

INVEST IN
**South
Lakeland**



Playdale Playgrounds

A spade, a ladder and 280 years
of timber enterprise.

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www.investinsouthlakeland.co.uk

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Croasdale is a family name with its heritage firmly embedded in South Lakeland and especially the Leven Valley, the area of dense woodland and diverse small industry that stretches from the southern reaches of Lake Windermere to the shores of Morecambe Bay.

Such a landscape has naturally leant itself to utilising the natural and carefully managed timber resources, rather than farming the Lakeland fells as is common further north.

So the Croasdale family can date its roots back through the centuries, with generations of coopers, hoopers, wood-mongers and timber merchants making their living from the Valley - ever since Henry Croasdale re-shafted a spade and re-rung a ladder for Finsthwaite Parochial Church Council in 1735.

From such a modest start, the family now has 'play' as the primary focus of their activities; since 1978 they have been known on a much larger stage as Playdale, one of the UK's foremost design, manufacture and installation businesses in children's playgrounds.

Playdale's Chairman, John Croasdale recounts the story: "In the summer of 1978 the playground equipment in the local playing fields was old and needed replacing. We were timber merchants at the time and myself and my father Jack were involved in building the new community centre and looked at what playground equipment was available at the time. What we discovered was a range of timber play equipment, so the next step was logical – we can make this ourselves!"

So it was then Playdale began and the initial foray into the world of play equipment was to prove a resounding success. That year they built three new playgrounds and, by 1983, the Croasdale family felled the timber merchant business once and for all in order to concentrate on this exciting and growing new area of business.

"We now specialise in manufacturing timber and stainless steel playground equipment for a number of markets, including local authorities, schools and nurseries, community groups and architects." continues John. "Playdale also have a product range dedicated to schools and nurseries that is designed



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to complement the school curriculum, supporting children through each stage of their development.”

Always looking to innovate and evolve the offering, product ranges such as ‘multi-play towers’ are regularly redeveloped or new ones created by in-house design teams.

“In 2007 we revolutionised children’s outdoor play with the creation of i.play, the world’s first electronic playground equipment which combines cutting edge technology and an environmentally-friendly design.”

Playdale install around 600 playgrounds every year in the UK as well as supplying equipment to their network of distributors worldwide.

“It is great to think that there are children across the world playing on Playdale equipment manufactured right here in the Lake District.”



A genuine ‘full service’ organisation, the Playdale workforce has also grown steadily over the years and now stands at 110 employees across planning and design, manufacture, installation and customer service teams with the majority born and raised within the nearby communities.

Playdale also offer maintenance, inspection and consultancy services - a comprehensive offering which puts them at the very cornerstone of the sector in the UK.

The days of hauling timber from the woodlands by Shire horse are long since gone, so too the orders for ‘Shore Poles’ that would be made for Barrow’s shipyard, yet traditions still run deep at Playdale with the South Lakeland location being one which they have no intention of ever changing: “The business has always been based in Haverthwaite, part of the Leven Valley, it’s where my family are from and it’s at the heart of our ethos. There’s a real pride employing local people, giving them an opportunity to develop their careers and represent this little corner of South Lakeland.”

The reach of the company now extends internationally, with commissions from as far as South Korea and with clients who regularly (and happily) make the journey to Playdale’s offices. “It is always a pleasure to show our export partners and clients around the Lake District when they come to visit us.” says John.

The next rungs on the business development ladder are being successfully climbed as Playdale is now ahead of its target with distributors and sales agents across 47 countries with a truly global reach.

“We have been named as the UKTI’s North West Export Champions for the last four years as well as being selected to feature in their national ‘Exporting is GREAT’ campaign which supports and inspires UK exporters to sell goods and services overseas.”

“Since we began exporting we have had great success and are delighted to have won a number of awards including National Exporter of the Year in 2016.” concludes John.

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Welcome to South Lakeland

A Breath of Fresh Air for Business

INVEST IN
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An area known globally for its astounding natural beauty and unique vibrant culture, South Lakeland is also home for a thriving and innovative business environment where companies can become established, grow and prosper.

The entrepreneurial business spirit is strongly encouraged in South Lakeland, reflected in the healthy number of fledgling enterprises setting up each year in our region, and our work also encompasses projects designed to help make the first steps to start-up as easy as possible.

The Economic Development Team at South Lakeland District Council are an inward investment service providing information and support to businesses of all sizes, covering all industry sectors, whether you are already here or are looking to locate your operations in South Lakeland.

The Economic Development Team are here to help your business uncover the exciting potential that exists here. Should you have any questions, we are on hand to assist and tell you more about the opportunities to be found in the most beautiful corner of the UK.

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