



1964 - 2014. The Journey So Far.

BARB^{OR}UR
Fit Out Specialists since 1964



One family's story of perseverance, attention to detail, skill, dedication and... *a whale in a pram.*

Welcome to a tale of half a century's hard work that encompasses the passing of imperial measurements, the arrival of decimal currency, the disappearance of entire grocery chains, the advent of national brands, the election of ten Prime Ministers, the surviving of four recessions and much more besides.

Throughout it all, the Barbour family have built not only interiors and facades for countless shops and stores, but also a reputation for high quality service, top class workmanship and fair prices. Theirs is a status that has stood the test of time and many a demanding customer, from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, south into England, and even overseas, to Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and the Isle of Man.

This celebratory brochure provides highlights and glimpses into half a century's endeavours, and it captures the remarkable spirit and entrepreneurial drive that are still proving their worth to this day, and are surely timeless.

Read on and discover a little of what it takes to earn success, satisfaction, respect and at least 14 shillings for a job well done*.

*14 shillings = 70p



Starting on the road to success – *by bus, mostly.*

Barbour's first sale was for 14 shillings – (that's 70p in today's money) - for a dozen modular shelves for a fruit shop, just south of Glasgow. After bus fares were deducted we had just about made a small profit. It was February 1964, and our founder James Booth Barbour was a mere 24.

JB, as he is affectionately known, wasn't afraid of hard work, nor of going the extra hard mile (normally by bus, bicycle or foot). In the beginning, he'd pack his brief case with sales leaflets and a price list, jump on a bus and head off into Glasgow, Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and Argyllshire, to go round the streets, chapping on the doors of shops, selling shelves, counters, refrigeration and signs. Occasionally he'd have the luxury of travelling by car ... when his father would lend it to him.



Moving into No10 ... *Maxwell Road*.

After six months, for the princely sum of £300 we had our own means of transport – a used Hillman Minx. JB's father gave him £100 towards it, but he paid it back not long afterwards. Such insistence on financial independence and integrity would forever remain paramount in the running of the company.

Children were born into the Barbour home. First to arrive, in 1966, was our future Financial Director, Kenny, who was followed in 1968 by Alan, who would become our Estimating Director. As can be imagined, trying to build a business empire from home was becoming increasingly tricky. Alan, then only a few months old, cried loudly. A lot. That's seldom a favourable background soundtrack for business phone calls, so we had to get out of the house.

We rented a shop at 12 Maxwell Road, Glasgow, and transformed it into a showroom. At the rear we had an office with space for a typist, a designer and JB. We didn't have a cat, so thankfully there was no question of swinging one. A year later we bought the shop and when No 10 came on the market we bought that too and knocked a hole in the dividing wall to join them up.



The space race.

The opening of the showroom prompted what seemed like a never-ending race for extra space. The more we had, the more we appeared to need.

This new era also triggered the purchase of the company's first van, a grey Morris Minor pickup. This really was a multi-use vehicle, a sort of SUV of its day, which was customised with the addition of a speedframe rack for ladders or whatever else we could manage to tie to it that needed transported. So individual was this vehicle it even had its own, out-of-this-world name – Sputnik!

In the early years getting paid in good, solid money, whether in cash or cheque, was never easy. There was one occasion in the late 1960s when JB was somehow persuaded, by the entrepreneurial boss of a Glasgow department store, to accept a selection of rather dapper items of clothing and a golf trolley in return for some second-hand counters. It was such a good deal, the whole family got kitted out. The clothes and the counters are long gone, but JB still has the golf trolley and it works just fine!



Full steam ahead.

By 1969 we had broadened our horizons and were working with the Co-op all the way from Clydebank to Argyllshire and we even completed our first few fit-outs overseas.

Well ... Mull and Islay, to be precise.

Business was augmented with work for drapers' shops and, better still, self-service was being introduced to the grocery trade. The upsurge in demand for new store layouts saw Barbour breakthrough into business with what was for the time a large chain of grocery stores in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

JB was drawing up the plans himself in those days, as well as doing the estimating and carrying out the work for the conversion of shops to self-service. Talk about knowing a job inside out ...



A measure of optimism.

To the rear of the Barbour building was Milligans bakery and yard. The aroma of fresh morning rolls met the Barbour workers every morning, but the Barbour appetite was for more floor space – manufacturing space to be precise: it was apparent that Milligans used only the ground floor of their building. The unused upper floor represented potential manufacturing space for an enterprising shopfitter.

The top floor was duly rented, and a Multico cross-cut saw purchased for the then handsome sum of £300 (about £4000 in today's money) - a huge investment at the time - along with a planer, a few benches and some tools and equipment we managed to hurriedly gather together from a second hand sale. A foreman and three joiners were added to our growing team along with a new addition to the family: Norrie, our current Managing Director. It was a bold move by any standards but this was the early seventies, a time of optimism when oil had just been discovered in the North Sea - things were truly looking rosy, or at least an attractive oily black.

It was at this stage we learned the importance of precision manufacturing, as anything we built had to be negotiated via a narrow flight of stairs out into a back alley and carried all the way round the building to the main road. The jobs simply had to be to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ th of an inch or we couldn't get them down the stairs!



Burning ambition.

Eventually we bought Milligans' entire building, but access remained restricted by the narrow lane and deliveries had to be lugged in and out by hand. Even more annoying was the corrugated iron roof – local children delighted in hurling bricks onto it and setting off the burglar alarm. Many's the time JB was called out during the coldest, darkest hours to reset the alarm – not the kind of night shift the company would ever pay for.

Disaster was narrowly avoided in 1972 when the yard caught fire. Luckily there was no real damage and once the wreckage was cleared, we had an ideal space for our vehicles. No more long walks weighed down with large, heavy, custom-built fixtures and fittings.



Balancing acts.

Isobel Barbour, JB's wife, contributed directly to the company's progress. As the boys became old enough to go to school, Isobel became more able to take over the running of the accounts, always endeavouring to adhere to the age-old advice: "Cash is king in business!"

Isobel balanced the books every month with a trial balance and ensured we paid all suppliers on time. Gradually as business built up, she made sure we saved up and paid for transport and machinery as we went along. The company has never had an overdraft. She would even receive chocolates from our accountancy firm every year, as she would always present the annual accounts balanced to the last penny.

Business had grown with new orders from established names such as Victoria Wine, Henderson the Jewellers, Farmfoods and many varied independent retailers. It was one such job for Victoria Wine that almost ended in catastrophe. One afternoon in the workshop, we had laid out a lot of very expensive ceiling tiles, to be painted bright orange ... well, it was the 1970s, the decade that style forgot. Each tile was laid out a precise distance from the next. Alan and Norrie, being rather young and playful boys, decided the pattern of tiles made for an ideal game of hopscotch. In trying to clear the tiles, they hopped well, but not quite well enough – they accidentally clipped tile after tile with their heels, damaging one after another. What was said to them by their father is thankfully lost in the mists of time. Fortunately for all, the workshop guys strove through the night to save the day.



“We’ll never need more space again!”

By 1978/79, production was being seriously inhibited by the size of the Maxwell Road building and its awkward access. The only answer was to find new premises and in 1980 a suitable factory/office unit was found in Lawmoor Street, Dixons Blazes, Glasgow.

On finalising the deal, a proud JB stood in the new factory and declared to all, “We’ll never need more space again!” Shortly after, in the quest for more space, a mezzanine level was added, then a complete second floor, and in 1985 the premises next door were purchased. Five years later another extension was opened and in 2002 the premises next door were bought, giving Barbour a total of 27,000 sq ft of office and factory space.

We were now able to install our very own modern machine shop with computerised CNC wood machine, a joiners’ shop and a storage/delivery area with paint booth. The additional space permitted the taking on of setters-out, estimators and designers. With the inclusion of our dependable team of sub-contractors, a complete one-stop-shop for fit out projects became readily available to customers.

The Barbour service, product and brand were maturing into an impressively complete and professional offering. All this amidst a country gripped by recession, where unemployment had reached two million, the highest level since 1935. Inflation was a whopping 21.8%.



A company with bite. And byte.

Sheba the black Labrador joined the company (and the family) in 1983 and attended production meetings with alarming regularity. Having said that, she slept through most of them, sitting on a chair with her head on the boardroom table. It was the start of a family love affair with black labs that continues to this day, as Tara and Briagh are often seen around the office. They, however, seem completely disinterested in our production meetings. They'd rather walk the walk than talk the talk.

By 1984, a time when football shorts were short and hair was long and in a mullet, Isobel Barbour had the foresight to introduce computerised accounting. The company's first computer was an Apricot Xen, with 2mb RAM and a 3.5" floppy disk. Those were the days.

Meanwhile we were responsible for fitting out well over 20 bakers around Scotland, including Aulds, Bradfords, Goodfellows and Greggs. We also fitted out numerous chemists' and opticians' shops, including some for Dolland & Aitchison. Well, turning down work from opticians would have been short-sighted ... and at Barbour we've never been that.



“Zugang verboten!” - *“Entry forbidden!”*

In the mid to late eighties, international travel was becoming increasingly popular and travel agencies presented further opportunities for Barbour. We were employed by Lufthansa Airlines, Lunn Poly, Kenneth Macleod Travel and Denholm World Travel amongst others.

Not every Barbour international venture ran smoothly. A young Norrie Barbour, just 17, and older brother Alan, 19, were tasked with delivering a truckload of chill cabinets and counters to Denmark via Holland and Germany. They made it safely as far as Holland, and indeed out of Holland, but not into neighbouring Germany. The necessary paperwork was not up to Teutonic standards! Worse still, they only had Dutch permission to transport goods out of Holland and not back in. They had become the world's first stateless fit-out contractors ... would they be accused of counter espionage? Somehow the lads talked their way back into the Netherlands and a frenetic series of phone calls unlocked the barriers to trade. Our paperwork has been wunderbar ever since.

Alan Barbour went on to join Barbour's estimating department in 1988, having studied building at University. He progressed to become our Estimating Director.



On the safe side.

Regular training at Barbour takes place under the auspices of the Construction Industry Training Board and other agencies covering Health & Safety, risk assessment, power tools and many other areas. In 50 years, of course, standards change and become more stringent.

“The days of wobbly planks and trestles are over!” was a wry comment from JB, harking back to a time before hi-viz vests, hard hats, steel toe-cap boots and ear defenders.

Team building has been another form of training we’ve embraced at Barbour. One particularly memorable weekend away in the early nineties involved staff trekking through the wilds of the west Highlands and staying overnight in a ramshackle bothy. We’re not sure, but the intention might have been to create even greater appreciation of well fitted out accommodation!

Kenny Barbour, a chartered accountant and eldest son of JB, is Barbour’s Financial Director. He joined the company in 1992 when his mother Isobel became ill, and assumed control over the accounts, wages and insurance, and has supervised the introduction and upgrading of IT systems for manufacture, design, setting out and estimating.



National standard.

By the late nineties we had completed projects for amongst others The Body Shop, Bed & Bath Stores, Logo, Sports Connection, Clarks Shoes, Jeansters, The Wool Shop, GAP, Burtons, Dorothy Perkins, Bank of Scotland, Endsleigh Insurance and Leicester Building Society.

The first Dorothy Perkins store that Barbour fitted out was in the St James Centre, Edinburgh. Here Barbour encountered one Project Manager for whom snagging – the finding and eradicating of flaws, however minor – was a serious business. This ultra-demanding approach is of course vital in the fashion industry, where first impressions and image are everything. It was a salutary lesson for all on the job, and the team had to learn from it, fast. The high standard of our finishing climbed even higher and that level of expertise stands us in good stead to this day.

As the business grew, so did our fleet of vehicles. We had come a long way – hundreds of thousands of miles, now we think about it - from visiting clients by bus and now boasted three Bedford vans, one lwb lorry and six company cars. We've always had plenty of drive.



We have a name for progress (*okay, several names*).

In 2003 Norrie Barbour, a graduate in civil engineering and law, came into the fold as Managing Director, after several years practising as a lawyer.

The business went on flourishing, with projects for household names such as Topman, Evans, H. Samuel, New Look, Tony Roma's, Leslie Davis, Rogerson Fine Footwear, Topshop, Henderson the Jewellers, Wallis, Beaverbrooks, O'Briens, Burton, Game, The Whisky Shop, Ernest Jones, WH Smith, Dorothy Perkins, Next, Lipsy, Debenhams, The White Company and Diageo.

The business was built on good relationships with all. As we had done since we first opened our doors, we endeavoured to deliver a high quality job at a fair price every time, and we continued to treat suppliers and contractors the way we liked to be treated ourselves.



“Victory belongs to the most persevering.”
– *Napoleon Bonaparte and JB Barbour*

In the company's first half century there have been over 500 employees, 200 Barbour vehicles, 5000 fit outs for more than 500 clients, and a combined turnover of £130 million.

Throughout our history we have always had apprentices year on year, with a number of fathers and sons working for the company. To date, 200 apprenticeships have been served, including, in the 1980s, the training of the first female apprentice joiner in the UK.

There have been extraordinary jobs galore through the Barbour books, such as catwalks for fashion shows and the fitting out of a church complete with sanctuary, pews and lectern. But oddest of all has to be the whale. Complete with functioning mouth, the leviathan was lovingly designed, constructed and fixed to a pram as a show-stopping, mobile theatrical prop, and gifted to a local Sunday school for a musical production of Jonah & The Whale. We like to think he's still out there somewhere, roaming free.

That brings us to the tail-end of our story, but nowhere near the end of our journey.

It must be pointed out that success was not always immediately forthcoming to Barbour, and hard lessons have had to be learned throughout our fifty years. We can truthfully say, however, that the misfortunes, setbacks and challenges are infinitely outweighed by the knowledge, skill and experience that we have gained.



The future lies in high quality, in every aspect of the business, and to do that, Barbour must remain true to its belief in reliability, flexibility, creativity and innovation. A well-trained, well-equipped, motivated workforce is key to progress, as everyone strives together for success. We look forward to sustaining and furthering the company's hard earned reputation for excellence.

Kenny Barbour, Alan Barbour, Norrie Barbour and Scott MacLeod.

BARBOUR

Fit Out Specialists since 1964

570–572 Lawmoor Street,
Dixons Blazes Industrial Estate, Glasgow G5 0TY

Tel: 0141 429 3999

Email: enquiries@barbourfitout.co.uk

www.barbourfitout.co.uk



INVESTORS
IN PEOPLE

