group's strategy agenda: "By setting attainable performance targets we have been able to achieve our 10% growth year on year," says George. "As Managing Director it is my aim to see that the Emerson Group workforce shares in that success."

The business has successfully completed two Company Development Programmes assisted by Invest Northern Ireland. The principle focus on training was to improve the managerial competencies within the company. A range of qualifications have been completed from strategic management, leadership skills, customer services, operational management, accountancy and Information Technology through to Environmental Management and Health and Safety Management. According to George – "It's important that our people continue to develop and evolve in terms of their skills and



Diane Marks and Mark Turkington of Shakers Gift Shop in Lurgan.

competencies in line with the growth requirements of the business."

The Group has already introduced profit sharing in the contracts division, and further expansion of this policy is currently being discussed. George Emerson believes that performance related structures work to everyone's benefit: "We are an Investors in People Company, but as a business we have always recognised the strength of our people," says George. "Without a good staff, it simply doesn't work and it is important that our people are well looked after."



Gary Wilson, IT manager.

This policy extends beyond financial reward, and the Group operates a number of health schemes for its employees, which include free eye care and dentistry.

Health and Safety matters are also of the utmost importance and all members of staff are issued with safety equipment and clothing and the Company's Health and Safety policy is constantly being reviewed and updated.

People development is core to the company's strategic development.



Caring for the Environment

The Norman Emerson Group is proactive on environmental issues, with careful consideration given to everything from emissions to waste management and recycling procedures.

"As a Group we care about the environment – after all, it's the local environment that has helped to sustain our business for almost seven decades. We are grateful for the God-given resources available to us – from Lough Neagh to the Sperrins, our quarry in Tandragee to the natural stone we

source all over the world," says George.

The company also views society as an important aspect of the environment.

George Emerson personally provides a very positive role model in terms of promoting corporate social responsibility. "Business leaders can play an important part in the development of their local areas," says George. "From cross community work, youth counselling and charity promotion through to regional development, sectoral support and promotion of quality in business and

organisational development we at the Norman Emerson Group are committed in terms of providing managerial time, advice and expertise to a broad range of societal development initiatives. In reality it is a win win situation – local society benefits from the participation of our management team and in turn our managers are enriched by the experience. The scope of company involvement also reaches beyond Ireland to Africa, Russia and India via charitable aid and hands on assistance."