



The Oilmen: The North Sea Tigers

Bill Mackie

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The man in hard hat, tartan shirt and jeans stepped down from the helicopter at Dyce Airport. He flourished what one of the waiting journalists later claimed looked like a salad cream bottle filled with flat Guinness. The man said, "Gentlemen, this is North Sea oil." The dramatic announcement on October 11, 1970 signaled the symbolic launch of an exciting new economic era for Scotland. In what was to become British Petroleum's fabulous Forties Field, 130 miles off Aberdeen, the seeds of a mega billion pound oil and gas industry had been sown. From that first trace of commercially viable hydrocarbons grew an industry which at its peak employed 125,000 people on and offshore in Scotland, created giant global corporations contributing more than £100 billion in fiscal revenues to the public coffers. The complex and powerful enterprise which would ultimately eclipse the scale of the same era's first moonshot in cost, daring and brilliant technical innovation irrevocably changed the lives of thousands of families, challenged a nation's political will and alleviated the UK's financial problems. *The Oilmen* reveals in words and dramatic pictures, the extraordinary personal stories of the brave men and women who made it all happen above and below some of the most treacherous waters on earth; the bold pioneers who laid the great pipelines and devised the leading edge technology that enabled the oil and gas and the massive revenues to flow. It tells of an early harsh unforgiving regime where money came before health and safety until a series of headlined disasters forced widespread change; it captures the rough camaraderie and the black humor of the crews of rigs, platforms and support ships; it follows the brave men who dived and frequently died for a living; it analyzes the unceasing offshore labor wars and it recounts the titanic pioneering efforts to tame a dangerous force of nature with the largest floating structures ever built by man.

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