



Berry Ritchie

The Good Builder

The John Laing Story

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The story begins in mid-nineteenth century rural Cumbria with an archetypal local builder, carrying out any modest commission, from whitewashing the interior of the church to more substantial jobs. The firm expanded to become well-recognised in the county, and as such might well have remained. But at this point a remarkable figure enters the stage: John William Laing.

Combining exceptional ability for calculation, management and innovation with toughness of character, Laing was put in charge of demanding projects at an early age. At the start of the twentieth century he was running the enterprise which during the six decades under his leadership was to become one of the greatest construction companies in Britain.

By the 1930s the firm was building large housing estates, factories, offices, schools, hospitals, airfields, and virtually every other type of building. The crowning glory for Sir John Laing was Coventry Cathedral, reflecting his deep religious and moral conviction integral to the firm's reputation for fair dealing, craftsmanship and quality.

These attributes, including a talent for motivating and retaining first-class managers and employees at all levels, have happily been passed to Laing's family successors. Under their leadership the company, despite often harsh economic conditions, has survived and flourished. It has scored many construction 'firsts' - such as nuclear power stations and motorways, to take two notable examples - and continues to win major new contracts like the Second Severn Crossing at home and overseas.

Laing is arguably now the most successful major construction company in Britain.

continued on back flap



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PUSTAKA PERDANA



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Title page picture: The clubhouse at Creek Golf Course, Dubai, built by Al Naboodah Laing to resemble the sails of a traditional sailing dhow. The 35m-high structure has an observation deck on its top-floor.

Note on illustrations

The structures featured in this book were in the main constructed, or refurbished, by John Laing

Foreword

This is the story of a family company which, over 150 years, has grown in size and stature and has become a major force in the international construction and housing industry, and yet it still remains a caring, family business.

To record all the significant events in a book of this nature would be an impossible task. The sheer volume of material made it inevitable that significant contracts have had to be omitted, key employees not mentioned nor given the recognition they deserve, and important episodes passed over. I would therefore like to pay personal tribute to the invaluable efforts of the thousands of Laing employees and the many directors of the company who have been the means by which the company has achieved all that has been accomplished. It has often been said that it is relatively easy going forward. However, so often our finest hours have been battling in recessions and in the most difficult and complex of circumstances at home and overseas.

While James Laing would not recognise our construction world with its complex projects, computerised design and management control systems, I believe he would see that the values, traditions and professionalism that existed so long ago remain true today.

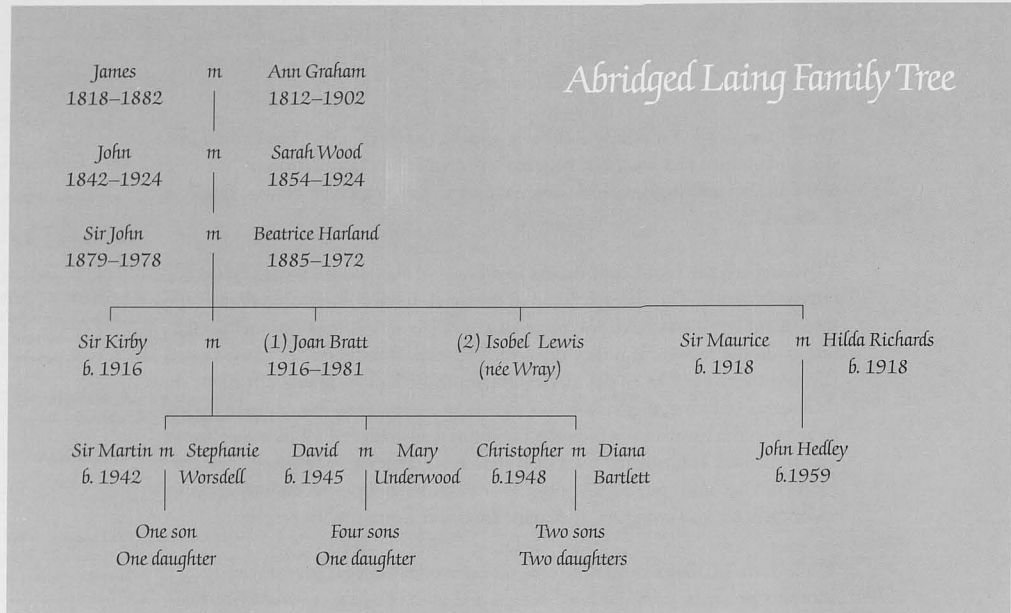
During its lifetime the Laing Group – Construction, Homes and Property – has faced a wide variety of problems and opportunities from depressions, recessions, war, industrial unrest, booms and takeovers. It has managed throughout that period to be flexible and has adapted to the circumstances of the time. It must continue to do so.

Different members of the family have coped with these pressures in their own way so that today the company ethos reflects these varied sources of inspiration, based on the Christian ethics of my grandfather, continued by my father, Sir Kirby, and uncle, Sir Maurice. The tenacity and determination shown and expected by them still exists in today's fine management team and workforce.

We look forward with confidence to the 21st Century.

Sir Martin Laing CBE

Abridged Laing Family Tree



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Other pictures come from the archives of John Laing plc. These include paintings by Cuneo, commissioned by the company, on pages 117, 119, 124, 126, 128, 129, 133, 135, 143.

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