

The Bulletin

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Berrys 1966 - 2016

By Dave Berry

In November 1966, company founder Dave Berry set up D. Berry & Co (Pipe Fitting Supplies) Ltd in a modest office and storeroom in an old "outdoor" (Off Licence) in Hockley, Birmingham with a promise to supply the heating and plumbing trade and other pipework users with tubes, fittings, valves and ancillary equipment more quickly and efficiently than had previously been achieved. That promise holds good today, and upholding high standards of quality and service is fundamental to Berrys' business.



Middlemore Industrial Estate

The company, since 2011 called Berrys Technologies Ltd, has progressed considerably from its beginnings as a distributor, and now also designs and manufactures its own range of innovative products, and has become the UK's leading forecourt equipment specialist. The company is achieving its aim to provide a full range of advanced products to the Petroleum Industry, many of which also claim essential time and cost savings during site construction. As a major supplier to many Oil Companies and Supermarkets, Berrys is well placed to service the market throughout Europe and beyond.

In 1969, the company made its first acquisition when it purchased Birmingham Tube & Fittings Co Ltd. This company, established for many years, had more advantageous buying terms than Berrys, and its purchase enabled the company to very quickly become much more competitive. This acquisition coincided with the company's move to Middlemore Industrial Estate, Handsworth, Birmingham in 1969; premises with a much easier access to the recently opened motorway system less than a mile away. It made the delivery of materials throughout the United Kingdom much easier, faster and more cost effective.

In 1970 a further unit opposite was leased, which enabled the company to set up a separate fabrication facility. An increased number of staff and much greater volume and range of stock gave the company the opportunity to meet the growing demand for additional products and services.

These two units were part of a block of eleven, built on the old Birmingham Carriage and Wagon Works site; between 1970 and 2005, the company took on the remaining nine units as and when

they became available, enabling the whole avenue of eleven individual factory units to be called "Berrys Business Park".

The beginning of the 1970's were to be remembered not for growth within the company, although unbelievably there was, but for industrial chaos. How any company managed to survive is a difficult one to explain. The decade was littered with strikes, walk outs, work to rules, and demands for higher wages, with governments of both parties declaring states of emergency on more than one occasion.

There were wage demands of up to 50%, while inflation rose between 15% and more than 20%. The Government and the Unions agreed about nothing, and the TUC and the CBI failed completely to produce any kind of consensus. It was definitely a challenge running a business during these times.

Matters were made worse in 1974, when OPEC raised oil prices by 70%, which resulted in fuel shortages, a 50mph speed limit, a 3 day week, and obviously a few hiccups in the UK's petroleum and forecourt industry. Berrys made a strategic shift to the forecourt retail sector, and within a few years became the nominated supplier for Shell and other major Oil Companies, with customers including many of the forecourt installation companies.

As the company's business with the petroleum industry began to increase in the 1980's, Berrys was lucky enough to win the trust of the larger contractors in the market; with continued excellent service to this industry, Berry's began to be the first name on many buyers lips when it came to purchasing materials.

Berrys was either lucky or more likely very astute during the '80's and '90's in its choice of products that were offered to the industry; with names like Durapipe, Fibrelite, Klargester, Wright Engineering and others, Berrys offered products that were always of interest to customers.

A comprehensive range of forecourt supplies was also developed including forecourt equipment, pump spares, ancillary equipment, signs and labels, tools as well as health and safety equipment.

In 2000, Martin Berry took over the running of the company, with a vision of not only being a distributor of other companies' products, but also to be designers and fabricators of bespoke



Martin Berry (left) and Dave Berry

solutions for problems on petrol forecourts. In the ensuing years Berrys quickly became the industry's "go to" company, and in the process has designed and manufactured a range of products that are now sold in over 30 countries.

Martin was responsible for the whole ATLAS (Advanced Tank Lid Assembly System) concept, introduced to market in 2000, which has been one of Berrys' staple products ever since, more recently improved on with the ATLAS Mono and Mono Gen 2. ATLAS set new standards for the industry being simple and fast to assemble (in factory or on-site), adaptable to all forecourt layouts and offering maximum protection from water ingress or fuel leakage,



Vent Master

whilst being suitable for offset or direct fill, suction or pressure applications.

Vent Master and Fill Master were also the brainchild of Martin; first introduced in 2004 and now used throughout the UK. These complementary products can be fitted individually or as companions where the vent and fill positions are next to each other.

The company has always recognised the importance of site safety and 2005 saw the introduction of the Easy Riser, now known as EROS (Easy Riser Oscillation System), developed in line with both Working at Height and Health and Safety Regulations, ensuring that site operators and service engineers can carry out pre-vac valve maintenance in a safe and controlled manner at ground level. A product that can easily



Fill Master





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EROS Easy Riser - bringing pre-vac valve maintenance down to earth

be retro-fitted, this was the first product to take Berrys truly worldwide, with installations in over 30 countries to date.

A spate of well-documented fuel thefts from forecourts in the UK in 2011 led to the design and production of a lockable security cover for existing and new tank chamber covers.

In 2012, Berrys invested in a larger manufacturing facility in Aston, Birmingham, which allowed the company to expand its manufacturing capacity in line with the demand from the



Berrys HQ in Aston, Birmingham

international market. A Research and Development department was added, solely focused on new product development, and a sister company, Fluid ID Systems Ltd, within the premises, was formed, that assembles and manufactures all of its products in accordance with most of the world's recognised standards.

Instrumental in product design and improvement is Jacque Williams who joined Berrys in 2002 as Manager for the Pump Spares Depot, worked his way up to Technical Director in 2009, and is now the company's Managing Director. Jacque has been pivotal in the further development of the original ATLAS system, and the more recently developed ATLAS Mono Gen 2, the revolutionary EROS Easy Riser system, and has pioneered misfuel, or crossover, prevention with the design of Berrys' MIDAS system.



The innovative Midas 'Misfuel Identification and Avoidance System'

2012 also brought to fruition several years of development of MIDAS (Misfuel Identification and Avoidance System) - the brainchild of Jacque Williams, developed following a meeting on a petrol forecourt with oil company engineers, who indicated that misfuelling storage tanks with incorrect fuel was a major issue, both environmentally and financially. MIDAS has been well received in the market place with units installed and working in extreme environments from the freezing cold of the Ural Mountains of Russia, to the searing heat of the Middle East in Oman.

Midas can be used on above or below ground filling points and comprises a valve with intelligent control that can discriminate between petrol and diesel grades of fuel and prevent the wrong product entering the tank and causing a misfuel or crossover. The device is calibrated during installation for either diesel or petrol; on delivery the system reads the fuel being delivered and if correct opens the valve to allow the filling operation to continue. If an incorrect fuel type is detected the valve stays closed and alarms both visibly and audibly to alert the driver to the mistake



Fill Protector

2013 saw the introduction of Fill Protector - another product designed for safety on the forecourt, this time installed or retro-fitted to the tanker filling position to prevent accidental vehicular collisions.

In 2013 Jacque Williams graciously and thankfully accepted both the APEA's 'Innovation' and 'Quality' awards for Midas, on behalf of Berrys Technologies.



Midas wins APEA Awards for Quality and Innovation, 2013

Designed to work in conjunction with Midas, OPUS (Overfill Prevention Ullage Sensor) was launched in 2015. Opus prevents the overfilling of storage tanks, using a probe sensor which initiates closure of the Midas inlet valve once the tank is nearing an overfill, thus eliminating the need for any mechanical overfill valves within the tank.

The ATLAS Mono Gen 2, available since 2015, now offers a 30 year constructional warranty as it is welded directly to the storage tank during manufacture. This potentially removes hours of on-site installation work and, with predefined pipe entry and exit positions, gives the installer a range of potential site layout



Opus - storage tank overfill prevention, used in conjunction with Midas



Mono - Advanced Tank Lid Assembly System

options. An integrated steel corbel system also substantially increases the success rate for chamber vacuum testing.

In 2016 Berrys completed its intention to provide customers with a range of fully factory assembled 'plug & play' products. The range includes Mono Gen 2, Vent Master, Fill Master, and with the introduction of Sump Master all four pipe connection points on a typical forecourt layout are now covered.

Half a century in business is an exceptional achievement which can be related to a degree of pride in everything Berrys does and to everyone who has helped in its success. During these 50 years the company has travelled a considerable distance and as the



Sump Master

momentous date of November 14th 2016 approaches, everyone at Berrys can be immensely proud of what they have helped to achieve.

The industry has seen much invention and creativity during the last few decades; the company continually monitors new technological developments for advances that can help with the creation of intelligent solutions for the ever changing requirements of the industry. As alternative fuels become more widely used, forecourts will be changing and Berrys is geared to pursue the opportunities that this will bring for the design and production of safer, more efficient products and processes.