

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Subscribe](#)[Advertise](#)[Contact](#)[Video](#)[Surveys](#)[Help](#)[Manage Members](#)[Jobs Board](#)

AUSTRALIAN
OIL & GAS
SUPPLIERS GUIDE 2011-12

The essential
industry
reference guide.
Distributed at
APPEA!

Click **HERE**
to book today!

**PETROLEUM PROFILE:****Sitting down with: Michael Earle**

Friday, 9 September 2011
James McGrath

HAWKLEY Oil and Gas chief executive officer Michael Earle has a career in oil and gas spanning 30 years and four continents with companies such as BP, LASMO and OMV. He has now settled into his CEO role with Hawkley and is ready to drive the company's Ukrainian vision.

EnergyNewsPremium recently caught up with the head hawk to discuss all things **Hawkley**, taking dangerous detours in Libya, managing family over continents and packing into scrums in Cairo.

What did you see in Hawkley when you decided to join?

I knew about Ukraine before I joined. I had tried to do business there with other companies, but it's quite difficult to close a sensible deal there. However, the business model that **Hawkley** has adopted is different and it seemed to be one that would guarantee success.

So I felt good about what the company was doing, and there was also the personal ambition of being the CEO of a public company. I need headroom to create change and growth, and **Hawkley** offers me this.

Taking the job also gave me the opportunity to return to Australia, which had been on my mind for more than 25 years since I had lived in Melbourne while working for BP.

How is progress on Hawkley's gas plant?

We will need to obtain state approval for the design and construction. So we are going to let local companies do the work so that it's all done in a way that is understood, the materials can be obtained locally and there is no language barrier.

We have decided the approximate location and the capacity of the plant, and the project's now gone off to the first phase, which is the scientific investigation of the gas and condensate properties, so we can determine which materials to use and the design to suit.

We aim to have everything approved by the end of the year so we can start tendering early in 2012.

Will you be looking to drill the next Sorochynska well as soon as possible?

The location has been chosen and we're seeking approvals from local landowners in respect of access and constructing the site.

We have previously announced that we will spud the second Sorochynska well in the fourth quarter, which is a wide target because approvals can take longer than anticipated, but at this stage we are still on target for the fourth quarter and I expect spud to be end of October or start of November.

Is Hawkley looking outside of Ukraine for growth opportunities?

We're continually in contact with our network, and the market sends interesting offers in different countries.

Our priority is to build a sustainable business in Ukraine and nothing is going to detract from that, so while the new ventures work is essential it's not distracting us from our primary objective.

There's a huge amount of work to do to enter a new country. You might have to establish an office, appoint a local manager and recruit staff, so although we will be expanding beyond Ukraine, we must ensure we have the right opportunity.

What news should we be on the lookout for over the next six months from Hawkley?

Thursday, 22 September 2011

LOG IN

Recently Discussed

Companies and organisations covered during the past 30 days - [more](#)

Search this site

Company Search

Company Name

Company Description

Search

Story Search

Type Text Here

Section

Commodity

Region

Feature

Search

Advanced Search

Site search sponsor

**Industry Search**

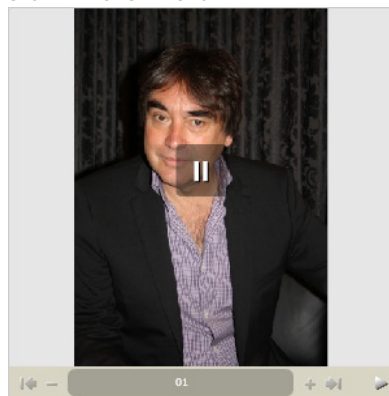
Search

**Used Equipment**

► Cameron G2 Spool Tree-
[more](#)

Industry News

Subscribe | Advertise
FREE TRIAL!

**STORY IMAGE SLIDESHOW****RELATED STORIES****Hawkley in for joyous spring: Hartleys**

(1 September 2011)

HAWKLEY Oil and Gas shareholders could be in for a good three months, with broker Hartleys tipping Hawkley's shares to almost treble during the period to 63c. - [more](#)

Hawkley working out Ukraine gas plant plans

(1 August 2011)

HAWKLEY Oil & Gas has handed local institutes in Ukraine the task of carrying out the engineering design study for the gas handling plant it plans to build. - [more](#)

RELATED COMPANIES

- HAWKLEY OIL AND GAS LIMITED

We hope to be testing what we call the "B-20" zone, the uppermost target in Chernetska-1, which is an appraisal well. If that isn't successful we'll drill ahead to the deeper targets in anticipation of success there.

We'll be spudding the next Sorochnyska well and that will take six months to drill.

We expect to have the approval to build the gas plant and perhaps will be going forward into the construction phase.

Fourthly, the market will be hearing about the approval of the production licence over both of our assets. We don't anticipate there being any problems but we have a negotiation with the state as to the exact level of reserves, and the signature bonus will be set according to the level of reserves.

We do have the option of extending the current licences by five years, so one way or another it's not a dead end.

With a career spanning 30 years and four continents, there's got to be a good story in there somewhere.

In the early 90s I spent four years working in Libya for LASMO, where I was exploration manager. It was a difficult time because of US sanctions and Lockerbie, and we had to enter the country by boat from Malta or by road from Tunisia.

LASMO had a concession in the desert, about 1000 kilometres into the Sahara, right in the middle of it in fact. I took my team on a geological field trip to the Chad border, the infamous Aouzou Strip, where there had been a recent war between Libya and French-backed Chad.

Libyan troops were camped in the bombed out village where we stayed, and there were MIG jets glinting in the sun on the nearby airstrip. Being keen geologists we wanted to see every outcrop of rock, and in one place we drove south off the dirt road to look at something interesting in the cleft of a narrow pass into Chad.

On the way back I was looking out the window of the jeep only to see a landmine flip up from under the sand beneath one of the tyres.

When we got back to the road I told the driver and he looked around and said "Oh yeah, see those flat stones with sticks propping them up, well that's how we mark out the minefields." Slightly beyond the call of duty, but done in ignorance.

Obviously travelling around the world is a challenge for maintaining a family life?

Different families handle the situation in different ways. What we've done is to keep the family stable in one place and I'm doing the whizzing around.

Other families would take the whole family to be expatriates, but I've been to some unhealthy and even dangerous places such as Papua New Guinea, and each time we decided to keep the family stable so the children could maintain long-term friendships and go through school without interrupting their progress.

What do you see as the key changes for the industry over the years?

I started in the industry in 1980, and at that time as a geologist or a geophysicist you were able to develop a good grasp of all the different areas of your specialisation.

Since then there's been an adaptive radiation, or blossoming, into many new fields, often assisted by sheer computing power for assembling and analysing data. Now there are probably 50 types of geotechnical specialisations.

To be an exploration manager in the 80s and maybe 90s it was perfectly possible to be on top of things and have a sensible discussion with the specialists.

Now, really, I think it's impossible, so an exploration manager is more a manager of people and projects where she or may not have a fundamental grasp of all the details. You have to trust the people under you a lot more.

When did you make the jump to management?

Geology was my only real interest when I joined BP after university. And the world that was within BP provided such varied experience that I didn't have my eyes set on going high, and frankly it didn't seem too practical in a global company with 138,000 employees and one CEO.

However, after 10 years in the company I was ready to become an exploration manager, the first real rung on the career ladder, and an opportunity at LASMO presented itself and I took it. After a few years in



Subscribe | Advertise
FREE TRIAL!

LASMO I was moved from the Libya subsidiary into a business development group in head office and realised that I needed to have a more commercial outlook and knowledge of the business.

My ambition then was to study for an MBA, and I left LASMO and completed the course in 1997.

What do you do to unwind? Are you one of the army of CEOs who unwind with a round of golf?

I don't unwind! That's not my style. I'm more of an adrenaline seeker who likes danger and physical contact. I've done a lot of water sports, such as windsurfing, I've tried my hand at motor racing and I played rugby over many years in different clubs and locations.

Cairo has a very nice rugby club. When I was there we had 11 nationalities playing for us. I played in the Dubai 7s twice while at Cairo, and again in 2004 for the British High Commission out of Islamabad.

I've slowed up a bit since then and spend much of my spare time with my son, who likes bungee jumping, paragliding, go-carting, 10-pin bowling, fishing – and golf.

FOCUS 

[Click here to read the rest of today's news stories.](#)



[Email to a Friend](#)



[Print This Page](#)



[Feedback](#)

[Disclaimer](#) | [© Copyright Aspermont Ltd](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms and Conditions](#)