

## THE BUTE FABRICS TEAM

The team at Bute is packed with specialised skills, often that are gained through in-house training and years of experience.

We would like to introduce our Senior Director of Operations, David. With over 40 years experience in the textiles industry, we wanted to ask David about his thoughts on the investment project and the mill upgrades.



Are you able to give a background to your career in textiles and your love of textiles?

My journey in textiles began 40 years ago when I joined John Gladstone & Sons, a commission cloth finishing company based in my hometown of Huddersfield. I was fortunate to be placed on their apprenticeship programme and sent to college on a day-release basis. Four years later, having worked my way through the mill, learning all the various finishing processes, I qualified with a BTEC HND in Textile Technology. Sadly, I was in the final cohort and the course closed shortly after I graduated; a sign of the times in the recession of the early eighties and reflecting the challenges of many textile companies in Yorkshire at that time.

I moved to the vertically-integrated woollen manufacturer, John Crowther & Son, in the late eighties and there gained essential management experience. By now I was hooked! Eight years at Crowther was followed by a move over the border into Scotland and 24 years at high-end accessories manufacturer Alex Begg. During my time with Begg I worked in a variety of managerial and director roles which afforded me the opportunity to work with some of the most talented people in the industry. I was also fortunate that my roles gave me the chance to travel frequently and extensively across Europe and the Far East and meet some remarkable people along the way; from yarn and machinery suppliers in Italy, Germany, and France to cashmere and wool fibre suppliers in China, Australia, and Mongolia. However, the joy for me remains more grounded: nothing gives me greater pleasure than being involved in the production of beautiful fabrics made to high quality standards and delivered to customers on time.







What was it that first attracted you to join the Bute Fabrics team?

As I approached my fortieth year in the industry, I started to get the itch for a new challenge and was drawn to Bute Fabrics on the lovely Isle of Bute. In 2019, MD John Glen contacted me to see if I'd be available to help him with some operational improvement projects. I'd known John for quite some time, both as a friend and as an ex-colleague, but I wasn't too familiar with Bute Fabrics. I took some time to visit John and he showed me around the manufacturing site. It was clear then that there was work to do and when he described to me the capital investment and the business expansion plans that were being developed I eagerly accepted his offer to join the team.

Can you outline your role within the team?

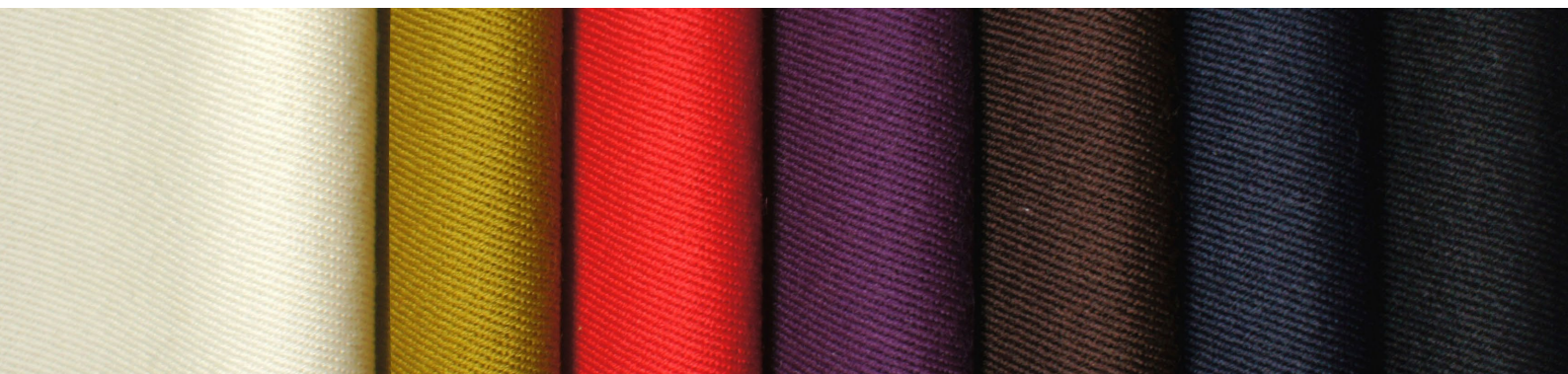
As Senior Director of Operations, I am tasked with overseeing all aspects of the operations of the business, working within an excellent team on business strategy development, quality and efficiency improvement projects and product development. However, having joined the company in July 2020, my first six months have been dominated by overseeing the preparations for, and arrival of, the most significant capital investment that Bute Fabrics has ever seen. We have totally reconfigured the layout and flow of the production departments, as well as installing high-end racking systems in our warehouses, laying quartz screed flooring in all departments, installing high-efficiency LED lighting and an extensive cosmetic refurbishment across the entire business. All of the work we have done has made us leaner and more efficient as a manufacturing business with better work-flow and better organisation which has improved capability.

Of course, the Coronavirus pandemic brought with it additional challenges, particularly around the shipment and safe arrival of large pieces of industrial machinery from Germany and the technicians to undertake installation and training.

What is your overall goal as a result of the investment?

Despite the added challenges that Covid-19 undoubtedly presented, we now have our new equipment installed. The Karl Mayer, 'Multimatic' high-speed warping machine, the first of its kind in the UK, is installed, as is the Groz-Beckert 'WarpMaster' drawing-in machine. In addition, two new Groz-Beckert 'KnotMaster' knotting machines are very welcome arrivals in the weave shed. This investment, with a total value close to £800K, has set the company up magnificently well.

The 'Multimatic' will increase the company's warping capacity by over 300% and will bring improved design flexibility through almost limitless warp patterning and colouration opportunities. The 'WarpMaster' drawing-in machine will significantly speed up our weaving preparation and the 'KnotMaster' knotting machines will replace outdated and unreliable units.







Being based on a small island with a strong sense of community, in your opinion what is the general consensus of the changes within the mill and the impact that it will have on the island?

This substantial investment in manufacturing capability is intended to make the business more competitive and, ultimately, more successful. As Bute Fabrics is one of the foremost employers on the Isle of Bute, this can only be a good thing for the company's workforce, safeguarding jobs and for the opportunity it provides to grow and to employ more local people in the future.

Our warpers Abbie and Helen are both incredible members of the team. Both have a careful eye for detail and after 10 years of working at Bute we asked Helen about her thoughts on the investment project and the mill upgrades.

How many years have you worked at Bute Fabric?

I have been at Bute Fabrics for ten years. I initially started at sixteen years old where for two and a half years I was a handloom weaver. Then ten years ago I got a job as a weaver and I have now been warping for the last two years.

The investment in the mill has made improvements throughout the workplace - has this affected your role?

Upgrading to more technical machinery has caused great excitement at work and we are thoroughly looking forward to our latest edition - the new warping machine. The investment made to the mill is substantial and allows us to work with different yarns and patterns. The new capabilities mean that we can feel secure in our roles especially with the current economic climate. We all work as one big family; it is a great team to be a part of.







Has the progression from mechanical to more electrical machinery changed your daily responsibilities?

My responsibilities have never changed. I come to do my job to the best of my ability and changes are natural, it is always good to learn and improve and the investment has made this possible.

In your opinion - what sparked the need for change within the mill?

The mill needed to change to move with the times and adjust to what our clients want and need. To have a business of the future you cannot stay in the past and I believe Bute Fabrics will stand the tests of time for my grandchildren to work here one day. We are moving into a new exciting phase and we are all going to do our best to make Bute Fabrics the best the mill it can be.

Bute Fabrics Ltd  
4 Barone Road  
Rothesay, Isle of Bute  
Scotland PA20 0DP

[www.butefabrics.com](http://www.butefabrics.com)  
T +44 (0)1700 503 734  
[sales@butefabrics.com](mailto:sales@butefabrics.com)

