

Making it in Leeds

News release from Leeds Manufacturing

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£300,000 investment creates new jobs and smarter schools

A £300,000 investment in traditional tailoring allied to smart internet retailing and relocation to larger premises has created over 30 new posts and saved ten existing jobs at a historic Leeds tailoring firm.

Perry Uniform, a historic Leeds tailoring firm, was rescued from administration by serial entrepreneurs Bernard and Caroline Bunting in 2007. School uniforms are the core business of the company founded in Armley in 1946 and which had been struggling following the 2003 death of Peter Franklin, who built the business.

Bringing the firm out of administration, the Buntings merged the operation into their highly successful online venture Uniform Schoolwear and invested over £300,000 re-locating to an 18,000 sq ft centre in Bramley, housing production, a design studio and sales call centre.

Ten original staff were retained and over 30 more skilled cutters, machinists and finishers have been recruited as annual sales approach £3 million. A new London show-room is set to open next month.

In re-building Perry's former Green Howard officer Mr Bunting applied skills acquired in the IT industry to grow other brands including The Children's Warehouse mail order operation and a uniquely successful fulfilment deal for online orders from famous London toy store Hamleys. He sold his first successful online medical business to Reuters. His wife Caroline remains firmly front of house for the newly enlarged operation

Blending the same IT knowledge with the skills of time-served garment makers the couple aim to take the re-branded Perry Uniform (From Cutting Room to Classroom) into a prosperous future as an iconic global brand. In addition to schools, the company has in recent years supplied uniforms to the Harlequins and South African Rugby Union teams.

A unique intelligent internet-based sizing system enables parents to order garments online and have them delivered the next day, complete with name tags, avoiding the August four-hour queues witnessed at some uniform retailers. Most of the firm's fabrics are from Yorkshire mills, unless it's Harris Tweed from the Outer Hebrides.

Ian Williams, policy director at Leeds Chamber of Commerce said: "Manufacturing and entrepreneurship has a key role to play in helping rebalance and rebuild the UK economy. The Buntings have combined traditional skills with online retail to transform and assure the future of Perry Uniform as a 21st century manufacturing business"

"By harnessing local manufacturing skills to internet trading, we're able to provide the very best quality at sensible prices. This cuts out middlemen and avoids British or overseas cloth being tailored abroad and imported back into the UK," says Mr Bunting.

"It's a cut throat and competitive market but our value added services set us apart from the multiple retailers. Most importantly we are available 24\7 - 364 days of the year and we carry stock all year round – not just during the peak back to school period.

"Importantly, we use hard wearing, long lasting cloth milled in Yorkshire for our blazers, jackets and suits; we embroider school crests on garments to establish a sense of belonging and identity that reflects the ethos and heritage of the school.

"Additionally, we sew in personalised embroidered name tapes and offer free delivery and returns of orders direct to home or office making it easy to shop at a time convenient to parents. This year we have also introduced a repair and alteration service to help hard pressed parents get even more wear from their children's uniforms."

Ends

Photography: Ancient and modern – Perry Uniform's Bernard Bunting combines traditional tailoring with online marketing

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Notes for editors

[Leeds Manufacturing](#) is a joint initiative by Leeds Chamber of Commerce and Leeds City Council which aims to raise the profile of individual manufacturing companies in Leeds and promote the city as a centre for manufacturing excellence. Further case studies on Leeds manufacturing companies are available online at: www.leedsmanufacturing.co.uk