



# Heritage industry

**T**raditional British brand Barbour has been the toast of the fashion pages in recent years with its waxed trial bike jackets and its heritage outerwear.

The company, set up in South Shields in 1894, has over 100 years of history to be called upon, which includes kitting out the British International motorcycling team between 1936 and 1977. However, it is Barbour's connection with a US motorbike team rider from 1964 that has been a major influence of late. That rider was Hollywood star Steve McQueen, a link with the company that has been commemorated with its Barbour Steve McQueen capsule collection marking the 75th anniversary of its iconic International motorcycle clothing. This includes a remake of the famous International waxed jacket, sporting a US flag patch, and other 1960s archival pieces.

Now, hot on the heels of this, Barbour has made its first foray into the optical market with a range of eyewear through another independently owned British family firm, Gloucester-based Norville Eyewear.

Mark Truss, Norville sales director, explaining the global licensing tie-up, says that Norville's business model has changed, as, having acted as a frame distributor in the past, it had decided to look for its own brands

Barbour joins the eyewear club through a licensing deal with Norville. **Rory Brogan** reports on the range of styles and price options



**The Barbour brand appeals to a wide age group of consumers**

and develop, design and source its own collections. 'This started with the Jeff Banks and Studio lines which we design and manufacture. The whole idea is that Norville as an independent British company will offer the same in its products. We're currently in negotiation for a women's brand and, with Duck and Cover also to launch, we will then have four brands.'

## Respecting the brand

Truss explains that the tie up with Barbour, a year ago, is the first time the lifestyle brand has granted a licence.

'Dame Margaret Barbour wanted to work with a company with a similar ethos and message, who would be an extension of the brand and not just slap the Barbour name on the sides of frames. We had a four-month negotiation process, proving that we had the correct production and attention to detail to work with and respect the brand.'

When it comes to its clothing collections, Barbour targets its product distinctively, he explains. 'It starts out in John Lewis, then the Heritage collection will be found in Selfridges and the premium Beacon Heritage collection is held in limited edition numbers at Liberty London, for example.'

As a result, Truss explains that Barbour eyewear will also come in a range of price options. The first collection is the Lifestyle entry line, to be followed by the next level up,

a Heritage range made in Italy and Japan. Heritage will be supplied with leather cases and different packaging and will be launched at Mido. Then a top-end Beacon line of classic styles with a fashion twist will be launched in 2013. These will be hand-made in Italy and aimed at city centre practices.

In spite of all its fashion appeal, Truss adds that a large percentage of Barbour sales are still in traditional sports and country shops, describing the brand as 'fairly unique in its positioning – covering hunting, fishing and fashion too'.

'The good thing about Barbour is that it has cross-over appeal, from the 20-year old at Glastonbury wearing a waxed jacket and jeans to his father taking the dogs out for a walk to the pub. The quality is second to none. It's an important brand for us.'

The Lifestyle line is 65 per cent male, which he says reflects Barbour's sales ethos, and will have a price range in independent practice of £99 to £129. There are 19 frames in the collection with 12 for men that come in colour options of muted forest tones in greens, coppers and blacks. The eight sunglass models – four for men, two unisex and two women's designs – will range in price from £69 to £99.

Predominantly acetate, with a number of metal models, the Lifestyle frames come with faux-leather cases. One key style is a larger acetate frame with a double bridge in two-coloured acetate.

'You always need a statement piece. It won't necessarily do the most volume but is an attraction for the window,' adds Truss. 'The detailing is all high quality, for example the Barbour logo set into an acetate side had to be cast properly. With anything Barbour does they protect the brand.'

To tie in with the eyewear, Norville has developed a Barbour branded ophthalmic lens, the Barbour Top Coat. This is a hydrophobic coated product that will be sold on a stand-alone basis.

With next season's shoot for the Barbour Heritage line featuring retro sunglasses and motorbikes, Barbour eyewear will be tying in nicely with the brand's identity. ●

