



The **WORLD** in our street

Interview with

Mike Leech at Maltby's

Mike has worked at Maltby's since December 1967. The business was started in 1947. Mike's role was that of Salesman and then he progressed to Manager and then General Manager. Mike is now retired but he works a couple of days per week doing sales and estimating. Mike lives in Hoole and previously in Saltney and was born in the maternity home in Mancot.

Maltby's started at number 84 Brook Street in 1947 in the building opposite to where the shop now is. Edgar Maltby passed away in October 1967 and it was two months later that Mike joined the company. Maurice was Edgar's son and it is his son Christopher who is now MD.

In 1970 the company expanded into the former Department Store Lightfoots, they also bought the butchers shop to then knock through to make the largest fronted shop in the City.

Brook Street was the main Warrington Road and there were so many large names that started off there before transferring further into the city such as Boots & George's Prams.

In the past the company sold furniture in abundance, there were 4 lorry loads per week leaving the shop in the 1970's and there were 12 carpet fitters, the business really grew and was very vibrant – it grew from the word go. Now it has changed somewhat in that the company no longer sells furniture – they have a few beds on display and sell a few but now the focus is on carpets and flooring.





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They have clients all over the country and Europe. They have approximately 5 teams of fitters and some specialise in hard flooring.



A lot of the carpets are from the UK – traditionally from Kidderminster and Axminster in Devon and also Blackburn along with carpets from India, Belgium, Denmark & South Africa. Quality is how it is selected, value for money, reliability of manufacturers and suppliers – they do not want to be dealing with people that let you down.



Yesterday, Chris the MD went down to London to Chelsea Harbour to a carpet show to look at new products. There is a big show in Harrogate and even Las Vegas!



When Maltby's orders a carpet from America for example and it is already made then it goes on the boat in a container and will be in Chester in 6 weeks. If it is a carpet from Kidderminster it can be next day but is typically 7 to 10 days. Jacaranda is a company which supplies carpets from India. There is a big difference in price between handmade or machine made carpets.



Brook Street has changed a lot with a lot of individual shops spreading into the city. In the past all the shops were totally individual but things really changed when the dual carriageway was built and this effectively cut off Brook Street.



Maltby's business all tends to be word of mouth – Chris was only thinking the other day about possible links with other businesses such as the car wash.





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The changes in the street have not affected the business in a negative way they have just had to adjust and get used to changes and they have over the years and continue to do business with the other businesses on the road.



Mike remembers when the cattle were paddocked on Lightfoot Street – hundreds of them and then always on a Wednesday afternoon the shops were shut so that the cattle could go through to the market.



When Mike was asked about his hopes for the future – he responded “hope to stay alive as long as possible!” In terms of the business it is hope that business is sustained and it continues in the positive way it currently is. Maltby’s still owns the original property across the road and leases this to Bendicks and also there are a number of flats above the premises and these are managed by Muir Housing.



Chris’ son Harry who is 15 has shown an interest in being involved in the business - he will be 4th generation.



When somebody comes into the shop looking for a carpet, Mike will ask where it is for and then will show them some specific ranges – again there is a wide range of budgets and so then people can borrow samples, a decision will be made by the client, Maltby’s then go and measure up, provide a quote and then the client will order it and the fitting will be booked and a deposit has to be paid. It is then fitted and the client has to pay.



The company also does quite a lot of contract work and sometimes this can be a very big job – on one occasion there were 3 fitters on the job for 3 weeks





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in one property. They have also done a holiday village in Craven Arms near Whitchurch.

There is a lot of repeat business and recommendations.

Mike has got numerous handwritten letters from past years from clients expressing their thanks.

