

## FAMILY BUSINESS AWARDS 2015



## Another bumper year for family businesses

**2015** has been a bumper year of discovery for us as we've been introduced to dozens more family businesses from across the Cotswolds. This year there has been more interest than ever in our annual celebration of family businesses, and not a week has gone by without emails into Cotswold Life Business & Professional suggesting we take a look at this company or that.

What is most surprising is that some of the region's biggest companies are family businesses. Indeed, some businesses are actually rather reticent about being referred to as a family business in case they

are perceived as being a small 'mom and pop' businesses against their bigger competition. We can confirm that you can't always judge a book by its cover and many family businesses are also global players.

Our annual jury meeting took longer than ever this year as we debated long and hard on the final outcome.

As we go to print we hear that in 2016 there will be a National Family Business Day in September 2016. According to Paul Andrews of support organisation Family Business United: "There are over 3 million family firms across the UK and not only do they employ significant numbers of people,

generate significant tax revenues and support local communities, they are the backbone of the UK economy. All too often the endeavours of the family business sector are dismissed in favour of their non-family counterparts and the aim of National Family Business Day is to champion the sector, put family firms on the map and help to dispel the myths surrounding the family business sector."

We are already planning for our Family Business Awards celebration 2016, so if you know of a family business, or you are part of a family business, which you think should be celebrated, get in touch early.

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Nicky Godding



Dani Saveker



Ruth Dooley

## Meet the 2015 Judges

**Nicky Godding:**  
Business Editor and Chair

**Dani Saveker**  
Chief Executive  
Families in Business Ltd

**Ruth Dooley**  
Partner and Head of Tax  
Hazlewoods LLP

**Elizabeth Saunders**  
Partner and Head of Private Client  
BPE

**Paul Lowe**  
Operations Director Darby's LLP  
Chair of Oxfordshire Business Awards

**Claire Willcox**  
Relationship Director  
Santander Corporate Banking  
Oxfordshire

**Bill Smith**  
Finance Director  
STL Communications



Bill Smith



Claire Willcox



Elizabeth Saunders



Paul Lowe

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## Oxfordshire Winner: Blenheim Palace

Blenheim Palace is the home of the 12th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough and the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. It is a masterpiece of 18th century Baroque architecture, which houses some of the finest antique collections in Europe.

The Blenheim Palace Estate is a World Heritage Site with over 2,000 acres of 'Capability' Brown landscaped parkland and an array of stunning formal gardens. An iconic part of history, Blenheim Palace is a living, changing experience with sporting and cultural events, themed exhibitions and tours throughout the year, run professionally rooted in family.

It offers award-winning eating experiences and shops full of lovely souvenirs and gifts.

Opened to the public in 1950, Blenheim Palace is now established as one of the UK's must-visit attractions and is a world-renowned luxury venue. It welcomes over 600,000 visitors per year and money raised through ticket sales is invested back into the estate, funding vital and ongoing restoration projects, keeping the rich history of this 300-year-old palace and its contents alive.

Howard Tenens Peter, Dan and Ben Morris



## Gloucestershire Winner: Howard Tenens

Howard Tenens is one of the largest privately-owned logistics companies in the UK which believes in reliable, high quality, value for money supply chain solutions which it provides for an impressive array of customers, including Costa Express, Honda and Miller Brands UK.

With a warehouse footprint of over 3,000,000 ft and a distribution fleet of 160 vehicles, Howard Tenens provides complete UK coverage. The company is set to continue to expand its footprint, starting in Gloucestershire. Building

works have begun to develop its existing Sharpness site. An additional 167,000 sq ft warehouse is being built to complement the current operation. This site expansion and new build will be the largest high specification warehousing development in the South West since 2008, with the build anticipated to be finished in February 2016. Howard Tenens owns the vast majority of this commercial space which is available for lease, as well as providing warehouse space for logistics operations.

Howard Tenens considers itself technologically innovative, providing cost effective, resourceful and sustainable logistics operations.

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## Oxfordshire Winner: Salter's Steamers

For more than 150 years Salter's Steamers has been offering boat trips on the River Thames, through some of the most beautiful scenery in England. During the summer, scheduled trips and special cruises operate from every major location on the Upper-Thames between Oxford and Staines (through Reading, Henley and Windsor).

As one of the longest established firms on the Thames it owns one of the largest and most exclusive fleets operating on the river.

The firm was established when John and Stephen Salter took over Isaac King's boat building firm based at Folly Bridge in Oxford. This was the country's leading racing boat builder in the 1860s which built many of the beautiful Oxford University barges at Christ Church Meadow, used by many university colleges for years as a base for rowing. These have all now replaced by boathouses. Salter's became one of the largest inland boat-letters in the country by the late 1880s and by the turn of the century the firm was the largest passenger boat operator on the non-tidal Thames. The firm was one of the most important businesses on the river for popularising pleasure boating on the Thames. It is still owned and run by fifth and sixth generation family members.



Peter Badham presents certificates to Badham Pharmacy staff

## Gloucestershire Winner: Badham Pharmacy

Richard Badham opened his first pharmacy at Whaddon Road, Cheltenham on October 17, 1940. A heart murmur prevented him joining up to fight so he did the next best thing in a time before the NHS, setting up a business to help other people. He worked hard and the business grew. In 1947 he married Jean and they lived over the shop for seven years, running the pharmacy from 9am to 7pm, delivering prescriptions, returning to open the shop again in the late evening.

The couple had five children. David, Paul and Peter became pharmacists; John became a headmaster in Tewkesbury. Faith went into HR. When Richard died from a heart attack Jean took up the reins and grew the business

again. By 2006, there were eight Badham pharmacies: two in Evesham and six around Cheltenham. The business split with David taking over the Evesham shops and Peter and his wife Lynn taking on the Cheltenham shops.

Badham provides exceptional customer service. It employs a team of highly-trained staff, builds good relationships with local doctors' surgeries and offers free collection and delivery for all customers.

The company has fully engaged with all new services and demonstrates a wealth of innovative ideas to help patients.

Peter and Lynn Badham now have 16 pharmacies and one mobility shop based at St Paul's medical centre in Cheltenham. Their aim is to continue to expand.

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## Oxfordshire Winner: **Carl Reeve**

Data Plastics was founded 25 years ago by chairman Joe Reeve, who started the business importing the 'red cap' range of protective caps and plugs for products in transit. The company has significantly grown and developed into a leading plastic injection moulding manufacturer with cleanroom facilities.

Now led by managing director, Carl Reeve, the family-run company designs 3D prints, prototypes, tools, manufactures and assemble plastic mouldings, and supplies standard parts to more than 1,500 customers in the UK and around the world. Its diverse manufacturing base serves a wide range of businesses spanning engineering, scientific instruments, medical and pharmaceutical to electronic, mobile communications, consumer products, automotive and aerospace.

A successful British manufacturer highly supportive of its skilled and loyal workforce of 70 permanent staff, Data Plastics combines creativity and innovative techniques to develop and produce world-class products. Its team solves complex challenges offering support to the many entrepreneurs trying to get new concepts and products off the ground.

The business is committed to continual investment in plant, machinery, staff training and development which underpins its impeccable manufacturing record, high quality standards and market success - all of which can be seen from its customer success stories.



## Gloucestershire Winner: **Paul Bence**

Paul Bence became managing director of Bence's in late 2010. One of the first actions he took was to enrol on a leadership course to develop his skill base so that he was better able to build on the family business. He needed to not only work 'in' the business but also 'on' the business providing strategic leadership to enable growth.

He improved communication across the business to boost staff morale, wanting them to feel part of the business planning process. With a better understanding he considered they would feel confident to contribute more and feel more valued. New ideas and experiences were brought to the business and the culture began to change.

2014 was a record year for net profit at George Bence in its 161-year history. It is showing a 118% increase in net profit year on year.

Underpinning the financial success of the business is a drive on strategic planning with new product development and market penetration including new products and new market entry. In the past 18 months Paul has driven a change programme that involves reinvestment of shareholder profits into development of new brands and new businesses which have given the company a physical footprint in the Cotswolds. This has included the opening of Bence Decorating Centre and a second Obsidian showroom in April 2015 in Bourton-on-the-Water.

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Adam and Joe Henson

## Gloucestershire Winner: Cotswold Farm Park

Joe Henson and his business partner, John Neave, opened the Cotswold Farm Park during Whitsun 1971, the first of its kind in the country. This was a diversification from their commercial farming business, to showcase and tell the story of British rare breeds of farm animals and explain the importance of their conservation. Joe's wife Gill organised the catering from a mobile caravan and his four children all got stuck in to help.

Joe's son, Adam, succeeded the tenancy in 1999 and together with his business partner, Duncan Andrews, has continued to develop this family-run business. Visitors of all ages can interact closely with the animals and learn all about farming, past and present, as well as meeting over 50 flocks and herds of rare breeds including the local Cotswold sheep, Gloucester cattle and Gloucestershire Old Spot pigs. With seasonal demonstrations, play equipment and activities, the Cotswold Farm Park provides a fun and educational experience for people of all ages and walks of life. Visitors are welcomed by an enthusiastic team of 79 members of staff and after all the fun, light refreshments or a hearty lunch can be enjoyed in Adam's Farm Kitchen.

## Oxfordshire Winner: Millets Farm

Lucinda LaVelle (nee Carter) of Millets Farm tells the story. "Millets Farm was bought by my grandparents when they married in 1952, with Millets Farm Centre being established in 1983. My father Nigel Carter and uncle Tony Carter were the driving force behind the diversification of the farm. The business is now in its third generation with my brother and I taking an active role in day-to-day management, and our cousin is soon to join the team.

"Being personally involved ensures we never lose site of the attention to detail and it encourages us to strive for standards we can all be proud of. As a family we are always looking for the next venture to develop and enhance the business. Having grown into a popular visitor destination in the



Oxfordshire area, with over one million visitors per year, we have a responsibility to our customers to execute our offer with a level of professionalism not always associated with a traditional farm shop. As such communication of the message that we remain family run with farming and growing at our heart is an ongoing challenge. As more family members join the business we are working hard to streamline communication between ourselves and to ensure we present a cohesive message to our team of staff. We have an exciting couple of years planned so watch this space."

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## Gloucestershire Winner: **G A Baker**

Bakers Fine Jewellery in Montpellier opened its doors in 2011 and the family business behind the store can trace its roots back to 1741.

The company currently operates several prominent jewellers in the area including Bakers Jewellers in Gloucester, Highbridge Jewellers in Bourton-on-the-Water and Miles Mann Jewellers in Bath. Owner Miles Mann is the eighth generation of his family to be involved in the trade and he is often asked the secret to the firm's continued appeal.

"I believe customers are always drawn to stores that can offer something different.

"We specialise in antique and vintage jewellery that is hand-restored by our own craftsmen. We are also committed to offering a level of service that brings people back to us."

You need only glance at the window of Bakers Fine Jewellery to confirm that there many unique and beautiful items to choose from but Miles is keen to point out that you don't have to be a high flyer to shop at the store.

He says: "In Montpellier we do stock a lot of exceptional pieces but we also offer vintage silverware and gifts starting from under £50 and we aim to appeal to discerning customers, whatever their budget."

It's businesses like Bakers Fine Jewellery that give Cheltenham, and Montpellier in particular, its enduring appeal as a shopping destination.

## Oxfordshire Winner: **Symm**

Symm was established in 1815, the year Wellington defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo and in which the company's founder, master builder and architect Daniel Evans, completed his first significant commission, a Wesleyan Chapel in Leicester. It was a simple but elegant building in the classical style. He moved to Oxford and eventually built up a contracting company with his son-in-law Joshua Symm, from whom the company takes its name. The company went on to thrive in the neo-Gothic building boom of the mid-1800s and, in the 1870s, it passed in turn to Thomas Axtell, whose family remains involved to this day.

In the twentieth century the company continued to work throughout Oxford on new building and restoration projects, particularly in stone. Symm now offers bespoke, in-house joinery, stone and specialist decoration services almost anywhere in the world in addition to undertaking complete building projects and providing a custom

Aidan Mortimer, Symm



home technology service for private clients here in the UK.

The company's story is a remarkably circular one; craftsmanship and apprentice training still lie at the heart of the business, with 31 young people currently in training and, exactly 200 years on, the company's most significant current commission is again building a new chapel in the classical style on an estate just outside Henley.

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Alice and Rupert Welch in front of a photograph of founder Robert Welch

## Gloucestershire Winner: Robert Welch

Robert Welch Designs is known for the design, quality and functionality of its products. With 60 years of industry experience and award-winning products from the in-house design team, the company offers a unique range of cutlery, kitchen knives, utensils and tableware.

Company founder, Robert Welch (1929-2000) was an inspirational designer who believed that everyone should be able to use beautifully designed pieces in everyday life. Still family-run, the company is now an international brand with products including award-winning kitchen knives and over 30 cutlery designs.

The company is experiencing good

growth in the UK and further afield. The past five years have seen Robert Welch Designs develop a strong and still-growing sales record in America, Australia and Asia as well as sustained growth throughout continental Europe. Korea and Japan are key markets for the future.

The company's products can be found around the world in department stores including Williams Sonoma, Crate and Barrel in the USA, @home in South Africa and Myer in Australia as well as at top restaurants and in five star hotels.

Company headquarters remains in Chipping Campden where Robert started the business and from where a small team of people has created over 3,500 individual new products, leading to sales of over 46 million items around the world.

## Oxfordshire Winner: Tibbetts

TGL (Tibbetts Group) is a specialist UK supplier of clutch related products such as clutch kits, bearings and flywheels to the global automotive market. It has been selling clutch components for over 30 years. TGL was established in 1985 when the component distributors John Tibbetts (Europarts) Ltd and Euroquip Automotive Ltd were amalgamated into The Tibbetts Group. Based in Banbury, TGL currently has over 65,000 sq ft of warehousing space.

The group, owned by the Tibbetts family, is built on strong, traditional family values passed on through all suppliers and customers. TGL's core business is overseas, supplying clutch components to the automotive aftermarkets in North and South America, Europe, Africa and Australasia with around 80,000 components being shipped from Banbury each month.

As technology advances in the automotive industry, TGL works with its suppliers and factories to provide the latest products to customers. At Banbury, the TGL engineering team test and help to develop products that will keep customers at the front of their business.

In June 2013, TGL acquired BF Component Solutions to broaden the product range and to invest in a strong, profitable business within component supply. The Tibbetts Group currently employs around 100 employees at sites in Banbury and Stokenchurch.

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Peter Hickman and some of his loyal staff

## Gloucestershire Winner: Peter Hickman

Peter Hickman talks about his business. "Whenever you go to a Peter Hickman salon you will get the same message. 'We Love what we do'. Outstanding customer service is fundamental to grow a successful business. A company must create a seamless customer experience that can lead to customer loyalty, so it's important to know your product and your customer's needs.

"With this in mind 'training is forever' and our in-house training provides young staff with a complete package: starting with an apprenticeship and learning from each other, and from people and international companies outside our group.

"Our people will be equipped to earn a living in a very competitive industry and we also encourage them to play their part and be proud of their community.

"We assume they have an inbuilt desire to improve themselves. Tapping into this energy and expanding their horizons is an exciting challenge enabling them to switch from the strict discipline in the use of chemicals, and the flamboyant artistry of our trade is a challenge. This of course has to be combined within the confines of business and to that end we commend our administrators without whom any business will struggle long term."



## Oxfordshire Winer: Aston & James

A small, entrepreneurial venture back in 1990 has become a thriving business offering office and workplace solutions from stationery and furniture to office design, equipment, networking to eco solutions. Over the past 25 years Aston & James has built up its experience, knowledge and an outstanding reputation working with local businesses. The business now employs 18 staff.

It believes in building relationships to understand its customers' businesses. This allows the team to offer suitable solutions, along with a great selection of products. This is why the company feels it is on its way to fulfilling its mission of becoming

Oxfordshire's leading workplace solutions provider.

Aston & James takes its responsibility to the environment seriously. Regardless of whether customers purchase new office furniture from them or not, they will remove existing furniture and resolve a logistical and environmental headache.

The company's 5 Star Loop paper is a 100% recycled closed loop paper. By participating customers are helping to avoid UK landfill, protecting the environment and reusing precious resources.

The business also operates a free and award-winning ink and toner collect service to help cut CO2 emissions.

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## Gloucestershire Winner: Poeton

With a 117-year history of being a leading exponent of surface engineered coatings, Poeton Industries has survived and prospered through local and global changes, and in 2015 continues to adapt and innovate to meet manufacturing industries' growing need for advanced surface coatings.

The company has also responded to industry's demand for proactive treatment support 24/7, to ensure that its high technology components can be processed in the shortest possible time, whilst maintaining quality and competitiveness. To support its customers' global manufacturing facilities, Poeton has also positioned itself in South East Asia and has a commitment to establish a process capability in Eastern Europe within two years.

The cornerstone of any business is its people and Poeton has long provided apprentices and new-starters with exceptional training. The opening of a new Group Training Academy in 2016 will further enhance this commitment at its Gloucester facility.

No industry stands still and the surface coating sector is no exception. Customers demand improved coating performance, new coatings and the ability to treat new materials. Poeton is the only company in Europe to offer a dedicated R&D capability to support these demands.



Michael O'Byrne

## Oxfordshire Winner: Ability Matters

Ability Matters Group (AMG) was established by its CEO Michael O'Byrne over 25 years ago. Michael started off as a prosthetist in Oxford and has gone on to create a highly successful international healthcare company with a £40 million annual turnover. He is supported by his wife Erla and his sons John and Michael Jnr. John is managing director with his younger brother Michael joining last year as a recently qualified prosthetist.

Under the Ortho Europe (OE) brand the Group produces and distributes prosthetics, orthotics and specialist (wheelchair) seating. OE also has direct operations in France and Holland.

Under the Opicare brand the Group delivers clinical services in partnerships with the NHS. Recent years has seen expansion of activities to include the provision of wheelchair services on behalf of the NHS.

Ability Matters is also the trading name for a retail operation providing mobility and independent living products to the public. The nearest centre is on the Abingdon Road in Oxford.

In 2014, AMG was ranked 22nd on the Sunday Times HSBC International Track 200 - the Group now employs more than 450 staff approximately 50 of these being based in the Abingdon head office.

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# The business of families

Dani Saveker, founder of Families in Business joined the Cotswold Life Family Business Awards judging panel this year. We talk to her about why she set up Families in Business

**D**ani joined Savekers, a family business manufacturing architectural metalwork and shop fittings, in 1994, as a university graduate. Finding a job was tougher than expected, but her cousin, then managing director of the family business, offered her a temporary design project, which turned into a full-time role.

"In 1997, I was given the chance to run the shopfloor. I seized this opportunity and developed my skills. I learnt to weld, electroplate, anodise, fabricate, operate a CNC and waterjet, and polish metal."

She was also beginning to realise the unique dynamics and challenges associated with family businesses, most of which were related to emotions and fears.

"This was a fantastic time, but it became clear this historic business had little in the way of efficient manufacturing or sales practices. I wanted a change for the better." Dani came up with a strategy to improve production, got board approval and became production director.

A month later, the managing director announced he no longer wished to lead the business and it was to be sold. Dani's response was swift, she offered to buy the business, and was given a week.

"I presented my case, including restructuring the board and redundancy for my uncle and his son. The shareholders agreed and unanimously voted me managing director."

Before the MBO completed, the business suffered a major fire caused by a faulty thermostat in the plating line. Production was wiped out. The new management team rallied, and the first orders dispatched 48

**30,000 new family businesses have been created since 2010 with over 50% today being medium to large businesses**

hours later, despite the building being without a roof.

The MBO completed around the company's 100th birthday and optimism was high. But in late 2008, the recession took hold and, combined with the 40-year legacy of restricted growth, outdated structures, and spiraling costs, the business was struggling.

"On 10th March 2009 I delivered a speech to the workforce I grew up with that will stay with me forever: 'On behalf of my great grandfather and whole family past and present, it's with regret that despite every possible effort, I am having to close the doors for the final time'."

The company was put into voluntary administration.

Having experienced first-hand the feelings of isolation and loneliness when leading a family firm, Dani was determined to ensure others in family businesses wouldn't feel isolated as she had.

In 2012, she launched Families in Business (FiB). The organisation provides family businesses with support for their particular challenges, so they can build resilience, focus, value and fulfilment.

"We work with advisers to help them better understand the wider influences,

and together support family businesses to improve governance, creativity, innovation, systems, succession planning, communication and protection.

"FiB ensures a safe, confidential go-to place for family businesses, which are so critical to the UK economy."

According to Dani, family businesses account for almost 75% of UK private enterprises and employ over nine million people. They also provide 39% of private sector employment. 30,000 new family businesses have been created since 2010 with over 50% today being medium to large businesses. But still over 60% of them fail to plan for succession - and need support.

"Demand for our support is growing - we have 100 family business members, 36 advising firms and have helped some 300 family businesses in the last 12 months alone through our events, peer groups, membership, tools, and consultancy."

The FiB portfolio of services includes a suite of tools to guide and assist family businesses identify their vision and reach the right decisions for the organisation. Additionally it has a programme of training and development for professional advisers to support them in better engaging with their family business clients, and offers a unique framework and approach to working with family businesses called FiB Navigation that is used by its team of regional directors and exclusive partners.

Families in Business is an approved Growth Accelerator Training Provider. The FiB 'Introduction Workshop: Working with family businesses' is certified by the CPD certification service.

[www.fibcommunity.com](http://www.fibcommunity.com).

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## FiB Annual Survey

FiB's commitment to understanding family businesses is at the heart of its annual survey. This year's headline findings are:

### Top 3 Challenges:

#### For Business

Skills and talent  
Growth  
Resources

#### For Family

Family dynamics  
Succession  
Shared purpose/focus

#### For individuals

Time and energy  
Being willing and able to let go  
Enjoyment of the role in the business.

While there isn't one main reason behind family business failure or success, key reasons include:

**1. Internalising** and losing sight of being relevant to the world around them, and convincing themselves it's always worked so why change anything.

**2. Head in the sand** - choosing, consciously or subconsciously, to remain in denial.

**3. Ignoring the 'elephant in the room'**, whether this is a succession plan, or leadership roles.

**4. A breakdown in communication**

**5. A lack of clear vision and purpose** - or if there is one, not sharing or agreeing on it.



Family businesses account for almost 75% of UK private enterprises

"FiB's survey reveals a changing face of the family unit in family firms," says Dani. "25% having 'blended families' reflecting the modern family as a result of divorces and second marriages, and growing numbers of step and adopted children joining a business.

"There is a trend of a multi-generational structure as more generations work together, 12% have directors over 81 years old, and 33% directors aged over 71. The

majority of family firms (45%) have two generations, with 18% having three and 2% with five generations still involved.

"Only 30% get to second generation and just 10% to third generation."

The FiB Annual Guide 2015/2016 - 'The Future Landscape' - includes the survey's findings and practical advice from FiB and its advisers. FiB members receive a complimentary copy, or request the report via [www.fibcommunity.com](http://www.fibcommunity.com).

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