



‘Acorn to Oak’

The story of Barton Grange

Almost seventy years ago in 1945, Edward and Ada Topping bought a small mansion in Barton, just north of Preston, and converted it into a six bedroom hotel which opened in 1951. Whilst they got to grips with running an expanding hotel business, their son Eddie was at College training as a horticulturist and landscape gardener. In 1955, with his training completed, he returned home to set up a market garden within the five acres of land surrounding his parents’ hotel.

As the hotel business grew, so too did the gardening enterprise and, in 1957, Eddie established a landscaping business. Then, in 1963, he made the truly pioneering move to open the North West’s first ever garden centre. Heralded by a full page announcement in the local paper on 10th May 1963, Barton Grange Garden Centre in Preston originally operated out of a small shed adjacent to the hotel car park. From these humble beginnings, the Garden Centre grew to become one of the most successful businesses in the region.

In the early 1970’s, Eddie purchased more land a mile from his Garden Centre where containerised trees and shrubs are now grown by a subsidiary company, Garden Centre Plants, to supply not only Barton Grange but other garden centres nationwide. In 1986, a propagation unit, the Northern Liner Company, was set up at nearby Pilling, where some three million plants can be growing at any one time. 1993 saw the purchase of Brookhouse Nursery, which specialises in houseplants and bedding plants, further strengthening the nursery business and taking the total area of nursery production to around 40 acres.

Meanwhile, the landscaping business developed into one of the most successful in the North West, winning major awards for garden design, and the Garden Centre business also flourished. A second Centre was opened in Bolton in 1990 and a third at Woodford in Cheshire in 1994. The Hotel expanded to become a prestigious 51-bedroom Hotel and Conference Centre, with its own gym and leisure complex and the hugely popular Walled Garden Bistro.

In February 2006, the garden centre at Woodford was sold to enable the business to reshift its focus back to Lancashire. Work then began on the Group’s most challenging development – the £12 million project to build the new Garden Centre and narrowboat marina at Brock, just north of Barton. This new Centre opened in March 2008, and the Marina welcomed its first narrowboat in September that year.

The Garden Centre at Brock was awarded the title of Destination Garden Centre of the Year by the Garden Centre Association in 2012 and 2013. The decision was then taken to sell the Bolton garden centre in June 2013 so that the company could focus its efforts on further developments at Brock – *watch this space!*

From a small mansion to a major group of companies with a multi-million pound turnover, Barton Grange has established itself as one of the leading businesses in the North West. It remains a family run company, committed to traditional values, with two of Eddie Topping’s sons now in charge - Peter runs the landscaping and nurseries business whilst Guy oversees the Hotel, the Garden Centre and the Marina. With plans already in hand to develop further the site at Brock, the future for Barton Grange looks very exciting.

June 2013



Being a Barton Granger

At Barton Grange, we have a way about us which we hope makes us special and makes people remember us for all the right reasons. It's called 'being a Barton Granger' and we think it's summed up like this:

As a Barton Granger ...

- you are proud to give your best everyday and enjoy doing it;
- you are able to carry out your duties in a well-organised and effective manner;
- you share ideas and get involved with making improvements;
- you are able to communicate your feelings honestly and in a constructive manner;
- you develop your own skills and encourage development in others;
- your enthusiasm and friendliness is infectious to both staff and customers;
- you are able to identify needs and expectations of customers and strive to exceed them;
- you show mutual respect and trust for colleagues and customers;
- you use personal skills to enhance the company expertise;
- you ensure every customer leaves a fan and encourages others to shop at Barton Grange.

