

Charles Alvey and Son is one of the oldest and most respected names in the Australian fishing tackle industry. This month, for the first time in the company's peacetime history, Alvey acquired a range of product for production which is not Alvey design, and, to produce it, Alvey is expanding the Brisbane factory by 6,000 square feet. But admirers of the Alvey product need have no fears, the basic Alvey reel is not about to disappear.

Four Generations Show How It's Done!

The first Alvey reels were produced 67 years ago and with the exception of tooling for one small heart shaped spring, they still have the tooling for every reel they've ever produced. And tucked away in the loft are spare parts for almost every reel, which they are prepared to find and ship when a request comes. In an age when some companies won't even produce parts for reels only three years old it's a most remarkable attitude.

The small heart shaped spring was lost when the floods of 1974 wrecked their St. Lucia factory, putting Alvey out of business for two months, but September 1978 saw a move away from the reaches of the river to the industrial estate at Wacol and the first stage of a factory which has now grown to some 30,000 square feet totally dedicated to fishing tackle.

In 1987 the company is run by Jack Alvey, as Managing Director, and his son Bruce Alvey as General Manager, generations three and four in the family company, but next year should see the retirement

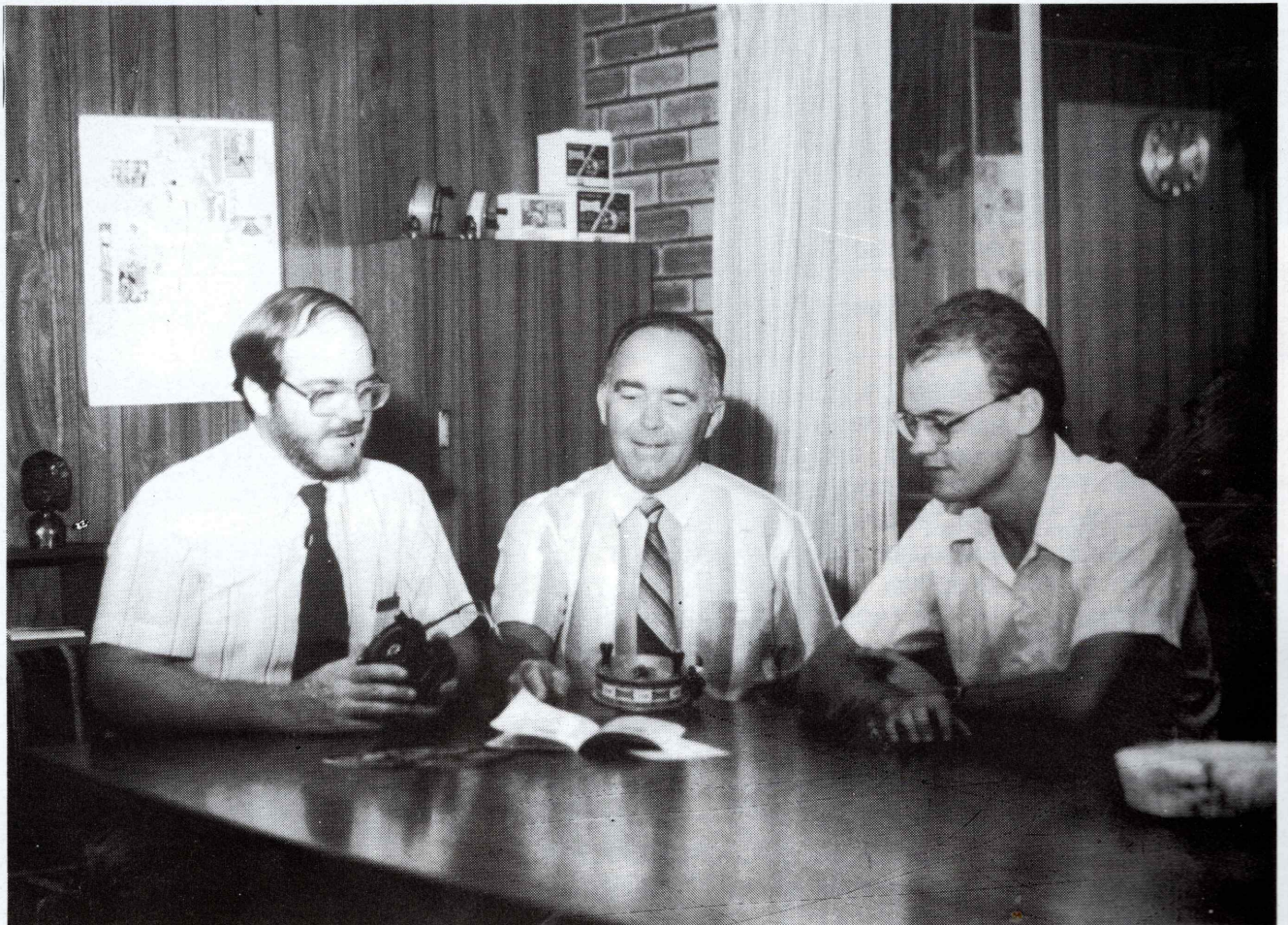
of Jack as Managing Director, another member of the family, **GLENN Grant**, Jack's younger son, is about to join the company founded by great grandfather Charles.

Key to the Alvey success is the total dedication to providing superb service and exceptional quality. Right from the start in 1920, when Charles produced 20 reels per week using a treadle lathe, both materials and construction standards have produced a reel which anglers have nominated as the "reel you can't wear out."

The company spends as much time keeping old reels in service as

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From left to right: Bruce, Jack and Glenn



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selling new ones.

Prompt Parts Supply

Alvey demonstrates this by a readiness to supply parts directly to any retailer in Australia.

"We found wholesalers sometimes don't pass parts orders on very promptly," says **Bruce Alvey**, "so we'll supply parts as soon as we know, direct to the retailer. The problem is that sometimes it's weeks before we find out and by then the customer whose reel is out of action is getting angry. If anyone has a problem they should ring us as soon as possible and we'll sort it out."

The company receives an immense amount of feedback from anglers who own **Alvey** reels. Many requests are simply for catalogues, but letters often suggest products or features the customer thinks useful. Not only are these ideas considered, but each letter is also answered, sometimes enclosing a small part free of charge. This often generates a second letter with fullsome praise for the **Alvey** service, and almost certainly a customer who will buy his new reel from **Alvey** when the time comes.

Stable Staff

The old fashioned family touch doesn't just find expression with customers. Inside the factory everyone has direct access to all levels of management. A problem or complaint can't be blocked off at lower supervisory levels. As a result the **Alvey** work force is remarkably stable, with 1/3 of the work force having been employed for over 15 years, another 1/3 for 10 to 15 years, and the balance for shorter periods. Once people settle in they're not inclined to leave.

Frank Green, production manager, has been with the company for over 35 years, and low quality product would violate all the standards he personally upholds. It's the same throughout the factory, at all levels.

Alvey to Produce New Product Line

For many years **Alvey** produced

nothing but reels, and whilst there is no intention to expand into any field other than fishing tackle, **Alvey** are about to produce a whole new line of product.

Alvey were already installing \$100,000 worth of injection moulding equipment to do inhouse moulding of reel parts, when they recently got wind of a desire by **Addis** to sell off the tooling for the Capstan range of fishing accessories, 4 sizes of handcasters, 2 sizes of baitbuckets, hook disgouger, rod bucket, and bait trap.

In mid June the deal was finally sealed and the new injection moulding section will soon be turning out the newly acquired products.

But the Capstan accessories aren't the only new products coming out from **Alvey**. By Christmas there should be three new model spinning reels available under the **Alvey** name. These top quality reels will feature stainless steel gearing, to our knowledge the only reels on the Australian market with this feature.

Responsible for getting the products out into the market place is Sales Manager, **Mike Minter**, who has been with the company only two years, but who had 13 years in wholesale handling of the **Alvey** products. He was a natural for the **Alvey** staff and according to **Bruce Alvey** has slipped into place as if he'd always been there.

History Of Alvey

Right from the start **Alvey** have done things their own way. In 1923 **Charles'** son, **Ken**, joined the business and together they expanded from the original 20 reels per week to about 500 per week by the 1930's. Not only did **Charles** design a unique reel but he also established engineering standards which have stood the test of time. For instance the same threads are used in today's production as on the original reels, and the spindle is the same diameter. As a result an old reel can be fitted with a current spindle if required.

This is not to suggest the **Alvey** reels haven't been improved over the 67 years. The company has always maintained a strong

involvement in the promotion of the sport of angling, giving support to the National, State, and Divisional organisations. As well they've provided support to individual clubs and projects such as the Junior Anglers Association.

Association with a sport like this, has led to many suggestions for modifications from top anglers. Ideas that come from the drawing board are also checked out with these top fishermen, so the end result is a constantly evolving practical reel.

Following a six year break in reel production, during World War 2, during which the machinery was converted to produce vehicle and aircraft parts, reel production resumed in 1945.

Premises grew and staff were taken on until about 50 people were employed. Even today with modern machinery there are still 45 employees throughout the year, plus extras during the seasonal peak. **Alvey** have never considered shifting their production off-shore. The operation remains 100% Australian.

Really highlighting the approach to business which typifies **Alvey** is their customer liaison man **Bob Ross**. **Bob** runs his own business supplying garage and engineering equipment up the Queensland coast as far as Cairns. He also calls on all the sports stores up the coast on **Alveys** behalf, not to sell, but just to sort out problems, whether they be supply, service, spare parts, or just a general overview. It doesn't even matter if the store doesn't stock **Alvey** reels, **Bob** calls just the same, because a customer is still likely to bring an **Alvey** reel in for service.

During a recent survey of sports retailers across Australia, about manufacturers who back up their product, **Alvey** was the name most mentioned favourably by retailers from Brisbane to Perth. That sort of reputation has been won the hard way, and stands as an example for others to follow. **Alvey** may not be the biggest, but their record could justifiably let them claim to be the best. ■