



Mary Murrell

speaks to

Sam Watson



# Internet boost

*Durham Flooring has enjoyed a substantial increase in business since upgrading its website last year. Mary Murrell reports:*

OVER three quarters of all Durham Flooring's business is generated online from across the country, says Samantha Watson who, with husband John, owns the company.

'Since the beginning, we have always been strong on marketing using modern methods to promote our company, including a website.

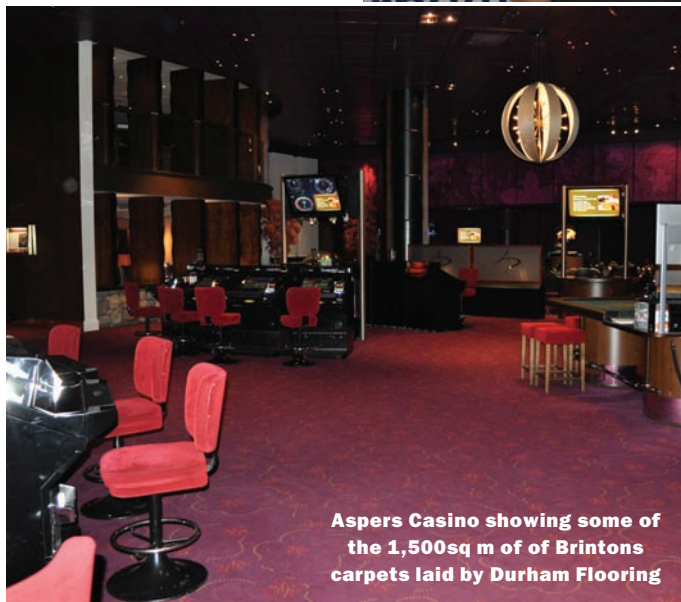
'We work with an excellent web solutions based company and its software enables our site to appear high up in searches on Google, Yahoo, etc.

'Our website now lets us punch above our weight as it has opened the door for us with larger tenders. Overall trade is more consistent with fewer seasonal peaks and troughs.

'We have a good, stable business that has grown well over the years since we established it in 2002,' says Sam. 'When we set it up we were able to do so using our own resources without any loans, so we have always been in a good financial position, as we are today.'

Sam's background is in sales and account management while John has been selling and fitting floorings since he was 17 having spent 20 years working in his father's retail carpet shops.

'Durham Flooring concentrates on the commercial trade. Although many of our contract projects are around Durham and Newcastle, we work throughout the UK especially



Aspers Casino showing some of the 1,500sq m of Brintons carpets laid by Durham Flooring

for main contractors and their clients with outlets around the country like Domino's Pizza, Comet Electrical, Barratts and Priceless.

'Various contractors and companies have used us for a number of years, and we work closely with main and sub-contractors on new builds and refurbishments.

'We have a good reputation for quality and service. We have very few comebacks after installations have been completed, and if there are problems clients know that we

will respond quickly,' says Sam.

Durham Flooring supplies and fits carpet and carpet tiles, vinyl, safety flooring, rubber and linoleum and carries out subfloor preparation work.

The company employs a small team of fitters, using sub-contractors when necessary, all with CSCS certificates.

It works with schools, healthcare establishments such as surgeries and care homes, retail outlets, the hotel and leisure industry and factory sites.

A major installation was at the Discovery Museum for Newcastle City Council where Durham Flooring removed all existing flooring and plying and screeding the subfloor surfaces before installing 1,250sq m Karndean wood plank for its aesthetic appearance and easy maintenance and Altro D25 safety vinyl in the walkways.

Recent installations include approximately 1,500sq m Brinton's thick and heavy carpet tiles in Aspers Casino and Amtico and Altro products in a large nursing home in Barrow-in-Furness where it was necessary to work at night and at



Sam and John Watson of Durham Flooring, a member of the CFA

different hours in the day.

'We pride ourselves on being very flexible working whatever hours causes least disruption to clients, and around other contractors on sites,' says Sam.

Durham Flooring is a CFA member. 'It is very useful to have an independent association for our trade who can offer help on a wide range of issues,' says Sam. 'We use its website to find sub-contractors and distributors around the country.

'I feel the industry is more and more governed by health and safety requirements. This is good up to a point, as it stops unqualified people working on site, but the paperwork is becoming very laborious.

'As each project can demand different qualifications contractors have to join several associations just to get on site, ie CHAS, CSCS, CITB, CFA. The whole system needs simplifying. It would be so much better if just one was in charge of all construction industry H&S regulations.

'Additionally, I would like retentions to be completely abolished, or at least for there to be a lower percentage and a shorter repayment time. There should be more trust throughout the industry.'

Sam believes there is some buoyancy in the market now and that trade is picking up.

'People lacked the confidence to spend because there was a pervasive atmosphere of doom and gloom. Tenders began to dry up, but now they are flowing in,' she says.

'Of course, this may be just pricing exercises. Time will tell, but there are definitely more refurbishing projects now. We are very pro-active in getting jobs in, so all in all, I think we can be quietly confident about our future.'

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The Discovery Museum where Durham Flooring undertook a major project for Newcastle City Council