

# The Little Man

The Harris Paints Story

1972 - 2022



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# credits

**The Harris Group of Companies**  
**The Little Man**  
**The Harris Paints Story 1972 - 2022**

Written by Tracy Johnson

1<sup>st</sup> Edition - 2012

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition - 2022

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Layout: Automotive Art Marketing Department

Design: Miller Publishing Company Ltd.

ISBN 9789769620988

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# contents

|            |                               |
|------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>6</b>   | Introduction                  |
| <b>14</b>  | Fifty Colourful Years         |
| <b>42</b>  | Champions of Colour           |
| <b>66</b>  | Innovation & Environment      |
| <b>88</b>  | Leaders in the Caribbean      |
| <b>146</b> | 1970s: Starting Out           |
| <b>170</b> | 1980s: Full Throttle          |
| <b>186</b> | 1990s: Higher Standards       |
| <b>202</b> | 2000s: Smart Growth           |
| <b>222</b> | 2013-2022: Shocks & Surprises |
| <b>252</b> | Focus on the Future           |

# preface

For obvious reasons histories, memoirs and biographies tend to come in the twilight years or at the end of an era. However, in the development of this project, while the objective was very much to look back and capture all the twists and turns from the company's conception in 1972, there was also a need to connect the legacy to the modern, dynamic and forward-looking business that exists today.

This was the main reason Harris opted for a colourful, innovative and accessible format in which to tell their story – one that is multi-faceted, made up of many characters and numerous overlapping factors and considerations. The Little Man's fifty colourful years is therefore told in a collection of articles; stories within the story that can be dipped into as desired and not designed necessarily as a chronological read. In this latest edition, we present a newly designed presentation and have included many more original photographs. Please note, that for reasons of simplicity, all subsidiary companies are referred to as Harris throughout.

In these pages the point is made time and again that any company is really the sum of its people. It is my biggest regret that due to the constraints of time and space, it is impossible to recognize all those who have played a part in Harris' manufacturing plants and offices around the region and have so many more stories to tell. The same of course applies to the enduring support of Harris' large extended family of retailers, distributors, agents and partners throughout the Caribbean and beyond.

The project was initiated by Chairman, Robert Jones who has a respect and enthusiasm for history and its importance to who we are today; a perspective which he is acutely aware can all too easily be lost. It was further developed and directed by Chief Executive Officer, Ian Kenyon in collaboration with Marketing Manager Retail Services, Simone Benn. Much gratitude goes to the numerous contributors and Harris staff members that gave generously of their time to share their perspectives and

memories. I would like to particularly thank Regional HR for their support and Charles Kirton and David Tindale who have both been of tremendous assistance. We would also like to thank Miller Publishing for creative direction and print consultancy as well as Automotive Art who provided graphic art services and helped bring this project to fruition.



**Tracy Johnson**  
Writer/ Producer

# foreword

This book has been updated and revised to coincide with the 50th Anniversary of Harris Paints Barbados. Why a book and why now?

Fifty years is not a particularly long time. Many companies have been around for more than a hundred. However 50 years is a considerable time in the working life of an individual and it was felt that it was important to record the collective memory of those who had played a part in the story of The Little Man before those memories were lost forever.

An organization of itself has no heart, no soul, does not breathe, recognize success or failure, but the people who work within that organization do and this is their story. They provide the character and ethos that differentiate one organization from another. This is at one moment intangible and at another almost solid and dependable.

From the first idea a project was born. That project became a reality and in 50 years it has grown and prospered - not without encountering challenges which had to be confronted and overcome. Success does not come easily. And if The Little Man has been successful it owes that success to those that gave it birth, nurtured and developed it and to all who contributed and gave it character. The cast both past and present, is extensive: our shareholders and directors, our members of staff, our auditors, our bankers and insurers, our suppliers and all importantly our customers. This is the story of Harris, of all those who have contributed and especially to Andrew, Ralph and Richard - for without them, there would be no story.

There will be more chapters yet to be written by those who have inherited the mantle from those who have gone before.

The Little Man is proof that the ideas of men harnessed to the plough of determination and perseverance, and striving to attain a common goal, can achieve uncommon results.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Jones'.

**Robert Jones**  
Chairman and President

## Acceptance

By Herbert Merrill

“I have perhaps loved overmuch the place, the person and the day,  
And cannot now abide the touch of time that takes them all away.  
I have perhaps tried over hard to bind quicksilver moments fast,  
Stubborn enough to disregard that nothing here can ever last.  
I cannot catch the falling star, nor cup the fire in my hand,  
Forbid the wintertime, or bar the tide from covering the sand,  
And I have learned, at bitter cost, no man can find what he has lost.

# values



# what we do

Harris manufactures and distributes **outstanding quality coatings** developed specifically for Caribbean conditions.

As industry leaders, we provide **expert advice and solutions.**

# why we do it

To **enrich lives** through **colour.**

# how we do it

Making it easier for people to **get the results they want**, creating attractive, safe environments through **innovative solutions.**



# our mission

To **ENRICH** the lives of people wherever Harris chooses to market its products and services.

We will achieve this by producing ideas and inspiration that enable our customers to decorate, enhance and protect their living and working environments with **OUTSTANDING products and solutions** that bring superior **VISUAL DELIGHT** and **LONGER LASTING CARE** to their surroundings.

Belize 





ATLANTIC OCEAN



CARIBBEAN SEA



# chronology



**1972**  
*15 Sep*

Harris Paints starts operations at Carter & Co bond, Corner of Victoria and Middle Streets, Bridgetown, Barbados (repackaging ready-made product)

**1973**  
*15 May*

Manufacturing begins at Lowlands factory, Christ Church, Barbados

*Sept*

Offices and warehousing relocated to the BICO Building, Bay Street, Barbados

**1974**  
*6 May*

Harris is in financial jeopardy compounded by oil crisis and world recession

**1975**  
*Jun*

Lowlands operation closed and entire enterprise relocated to Bay Street premises

**1976**

First exports shipped to agent Ninian Marie, Turkey Lane, Roseau, Dominica

**1978**

First overseas factory established at Fond Cole, Dominica

**1979**  
*1 Oct*

Harris wins valuable distribution deal with sales agents A S Bryden & Sons Ltd

*Oct*

Official opening of new Wildey factory, Christ Church, Barbados

**1980**

Harris pioneers the local manufacture of automotive paints and nitro-cellulose furniture finishes. Troweltex and marine paints are also added to the Harris range

**1981**

Purchase of nail operation and launch of Harris Nail & Wire Works Ltd, Barbados which produced galvanized nails, barbed wire and chain-link fencing

Harris launches in-house canning operation, Wildey, Barbados

**1985**

Dominica exports within OECS including Antigua, St Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, St Vincent and Grenada



**1986**

Dr Jaap Leguijt begins period of technical consultancy that spans approximately 10 years

**1987**  
*29 Oct*

Completion of new modern factory at Canefield Industrial Estate, Dominica

*25 Nov*

Ralph Johnson marks Harris' 15th anniversary year by participating in the international Atlantic Race for Cruisers in locally made boat **Bruggadung**, underlining the company's willingness to take on foreign competition

**1988**  
*21 Apr*

Official opening of Polyfilla plant, Wildey, Barbados manufacturing powder products under license from Polycell through the mid-1990s

Distribution agreement made with Colour World of Paints, Castries, Saint Lucia

**1990**  
*Mar*

Harris Feb Caribbean Inc is formed to manufacture and distribute the Feb range of building products throughout the region

*Aug*

Merger between Harris Automotive and Technical Coatings with Automotive Art

**1991**

Launch of Durashield – the Caribbean's first thixotropic paint

*Aug*

Distributive arrangement launched in Trinidad and Tobago with Laughlin & Degannes but Harris withdraws in Dec 1993 due to adverse conditions

**1992**

Harris invests in US chemical supply company Xport Marketing Services (sells in 2003)

**1993**

Distribution outlet opens at Water Street, Georgetown, Guyana

*Sep*

Harris celebrates 21 years

# chronology



**1994**  
*Aug*

Harris launches Colour Creations – the Caribbean's first computer colour matching system and adds automatic dispensing system by Dec 1996

*Sep*

Small manufacturing plant opens at Massade, Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, to produce Boss Emulsion

**1995**

Harris pioneers water-based enamel (Duragloss Hydro Enamel)

Harris wins Quality Control award from Barbados National Standards Institute

**1998**

Certification programme to meet ISO standards initiates in Barbados and then across the subsidiary companies

**2000**  
*3 Mar*

Harris wins Cuprinol account from major rival and embarks on familiarization trip to UK

*Sep*

First corporate management retreat to develop future vision of company

**2001**  
*Jul*

Official opening of new 15,000 sq ft factory facility at Bois D'Orange, Saint Lucia

*Nov*

A landmark licensing agreement with ICI is signed, effective 1 Jan 2002

**2002**

Harris re-brands architectural paint line and launches Ultima

**2003**

Harris initiates extensive overhaul of regional IT network and financial reporting systems

**2004**

Launch of Devoe Coatings range to develop industrial maintenance sector

**2005**  
*Feb*

Fire destroys retail outlet at Wildey, Barbados

**2006**

Small production plant opens in Guyana to produce Boss Oil

Harris acquires BH, Jamaican paint manufacturer Brandram-Henderson, Kingston

*Sep*

New corporate offices, warehouse facility and retail Colourcentre opens Wildey, Barbados



**2007**

*Apr*

Distribution firm ISI is formed to facilitate the timely supply of goods throughout the region

Agreement with ICI is renewed

**2009**

*Mar*

Harris implements broad-based Enterprise Resource Planning system to facilitate integrated operations around the region

Ian Kenyon is appointed CEO

**2011**

*May*

Strategic alliance with International Paint announced, world leaders in HPCs

*Dec*

BH Jamaica proudly celebrates 50 years

Launch of new mid-range paint line Perma

**2012**

*3 Mar*

St Lucia Manufacturers' Association awards Harris five top prizes for excellence

*15 Jun*

Harris wins four out of five top awards at the National Initiative of Service Excellence Gala including the Prime Minister's Award for service excellence

*Jul*

Harris is first company to achieve Tier 2, Green Business Award, Barbados

*15 Sep*

Harris celebrates 40 years

**2013**

*Apr*

Regional launch of Ulittima Plus brand featuring 5 special technologies in one can.

**2015**

*May*

Barbados wins Productivity Award - Natitional Initiative for Service Excellence

*Jun*

Barbados awarded Tier 5 Green Barbados Business programme

# chronology



**2016**

*Mar*

Saint Lucia wins 4 Diamond Awards (SMA)

*Apr*

First Harris Pro Show expo for trade showcasing pro solutions is held in Barbados

*Oct*

New Commercial Centre opens at Wildey, Barbados

**2017**

*Mar*

Pro Show expo for trade showcasing pro solutions is held in Kingston, Jamaica

*Apr*

Coatings Research Group conference is hosted in Barbados

Project Fusion new POS and ERP implementation begins

*Sep*

Hurricane Maria causes widespread destruction in Dominica

Event to celebrate 45th Anniversary of Harris and the contribution of Chairman Ralph Johnson

Excel decorative brand relaunch with new campaign

*Oct*

First commercial line of paint is launched Pro Speed Cover

Pro Club for contractors is launched

**2018**

*Jan*

Harris joins Nova Paint Club, selected as leading company in the region

*Apr*

Saint Lucia wins 4 Diamond Awards (SMA)

*May*

Dominica break production record

*Aug*

Harris purchases land for new Antigua factory

*Dec*

Robert Jones is appointed Company Chairman



## 2019

*Nov*

Website is relaunched and moved to new platform foundational for ecommerce

Launch of Ulttima Plus Pure - first Zero VOC Interior Paint certified Green Wise Gold

Launch of Colour Design service in Barbados offering home consultations

## 2020

*Mar*

Saint Lucia wins 5 Diamond Awards (SMA)

Covid-19 pandemic takes effect in the Caribbean

Harris brand refresh and introduction of new colour flow

*May*

Founder & Chairman Emeritus Ralph Johnson passes away

*Dec*

BH Paints marks 60 years in business

## 2021

*Feb*

Supply Chain pressures cause challenges around the globe

Massive volcanic eruption in St Vincent devastates north of island. Ash fall causes disruption in Barbados

*Apr*

*Nov*

Sir Charles Williams - longstanding Board Member passes away

Mini Colour Pots introduced in Barbados with first self-service style machine launched at Wildey Colourcentre

## 2022

*Mar*

War with Ukraine - global climate of uncertainty

New Master System dispensers installed in retail outlets across Barbados and Jamaica.

*Oct*

Ulttima Plus with Quantum Technology launched

*Nov*

Harris celebrates 50 years



50



**colourful  
years**



# prime times

Born of humble beginnings, Harris endured several very tough years to survive in the face of market dominance by a much larger competitor. From the very first year of business in Barbados, advertisements bore the little paint can figure in overalls and The Little Man quickly became the symbol of the company, its audacious attitude, confidence in the quality of its products and belief in its ability to deliver unsurpassed customer service despite its diminutive size. In fifty years these have remained the key guiding principles behind Harris.

Today the company's circumstances might appear very different. Harris has factories and offices in six countries, employs approximately 250 people, sells its products in over 15 territories throughout the Caribbean region and serves thousands of clients. However owing to the considerable shift in regional economic policies towards liberalized 'open' markets, Harris must now be able to meet the substantial challenges posed by global players with low-cost extra-regional goods that wish to establish a local presence. Armed with a clear strategy and vision, and lessons learned from the Little Man over five decades, Harris is confident that it has a bright future ahead.

Among the company's strengths has been the ability to access technological platforms in order to provide leading edge products to the Caribbean region. This has been achieved through partner agreements with several international companies and organizations. Such technological arrangements have afforded Harris the opportunity to drive innovation, to benchmark and test product performance and to lead the market in colour and environmentally friendly paints, a position the company has held since the 1980s.

Harris has also been able to implement this strategy to build the broadest portfolio of trusted brand names in a wide range of categories, from paint brushes and tools to high performance coatings; Harris is the most comprehensive one stop coatings supplier in the region.

Harris has been sure to move with the times and was one of the first companies in Barbados certified to meet the international ISO quality management standards in 1998. The maintenance of these certifications attained at regional plants around the region to this day speaks to the high level of operating standards implemented throughout the organization. Significant investment has also been made in re-engineering and upgrading the information technology systems to support a modern, regional business model and future development. Among the company's forward-looking programmes, which include initiatives in Safety, Health and the Environment, is the inspirational Harris Training Academy. This brings together technology and learning to create convenient access to information for employees across departments and Business Units. Employees can find paint and industry resources to refresh and build knowledge– available 24 hours. Additionally, there are a fleet of go-at-your-own pace courses through our partnership with a major online education platforms. While Harris has always strived for excellence the company is finding new creative ways to invest in talent and to better equip them to service customers' needs.

If further testimony was needed, Harris has been proud to be distinguished by several awards. In June 2012, Harris copped four out of the five top prizes by

the Barbados National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE), which underscored the company's achievements as a regional leader in customer service excellence and commitment. Harris was further distinguished in earning the Prime Minister's Award in recognition of their outstanding accomplishments. At the ceremony Harris' Chairman, Ralph Johnson expressed the importance of Harris staff in delivering on their commitment to customer service excellence: "nothing can replace the magic and the awesome power of engaged employees as they can move mountains" and he emphasized the positive impact such initiatives had on customer loyalty and positive brand recognition across the region. Such acclaim has not been limited to Barbados alone. Harris has been recognized on numerous occasions over the years by the St Lucia Manufacturers' Association and again was selected for business year 2021 in the highest category (Diamond), as winner of five quality awards for excellence in the areas of Leadership, Product and Consumer Service Quality, Implementation of Standards and Best Practices, Social Responsibility and Human Resource Management.

While Harris has managed to defy the odds and continues to improve profitability despite the prevailing headwinds and increasing global turbulence, it is equally important to the company's future success to recognize that the road has not always been a smooth one. Critically undercapitalized, Harris faced an extremely serious crisis in 1975 as the ambitious founders grappled to gain a foothold in the Barbados market which was 80% dominated by a single competitor. They later invested in nail and wire production, a category that never really produced satisfactory results; the nail

section was disbanded after about a 10 year detour and the wire and fencing efforts were reluctantly sold off in 2002. While Harris has had a large degree of success regionally, efforts to edge into the super-competitive Trinidad market went spectacularly awry and even prized prospects such as the 2005/6 purchase of the Jamaican company BH Paints, raised a plethora of complex problems and posed a substantial challenge to management to resolve. The company has also had to cope with the untimely passing of several team members and stewards of the business including founders Andrew Phillips in 1996 and Ralph Johnson in 2020.

One of the most winning qualities that Harris has possessed in its 50 years of operations is its overarching resilience, persistence and determination in the face of adversity. To succeed such trials requires drawing on reserves over and above what might normally be expected. CEO, Ian Kenyon says he has seen this time and time again. In 2010 in Jamaica when the Dudus Coke Gang War forced Kingston into virtual lock-down, the team rallied to keep initiatives on track in these inconceivable circumstances. In 2017, when Dominica suffered brutal destruction caused by Hurricane Maria, the team, under their own recognizance, hardly skipped a beat and in 2020, teams around the region

stepped up to the daily challenges and uncertainties of living in a pandemic and found a way to make it work.

As Harris looks forward to the next 50 years they plan to continue to dream big and to be propelled by their passion for colour; the belief that beyond each lifted paint lid is an exciting new outlook, fresh perspective and new possibilities for a better future. Harris remains committed to providing the best products specially designed for the Caribbean region where new walls can lead to new worlds for individuals, families and communities, inspiring colourful changes to delight customers.



*Harris was awarded the Prime Minister's Award for its outstanding accomplishments in 2012. Ralph Johnson receives award from Prime Minister, Hon Freundel Stuart*

# reflections on 50 years

Chairman Robert Jones invested in Harris from the start and though much of the time he was based in Venezuela, he has been an active Director and closely participated in strategic discussions and Board meetings from inception. He became more involved with Harris from the early 2000s and more recently relocated back to Barbados, his country of birth, and as the principal shareholder, assumed the leadership of the Harris Group of Companies. He shares some insights on the last five decades.

Chairman Robert Jones invested in Harris from the start and though much of the time he was based in Venezuela, he has been an active Director and closely participated in strategic discussions and Board meetings from inception. He became more involved with Harris from the early 2000s and more recently relocated back to Barbados, his country of birth, and as the principal shareholder, assumed the leadership of the Harris Group of Companies. Below he shares some insights on the last five decades.

## How did you first get involved in Harris Paints?

“The initial conversations around starting a paint company, I understand, took place between Andrew Phillips and Richard Carter and as they were both already managing business, they contacted Ralph Johnson. When Ralph looked at the idea, it was clear that they needed capital to try and make a go of it, so he then reached out to friends and relatives to invest in the venture, so I think that’s probably the first time I remember hearing about it.”

## How did you develop your business acumen?

“When I joined my father’s insurance brokerage firm in Venezuela I learned that there is a huge difference between theoretical learning and the practicality of the real world. I learned a huge amount from my father and the fact that we had a small operation meant we insured everything. Nothing was too small or too big for us to do. It gave me the opportunity to learn about different businesses. I got the chance to see how all types of businesses worked from large multinationals to smaller family-owned

companies and how they dealt with different issues across all types of sectors from manufacturing, retailing, wholesaling etc. so it gave me the opportunity to get involved, at least from the periphery and to see how the dynamics differed from one type of business to another.

I think I’ve learned the most from watching people I’ve worked closely with and being able to see how they operated. Working with my father I learned that success is largely dependent on really hard work. You not only need to be able to visualize, but it’s the ability to focus and execute that really makes the difference.

I also learned a lot from my involvement with Harris, particularly from Richard Carter, who was the quiet one of the group. Andrew and Ralph were both big, exuberant characters with big vision and Richard, I’d say was the steadying influence. He had a lot of experience and was very willing to share and guide. He made a tremendous contribution to Harris’ success in the formative years which shouldn’t be underestimated. I found it very valuable not only seeing how influential people worked in the business field but also how they lived their lives and interacted with people; it was a big lesson. One very much drives the other.”

## What are your memories of the early days?

“As I remember, there wasn’t any formal business plan, and I suspect that was one of the problems in getting funding from the bank, plus we didn’t own anything. We rented all the first locations we operated at. We didn’t have any assets to pledge as collateral and our first loans were provided by joint

and several guarantees. It is really thanks to those people who supported us in what we were trying to do that helped us get a leg up, until we could actually build our own factory at Wildey in 1979.”

### **What are some of the keys behind Harris’ success?**

“When we first started out it was a challenge to break into the market and win consumers’ trust. Producing quality products that we could stand behind was the cornerstone of the business coupled with service. As the company has developed, that has broadened into finding new technologies or new ways of doing things which has been key to staying competitive. We pride ourselves in being able to provide the most complete product portfolio for any coating solution. We’ve earned a name as people who innovate and I think the company has been very successful at actively going out there and searching for opportunities and making that happen. We have never compromised on the quality of our product.

Another area of differentiation is the fact that we run operations across several countries in the Caribbean. Our regional footprint is important to us. Most paint companies in the world would tell you that is very inefficient and makes no sense whatsoever to have multiple small factories. They would probably set up a big factory in Florida and ship everything down, but we try, as much as possible, to operate at a local level and actually become a part of the local fabric of the communities in which we operate. We believe this is what regional companies should do.

In terms of leadership: we were fortunate to recruit Ian Kenyon who has brought a wealth of international knowledge of the industry and implemented international standards. In the last few years, we have introduced external Board members who have different areas of expertise. This provides another point of view and these individuals normally ask a lot of questions that maybe persons working inside the company would not, and that sparks conversation and ideas and contributes to the overall strength of the Board. When you have a strong Board working in harmony with a strong executive, I think you have a strong operation.”

### **In your opinion has Harris made any notable missteps?**

“The obvious one that jumps out to me was the nail and fencing company. Andrew found the opportunity and we lapped it up. We thought it was a great idea but we didn’t do





*The Little Man became the well-known symbol of the Harris Brand.*

our homework. It wasn't quite what we were expecting but you know we were young and thought we were smart enough to make it work. Eventually we had to face facts and we decided to sell the business and it was the best decision we ever made. I think the lesson there was, if you make a mistake – and you're guaranteed to make some mistakes – you've got to recognize it early and cut your losses, because otherwise it just absorbs a lot of time, which is probably even more valuable to the business than money. When we decided to make automotive paint, we were much quicker to understand that we had no route to market for the product. We partnered with Dereck Foster and Hugh Blades and Automotive Art was born. One of the things I've learned, is to be aware of short-term pressures. If you are going to be successful, you need a long-term vision and build for 10-15 years out and understand the consequences of your decisions."

### **What accomplishment has made you most proud?**

"I think Harris was very fast off the mark to introduce point of sale tinting when we launched Harris Colour Creations. Everything was ready-mixed up to that time. We were the first in the market to introduce computer colour matching and the company did an excellent job in doing the preparatory work, planning, packaging and rolling out of the new system. We realized we didn't have anyone in house who could focus on it so Ralph got hold of his brother-in-law Mike Riley, who I think had recently graduated and was not yet working and he was able to step in. He did an excellent job leading the initiative and it was launched on budget, quicker than anything we had done before. That is something we really got right. We saw the opportunity and implemented it seamlessly.



*Robert Jones discusses Master system developments with founder of Alfa srl, Edoardo Rossetti.*

Again, with our new Master System – here's a little company that is bucking the trend worldwide. We are first movers on a whole new approach to tinting paint. Harris not only put itself in the position to be exposed to leading edge ideas but we were very quick to grasp the significance of it and understand the impact it could have on our business and its benefits. So, I think that is an incredible achievement and will open up a lot of other opportunities.”

### **What global trends do you think will be impacting business in the future?**

“I'd say the biggest one is global warming. We're already seeing more extreme weather events as well as severe droughts and water shortages in various parts of the world. As water gets scarcer, the consequences are becoming apparent. Energy availability and cost will be impacted. Our ability to produce food crops in a sustainable manner will be under threat and there's more chance of social unrest. So, we need to take a very hard look at what we all can do. At Harris Barbados we have installed solar panels on our buildings and will be expanding the project across the region as local regulation allows. We are actively looking at a number of initiatives around water conservation and treatment. We need to continuously be looking at ways to improve and to take advantage of new technologies that reduce impacts wherever feasible.”

### **What do you think is in Harris' future?**

“I would like to see the company increase its footprint. There is still a lot of opportunity in the region, but I think we have the potential to service extra-regional markets as well. This would allow us to earn foreign exchange which would reduce currency exposures and improve our financial resilience. In spite of our success, we remain a very small player in a segment that has seen major consolidation in recent years.

My idea of success for Harris would be when somebody wakes up and they want a coating solution, they automatically think Harris. And if you're in school and want a career, you think about coming to Harris. We need to be able to attract the best talent if we are to achieve our goals.

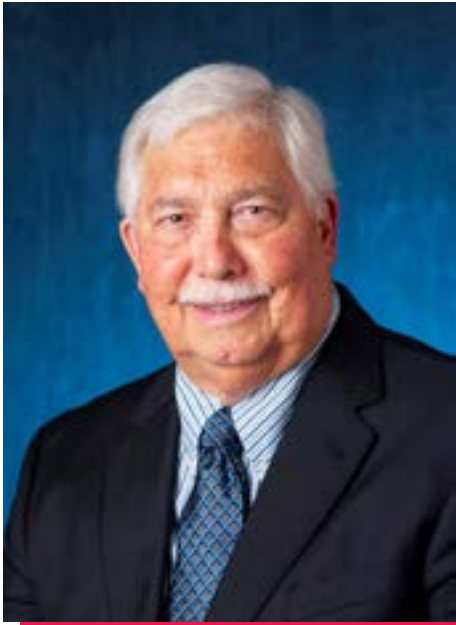
It is nice that we've got to 50 but like a batsman in cricket, you really want the 100 and then the double century. For the people who make up Harris and that are involved in making the company better, that's the mindset, that we will build a company that will be here for a long time to come and which they will be proud to be a part of.”

### **How do you feel on this occasion, marking 50 years of Harris?**

“Well, I'm 75 years old and Harris has been a very big portion of my life. I am immensely proud of what Harris has achieved and it's wonderful to have played a part. If I was able to get the report card from Andrew, Richard and Ralph, I think they would all tell you the same thing: Harris has, by a long way, exceeded all their expectations.”



# directors



## Robert Jones

Chairman and President

Robert Jones was born in Barbados and attended Lodge School and later St Andrew's College and Bishop's University in Canada. He later studied at the Royal Insurance Company in London before joining his father's brokerage business in Caracas in 1969, commuting regularly to the family home in Barbados.

A contemporary of Andrew Phillips, Robert first heard of the Harris project from his brother-in-law Ralph Johnson and the idea instantly appealed. He became one of the first shareholders and always believed that Harris could be a great success. Over the

years he has developed and maintained his interest in Harris while looking after his own business and real estate investments in Venezuela, Barbados and Guyana.

For the past ten years Robert has been able to spend increasing amounts of time in Barbados which has allowed him to take a more active role at Harris since December 2005; he plays an important part in shaping the future vision of the company in his position as Chairman.



## Ian Kenyon

Chief Executive Officer

Ian Kenyon is British by birth, Canadian by citizenship and Caribbean by choice. He received a BSC Hons Degree in Human Psychology from Loughborough University and 1984, joined the UK division of ICI Paints, which was then the largest paint and chemicals company in the world. For the first six years Ian participated in market research, sales, brand management and national account management before being appointed Managing Director for ICI's Benelux division (two years); followed by an international role to lead ICI's global Innovation team.

In 1997, he became the Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at ICI Canada and quickly moved into the role of GM of ICI's Canadian Dealer Division where he led

a team generating over USD\$100 million in new business in five years. In 2005 he was appointed President and GM of ICI Paints, Puerto Rico, and he managed the International Export and Licensing business through which he first met the team at Harris Paints.

Ian was delighted to join the Harris team as CEO in 2009 and has since led the company to successive year-on-year growth and profitability milestones. Ian participates on the Executive and Boards of many key international industry organizations and over his career he has lead teams that won the UK DIY Award for Innovation in 1994, the Home Depot Canada award for Best Innovation 2004 and the Prime minister's Award for Innovation in Barbados in 2012.



## Mac Anderson

Mac Anderson has been involved with Harris Paints since 2013, and an active member of the Board since 2018.

A Canadian citizen, Mac brings a valuable perspective to Harris with 35 years of corporate and commercial banking experience, with major Canadian banks. He was promoted to successively senior management positions in Calgary, Toronto, New York, Miami, and the Caribbean. Most recently, he was the senior executive responsible for corporate treasury at a large, private, Caribbean based company.

A graduate of Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, Mac has a degree in Economics and International Relations. He further completed numerous graduate level courses in Finance, and Human Resources over the course of his career.

Mac is also actively involved in his community and currently does volunteer work with persons with physical disabilities. He is a past President of his local Rotary Club, and Chamber of Commerce.



## Marguerite Desir

Born in Saint Lucia, Marguerite spent the first 15 years of her career in the public sector in Government and in the banking industry. She worked with two major banks holding progressive positions in areas such as Customer Service Management, Personal Finance and Loans, Human Resources Management, Marketing, Operations and Administration. She spent a further two years in the telecoms industry with Cable and Wireless (now FLOW) as Head of Customer Service, with responsibilities for the overall customer experience in Saint Lucia.

Marguerite joined the Harris Paints team in the role of Human Resource and Marketing Manager and then Regional Human Resource Manager in her first three years. She has worked with Harris for over 16 years, and is currently the Senior Vice President, Human

Resources for the Group, as well as Head of Business for Antigua, Dominica, Guyana and Saint Lucia, overseeing the general management and direct sales functions in these countries and the markets they export to.

Having earned a Master's Degree from the University of the West Indies, Marguerite also holds several other Leadership and Business Management qualifications. She has participated in several Executive Leadership Development programmes throughout the years including the Duke of Edinburgh Commonwealth Study Conference in Australia and Beyond Excellence Customer Service programme in the UK, where she was able to review the operations of several Fortune 500 companies in manufacturing, retailing and distribution globally.

Marguerite is currently the re-elected President of St Lucia Manufacturers' Association (SMA) and is committed to the overall development of the sector.



## Andrew Fairley

Originally from Canada, Andrew attended the University of British Columbia and IESE in Barcelona Spain, before completing his accounting qualifications in the UK.

As a UK citizen, he started working with Unilever near London, focused on implementing ERP systems in South Africa, Egypt and Argentina. In 1982, he moved to Guinness PLC in audit and was seconded to Spain in order to establish new processes and controls in Cruzcampo, which was a newly acquired subsidiary. He was then promoted to CFO of Jos International Breweries in Plateau State, Nigeria which put him in good stead to later help reestablish the Laurentina Brewery in Maputo, Mozambique

which had been dormant after many years of communist rule. From there he moved to Venezuela to work in the spirits side of the business, ultimately becoming responsible for Finance in Latin America for Diageo and Production of Cacique Rum.

After working in mergers and acquisitions, principally in India, China and Korea, and also establishing a start-up food distribution company in Caracas, Andrew moved to Barbados in 2012 to work for Harris as Vice President Finance and IT. He retired in 2020 but is still actively involved in the business as a Non-Exec Board member and on the Finance Sub-Committee.



## Michael Jones

Michael Jones was born in Venezuela and grew up between Venezuela and Barbados. He studied at Colegio Internacional de Caracas, and then went on to study at Lynn University and Southampton Solent University.

In between studies Michael spent time in Tulum, Mexico where he grew interested in Scuba Diving while promoting Marine Conservation. He later went on to get certified as a PADI Open Water Instructor with various specialty certifications. Michael is also a very keen sailor, and after circumnavigating the globe in the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race, he became a RYA Ocean Yacht Master.

In 2017 he initiated Green Manor Farm, an environmentally sustainable aquaponics farm looking to produce fresh local, chemical free produce to the community. Michael has been a Director for various family owned and run businesses since 2015 and was appointed to the Board of Harris Paints in 2019.



## Richard Jones

Richard Jones was born in Caracas, Venezuela. He attended the Colegio Internacional de Caracas in Venezuela and then the University of Salford in England. After leaving England, Richard returned home to Barbados for a period and later moved for a short time to Costa Rica to further his study and to benefit from an immersive cultural experience and unique environment.

On completion, he returned to Barbados and in 2017 he co-founded and continues to operate a family-owned aquaponics farm. Richard has a passion for the environment and an interest in promoting sustainability, water conservation and eco-friendly practices.

In addition to his role handling administration and finance, Richard serves on several family company Boards and in 2019 he joined the Board for the Harris Group.



## David Tindale

Born and educated in England, David Tindale obtained a Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Manchester. In 1973, he moved to Barbados and taught Mathematics and Physics at St. Winifred's School and Queen's College. He also worked as an Engineer at Intel before joining Harris Paints in 1983. Initially, his focus was on the newly formed Harris Nail & Wire Works operation, then upgrades in the Paint factory to accommodate new product lines and the construction of the new factory in Dominica.

He was promoted to General Manager in 1987 and then Managing Director, fulfilling a leading role in Harris Paints Barbados and a senior executive post in the regional organization for some 25 years before

retiring in November 2009. During that time he initiated the relationships with Cuprinol and ICI and developed the first point of sale colour matching and automatic tinting technology to be deployed in the Caribbean. He was also involved in the development of the business as a regional entity including the acquisition of Brandram-Henderson (West Indies) Limited in Jamaica at the end of 2005.

Today, he is still actively involved with the Company and manages the real estate in Barbados whilst serving as a Director on all of the Harris Group Boards.



## C O Williams Group

represented by Neil Weekes

C O Williams Construction Limited had its modest start back in 1960 as a small enterprise when founder, Sir Charles Williams, started providing relatively simple earth-moving and agricultural cultivation services using a single tractor. The company was officially incorporated in 1970 and is today one of the Caribbean's leading and most respected civil engineering and highway construction companies, providing services across the region from its headquarters in Barbados and regional offices in Antigua and Saint Lucia. It is affiliated with numerous other companies serving construction-related sectors.

Neil Weekes earned a Pharmaceutical Chemistry Bachelor's degree from the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK and is a Postgraduate of the School of Civil Engineering, University of Birmingham, UK. He returned to Barbados and since 1998 has been employed by the C O Williams Group of Companies where he is currently the General Manager at C O Williams Construction Limited and C O Williams Asphalt & Quarries Limited and he additionally serves on the Boards of several of the Group's companies.

Neil has directly managed the diversification of the C O Williams Group and is realizing the execution of the vision to be one of the leading companies in the field of civil engineering and highway construction and general contracting in Barbados and the Caribbean.





Hand-picked to lead the company to new heights some 13 years ago, CEO Ian Kenyon was recruited from blue-chip industrial chemical giant ICI. On joining, Ian brought with him 25 years of world-class experience in the coatings industry with a specialty in sales, marketing and business strategy. As a senior executive he consistently exceeded profit and cash objectives year on year at ICI businesses in the UK, Europe, North America and the Caribbean. A shrewd negotiator he secured many valuable contracts for ICI, not least of which being the current contract with Harris, and achieved incremental revenue streams of over USD 100 million for the business in Canada. A strong advocate of innovation, Ian led the UK team that won the UK DIY Best Innovation Award in 1994 and then, in 2004 led the Canadian team that won Innovation of the Year from Home Depot. He was also the lead executive responsible for winning Vendor of the Year Awards with three of the largest retailers in the world: Home Depot, WalMart and RONA, an accomplishment that has never been achieved before or since.

*This is an excerpt from an interview in which Ian candidly reveals how he joined Harris, the focus of the company and what the face of the future will look like.*

# an interview with Ian Kenyon, CEO

## How did you first become involved with Harris?

“Actually while I was working for ICI, I was brought in to help negotiate the terms of a collaborative agreement. Our meetings on that day in 2007 were fairly tense but I do remember being struck by the passion and conviction of the Harris team and the company’s potential for growth. For the first time during my career, I found myself thinking that I could imagine working for a company like this. It was just a passing whim and I honestly never thought anything would ever come of it or that it would turn out as it has.”

## What led to you joining the Harris team?

“Well the seed was undoubtedly planted at the meeting to renew the contract between ICI and Harris. In all my travels I had met a lot of top quality companies but I had never considered leaving ICI to join any of them. However something changed for me at that meeting in Barbados. Whether it was the sea air or the rum punch or just the sense of a small family run company, the underdog but with strong core values taking on the big blue chip companies, it all combined to make me think that if ever an opportunity arose at Harris I would be more than interested. That said it was still a complete but very welcome surprise to receive a phone call from Robert Jones who told me that Harris was looking for a CEO and asked if I would

be interested in meeting him to discuss it in Toronto! This was followed by a meeting with the executives in Barbados just prior to Christmas 2008. It was a big decision but overwhelmingly, I could see that Harris had such a tremendous opportunity for growth; even in spite of Ralph’s tales of terrifying airplane misadventures in precariously situated airstrips around the Caribbean, I decided to take the offer.”

## What were some of the immediate challenges?

“From about 2006 Harris had undertaken a number of ambitious initiatives virtually simultaneously, aimed at taking the company to the next level. To implement these initiatives, spending was at unsustainably high levels and on joining I found the company on the brink of a cash crisis. To put it another way, if Harris was an in-patient at the local hospital we would have been in intensive care! So within the first few months I was forced to take action and to reduce staff overhead by mainly cutting a number of management positions. It was a very difficult situation. Very quickly we had to identify other areas where operational efficiency could be enhanced. One of the main focuses was on reducing the operational complexity that had been created through a proliferation of inventory or SKU (stock-keeping unit) records. These had crept up to a mind-boggling number to almost triple the amount a huge company like Akzo Nobel would have. By simplifying the number of stock

keeping units it meant that other processes such as raw material ordering, forecasting and production could become much more straightforward. There was an enormous amount of work to be done to strip back the scale of complexity that had built up in order to have simpler, more focused and more effective systems in place. This work continues today and in fact will never stop as we strive to become world class.”

### **Has the focus of the company changed?**

“Harris was born out of a desire to provide customers with more choice, better value and premium products and service, and the customer is still very much at the heart of what we do. The company has never compromised on quality in the can and is as committed as ever to providing superlative coatings that are rated best by test. Listening to customers is fundamental to everything that we do. That is what the Little Man stands for and it is at the core of the Harris philosophy. By truly understanding the customer’s perspective and challenges we are then best able to offer the most suitable solutions to meet their specific requirements. To ensure that we maintain a tight focus on this objective, Harris actively measures and monitors customer satisfaction through independent quantitative surveys every year. In fact, the more the business environment changes the more important it is that we stay true to our customer-centric point of view.”

### **What developments have you seen in the retail sector?**

“Retail has changed significantly. Just as in virtually any other field, increased competition and a harsh economic environment forces us all to get a little sharper in order to survive. The market expectation is dramatically different. Retailers are looking for partners to help them maximize space. Today sales people cannot just expect to turn up and take an order. Now it is about category management and helping stores measure returns and to grow their businesses. Of course over the last 30 years Harris has led the in-store tinting proposition around the Caribbean which introduced customers to a whole new world of colour options beyond the standard colour card. Such sophisticated innovations have helped position Harris as leaders in colour. Nevertheless, retail shelf space remains of optimum importance in maintaining brand presence and ready-mixed products for grab-and-go customers are likely to remain an important part of our offer for a long time to come.”

### **How would you describe your management philosophy?**

“The measure of a successful business is its people and its ideas so I believe that getting people into the game is crucial. Successful business management is about winning the hearts and minds of a team that wants to perform. That’s how objectives are really achieved. I’d say I’m a straight talker; I aim to be open and honest and to do my best to share the facts and the information with people within the organization and to be open to input from all levels. It is no good

having a wonderful vision of the future if no one else is on board; you have to take the team with you. We also regularly survey staff to see how effectively for example, management is listening. I am particularly proud of the number of initiatives that Harris employees have activated to bring about improvements in areas such as efficiency, personal development and environmental responsibility. Since 2012 when Harris, in conjunction with the National Initiative of Service Excellence (NISE) was awarded top honours and bestowed with the Prime Minister’s Award in recognition of these achievements, the company has gone on to build on these successes and make great gains.”

### **How will Harris continue to compete in the future?**

“We are going to continue to build on what we have been doing for 50 years, supplying premium quality coatings designed for the Caribbean climate and distributed throughout the wider region. We will continue to combine in-house experience and access to global technology platforms to utilize cutting-edge technology. This will enable us to offer a leading and wide ranging portfolio of innovative top-performing products and brands, delivered on time and in full. Further to this we intend to invest in our people. Harris will continue to develop its team and network of trained representatives that are equipped with local knowledge and are uniquely positioned to build relationships, service and support clients’ needs.”

### What future developments do you think customers will see from the paint industry?

“For over 8 000 years man has been using paint; it is one of the oldest categories in existence. In fact liquid surface coatings continue to be the simplest and most effective way of protecting and applying colour to a substrate. I think in the future we will see more and more product developments that integrate technological advancements to enhance the properties of paint or specialized coatings. We are already seeing films that utilize additives such as Teflon and ceramic micro-spheres to create an extra-strong, resistant surface highly suited for use in heavily trafficked areas; there are special roof coatings that absorb energy so well that they can reduce the temperature in a house by six degrees; in places such as Malaysia paint coatings are used to help keep insects at bay through special time release capsules of insecticide held within the paint film. Not only will paints be able to do more but consumer demand will drive the need for increased convenience. There will be more two-in-one product innovations as well as improved application systems that will make painting easier than ever before. Above all I think industry and technological partnerships will become essential to innovation-oriented companies such as Harris; this will be key to access options to deliver these types of additional benefits that broaden paint performance and answer specific customer needs while providing longer-lasting good looks; an objective that Harris has been dedicated to since day one and that will never change.”

### Outside of the business environment, what has been one of the most memorable aspects of living in the Caribbean?

“You know as a boy in the UK, I used to play county cricket for Essex and every junior player dreams of coming to the Caribbean and particularly to the Kensington Oval – It is, you could say, a Mecca to cricket lovers. So getting to experience Kensington Oval first hand has been really special. I went on my very first trip to Barbados in 2007 to a 20:20 cricket match and on another occasion I went to a concert there and had a chance to actually walk on the grass and that for me was a truly magical moment! Since I've been living in Barbados I've played a couple of tape ball matches with the Harris Cricket team and realized that if we ever decided to stop selling paint we could start a cricket team as we have some seriously talented cricketers in the Harris Business! Unbelievably, one day while I was walking on Accra beach there was a guy playing beach cricket with a couple of Barbadian kids and the ball rolled over to me, when I went to hand it back I realized it was Mike Atherton (former English Cricket Captain). What was even more amazing is he invited me to play, so there I was playing a couple of overs of cricket with a former English team Captain on a beach in Barbados. I don't think it gets much better than that!”

Ian who is British/Canadian describes himself as a devoted family man. He has been married to wife Wendy for 34 years and has three children, Melissa (32), Ross (24) and Eleanor (22).

“**F**ind people that are better than you, who are experts in their field. Look for people who are passionate, can add knowledge and have a strong desire to succeed and then know how to move out of the way!”

*Ian Kenyon*



# Harris founders



## Andrew Phillips

1946-1996

For nearly 25 years Andrew Phillips was a significant guiding figure in the Harris Paints enterprise though he never held a post within the company except for a few short years after 1993. He was the driving force behind many of the initiatives that contributed to the growth and expansion of the business. In recognition of his invaluable contribution, the board of directors gifted him a number of shares in 1990, in appreciation of the countless hours and numerous duties he carried out on the company's behalf in the 17 years he had already served as Chairman.

Phillips, who was probably no more than 25 years old at the time, is credited with the vision of starting a local paint manufacturing operation, an audacious idea which was backed by the support of friend Richard Carter. With the extensive knowledge of the paint industry they shared, the two sensed an opportunity.

After school, Andrew set out to find a job and he quickly seemed to settle into a sales position at Berger Paints. When in 1967 he was passed over for a promotion he felt deeply that he deserved, the 21 year old young man with ambition became frustrated. But the disappointment was to prove the impetus to start his own business. With the experience he gained in the paint industry, he noticed that there were no independent professional paint contracting services outside that of the handyman or teams operated by construction firms. Perhaps spurred on by potential plans to marry, the young Andrew charged forward in setting up Caribbean Painting Services (CPS) with partner Charles Colley and a selected support team.

It was no secret that by this time Andrew had been courting Wynona Taylor, a petite and pretty Trinidadian girl. Although Wynona claims she was not that impressed when she first met him, the two became a steady item and many of the CPS meetings and early work was done from the front gallery of her family home in St Lawrence Gap. Wynona and Andrew wed in April 1968 and by the end of that year CPS was growing so fast Andrew was working around the clock. By 1970 the company moved to new offices in Whitepark Road and while they diversified into other home improvement areas, Andrew felt the growth of paint contracting services was being constrained by poor service and

unfavourable pricing policies of the existing paint suppliers of the day. In what would become his trademark style, Andrew refused to be thwarted and discussed the issue with Richard Carter, whose family hardware business sold paint and would surely be similarly affected – the rest, as they say, is history!

There is no doubt that Harris benefited enormously from the contacts and experience of the founders and Directors especially in those critical early years.

Andrew, who always seemed wise beyond his years, lent tremendous support to the early team particularly to Director and General Manager, Ralph Johnson, who had been selected to lead the operation and to book-keeper Linda Marshall who largely dealt



*Andrew looks on as winner of prize draw is announced c.1982*

with administration and company financial matters. He was always present at weekly management meetings and that dedication to the success of Harris never faltered.

After Ralph had established an outlet in Dominica with Ninian Marie and the operation was damaged in Hurricane David, Andrew became very involved in the creation of the new Harris manufacturing site there, developing a deep fondness for the island. He was an advocate for the Harris Nail & Wire Works which also produced fencing of which he became a chief buyer in Barbados (for the company he established in the 1980s Fencing and Industrial Coatings Limited). When Harris undertook a partnership with Automotive Art he provided valuable mentorship and guidance. In no place was his opinion more respected than in the boardroom and as Chairman, a post which he held from inception until his passing in 1996. His famous no nonsense approach kept meetings focused and moving forward.

Not only was he imposing in stature at 6' 4" tall, Andrew also had a bold character, immense energy with which he attacked all that interested him, keen ideas and the will to succeed at whatever he put his hand to. His competitive spirit found form not only in business but in the worlds of motorsport, polo and golf in which he participated with gusto throughout his life. Andrew was to be found in the thick of things, not as a mere bystander.

It is fitting that on the 50th anniversary of Harris we recognize the legacy of Andrew Phillips whose contribution has been immeasurable.

**“I** now move to the problems facing us for the future. We cannot meet this challenge quietly – we must be aggressive in our marketing, reacting quickly to market changes. We must be prudent in our spending. We must look to expand sales in the areas where we are not the market leader. We must pay strict attention to our investments in the region and see that they give us a proper return on our money.”

*Andrew Phillips to the Harris Board of Directors,  
14 November 1992*

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# Harris founders



## Richard Carter

Without a doubt Richard Carter played an inextricable role in the history and founding of Harris Paints and it was in part due to his open-mindedness, vision and willingness to 'break the mould' that gave rise to the creation of the dynamic local manufacturing company dedicated to quality and service. It is hard to believe that such an accomplishment and vast undertaking came about as a tangent to the main focus of his career which was the successful management of the Carter & Co Ltd family business.

As a young boy Richard grew up with his siblings in the Strathclyde neighbourhood on the outskirts of Bridgetown and later attended Lodge School. While surely he became accustomed to the talk and activity surrounding his father's family's High Street general store, he ended up working with his maternal grandfather at Society Plantation, St Joseph gaining valuable experience farming and eventually managing the estate.

During the 1960s Richard married his wife Priscilla and they started a family, the first of their two daughters arriving in 1965. Outside of work Richard took part in Barbados Rally Club events, even occasionally travelling overseas as in 1967 when he took part in the Carreras Rally in Jamaica, taking home the prize for the highest placing overseas entrant.

Having tested his mettle in the world of work, Richard joined his father to help manage Carter & Co Ltd in 1969 and the experience he gained planting provided invaluable insight. While staying faithful to the values and guiding principles of the business, Richard was keen to meet the changing demands of customers and the market. In the coming years the company expanded, adding locations outside of Bridgetown with better accessibility and parking. He developed the agro-chemical side of the company to better meet modern needs and he realized that hardware needed to change to service not just professionals but to appeal to the rising number of domestic or do-it-yourself customers.

Unlike the present day, in 1970 there were few paint brands in Barbados and therefore there was little choice for customers and no leverage for better terms and conditions available to retailers. Norman Simpson who headed Carter's High Street store often complained to Richard about his frustrations and the limitations it placed on the business. No one understood this more than Andrew Phillips who operated a significant paint contracting business and together with Richard the two decided finally to do something about it.

It was a hard road establishing Harris in what turned out to be a particularly difficult economic time especially 1973-1974 and despite the challenges, the Directors shared a determination to stick it out. While Andrew had lots of experience in the commercial market, Richard provided the retail perspective and was especially useful in helping create a cost structure that would provide workable margins for all levels of the industry. He stood behind the products and when Carter & Co added Harris to their shelves it was a considerable recommendation from a store of such distinguished reputation.

In so many ways Richard provided immense support to the new company. Linda Marshall, who would have been responsible for administrative and financial matters, remembers that he was incredibly generous with his time and was always willing to sit down with anyone to discuss issues and how they could best be resolved. He was always open and approachable; fair-minded and willing to listen.

As Harris gained momentum and became more firmly established, Richard felt the need to refocus on the development and management of Carter & Co Ltd (which had added two other properties to the High Street location in 1974, an office and warehouse in Barbarees Hill and a small store in Wildey) and announced his decision to step down from the Board. The thought of losing such an important member was a hard blow for the tightly knit Harris family and though they respected his decision in light of his other responsibilities, in the minutes of the Directors Meeting of 31 October 1978, they pressed him to reconsider.

Although not formally linked, Carter & Co continued to have an excellent relationship with Harris sharing ideas, participating in sales programmes and providing feedback to the company. Under the leadership of Richard Carter, Carter & Co has established the widest network of hardware stores in Barbados and is considered to be the number one paint and hardware store, stocking Harris continuously for 50 years.

Harris would like to take the opportunity to express their deepest appreciation to founder Richard Carter for his critical contribution in establishing Harris and the continued support of Carter & Co Ltd.



*Founder Richard Carter receives recognition award 1997, presented by Ralph Johnson.*

# Harris founders



## Ralph Johnson

1939-2020

Known to be a colourful character, Ralph won a measure of infamy through his early exploits in motorsport, captivating crowds at Rally Club events and the Bushy Park race track before he became widely known for his association with Harris Paints.

It was second nature to Ralph to put the full force of his personality behind the business and to put the business into every aspect of life he entered. More than any other figure Ralph became synonymous with the brand particularly in the years he served as

Managing Director, often hailed by passing strangers as 'Mr Harris'. Ralph continued to champion the company to success in Barbados, the Caribbean and beyond.

The eldest of six children, Ralph grew up in the Deacons and Westbury Road neighbourhood, a modest suburb of Bridgetown and spent many hours as a child in the family's small restaurant operations in Bridgetown learning the nuts and bolts of business at the knee of his Grandfather and Uncle. He left school at 16 and found work to contribute to the household income.

Like many young men Ralph would grow to enjoy the night scene which was thriving in the 1960s and so perhaps, it wasn't surprising that he was drawn in to help manage the family-owned night club operation known as Mary's Moustache in St Lawrence Gap. Eventually the spot was bought out to make way for a hotel and with a flair for hospitality and entertainment he started a new club on the corner of Deacons Road and Black Rock in 1970 known as The Cat's Whiskers. In addition to the bar business he was hiring international acts and was managing bands which included both The Merryman for a period and the Sand Pebbles. So a career change was certainly the farthest thing from his mind.

It was just a year or two later that Ralph learned of the daring proposal to break into the paint market from Andrew Phillips and Richard Carter and he was suitably enough impressed to consider investing. However the two felt Ralph could play a larger role and would be well suited to help them raise money and the investment that was needed with his broad range of contacts. Without a doubt the nightclub scene was changing and

possibly the prospect of prolonged night-work seemed less attractive to Ralph who was now in his early thirties. The proposal gave him pause for thought. This would be a chance to get in on the ground floor, to build and have a shareholding in the business going forward. It was an enormous gamble he decided to take.

It is said that an entrepreneur tends to bite off a little more than he can chew and then hopes he will quickly learn how to chew it and this aptly describes the plunge the three founders took in those initial years which Phillips once described in an interview as "traumatic". Ralph confirms it was a struggle of Titanic proportions. Due to severe under-capitalization the company was in crisis mode for nearly the entire first four years. However Ralph was immensely proud that the share capital of the company was raised completely locally and they were able to establish the only locally owned, managed and directed paint factory.

The challenges were numerous and none was greater than sales. "It was exceedingly tough to convince the Barbadian public that we could produce top quality products to rival what was coming in from outside, in our own backyard" remembered Ralph Johnson. From the beginning the company was founded on service and Harris pioneered many customer service activities that are taken for granted today but were not accepted practices in the industry at that time.

"We would exchange paint; we put a lot of pride and effort in to our in-store displays replacing any damaged goods without question. We would do whatever was necessary to win customers and keep them, even if it meant making multiple deliveries or after-hours service."

During his tenure as Managing Director and later as Chairman, the company was dedicated to leading innovation and bringing top technology to the region.

Over the years Harris accomplished many pioneering achievements; “The Little Man’ always had to think big” and distinguished itself through continued investment in research and development. Ralph was keen to point out that the company was first to introduce a number of products and services including the first Caribbean paint brand to introduce water-based enamels and varnishes; first to establish and market retail colour-matching technology; first to manufacture and supply a full range of building chemicals and Harris led the way in providing product training seminars in islands throughout the Caribbean to name a few. In addition Ralph was a vocal exponent on economic and trade matters for the manufacturing sector serving as President of the Barbados Manufacturers’ Association for two terms from 1990 to 1992.

Notwithstanding, Ralph always felt that activities out of the office were equally important. It is outside the office, he would say, that life really happens, where you meet people, make contacts and come across ideas. When people would sometimes ask him if Harris had a warranty he was comfortable telling them “You know where to find me. What more warranty do you need?”

He was arguably just as committed and passionate about his many sporting pursuits over the years, which he pursued with an energy and enthusiasm second to none (and for which he has become renowned). However it was not all fun and games. Ralph put in a remarkable number of hours on individual sporting associations and through his position on the Barbados Olympic Committee, to further his commitment and tremendous support of youth sport in Barbados.

Ralph was always cautious to temper the fairy tale when considering the level of success he and the Harris team have been able to accomplish. When drawn on the point, he confessed with a wry slightly sheepish smile: “You know, there were really no ‘Yes!’ moments...it was a long, hard grind”. To make a sporting analogy, it is almost never talent alone that rises above the rest, but it is the athlete of some promise who applies unrelenting hard work, persistence and dedication to his task that wins the day.



*Ralph accepts the Icon of Industry Award from then Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Mia Mottley, November 2006*

# advertising and marketing

## The Harris Little Man

The little paint can icon has been around as long as the company itself and by 1974 was a regular feature in advertising materials. Since then the Little Man has been a fixture at Harris standing up for customers and delivering quality, choice and service.

Coming out of the 1960s Barbados was a newly Independent nation and the world had just undergone some of the most sweeping social, cultural and political changes of the century. The image of the Little Man spoke to this context of struggle, promise of empowerment and bond of brotherhood. In a market that offered very little choice, Harris set out to make the customer king.

From the outset the Little Man marched to the beat of a different drum as Harris embraced a distinctly local/Caribbean perspective. They threw out the accepted advertising norms of the time as the Little Man found his own voice; a down-to-earth, straight-talking, tell-it-like-it-is style that confronted customers to examine their own choices more closely and judge by the quality of the contents and not the cover so to speak.



Harris did not waste time beating around the bush. The company proclaimed: "We ain't the biggest... We don't sell the most. We simply sell the best for less!" It was a clear and targeted message aimed directly at the large foreign owned corporation that dominated the industry.

Above all it set out the company's confidence in delivering superior quality despite their modest circumstances and signalled the beginning of a David-and-Goliath-like battle for market share.

Although it took several years before Harris began to win the fight, the Little Man was extremely effective in his role as corporate ambassador and became a highly recognized symbol of Harris. As the company has grown so has the Little Man who has kept his image up to date with digital formats that better lend themselves to animation and a more intimate customer experience. Still very much the face of Harris Paints, whether in store or on their social media channels, the Harris Little Man continues to serve as a reminder of the lessons learned throughout the company's journey and the promise of quality and customer focus that has been as central to past success as it will be in the future.

## Agencies and Campaigns

Under the leadership of Ralph Johnson, Harris established a proactive and aggressive approach to marketing from Harris' early days, devoting a sizeable portion of the budget to the company's promotional activities. He was a strong supporter of 'making noise' as a means to maintaining a high level of visibility to keep Harris and their products top-of-mind. This was achieved through a broad variety of different tactics from traditional advertising, sales promotion, events and investment in community outreach programmes.

In 1973 the company signed on with McCann-Erickson Advertising Agency with whom they were affiliated for 28 years. The agency was managed at that time by Philip Blades and from 1990-1998 by Robert Foster. After a period of three years as Board Strategy Director at McCann-Erickson's UK offices in Windsor, Jevan Jutagir was the lead at McCann, Barbados for two years before creating Red Advertising & Marketing Ltd and Harris followed to his new agency in 2002.

Since then, Harris has worked closely with a variety of suppliers to provide additional support to develop the company's long term strategic approach and how to best manage and leverage the company's intangible assets (brands, reputation, culture and customer relationships) to create and increase value. This included in the 'noughties,' the insights of international consultant David Punchard who had worked in the USA, Europe and

Latin America for over 25 years leading more than 200 corporate identity and branding programmes and Luke Ticknor, who assumed leadership of marketing policy and activities in 2010 when he was appointed Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Harris. Luke brought a valuable perspective due to his broad professional and industry-specific experience in consumer and trade marketing, gained in the competitive Canadian coatings market. He hired agency SOJE Lonsdale in 2012 and was a pivotal driver behind the successful launch of Harris' premium brand, Ulttima Plus, with five technologies in one can!

Over the past 13 years, CEO Ian Kenyon, with his substantial background in marketing and innovation, has helped focus and balance the strategic approach and been a vital influence on marketing initiatives in close collaboration with agency strategists, creatives and inhouse marketing executives.

It has been very important to Harris over the years that advertising campaigns speak to the local market and this was at times taken to extremes, for example the memorable **"Give me the Boss"** campaign of 1988/89 by Creative Director, Winston Edghill.

"It was an enormous task getting identifiable footage from each island in the right formats, getting correct voices and accents and customizing the prices for five or six territories" remembers Brenda Foster who was Harris' Account Executive at McCann-Erickson for six years before coming in-house as Marketing Manager at Harris in 1995, "but these efforts I believe, were instrumental in how well the brand has been adopted throughout the Eastern Caribbean." To this day, authenticity and reflecting local culture remains equally important and the company strives to empower local teams to implement tactical marketing programmes, full of local flavour, while providing regional support.

As the company grew, adding the Jamaican BH Paints to its retail network in 2006 it became important to unify the different operations. This led to the adoption of the bold slogan **'Champions of Colour'** which directly communicated the company's purpose to both external and internal customers. While it is still in use, Harris undertook a brand refresh in 2020-21 when partnering with Virgo Communications. Attitudes change over time and it is important to re-evaluate, to update the brand's image and to ensure there are guiding principles that connect to the company's purpose and shapes communications, keeps messaging consistent, highly recognisable and able to resonate with modern consumers.

As a result, Harris added a new element known as the 'colour flow' which is the most dynamic interpretation of Harris' rainbow motif to date. The 'flow' represents the rhythm and energy that emanates from colour, creativity and transformation as well as an abstraction of what unites us as Caribbean people and in our common human experience.

Another notable aspect of Harris' marketing efforts especially in the last 10 years, is to feature the top results the company has had through independent quality testing against competitors. The 'Best by Test' seal lends more clout behind advertising claims and is data-driven not pipe dreams. Harris also features other marks of quality including the ISO standard for quality management and the highly regarded Green Wise and Green Wise Gold emblems that denote products that meet or exceed environmental standards.

Over the years Harris has had several noteworthy campaigns. Under the stewardship of Red Advertising, Harris creative won six Addy Awards from the American Advertising Foundation which recognizes creativity and quality in advertising for its Colour Splash campaign, featuring print advertising **'Can You Hear Colour'** and the vivacious **'Colours'** anthem by Barbadian soca star Nahtalee. This was followed by further acknowledgements for television commercials Harris Ulttima 'Stain-LESS' and Harris Ulttima 'Best by Test' campaigns at the 2012 ADDY Awards.



*Above: Green Wise and Green Wise Gold emblems are marks of environmental excellence. Below: 'Can You Hear Colour' campaign by Red Advertising.*





# the evolution of the Little Man

Since inception, Harris has been identified by the Little Man and later integrated a rainbow motif. The rainbow or “swoosh” was largely extrapolated from early materials from Harris Tampa, who would have initially supplied some support when the company was being established though they were always separate entities.

There were several versions of these elements over the years until the early 2000s when in a bid to simplify, modernize and make the logo more easily replicable, the Harris Man, as he was called then, was dropped. This proved to be a great error. Subsequent market research showed that

the Harris Man was the most recognizable element of Harris branding and was seen as more than just a logo but a trust mark. In removing this, the brand started to lose its bearings with customers. The Harris Man was reinstated in short order and remains a vital brand identifier.



1970's



1980's



1990's



1990's



2000's

In 2015, Harris added a 'Professional' logo to its communications suite designed for the commercial side of its business and users who deal with the planning and carrying out of paint projects. It differentiates the segment who work with paint, have specific needs and different perspectives from a DIY user and acknowledges their importance as super consumers.



The Little Man takes on a new life-like appearance by utilizing 3D formats and animation. Often dressing the part, the beloved character today has more creative license than ever, to connect with customers through traditional and digital touchpoints.

The Harris colour flow is a new dynamic element added to corporate branding in 2021.

# celebrating major milestones

The valuable employees are the heroes of Harris and a surprising number have been with the company for 25 years or more. That's half the time Harris has been in operation!

While acknowledging that long service is by no means the only significant measure, Harris wishes to recognize the 19 veterans, currently with the company who have accomplished this incredible milestone. They have been an invaluable part of the team, sharing their knowledge and experience and have been a part of Harris' history.



**39 years**  
**Roslyn Sorhaindo**  
Retail Services &  
Export Manager  
DOMINICA



**39 years**  
**Wendy Del Castillo**  
Sales Representative  
Key Accounts  
BARBADOS



**39 years**  
**Charles Kirton**  
Regional Vice President  
Technical Service & Innovation  
BARBADOS



**36 years**  
**Cita Carter**  
Receptionist  
BARBADOS



**35 years**  
**Claudette Dangleben**  
Logistics &  
Inventory Manager  
DOMINICA



**33 years**  
**Patrickson Seaman**  
Production &  
Technical Manager  
DOMINICA



**32 years**  
**Reginald John Lewis**  
Production Assistant  
DOMINICA



**32 years**  
**Wendell Clarke**  
 Retail Services  
 Supervisor  
 BARBADOS



**30 years**  
**Joneth Nicholson**  
 Production Assistant  
 JAMAICA



**28 years**  
**Nicky Justin**  
 Production Assistant  
 SAINT LUCIA



**27 years**  
**Victor Price**  
 Production &  
 Technical Manager  
 SAINT LUCIA



**27 years**  
**Patrick Wilson**  
 Inventory Assistant/  
 Driver  
 BARBADOS



**26 years**  
**McCarthy Barker**  
 Production &  
 Maintenance Supervisor  
 DOMINICA



**26 years**  
**Anthony Coleman**  
 Messenger  
 BARBADOS



**26 years**  
**John Joseph**  
 Finance Manager  
 DOMINICA



**25 years**  
**Karen Louis**  
 Inventory Assistant/Clerk  
 SAINT LUCIA



**25 years**  
**Wendell Brathwaite**  
 Production Assistant  
 BARBADOS



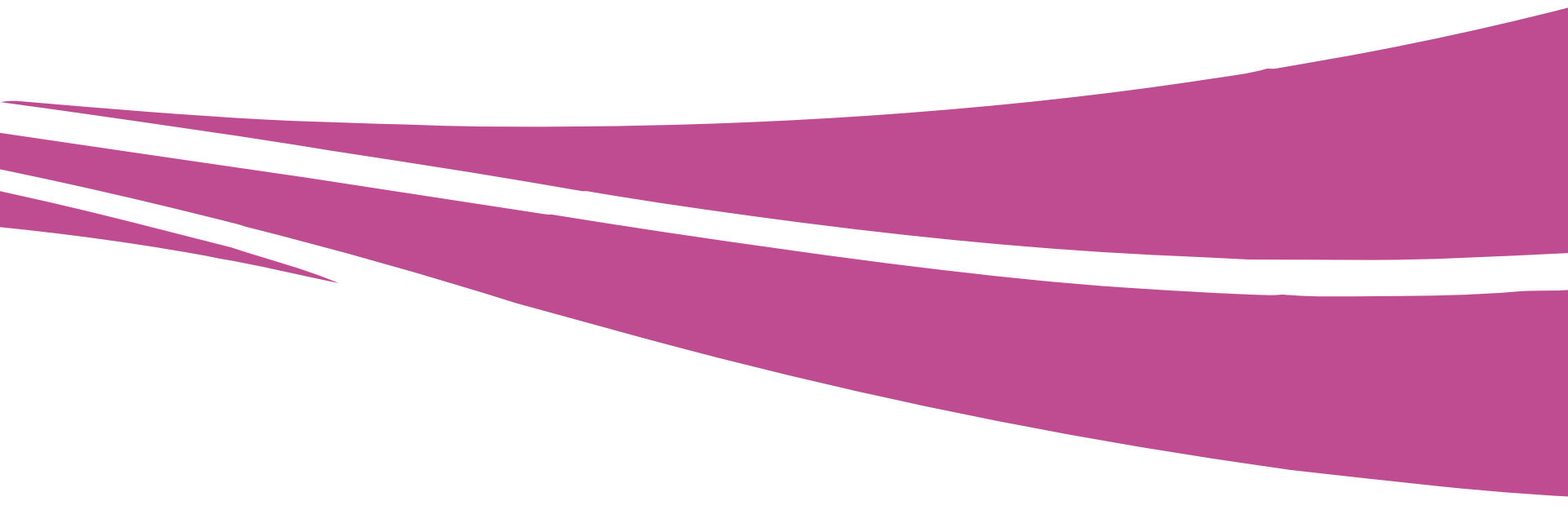
**25 years**  
**Gregory Biscette**  
 Inventory Assistant  
 SAINT LUCIA



**25 years**  
**Gregson St. Hill**  
 Retail Services Supervisor  
 BARBADOS



# champions of colour



# for the love of colour

Caribbean people are known for their love of colour in all its myriad forms. Whether big and bold or soft and cool as a whisper, colour takes pride of place not only in our hearts but in Caribbean culture. Perhaps it is the desire to reflect the richness of our natural world resplendent with tropical blooms, glorious sunsets and every shade of sea under the sun. Colour is the carnival we dance to all year round.

Made in the Caribbean, for the Caribbean, no other paint company understands that better than Harris who are recognized as the Caribbean Champions of Colour. The company was the first in the region to expand beyond the few standard colour card options and to provide customers with an unprecedented choice of colours that was almost unimaginable. Harris pioneered the first in store colour matching and tinting system that allowed Caribbean customers to choose the colours they wanted rather than the ones they were given.

Still at the forefront of colour and pushing boundaries, this year (2022), Harris announced it launched a revolutionary new colour platform capable of tinting paint with unparalleled precision. "The new system is not just an upgrade on the previous one" declares Ian Kenyon, "it is a completely different approach to colour production that has superior accuracy and control and allows us to achieve several other benefits for customers that are simply not achievable with traditional tint systems that are used by the majority of the paint industry". Although it will take some time to roll out the next generation technology across the region, the new colour platform is already in effect in Barbados and Jamaica with more countries to come.



Harris' passion to provide top quality colours, unsurpassed choice and superlative service to customers remains stronger than ever. The company connects to several leading industry organizations such as the Color Guild and Nova paint association and expert consultants to keep consumers ahead of the curve and developments in the world of colour, applying learnings to the improved production, marketing and ongoing training of employees.

Colour is at the heart of the company's philosophy; it can inspire, uplift and calm us. We engage and connect with colour on a fundamental level and studies have shown that when combined with quality design, it creates environments in which we can prosper.

**“T**he craving for colour is a natural necessity just as for water and fire. Colour is a raw material indispensable to life. At every era of his existence and his history, the human being has associated colour with his joys, his actions and his pleasures.”

*Fernand Leger, Artist.*



*Harris launches new colour technology with first campaign in Antigua in 2020.*

# what's trending

Colour connects us. It feeds our need as individuals and is a response, in part, to our experience and the world we live in. Swings in our social, political and cultural environment result in global trends that can impact preferences and inform other industries such as fashion, film and home décor.

Harris works with leading global colour authorities to predict colours we will all likely see a lot more of in coming years.

The 2022 trends are largely informed by the world 'recovery' from the Coronavirus pandemic.

Trending colours are warm, soft, nurturing. They inspire a sense of comfort and well being. Soft anxiety-reducing blues and neutrals promote calm. With periods of lockdown not long behind us, Greens are making a resurgence and reflect a longing to get back outside, and to bring the outside in.

We are done with doom and gloom. Emerging palettes show a propensity for playfulness. Case in point, our pick for Colour of the Year, Desiree – it's a joyful, quirky pink/purple that lends an air of lightheartedness to any decorating project. It's time to pick up a paint brush and add a pop of fun.



## Colour Trends 2022



Dove White 0018



Sheppartin 0546



Fogginess Mantel 0589



Terra Pin 0571



Lady Mavis 0038



Blue Pin 0434



Madrasa Blue 0190



Happy Tone 0648



Merry Fairmount 0300



Turquoise 1000



Autumn's Hill 0038



Impulse 0689



Marika 0811



Yellow Umbrella 0000



Redcover 0458



Vegetarian 0430

Exemplifications may vary from actual colour. Please refer to the full set of swatches for the complete colour palette.





# new mini pots



The best way to choose a colour is to be able to try it before you buy it and in 2021 Harris introduced its first ever mini pots. At last, a truly trial sized 4oz pot, available in any colour to take and try at home.

Customers have been clamouring for a sample size for some time but due to limitations in the dispensing system, colours could not scale down accurately and the smallest size Harris was able to offer previously, is a quart. With the change to a different tint platform, the new system can produce precise micro dots of colour making the tiny test size possible. What's more, no other manufacturer can match the size or options available at Harris, which offers mini pots in its full range of colours, custom made on demand and in two finishes.

Choosing colour is notoriously tricky. It is not something that most people do everyday and colour can look different depending on lighting conditions, surfaces and surrounding colours. Seeing colour options side by side can make decisions so much easier and ensures that when customers come to purchase, they are feeling totally confident.

The handy, affordably priced pot contains enough paint to cover 5ft square, in two coats, plenty to create a large swatch or to test in several locations without running the risk of having lots of annoying leftovers.

Mini Pots are currently available in Barbados and Jamaica (at select locations) with wider distribution in plan.

# smallest factory in the world

Consumers in Barbados and Jamaica are thrilled with the new Mini Colour Pots Machines which produces Mini Pots in any of the brand's main colour palette (over 1000 colours) in less than two minutes and the new small size comes at a very attractive price.

The machine is a vending style concept and very easy and quick to use. It's as simple as selecting the colour on a touchscreen, choosing the finish (flat or satin) and the machine then tints, packages and shakes it to ensure the colour is evenly blended and then produces a label including the colour details to support any future order.

"It's mesmerizing", exclaimed Don Gooding, the company's Colour Technology Officer "that the Mini Pot machine can do all this so quickly and seamlessly, offering such a wide array of colours in such a tiny footprint – it's a marvel of technology".

The machine uses Harris' latest products with Quantum Technology, an advanced new dispensing technology which is capable of extremely high levels of precision. "It is because we now control tinting to a much finer degree, that we can produce accurate colours in this new tiny pack size for customers to try before they then scale up to the larger gallon and five gallon pack sizes" explained Gooding.

Harris is at the cutting edge and one of the first adopters to utilize the innovative colour tester machines. The company is currently the only one in the world to have machines that can produce two finishes, operating on the latest and fastest software and making this available to customers in store.

The Mini Pot machines were installed in two locations: Wildey, Barbados (2021); and Premier Plaza, Kingston (2022) and have been very well received by both homeowners

and contractors, who no longer have to wait and worry but can see their colours in advance – it has made a significant winning difference in the colour decision process.



# design mode

One's environment certainly impacts wellbeing. The colour, planning and arrangement of décor in a home impacts the psychology and behavior of those who reside there. While the focus remains specific to colour, customers often forget that colour schemes extend beyond paint and embrace all the colour components of a room including the flooring material.

Harris' colour credentials have been boosted by our association with US colour and design psychology expert Fawn Chang who is an interior designer and master Feng Shui practitioner. Fawn has taken part in

key studies regarding the role of colour in education and learning and writes and speaks extensively on the role of colour in health, safety and wellness backed by modern scientific evidence. Fawn has visited the Harris Team on several occasions and was guest speaker at a Barbados Institute of Architects event in March, 2015. Her contributions have helped inform colour marketing and training within the Harris Group.

Supporting the local colour design team in Barbados, Harris has also developed a relationship with Barbadian Interior Designer

Melissa Browne who represents Harris at home consultations locally, meeting customers to help develop schemes for homes and commercial spaces.

Melissa came to national attention as the winner of the Ashley Furniture Smart Homes Magazine Interior Design Challenge, a competition to find up and coming design talent of which Harris was a sponsor in 2018 and 2019. The event, organized by Make It Happen Management, has been put on hold since 2020 when it was impacted by shutdowns due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

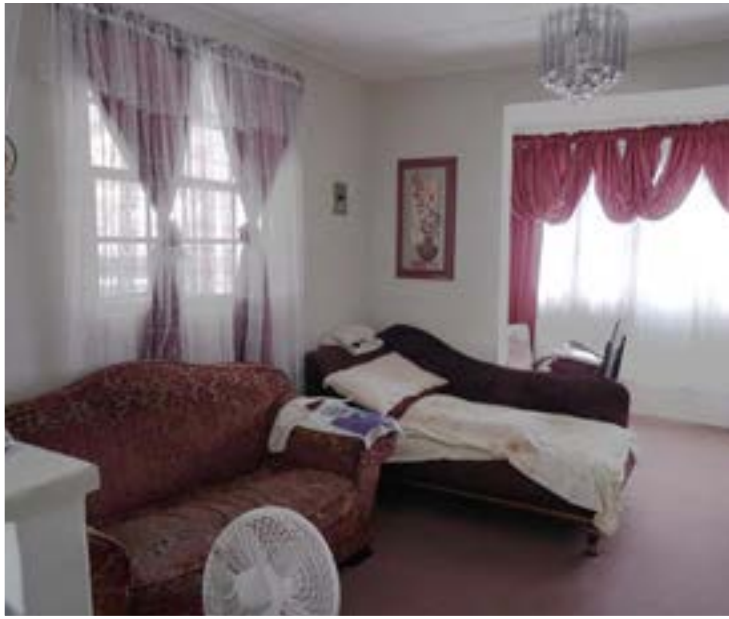


*Fawn Chang presenting to colour specifiers in Barbados 2015*



*Harris Colour Design consultant and interior designer  
Melissa Browne of M Designs*

*Before and after transformation  
by Melissa Browne during 2018  
competition*



**Before**



*(Photo by Rachelle Gray)*

**After**

# development of point-of-sale tinting

Today customers are so accustomed to the freedom and luxury of a virtually limitless colour palette it might be hard to remember a time when this was far from the norm.

Certainly, in Barbados and the Caribbean it was Harris that was first to offer customers unprecedented control and customization of colour the like of which was generally unknown in the region. Suddenly the shortcomings of the colour card, that was the backbone of paint shops for generations, were shattered. Almost overnight customers were introduced to a world of show-stopping colours conveniently available right from their neighbourhood retail stores. Decorating was transformed by the vibrant number of possibilities that now was more accurately able to capture the Caribbean's flamboyance and love for colour. Harris has remained fervently passionate about colour and committed to providing clients not only with outstanding products but also the convenient tools to choose the perfect colour combinations and bring superior visual delight to their environment.

Traditionally, paint companies had in-house tinting systems which allowed them to offer a limited number of pre-mixed shades in addition to the ubiquitous and ever-popular white. Everyone was subjected to the same few colour choices that dictated colour schemes in homes around the region. Only professional paint contractors would, on occasion, visit the factory to obtain specially mixed tints from fan decks or colour cards to provide a measure of individuality on the most distinguished of jobs. This was, for the most part, done by hand and although



technicians were highly skilled, future colour matching could be problematic. During the late 1980s, Harris experienced a significant thrust in research and development activities and experimented by providing basic colour tinting machinery in a couple of retail outlets. This attracted little attention until Harris took a new approach that would bring colourcentres front stage for customers.

In the early 1990s the company came across a rather unexciting-looking scientific tool that resembled a black box and out of this was unleashed a bold new vision that would revolutionize the world of paint colour possibilities. More accurately known as a spectrophotometer, Harris purchased this colour technology and system from a US company known as Colourgen. The spectrophotometer is an electronic device which accurately analyses the colour

of almost anything by measuring the wavelength of light. Attached to a computer system it could then produce a prescription or the paint formula needed to reproduce it. Harris knew that if they could get the device out of the laboratory and in front of customers it would literally lift the lid on colour but the magic would be in the marketing.

Under the guidance of Marketing Manager, Doug Armstrong and General Manager, David Tindale, Harris set about constructing and locating large in-store units that would house the spectrophotometer and computer screen display. The system was branded Harris Colour Creations, the first colour matching system in the Caribbean. It debuted in the third quarter of 1994 boasting "almost limitless pure, clean colours made with virtually matchless precision

and accuracy". Harris Colour Creations was the first system that allowed customers to match almost any opaque material, in just five minutes, by simply providing a sample of two square inches or bigger of paper, fabric, plastic, wood or tile. It utilized new, clear paint bases that produced 916 clearer, brighter, better quality colours and could be used to tint the paint products of the day (Duratone, Duracote and Durashield).

It took three long years of painstaking research for Harris to achieve this result but they made an instant splash which quickly increased the company's stature as the leader in paint and innovation in the region. However, there were challenges along the way. For uniformity and colour precision, paint bases and batches demanded an unprecedented level of consistency making quality control measures of paramount importance. There were quite large disparities in the cost of some hues which led to pricing issues. The first of its kind, substantial resources were required to educate the market and promote the system. Designed to be used in-store by a technician or operator there was also a significant additional requirement for training. In the first generation Colour Creations system, colour prescriptions had to be measured out manually which created a degree of human error. This was largely eliminated in December 1996 when Harris unveiled the Accutinter which then measured and dispensed colours automatically.

Colour Creations was, without doubt, a resounding success story for Harris but it was founded on fairly basic technology. The company could see the potential for further investment in point-of-sale tinting technology and knew that if they were to maintain the position they had created for themselves as leaders, they would need to waste no time in moving to the next step. While there would always be those that were content with colour cards, customization not only provided the customer with more



*Colour Creations units were installed in stores from 1994 and was the first computer colour matching system in the region.*

choice but could significantly reduce costs associated with stocking standard colours with paints being mixed in-store as needed from standard bases.

A fortuitous meeting with a Cuprinol executive by the name of Paul Lewis, led to an introduction to one of the largest chemical companies in the world when Cuprinol was acquired by ICI (originally known as Imperial Chemical Industries). At the time ICI had engineered the most

complete colour system ever developed known as the Master Palette™ and through the auspices of Paul Lewis, Harris was able to negotiate an agreement for use throughout the Caribbean in 2002.

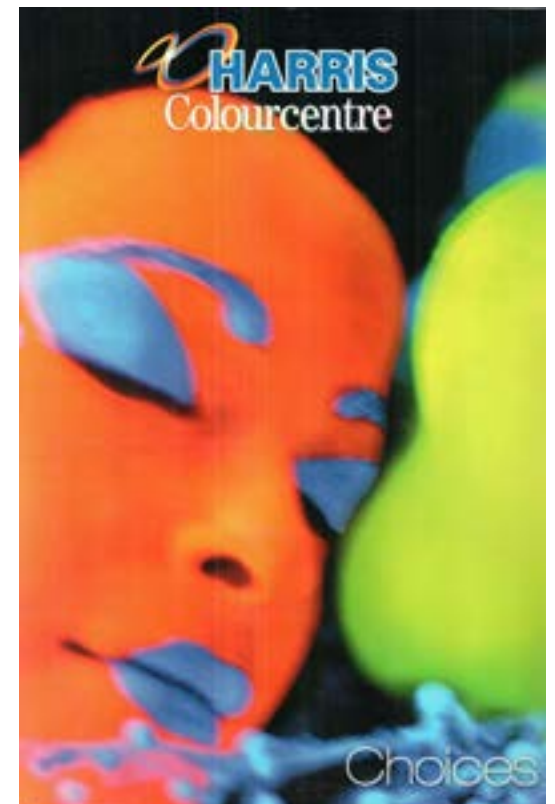
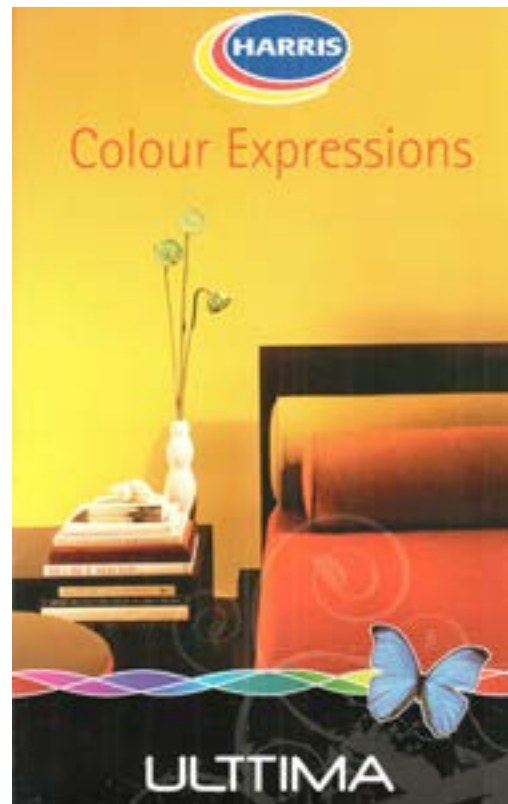
This system, which was the most advanced in the world at the time it was implemented, offered a comprehensive array of colours that could accurately produce 6 134 distinctly different shades using computer operated colour management and dispensing

equipment. It allowed Harris to provide more colours, a greater range of shades and improved colour accuracy, with dispensing machines able to dispense in increments of 1/64 of an ounce and up to 1/128 in some formulas!



*Harris' new Master Palette™ colour display was launched after 2002*

Harris Colour Cards over the years.





# picking perfect colours - made easy!

Customizing our environments with colour is one of the most effective ways of creating ambience and of expressing our identity and individuality but with literally thousands of colours to choose from it can become an overwhelming exercise. Harris, however, is the only company in the Caribbean that has a unique colour coordination system scientifically developed to make colour selection easier for customers than ever before.

The Language of Colour™ system was developed and designed by an innovation team at ICI, which was led by Ian Kenyon, today CEO at Harris. He therefore has an extensive understanding of the findings of the international market research conducted and the consumer psychology that supports successful colour choices. The system takes into account three very different approaches consumers use in selecting a colour and integrates them into a single easy-to-use scheme. At the time, this was a radical development in colour theory.

The system allows customers to easily focus on the choices available within a selected colour; or to identify particular shades that will set the appropriate tone for the space to be painted and at the same time provides perfectly coordinating options.

Every colour in the Language of Colour™ system has been organized according to colour, shade and mood. Each mood inspired collection is made up of hues that are guaranteed to harmonize together and

provide perfect colour combinations. Start with a colour family or consider how you want your space to feel. Then simply follow the Language of Colour™ mood group to create a customized colour palette tailored to you.

There are four languages or moods from which to choose: **Luxurious**, **Warm**, **Fresh** and **Calm**. Embrace the colours that speak to you; renovate and rejuvenate and get the look you love..

## Speaking the Language of Colour

If you want to revive an old space or create a bold new impression there is no easier and more cost effective way than a new coat of paint. The colour you choose can capture attention, assert your style and add value to your property.

To find the look you would love to live in consider the colour you are drawn to then let Harris help you hit the right note. Here are some examples of how colours can be interpreted in the four languages which create quite different and distinctive interiors. A full range of colour options are available from Harris Colourcentres.



**Luxurious**  
Intense, rich and vivid



**Warm**  
Cosy and comfortable



**Fresh**  
Clean, pure and breezy



**Calm**  
Cool, calm and sophisticated

# reds



## Choose Your Mood

**Matador**  
Luxurious

**Tomahawk Red**  
Warm

**Strawberry Crush**  
Fresh

**Capri Rose**  
Calm



# oranges



### Choose Your Mood

|                                    |                          |                            |                       |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Oriental Poppy</b><br>Luxurious | <b>San Mateo</b><br>Warm | <b>Ripe Peach</b><br>Fresh | <b>Sonora</b><br>Calm |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|



# yellows



## Choose Your Mood

**Golden Sun**  
Luxurious

**Indian Saffron**  
Warm

**SunSpot**  
Fresh

**Victorian Yellow**  
Calm



# greens



## Choose Your Mood

|                                  |                            |                          |                          |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Emerald Isle</b><br>Luxurious | <b>Shy Blossom</b><br>Warm | <b>Leapfrog</b><br>Fresh | <b>Reptilian</b><br>Calm |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|



# blues



## Choose Your Mood

**Planetarium**  
Luxurious

**Michigan Lakes**  
Warm

**Clear Sky**  
Fresh

**Falling Rain**  
Calm



# purples



## Choose Your Mood

**Palace Purple**  
Luxurious

**Princely Purple**  
Warm

**Night Magic**  
Fresh

**Magical Twilight**  
Calm



# neutrals



These earthy colours you might find in the world around us are a natural foil to any mood group you choose. There are over 350 shades in this easy-to-live-with range from the palest Frost to darkest Black Mica.

Shy and demure and even quietly sophisticated, neutrals resist the spotlight yet by a curious sleight of hand, they direct the eye and set the tempo of a room. Allow furnishings, artwork or architectural features to take centre stage while neutrals provide a comforting canvas.

Neutrals are simply too chic and clever not to be noticed.

**Roma Glass**

**Tahoe Stone**

**White Pearl**

**Oyster Bay**

**Limoges Blue**

**Fine Silver**



# whites

## Fresh, Clean, Simple, Timeless

White is the all-time best-selling paint colour universally. Pure and clean, there is a surprising choice of whites with just a hint of a tint. These pretty pastels coordinate well with any mood group in the Language of Colour™ system. Use as the main attraction or to accent other colour choices. Highly versatile, 'whites' are suitable for almost any type of room as well as exterior walls, trims, fence and more. White is a favourite for modern, contemporary, classical and formal spaces and can work wonders for small and dark rooms. Create a light, airy Caribbean beach-chic look on wood surfaces with a popular 'pickled' effect. A classic neutral, it is hard to go wrong with white but be warned that it won't disguise dirt.

For high traffic areas use a tough gloss enamel or latex paint surface that is easily scrubbed and wiped clean.



**Soft Presence**

**Swiss Coffee**

**Winters Day**

**Faithful**

**Mongolia Spring**

**Quiet Hideaway**

# colours you love

## *The Top 10 Colours Across the Caribbean*

Harris automatic dispensing systems record the most frequently tinted colours requested by customers.

**PAINT IT.  
LOVE IT.**



Wonder Woods

Pleasant Stream

Green Gone Wild

Peeps

Turkish Brown

Sugar Dust

White Kitten

Spanish Brown

Ballet Cream

Party Time

# tools to help you choose!

With literally thousands of shades to choose from where do you start? Harris Colourcentres provide a range of tools to help find the perfect colour.

## Find your Colours

Immerse yourself in hundreds of colour options by viewing the unique Language of Colour display. Designed to help you identify the tone and timbre of colours to suit your home. Take your time to think about it by taking home our colour cards or 'chips'. (Fan decks and atlases are available for professional specifiers).



## Paint a Photo

See colours in a real-world context with our online visualizer. Upload your photo or use templates to create, save and share unlimited designs. Try out unexpected combinations! (Custom renderings are available for Professionals on qualifying projects).

*Note that digital colours may appear different to the actual paint colour so always check the colour chip in store before purchasing.*



## Find a Colour Match

Found a shirt that is the perfect colour? Or maybe you want the walls to match your cushions? Worry not. Harris can analyze the colour and find the closest match.



## Take a Tester

Try colours out at home with a handy 4oz Mini Pot available only in select locations. Easy and affordable, Mini Pots are custom tinted in 1000 + colours to try before you buy. Never doubt your decorating decisions again!



## Colour Advice

Talk your project over with one of our experienced colour champions to assist you in narrowing down choices and finding the colours that are perfect for you.



# **innovation & environment**



# climatic concerns



Known for idyllic year-round warm temperatures and dazzling turquoise clear seas, those that live in the Caribbean know that maintaining the beauty of our homes in this environment can be more challenging than most people might think. Developed in the Caribbean specifically to withstand the region's climatic conditions, Harris' products are uniquely situated to provide satisfying solutions to some of Mother Nature's more devilish designs.

People come from the world over to enjoy the glorious sunshine and warm weather of the Caribbean but even the most devoted sun worshipper these days understands the impact of the sun's powerful ultra-violet (UV) rays. Long periods of exposure to the sun's fierce rays can have a punishing effect on exterior surfaces such as walls, decks and roofs. Unrelenting heat and UV radiation can

be extremely damaging unless products are specifically formulated with powerful UV absorbers, the blocking agents that provide sun protection.

There are thousands of miles of coastline in the Caribbean and the most luxurious breezy seaside locations are subject to a continual onslaught of corrosive sea spray that eats into ill-prepared surfaces. The pervading high moisture levels also promote the rapid deterioration of fine finishes. Sulfurous atmospheres of some volcanic islands pose their own difficulties. For a high level of asset protection, it is important to seek durable surface-specific coating solutions for metal, wood, concrete, plaster and painted surfaces. Harris' on-the-ground team have the knowledge, experience and access to top technology specifically designed to tackle environments such as these.

The geography of the region is very diverse and while some islands are arid many of them experience heavy, frequent downpours in the summer 'green' season and high levels of humidity. The combination of warm, wet conditions promotes the growth of many types of algae and fungi which includes mold and mildew. It is particularly important that coatings used regionally contain effective biocides that are sophisticated enough to deter the proliferation of these destructive micro-organisms without damaging the environment.

Harris has spent 50 years formulating and measuring the performance of their products in just these conditions. The company provides standard and customized solutions to protect all areas of your property.

“The primary purpose of leadership is to give your customers the ability to do what they can't do, but would have wanted to do if only they knew they could have done it.”

*Daniel Burrus, Technology Futurist and Strategist*

# earth friendly acrylics

Chemical based industries are not the first thing associated with environmentally friendly products but the truth is that advances in technology have revolutionized businesses such as paint manufacturing in the last 60 years. As the world became more aware of some of the harmful effects of paint constituents, consumers demanded better and scientists rose to that challenge producing scientific innovations that have transformed products without sacrificing performance.

From an industry perspective, gone are the days of using white lead as the basis for decorative paints which could have toxic effects, especially if ingested by children or inhaled during sanding. It was widely eliminated decades ago and substituted for titanium dioxide, a mineral compound which is deemed completely safe and is extremely well suited to the job. The most forward looking in the industry also sought to replace heavy metals such as mercury, tin and copper and worked to reduce the volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or harsh solvents used in paints and paint components such as biocides and driers.

Harris quickly recognized what the future held and set its technical department and laboratory to work to develop new products that were safer, easier to use and kinder to the environment. The result was a generation of ground-breaking water-based products that utilized powerful leading edge 'friendly' biocides engineered by European firm Thor, that retard bio deterioration of surface coatings caused by algae and fungi - a common problem in tropical Caribbean climates.

Ralph Johnson, who was then the company's Managing Director, remembered that Porch & Patio Floor Enamel, the first innovation of this kind to hit the market, as being ahead of its time and led demand rather than being market driven. "Within the first five years we introduced water-based floor paint. All the floor paint prior to that point was oil-based. When we first started nobody in their right mind would recommend a water-based paint on a floor never mind a galvanized roof! But unlike oil-based floor paint you could walk on it in half an hour. People couldn't believe it at first! And that product is still sold and recommended today."

In the mid-1980s Dutch emulsion specialist Jaap Leguijt joined Charles Kirton, Chemist and Technical Manager at the Harris plant in Barbados and succeeded in trail-blazing products never before produced in the region. These included a revolutionary water-based coating for concrete roofs known as Roofing Compound (now Ulttima Roof Coating), designed to eliminate the need for the traditional method of hot applied cold tar. The innovation allowed customers to avoid hours of unpleasant hot work with an easy to apply, affordable alternative.



*Charles Kirton (centre) demonstrates Harris' new water-based gloss paint at a launch seminar (Barbados, 1995); Ralph Johnson (left) and David Tindale look on*



Within the next few years Harris continued to drive the use of water-based products introducing radical concepts such as water-based varnish and a water-based gloss enamel. These products were non-yellowing, quick drying and virtually odourless introducing customers to unsurpassed convenience. By eliminating the harsh chemicals traditionally required to make oil

bases, employees benefited from improved work conditions and paint products were more easily disposed of with less overall environmental impact.

When asked in 2012, Charles Kirton, who is Vice President of Technical Services and Innovation at Harris, of what the future holds, he replied: " I think that while in the

last few years the emphasis was on low VOC products, the next few years will be no VOCs. For general use, I think oil paints will fall out of use in the next five to seven years. Even if you look at it now there is very little need to use solvent based paint but sometimes," he adds with a wry grin "you have to wait until the market is ready to fully accept it."

Ten years on the prediction has not quite come true but with environmental concerns moving to the top of global agendas, the trend directionally, is still very much on point.



# research & development



*Charles Kirton*

In the early days of Harris, locally made products were afforded a good level of protection from outside imports and this continued, though to a decreasing degree, through the 1990s. The resulting conditions helped shape an aggressive business strategy. Harris set its sights on producing a broad range of products that would shut out international competitors and give them an advantageous position in the market without compromising quality. The activities of the research and development department were fundamental to driving innovation. While the world's economy and trading environment is much changed, innovation remains key at Harris today underpinned by access to world class technologies through its strategic relationship with several industry-leading, international partners.

Much of what Harris has accomplished in terms of new product development can be attributed to two scientists; Barbadian Charles Kirton who joined the company in 1983 and Dutch consultant Jaap Leguijt who collaborated on a part-time basis with the

company from 1986 for over 10 years. The two worked together improving formulations and pioneering a host of revolutionary first-generation, water-based coatings that were the first of their kind to be engineered and manufactured in the Caribbean, winning the Barbadian company unparalleled attention.

Charles remembers that particularly the first two years of this collaboration made a big impact on working practices and the laboratory's ability to develop and test formulations without having to wait for long periods of time. Quicker results were possible through comparative testing which could reveal superior formulations in quite short time periods. The success of this methodology laid the groundwork for much of what the department was able to accomplish in the next 10 years. This was further facilitated by the opening of a new fully equipped state-of-the-art laboratory in 1987, on the company's 15th anniversary.

Among the first innovations that resulted from the department's work was the piloting and promotion of the usefulness of Harris Roofing Compound in 1988. This water-based coating for concrete roofs offered an easy and radical new solution for water-proofing roofs that were traditionally treated with hot bitumen. Through rigorous laboratory testing, Harris went on to develop formulations and find alternatives for many solvent-based products introducing, for example, water-based varnishes, Harris Duraglaze and Harris Aqua Overglaze, for interior and exterior use in 1993.

It is difficult to convey from today's perspective the power of these cutting-edge developments that at the time challenged the established fundamentals accepted by paint professionals for decades. This was definitely the case when Harris launched Duragloss Hydro Enamel in 1995 as an alternative to gloss oil paint. Never before had 'enamel' been water-based. The groundbreaking product that was generating a lot of buzz claimed to match the durability and high shine of traditional oil paint yet it was low-odour, quick drying and paint brushes washed out in water! According to Charles bringing this product to fruition remains one of his proudest achievements. "For the time," he says, "it was the ideal product. We changed things from everybody having to smell oil paint at Christmas in the house, now you could paint a door and get a glossy finish and use the room the same night."

Of course, the work of the lab is not only concerned with new product development but improving the quality of existing products. Harris undertakes regular testing of its own and competitors' products to assure standards and the value provided to Caribbean customers. Modifications and enhancements are made in step with strict protocols and international standards. For example, asbestos fibres traditionally used in textured finishes as a binder were replaced with more environmentally friendly wood fibres about 20 years ago. The resulting modern Troweltex formulation meant the product was now stronger, kinder to the environment and easier to apply.



*Charles Kirton in the Lab circa 1990*

“People in the Caribbean always think that when we get technology here it is old. One of the things that we can be proud of at Harris is that the products we introduced were at the leading edge, they represented where the industry was going at the time and we were right there with it.”

*Charles Kirton, Vice President Technical/  
Research and Development*

As the pace of technology has advanced, Harris has not been deterred from its quest to provide the best quality coatings for the Caribbean but understands the need to work beyond their own laboratory environment with key partners and specialists. A good example of this strategy is Harris' collaboration, with multi-national chemical company Thor, to develop its highly effective, environmentally friendly Mildew

Guard technology (specialty biocides in Ultima Plus products). Thor was able to provide Harris access to some of the most sophisticated ingredients that would have taken years of technical knowledge, research, experience and large-scale investment in laboratory and specialized equipment to develop.

By the same token, Harris works across a wide network of first-class industry suppliers and has extended its product testing capability through a USA accredited laboratory (CRGI Inc) who utilize 'blind' testing methodology to ensure results are impartial and objective.. Through such arrangements Harris is uniquely positioned to regionally manufacture paint in the Caribbean that is second to none.

# Dr Jaap

One of the most significant steps Harris took in developing a line of top class products was an agreement with Dutch scientist, Jaap Leguijt to work alongside their laboratory for what turned out to be a period of nearly 10 years. Through his experience he was able to harness some of the leading edge technologies of the day and hone formulas that would create high performance coatings for the Caribbean environment.

Dr Jaap, as he became widely known, was a chemist and formulation planner with a huge European raw materials supplier that Harris used called Synres (owned by DSM<sup>1</sup>). In 1985 Jaap made a farewell visit to Barbados and announced his plans to take early retirement to his home in the south of France the following year. Ralph Johnson seized the opportunity. He knew of Jaap's extensive knowledge of raw materials and his skills in formulating paint. He invited him to come and spend the winter months of 1986 working with Harris' technical department and the relationship, which suited both parties well, grew into something much longer term than originally foreseen.

From the outset one of Harris' major challenges was to prove that locally manufactured paints could equal or out-perform international brands in the Caribbean. The company was forever on a quest to boost quality yet provide an affordable product which meant keeping material costs in check. It was to this end that Jaap used his expertise in introducing new laboratory methodologies and by testing, examining and amending formulations.

Far beyond that, his accomplishments extended to working on several product innovations with the Harris laboratory staff and Charles Kirton, Technical Manager in



*Demonstration by Dr Jaap (right) to guests on Harris Paints 15th Anniversary*

particular; many of which had never been seen in the Caribbean. The pair was able to utilize Jaap's background as an emulsion specialist to develop several water-based alternatives to traditional oil-based coatings (typically more difficult to use and less friendly to the environment).

Dr Jaap was also the driver behind setting up educational initiatives and seminars. Due to the radical new nature of many of the emerging products it was essential that customers – retailers, contractors, engineers and architects, understood how products worked, how they were best used and the correct application procedures. This was fundamental to market adoption and it is a practice that Harris became committed to over the years, becoming well known regionally for service support and product training. Undoubtedly Dr Jaap made a lasting, valuable and outstanding contribution to the company.

<sup>1</sup>DSM acquired Synres in 1971 and became known as DSM Resins in 1983 after merging with Unilever's Unichema/Scado business. DSM Corporate website. 16 February 2011.

**“D**r Jaap would always ask me: Which is better, a pair of shoes that cost \$50 and last for six months or a pair that cost \$100 and last for six years? But you have to consider what price the market will bear and a lower price means there is going to be some sacrifice. It is a balancing act.”

*Ralph Johnson, Chairman, Harris Group of Companies*

# pioneering products

Harris has a distinguished history of innovation, known for introducing trail-blazing products that set the standard in the region.. Below are just two cases that demonstrate that inspiration for innovation is sometimes found in surprising places!

## 1993 Aqua Overglaze and Duraglaze

When Charles Kirton returned from holiday he found production staff trying to devise a clear coating for a customer in St John, Barbados who wanted a sealant for ceramic tiles. This query led to the development of the first water-based varnish developed by a wholly owned Caribbean paint manufacturer!

While the first pass at this task was broad off the mark, the challenge captured Charles' attention and he set about engineering a formula to do the job. The project went beyond the bounds of the client request and in collaboration with Dr Jaap Leguijt the company developed a true water-based varnish, a product that was almost unheard of within the OECS.

To put the product to the test and to examine the best application procedures, Harris was able to work with Chapel Quarry who were at the time producing limestone cladding for building exteriors. The clear sealant or

varnish, branded as Harris Aqua Overglaze provided a natural barrier causing water to run off rather than seep into the limestone and therefore improve the resistance to the growth of moss. Aqua Overglaze became an alternative to silicone that was also used for the purpose but had the drawback of permanently etching any glass with which the silicone came into contact. The Aqua Overglaze could scrape away and be washed off without damage. The product became a success especially with the growth in popularity of limestone as an upscale finish for homes.

The sister product, Harris Duraglaze, was developed as a protective coating for use on interior wood which presented DIY customers unsurpassed ease of use. Unlike many traditional varnishes of the day it was non-yellowing, odourless and brushes could be rinsed with water under the tap. Both products are still sold today.



## 1991 Durashield – Turning the Paint World Upside Down

When sales of Harris' Velvet Emulsion, a high-end paint designed to hold up to tough conditions, failed to meet sales expectations, the company resorted to a creative new strategy to re-invent the brand and re-launch it under a new label.

Armed with well over 15 years of market information, Harris knew that it was popular belief that thick paint had to be good quality paint though that is not necessarily true. However, it capitalized on leading edge technology of the time utilizing new additives that would transform the look and feel of traditional paint to an unusual degree. The “thixotropic” qualities of the additives thickened the consistency of paint to a

*Harris innovations being showcased by David Tindale and team in Grenada 1994; Dr Jaap seated in background*

buttery gel, yet when pressure was applied during the painting process the flow would be smooth and even. The result was a novel and sumptuous new-look paint that captured a lot of attention!

Durashield made a dramatic entry to the market at its unveiling at Island Inn Hotel. In a memorable jaw-dropping moment, a quart of Durashield was held upside down over the head of the unfortunate Technical Coordinator, Byron Hunte – but of course not a drop came out! The supporting media campaign delivered similar images to an awe inspired public and Durashield went from strength to strength.

The brand was not without its problems and it was a challenge to manage expectations. As it was so thick people thought they could water it down and still get the same performance as regular paint. In reality although the paint had more body and this unique gel like consistency, it was really no thicker than normal paint so any dilution was bound to lead to unsatisfactory results.

For a short time Durashield ruled and painters from the day still talk about it. The brand was superseded with the advent of colour tinting systems in retail stores. Managing proper colour dispersal was deemed potentially problematic requiring different procedures and adding a level of complexity that was unfeasible. Thinking back to those days, Charles Kirton remarks that the magic of Durashield was the alchemy of science meeting marketing.



*Charles Kirton collects Quality Control award from Barbados National Standards Institute, 1995; presented by Hon Reginald Farley, Minister of Industry, Commerce and Business Development*

# innovation

## 2010-2022

Since 2012, innovation at Harris has been alive and well. In fact, it might be one of the company's most prolific decades to date. With a growing number of international partners, Harris increased potential opportunities and resources for key research and development activities. The result has been a cavalcade of new products produced to better meet the needs of specific consumer segments including professional specifiers, paint and building contractors or do-it-yourself (DIY) users.

### Ultima Plus – 5 Technologies in one Can (2013)

Easily the standout innovation of the last 10 years, Ultima Plus has become Harris' flagship brand of premium paints and has been an incredible sales success. When it launched in 2013, the line featured multiple beneficial technologies that enhanced coverage, colour performance, durability, ease of use and overall safety. The formulations included new high quality raw materials that negated the need for primer on some surfaces, more powerful pigments, new long lasting, slow-release biocides (or mildew/algae fighting agents) and an overall formula that was designed to have very low odour. These 5 super technologies included: Two in One (paint and primer); ColourLast (superior fade resistance); ColourFast (superior hide); MildewGuard (superior mildew protection); EasyBreathe (low VOC formulas that are more gentle on users and the environment). Ultima Plus was the first brand to earn the Best By Test seal based on results from independent third party competitive testing by an accredited paint laboratory.

### Contractor Brand – Pro Speed Cover (2017)

As a result of market trends and increased competition particularly in the commercial sector, Harris developed a new paint specially designed to meet the needs of trade contractors. To earn a profit, pros depend on keeping their cost of goods, labour, and materials in check, especially when working within tight budgets, to generate sometimes the slimmest of margins. Launched across

the region from 2017, the new Pro Speed Cover mid-level range introduced the first commercial line from a regional paint manufacturer. It offers a good price point as well as impressive production efficiencies with wall paints covering on average up to 20% more than standard! The gloss emulsion finish is virtually indistinguishable from a traditional oil paint, but it dries up to 30 times faster, saving applicators valuable time, and hardens quickly avoiding freshly painted surfaces (eg. windows and cupboards) from sticking. The brand is ideal for routine maintenance of commercial properties, new builds, refreshment of properties for sale and residential and office rental markets.

### Zero VOC Interior Paint - Ultima Plus Pure (2019)

VOCs are volatile organic compounds contained in many everyday items from household products to hairspray that can be harmful to health and damaging to earth's atmosphere. Fortunately, the industry is moving away from high VOC products, backed by regulatory restrictions in the US and Europe. Harris has been a first adopter of kinder emulsion technology virtually from its foundation, so it is fitting that the company was the first regional manufacturer to introduce a Zero VOC interior paint. Formulated to provide the same premium performance as the other finishes within the Ultima Plus line, Pure, which is virtually odourless, was launched in 2019. Designed for interior decorating, the product is certified to meet the highest safety standards by a US accredited test facility. It therefore meets green building standards





and is an excellent option for hotels, offices and other institutional buildings that need to be refreshed and reoccupied quickly while maintaining the highest regard for public safety.

### Next Generation Quantum Technology (2022)

Harris' latest 'one-base' products are powered by Quantum Technology. These products are made using a different method to traditional paint and can only be tinted on a specially designed tint dispensing system. Traditionally paints typically require four or five bases to generate the thousands of colour options that customers have come to expect. Each base produces just part of the range. If a base is out of stock, colour can be compromised. What if there was a way to tint all colours from just one base? That is what one elite industry insider thought and over several years working with experts, has re-engineered the entire colour production process from factory to point of sale. Harris was able to leverage this technology and make further developments to produce their new Quantum Technology products – Ultima Plus Flat, Satin and Porch and Patio. These are the first to move to the next gen platform which preserves performance characteristics but enhances colour accuracy, consistency and clarity. It also offers multiple other benefits and cost efficiencies to retailers. Harris initiated the first phase of a regional roll-out with new style dispensers implemented in Barbados and Jamaica in 2022. Described as “a game changer”, the revolutionary new technology is expected to further differentiate the brand from its competitors.



# Charles Kirton's colourful career



Before a new paint product comes to market, it must be perfected in the lab. While this intense research and development may be demanding work, Charles Kirton, VP of Technical Services and Innovation at Harris Paints, would not want it any other way.

A legend within Harris and with industry professionals and specifiers, Charles has been making paint products for, what some would say, a lifetime. A one-time teacher, it has held him in good stead as he has become the go to resource for all things paint, inventing numerous new Harris products, many the very first of their kind in the Caribbean.

Although his first love was biology, he studied chemistry and he could not have imagined then that he would go on to create some of the best loved brands in Barbados and the Caribbean.

"I have been with Harris Paints for 39 years now and still love that no two days are ever the same," says Kirton. "The process of taking a product from concept to customer presents many different challenges. Sometimes things go right and sometimes they go wrong – but even those times are an opportunity to learn something new. It keeps you on your toes."

If there is one thing he's learned he says, is never to rest on your laurels. There are so many changes in materials and possible interactions you never really know how a formula will turn out. He lives by the mantra "Test it. Test it. And test it again!"

In addition to developing, testing and improving products for the Harris Group, Kirton keeps his ear to the ground for the latest industry breakthroughs.



He also works closely with his sales and marketing teams to respond to customers' needs. After all, new products must not only meet the company's high standards for performance and quality, they must be effective and easy for customers to use.

Among their most successful collaborations has been the development of Harris' premium Ulttima Plus brand that features a combination of 5 special technologies engineered to provide superior performance in the harsh tropical conditions found in the Caribbean. "There have been significant technological developments over the past 10 to 20 years and Harris has been quick to take advantage of them, to the benefit of customers through advanced formulations" says Charles.

Once of the most revolutionary changes of his career was yet to come. It was at the 2018 Nova, paint industry conference in Genova when a visiting technical team presented their innovative approach to tinting paints that would fire Charles' imagination and set him on a course to change how paint is made. It then took him and his team, three years of dedication and

painstaking analysis in close collaboration with the Italian partners (amidst a pandemic!), to customize, set up and perfect the system.

The system that Charles perfected was first implemented in Antigua in late 2020. The concept, as refined by Harris, was launched in 2022 as Quantum Technology in Barbados and Jamaica and is expected to deliver significant and far-reaching benefits including substantial manufacturing and retailing efficiencies and exceptional colour and performance properties for the end user. If all goes as anticipated, Harris expects to roll out new products based on Quantum Technology over the next two years across the region and also into new territories.

"Up until now, paint has been tinted by adding colourant to one of four bases depending on the colour intensity required but the Quantum products use just one base, as it allows for all the critical components of colour to be added at the point of sale and fully customized in each can" explains Kirton adding that this revolutionary system not only produces better than ever results but dramatically reduces complexity. "It's a

very exciting development that opens many opportunities for us and our customers. It's a total game-changer and this is just the beginning!"

Since implementing the new platform, Harris has already introduced a new, tiny, colour-accurate paint sample (about the size of a small yoghurt pot). These mini pots are made to order and would not be possible without the Quantum Technology. It makes testing colour much more affordable for customers and mini pots can now be produced as easy as buying a can of soda from a vending machine!

The painstaking hours of testing the new system has resulted in the top chemist getting credit for his breakthrough development. Kirton is officially cited as Inventor of the company's first internationally patented coatings technology – a key part of the overall innovation and another Harris first!

The road to developing Quantum Technology has been the crowning achievement to date on his 39 year career at Harris and Charles Kirton is excited to see where it leads to next!

# quality control

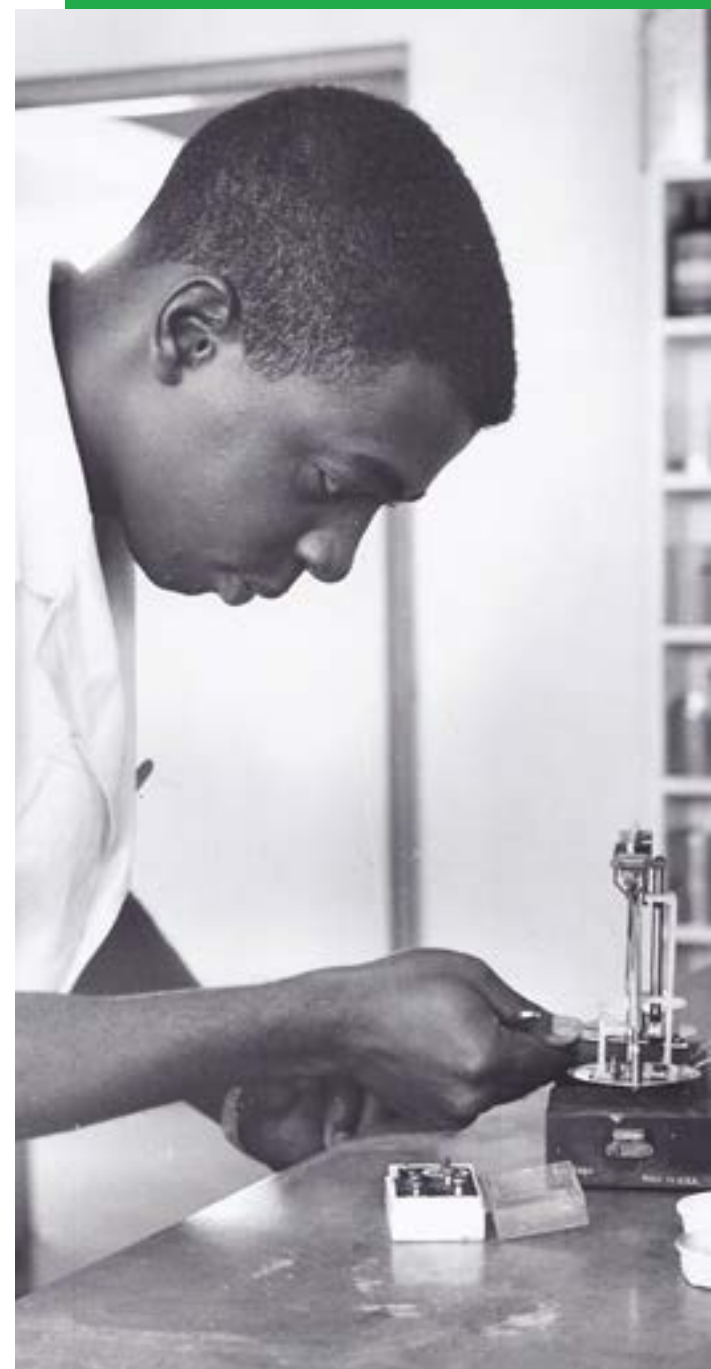
One of the primary goals of Charles Kirton when he first joined the company in 1983 was to reinforce and strengthen the quality control protocols of the company. A good scientific understanding of chemicals was important when raw materials were in short supply and it was necessary to make substitutions to formulas. This meant monitoring the production process more closely and implementing a rigorous schedule of batch testing.

Today, in compliance with ISO 9001:2015 quality management standards, every batch of Harris' products is tested wherever it is made in the Caribbean so that customers can be assured of the same great quality every time. There are a number of standard tests that measure specific properties that are key factors to the paint's performance and the job it is designed to do. These include viscosity, which has an impact on "brushability"; durability – the scrub and flex resistance capabilities of the paint; the density and weight per gallon; drying time and dispersion or fineness of grind.

Over the years the Harris team has worked with not only decorative products but automotive and Feb building products too. In fact when Harris first started to manufacture the Feb line under licence in the early 1990s, many people felt there was a significant improvement in quality. Charles Kirton attributes this to two main factors; that there was a discipline and accuracy applied throughout the manufacturing process from formulation to production and secondly, that the technical department was skilled enough to properly interpret manufacturing instructions.

In 1994 Harris launched a new colour tinting system called Colour Creations in retail stores throughout Barbados. The new system introduced customers to a whole new world of choice and colour selection beyond the limitations of the colour card. Over 900 colours could be mixed by store assistants by adding the correct quantity of colorants to white bases. For an accurate colour result it was essential to work with bases that were 100% consistent and the production team and quality controllers proved they were more than up for the challenge. The Barbados National Standards Institute was duly impressed and recognized Harris with the Quality Control Award in 1995.

When Charles Kirton, who is Vice President of Technical Services and Innovation at Harris, is asked the key to his success, he replies: "Trying to be true to anything that you do. In other words, don't take the short cuts. I have to go through all the steps as they are called for. I just can't do it any other way!"



# the new algae-busters

Durable paint protection particularly within the tropics requires strong chemical ingredients capable of retarding the growth of microorganisms-that break down the surface and reduces the life of your paint job. For years this was achieved using harsh chemicals but in the mid-1980s Harris determined the need to develop a more advanced approach. Specialist chemical company Thor was identified to assist with this objective - to develop a new generation of biocide additives for the Caribbean region that would set a new standard in terms of health, safety and environmental protection.

Left unchecked there are numerous microorganisms or bacteria that will thrive on paint surfaces giving rise to the growth of algae, fungi and mildew especially in a moist, warm, tropical atmosphere. Strong sugar producing regions create a special ecology that promotes the growth of these cultures.

When exposed to sulfurous compounds, the old mercury-based fungicides would quickly turn white paint, black. This had been a particular problem experienced in Dominica. Consequently, Harris set out to eliminate the use of mercury-based products. At the same time, they required a superlative chemical compound that was less damaging and up to the tough task of preventing microbiological spoilage of coated surfaces in a tropical climate.

For a period of nearly 10 years Harris and Thor conducted research towards customizing the best, most cost-effective, environmentally friendly formulation for use in the Caribbean. Through rigorous wet-state and dry-film challenge tests they were able to analyze performance statistics. The results were presented to a gathering of architects, builders, contractors and Ministry of Health officials in an industry

presentation in 1995. The workshop facilitated by Jerry Tracey, then Technical Manager of Thor, examined the causes and prevention of biodeterioration and highlighted the biocidal effectiveness and environmental compatibility of the new Harris formulations.

Over the years Harris has continued the relationship with Thor and is dedicated to maintaining safe and effective paint protection in keeping with the latest advances of technology. The company is assured that all products are manufactured under the ISO 9001 mark of quality and meet all existing and anticipated regulations stipulated by environmental authorities. Harris is currently testing new and exciting biocides that have the potential to bring customers a new and higher level of protection and performance.

## Visual Of Ulttima Plus Results



Flat Emulsion Paint with No Biocides  
(**>75% Growth**)

Ulttima Plus Flat Exterior  
(**0% Growth**)

Leading Competitive Flat Exterior Paint  
(**>50% Growth**)



# paint basics

## The Basics:

On the surface, making paint is essentially a simple process that involves a few steps and some fundamental components. However, this belies the thousands of complex chemical options that technology offers us today to produce all manner of specific formulations to provide a wide range of coating solutions.

Paints are generally made up of pigment, a carrier substance or base, binders and additives. Carrier substances can be divided into solvent-based (oil paints) or water-based (emulsions). Binders provide adhesion and comprise of synthetic and natural resins such as alkyds, acrylics, polyurethanes, epoxies, linseed oil and so on. To further manipulate the properties of the paint a wide range of additives can be used to enhance the performance or specific characteristics of the paint.

To make paint, the base ingredients are ground and mixed into a paste. The paste is then refined. Some solvent-based paints are further refined in a sand mill while water-based paints are processed in a high-speed dispersion tank. The paint mixture is further 'let down' (extended) and other ingredients added while it is continually agitated in large tanks. The paint is filtered before being packaged.



Dispersing & Mixing



High Speed Dispersing/Sandmill



Mixing – Slow Speed



Filtering



Packaging



# getting the white stuff

One of the most important ingredients used in manufacturing paint is titanium dioxide ( $\text{TiO}_2$ ), also known as titanium (IV) oxide or titania. About 95% of world production of titanium dioxide is used in paint. This valuable white pigment can also be found in many day-to-day items including food, cosmetics, sunscreens, plastics, paper, inks, textiles, ceramics, rubber and even toothpaste!

What is truly remarkable about this finely ground powder is that it is brilliant white and highly opaque, in other words, it has an extremely good ability to hide whatever is under it (a very important characteristic in paint!). Its refractive index or ability to scatter light is second only to diamond and the fact that it is nontoxic and allergy free makes it particularly consumer friendly. Furthermore, Titanium White has a very high resistance to discoloration caused by prolonged sun exposure, something that is particularly relevant to the Caribbean.

Pure titanium dioxide does not occur naturally but there are several crystalline rock forms that contain small amounts along with other minerals. Two of the most significant sources are minerals known as ilmenite and rutile. Ilmenite, which was first discovered in Russia, is usually a black, metallic crystal when found. To obtain titanium dioxide, the ore is purified and processed and then often treated to enhance its performance as a pigment. Titania can be found in many parts of the world but some of the most significant sources occur in Australia, South Africa, India, the USA and Canada.



*Titanium Dioxide*



*Ilmenite*



*Rutile*

# safety, health and environment

Harris has always demonstrated a keen commitment to their employees, their community and the beautification of these island environments. The company has strived to live up to the slogan “Pride Inside and Out” in every aspect of the way they do business be it through training, the promotion of healthy practices, the development of environmentally conscious products or support for community projects.

When CEO Ian Kenyon joined the firm in 2009, he further underscored the importance of these objectives encapsulating them in the mission and core values of the business. As a result, a lively programme of SHE (Safety, Health and Environment) initiatives has been activated by work groups in each Harris company. These embrace a broad range of enterprises aimed at improving the well-being and quality of life for Harris employees and customers and preventative measures to reduce risk of accident.

Alongside award-winning environmental programmes, there is a regular programme of safety activities and training. This includes topics such as First Aid; Fire Safety and Evacuation Training (drills and smoke bombs!); regular fire inspections; Multi-Hazard Contingency Planning and Disaster Preparedness Training; even training about tropical mosquito-borne hazards such as Zika.

They say, expect the unexpected but in 2020 no one was prepared for Coronavirus. Harris’ Senior Team and Human Resource department were swift to act implementing safety measures and health protocols to

protect staff and customers region wide. The situation was fast evolving with a constant need for communication and education; to keep staff informed of current conditions and options around health care and impacts at work. Two years on, protective measures are still in place but the situation has stabilized and is acknowledged as the new normal.



# **SAFETY**

**IS A FULL TIME JOB**

**DON'T  
MAKE IT A  
PART TIME  
PRACTICE**





# think green

**LET'S GO GREEN TOGETHER!**

*From energy conservation and renewable energy, to proper waste management and designing paint that is more eco friendly - Harris Paints is working to sustain our precious environment, day in and out.*

**Come Celebrate with us and enjoy 20% OFF all Ultima Plus paints Today Only! between 12pm & 2pm Harris Colour Centre Wildey**

**Caribbean Champions of Colour**  
www.championsofcolour.com  
Caribbean Champions of Colour

**GREEN WISE CERTIFIED**

**green wise**

**HARRIS**

This is the slogan that is synonymous with all Harris' internal environmental initiatives which affirms the company's vision as a leader in green business practices.

Since the 1980s Harris has led the way to reduce the need for harsh oil-based paint products by formulating and promoting high performance water-based alternatives. The company has been able to substantially reduce the use of harmful substances that were once required and has products that are tested by third parties and awarded Green Wise and Green Wise Gold certifications, widely respected by environmental organizations. It is Harris' ongoing mission to better serve the environment and to provide safer, cleaner products for the benefit of users and employees.

In 2010, the company relaunched efforts to raise awareness of environmental issues and closely examine what steps could be taken to reduce the impact on the world we live in. This was done by carefully examining practices within the plant but also educating employees about the personal measures they could adopt that would collectively make a difference. The broad ranging initiatives embraced four key areas; energy conservation; water conservation; waste reduction and recycling; and pollution control and management.

Each of the regional plants is encouraged to identify and implement cost-saving and conservation measures within their own environments. Practices such as recycling or reusing materials such as plastics, glass, metals, cardboard, paper and drums are promoted. Signage can play an important part in energy conservation along with an examination of energy used. Simple steps

like installing water saving devices on taps can cut down tremendously on waste and rain harvesting systems can be a wonderful resource when water is short.

The Caribbean has long used clean solar energy to heat water and now solar roof systems are becoming more popular. Harris Holdings, the company that manages the Group's property backed the installation of a 90kW photo voltaic system at Wildey, Barbados about six years ago. The investment has a positive environmental impact reducing the carbon footprint of the business and offers excellent cost savings in reduction of energy bills. This has become ever more important as global energy prices have soared throughout 2022. Harris Holdings plan to expand the initiative, adding two other similar sized systems that will be hooked up before year end.

### Green Awards

Bringing colour to the Caribbean is a mission founded on cherishing the environment in which we live. It follows that Harris was proud to be recognized in the Green Business Barbados (GBB) programme designed and conducted by the Future Centre Trust (FCT) and to be among the island's first two recipients to earn their Tier Five green credentials in June 2015!

Having worked closely with FCT for several years, Green Business Barbados provided a framework for Harris to help develop initiatives to deliver improvements particularly in the key areas of Energy Conservation, Waste Management and Employee Wellbeing and Productivity.

FCT is a charitable non-governmental organization which focuses on environment issues and the programme was designed to encourage the Barbados business community to take a greater role in conserving and preserving the environment for future generations. Harris joined the programme in 2010, earning their first accreditation, Tier One status in January 2011.

Key to success was electing a dedicated environmental think tank, which became known as Harris' Green Team, an inter-departmental committee responsible for spearheading initiatives and discussing ideas at all levels of the organization. One of the team's most ambitious efforts was to implement a pail recycling programme in October 2010, offering a cash payment of BBD 1.50 for every clean Troweltex plastic pail returned (though it met with disappointing results). However, there were very many other successful plans and Harris implemented more than 175 measures from replacing incandescent bulbs with new LEDs and moving away from use of plastics long before it was mandated by Government.

These initiatives have had a lasting effect on the company's DNA and Harris is in ongoing discussions with FCT about extending the programme, which is currently only offered in Barbados, to cover all the territories where it operates.

### Treating Waste Water

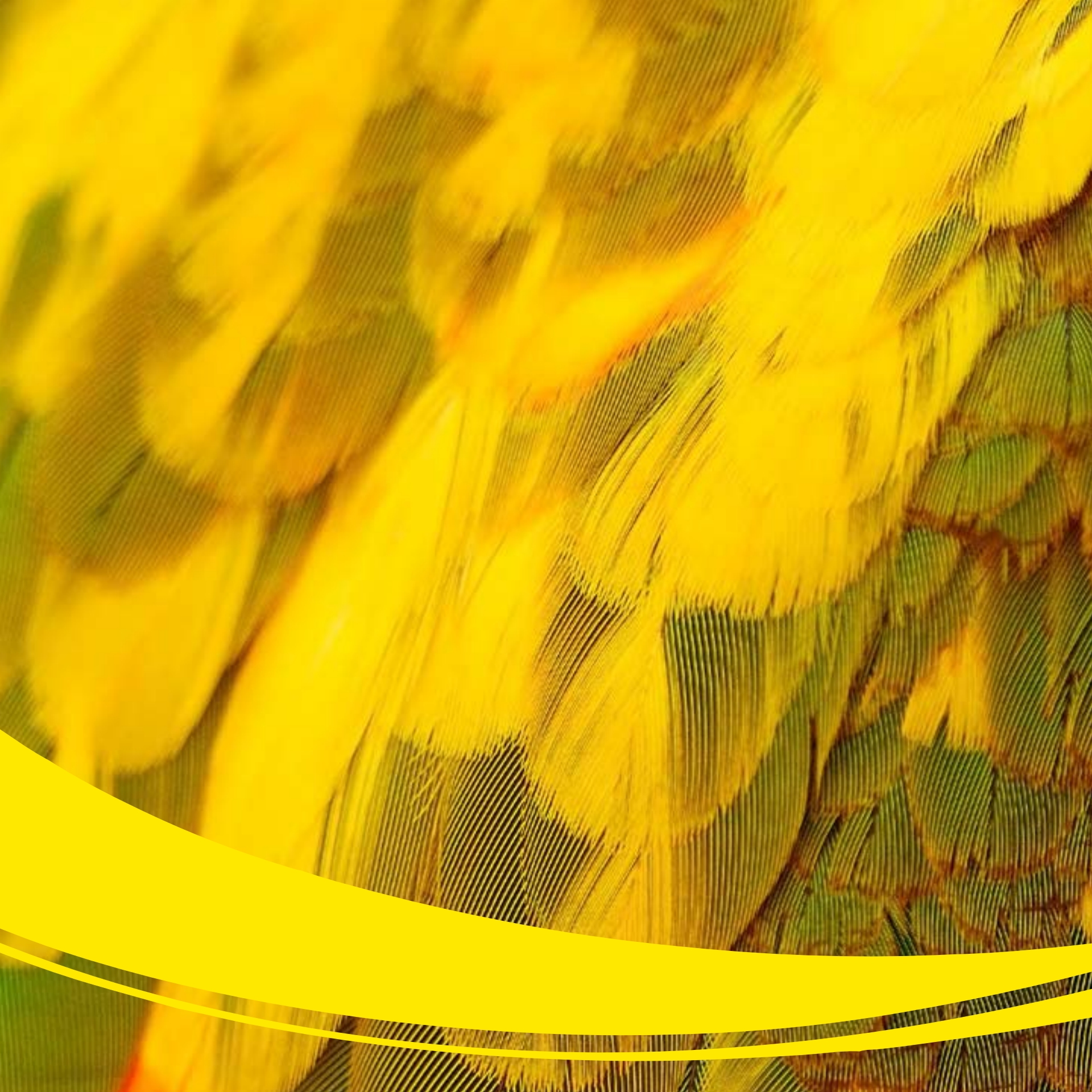
In the late 1990s with environmental concerns taking ever more prominence, Harris took a look at what else they could improve beyond the generation of water-



based paints they had avidly pioneered in the last 15 years. This time they examined internal operations and the method in which waste water was dealt with from the factory.

In fact, it was Harris Paints Dominica that led the way in safeguarding the local environment from any hazards that could be posed by waste water. The company set out to move away from the widely used practice of employing an underground soak away to installing a modern water treatment facility at their plant in Canefield. The custom designed treatment plant was engineered and installed by Atlanta based company RTEK at a cost of XCD 90 000. The technologically advanced operation chemically treats water to make it safe, removing solids and rendering it suitable for disposal.

In an article in the Dominican newspaper, The Sun, then General Manager Griffin St Hilaire told reporters that the move makes Harris Paints Dominica the first of 21 paint factories in CARICOM to have such a plant installed. He was commended by Senior Environmental Health Officer on the significant achievement and the company's commitment to protect the natural resources of the island. Similar facilities were also installed at the Barbados and Saint Lucia factories and in cases where waste cannot be chemically treated on site, the appropriate services are contracted to meet this requirement so that no paint residue should enter the water table.



# **leaders in the Caribbean**



# number one in the Caribbean

Over the past 50 years Harris has been dedicated to becoming the premier coatings company in the region. Through the extensive network of plants, sales people, agents/distributors and clients, it has developed a strong presence in at least 15 Caribbean territories where Harris is both a recognized brand and a respected distributor of quality products. The company holds the

number one or two positions in 65% of those markets and is a dominant force in Antigua, Barbados, Dominica and Saint Lucia with a very strong presence in Anguilla, Grenada, St Kitts and Nevis, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica (via the BH Brand). Regional manufacturing plants are located in Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Saint Lucia, and Jamaica with warehousing and offices in

Guyana. Harris is proud of the contribution it has made through employment and developmental activities in the communities and islands where Harris is sold. Always with an eye to the future, Harris continues to seek opportunities to increasing their stakehold in the Caribbean and wider region.





# international standards

All the operations run by the Harris Group adhere to a quality management system and are certified by SGS, the world's leading testing, inspection and certification company, to ISO 9001:2015

The quality management system speaks to operational excellence and Harris was among the first companies in Barbados to achieve certification to ISO 9001 (1998). The widely regarded accreditation is internationally recognized and indicates the competence of an organization to produce consistent, reliable quality of goods.

Trade liberalization in the region provided the impetus, in large part, for Harris to seek a verifiable certification held in high regard. If the company were to successfully face international competitors, they would need to prove that they could go toe-to-toe on quality and standards. By the same token, if they were to seek to strengthen their position through alliance with a strategic partner, an internationally recognized pedigree could give Harris a competitive edge. Furthermore, management of the organization, with operations spread out across the region was increasingly dogged by an idiosyncratic way of doing things. What had before been seen as testing, with the increased size and scope of the company, was becoming a problem.

Just one year after their 25th Anniversary, Harris set about training with Steve Hedman Consulting Services which had been recommended by Pine Hill Dairy. To economize training was combined with Oran Ltd (producers of windows, doors, furniture etc) who were also seeking certification at the time and were in a non-competitive business.

The initial rounds of orientation training were followed by internal training to brief staff on the ISO concept. Work groups, steering committees and internal auditors were elected. The management system is applied to every part of the business including quality control and control of raw materials. It requires checks and balances, special protocols, standard operating procedures and document control. "The hardest thing about achieving the ISO standard," admits Hedman in an interview with the Broad Street Journal, "is developing the documentation. Everyone already has a job and now you are asking them to sit down and document everything they are doing; that is what really takes the time."

Certification was achieved in 2001 (Barbados) and the Harris Group has since worked to certify all operations. The driving force behind this achievement is Dolores Pope, Business Management System Manager who works across the regional business units to help teams continue to focus on efficiency, consistency, operational improvements and to address new focus areas such as risk management. Working with a very high level of organization and attention to detail, she is the principal coordinator managing teams that conduct regular audits of all departments to ensure "we are doing what we say we do!"

Harris has put its full support behind the quality management system and committed a lot of resources to it. CEO Ian Kenyon remarks, "When you originate from a small island I think the pressure is always on to demonstrate in every way possible that we have the quality and standards to allow us to compete with any international brand and Harris, I think, has done that very successfully".

**“W**hen you originate from a small island I think the pressure is always on to demonstrate in every way possible that we have the quality and standards to allow us to compete with any international brand and Harris, I think, has done that very successfully”.

CEO Ian Kenyon

*Dolores DaBreo-Pope, Business Management System Manager*



# going 'glocal'

This is the attitude at Harris (not to be confused with 'going postal'<sup>1</sup>) and the philosophy behind the company's modern business strategy. Glocal is a combination of globalisation when it is informed by local considerations and is a perspective that answers the need to provide the best that technology has to offer while understanding and servicing a market that has its own unique culture and requirements.

Over the past five decades the political and trade environment in the region has changed considerably as local governments have acquiesced to global pressure to liberalize trade and open markets. Further to this, technological developments have revolutionized not only the paint industry but nearly every aspect of our world. Within this environment the Harris Group has expanded its product portfolio by 15 times and has grown the organization in five countries. It is fair to say that the goal posts have moved radically and yesterday's game plan will no longer work in today's environment. Notwithstanding, in this sea of change the only constant has been Harris' commitment to quality and the relationships and business experience that has been built up over 50 years throughout the Caribbean. At the same time, there exists new opportunities and through a blend of regional manufacturing and international partnerships, Harris has been able to provide a full range of coating solutions for domestic, commercial and industrial use; from specialized building chemicals to brushes and tools.

Caribbean people are very familiar with what happens when foreign concerns apply a one-size-fits-all approach to markets that are highly individualized. "Even large companies like John Deere have made this

mistake" remarks CEO Ian Kenyon about their initiative to introduce a tractor for Indian farmers. "The problem is they didn't appreciate the nature of the industry there and farmers' requirements for vehicles were entirely different to what they anticipated and therefore sales fell flat." Being based regionally is a significant advantage. "Too many times people invest in products and when they don't work out, there is no one to turn to. We have a developed network of Harris Colourcentres, retailers, agents and distributors throughout the Caribbean. People know us; they know where to find us and as Chairman Ralph Johnson likes to say, "We aren't going anywhere – and that is as good as a guarantee."

<sup>1</sup>Slang for becoming uncontrollably angry.



**“W**e have a developed network of Harris Colourcentres, retailers, agents and distributors throughout the Caribbean. People know us; they know where to find us and as Chairman Ralph Johnson likes to say, “We aren’t going anywhere – and that is as good as a guarantee.”

CEO Ian Kenyon

# giving back

From the outset Harris recognized the importance of the local community in the Little Man's titan task of taking on international companies and carving out a share of the market. The company is deeply appreciative of having been embraced in so many territories and is only too aware that sometimes a little assistance goes a long way and even great things can come of small gestures.

Therefore, since inception Harris has always actively participated in giving back and supporting a wide number of community initiatives. Of course, the company is not able to answer every appeal but each subsidiary develops an annual action programme based on local knowledge designed to uplift, inspire and brighten lives.

On many occasions staff jump in and get involved in lending practical assistance which helps bring the Harris team yet closer and provide individuals with opportunities to enrich their lives and for personal growth. These activities include beautification, educational and environmental initiatives as well as health issues, particularly the fight against cancer.



**FIGHT CANCER!**

CARIBBEAN TOP 10

GO  
*Kristen*  
Orange

**This year paint your home 'Kristen Orange' and for every gallon you buy, Harris will donate \$10 to battle cancer!**

The Team Kristen Charity was established to assist young Kristen Lopez in her ongoing fight with a rare, but aggressive form of leukemia and will, in future years, assist many other cancer patients in Barbados.

To show your support, simply ask for our Caribbean Top 10 'Kristen Orange' (also known as 'Fiesta Orange') at Wildey, Six Roads, Fitts Village, Colourcentres, Centers General, Diorea, H&B Hardware, Marshall Trading, Barbados Lumber Co, Speightstown, K&A Home Improvement, Hardware Ostins and Decosta Mannings locations.

**Every Gallon Counts!  
Go Orange Today!**

**Caribbean Champions of Colour**

**HARRIS**





*Above (L-R) Michelle J Straughn - Walk Manager, BCS Breast Screening programme, Mrs Debra King, Director, Corporate Communications - CIBC FirstCaribbean and Trustee - FirstCaribbean International ComTrust Foundation Limited, Dr Shirley Hanoman-Jhagroo, G.C.M. Medical Coordinator, BCS Breast Screening programme, Dame Billie Miller - Champion of the Walk, Cheryl Downes, Human Resource Manager, Harris Paints, CIBC FirstCaribbean Walk for the Cure Regional Platinum Sponsor, Mr Richard Kennedy - Walk Manager, CIBC FirstCaribbean*



Staffers from around the region participate in Walk for the Cure activities

Harris

# Barbados

## Area

166 sq miles (430 sq km)

## Terrain

Coral stone island, generally flat except for the Scotland district in the north-east

## Population

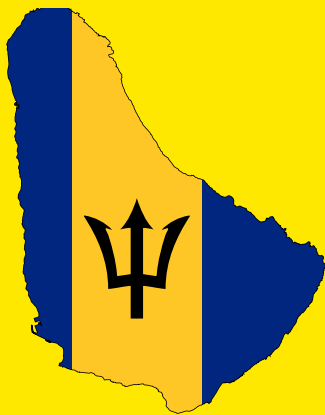
286 705 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Bridgetown

## Languages

English



## The Home of Harris

Founded in Barbados in 1972, Harris is very proud of its Barbadian heritage and it remains the headquarters of Harris, which has been located at the Wildey Industrial Estate, St Michael for the past 43 years.

Despite difficult beginnings, today Harris is a household name and is a dominant force in the coatings industry locally and throughout the region. About 15 years ago, the company started to outgrow the original building – 8 000 sq ft which housed the factory, warehouse and offices. Becoming

increasingly short of space, it was clear Harris needed room to expand. The company looked to acquire additional land which was found nearby on an almost adjacent site. Plans were prepared in 2004 for the construction of a warehouse facility but when misfortune struck in February 2005 and fire broke out destroying Harris' sales depot, it was decided to incorporate a retail outlet into the plan for the new building as well. The new space was much larger and included a 6 000 sq ft of store space with corporate offices above and the new



*The opening of the new Sales Depot (rebuilt after the fire) with a plaque and dedication in memory of Mickey Hutchinson who had been so helpful to Harris early on*

<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

warehouse was the size of the entire original plant! The new premises officially opened in September 2006.

In addition to these developments, Harris felt that the growing residential communities in the east of the island and the prestigious west coast were underserved and proceeded to scout for suitable locations. As a result, Harris added two further Colourcentres for customer convenience located at Emerald Park, Six Roads, St Philip and Fitts Village, St James officially opened in December 2005 and November 2009 respectively.



*New branding at Harris Wildey (below) and Six Roads (above) 2021-2022*



*A colourful welcome awaits at Harris Colourcentres, Rainbow pedestrian crossing installed 2018*

## Training & Work Experience

To provide vital skills and experience for youth, Harris worked with the Barbados Entrepreneur Foundations' (BEF) Classroom to Boardroom initiative, 2016. Students were tasked to find solutions to real problems in a short timeframe and did so with impressive teamwork and creativity. The session was led by facilitator Derek Browne of Entrepreneur's in Action in collaboration with CEO, Ian Kenyon and team members from BEF.

In 2020 Charles Kirton, VP of Technical and Innovation at Harris, led an Introduction to Painting course for youth seeking opportunities in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Community



*Classroom to Boardroom 2016*



Empowerment's Youth Development programme. The week session entailed paint education and life skills provided by Kirk Prescod and David Brathwaite. Sessions were facilitated by John Hollingsworth, Principal Youth Development Officer in collaboration with Permanent Secretary Yolande Howard. Final closing remarks and presentations were made by Hon Minister Adrian Forde.

*Students at the conclusion of Harris' Introduction to Painting course, 2020*

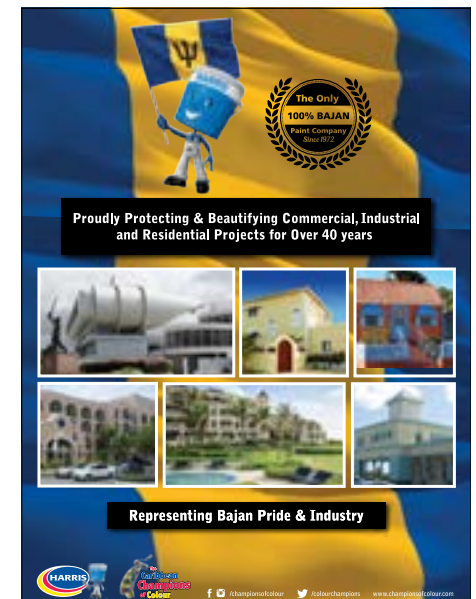
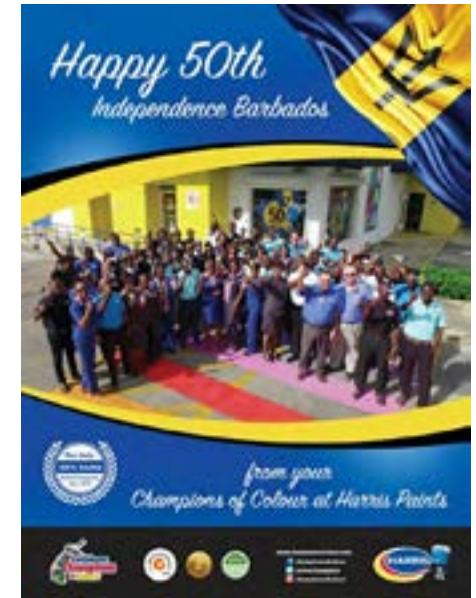


# 50 years of Independence



*Harris salutes Barbados on the 50th Anniversary of Independence 2016*

Barbados reached an important milestone in 2016 with 50 years of the country's independence from Great Britain. The half century was celebrated with great fanfare throughout the nation and commemorated by Harris in this special aerial photo.



## Support for Arts in Education

Creativity has a vital role in communities, providing inspiration, cultural connectedness and so much more. Harris Paints Barbados has been delighted to support a wide number of initiatives over the years. None more so than the mural projects plan set out by the Ministry of Education, Technology and Vocational Training in 2019. Hon Minister Santia Bradshaw expressed a need to heighten appreciation for the arts in the educational system and commissioned a number of works at schools around the country.

Harris, who widely supports school refreshment projects annually, was delighted to partner, through the provision of paints, to facilitate captivating and important installations by local artists. The muralists selected for these projects were Kwami Hunte, Don Small, Nikolai Charles and Sheri Nicholls.

*Below: Minister of Education, Hon Santia Bradshaw in front of 'The Living Art Wall' at the Ministry, Constitution Road, Bridgetown*



*Top: 'Legacy' at St Mary's Primary School, depicts national hero Samuel Jackman Prescod; veteran entertainer Richard Stoute; Dalton 'Jackie Opel' Bishop; Cultural Ambassador, Anthony 'Mighty Gabby' Carter and educator Matthew Farley who all attended the city school, Bridgetown. Middle: Installation at Ann Hill School, St Michael by Sheri Nicholls. Bottom: One of the many murals featured at Grantley Adams Memorial School, St Joseph, by Kwami Hunte, Sheri Nicholls, Don Small and Nikolai Charles.*

## Engaging Children on the Environment

Also using murals to connect with children was the BlueGreen Initiative (BGI) led by Hon Senator Crystal Drakes who approached Harris about support for installing artworks as part of their 2019/2021 Coral Reef 'Be Blue' School Tour, an interactive programme of educational activities to raise awareness of the environment and the importance of protecting marine life. A cause close to Harris' heart, the company was pleased to support murals painted by BGI's artist in resident Jehmilah Wood at selected schools.



*Top to bottom on the right:  
Part of the 51' x 7.5' mural at Maria Holder Nursery,  
Oldbury, St. Philip unveiled November 2021, featuring  
'coral buddies', children's book characters; Middle:  
Blackman & Gollop Primary School/Be Blue, School Tour,  
March 2020; Bottom: Feature of mural at Bay Primary*



# Home Sweet Home

Sprucing up homes is at the heart of what Harris does best and the company was very happy to partner with Arawak Cement Company's Home Sweet Home Makeover Show offering one deserving Barbadian family a major renovation and makeover for Christmas. To win this incredible remodel, Barbadians nominated a family that owned their own land and home but needed assistance and entries were judged by a panel of representative of key charitable and social assistance organizations. The amazing opportunity was won by the Green family of Belleplaine, St Andrew, whose small single level abode would be transformed! The inspiring story was televised produced by Blue Waters Productions and Alison Saunders' SFa Communications, who developed the Home Sweet Home campaign. Harris Paints worked in collaboration with Arawak Cement, the construction crew and show organizers to choose long wearing finishes and colours to make the homeowners proud. Other major sponsors included Genesis Construction Limited, Barbados Lumber Company and Barbados Steel Works. As the saying goes, 'it takes a village' and valuable support was also provided by many other décor and support services.



*Photography courtesy of SFa Communications*







Norman Simpson made an outstanding contribution to the development of Harris Paints. Few people had his vitality, passion and knowledge of paint which was matched only by his considerable retail experience. His strong support and involvement was of invaluable assistance and a great asset to the business.

# CARTER'S

**LUMBER · HARDWARE · HOMEWARE**

## Carter & Company Limited

Unlike any other retailer, Carter & Co Ltd has always enjoyed a unique relationship with Harris owing to the major contribution by Richard Carter to both companies. From as early as 1965, Carter set out to make paint a premier part of what they had to offer the Barbadian public and from the advent of Harris in 1972, Harris has been proud to be a part of that mission. Indeed, Harris is happy to call Carter & Co Ltd, partners in paint and a whole lot more!

It would be impossible to talk about the hardware retail market in Barbados without dedicating a great deal of time to Carter & Co Ltd who has a proud heritage and family business dating back four generations. While they have a distinguished history, a great deal of the company's success is due to the foresight and ability to keep up with modern times. Historically the company earned its reputation by stocking and supplying a very wide range of goods and services and while this has not changed, Carter & Co Ltd led the way in embracing modern store design and retailing concepts opening its home-centre-style Wildey store in 1988. Built on integrity and family values, the Carter legacy was started by Douglas Hart Davis Carter and his brother who brought a property on Broad Street in 1860. An advertisement in the Agricultural Reporter of 20 November 1896 demonstrates that the family offered a wide variety of goods from 200 kegs of blasting powder to beer! They further supplied

it seems, sewing machines, shoemaker's leather, household furniture and all manner of tools for engineers, coopers and masons as well as supplying on the spot carriage repairs and upholstery services. They quickly became an important stop for any planter or estate manager on his weekly trip to Bridgetown.

The Carters moved their business in 1916 to the High Street location which they still operate and in 1925 Douglas Hart Carter, son of the founder (and Richard Carters' grandfather) took over the business. It was passed in turn to his sons; Percy Carter, who helped manage the operation from the 1950s and was later joined by his elder brother George until his death in 1962. For the most part the business changed little over these decades and the Carter family stuck to the traditions and business formula they knew, providing personal service and general stores to families and estates across the island.

In 1969, the eldest son of Mr. Percy, as he was known, joined the family business full of modern ideas and considerable experience managing an estate or working Plantation. As has been well documented, there were significant global shifts in the political, economic and cultural landscape in the 1960s and these changes extended to the commercial environment and retail sector in Barbados. It was not long before Richard had proved himself capable of taking the reins



*(L-R) Great Grandfather Douglas Hart Davis Carter, Grandfather Douglas Hart Carter, Father Percy Carter, Son Richard Carter*

and it is primarily through his vision and business acumen that Carter & Co Ltd went from strength to strength over the next 30 years.

Among the staff at Carter & Co Ltd, heading the paint department in the High Street store was Norman Simpson who had joined the company just four years before Richard. Norman who was enormously enthusiastic and knowledgeable about paint, its application and accessories and was keen to establish Carter & Co Ltd as the paint specialist. As well versed as he was in the industry, he was perhaps aware that the do-it-yourself movement already underway in the United Kingdom and in North America was set to revolutionize retail. Often frustrated by the lack of choice in the Barbados market, nominal margins for dealers and generally poor level of service, he was hugely supportive when Richard told him of the idea to start a local paint manufacturing plant and he was sure the added competition could only be to the benefit of the consumer.

From the inception of Harris in 1972 to current times, Carter & Co Ltd has continuously stocked Harris Paints along with a selection of other brands. Despite the connection between the companies, Carter & Co Ltd was always very clear that their top commitment was to satisfy their clients. That is why especially in those initial years, the considered opinion of Norman Simpson and his confidence in the quality of Harris was so highly valued and appreciated. Long after Richard Carter stepped down from his position on the Harris Board, the companies have continued to have a long and fruitful relationship based on their mutual objectives of providing customers with premium products, choice and service.

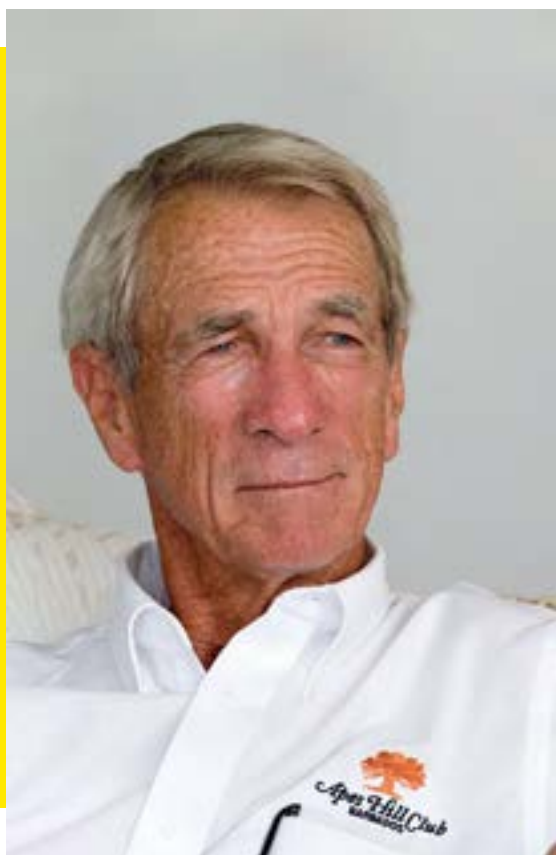
When Harris first introduced their groundbreaking Colour Creations automatic dispensing colour matching system, Carter & Co Ltd were the first to embrace the new technology with both hands. Although

some customized tinting would have been done at the factory for professional contractors, never before had Barbadians been given the opportunity to mix almost any colour they could imagine on-demand in-store! Today Carter & Co Ltd, under the able leadership of Michael Edwards and his team, remains at the forefront of paint retail and while colour tinting has become the industry standard, they are able to provide customers, in partnership with Harris, a unique system designed to make colour selection and coordination easier than ever before.

Known for “Paint, Hardware and a Whole Lot More” - Carter & Co Ltd has continued to expand and move with the times and now offers online shopping as well as seven general hardware locations including the original High Street store. In addition, they have five special interest stores including Carters Pit Stop (automotive supplies) and two ‘Fisherman’s’ locations.



*Carter's Wildey location*



## Sir Charles Williams 1932-2021

One of the most enthusiastic and loyal supporters of Harris Paints for more than 44 years was Sir Charles Williams who painted exclusively with Harris products wherever possible throughout the Caribbean. (As legend has it, he almost came to blows with a long serving supervisor who was unfortunate enough to have been caught with two pint tins of a competing brand on the C O Williams site at Warrens!)

After he became a shareholder and Director of the company in 1975 Sir Charles insisted that Harris was used across his property and business ventures and his brother 'Bizzy' adopted the same standard. This includes road-marking paint, industrial and high-performance coatings and decorative paints

which were used throughout his luxury Apes Hill Development.

Few people perhaps can understand as well as Sir Charles, better known as "Cow", what it takes to get on in life and he credited "the best parents in the world" for teaching him good work ethics. Brought up on a plantation as a young man he worked 18-hour days overseeing work on the estate by day and working in the dairy at night starting at half past one every morning. "My off days consisted of one half day on Saturdays and a Sunday every month", and it seemed he never slowed down much after that time. How did he do it? "I fought my way" he exclaimed and acknowledged with deep gratitude that it was down to one or two remarkable individuals that, through their kindness, gave him a chance.

On returning from a polo match in England in the mid-1970s Cow's financial advisor, Mickey Hutchinson, met him on arrival with some troubling news which he said concerned friends of ours. He went on to explain that Harris Paints, which then still had the factory in Lowlands, was in danger of going under and asked whether Cow would be interested in injecting some equity. Without missing a beat, a meeting was arranged at C O Williams in Warrens. After a discussion of the facts and figures Cow, who was sitting directly opposite Ralph Johnson, let him know that whatever was needed he would put in to save the ailing business but he could not resist goading his long-time friend by declaring that under no circumstance was it to finance his party-going and wild ways. To his greatest delight Ralph exploded in fury and had to be restrained!

Sir Charles' close connection with Ralph largely led to the quality of the relationship he had with the company for several decades. "I knew 'Bruggers' from the time he was knee high to a grasshopper, back in the day when he was a boxer", he claimed. The two became especially close after Cow invested

in a modest fishing boat and Ralph, together with his father Lance who loved to fish, would join him on outings from Tent Bay. The Harris team also became very close with Cow partly through the mutual love of motorsport that was shared by not only Andrew Phillips, Richard Carter and Ralph but also Cow's right hand man, Mickey Hutchinson. Furthermore, Andrew Phillips, "who was a lunatic behind the wheel of a car" surprisingly developed an enthusiasm for the sport of polo. These multifaceted relationships formed a solid core, a sense of stability and a high level of trust at the heart of Harris.

In Sir Charles' opinion, one of the most significant steps in the development of the company was the partnership agreement that was finally struck with A S Bryden & Co Ltd right at the end of the 1970s. As he put it: "my father always told me, put your horses in the worst company so you can beat them and put yourself in the best so you can get uplifted - and you could not want a more solid company than Bryden, one of the strongest names in Barbados; they were gilt-edge." He believed that the relationship contributed to the growth and wider acceptance of the Harris brand and helped elevate its image. Frank Edghill (who represented Bryden) was, he remembers, tremendously helpful and instrumental in opening doors not only in Barbados but in the other islands as well.

After 1978, Cow moved to Saint Lucia to build a multi-million dollar harbour and oil transshipment facility for Amerada Hess Corp (known as Hess Corp today) with a storage capacity of 10 million barrels. In his absence Mickey Hutchinson took the helm at C O Williams and represented the company in the Harris Boardroom where his enthusiastic support and astute financial advice made him a favourite. "Mickey was gold dust", said Sir Charles of his former General Manager (who died in 1991). "He was a giant of a man; he had extraordinary vision and great ability. We were very close. If I was the sail, he was my keel." As if to

demonstrate the sentiment Sir Charles recounted a particular occasion when he was invited to record some promotional spots for Harris on the TV. “I am not the world’s best public speaker” he admitted magnanimously “but to be honest, I thought it had gone pretty well. To my surprise instead of congratulations I received a dressing down from Mickey Hutchinson who claimed that I paraded about Harris so much, no one would think I worked for C O Williams!” It tickled him to think of it.

As Harris grew and started to concentrate more on overseas expansion, Ralph approached Cow for his advice about increasing their share of the Saint Lucia market. If they got involved in a retail operation they needed someone on the ground that could manage the business affairs. Cow knew of Keith Smith through working on the Hess project (which he playfully dubbed: ‘Holidays, Evenings, Saturdays and Sundays’) and recommended him as a solid contact. Keith went on to partner with Harris and Mikey Pilgrim, in operating Colour World of Paints promoting the Harris brand in Castries and later became the senior executive at Harris when they opened their own factory there in 1994.

Through C O Williams’ nominated representatives and his relationship with Ralph, Cow always kept well informed about Harris activities. As the company expanded, he was the first to recognize the challenge of managing growth, which is almost never plain sailing. He stressed the importance of looking to the opportunities in the market. “He who has the best eyesight in the world and has no vision is completely blind’ and there is no truer word!” He continued to be excited about the future of Harris, extending his stake hold in the company and was proud of his long association. He gave Harris a lot of credit for the energy with which it tackles the competition, the reliability and undeniable quality of products.

“**S**ir Charles Williams was a pioneering entrepreneur, a titan of industry and a colleague and close friend to the Harris Family. Through his many spectacular professional achievements he contributed to the development of Barbados, and the infrastructure of the region in countries such as Saint Lucia, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and countries even farther afield.”



*Sir Charles celebrating Harris’ 45th anniversary with Chairman Ralph Johnson, (Photo by Jamal Boodhoo)*

# Harris

# Dominica

## Area

289.5 sq miles (751 sq km)

## Terrain

Mountainous volcanic island with rainforest cover

## Population

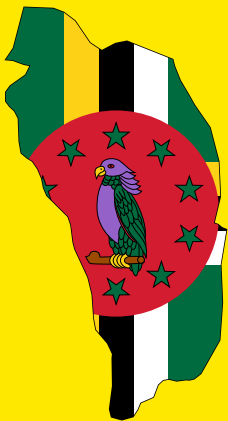
72 172 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Roseau

## Languages

English, French Patois ("Kwéyòl")



## Harris Dominates

For 44 years, Harris has been proudly manufactured in Dominica serving both local and export markets. When it was first established there were precious few manufacturing plants on the island and the government was keen to provide job opportunities for the population and to create a favourable business environment. To a large degree, Dominica embraced Harris as their own. Co-founder and first Chairman of the Board of Directors, Andrew Phillips, had a special fondness for the island and spent considerable periods of time there when developing the current factory complex at Canefield Industrial Estate.

The business was developed and championed by Dominican scion Ninian Marie who guided the operation skilfully for the first 18 years. Mr Marie helped to establish a 'Buy Local' campaign through his work with the Dominica Association of Industry and Commerce (DAIC) which laid critical groundwork for establishing the dominant market share enjoyed in the territory.

This has been maintained by subsequent leadership and Harris is estimated to account for over 80% of all paints sold.

At the 20 000 square feet Canefield facility, which employs about 27 people, Harris produces the full range of decorative coatings which are sold island-wide. These products are exported to Anguilla, Antigua, Montserrat, St Kitts & Nevis and St Maarten from the Dominica hub.

Happily, Harris can say that the Government of Dominica has always been extremely supportive of their efforts to develop a strong business base in the island. Harris was delighted to present a Plaque of Appreciation to Prime Minister, Hon Dame Eugenia Charles in 1993 and in her address, she said that Harris had proved Dominica's investment potential and that initiatives could succeed if strength, ability and innovative ideas were employed to bring it into being.



*Ralph Johnson in discussions with the Government c 1996, L-R Hon Prime Minister Edison James, Minister of Trade and Marketing, Hon Norris Charles and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Hon Irwin LaRocque*

<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

Similarly, subsequent administrations have equally understood the need for measures to help local business flourish especially in the face of increasing levels of competition and were instrumental in providing supportive conditions.

## First Overseas Factory

A go-getting Ninian Marie was impressed with what the Little Man had to offer back in 1976-77 and quickly cut a deal to import Harris for distribution in Dominica. Always a man with his ear to the ground, Ninian realized that trading conditions would be tightening up to protect small scale manufacturing in the Lesser Developed Countries (LDCs) and persuaded the principals of Harris of the need to establish a factory in Dominica. This move was supported by the Patrick John government and the first Harris subsidiary was established in 1978, the same year as official Independence.

In the early days, the simple plant located at Fond Cole employed about seven people and undertook basic paint production using bases, then combining with the requisite additives, dryers, thinners etc to make the product range. Despite the atmosphere of optimism, the foundling factory was to suffer a terrible blow just one year on. In August 1979 Dominica was devastated by Hurricane David, a mammoth storm that left tragedy, destruction and wide-scale homelessness in its wake. The factory survived but it would take months to deal with the after-effects of such deep distress suffered by the nation.

Yet Ninian Marie and the Dominican team rallied to meet all the challenges. By the mid-1980s the operation flourished and sales



*Roslyn Sorhaindo, Retail Services Manager makes a donation of paint to a school in St Kitts.*

were growing in overseas markets which at one time included exports to Grenada, St Vincent, St Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia and even as far afield as Montserrat and Guyana. With sights firmly set on continuing to increase market share in the Leeward Islands it was clear that Dominica needed a bigger operation. Little was spared in the planning

of a new modern manufacturing plant at the Canefield Industrial Estate estimated to have cost XCD 1.5-2 million. The facility was opened in 1987 and was designed with state-of-the-art amenities capable of meeting increased demand and fitted for a bright future.





## Portsmouth Colourcentre

The up-and-coming second city of Dominica, Portsmouth is burgeoning into a vibrant centre of commercial activity located on the island's far-flung north-west coast. Together M & R Trading and Harris spotted a golden opportunity in the growing community which led to the opening of Building Supply Centre.

General Manager, Morrison Azille explained the concept and vision for the store. "We provide building solutions from the stage of foundation to roof assembly and with painting being a vital component of this process we jumped at the opportunity to partner with Harris Paints. We consider Harris Paints to be the top paint solution provider in the Caribbean, therefore we are happy to work with them because we only provide high quality products, backed by high quality service."

The area was once home to the Ross University School of Medicine which catered to some 1 000 students and provided the impetus behind much of the development in the locale. However, despite the departure of the University, the area has continued to grow. Marguerite Desir, Head of Business for Dominica said the new Portsmouth store was developed in response to the growing demand on the island for Harris Paints' range of quality products: "Our performance in this market has been quite remarkable and as such we took the decision to expand our operations in order to meet the growing demand for our quality paint and paint supplies. As Caribbean Champions of Colour we wanted to ensure all of our services were made available to the people of Dominica, thus we sought to undertake the development of a more modern facility to showcase all of what we have to offer."

The Harris Colourcentre in Portsmouth conveniently services the north of the island and stocks a full range of Harris products including specialty tinting on Ultima Plus products and unique, specifically designed decorative tools to help you choose colours and coordinate them perfectly.

**“We consider Harris Paints to be the top paint solution provider in the Caribbean..”**

General Manager, Morrison Azille



*Portsmouth, Dominica*



## No Other Like Ninian



L-R: The Hon Desmond Hoyte, President of Guyana with Ninian Marie, security detail and President of Dominica, Hon Sir Clarence Seignoret – late 1980s

### Ninian L Marie

*Managing Director, Harris Paints Dominica*

1978 -1996

A strong, raspy and bellowing voice was the trademark of Ninian Marie, the larger than life character with a magnetic personality that built Harris Paints Dominica. He played a key role in founding the Harris factory, establishing a dominant stake in the paint market in Dominica and promoting Harris products throughout the OECS. It all started one memorable day in the mid-1970s, when Ninian ambled into the humble Harris premises in Bay Street, Barbados unannounced and declared that he liked what he saw and he would like to ship some paint to Dominica. Young Managing Director, Ralph Johnson, took an instant liking to the man and no doubt relished the opportunity to expand the market. Before long a shipment was packed and

despatched to Marie's commissioning agency in Turkey Lane, Roseau. What the two men could not have known at the time was that their relationship to each other and to the company would become one of the most important developments in the company's history.

It soon became clear, as luck would have it, that Harris had found a partner that was keen, enthusiastic and well connected. To meet Ninian Marie was to remember him. He had friends far and wide and was well connected in Dominica and in other islands where he had been a *tour-de-force* on the men's lawn tennis scene and was infamous in local cricket circles. Sales grew in the wake of his influence and popularity but the politics

of the region were changing and if Harris was not to be shut out of the region, Ninian felt it was imperative to establish a Harris plant in Dominica.

In the following years Marie headed up the operation there and set about building the business with indefatigable energy overcoming many obstacles and tough challenges. Marie was also a strong leader and it was said that "he held the reins of authority tightly, yet by the fairness and bigness of his character he was able to motivate people to perform well for him and his beloved Harris."<sup>1</sup>

He was fiercely loyal to Ralph and to the Board at Harris and he served on many committees for the betterment of the company and of Dominica. He held the posts of Chairman of the East Caribbean Investment Promotion Service; Vice President of the Council of Eastern Caribbean Manufacturers; Director and Chairman of the Dominica Association of Industry and Commerce and the Industrial Development Corporation (now the National Development Corporation). Perhaps closer to his heart still was the work he did in founding the Dominica Association of Catholic Men, a cause about which he was very passionate.

Ninian Marie lived his life large and is fondly remembered for his friendship and the outstanding contribution he made to the company and his country. In every sense he is considered to have been a giant of a man.

Ninian Marie suffered from kidney disease and died suddenly in 1996 at the age of 50. He left an indelible mark on the company and all those who were fortunate enough to work with him.

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Johnson in a Tribute to Ninian Marie, Harris 25th Anniversary supplement, Sunday Sun, Barbados; 14 Sept 1997

## Celebrating Creole Culture

Every island in the Caribbean has its own unique culture and heritage and Harris takes great pride in recognizing the individuality of each territory in which they operate. Creole Day in Dominica provides an excellent opportunity for employees to celebrate their cultural heritage and build a strong spirit of togetherness.

Creole Week is a lively calendar of events that takes place in the last week of October and leads up to Dominica's Independence Day on 3 November. Harris staff is excited

to join in the festivities by celebrating the Creole language, sharing a delicious menu of Creole foods and proudly sporting the national dress, the 'WobDwiyet' (from the French *robe douiette*).

Creole roots go back to the 16th and 17th centuries at a time when the British and the French desired to win Dominica for their crown. While the British triumphed in the end, it is the strong French influence that led to a local Creole culture that is very much alive in Dominica today.



## Dominica Strong

The Dominica team are very tight, like a family and together it seems they can withstand almost anything. In the last 10 years alone, they have faced down adversity (more than once) and come out on top. What is clear is they look after each other, and they look out for their own.

In 2015, Tropical Storm Erika dumped upwards of 30 inches of rain on already saturated ground. Coupled with the mountainous terrain, it led to catastrophic flooding and landslides leaving hundreds of homes damaged and communities in peril. Yet, within 24 hours employees were rallying around to see how they could help. Soon the team, along with BU Head Marguerite Desir and CEO, Ian Kenyon, were climbing

over fallen trees and crossing rivers without bridges, delivering supplies and water to hard hit areas. The road to recovery would be a long one but it was with great pride, that the team made a presentation for XCD 100 000 in paints and other supplies to help the country rebuild with contributions from Harris and some of their generous suppliers.

Mother Nature can be unkind and just two years later, Dominica was dealt an even harder blow. The island suffered a cruel pounding from Hurricane Maria which left it ravaged and its inhabitants traumatized. Despite the grim circumstances, the employees congregated at the factory, which was still intact and they set about



*Top Left: Dominica Prime Minister Hon Roosevelt Skerrit greets and thanks members of Harris Paints Dominica L-R Business Unit Head, Marguerite Desir, with Roslyn Sorhaindo-Madir, Patrickson Seaman and John Joseph*

*Bottom Left: Ian Kenyon (left) and Marguerite Desir (right) arrive with supplies for Creole Day*



the massive job of clearing up. It is incredible testament to their fortitude that the Dominican factory was back in operation just 9 days after the event!

For weeks after, it was very precarious getting entry to Dominica but BU Head Marguerite Desir and CEO, Ian Kenyon packed up supplies and made a sea crossing from Saint Lucia. Laden with goods and ready to prepare a feast, they timed their arrival to celebrate Creole Day, held the last Friday each October, which was just the morale boost the team needed.

Showing remarkable resilience Dominicans wasted no time in setting about putting the pieces back together again. The Harris Group through fundraising efforts were able to pledge USD 200 000 in supplies for the rebuilding effort which the Prime Minister said would be earmarked for childrens' homes, senior citizens homes and the most vulnerable in society. And not six months later, Harris Dominica were performing at peak, breaking their all-time production record.

Major projects that have contributed to the success of the BU, particularly in the past 5 years include the Cabrits Resort & Spa, Kempinski – a 150 room luxury resort built in 2019 and Harris was recently selected for the new Grand Bay project of 103 houses.

But this close-knit team that stays together (30% of Harris Group's total long service veterans of over 25 years or more, are from Dominica) do not forget to pay it forward. Since 2012 they have been working with the Vielle Case Roman Catholic Church renovation project which was destroyed in an earthquake in 2004. They have recently completed repainting the renovated church with stunning results.

Working collaboratively with retailers, distributors and customers Harris provided a over XCD 20 000 in 2022, to fund computer equipment to aid students and teachers including a donation to the Alpha Centre to support children with special learning needs. Furthermore, every year two students receive “Excellence in Business” award in memory of Ninian Marie who helped establish Harris Paints Dominca and did much to propel the brand in the OECS.

This small Business Unit, has had a mighty big impact.

*Foundations underway at Grand Bay (2022)*



*“Golden” the results of the Vielle Case church renovation*

# Harris Saint Lucia

## Area

238 sq miles (616 sq km)

## Terrain

Volcanic and mountainous with some broad, fertile valleys

## Population

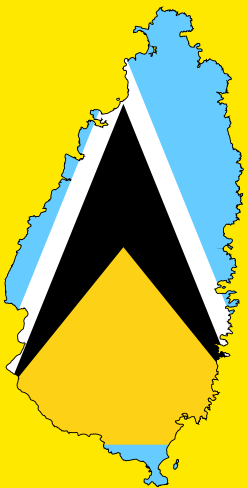
184 401 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Castries

## Languages

English (official), French patois



<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

## Top Awards for Saint Lucia

The Harris company in Saint Lucia has collected a glittering array of awards over the past 10 years earning a reputation for excellence and securing a position as one of the country's top businesses. Over a period of five award seasons, they have taken home 29 titles including the coveted Presidents Award for Excellence (2014) and in successive years, taking first, second and third place prizes for the Lawson Calderon Eco Manufacturing Award.

The Quality Awards were first implemented in 2012 by the St Lucia Manufacturers' Association (SMA) with the objective of identifying role-model organizations that ensure continual improvement and high quality management in delivering world class products and services, demonstrate efficient and effective operations and provide a way of engaging and responding to customers and other stakeholders' needs. They are held every two years and Harris has been one

of the choice companies that has excelled across the board.

Marguerite Desir, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Head of Business in Saint Lucia since 2009, is delighted with the initiative and the company's performance. As well as taking home top honours, the company has also been recognized in the categories of Leadership; Product and Consumer Service Quality; Implementation of Standards and Best Practices; Human Resource Development' and Social Responsibility.

An exceptionally energetic and capable leader along with her team, there is no doubt that Marguerite Desir has played a central and commendable role in attaining these achievements. She is known to be extremely dedicated and indefatigable and has developed a close and effective team in Saint Lucia. Marguerite holds an



*Saint Lucian team sweep the St Lucia Manufacturers' Association awards 2016; L-R Victor Price, Chiddi Charlemagne, Christopher Joseph, Karen Louis, Marguerite Desir, Shernil Regis, Cathilda Charles-Johnny, and Kurt Walcott*

extensive portfolio at Harris where she is also a Director of the company and holds the position of Senior Vice President Human Resources enacting many valuable company-wide initiatives to the benefit of the entire organization and is Business Unit Head in Antigua, Dominica, Guyana and Saint Lucia.

Commenting on Saint Lucia's record at the SMAs, Mrs Desir said: "As an ISO certified organization, quality is as an essential part of our DNA and we take great measures to ensure compliance with audit procedures to produce consistent products of the highest quality and a standard of operations that stands up on a global level". Not limited to purely business efficiency, Desir noted that Harris placed a premium on high ethical standards; excellent customer service and quality; the development of their people and endeavoured "to promote a culture of continuous improvement in everything that we do."

## Blazing a Bright Trail

Throughout Saint Lucia, Harris is known as the leading brand of paint with close to 50% of the market and today offers customers a full range of products plus all the latest colour selection tools. Well recognized for excellence in quality, Harris provides paint and protective coatings used on prominent projects throughout the island which include many hotels and luxury resorts; shopping malls; government offices; schools and churches. In addition, Harris responds to specialist needs by successfully supplying high performance coatings which have been effectively utilized for developments such as the country's National Hospital on the outskirts of Castries and the refurbished St Jude's hospital that services the south of

the island, now protected with fire retardant coatings. This is a far cry from where it all began some 30 years ago.

Always seeking market advantage, Saint Lucia was high on the agenda by the mid-1980s as Harris executives looked to become more prominent in this market. Ninian Marie, of Harris Dominica had established export sales to the region and Harris now looked to improve on that position. Further to that, if the planned expansion of the Dominican plant that was currently being discussed was to be completed, the plant would be able to more than meet any increased demand. Through existing company contacts Harris was able to negotiate a deal with Mikey Pilgrim, who had a small retail operation in Castries called Colour World of Paints and in 1988 Harris entered into a collaborative arrangement with Pilgrim who was also supported by his colleague, Keith Smith. This small venture was designed to test the waters but would become a cornerstone to establishing and building the Harris brand on the island.

In a very short space of time Colour World of Paints was making an impact on consumers and despite some challenges the potential was unmistakable. Retail sales of decorative paint appeared to be doing very well and in June 1990 Mickey Hutchinson was able to inform the Board that C O Williams Construction had received a letter from the Ministry of Communications & Works in Saint Lucia that indicated that only Harris Paints were to be used on road marking projects. According to reports by Mr Pilgrim and Mr Smith sales continued to grow despite the limited 1 000 square feet of floor space but competitive challenges were ever present which included the possibility of a new plant installation by Crown Paints.



*Bois D'OrangePaints; Under Construction (top), Completed (bottom)*

Harris decided that it would strengthen their interest in Saint Lucia and speed delivery if they set up a simple manufacturing operation of their own and in November 1993 applied to government for fiscal incentives. By summer the following year, the company had identified a spot in Massade, Gros Islet, in the north of the island where Harris established a modest factory with one disperser, a warehouse, office and four production staff managed by Keith Smith.

It was a widely recognized fact that the Saint Lucian market at the time was strongly driven by economy paint and Harris had demonstrated that there was actually a growing demand and desire for premium quality paints. When the factory opened in September 1994 it started to produce Harris

Boss Emulsion but in short order, two more dispersers were added in 1995, doubling production and allowing the factory to expand their range to include medium and top-grade emulsions, namely the Duratone and Durashield brands. Additional products were shipped from Dominica as required. By 1996 the production capacity at the Saint Lucia plant had increased to 100 000 gallons per year or over a third of the estimated domestic requirements of the territory.

In less than two years the factory investment yielded returns both in terms of increased profits and in market share where Harris now assumed a commanding position. The retail operation, Colour World of Paints was also expanded adopting a new, more advantageous location at No 59 Brazil Street in 1998 (managed by the illustrious Pinky Haynes) but market gains were under constant threat from trade liberalization. Through largely the lobbying efforts of Keith Smith, Harris pressed the government to institute special measures to protect local manufacturing efforts. In the meantime, shortage of space at the leased premises in Gros Islet forced the company to consider an alternative manufacturing location. Land was identified in Bois D'Orange, between Castries and Rodney Bay and an ambitious new custom built factory project was earmarked for the millennium year.

At the official opening Harris feted the completion of the new 15 000 sq foot facility in July 2001 which included a mezzanine level and a leading-edge water-treatment plant and came at a cost of about XCD 3 million. It was indeed a grand

achievement and symbolized the rather meteoric rise of Harris in Saint Lucia and while this was a proud accomplishment the then Harris President, Ralph Johnson took the opportunity to put matters into perspective as he addressed the visiting dignitaries and others assembled: "as we approach the future and the inevitable opening of markets in CARICOM to the rest of the world, we must always be mindful of the small size of these Caribbean markets and the uneven playing field of resources when compared with developed nations. Indeed, the productive capacity of the twelve or so paint factories in CARICOM can be outdone by one factory in the USA working for less than half the time. "

The fragility of the small economy was demonstrated almost immediately as tourism crumpled in the face of the World Trade Center disaster in September which had a negative impact on nearly all sectors in the country. However, Harris was well positioned to take advantage of better times having fitted the new factory, with an additional high-powered disperser and a semi-automated filler. The increased capability more than doubled and output levels were estimated at 200 000 – 300 000 gallons per year. At the same time Harris took steps to develop closer ties to customers by acquiring the retail operation Colour World of Paints and investing in an additional customer service centre at the factory location. Sales performance in Saint Lucia has continued to be very positive and through a close relationship with clients and the high quality products that Harris offers, the company has been successful in building a premium presence.

It has to be said that Harris did receive a great deal of cooperation from the government of Saint Lucia to whom they extend much appreciation; concessionary conditions helped alleviate large costs especially those associated with the import of raw materials and provided a realistic framework in which the business could flourish and provide much needed employment to the people of Saint Lucia.

## **Big Hearted Community Support**

Harris aims to contribute to the communities everywhere it engages in business activities and in Saint Lucia there have been several programmes implemented to benefit clubs, sporting associations, underprivileged families, educational enhancement projects, cultural programmes and more throughout the island. The company finds creative ways to brighten lives of those in need and, at times, that has meant helping each other such as when employees homes were damaged or destroyed by 2010's Hurricane Tomas. In other cases a splash of colour goes a long way and Harris has been happy to provide the colourful touch to many projects around Saint Lucia.



Anticlockwise from top left: The Harris Man adorns the Ave Maria Girls School with the schools motto; Harris partnered with artist Gaublert Bellas to decorate the Jacmel Early Childhood Education Centre; The busy Anse La Raye community, near Marigot Bay, Saint Lucia, installed a wonderful new landmark mural that now graces Mole Street. The beautification activity was brought to life with verdant images by local artist Jeramiah Mauricette featuring the lifestyle and history of the people of Anse La Raye. The enterprise was directed by the Ministry of Creative Industries in collaboration with Harris Paints to enrich lives through colour.





Harris Saint Lucia also sponsors the roundabout at Vieux Fort. New signage was designed and erected in collaboration with the authorities and the National Trust of Saint Lucia. The signage increases awareness of three key national areas and attractions in the south. These are: Ma Kote Mangrove which is the largest of 14 wetlands in Saint Lucia and is the largest in the Eastern Caribbean. It is an important area to protect communities in the south against flooding and erosion due to climate change and is a vital habitat for fish; the Maria Islands Nature Reserve home to five endemic reptile species and Moule A Chique Lighthouse, the world's second highest built in 1912 and it is still in active use.

The roundabout was spruced up with the assistance of helpers from Volunteer Saint Lucia's Vieux Forte and Anse La Raye Chapters (2019).



MA KOTE MANGROVE



MARIA ISLANDS NATURE RESERVE



MOULE A CHIQUE LIGHTHOUSE



# Harris Guyana

## Area

83 000 sq miles (214 969 sq km)

## Terrain

Rain forest, rolling highlands, low coastal plain, savanna in south

## Population

790 321 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Georgetown

## Languages

English (official), Amerindian dialects, Creole, Caribbean Hindustani, Urdu



<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

## Promise and Prospects

Full of promise, Guyana, the only English-speaking country in the South American continent, is close cousins with its Caribbean neighbours. Tantalizingly accessible from a geographic point of view, Guyana became economically isolated for decades due to the radical policies of President Forbes Burnham who led the country into bankruptcy. After Burnham's death in 1985 the environment became more open to political reform and Harris began to take a closer look at what might be accomplished.

Of huge advantage was the experience and knowledge that Director, Robert Jones (now Chairman) brought to the table. He had for many years managed an established family business in Georgetown called Wieting & Richter, which was principally a distribution company but also had a number of other interests. He was therefore a key resource and potential partner for Harris and was under no illusion of the challenges of operating in the territory. Initially Harris had hoped to work through Wieting & Richter to supply a local partner but when talks came to nought Harris decided without further delay

to open a retail outlet of their own at Wieting & Richter's Water Street location.

Harris Paints Guyana opened in 1993 to a better-than-expected sales performance. In fact, in the first year, sales were double the projected figure and Harris appeared to gain tremendous market acceptance in a remarkably short time. It was quickly acknowledged that the operation was significantly under financed and that to expand would need further investment to buy a delivery vehicle and grow a network beyond Georgetown, the capital. Marketing products farther afield would have its own challenges due to the extensive ribbon development that stretches for long distances along the Atlantic coast. These included the sometimes poor condition of roads, the hazard of untethered livestock, security concerns and a lack of street lighting. Communities such as New Amsterdam located in the East Berbice-Corentyne region (estimated population 17 000) is located 62 miles from Georgetown and entailed a river crossing by ferry and timing could be critical if



*Harris store in Water Street, Georgetown 1990s*

trucks were to return before nightfall. However, over the next couple of years these expansion efforts paid off with sales increasing by at least a further 60%. It was not long before Harris would need to enlarge its retail footprint at Wieting & Richter.

Although signs were encouraging, the reality was that Harris competed with quite a few other brands for a share of the very limited premium market. The largest market segment by far was in economy paint and this was dominated by the national paint brand Torginol and a number of other players from Suriname and Brazil. Undeterred, Harris executives still felt that the potential of the territory was extremely good. They projected that the company would be in a position to add a manufacturing plant before the turn of the century which they estimated would double sales and would provide a number of other cost benefits. They were also hopeful that additional export opportunities would arise, allowing them to extend beyond their existing network into new regions. Despite the enticing vision it did not all come to pass quite as quickly as anticipated.

Meanwhile in 2001, Harris' head office signed a new strategic agreement with ICI and also undertook to rebrand its 30-year-old line (Duratone, Duracote, Durashield) to Ulttima which now took advantage of ICI technology platforms. While Harris had implemented colour matching technology since the 1990s it was now outdated and through the new partnership, Harris invested in a new, state-of-the-art tinting system which could produce over 6 000 colours. Harris was keen to leverage this advantage and to offer the first in-store computer colour tinting service in Guyana. The new brand and system was rolled out to much ado strengthening Harris' presence in the market.

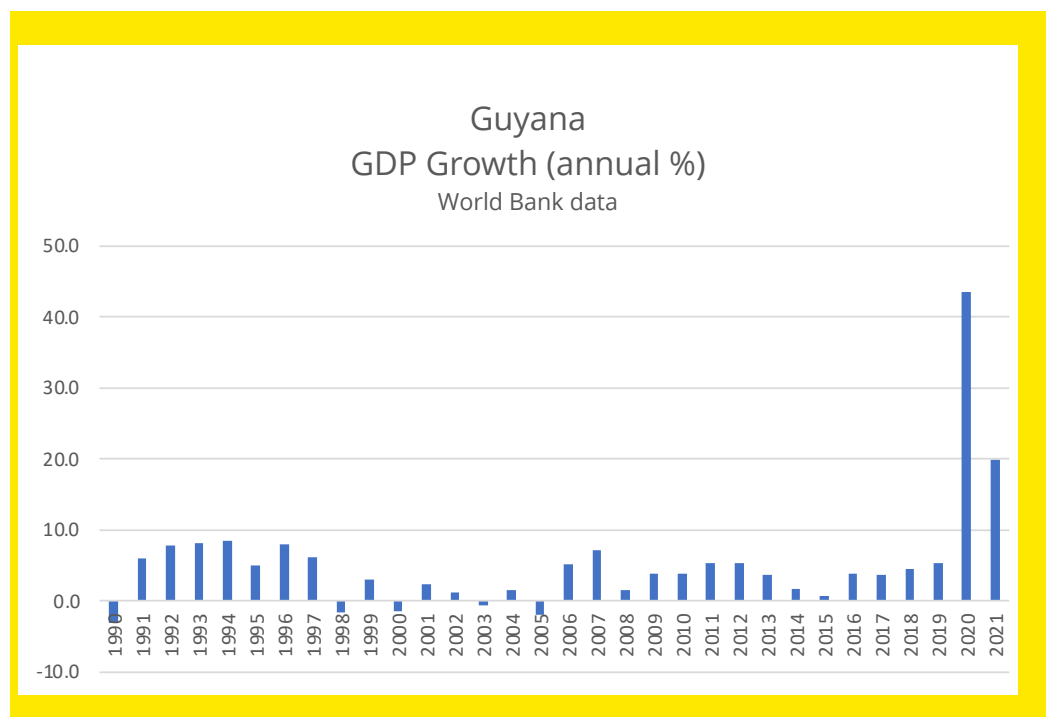
Harris also worked to increase sales in Guyana through other products in their portfolio and sales of Troweltex textured finish were a prime example. Troweltex



*L-R Charles Kirton, Brenda Foster and Kevin Welch promote Harris in Guyana, standing with Gerry Gouveia of Wieting and Richter*

was very well suited to the market as it was economical in price and produced a luxury quality finish which was fast and easy to apply and could cover a number of surface imperfections, thus avoiding costly and laborious preparation time. Another huge opportunity arose in 2004 when Harris was introduced through their connections at ICI, to a range of high performance coatings, a multi-dimensional system of specialist protective coatings for the industrial maintenance sector. Sales Representative Kevin Welch, caught on immediately to the potential of these products for Guyana and its neighbours, whose economies were heavily dependent on extractive/mining industries and food production.

In 2001 the Harris Board agreed to make the further investment needed to change the status of Harris Guyana from a trading company to a manufacturing plant in order to reduce the level of taxes being paid on turnover and profit. From experience, the executives deduced that the stake holding in the country would naturally result in an increase in market share if properly promoted. To get going, machinery and equipment would need to be put in place, a system for the ordering of raw materials and a training and development plan implemented for staff. Yet projected commencement dates and deadlines continued to get pushed back partly to allow time to locate an appropriate site with sufficient space for the proposed factory



and partly to maximize sales volumes that would better support production economies. The application for a manufacturing license was still unapproved in 2003 pending the submission of an environmental management plan which Harris would now have to develop. Eventually the plant opened in 2006 designed to be Harris' production centre for Boss Oil which would be sold locally and exported to other Harris supply centres.

One of the major challenges that the Guyana operation faced from inception, was finding effective senior leadership able to manage a business within the local environment. The operation was managed in its first two years by Tony DaCosta and following his term, Harris connected with Gerry Gouveia (not to be confused with Gerry Gouveia of Weiting and Richter) a Guyanese who had been living in Canada for some 20 years. On a trip to Barbados for his daughter's wedding, Gerry met Ralph Johnson on the golf course and expressed his desire to return to the Caribbean to live and work. Mr Gouveia became the new lead in Guyana in 1995,

supported by Harold Narain of Wieting & Richter but tragically he contracted malaria while on a hunting trip and died suddenly in 2000.

Finding the requisite management skills continued to be challenging and Harris hired-in assistance as necessary but it was difficult to find a long-term fit. Taking this into consideration, the relationship with Wieting & Richter has been particularly valuable providing added stability and some level of oversight, with additional guidance by Wieting and Richter Managing Director, Rene Molina.

Harris products continued to do well and were distinguished in the market for their quality but the step change to manufacturing did not deliver the results the company hoped for. Production costs continually exceeded expectations in spite of several advantageous conditions and dedicated efforts to tackle areas of concern.

Even so, the Guyanese economy was on a generally positive trajectory from about

2006 when Guyana joined CARICOM expanding market opportunities. Harris worked assiduously to increase efficiencies. Implementing upgrades and improvements in financial management, warehouse and inventory controls. The good work was continued in 2010, when Neil Boucher joined as Finance Manager in Guyana who made significant progress in laying down solid foundations and processes for future growth.

After a stint in Barbados as Finance Manager for Regional Accounts for the Harris Group, Neil returned to Guyana as Business Unit (BU) Head 2013-2014. The post was then assumed by Margaret Desir the VP of Human Resources and BU Head of Saint Lucia and Dominica who still leads the BU today.

Unfortunately a difficult decision was taken to shut shop on factory operations (2013) and to supply the business fully by importing finished products to serve the market.

## Opening More Doors

Guyana's ribbon development is strung out some 270 miles/ 434km along the Caribbean coastline and other than Georgetown there is very low population density making it a challenging market to find the best locations.

Harris was able to considerably expand their reach beyond the original Water Street location in Georgetown through an agreement with Gafsons Industries, a leading manufacturer and provider of building materials, Harris was the selected brand sold through Gafsons hardware stores in three locations; Houston, on the outskirts of Georgetown; Parika, Essequibo and Rosehall, Berbice.

In 2011 Harris opened a second Harris Colourcentre in Regent Street, Georgetown, offering 2 000 square feet of paint and colour services in the heart of the main shopping district. Results were so encouraging another store followed in Rosignol in 2013, a community about halfway between Georgetown and the Suriname border on the west bank of the Berbice River. Despite being a port and at an important river crossing, this third store was not successful and was later closed, though the Harris brand was adopted by a local vendor who has made a go of it.

Undeterred, Harris next set its sights on Diamond, a fast-growing community just six miles upriver from Georgetown. It is a vibrant residential and commercial area with high, middle and low income housing, has its own hospital and a growing number of amenities. At that time the Government was also working hard to open the new East Bank Demerara Highway that would surely help drive development. Harris' Diamond location was officially opened 24 October 2015

attended by the Minister within the Ministry of Communities, Keith Scott.

As the country develops customers become open to more options and Harris found that out lying towns to the northwest of the Essequibo river were struggling to get the range of colours they were now looking for. In 2020 Harris partnered with Builders Hardware, in Anna Regina, a 165km road-river-road endurance drive from Georgetown, installing a tint machine that can now provide thousands of colours to the community.



*Top: Maureen Vaughn, Inventory Controller  
Below: Garfield Manasseh, Trade Sales Manager*



*Clockwise from top left: an aerial view of housing development by the Central Housing & Planning Authority in Providence, East Bank Demerara; commercial building; new apartment complex, Felicity, East Coast Demerara; Movie Towne cineplex opened March 2019; new construction apartments, Happy Acres; Dr Yesu Persaud Clinical Education Centre (2020)*

## Commercial Projects Take Off

It has been nearly all forward momentum for Guyana from about 2007, with a burst of building around the Cricket World Cup which the country hoped would kick-start its tourism aspirations. However, the game-changer was yet to come.

In May 2015 Guyana hit the long-awaited jackpot when Exxon Mobil discovered oil; and that was followed by more; much more. The country is reportedly sitting on an estimated 11 billion barrels of oil and gas in an offshore block. Extraction activities are being ramped up at a frenzied pace, set to catapult Guyana to the top of the leader board of top producing oil countries by output by 2027, outstripping Venezuela.

The optimistic outlook has been good news for the construction sector which has seen a burst of commercial activity providing many good opportunities for Harris particularly due to its reputation for extremely durable, high-quality coatings and the range of solutions offered to commercial and industrial sectors. In the paint world these specialist solutions are known as high performance coatings and include concrete and metal protection as well as seamless flooring solutions for food processing, warehousing and heavy industry and more.

The market was developed virtually single-handedly by Sales Rep, Kevin Welch who, following a regional training seminar in Barbados went all out to get the necessary specialist certifications and spearheaded successful projects in Guyana and the region.

One of the first major clients in Trinidad was Nestle, which required resurfacing of the factory floor and packaging lines at the Valsayn plant, east of Port of Spain. After conducting a survey of conditions and



*Commercial flooring designed to hold up to heavy use, ideal for warehouses*

proposing recommendations, a team led by Linden Niles commenced work in June 2009 applying a polyurethane concrete overlay system, working some challenging shifts in order to best accommodate the 24-hour high production work schedule at Nestle. Other jobs included work at Suriname's National Energy and Oil Company as well as every surface of the new Georgetown Public Hospital from paints, roof coatings to medical-grade seamless walls and floors.

The Guyana team completed, in 2022, their largest flooring project to date; a 16 200sqft (1 505 sqm) heavy-duty floor at the Trisco Foods plant operated by Banks DIH International Distributors.

The oil bonanza has seen a huge growth in heavy industry in and around Georgetown and Harris has been able to meet the needs for protective coatings for these valuable investments, with products from its own widely-respected Rust Chem label and as authorized agent for the global leader in protective coatings, International Paint including its Devoe brand.

The Guyana team is led by Trade Sales Manager, Garfield Manasseh who is certified by NACE the world's leading professional organization for the corrosion control industry supporting clients by conducting site surveys, providing specifications and participating in collaborative contract



meetings to ensure project goals are being met. As a local provider the team prides itself on service, particularly, sourcing the best solutions for clients and providing colour tinting options. They are proud to have worked with names such as Noble Drilling, Seacor Marine, Saipem, G-Boats, Panthera Solutions, SBM and Guyana Oil & Gas Support Services.

Keen to avoid the oil curse, the government is accelerating initiatives determined to capitalize on the oil bounty and has outlined an extensive three-tier plan that aims to support national, regional and community development. The pace of change is potentially eye popping with major four-lane highways and a new Demerara River Bridge currently under contract; Region Three, where an oil and gas pipeline will on-shore, is earmarked as a key industrial area - the Wales Development Zone; and a major port and shore base are to be developed in Region Six. At the same time the government have announced plans to pump funds into health and education sectors as well as provide 25 000 houses for sale and 50 000 house lots in the next five years.

Backed by the boon in oil and gas, Guyana presents boundless and bewitching possibilities for a long time to come.



*Government officials visit Harris at Build Expo 2022 a showcase of Guyana's development trajectory; L-R Harris Trade Representative, Mohamed Rahim; Minister of Housing and Water, Hon Collin Croal; Prime Minister of Guyana, Hon Mark Phillips; Harris Sales Manager Trade, Garfield Manasseh*



Harris

# Jamaica

## Area

4 411 sq miles (28 389.2 sq km)

## Terrain

Mountains, waterfalls, rivers, forests, plains, caves, bays, beaches

## Population

2 973 4622 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Kingston

## Languages

English (official), English patois



## Jewel in the Crown

By far the largest potential market in the English-speaking Caribbean, Harris successfully acquired Jamaican owned Brandram-Henderson (West Indies) Limited (BH) in 2006. BH had been a well-known name in Jamaica since the 1960s and established markets in St Vincent, Saint Lucia and Grenada to the south, as well as Belize and Cayman Islands to the north. The purchase presented an exciting opportunity to expand the Harris umbrella beyond its traditional partners in the OECS to create a more dominant regional footprint with a well recognized and enduring brand.

The Jamaican Brandram-Henderson had produced a top quality paint that was sold at extremely affordable prices and the BH brand (particularly the Perma Cote and Perma Plastic decorative paints) was well known and highly regarded. At the time of the purchase, BH had an estimated market share of between 15-19%, in a country nine times bigger than Barbados. Harris was ripe for growth opportunities and the company was perfectly positioned, seemingly the right size at the right price, at the right time.

However, the acquisition was not without its challenges. It was by far the biggest acquisition that Harris had ever undertaken, thousands of miles away from their central offices in a distinctly different political, economic and cultural environment. It was clear that BH, which had operated on a shoestring for much of its life, needed to update operations in a number of areas not only to fall in line with standards within the Harris Group of Companies but to move forward within today's industry. Harris under-estimated the enormous complexity of this task and was faced with a company that had after all survived decades of difficult conditions within Jamaica and had their way of doing things.

While Harris grappled with the problems that seemed to grow more numerous with each day, the numbers took a worryingly steep nose-dive. As is often the case when getting to the roots of the matter, sometimes things get worse before they get better. Persistence paid off and slowly the procedures and controls necessary were re-established to take in hand the losses that were occurring due to operational inefficiencies. "Now with the new processes in place there is a big difference," summarized CEO of Harris Ian Kenyon, who joined the company in 2009. "We have simplified and rationalized production procedures and formula specifications so that customers can depend on a consistent product every time and one that is engineered for performance at the desired price point. This helps control manufacturing overheads and provides better value and better quality solutions to customers in the long run."

Getting the right people in the right positions was the other major task. Despite appointing a number of 'top guns' in the early years, to help the ailing business, Harris continued to struggle. Ian Kenyon explained how the company eventually managed to turn the tables by going back to basics and introducing people with a strong understanding of the industry and the territory who could really connect with the customers and work well with the team. Understanding customers and building relationships through finding the right solutions is key to the Harris ethos. Together with the improvements made in production, this initiated a significant shift in momentum for the Jamaica business who have been growing ever since.

<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

## Business Growth

It's been a good news story for BH Paints over the past 10 years. The company has expanded its retail network, increased plant capacity and has seen year-on-year growth throughout the period (except for 2020 due to Covid-19) and the company believes this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Historically, Jamaica has been a very challenging business environment branded for some time, as one of the slowest growing developing countries in the world. In a bid to flip the script, the government signed on to an ambitious reform programme in 2013 to stabilize the economy, reduce debt and fuel growth. Funded to the tune of USD 932M by the International Monetary Fund, these measures have met with some success; by 2019, the country achieved large reductions in public debt with unemployment falling to 7.2%, almost half of what it was at the beginning of the period.

Against this backdrop, BH Paints set about extending its reach by expanding the number of retailer outlets through which its products are sold. This includes smaller dealers who handle ready-mixed products as well as adding to the number of tint-capable locations which grew from just three in 2018 to 28 island wide by 2020.

The company had established its own BH Colourcentre stores; the main Bell Road, Kingston location on site at the plant plus four other main stores were added - Premier Plaza, Constant Spring, Mandeville and Savannah La Mar all opened 2011. Sights were set on two key locations, the growing urban commuter community of Greater Portmore just 15 miles from the capital and a location in the Montego Bay area to better serve the array of hotels catering to the island's vibrant tourism industry.

The 800 sq ft store opened in Greater Portmore in June 2015 with a new more fashion forward store layout designed to provide a more comfortable area for design and colour selection. The then Trade Sales Manager, Claude Manning who was at the opening, told the press, "We are really expanding the side of our offering as colour consultants, so we want people to be able to interact with us more closely than before".

It wasn't until the following year that the senior leadership believed they had found the right location on the north coast in Whitter Village, Ironshore, just to the east of Montego Bay and serviced by the main highway. The area is in easy reach of the hotel belt and is developing with numerous mid to high income residential developments as well as growing commercial activity.

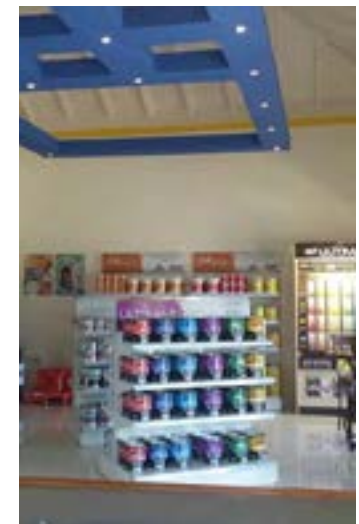
Not only had BH now provided more locations from which to purchase the brand, but it also extended its portfolio. BH introduced Troweltex textured finish to the Jamaican market in 2012 – a product that has grown in popularity and the following year, in 2013, BH launched its Ultima Plus



*Radcliffe Myers, Business Unit Head*

premium line; the first paint to have five unique technologies in one can. Ultima Plus emulsions promoted better coverage (hiding), longer lasting colours, improved mildew resistance, a special new easy-breathe formula that is safer to use and a paint and primer in one.

As sales projections trended upwards, BH Paints turned attention to increasing capacity and making improvements to support future growth at the plant which supplies both local and export markets.



*BH Colourcentre, Whitter Village*



*Ian Kenyon presents at Pro Show*



*Annmarie Ancel, Assistant Manger Trade and Retail Services helps a customer*

Between 2013-2016 the Harris Group invested around JMD 88.5M on upgrading operations and safety. The overhaul included a detailed look at policies and procedures around safety; improved fire protection and the implementation of environmentally friendly processes via solvent and water filtration systems.

Head of BH Business Unit, Radcliffe Myers indicated that the company had a very strong performance in 2016. He noted that over prior year, there had been a 27% increase in production at their facility, a double-digit increase in volume sales and an overall 16% growth in net profits. These robust results were attributed to prudent procurement practices and cost control as well as strong growth, particularly in trade sales, which increased more than 25% over the last year and 45% over the last two years. In order to keep up with growth, profits were reinvested expanding production capacity and adding new equipment by 2018.

Part of BH's success can be attributed to gains from commercial projects as Myers confirmed. "We see a lot of potential in the commercial sector in Jamaica and have increased our portfolio both in terms of the range of products we offer and services available to professionals working in the industry at all levels".

To showcase the range of solutions and a new contractor brand of paint, BH Paints held a Pro Show in 2017- an industry event displaying a diverse range of protective coating solutions and application equipment suitable to multiple sectors including heavy industry, hotels, healthcare, food processing facilities and construction.

Owing to the extensive range of products, the quality solutions offered and a dynamic trade sales team, BH Paints was growing in reputation among professionals. "As a brand that has been dedicated to Caribbean coatings for several decades and one that is able to leverage international partnerships to bring best in class solutions to this market- that is being recognized in the industry and we are able to back our products with the technical know-how", said Myers.

The company has been able to offer highly technical specialty solutions for very high investment assets exposed for example to marine environments. This includes many different types of businesses from coastal hotels and commercial buildings to dock yard equipment and offshore facilities. Based on a study aimed at estimating the cost of corrosion at a global level, conducted by NACE International (a global anti-corrosion body), Jamaica could be losing JMD 50 billion annually in the destruction of structural assets and other losses from 'bad paint jobs'. Figures extrapolated from the study suggests that costs of corrosion, while challenging to measure, could equate to as much as 3% of a country's GDP or more. Cost impacts include high maintenance costs, property damage and business interruptions due to equipment failures and lost production time. These could result from applying low-cost protective coatings to high-value assets, including steel.

To address the issue BH Paints hosted a very well attended seminar in November 2018, in collaboration with the Caribbean Maritime University to increase awareness



*The BH Paints team celebrate the successful conclusion of the Pro Show*

of high corrosion costs from using incorrect coatings choices on structural materials. Guest speakers Martin Criado and Peter Roberts of International Paint, for whom BH Paints are the authorized distributors in Jamaica, admitted that the initial cost of high performance coatings (HPC) paints will be higher than standard finishes, but could yield substantial savings - as much as 40% in dollars-per-year cost, by extending critical maintenance life-cycles up to 40 years, in some cases. The seminar was attended by the Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Orlando Vasquez who emphasized that with periodic storms, increased temperatures as well as the bodies of water surrounding the Caribbean islands, HPCs provide a highly customizable system, instead of a simple coat of paint, with a wide range of technologies including acrylics, alkyds, solvent and waterborne epoxies, urethanes among others, offering greater protective efficiencies to users throughout the Caribbean.

HPCs also made a great contribution to the sales growth due to flooring projects in the commercial food and beverage production

sector with many Jamaican operations upgrading facilities to meet export requirements and the highest international hygiene standards. Industry leaders such as Nestlé, GraceKennedy (Grace Food Processors Canning Division), Rainforest

Seafoods, SOS Foods, Pepsi, Nation Choice Meat, BetaPac and Island Grill all installed long-lifecycle, HACCP certified seamless resinous floors that provide the maximum protection against risk of contamination in production and food service areas.

These type of systems are exceedingly durable and can be customized based on clients' needs. They stand up to punishing conditions including frequent cleaning with aggressive chemicals and extreme heat as well as heavy impact and high foot traffic. At the same time, they provide anti-slip properties to protect against the risk of workplace injuries. In most cases BH Paints recommended systems contain a patented silver-ion based additive which protects the surface from microbial growth between wash cycles, eliminating up to 99.9% of bacteria.



*Martin Criado, Manager Protective Coatings, Latin American Market and the Caribbean for International Paint; a division of Akzo Nobel*



*Anti-corrosion HPC solutions*



*Professionals from multiple sectors attend HPC seminar*

Each year for nearly a decade the BH team have been exceeding sales targets and attracting top contracts like the prestigious Ministry of Foreign Affairs Building on the Kingston Waterfront. During 2020, naturally sales plunged due to periods of national shutdown and the overall uncertainty, but it has bounced back surprisingly well. The company forged through the pandemic taking the opportunity to make further plant upgrades to keep up with demand; reorganizing the warehouse, creating 120 new pallet positions and extending the production area, getting set for a new period of growth. Post pandemic, perhaps buoyed by the implementation of many government projects, Jamaica is experiencing a construction boom. With a new advanced tint system recently rolled out island-wide that has new colour capabilities, BH Paints which celebrated its 60th year as a brand in Jamaica in 2021, is ready for the challenge.



*Presenters at BH Paints seminar on Protecting Assets in Coastal Environment: Peter Roberts, International Paint; Orlando Vazquez, VP of Sales & Marketing, Harris Paints; Radcliffe Myers, BU Head, BH Paints; Martin Criado, International Paint*



*Cayman Islands Brewery Ltd, Cruise Terminal at Montego Bay and food and beverage producers, SOS Foods are among the many companies that have adopted high performance solutions from BH Paints*

# Flavour of Jamaica





Hyper 0780    Bright Yellow    Brilliant White    Mediterranean Mist 0713



Grape Jamboree    Exotic Bloom    Brilliant





## Creation of a Jamaican Brand



*1960s Executives (2nd L-R) Jack Hagan, General Manager; Mr Hyde, Plant Manager; Noel Swaby, Production Supervisor*

By the late 1950s the Canadian owned company CIL (Canadian Industries Limited) was set to expand their Brandram-Henderson (BH) paint line in Jamaica. There is evidence that these 'celebrated paints' were being sold in Jamaica since at least 1941 as advertised by Webster Lumber Co Ltd in the Jamaica Gleaner<sup>1</sup>. Through a number of local agents, BH had developed a good name and even exported to neighbouring territories such as British Honduras (Belize since 1974). Lured by favourable concessions to foreign concerns CIL decided to invest in the country; they registered a local company in Jamaica on 29 December 1960, Brandram-Henderson (West Indies) Limited, purchased land on East Bell Road, Kingston in one of

the new industrial estates and set about building a factory. A year later they started manufacturing.

At that time there were few competitors and no single brand dominated the market. In the beginning BH imported the Beaver brand from Canada but by 1968 BH was producing its own range of products: three grades of emulsion including two distempers (whitewash) and the Perma Plastic brand; two grades of oil paint, Perma Cote and White Star and China Lac (enamel). They also produced varnishes that were made primarily for export to the eastern Caribbean. Increasingly the Canadian executives that started the company returned to Canada or moved on to other operations. Although still Canadian owned, Dudley Horner was hired as Managing Director in 1972 and the company of about 50 employees became entirely administered by Jamaicans.

Mr Horner recognized that although the company was in fair health, there was an outdated multi-tiered distribution system which was not only hampering the growth of the brands but was also tying up large amounts of cash, eating into margins and weakening the company. He set about streamlining the system, simplifying price points and terms, reducing headcount and organized a more efficient sales force that could promote products across the country. Unfortunately, there were other serious challenges to come.

Michael Manley's PNP government won the 1972 election and set Jamaica on a socialist course which seriously restricted business operations. Mavis Bryson, who became Financial Controller in 1977, remembers the difficulties of obtaining raw materials. "You

had to apply to the Trade Board for an import license and for whatever reason you got your license or you didn't. And just because it was approved, did not mean it was then released. In one year, we got something like 23 permits approved but only two released!" Furthermore, there were serious problems in making payments to suppliers because a permit had to be obtained from the Bank of Jamaica, foreign exchange was scarce and the process slow and idiosyncratic. The government also set price controls on products and on top of that BH could not borrow money from the bank because they were still owned by a foreign entity. There was little support from CIL who were not prepared to inject cash into the troubled territory.

There was no doubt that Jamaica was in the midst of an economic crisis by the mid-70s. The government's left-wing tendencies resulted in severe cuts in international aid. There was no new investment; earnings from sugar and tourism fell and the government continued to spend. In attempt to generate income, a substantial levy was applied to bauxite companies which ultimately prompted foreign corporations to look elsewhere. Many Jamaicans seeing impending disaster were simply taking their money and running.

So how did BH survive? "We had some suppliers who were very generous as we had had a good relationship and a good record over the years" recalls Mavis Bryson. Due to the restructuring implemented by Dudley Horner the company was more efficient and as if he could see what was coming, Mr Horner used every bit of spare cash to buy and stock up on raw materials. "We had a whole heap of titanium. We had two tanks

<sup>1</sup>Webster Lumber Co Ltd. BH Paints (advertisement). The Gleaner, 18 February 1941



*Jamaican produced  
China-Lac ready  
for distribution*

built (one tank I think was a total of 5 300 gallons) and we used to bring in resin in bulk and have it pumped into the tanks. That is what carried us through a good part of the 70s.” Due to the government crackdown on imports BH expanded their product range to respond to local needs. By the end of the decade they had developed a quick-dry enamel, which was the first non-toxic enamel that was produced in Jamaica and branched into industrial enamels. They also continued to export their stains, varnishes and China Lac through their agents, Sprostons.

The difficult times forced the company to operate as efficiently as possible. To gain more control over cash flow, strict credit controls were imposed and discounts were limited to cash purchases. Due to these hostile terms, BH knew that they needed to keep their price lower than their competitors but they were at no time willing to sacrifice quality. With the help of Cecil Whyte, Chemist & Production Manager who was largely responsible for product development and quality controls, the company emerged into the 80s with a core of loyal local customers and a number of international awards (from Monde Selection in Belgium) for world class quality.

Conditions improved in the 1980s due to a change in administration but foreign exchange controls continued and in 1984 the government instituted a twice weekly auction system for foreign currency. Mavis Bryson remembers: “We had weekly auctions at the Bank of Jamaica. A certain amount of foreign exchange was allocated and you guessed what the likely rate would be. You had to submit all your documentation, customs entry, bill of lading, etc. to the bank about a week before along with your bid.

Soon everybody got the idea that each week you bid 5¢ more than the week before. So eventually we learned the system and you could plan your cash flow.”

At this time, CIL the parent company decided that they were moving out of paint. They were closing operations in South Africa and Australia and approached Dudley Horner and Mavis Bryson about buying the company. The two had already been through so much but in spite of this they considered it a good proposition. After protracted negotiations, an agreement was eventually reached in 1987. They were offered what they considered very favourable terms which included a loan to be repaid over seven years. Although the currency had devalued, they had not anticipated the crushing declines that were to come. Rather miraculously by curtailing planned expansion, implementing strict belt-tightening measures and keeping a vice-like grip on cash flow, the two Jamaicans succeeded in purchasing the company in full and on schedule in 1994.

In the 2000s Mavis Bryson and Dudley Horner received a number of overtures to purchase the company over the years but they had no intention of letting it go for a song. They may have not been the biggest, but they were established, had a good reputation, were well positioned and had sound financials. In fact, they had regularly been told that you only needed half the quantity of their own brand Perma Plastic paint to get the same coverage as one of their leading competitors.

By this time Harris was actively looking for opportunities to expand and both Jerry

Tracey, Technical Director at Thor’s US operations and Bill Hay from Highlander Trading Corp, a raw materials and equipment supplier in Florida, indicated that BH could be an attractive candidate. Ralph Johnson and David Tindale were the first to inspect the property and meet Mavis Bryson. They

liked what they saw and negotiations ensued despite the best efforts of a top competitor to derail the process. The deal was concluded in 2006 when Brandram-Henderson (West Indies) Limited was acquired by the Harris Group of Companies.





*(L-R) Mavis Bryson and Dudley Horner*

## Dudley Horner

Always looking forward and planning, that is how Dudley Horner, who managed BH successfully for 35 years, is described by his friend and business partner Mavis Bryson. It was a combination of his experience, shrewd knowledge and political and economic foresight that managed to steer the company along with his colleague, through some of the most challenging times in Jamaican history.

Although he started life at Jamaica Savings Bank, he soon went into private enterprise working with British Overseas Stores who sent him to British Honduras (now known as Belize). He spent nine years as a manager at Hofius Ltd, which was a large hardware/department store selling a vast array of items to almost every type of enterprise throughout the country, which included the British military that was stationed there. On his return to Jamaica, he continued to work in the hardware sector and managed a number of agencies of leading Chinese and British manufacturers.

After a stint with Esso, Dudley Horner joined BH as the Managing Director in April 1971. His experience and industry knowledge was of immediate use in adopting new distributive policies that were more efficient, cutting out the regional agents and instituting more local distributors that could better service the growing communities and markets throughout the island.

In the years to come Horner would prove himself time and again to be a resourceful, dedicated and unyielding leader. Together with Mavis Bryson with whom he bought the company in 1987, BH achieved an excellent reputation for high quality paints at an economical price and established, above all, a much-loved and enduring Jamaican brand.

“**W**e knew it was going to be hard and that we’d have to work very hard but we didn’t even know what hard work was yet!”

*Mavis Bryson, Owner/Financial Controller 1987-2006 Brandram-Henderson (West Indies) Ltd*

## Brandram-Henderson - Canadian Connection

Brandram-Henderson has a long and distinguished history. The name dates back to Canada over 100 years ago to a time when sailing vessels and steam ships were still king. The name became well known producing among other items, marine paints of distinction.

Brandram-Henderson Limited (BH) was incorporated in 1906<sup>1</sup> with the amalgamation of two companies; Henderson and Potts (established 1875) and the Canadian arm of white lead manufacturers Brandram Brothers of London. The economy in this relatively new country boomed, facilitated by the rail networks that ran across Canada and through the Maritime Provinces. Despite the war, 1914 – 1918 the company grew by leaps and bounds. BH acquired a number of companies principally involved in paint, lead or the production of linseed oil and quickly expanded. By 1927 the company headed by George Henderson, was an enterprise of some notable significance:

“At practically every large centre throughout the Dominion there are situated Brandram-Henderson plants or warehouses.”

The Financial Post. 28 January 1927

These included a number of factories in Montreal and others in Toronto, Halifax, Medicine Hat and Vancouver. In addition there were distribution centres in St John, New Brunswick, Winnipeg, Calgary and Edmonton. But it was not only the domestic market where the company had made an



impact. BH had also established exports to the West Indies, South America and South Africa.

It was not long before their success caught the attention of Canadian Industries Limited (CIL), a subsidiary of the British firm ICI (Industrial Chemical Industries), who sought to strengthen their share of the paint market. Although the conglomerate bought Brandram-Henderson, the brand was so well known and had such a good reputation they decided to keep the name, so the BH brand lived on.

In a curious footnote, today, both the Harris CEO, Ian Kenyon and former sales and marketing executive, Luke Ticknor previously worked at ICI and therefore were well acquainted with the CIL subsidiary that invested in the BH brand all those years ago. Today through the efforts of Harris they bring that experience back to the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica where BH lives on.

## BH Paint the Celebrated *Bluenose*

1921 In less than 40 years, Brandram-Henderson distinguished themselves in producing top quality paints, the toughest of which were used to withstand the harsh conditions at sea by vessels plying the treacherous north Atlantic coast. No vessels had to be more hardy than those that fished the Grand Banks, north-east of Newfoundland, from March to October. Remaining at sea for long periods during the fishing season, they needed to carry great weights and handle well in all weather. It should be no surprise that BH Anchor Marine Paints were chosen in 1921 for exclusive use on, probably the most famous ship in Canadian history, the *Bluenose*, a working boat that came to dominate the International Fisherman's Race for a decade. The exploits of the schooner were so legendary that when in 1937 a new coin was issued with the

<sup>1</sup>Brandram Henderson Ltd. Paint and Varnish Company Has History of More Than Half Century; 1925 Earnings Slightly Over 1924." The Financial Post. 28 January 1927.



image of a sailboat, it became widely known as 'the *Bluenose* dime' and is still in use today.

To be fair, the *Bluenose* was designed and built specifically to compete well in what was considered one of the greatest sailing challenges of its time. The International Fisherman's Trophy drew commercial fishing boats to compete in a gruelling test of skill and speed over 40-46 miles (35-40 nautical miles) which had to be completed in less than nine hours. While the America's Cup was known as the most prestigious yacht race in the world, these elite sailing craft had to withdraw in anything more than a strong breeze, due to their massive sail area and top heavy design. This drew ridicule from fishing captains up and down the coast. The idea of a race raised international interest in the ship industry, ignited the rivalry between New England and Nova Scotia shipyards and kept the age of the sail alive.

When the *Bluenose* retired from competition in the 1930s, the boat became an international ambassador for Canada representing the country at the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago and also at the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary of England in 1935. Despite the hard times suffered by many throughout the Great Depression, the *Bluenose* became more than just an important emblem of Nova Scotia, where the boat was built, but a symbol of pride throughout the country. "Tough, elegant, resourceful and dependable, refusing to be defeated in anything, the vessel sailed into the hearts of Canadians as something larger than themselves."

“**T**ough, elegant, resourceful and dependable, refusing to be defeated in anything, the vessel sailed into the hearts of Canadians as something larger than themselves.”

November 10, 1921 THE MARITIME MERCHANT 37

Save the surface and you save all *and a half*

Bluenose Schooner "Bluenose" which has just won the Fishermen's Trophy—defeating the "Blair" of Connecticut.



## B.H. ANCHOR MARINE PAINTS

used exclusively on the **Bluenose**

That B-H Anchor Marine Paints were chosen for use on the "Bluenose", the pride of the Maritime Provinces, is noteworthy. It confirms the fact that B-H Marine Paints manufactured by Brandram-Henderson since 1878, and used extensively in the shipping industry throughout Canada, are still regarded as the best available.

For more than 30 years Brandram-Henderson have specialized in Marine Paints, with the result that our paints for Marine purposes are being supplied in great quantities today to fishermen and shipbuilders throughout Canada.

For every purpose in which a brush is used there is a high-grade Brandram-Henderson product that is held in as high regard by Canadians from coast to coast as our Marine Paints are among the fishermen and shipbuilders.

Write for Our Agency Proposition.



**BRANDRAM-HENDERSON**

# Harris Antigua & Barbuda

## Area

169.9 sq miles (440 sq km)

## Terrain

Low lying limestone and coral islands, with some higher volcanic areas

## Population

99,525 estimate<sup>1</sup>

## Capital

Saint John's, Antigua

## Languages

English



## A New Operation Underway

Harris Paints is a well-known brand in Antigua and Barbuda and the established market leader for many years.

Up until 2020, Harris Paints were exclusively traded through agents Paint Plus, operated by David and Jason Goddard with products being shipped in on a periodic basis. However, in 2018, Harris took the step to purchase the land and assets of the old Lee Wind plant with a view to establishing a state-of-the-art factory with sole paint manufacturing rights in the country. Having local supply would be a distinct advantage within Antigua but it also prevented potential competitors from taking up position and the island was also well located to service potential future expansion in the northern Caribbean and to strengthen the existing distribution network.

Work got underway clearing the 2.5 acre site off Powell's Main Road, in late 2019 and renovations officially got underway the following January. Progress was hampered by the onset of the coronavirus pandemic but CEO, Ian Kenyon declared that Harris Paints would not be stepping back but will be stepping up, not only to open the factory but to introduce new brands and more choices for Antiguan and Barbudan consumers.

"There is no doubt that COVID-19 has thrown us a very challenging curve ball. Harris Paints operations have been impacted by full or partial shutdowns across the Caribbean. However, we are a strong company and remain 100% behind the investment in Antigua and Barbuda. We have certainly had to be very adaptive under

*L-R: Francis Grantley Gomes, Production; Edith Berridge, Sales and Administration Manager; Jonathan Chandler, Inventory; Andreas Michael, Production Supervisor and Quality Control Officer  
(Photo by Tameka Ferris)*



the circumstances, to make adjustments, to shift priorities of some activities but we aim, barring any long-term restrictions on movement, to be production ready in May." said Kenyon in a press release.

To be sure, Harris Paints Antigua opened its doors in May 2020 generating its first batch of paint, Harris Concrete Primer and a warehouse packed with 10 000 gallons of products in stock at its new Antiguan home.

<sup>1</sup>World Bank data 2021

## Warehouse: Stages of Transformation

*(Photo by Tameka Ferris)*



*The beginning*



*Cleared and cleaned*



*Renovated warehouse*



*Premises acquired (inset) and newly renovated Harris Paints Antigua (below)*



*(Photo by Tameka Ferris)*



## Antigua Outreach

Although Antigua is the newest Business Unit and has been operating for only two years, they have been active supporting the community and responding to requests where possible. Some of the initiatives they have supported include the renovations of the Boys Training School; fundraising and awareness for Child Abuse Prevention

in collaboration with the Kiwanis Club of Antigua and the provision of drums to communities to help with litter disposal or for water conservation purposes.

A mural was also created to celebrate Antigua and Barbuda featuring the national fruit, the Black Pineapple, at the Antigua

Recreation Grounds. Established paint specialists Paint Plus, donated Harris Paints to the Secondary Schools in Antigua to capture this colourful scene. The mural was created for Independence 2021.





*Mural for Independence 2021*

## A Legend in Paint

Gaining access to new markets is rarely an easy task and Harris experienced early challenges in servicing the opportunity in Antigua. The first export endeavours were initiated from Dominica, under the leadership of Ninian Marie. However, Harris experienced a lot of difficulties getting goods to clear the port. Likely through a meeting of one of the professional organizations he was a member of, Mr. Marie discussed the issue with Antiguan businessman, Stephen Shoul who then suggested that Harris goods be shipped to him at his warehouse. In this way, Harris was able to provide stock to a number of stores.

Around that same period, David Goddard who was related to the Shoul's through marriage, returned to Antigua from Canada, full of energy and entrepreneurial ambition. He was a natural fit to the paint business and over time made it his own, opening his own store, Paint Plus in 1995, specializing in paints and representing the Harris brand. A family business, David operated Paint Plus together principally with his son Jason Goddard, growing the business into the leading name in architectural and specialty paint solutions in Antigua for the past 27 years.

Our deep condolences are extended to the family on the passing of David Goddard (May 26, 2022) especially to his wife Carolyn and to his children, Jason, Adam and Thaddea as well as to the Paint Plus family.



*Celebrating 45 years of Harris Paints in Barbados; L-R: David Goddard, Paint Plus Antigua; Ralph Johnson, Harris Paints; Michael Edwards, Carter & Co Ltd, Barbados; Ian Kenyon, Harris Paints (Photo by Jamal Boodhoo)*



## First Master System Factory in the World

With the renovation of the factory complete, Harris installed new plant equipment. This was the first factory, to be set up and run operations based on an entire new colour platform known as the master system. It was so called because unlike traditional products which require usually four bases in order to produce all colours in the range (from very pale to the most saturated) the new master system only requires one 'master' base.

While the factory was set up to produce master products, the approach had to be phased and the new technology could continue to tint traditional lines until all

products could be converted to the new system. The first of the master products to be launched (November 2020) were Harris' top sellers Ulttima Plus Flat, Satin and Porch & Patio emulsion products.

Despite the pandemic, Harris was able to hold seminars to introduce the benefits of the new system to about 35 contractors by providing multiple sessions for a limited number of persons to fulfill the spacing for health and safety requirements and with presentations live but virtual, as air travel was severely curtailed at the time.

The seminar arrangements were handled by Sales and Administration Manager in Antigua, Edith Berridge and key presentations were made by VP of Sales & Marketing, Orlando Vazquez and VP Technical Services and Innovation, Charles Kirton.

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*Launch of New Era Ulttima Plus 'one base' paints made with new master colour technology; Right: Participants examine samples to evaluate performance and benefits*





**1970s**

**starting**

**out**



# the first factory

## 1972 - 1973

As eager young men in the 1970s Andrew Phillips and Richard Carter were keen to get ahead. Andrew had a fast-growing paint contracting business and Richard helped manage his family's established hardware business in High Street, Bridgetown. Frustrated by the lack of service he received from the paint suppliers of the day, Andrew felt that without some competition in the marketplace, consumers would always have to settle for whatever terms they were given. Once piqued, Andrew was not the sort to take matters sitting down and he heatedly discussed his concerns with Richard who knew numerous contractors though the retail trade to which he routinely sold paint. The two, with not a shred of manufacturing experience between them, decided to take matters into their own hands and intended to produce a home-grown alternative that would provide the market with a more competitive product than what was currently being offered.

Looking back, the boldness of their plan does seem outrageously ambitious but you have to remember the world was also a very different place back then. The sixties had been an inspirational decade on many levels. The Government of Barbados had ushered in a new economic plan which aimed at moving away from sugar production and growing new sources of revenue based on tourism and industrial development. Fiscal incentives were provided to encourage foreign investment in the hotel sector and together with the advent of commercial jet airliners such as the Boeing 707, tourism quite literally took off! According to the Central Bank of Barbados' Statistical Digest, total tourism arrivals jumped from 35 500 visitors in 1960 to 68 400 visitors in 1965 and 156 400 by 1970<sup>1</sup>. In other words, tourism

grew by 340% in just 10 years and this had a positive knock-on effect in nearly all areas of the economy. Further to this, there were other far reaching social and political changes taking place. The civil rights movement had won a momentous victory and saw President Lyndon Johnson sign the Civil Rights Act in 1964. There was sweeping de-colonization in widespread parts of the world, with Barbados celebrating its own independence with much fanfare in 1966. And not least, Sir Garfield Sobers had become probably the world's most famous cricketer and captained the West Indies though some of their best years during the middle of the decade. Such events perhaps inspired in the pair, a kind of optimism about the coming of a new era of possibilities but they were yet to fully understand the seriousness of the challenges they would soon face.

To get started it was necessary to get some technological support and a contact was made with a Mr Janer of Harris Paint Company in Puerto Rico, through which an arrangement was made to import ready-made paints for re-sale on the local market. In the meantime, Andrew and Richard had to find a storage warehouse and base for operations and as both were already in full time employment, they would also need to find someone to manage and take things forward.

As it happened, Richard had a temporary bond behind the site of old Fogarty's Department Store building<sup>2</sup> on Broad Street which had burned down along with Cave Shepherd in 1969. It is here that Ralph Johnson came to view the operation he had heard so much about in a modest wooden building on the corner of Victoria

“Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success”

Henry Ford, Founder Ford Motor Company



*Ralph Johnson works the phones in the early days*

and Middle Street. Very few people back then had any special knowledge of paint production and this certainly was not Ralph's area of expertise either. On the other hand, Andrew and Richard both knew he was a man who could get things done and had seen first-hand at Barbados Rally Club events, the wholeheartedness with which Ralph entered into any endeavour. While it might have been alleged that where Ralph went, notoriety followed - he was undoubtedly not only well-known but well-liked in a large number of

*Rendering of first Harris Paints Factory, Lowlands*



social circles, which could not be a bad thing for a fledgling business.

Harris officially commenced operations on 15 September 1972, though it took another couple of months before the official incorporation documents were signed and sealed. It was clear that the immediate importation arrangements of paint from Puerto Rico could only serve as a short-term measure as the high rate of duties they experienced did not make this plan feasible. As newly appointed General Manager and Director of Harris Paints, it was therefore Ralph's first task to immediately set about making the provisions necessary to set up a manufacturing facility on joining the company on 1 December 1972.

From the outset Ralph had a small team by his side, a few of which had had some prior paint production experience, chiefly St Clair Pilgrim, Production Manager. Additional crew were Cleveston Seale, who famously recruited friend Michael Carter to the team and jack of all trades, Albert Carrington. After three months of the most rudimentary of working conditions, Ralph petitioned for a clerk to assist him who would attend to stock cards, answer the telephone, type and perform general office work. So meagre were the resources that this would not be forthcoming for several months yet to come. However, Richard Carter was generously able to offer the loan of a desk and typewriter!

At the same time it was reported that a potential premises, an outbuilding at Lowlands had been identified and deemed suitable and the Directors agreed that they

should move forward as quickly as possible. Michael Carter speculates that by 'suitable' the Directors must really have meant 'affordable' as he remembers the building to have been in very bad condition, engulfed by bush and home to a colony of bees. In practice it was not much more than four walls and a roof. However, they soldiered on over the coming weeks, readying the facility for the installation of a 25 horsepower Cowles Dissolver and a 7½ horsepower slow speed mixer, by pouring a new floor, constructing ramps and flamboyantly emblazoning the Harris logo on the roof.

Also in April 1973, it became clear that the position of Mr Janer had changed and while he would be stepping out of the picture, he indicated that if the Harris team were intent on manufacturing, they should deal directly with Harris Paints in Tampa, Florida. Almost immediately through the generosity of then President Truman Dalberg, the Barbados team were able to make an agreement with the American counterpart, a subsidiary of the Grow Chemical Company which manufactured many brand name paints across the USA. Through this relationship Harris were able to get technological support for quality formulations and order the necessary raw materials. A Mr Warren

Lynch was kindly dispatched to assist in the factory set up at Lowlands and his years of experience and invaluable advice provided a long-lasting benefit to the company. It was Lynch that sagely advised the entrepreneurs that while making the paint might be challenging, selling it would be the real test.

The Lowlands factory opened with great anticipation on 15 May 1973. While the shareholders and directors briefly basked in this significant step forward, little did they know that they could hardly have picked a worse date in history to start such an enterprise, for it would be the eve of one of the most crippling economic events of the century.



*Rendering of first Harris Paints Building, Bridgetown*

<sup>1</sup>Downes, Andrew S PhD. Economic Growth in a Small Developing Country. The Case of Barbados. September 2001.

<sup>2</sup>The Fogarty's Department Store site was redeveloped into Norman House, which we know as Norman Centre today



# Harris Paint Company, Tampa



*John E Harris, Founder - Harris Paint Company, Tampa (Photo by Charles Barron)*

Harris Paints Barbados was set up wholly independently though 100% local share ownership and investment. Without a paint production expert among them, the Barbadian company needed an agreement with a paint producer that would help them meet their objectives. Most importantly they needed to obtain premium paint formulas that would produce high quality paint and allow them to compete with the international brands already in the Barbados market.

As some time would be needed to finalize financing, purchase plant equipment and for shipment and installation, Barbados started

the operation by importing ready-made paint from the Puerto Rican subsidiary of the Harris Paint Company in Tampa, Florida. It was a short term measure and was not cost effective plus Barbados felt that they would be able to better manage quality control themselves. When their associate in Puerto Rico was leaving the company he advised his Barbados counterparts to deal directly with Tampa.

By all accounts it would appear that the Florida operation was a very well established maker and retailer of lacquers, paints and varnishes. It had been operating successfully

at least since 1946 at the site at 1010-26 North 19th Street in the west of the city when it was directed by President John E Harris and Production Manager/Chemist Michael J Catena. Evidence suggests the company was at one time known as Harris Standard Paint Co. A press announcement in the Sarasota Herald Tribune of 3 September 1963 declares: "made manufacturer, Harris Standard Paint Company." It boasts that the Brand is "a product which has been on the market since 1904." and tested in Florida by Florida's largest paint company.

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Harris Paint Center - Tallahassee, 1964 (Photo by Harvey E Slade)

## Tampa, Florida: 1948- 1957



*Photographer: Charles Barron*



*Photographer: Charles Barron*



*Top: Company President and assistant at agitator tank testing color and quality; Middle: Working at the varnish mill; Bottom: Testing for true colour match*



*Top: Michael J Catena, Production Manager and Chemist at delicate viscometer; Middle: The sealing and packing line; Bottom: Testing pigment and varnish mixture at miniature roller mill*

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*The Florida Architect, Sep/Oct 1970*

The American operation proved an attractive proposition for larger companies looking to bolster bottom lines and their stake holding in the paint market. In 1962 Harris Paint Co Tampa was acquired by McCrory Corp, at the time the fourth largest US retailer, a subsidiary of Rapid-American directed by Meshulam Riklis, a wily financier and deal-maker extraordinaire. The company was flipped and re-sold just 18 months later to Bernzomatic Corp of Rochester New York for “more than USD 2.3 million” cash sale, substantially over the purchase price. Bernzomatic, makers of propane propelled spray enamels felt that Harris’ significant aerosol spray paint business would complement its own activities. In 1965 the operation was taken over yet again by an increasingly powerful contender, Grow Chemical Corp that was on a course to become a major supplier of industrial coatings and maintenance supplies.

When the Barbados team opened negotiations with Harris Tampa in 1972-3 Grow Chemical was already at the helm and the paint company had not long established a plant in Puerto Rico. Then President, Truman Dahlberg is remembered to have been receptive and well-disposed to the Barbadian executives and their proposal

and despite the very small size of the market, he agreed to assist them in setting up an independent manufacturing operation.

Grow Chemical, on the other hand had its own course to chart. The company so far had managed to live up to their name over the past 20 years through an assertive programme of mergers and acquisitions spearheaded by the Group’s leader and mercurial entrepreneur, Russell Banks. In 1976, in a stunning business manoeuvre, Banks made an important purchase of two major paint companies (one of which was Devco & Reynolds Co) that together were said to be 2/3 the size of Grow by sales volume. However the deal left the company very short of cash which was compounded by a downturn in key markets. These conditions prompted Banks to alter the company’s focus for most of the 1980s and Grow Group Inc, as it was now called, undertook new initiatives and Harris Tampa was sold to a Puerto Rican company.

Meanwhile, the company in Barbados which was now seeing some success proceeded independently with plans to build a spacious manufacturing facility and to establish their first export operation.



*(Photo by Harvey E Slade)*

*Interior of Harris Paint Center - Tallahassee*

# hard knocks

## 1973 - 1974

As a small home-grown operation Harris clearly had their work cut out in convincing the public that the paint they produced could be as good a quality or better than what was currently available. In fact, from this very early stage, Harris knew success hinged on commitment to quality and it has been a fundamental tenet from which it has never wavered. The company paid a great deal of care and attention to the calibre of the product made through a small batch production process. In this regard the Lowland factory was successful in producing a high-quality emulsion in a limited range of colours (Bone White, Oyster White, Natural

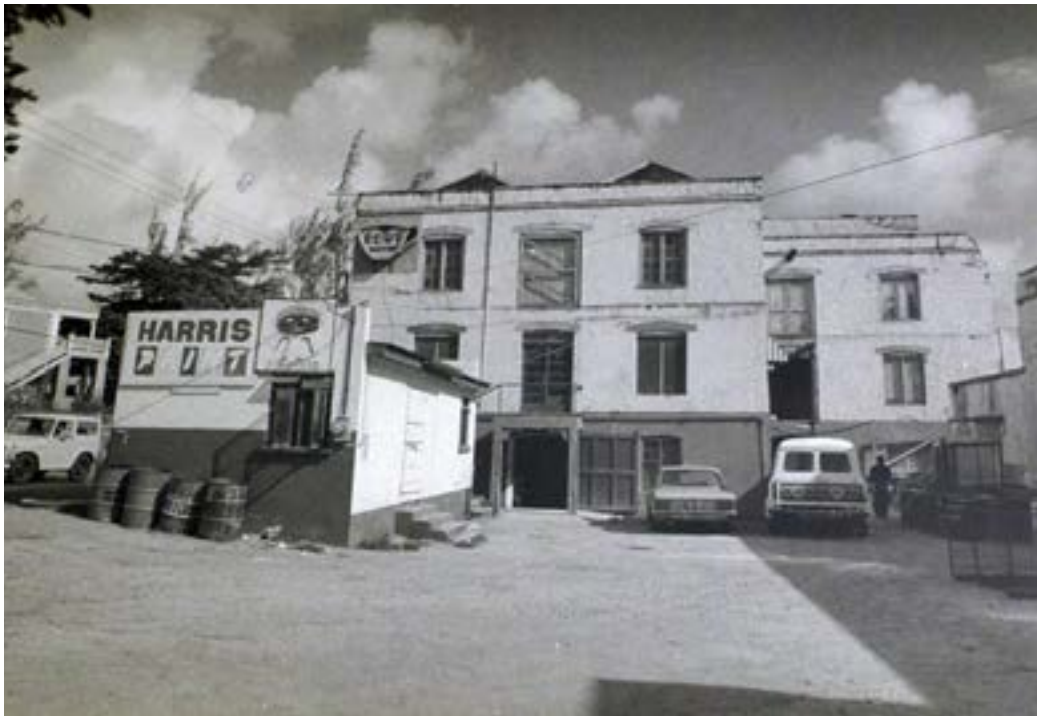
Coral, Shell Pink, Gardenia, Litchfield Yellow, Butter Yellow, Bittersweet, Mushroom and Sandalwood) but almost from the outset, it was clear that more space would be needed if they intended to offer customers a full range of paint products.

Having just established a factory, there was almost an immediate need to find another location to set up an additional operation to produce oil paints. Strapped for cash, the directors felt the old BICO Building would be ideal for their purposes. While the three-storey building was run down having been built at the turn of the century as a

cold storage facility for the Barbados Ice Company, they agreed to rent the ground floor (for about BBD 300, on a month to month basis) which had capacious rooms that could accommodate production and storage requirements and was in an enviable central location. Neither of the two upper storeys was, in fact, habitable. Despite its dilapidated state and dank, dark rooms, Harris moved the offices and warehousing to Bay Street in September 1973.

Now with the luxury of two office spaces, Ralph set out to get some administrative support. He knew of Linda Marshall who had worked with his father Lance doing the book-keeping for the family restaurant outlets and other business ventures. After a period off work to start a family, she then took a job at J K Archer distribution agency. This was where Ralph met her one day to outline his new venture and to ask her to join the team. Linda joined Harris in October 1973 and she was to play an important part in overseeing the company's financial matters for nearly 30 years.

Just when things seemed to be getting a little easier, along came another setback – one that would send shock waves from the Middle East throughout the Western world and even to the Caribbean. Incensed by US interference and support of Israel in their on-going conflicts with Palestine, the mainly Arab cartel of oil exporting countries (which supplied much of the world's oil) sanctioned the United States, cutting off supplies. The resulting oil shortage caused chaos and unprecedented price spikes that threatened to bring the US economy to its knees.



*BICO Building, Bay Street*

“We must cut down on our use of fuels. We must continue to use electricity as sparingly as possible. We must use water as though there may be none tomorrow. We must reduce our driving.”

Senator Branford Taitt, 1974

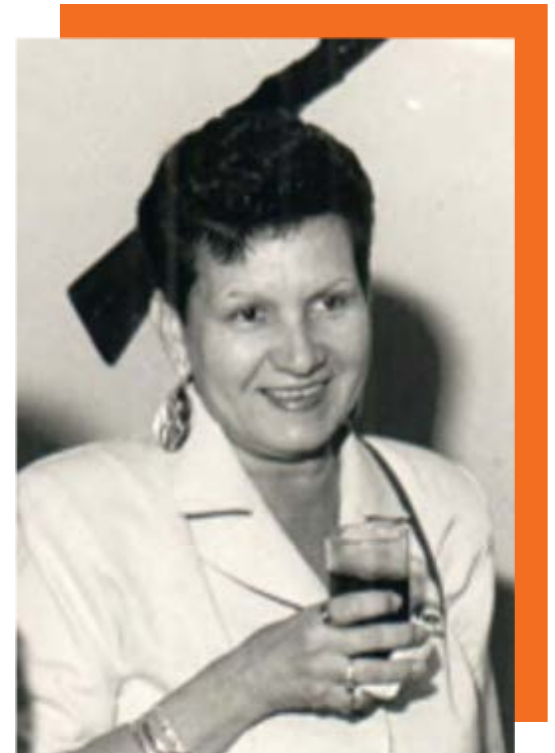
The action had an immediate impact on world trade. Shipping prices escalated dramatically. Raw materials became scarce and when they were available, they were double the price. Manufacturers such as Harris experienced soaring production costs and they were urged by Senator Branford Taitt to economize for survival. “We must cut down on our use of fuels. We must continue to use electricity as sparingly as possible. We must use water as though there may be none tomorrow. We must reduce our driving.”<sup>3</sup> While some companies were forced to reduce shifts to lower overheads, Harris called a temporary halt to production. Not only were raw materials a challenge but they had managed to acquire more or less adequate stocks of paint products and the even greater challenge now, was to sell them.

It was not just the Oil Crisis that had a negative impact on the cost of doing business and consumers' wallets. The early 70s turned out to be the worst economic recession in the United States since the Great Depression of the 1930s and all related economies would feel the brunt of it.

On Sunday 24 February 1974, Barbadians faced facts in a special report by journalist Al Gilkes in The Nation newspaper whose headlines screamed: “Cost of Living Keeps Going Up, Up, UP...”. The information taken from an index prepared by the Government Statistical Service indicated that in four years (January 1970 to January 1974) Barbadian consumers had experienced average price increases across all sectors of more than

70%. Costs of operating a household and furnishing were up 70% and consumers were now paying 85% more on food and beverages.

So from the outset the cards were stacked against the survival of the small company; Harris had the misfortune to set out in a bad economy; the venture was critically undercapitalized; their local product was being measured against international competitors with much deeper pockets and yet they prevailed. Despite the tough circumstances Harris was at no time willing to sacrifice the quality of its product. With a small team of six, under the meticulous guidance of St Clair Pilgrim, the company reported that they produced an estimated 12 000 gallons of paint in 1973 and 20 000 gallons in 1974. While the business clearly had signs of potential it remained to be seen whether they could make it work.



Linda Marshall

<sup>3</sup> Senator Branford Taitt's address to the Barbados Manufacturers' Association as reported in The Nation, 10 March 1974. Nation Publishing Co Ltd

# the watershed year

## 1975



Up to their ears in mounting debts the shareholders of Harris had to face the brutal reality by the middle of 1975. They had shopped at every bank in town (these included Chase Manhattan, Bank of Nova Scotia, Royal Bank of Canada and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Canada) to secure loans and the working capital needed to operate the business. In April, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Members of Harris Paints Barbados Limited was convened at Caribbean Painting Services (CPS) offices in Whitepark Road to discuss the grave state of affairs. The objective of these critical deliberations was to decide if to put more money into the company and give it one final try or whether to abandon the project and liquidate. The tense meeting

was continued on 6 May allowing Richard Carter a final opportunity to meet with bankers to see what could be done. Around the table were the assembled stakeholders: Andrew Phillips, Chairman; Richard Carter and Ralph Johnson, Directors; and assembled shareholders and representatives: Bruce Stoute for Barbados Co-operative Cotton Factory Ltd; Norman Simpson for Carter & Co Ltd; Mr Lionel and Bryan Ward for Guinea Ltd; Vere Davis and Secretary, Mr A G Pile (Robert Jones was unable to attend the meetings as he was engaged in other business out of the island). These gentlemen listened solemnly as Richard Carter told them that the Company's account at the bank was overdrawn to the limit and that he considered for the company to be a viable proposition they needed a minimum of BBD 77 000 to be injected. Currently the Directors along with Mr Jones were guaranteeing the entirety of the loan which was hampering, in some instances, other business activities. He went on to say that while the company had done a lot for paint dealers, Harris belonged to the shareholders and that they needed to have sufficient confidence in its future if they were to invest further sums.

The group poured over the challenges the company now faced. A six-month delay in the delivery of equipment had contributed to a first-year loss of about BBD 35 000 as production was limited and skilled staff still had to be retained. By the end of the second year, 31 August 1974, sales had picked up by 40% (to about 20 000 gallons) but three-month credit terms meant the company was still starved of cash and unable to reduce its other mounting liabilities. The main concern was a USD 52 000 debt to Harris Tampa from whom raw materials were being purchased. So dire was the situation that

Tampa would now no longer ship goods to Harris and had even ceased the insurance on their last shipment which had cost Harris a further BBD 3 000. It was clear if they were to continue, they would either have to find a way to remedy the situation with Tampa which required a substantial injection of cash or they could look to purchase on the open market. It was decided that there was little, if any, savings to be made at that time by shopping around, that the Tampa rates were fair and competitive and that they allowed the Barbados company to order minimum quantities which was a considerable benefit.

To increase operational efficiency, it had been determined that the installation of a sand mill machine would produce savings, increase the flexibility of the company to produce a wider range of products and could eliminate the dependency on Tampa. The substantial benefits were impressive but to make the purchase they needed an additional BBD 22 000 on top of the existing bank loans which were costing them a further estimated BBD 20 000 per year! Ralph projected that with the new machine they could save a whopping BBD 4.00 per gallon plus he was confident that the increased production capacity would see significant sales growth and that the machine would pay for itself in a year. In other good news, sales were up 34% on the same period in 1974 and contractors were commenting favourably on the quality of the Harris product.

Taking all these circumstances into consideration, if the company were to continue it would be necessary for the present shareholders to double their investment in the business and for each of them to give a guarantee to the bank which would hold a charge over the fixed and floating assets of Harris. This would allow

the company to reduce its indebtedness, the interest expense and get back on a good footing with Tampa with which they hoped to negotiate some debt relief measures.

Effectively the decision taken that day 6 May 1975 by the seven guarantors saved the company – Barbados co-op Cotton Factory Ltd, Caribbean Painting Service Ltd, Carter & Co Ltd, Guinea Limited, Ralph Johnson, Robert Jones and Vere Davis. They further resolved to attract additional investment and before the year was out, they received commitments from Ralph Branch of Barbados Tyre Centre, Michael Mahon of Lion Castle and C O Williams Construction Company Limited, all of whom later became Directors and contributed significantly, whether for a long or short period, to the development of the company in very tentative times.

## The Turnaround

The financial assistance secured in May 1975 gave Harris a new lease on life. It had effectively bought valuable time to get affairs in order and now it set out to prove that it could make a go of it.

First and foremost was the debt owed to the Tampa company, principally for raw materials, which they had yet been unable to settle. This had to be job number one. When the correspondence from their Financial Controller became increasingly terse and demanding, it was felt that the only thing left to do was for Andrew and Ralph to travel to Tampa to see if they could negotiate with the irascible executive. This they did in July/August 1975. The subsequent interview in Tampa was far from what they were expecting and they quickly came to an arrangement with Steve Borusovic with

whom they convivially spent the rest of the day. What is more, Harris was offered a 10% reduction on the cost of raw materials and free freight to Miami for shipping! The meeting was a great success and resulted in a firm and long-lasting friendship with Steve and put Harris on a good footing with the Tampa company from whom they required technical information, training and quality control services.

Buoyed by the positive outcome together with the support given by shareholders and Directors, Harris launched a full assault aimed at getting a stronger foothold in the market. Vere Davis was instrumental at opening doors at Plantations which was one of the larger hardware suppliers of the day. Ralph approached Basil Cole of Alleyne, Arthur & Cole who had a distributive network among many of the small country shops. Major contractors, construction supply firms and general hardware retailers were systematically approached. No stone was left unturned; Harris even scouted pharmacies to establish a presence in out-lying Speightstown.

On the manufacturing front, it was decided to relocate the entire operation to Bay Street and the Lowlands factory was closed in June 1975. To expand their production repertoire a Red Head sand mill which was used for grinding high quality enamels and oils had been ordered. It arrived a little later than hoped on 25 August. By the end of the year Harris was producing Duratone Emulsion, Duracote Gloss Enamel, Rust Chem Enamel and Porch & Patio. The sales efforts were paying off. At the Directors meeting of 27 January 1976, Harris recorded an increase in sales of 45% over the previous year. The tide was finally beginning to turn.





# the first customer



## Alfred Pragnell

1978 -1996

The first walk-in customer at the new Bay Street premises shortly after they opened in 1975 was said to be none other than famous Barbadian broadcaster and radio personality Alfred Pragnell.

Alfred, who lived not a mile away in nearby Chelsea Road, was in the market for paint with which to refresh his family home. As a lover of all things Bajan, it was with some enthusiasm that he made the short trip to investigate the new local paint company. After purchasing a few gallons of Bone White (which he jokingly suggested should be renamed Bajan Bone) he became a steadfast champion of the company and its products for the remainder of his life.

“One should not live one’s life by other people’s rules.”

A firmly held motto of Alfred Pragnell

While Alfred was known principally by his legions of adoring fans for his hilarious storytelling, comedic performances and use of the local dialect, those who were close to him knew him to be a passionate, free-spirited individual who held the view that “one should not live one’s life by other people’s rules.” It should be no surprise then that he was quick to buck tradition and to adopt the new paint produced by Barbados’ only 100% local paint manufacturer.

In gratitude for his outspoken support especially in those tough early days, Harris offered periodic re-paintings of his home at no cost. He performed in many commercials for Harris including a memorable one with Ralph in which Alfred complains he is “blue vex” for not being asked to advertise sooner! As the company grew and reached one milestone after another, Alfred graciously performed as host and MC at company celebrations, where he was able to add his own vibrant colour to the occasion, as he did to so many others, throughout his career.

First Customer Alfred Pragnell (1934-2004) was a consummate broadcaster, storyteller and performer. He joined the British operated Barbados Rediffusion Service in 1956 and was probably the first truly Barbadian voice on the radio. He later held the post of Deputy Programme Manager on the re-named Starcom Network’s Star Radio for 21 years, before retiring in 1988. Well-known for his story-telling and cast of comedic characters, he performed widely in Barbados, the Caribbean and beyond. In 2001, Alfred Pragnell was awarded the Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his contribution to broadcasting.



*Mike Mahon's Cortina*



*Right: Andrew Phillips (R) (with John Cole)*

## primed for competition

Drawn together by the fast pace and high stakes of motorsport, many of the early key company players were already well acquainted through the activities of the Barbados Rally Club and Bushy Park Track events. Weekends in the late 60s and early 70s were spent captivated by the thrills and spills, off road and on, where contenders tested their mettle and their machines. In this arena, Andrew Phillips, Richard Carter, Ralph 'Bruggadung' Johnson, Ralph Branch,

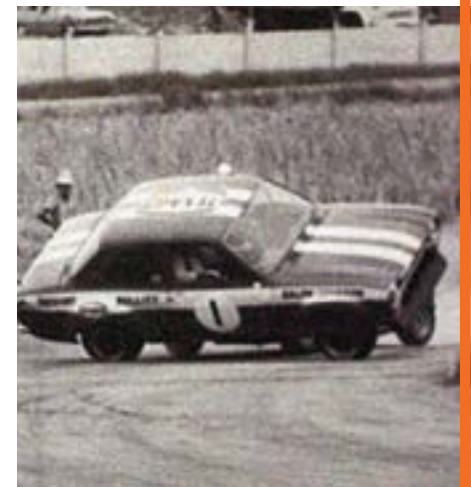
Mike Mahon and Mickey Hutchinson learned what each other were made of. As everyone knew the most popular drivers did not necessarily have the biggest and best cars but they had tenacity, drive, a calm head under pressure and a willingness to lay it all on the line to succeed. Friends and at times rivals these young challengers honed their competitive characteristics and developed a mutual respect that would later bind them in business.



*Above: Mickey Hutchinson sporting his MG;  
Below: Ralph Johnson rolling in Bullitt*

*Below: Ralph Branch and Richard Carter*

*Photos compliments Geoffrey Goddard*



# breakthrough and beyond

## 1976 - 1978

Harris and 'The Little Man' gained significant traction and brand recognition in the second half of the 1970s growing sales on the home front and abroad.

Around 1976 the company, through somewhat haphazard circumstances, got an opportunity that would lead to the establishment of the first Harris overseas factory. This was probably the farthest thing from Ralph's mind when one day an unexpected visitor turned up at the office in Bay Street and apparently undeterred by the dungeon-like accommodations, animatedly expressed his enthusiasm for the local product. The unforgettable encounter with the flamboyant Ninian Marie of Dominica resulted in an amicable arrangement. In short time, Mr Marie was appointed Commissioning Agent and Distributor of Harris products in Dominica and the OECS.

At the outset, the agency was located in Turkey Lane, Roseau and sales of the imported Harris products proved promising. However, at this time there were also political developments afoot within the OECS which would, if passed, essentially close doors on imports from outside the region. Ninian set on a vociferous campaign to convince Harris executives to set up an operation in Dominica to maintain access to the OECS market, eventually convincing Ralph of its merits after close to a hundred hours of phone calls.

The matter was put before the Board for discussion and hotly debated. Robert Jones admits that at the time he thought they had holes in their head and couldn't see how you

could put a factory in Dominica, a country of about 40 000 people at the time and make it work. He concedes, "It turned out to be one of the best investments Harris ever made". Thanks in part to Ninian's political connections, Harris was offered exceedingly attractive conditions by the Patrick John Government and so with not so much as a feasibility study, the Dominica factory was established in 1978. [See Leaders in The Caribbean, Harris Dominica]

At home Harris was finally making some important breakthroughs and was being considered for substantial hotel jobs which included the contract to supply all the 'Bone

White' paint used in the newly constructed Sunset Crest West Coast development. Due to efforts in advertising, Harris and 'The Little Man' had been gaining brand recognition among the buying public who connected with the straight-talking, tell-it-like-it-is sales messages. "We ain't the biggest... We don't sell the most. We simply sell the best for less!" Indicators were so positive that as early as 1977 Harris realized that the need for further expansion was clearly on the cards.

It had not been an easy task but by 1978 Harris clearly was on a high. In the late summer the company installed the first



*Harris Dominica Factory, Canefield, circa 1987*

“It turned out to be one of the best investments Harris ever made.”

Robert Jones on building a factory in Dominica

twin-bladed dissolver used in Barbados which enabled the manufacture of emulsions, enamels and textured finishes to the highest quality, in the minimum time. In just six years Harris had achieved an independent operation and although they had encountered some pretty dire economic times, they had not only survived but had grown sales from BBD 100 000 to 1 000 000 and now employed a staff of 20. However, there was bad news too. In September the company mourned the loss of St Clair Pilgrim who had efficiently and fastidiously run factory operations since inception. Harris was further saddened by the announcement of founding Director Richard Carter, of his intention to resign from the Board in October 1978 to concentrate on his family business though both he and Carter & Co Ltd would continue to be of unfailing support in the coming years.



*Sunday Sun, Nation Publishing Company Ltd, 6 October 1974*

# Harris arrives: Wildey

In order to meet the increasing demand, it was clear that Harris needed a custom built premises with sufficient space for warehousing, manufacturing and offices, that would not only meet the needs of the day but would provide a platform from which the company could grow.

The land at Wildey Industrial Park, part of the new manufacturing estates created by Errol Barrow's DLP in 1976 which included Grazettes, Newton and Seawell, was identified as early as February 1978 but the property at Bay Street was still under strong consideration as it was in an excellent commercial location. In October of that year the Board learned that the BICO building had been taken off the market and without further delay a 20% deposit was paid to secure the Wildey site. Arrangements moved full speed ahead with plans being drawn up and carefully reviewed by Director Michael Mahon among others. The ever-present challenge of financing was met by the Barbados Development Bank under the kind guidance of Luther Miller. Tenders were sought and the job was awarded in



*Wildey Office and Factory Building 1979*





*Building of Wildey factory in progress*

March 1979 to Durahome Construction who proposed to build the factory in 16 weeks for the sum of BBD 273 118.

At the official opening in October 1979, there was more good news and Harris announced that they had secured a hard-won distribution deal with the influential commissioning agency A S Bryden Ltd commencing on the very first day of the next

financial year. Brydens brought a wealth of experience and broad reach that was invaluable to Harris and in time they took up a shareholding in the company (represented by Frank Edghill) developing a close and important relationship.

The move to the gleaming new spacious premises at Wildey at the end of the 1970s while essential in practical terms, was also

symbolic of the level of success achieved by the company. The first seven years had been quite a rollercoaster ride. They had challenged the competition, faced near economic disaster and had survived. With a foot in the OECS markets and new strategic partnerships, Harris was ready to take on the modern era of rapid technological development it was about to enter.

*"Our Little Empire!" is the handwritten note on the back of this original image*



# three things you might not know 'bout de old days



## Sweet Treats Helped to Build Strong Teams

Chairman Andrew Phillips loved chocolate and always had a couple of large bars of Cadbury in his briefcase "to prevent headaches". Monthly Board meetings were accompanied by the treat of a proper home-cooked Bajan style lunch and often some of Mr Phillips' chocolate!

## Harris was "Green" and Recycling from Years Ago

Accountant Linda Marshall used to ensure that the paper from the adding machines especially hers, was carefully rolled back up and re-used on the other side.



## Harris Encouraged a Harmonious Work Environment

It was not uncommon during Lent for Michael Carter to take out his hymn book and sing hymns which could be heard throughout the office.

*Contributed by Wendy Del Castilho and Cecile Herbert*

# early directors and principal shareholders

According to Chairman Andrew Phillips, one of Harris' fundamental strengths was its ability to "maintain a very diverse range of shareholders, as many as possible of whom were asked to give of their opinions to assist the company to keep in touch with a wide selection of the business community". Below are some of the participants that played a special role in Harris' history inside and outside the boardroom during the 1970s and beyond. They contributed valuable guidance, fresh outlooks and perspectives, expertise, energy, influence and ability to spot opportunities.

## Barbados Cooperative Cotton Factory/Barbados Foundry

Located in Whitepark, Bridgetown the Cotton Factory had evolved into a general store offering supplies from hardware, animal feed, fertilizers and more and in 1974 it opened a new division branded as BCCF Home Centre, a department featuring furniture, draperies and home entertainment systems. It was part of the Barbados Foundry Group of Companies. Following consultations with managers Bruce Stoute and Kyffin Simpson, the Foundry and Cotton Factory invested in some shares in the summer of 1973 and were offered a position on the Board. While their direct involvement in Harris was relatively short-lived, they provided critical financing at a time when many wouldn't and money was in short supply.

## Ralph BRANCH, Barbados Tyre Centre Ltd

Ralph operated a tyre business on Wildey main road, specializing in the sale of new tyres, tyre installation and repair and therefore was involved in an unrelated field to the traditional paint business. Yet in the summer of 1975, at a somewhat critical hour, Ralph decided to invest in the local manufacturing project in the hopes that it would come good. His interest was such that just a few short years later he was appointed as company Director in early 1978. While there was a family connection between Ralph and Richard Carter, most likely again it was the Barbados Rally Club and a love of motorsport that helped build the relationship he had with the individuals around the Harris boardroom table. Ralph maintained his stake in Harris passing it on to his son, William on his retirement.

## A S BRYDEN & Sons Ltd, Frank Edgehill

For many years Harris executives were keen to establish an agreement with A S Bryden & Sons, one of the largest and most established wholesale distributors in the region. The company had built a reputation over the past 80 years, dating from 1898, as a purveyor and marketer of premium brand goods which included food, consumer items

and household goods. It became A S Bryden & Sons (Barbados) Ltd in 1941 and became a public company in 1974. With an extensive network across the Caribbean A S Bryden was considered a key strategic partner for Harris. Their new alliance was announced at the opening of the Wildey factory in 1979 and Bryden later became a member of the Harris Board, represented by Frank Edghill until his retirement in 1990. Frank grew close to the company and took a much appreciated and highly participative interest in Harris, providing an invaluable regional perspective.

## Richard CARTER, Carter & Co Ltd

Founder of Harris, Richard Carter helped guide the business especially in the precarious early years with good judgement, sound business sense and an exceptional knowledge of the paint retail business. There could have been no better partner than Carter & Co Ltd which accounted for the better part of Harris sales and included the full support of Carter's retail manager Norman Simpson. Once it was clear that the small local company was on its feet, Richard announced his retirement from the Board in 1978 to attend to his substantial business commitments. Carter & Co Ltd have remained close to the Harris family.



## George De Vere DAVIS

One of the very first investors to take a chance on Harris, Vere helped the bold idea become a reality. At the time he lived at Cliff Plantation and his neighbour and close friend was Richard Carter. So when he heard about the initial plans to establish a paint factory back in 1972, he became an immediate supporter, investing a considerable sum in the venture. At that time, they had barely got started, there was just Andrew, Richard and Lionel Ward from Staple Grove and he watched the young company take shape and struggle for survival. He remembers that it was very tough, particularly the first four years, not only operationally but building sales and confidence in the brand. However, he knew that anonymous samples were being sent for testing and the good results and paint quality was evident. "Wherever I went on the estate I would push it ... every time I went to Plantations (a hardware store) I would do what I could to promote Harris." Both the considerable moral and financial support was vital to Harris in what were lean and uncertain times.

## J JANER

An early associate from Puerto Rico who helped the company get going in 1972 with imported product before the manufacturing operation was established. Mr Janer left his position and subsequently dropped out of the picture. After having missed four Directors' meetings, his position on the Board was officially removed in April 1973.

## Ralph JOHNSON

An option to be shareholder and own part of the business was one of the motivating factors that prompted Ralph to join the Harris team in late 1972. He quickly became the face of the company and an ambassador for Harris in all aspects of his life. Harris was emblazoned on his briefcase, on his car and on 'The Little Man' his boat. With similar zeal he secured support from family members including his wife, mother and stepfather, Sir F A Hoyos that stepped up in the very difficult times. Ralph, often thought of as 'Mr Harris' or even The Little Man himself, occupied the post of General Manager, Managing Director and in the mid-1990s was elected the second Chairman of the Harris Board of Directors.

## Robert JONES

It was Ralph that originally pitched the idea of investing in the local manufacturing plant to his brother-in-law Robert Jones who could not have conceived at the time that he would one day be President of the company. Intrigued by the idea and always a family supporter, Robert had purchased a substantial number of shares by January 1973. Although mainly based in Venezuela in the insurance industry, Barbadian-born Robert always kept firmly abreast of activities within the company and participated in major decisions through consultation or attendance at meetings when his schedule allowed. In October 1975 it was suggested that Robert would be an asset to the Board and should be invited to be a Director. After an amendment to the Articles of Incorporation to facilitate this, Robert was elected on 25 November 1975 and has served on the Board for the past 47 years. Throughout the years Robert has maintained a steadfast allegiance to Harris increasing his commitment to become the company's largest stakeholder and taking a leadership role as Chairman in the firm today.

## Michael MAHON

A very close friend to Andrew Phillips, a first cousin of Richard Carter and a fellow motor enthusiast, it is perhaps then of little surprise that Michael Mahon was among the reinforcements sought in 1975. No doubt he had been hearing about the progress of the ambitious enterprise for some time. An agriculturalist, Michael managed the Lion Castle estate in St Thomas when he decided to help finance the project by investing share capital. He contributed to the advancement of the company with a place on the Board of Directors until the early 1980s assisting with plans for the new factory at Wildey. By then Harris was well on its way and the company was considering diversifying into other undertakings.

## Andrew PHILLIPS

Andrew served as Chairman of the Board from the company's inception. Together with Richard he had the idea to start a local paint manufacturing operation and his years in the paint contracting business provided valuable perspective and insight. He was very active on all Harris matters despite having independent business interests. He was an effective Chairman and was proud that despite the strong characters, Harris Directors were able to come to unanimous decisions and carry them out.

## Lionel WARD, Guinea Ltd

The Wards are one of the oldest families in Barbados, their lineage dating back to the mid-17th Century in Barbados. Lionel Ward was a planter and worked on several estates before moving to Staple Grove in the 1940s and had considerable business experience through his involvement with Plantations Limited, then a large general supply store in Bridgetown. He was among the first that were approached regarding Harris, as he was well respected, a businessman of some stature and had strategic connections within the hardware industry. Mr Ward purchased shares in 1973 and later joined the Board sometimes represented by his son Bryan. Although it was not a long association it is believed that Ward's investment to support these young entrepreneurs in their bold venture was largely good hearted. Without assistance such as his, Harris would never have got out of the blocks.

## Sir Charles 'Cow' WILLIAMS, C O Williams Construction Ltd

As a major player in both local and regional highway construction and Barbados' most famous self-made magnate, Harris was keen to have C O Williams behind the new brand. Not only would the leading industrialist offer the young company a wealth of experience, business acumen and regional knowledge but also a measure of legitimacy

to the new operation. C O Williams became a Director in 1975 and he immediately added C O Williams Electrical to the list of Harris dealers. It was at Cow's Warrens headquarters that agreements were signed setting up the Dominican subsidiary and it was largely through his encouragement that Harris became heavily invested in Saint Lucia. Undeniably his ventures opened doors for Harris' road marking paint and for initiatives with other Williams' companies but over the years by far the most valued, is the association with a business leader of undisputed calibre and his immense loyalty, integrity and stalwart support.

## Board Representative - Michael 'Mickey' HUTCHINSON

In his capacity as Financial Director and the representative for C O Williams on the Harris Board, Mickey Hutchinson became a close and valued associate of the Harris team. Also a familiar cohort from the Rally Club, Mickey was well liked and respected for his financial acumen and was extremely helpful in suggesting measures that would assist the growing business. In a tragic turn of events he became gravely ill and died suddenly in 1991, leaving Harris colleagues in shock. As a mark of respect, the Harris Directors elected to erect a plaque in his honour at the Wildey retail store which was unveiled at a special memorial service on 19 August 1992.

“They contributed valuable guidance, fresh outlooks and perspectives, expertise, energy, influence and ability to spot opportunities...”

# tales of a salesman



*Michael Carter receives a gift from Ralph Johnson*

After 50 years in business there are relatively few who remember what it was like way back when. Although Michael Carter retired in 2013, he worked with Harris from 1972 for a little over 40 years. He spent most of his career in sales specializing in export markets for 15 years. Here he shares his memories and how it all got started.

At the very beginning, a career in sales was the farthest thing from Michael's mind. It all started one day when 19-year-old Michael was playing cricket with his good friend Cleveston Seale near their home at Bayland, Barbados. Cleveston had just taken up a position with Harris and encouraged Michael to come work with him. Looking back Michael can only scratch his head as to what on earth possessed him to give up a good paying job to go with a shot-in-the-dark

new company for less than half the wage but that's exactly what he did.

When he joined in 1972, young Michael formed part of a tight crew working under Production Manager St Clair Pilgrim and the team turned their hand to whatever had to be done. Michael was involved in building and setting up the first factory operation at Lowlands and in manufacturing the first paint made at Harris. "And when the place was full of paint", he remembers with a chuckle, "it was down-tools and we all had to become salesmen. I would go all about either on my bicycle or on the bus!"

Due to a demand for space, the company split operations in 1974 and although Michael continued to work primarily with the production team at Lowlands, he would

occasionally be called on to fill in for the Warehouse Manager at Bay Street if he was unwell. Harris, Michael remembers was incredibly meticulous and could spot any paint can that was missing from his warehouse in an instant. As it happened, one day he went home from work and never came back and although it was considered quite a mystery by everyone it turned out to be Michael's lucky day. He took charge of the warehouse and worked in the office under the guidance of Harris' financial administrator Linda Marshall.

From this position Michael could see that the company was really having a gruelling time making headway in the market and due to the tough conditions, none of the Harris salesmen ever seemed to last too long. With Christmas Season 1976 fast approaching, Ralph Johnson, then the General Manager, was yet again searching for a salesperson and felt Michael would be the ideal candidate as he knew all about making paint. Very wary that this could cost him his job, Michael discussed the issue at length seeking advice from Richard Carter, Linda Marshall and his family and on Monday morning he entered Ralph's office with his decision in hand. Before he could refuse Ralph immediately announced that he had told the Directors of the new appointment and that he had full faith that he would do a wonderful job. Michael was so bowled over he embraced the opportunity and resolved to give it his best.

There was no need to worry as Michael turned out to be an excellent salesman who had the drive to succeed, a good understanding of paint and an easy way with people. They had to fight hard to get into retail stores and win a place on the shelf. One of their biggest breakthroughs was getting trade into Plantations (a very established hardware and general store at the time) from Mr Proverbs. With outlets at Broad Street, Bay Street and Speightstown it was a tremendous opportunity for Harris. He remembers they were lean and hungry and were offering unparalleled service and

business terms. As they won some measure of success, Harris was able to do even more. "We always had very close relationships with our retailers and there were some very small emerging community hardware stores at the time and we were even able to offer them credit in order to help them develop their businesses. These are today established business houses who are noted in their field," reflects Michael.

The company's record to date notwithstanding, Michael remembers the nay-sayers and admits there was a good bit of trash talk in the early days but slowly as the years went by and Harris not only persevered but started to gain momentum, the critics fell silent. Over the years he has

developed his own philosophy. "I'm not into bashing other people's products. It's not about that. It's about what my product can do for the customer. That is what will convince the customer to use your product" says Michael, and he believes that this customer focus has been key to Harris and his career.

The ebullient Michael had two great passions – people and football. Due to his involvement, Harris became the principal sponsor of Everton Football Club which was based in the Garrison and Bayland districts and had a strong rivalry with Notre-Dame, New South Wales and Beverley Hills clubs. Many Harris employees came from Everton or ended up playing for them and football

became a major uniting force for the company. As a young upcoming amateur team it demonstrated to local communities that the Little Man was ready to back their own and was tough enough to take on the competition.

Appointed Export Manager in 1998, Michael spent the latter part of his career responsible for sales in all territories outside of Barbados travelling extensively up and down the Caribbean promoting Harris Paints from St Kitts to St George's and Rodney Bay to Roseau.

He married Harris Receptionist Cita Carter in 1987, where she continues to work today.



*(L-R) Hon Harold Bernard 'Bree' St John, Minister of Trade and Industry; Cleveston Seale, Michael Carter, Harris Dealer Lance Bynoe of Home Centre, Whitepark Road and Ralph Johnson celebrating at Harris 10th anniversary event in 1982*



**1980s**

**full**

**throttle**



# headway at home

| “If everything seems under control,  
you’re just not going fast enough.”

Mario Andretti, Champion Racing Driver

Harris Paints had found its footing by the end of the 1970s and in the next decade the company focused on prioritizing technological support for products, which led to new innovations and the development of new manufacturing initiatives. This was also partly a strategic response to the changing trade and political environment in the Caribbean which increasingly sought to shut out competition in favour of locally produced and foreign exchange earning products.

Despite an economic decline in the early 1980s, Harris assertively engaged in new endeavours and diversified. In the coming years, Harris would expand their product range and invest heavily in research and development that would allow them to introduce new products from their own home laboratory facilities. In addition, they added new manufacturing operations that included a canning plant and a nail, wire and fencing facility. They expanded into automotive products as well as providing marine and industrial paints and furniture finishes. Heartened by results from the Dominica factory they were actively looking for new opportunities to increase their stakeholding in the OECS.

With a no-holds-barred approach Harris proactively pursued every opportunity to grow their share of the market in Barbados and throughout the Caribbean, establishing the company as a household name and positioning the company as a total solutions provider.

On the home front the 1980s got off to a great start. For years Harris had tried to land an agreement with A S Bryden Ltd, one of the largest agencies in Barbados with

ties throughout the region and their efforts finally paid off. This was a significant coup for the young paint company that struggled to establish itself in the local market. For several years Bryden had been the agent for an international brand of paint and the new deal with Harris not only conveyed a major vote of confidence in the local product to the market but, at the same time, it effectively eliminated a competitor. The alliance between the two companies was an important step in gaining and consolidating the presence of the Harris brand in leading retailers of the day such as Plantations and Manning, Wilkinson and Challenor. Over the years their collaborative relationship grew with Brydens taking a stake in the company, ably represented by Frank Edghill who took an active role in advising the company and was particularly knowledgeable about conditions in other territories outside of Barbados.

Harris made the most of cooperative deals wherever possible if it could serve to strengthen the company’s operations. For a period, Harris even reached an agreement with Sissons, the Trinidad-based competitor to manufacture their products under license to be sold in Barbados. This might seem counter intuitive but it offered a number of benefits, providing extra income and helping to reduce factory costs due to increased through-put. It also gave Harris some leverage in controlling competitive prices. The arrangement only lasted for two or three years before the company decided to open their own plant which turned out to be a short-lived venture.

As the company gained ground with retailers and contractors, Harris also

invested more and more heavily in research and development activities to ensure the company offered top quality and cutting-edge products. Although Harris was actively exploring new areas of interest it by no means intended to relax its grasp on the decorative paints market. In fact, it was during these years that Harris developed a critical relationship with a Dutch chemist who agreed to work alongside the Harris team as a consultant, to build local capacity and improve testing techniques. Harris celebrated their 15th anniversary in 1987 with the opening of an advanced new laboratory. By the end of the decade the company had added an economy line (Harris Boss) to their product range, a revolutionary new Roofing Compound that was a first in the region and had laid the groundwork for a host of new product developments to come.



1982 - Ralph Johnson in discussion with Hon JMGM “Tom” Adams, Barbados Prime Minister (1976-1985), at Harris Paints’ 10th Anniversary function.

# the canning plant



*Canning plant. Production of paint tins in progress*

Aside from raw materials Harris needed to procure paint tins in which to can the manufactured paints. This was carried out locally by Roberts Manufacturing throughout the 1970s. However, in the late part of the decade can costs were up 20%, there were intermittent supply problems and this led Harris to investigate the alternatives.

The Directors felt that if they could raise the necessary funds to acquire the equipment, an initial stock of tin plate estimated at BBD 100 000 and reforming and seaming machinery, they should be able to set up their own operation and considerably reduce expenses. So almost before the paint was

even dry on the new factory at Wildey, Harris was back at the Bank with another bold proposal for financing to acquire the necessary equipment and materials to make their own cans in-house.

The Canning Plant was set up in 1980-81 and produced cans that were then sold for a very small margin to the paint side of the business. Production demands grew by leaps and bounds in the next 10 years as sales increased and the product range was expanded. As the company followed new avenues in automotive, expanded their laboratory testing facilities and added a Polyfilla manufacturing plant in 1988, space

became seriously constrained. In November 1989 it was reported that production of the canning plant was being stifled due to the limited warehousing capacity which could store just one week's supply of cans. This was a precarious and disconcerting situation as a simple short-term machinery failure could have a serious and almost immediate effect on the supply of paint.

Fortunately, within the next year a space previously leased to an air-conditioning outfit (Gulf Stream) to help pay back the outstanding loans for the new factory, was vacated and the canning plant moved to the first floor of the building they previously occupied.

For much of the 1990s, Harris continued to service their own needs for cans on their rather basic equipment. However, internationally, plastic pails were becoming a viable alternative; they were increasingly more affordable; they were well suited to the environment as they were not subject to rust and unlike metal cans, the material was resistant to dents and scratches. Plastic could not answer all their needs though as it would be degraded by solvents and therefore was unsuitable for oils. As the company developed, increased production quantities presented opportunities for economies of scale that were best met by international specialists therefore reducing overheads and increasing efficiency. The decision was taken to exit in favor of outsourcing packaging supplies.



# Harris Nail & Wire Works Limited

As Harris was growing it looked for new ways to penetrate the market by venturing into related hardware categories and The Barbados Nail Company Limited, a modest nail and wire operation based in Bridgetown, caught the attention of Andrew Phillips. With the consent of the other Directors, they bought it as a going concern in 1981 from Alleyne Arthur & Company Limited. The operation had been at a virtual standstill but there was some basic machinery albeit a bit on the worn side and Harris was able to negotiate what was considered a bargain price. The new division was guided largely by Andrew and later David Tindale and produced nails, wire and fencing for both the local market and for export to the OECS.

It is important to remember that at the start the government of Barbados was very keen to develop manufacturing businesses that would conserve foreign exchange and build employment. The market was still quite strictly controlled against imports and chain-link fencing was a fairly new product with no other manufacturers locally and few to speak of within the Caribbean.

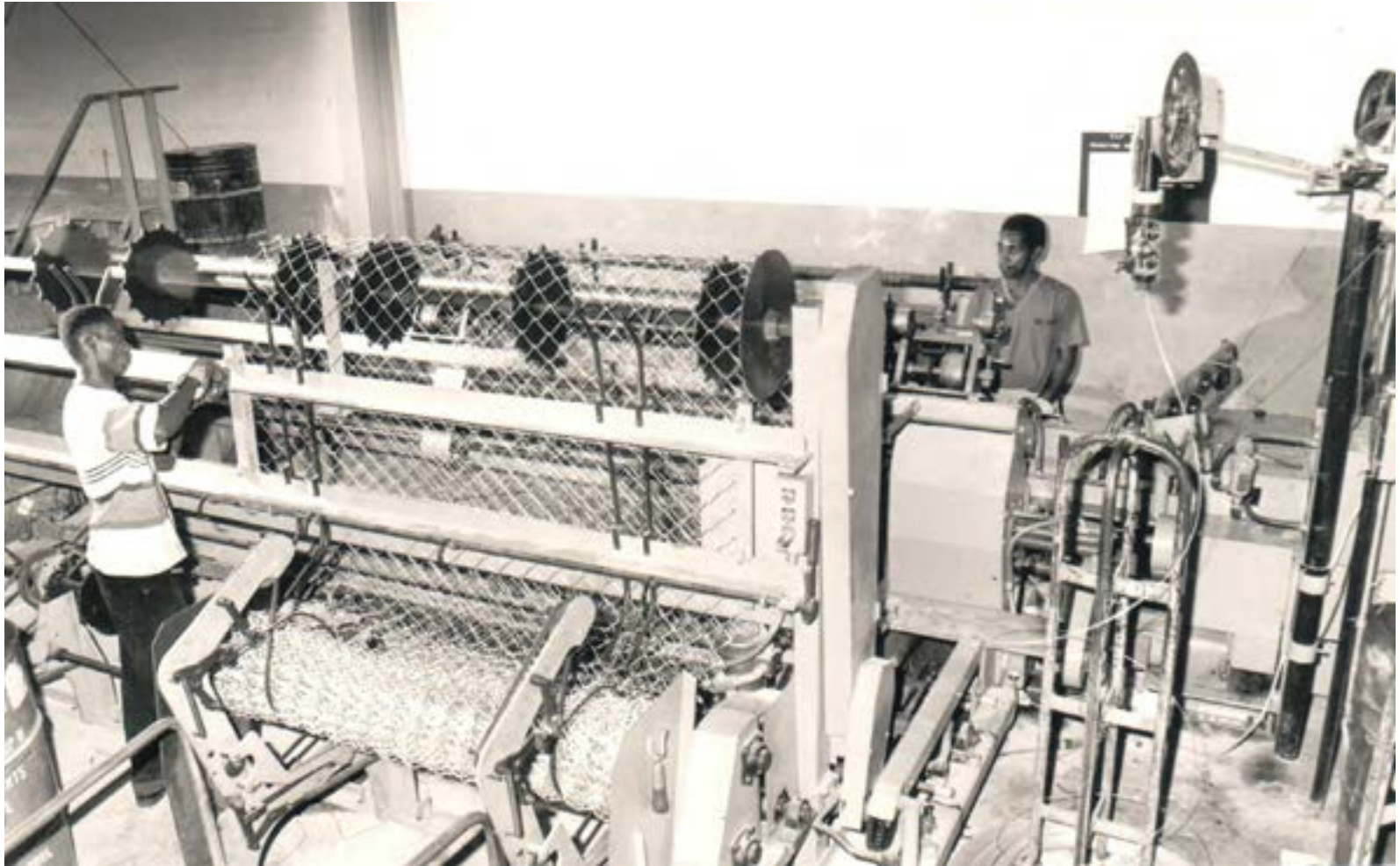
The equipment was moved to the Wildey location and was set up adjacent to Harris' factory on Lot 13, where the Automotive Art tyre change facility is currently located. At its peak, Harris Nail & Wire Works Limited as it was known, had about 10-12 employees that operated large, loud machines to manufacture barbed wire and fencing and another to hammer the heads on nails. It produced plain iron nails and galvanized nails for better rust resistance. However, the basic galvanizing process used produced tough conditions. It involved working in front of a hot furnace

where the nails were tumbled in chemical, zinc ammonium chloride, for a period at very high temperatures. To relieve some of the heat and fumes released, a chimney was installed but there were still complaints from neighbours. This then forced Harris to run the galvanizing process only at night, principally between 6-11 pm. On top of this, the operation struggled to achieve the smooth high quality galvanized finish that they desired.

Over time, market restrictions were eased and more and more nails were being imported from other regions and Trinidad in particular. When in 1988 Jamaica was hit by hurricane Gilbert that passed directly over the island, the nail operation rebounded somewhat, filling empty containers and shipping nails to the north Caribbean. In spite of this, the writing was on the wall. The principals were forced to concede that despite a level of protection, it was cheaper to import the nails than to make them which was quite a disappointment. The nail operation was closed and Harris determined to find a buyer for the stock and equipment in the early 1990s.

Harris continued to produce fencing which showed promise, adding a new Bergandi twin-spiraling machine with compactor (capable of weaving wire at twice the speed previously achieved) thus expanding production capability. Different types of fencing were manufactured including galvanized and PVC coated chain-link which was sold locally, mainly through Andrew Phillips' company, Fencing and Industrial Coatings Limited (FICL). The business performed moderately well but suffered a severe blow when Andrew Phillips died suddenly in 1996.





There was some debate and difference of opinion regarding the future of the division which was now known as Harris Fencing. In truth Harris' core business, the paint division had grown so much in the last decade, it was now an exceedingly more complex and demanding business. It was felt that whatever time was spent dealing with the wire fencing, was time that they could put to better use in the paint company. In 2002 the Board took the decision to sell. The equipment was bought by Carlos Duncan, who had been working at Harris dealing with commercial fencing contracts among other things, to establish his own private fencing business.



# other new enterprises

During the mid-1980s the Government of Barbados implemented an import substitution strategy which attempted to close the doors on international imports providing that there was a locally manufactured alternative. This prompted Harris to take a closer look at opportunities to grow the business by adding new product categories and expand into new segments of the local market. To achieve this Harris needed to secure licensing deals and technological agreements to support any additional manufacturing ventures. The result was the company almost simultaneously embarked in a number of different directions at once.



*Blazin' in Harris colours! Sponsorship of Barbadian rally driver, Richard Roett's, 2500cc 12 valve 6cyl Triumph Vitesse, announced Harris' arrival on the automotive scene*

## Automotive

Having borrowed heavily to finance the new factory in Wildey and to invest in the Dominica plant, Harris was already in search of increased revenues and had ventured into the highly specialized automotive sector by 1983 with a UK company called Valentine. Essentially the bases were imported and then tinted in-house according to the supplied formulas. However, the arrangement had its limitations and Harris started to look into alternative directions that would carry them forward and strengthen their position in the sector. Intensive efforts were made over a considerable time to negotiate and secure a long-term alliance which, in the end, yielded no results. In the meantime, Harris capitalized on the market situation and was now making good quality putty, body fillers and re-surfacers and in 1989 added a dedicated automotive plant. Serendipity played a part when Harris was

approached shortly thereafter by two young entrepreneurs and automotive specialists armed with a bold plan and big brand. After the many frustrating months that had seemingly ended in nought, Harris now surprisingly quickly struck a 50:50 deal to merge their automotive division with a new company Automotive Art, in a move that would revolutionize the automotive industry in the island.

## Furniture Finishes

Alongside the efforts in the automotive arena which relied on nitro-cellulose technology, Harris saw an opportunity to take advantage of the synergies to tap into the local furniture trade, which was a market that was still strong at that time.

With the support of companies such as the distinguished UK based F T Morrell, Harris was able to manufacture and introduce a range of specialist products that included Sand & Sealer, Gloss Lacquer and related products such as Lacquer Thinners. The company aggressively marketed to niche operations throughout Barbados from large manufacturers to small artisanal outfits with great success. To a large degree the industry in Barbados was dependent on exports to Trinidad; hard hit by a downturn in oil prices in 1982, Trinidad slumped into recession through 1987 and implemented a strict import regulation scheme which effectively caused the collapse of the sector in Barbados.

## Marine

In truth, enthusiastic support to participate in the Marine sector came more from a love of yachting and boats in general than from a pure business perspective. With the heavy involvement of Managing Director, Ralph Johnson and General Manager, David Tindale, in sailing circles, the provision of coatings for the fishing industry throughout the islands seemed a natural fit. Through collaborative agreements Harris was able to introduce first Shrimp Boat formulas such as anti-fouling marine paints for steel, aluminium, fibre glass and wooden hull boats expanding the range to include other treatments such as Fibre Glass Primer and Deck Coatings. In 1985 Harris was further appointed by American marine specialist Pettit Paints as their distributor for the Caribbean area from Tortola to Trinidad, liaising with point person for Pettit, Ben Winter.

Contrary to popular wisdom, Ralph managed to successfully blend business and pleasure to gain maximum leverage for the Harris brand in his own inimitable style. His first small sail boat The Little Man fearlessly took on much larger, sleeker vessels on the local racing scene – an activity that underscored Harris' bold entry as the underdog in the local marketplace. A Harris marine paint press advertisement of the time declared: "It's not the size of the man... It's what's in the can!" It wasn't long before he sought a new, leaner, meaner machine and in another bold manoeuvre he commissioned his friend, boat-builder and champion sailor, Andrew Burke to construct a vessel for him that would be 100% Bajan. As if this was not enough, no sooner than it was built,



*Harris shows off newly painted hull in marine coatings at Barbados Yacht Club*

*Bruggadung* set course on a cross-Atlantic race capturing attention across the nation.

These exploits arguably contributed to the positive image of the company and emphasized some of its key attributes but in reality, the high-end yacht market in Barbados, which could afford the exceptional quality of paints carried by Harris, was almost infinitesimal and yachtsmen in marinas around the Caribbean had access to low-cost alternatives. The fishing industry in the territories was not

much more receptive as they generally were operating on tight budgets and looked to take advantage of cheap imports wherever possible or even cut corners by using non-marine substitutions. While marine initiatives did not account for large revenues, Harris found a way to get their money's worth particularly in the 1980s and it has remained important to represent the sector with a range of optimum quality products.

## Textured Finish

As early as 1978 Harris was already working on a formulation for a decorative textured finish; this was growing increasingly popular on the local market. The finish, made with limestone or coral dust available in Barbados, could be applied to virtually any surface transforming the appearance to a sophisticated coral stone construction (a look that was generally beyond the budget of the average person) lending to its rise in popularity. Unlike paint which requires careful surface preparation to ensure smoothness, textured finish easily covers imperfections and still delivers a high-quality result. At the time, the market was dominated by one primary manufacturer and true to their aggressive strategy, Harris Troweltex was designed to tackle the competition. Throughout the 1980s the product fared well and grew a loyal fan base although, with so many other ventures and new products being added to the Harris portfolio, marketing dollars were tight and it probably did not receive the attention it deserved. It has remained a key product in the Harris architecture and has gradually increased in popularity across other island markets.

## Polyfilla

Anticipating the imminent closure of the market for wall filler, Harris had opened negotiations by January 1986 with the principals of Polyfilla, which was the world's leading brand. The following month Harris received an endorsement from the local agents Atwell, Dalgliesh & Co Ltd who had distributed the product in Barbados for the past 30 years and now proposed Harris as their manufacturer of choice in a letter written by their founder Kenneth Tucker. As a result of their continued efforts a successful deal was reached with Polycell's General Manager, John Newens and executive, John Dewell who were extremely helpful in assisting Harris to get a manufacturing plant established.

Overseeing the operation was General Manager, David Tindale who was responsible for setting up the facility and meeting the exacting quality control standards laid down by Polycell. The plant was officially opened on 21 April 1988 and showcased BBD 120 000 in plant machinery which could mix 3 670lbs (1 668kgs) of Polyfilla in less

than 30 minutes and the packaging system could pack 16 one-pound boxes (450g) a minute. At full capacity (based on an eight-hour working shift) it was estimated that the plant could produce over 600 000lbs (272 727kgs) of product per year. It was another first for Harris who was tremendously proud to extend their product lines, take on new employees and locally produce an internationally renowned brand.

Despite the high level of optimism, the venture was relatively short-lived and was wound up in the mid-1990s. Within this time frame new pre-mixed products rose significantly in popularity, reducing the demand for powdered product which impacted the efficiency of the plant. In the meantime, Harris had also extended operations in other areas which continued to stretch financial and management resources and caused the company to undertake some level of rationalization.



*1988 Polyfilla plant opening*



*Chairman Andrew Phillips (middle) and representative for C O Williams, Mickey Hutchinson (right) discuss the operation with Polycell executive*

# regional developments

Despite the establishment of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) in 1973, the 1980s were characterized by complex and inharmonious trade policies throughout the region. The restrictive environment consisted of import duties, stamp duties and consumption taxes even at times on goods originating from within the region plus wide-scale use of other non-tariff barriers such as licensing schemes. These factors were further compounded by exchange and capital controls. This amounted to a significant administrative and bureaucratic burden. While these difficulties probably did deter international companies from doing business in the region it also made the trading climate challenging for regional operators.

Harris, of course, had already made a start with its small operation in Dominica in 1978. However just one year after opening the new plant at Fond Cole, Dominica suffered a direct and devastating hit by Hurricane David. The plant was relatively lucky but before year end there was further disquieting news as the Patrick John government, under whose auspices Harris had been established, collapsed. Fortunately, through the stewardship of Managing Director, Ninian Marie, Harris found a firm friend in new Dominican Premier, Hon Eugenia Charles, now Dame, who saw the potential the Harris factory provided for future employment in the island and she steadfastly championed the growth of Harris and its operation-base in Dominica. Owing to this relationship, Harris was able to successfully lobby the government for concessions to promote trade and business activity and ultimately resulted in a commitment from Harris to go forward with

plans to build a modern, factory complex at Canefield, just outside the capital. The facility and pièce de résistance was opened in 1987 and is still the base for operations today.

It was not always a smooth road though, especially in the early years. Some islands felt that CARICOM favoured the agendas of the larger countries in the community and in an effort to even the playing field, seven countries including Dominica joined forces in June 1981 to create the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a trade sub-region within CARICOM. Within the OECS, arrangements were made to ascribe certain established manufacturing sectors as the sole domain of certain islands. Almost immediately this caused a conflict as there were competing paint operations within the group; the Antigua operation Leewinds and Harris Dominica came to loggerheads. For a period, exports became bogged down in red-tape and political negotiations took some time as there were other serious regional events in play, namely the growing instability in Grenada which culminated in the execution of deposed Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and the so called 'US invasion'. When headway was made regarding trading arrangements there was a fierce battle for territory. The limitations of inter-island shipping services and the need for continued lobbying for propitious trade conditions contributed to the myriad of difficulties.

But perseverance won through. By 1985 Harris Dominica was on track for a 50% increase in sales over the previous year. The very connected Ninian Marie, Harris Directors and marketing man Michael Carter,



“So we also want to say thanks for coming to Dominica; thanks for sticking it out in spite of the stumbling blocks and hard areas. Thanks for the employment you have provided; thanks for the assistance you have given in other areas and thanks for inviting us to celebrate with you. We are very glad to be here because we are proud of what you have achieved.”

Hon Dame Eugenia Charles, Prime Minister  
Address at Harris Paints' 15th Anniversary Celebrations,  
10 September 1993, Dominica

worked unrelentingly to establish Harris in the region. By the end of the decade Dominica had proved to be a most valuable investment and Harris was successfully selling decorative paints; automotive, marine and industrial coatings as well as furniture finishes and nails and wire throughout the OECS. What is more, the company was already considering strategies to increase volumes by establishing plants in other territories; they had a deal on the table in Saint Lucia and were looking with interest for a suitable opportunity to enter Guyana.



*Andrew's son Christopher, helps out*



*Preparing the boat*



## Little Man takes to the high seas

In one of his more flamboyant exploits Managing Director and avid yachting enthusiast Ralph Johnson undertook a captivating adventure in late 1987. As the sole local entrant in an international cross Atlantic yacht race *Bruggadung's* participation shone a spotlight on Barbados, ignited national pride and demonstrated the belief that "The Little Man" was more than a match for world class competition.

The race was conceived by Jimmy Cornell, a yachtsman and writer for *Yachting World Magazine* and was known as the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC). Some 197 boats from 26 countries participated in the event that started in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria and would finish in Barbados, after completing a 2637 mile (4 244km) Atlantic crossing.



*Wendy Del Castilho presents The Little Man mascot to Captain Ralph, while David Tindale (centre) and colleagues look on*



Preparing to launch. Careenage, Bridgetown



Above Christopher Burke admires his father's craftsmanship,  
Right: Champion Sailor and Shipwright, Andrew Burke



What was even more remarkable about the Barbadian entry was that the 32-foot (10m) *Bruggadung* was a 100% locally made craft. It was commissioned by Johnson in 1984 and was designed and built on the lot at Harris Paints by friend and distinguished local yachtsman Andrew Burke, who also undertook the Atlantic voyage serving as tactician. Before his departure to Gran Canaria, Ralph was treated to a *bon voyage* send off by staff members who presented him with a figure of The Little Man. This he promised would serve as the yacht's mascot on the journey ahead. The other crewmen that would join him were Arthur Emptage (navigator), Shane Atwell, Clint Brooks, Jim Hughes, Paul Johnson and Derek Johnson.

On Wednesday 25 November at 2pm *Bruggadung* led the other 50 boats in their class out of Las Palmas Harbour, with sails set for Barbados and flying a colourful spinnaker emblazoned with the broken trident. They started with light conditions and even though winds picked up to 15–20 knots as they ventured deeper into the ocean, they experienced few major difficulties with the exception of a couple of broken halliards and torn sails which they repaired on board.



Andrew Burke shows hull under construction





*Mount Gay gives the Bruggadung crew a royal welcome*

Meanwhile excitement was mounting back home, as Barbadians followed the race news carried in several local media reports and fans eagerly anticipated their position. On Saturday 13 December at 3.37am, *Bruggadung* became the second finisher (after Canadian trimaran *Rusty Pelican*) after just 16 days, 17 hours and 36 seconds at sea (a record they would hold for very many years to come) and was awarded 'World Cruising Line Honours' – Trophy Class E (30-36ft). The jubilant crew were welcomed home by a contingent of boats and throngs of well-wishers.

Without a doubt the adventure, which took place shortly after Harris' 15th anniversary celebrations, was a huge success capturing hearts at home and proving that a small team, from a small island could think big and compete with larger competitors, a metaphor that has served Harris well for decades.



*Ralph Johnson celebrates his record performance with a bottle of bubbly*

## SUNRISE by Jove

*“Ye mariners in Bimshire bred,  
Sail on, sail on, your sails outspread,  
Despite the gusty winds that blow!  
We must applaud this daring crew  
Of young Buhbayjans, brave and true,  
Who hope the world's best to outdo,  
And bring the islands's gold and blue  
To victory. Then feasts shall flow!  
Despite the rain clouds overhead,  
Bruggadung is breezing ahead!”*

Sunday Sun, 6 December 1987: Reprinted courtesy  
of Nation Publishing Co Ltd



*Bruggadung crew members in high spirits. (L-R) Ralph Johnson, Arthur Emptage (glasses), Paul Johnson and Derek Johnson; Hon Minister Wes Hall (centre); Clint Brooks (partially hidden)*



*Captain Ralph receives a congratulatory case of Mount Gay Rum from Peter Marshall (far right). Crew members (L-R) Clint Brooks, Jim Hughes and Paul Johnson look on in anticipation*

# the annual Harris Paints Regatta

Inaugurated in 1983, Harris has been delighted to sponsor a yacht race every June at the Barbados Yacht Club, attracting all classes of boats in closely fought competition with often colourful post-race celebrations. It includes a two-day Junior Regatta during which young sailors test their mettle encouraging skills such as independence, decision making, teamwork and enjoyment and respect for the marine environment.



*Pictures from the June 2012 Harris Paints Regatta (Photos by Peter Marshall)*

2018 skipper Ralph Johnson and crew including staff members for left Fred Hughes and Dabian Elliot (fourth from right)



Scenes from The Harris Paints Junior Dinghy Regatta 2021 (Photos by Peter Marshall)



**1990s**  
**higher**  
**standards**



“The healthiest competition occurs when average people win by putting in above average effort.”

Colin Powell

Fast approaching nearly 20 years of operation Harris had achieved much of what it had set out to accomplish. The brand had a strong presence in the Barbados market in decorative paints and was a growing player in the region through mainly export trade from the Dominica factory and a small joint marketing enterprise in Saint Lucia known as Colour World of Paints. In addition to the nail and wire operation, the company was now producing powder-blended building products and had a small stake in the furniture finishes and automotive markets. Harris continued on a course to broaden their manufacturing enterprise, expand their product offering and heighten their level of quality and service which they would do through the course of the next decade.

The company faced challenging conditions. Barbados was beset with a hard-hitting recession in the early 1990s which saw unemployment leap to levels, reportedly, of 25%. In a subsequent agreement with the

IMF, Barbados imposed stringent austerity measures and agreed to protocols to control wages and prices. A further feature of the IMF fiscal measures implemented within the region was the promotion of competition through an open market economy. This meant local manufacturers would receive increasingly little protection from foreign-produced goods that often could be made at a lower cost.

In response to this environment, Harris took an aggressive position and fought ever harder to provide Caribbean customers with the highest quality paint products and latest innovations by investing heavily in technology, research and development. In an attempt to reduce escalating raw material costs Harris purchased a 50% share in a US chemical supply company. Harris expanded into new market segments and established a phenomenally successful automotive joint-enterprise and a building chemicals

division. Lastly, with a rebounding economy, the company took several steps to consolidate and strengthen their position in the OECS. While Harris made some outstanding achievements during this decade, they also experienced bitter losses on both a personal and professional level.

## Decorative Paint Revolution

There are many stakeholders that contribute opinions as to what trends will be vital to the future and these include advertising executives and dealers as well as the opinions of those that play a day-to-day role in the company and keep an eye on trade magazines and shows. In an advertising pitch in 1990 the prevailing opinion was that while Harris was a major contender in the quality end of the market in Barbados, consumers on the whole, were still resistant to the idea that a local brand could truly match internationally known labels. These were prejudices the company had been dealing with from the beginning and with the reduction of trade barriers more competitors were likely to enter the market. It was clear that for Harris to capture further market share it was of ultimate importance to be assertive, to identify trends, deliver the best and latest innovations and be seen as leaders in the market. Throughout the 1990s a number of strategies to accomplish these goals took shape.

The Harris Group...



**HARRIS • Feb**  
BUILDING PRODUCTS

**HF**  
**HARRIS**  
**FENCING**

**HARRIS**  
AUTOMOTIVE

## 21 Years Old Today!

Now is our time to celebrate 21 years of bringing you Harris Products. The Harris Group began with just offering paint, but has grown...

... And now, Harris offers the region a wide range of quality products.

The relationship with our many loyal customers has also grown... and thanks to them, over the years Harris has become the proud household name it is today. Because whether you come to us for Fencing, Feb products, Automotive supplies or just one of our many paints, you know when you buy Harris, you buy the very best.

The Harris Group - keeping our commitment to you.

**HARRIS PAINTS BARBADOS LIMITED**

Harris Complex Widey,

St. Michael, Barbados.

Tel: (809) 429-4840 Fax (809) 436-9544

*Keeping our Commitment to you.*



# new product innovations

From as early as 1986 Harris had pounced on an opportunity to get some top level technological assistance from a recently retired scientist from Europe who was enticed to exchange the biting winters for the warm weather of Barbados. He was mandated to set up a new advanced laboratory and to review the company's testing and quality assurance procedures in line with international best practices and to build capacity within the department. Dr Jaap as he was known, worked with Harris in close liaison with in-house Technical Supervisor, Charles Kirton until 1999 and together they implemented improvements for the production of consistent quality standards.

On the world stage environmental issues gained significant momentum in the 1970s. In the US the decade saw the establishment of the National Environmental Policy Act and the Environmental Protection Agency; the Clean Air Act; the founding of Earth Day and many other similar measures. During the next 15-20 years environmentalism moved into the mainstream. While "going green" was still a catch phrase in the islands, the world's leading paint manufacturers and chemical industries were certainly taking notice and endeavoured to provide alternative options to high performance "oil" paints that often contained toxic ingredients. In his previous position Dr Jaap, who was an emulsion specialist, worked specifically on new technological formulations, part of a revolution in the paint industry, to produce cleaner, safer and healthier products. Now, together with Charles Kirton and the Harris technical department staff, Harris embraced the new technology, developed and introduced several ground-breaking, never-before-seen products to the Caribbean.

Remember, up until this time the paint

industry really had not changed a great deal. Generations of painters knew that emulsion paints were used for walls and that for a tough, high shine protective surface on wood and metal, an "oil-based" or alkyd paint was required. The new Harris products turned that thinking on its head. Over a period of a few years Harris engineered and was first to market remarkable innovations formulated in their own labs, specifically with the Caribbean environment in mind. These included water-based floor paints, varnishes and enamels that were now cleaner, greener and easier to use than ever before, as brushes could simply be rinsed with water.

However sensational, some advances had their drawbacks. In 1991 in response to the high consumer appeal of thicker paints, Harris launched a new thixotropic 'non-drip' premium emulsion known as Durashield. Its unique formulation lent a buttery consistency in the can (so thick that it could be turned upside down without spilling out) yet produced a smooth flowing paint on application. The promotional campaign featured a can of Durashield being upended over a man's head (actually the Technical Assistant, Bryron Hunte). The product elicited an immediate and overwhelming response and was the talk of the town. Inevitably some problems occurred when customers took to watering down the paint in order to 'stretch' it and were disappointed when they did not achieve the same results.

The anecdote serves to demonstrate the importance of providing education especially with new innovation. This became a key cornerstone of the Harris strategy and was used to influence perceptions of the brand, to promote the quality through product knowledge, build relationships and ultimately sales. The technical team attended trade

shows such as Barbados Manufacturers' Exhibition (BMEX) and spearheaded an exceptional programme of consumer training seminars across the region targeting key customers such as dealers, architects, contractors and construction professionals. The effort was highly effective and very well received and what is more, few, if any paint companies could claim a similar investment or service at this time.

From a marketing perspective, initiatives emphasized the sophisticated, scientific and technological aspect of the brand. This rationale was behind periodic pointers in the press 'Top Tips From Dr Jaap' and a major campaign 'Creating Higher Standards in the Caribbean' by ad agency McCann-Erickson, which positioned Harris as the authority in paint matters. The success of both Harris' innovations and their ability to leverage them helped change public perceptions and move the company to number one.



Dr Jaap

# colour creations

On top of the advances that were made in developing new products, Harris was also keeping a sharp eye on other trends in the industry that could set them apart from their competitors. To a large extent the company was built on quality and value for money but they realized the truly inspirational aspect of paint, especially in the DIY market, was colour. What Harris offered met expectations and the industry standards of the day, a range of about 25 versatile shades chosen from a colour card. Essentially choice was relatively limited and did not truly offer much opportunity for personalization. When the company learned of a computerized paint system that was capable of producing a huge array of paint colours mixed in minutes on demand and in store they recognized an exciting prospect to deliver superlative service.

It was a huge risk not only to buy the system but it would mean a fundamental change to the business. The system comprised of a machine that could accurately analyse a colour sample (a colour card, a swatch of material etc) and would generate a formula which was then used to tint a paint base. Harris would not only have to provide the bases and tinting components to retailers but conduct a substantial amount of training in the use of the equipment to get good results. And how would customers react? Would they be wowed or overwhelmed? Would they welcome a world of new choices at their fingertips or prefer to continue with what had worked for generations.

With next to no market research Harris took the plunge, greatly energized by the idea of bringing customers a new level of service, convenience and choice that had never before been experienced in the Caribbean. The new system which became known as Harris Colour Creations was revealed in 1994 for the first

time and allowed customers to choose from a range of literally hundreds of colours.

In hindsight, Colour Creations was quite a basic system and even though it was quickly upgraded, technology developed so rapidly that by the end of the decade Harris was searching for a more sophisticated system in its ceaseless quest to stay ahead of competitors. In Barbados, perhaps the most conservative of markets, consumers on the whole were slow to adopt the new practices but at the time it was, without dispute, the latest and greatest innovation in colour and definitely played a significant part in the rising profile of the company.



*Prime Minister, Hon Owen Arthur visits Harris Colour Creations at BME, 1996*

# growing new divisions

At the very beginning of the 1990s Harris executives were faced with two major opportunities which would lead them to develop their efforts to diversify into related categories, namely the automotive and building product sectors.

Just a few years after the opening of their new powder-blending Polyfilla facility, Harris executives learned of the sale of a manufacturing operation for the Feb line of products from a retiring local operator. Andrew Phillips gave an overview of the Feb line to the Board at their meeting of 14 August 1989 which was met by support from Ralph Johnson, who felt this would be a high growth area. A period of negotiation followed with Henry Viera who ran Caribbean Chemical Industries and was concluded in April 1990. In the ensuing deal Harris acquired the manufacturing license (issued by the UK parent company) and purchased the market value of the equipment and product in stock to be relocated to the Harris site.

At much the same time Harris was setting up its newly formed Automotive and Technical Coatings Division to manufacture automotive paints and products in partnership with UK company, Valentine. It had taken years of effort to achieve this and even in its fairly early stages Harris was producing good quality products that met with modest success. At this time most automotive paints were made from durable acrylic resin enamels which required seemingly endless polishing but were relatively affordable. However a new colour system was developed in the 1970s known as Basecoat and Clearcoat that delivered a superlative gloss finish which was durable even when exposed to a wide range of temperatures and had excellent protective



*Architectural, marine and wood coatings on display at BMEX 1999*

properties against rust. The system was slow to catch on and scarcely used initially due to the exceptionally high costs but as these gradually fell, the superiority of the system and its eventual wide scale adoption became inevitable. In a fortuitous turn of events, Harris was approached by two young entrepreneurs who were keen to bring this technology to Barbados and by combining forces, the joint venture went on to be a superlative investment for Harris and a revolution in the automotive retail business in the region.

# absolutely feb-ulous!

The acquisition of Feb marked a concerted strategy by Harris to diversify into related categories. In the company's view this could prove advantageous on two levels: by providing additional income from a new segment of the market and by providing an avenue through which Harris personnel could build relationships earlier in the construction phase and therefore influence purchasing decisions, for example, of paint. Effectively the move would better situate Harris to find out what was needed, to offer solutions and promote the decorative coatings too. By encouraging the use of building chemicals to achieve better surfaces this would also have a beneficial impact on the application results of the paint. It seemed like a win-win situation.

As is often the case, the relocation of the plant and setting up of production facilities to manufacture, turned out to be a much bigger and more expensive job than was originally foreseen. The company was able to renegotiate the terms of the licensing agreement with the Feb parent company but this meant Harris paid additional franchise fees and a \$12 000 registration fee to the government in order to conclude these arrangements. Current licenses for fiscal incentives were due to expire so new applications had to be processed in order that they could take advantage of duty-free concessions on raw materials. In the end, take over costs were probably double the figure of what was originally estimated.

However, the plant was set up and production got underway under the guidance of Tony Gill. Fortunately, Harris was able to enlist the services of Colin Deane who had about seven or eight years prior experience with Feb products at Caribbean Chemicals and he was instrumental in launching the division. In Barbados, Andrew Phillips and his wife

Wynona, held a lavish launch party for industry professionals at his home at Lion Castle, St Thomas. And Colin was dispatched to carry out training seminars in Dominica from as early as March 1990. This was followed in 1991 by further seminars in the OECS islands.

The construction industry is conservative by nature and even by the early 1990s not many people had a high level of understanding about specialist building chemicals and what they could do to save money and enhance performance standards. For this reason, over the years training has been a key strategy used by Harris, making knowledge available to engineers, architects, contractors and all professionals in the building trade. It seems to have paid off. Today many of these products have become familiar tools and treatments such as mortar plasticizer for concrete plastering, waterproofing of pools and sealing of concrete floors are known and accepted standards.

While the division delivered a solid performance throughout the 90s and 2000s, the manufacturing environment continued to be challenging with very little protectionism and rising costs of shipping and importing raw materials. On top of that the technology behind these products was ever evolving to new levels of sophistication virtually unattainable by small scale operators. Around 2007 the decision was taken to increase efficiency by out-sourcing specialty products which Harris envisioned would be beneficial in a number of ways. It would streamline the remaining manufacturing portfolio; lower costs and increase efficiency; provide blue-chip technology and would ensure that Harris would be able to continue to deliver cutting-edge, quality solutions.

“Harris has arranged many, many seminars. So many hours have been spent, not only in Barbados but travelling throughout the Eastern Caribbean taking samples, conducting training and interacting with all levels of people in construction. We have spent many years building awareness which has led to people being more sophisticated in their building. I have no doubt that we have contributed to that improvement in sophistication.”

Colin Deane, Building Chemicals Specialist



*Top: Colin Deane, Sales Representative introduces Feb products during a seminar at Harris, seen here demonstrating (Feb) Hypruffe (a waterproofing bituminous coating, the equivalent of what is now sold as Harris Damp Seal D.P.M). Bottom Right: Front Row: Andrew Phillips, Chairman examines sample, and Wendy (Clarke) Del Castillo seated. Back row L-R: Tony Gill, Production Manager and Michael Straker, Sales Rep standing.*

# the road to Automotive Art

In the early 1980s Harris decided to explore the automotive paint industry. After all, both Chairman Andrew Phillips and Managing Director, Ralph Johnson were legendary names in car racing and rallying in Barbados and the Caribbean, having raced on many of the regional circuits. What is more, we know that people in the Caribbean love motorsport almost as much as they love cricket! It seemed then that this avenue might perhaps bear fruit.

Working in partnership with a UK company called Valentine who supplied the tints and formulas, Harris set up the various tinting systems needed and mixed and packaged the paints at their Wildey, Barbados premises. David Tindale remembers the remarkable skills demonstrated by paint-mixer Darnley Carter who in those days mixed the paint by hand. “We didn’t have the computer technology then to do it, so it was all done on scales and a lot of it had to be adjusted by eye.” The business held its own but it became increasingly clear that it was a very different business to decorative paint requiring a completely different set of quality control standards and manufacturing techniques. It was set up under a separate division named Harris Automotive and Technical Coatings. It was at this juncture that there was a rather fortuitous meeting between the principals of Harris and the young enterprising duo of Dereck Foster and Hugh Blades, who had been running the automotive department at Blades & Williams for some years. In 1990, the twosome had just struck out on their own and become competitors backed by the premium Glasurit brand of automotive paint (a subsidiary of German chemical giant BASF). Their established distribution base was very attractive to Harris plus they had buckets of energy and sharp new ideas for revolutionizing the automotive business. On

the other hand, as a new startup operation, the pair was very short of money with which to grow their operation. As Dereck recounts, “Ralph doesn’t miss an opportunity and he said that he thought we should do something together”. Harris already had manufacturing and Dereck and Hugh’s new business, Automotive Art, was all about retail, the front end. The idea was born to combine forces in a 50:50 partnership with Dereck and Hugh running the operation.

Dereck Foster, who now holds the post of Executive Chairman of Automotive Art, remembers the early days; “Harris became very important to us because we could start off with a bigger customer base. Because they were an established company with a good reputation they were able to help us get more financing and that allowed us to grow quickly”. Finding themselves caught short in a rental contract, Harris offered them a small space in their building where at one time their nail operation had been. They made a savvy manoeuvre moving immediately, four months before their lease ran out and were therefore able to transition all their customers to their new Wildey location.

Shortly after, Hugh, who was the operations arm and Dereck, who focused on business development, had moved all the equipment that was specific to automotive to their space (today the Service Centre) and took over the running of the factory. Their complementary skills and friendship were to make the pairing an enviably enduring and successful partnership. Almost immediately, in addition to the Valentine products and the top-of-the-line Glasurit brand, they started to make products under the Harris Automotive brand - key products that they could manufacture to high quality with the equipment available such as clearcoat, primer and body filler.



Within two years they were exporting their range of products to the territories in which Harris was already being sold starting with Dominica and then Saint Lucia and Guyana.

By the early 90s the world’s leading manufacturers of automotive paint industry had made revolutionary technological advances that would completely transform the industry. This technology was only available to the biggest companies, it was out there but it had not yet been introduced to the Caribbean which was perceived by some as a small market that was difficult and perhaps unable to embrace the new practices. The Automotive Art team had no such qualms. Dereck who had spent hours doing up old cars himself knew exactly what a saving the new technology would mean. Together with a brand new approach to sales, they made it their mission, with the backing of the BASF Glasurit brand, to bring this new engineering to Barbados and the Caribbean.

“When you painted a car before, you used to have to paint it, sand it, put on a coat, spray it”, remembers Dereck Foster. “You



(L-R) Hugh Blades and Dereck Foster

used to have to put on multiple coats and then when it was done painting you then had to polish it to make it shine; and to keep it shining for its life you had to keep polishing it! Generally speaking colour matching was iffy. The durability of the product was maximum five years. Plus in those days cars used to rust a lot - that doesn't happen today." Although the new products promised radically improved results with a lot less time and effort, they were about 50% more expensive. Dereck knew the old traditional sales approach wouldn't work. You had to show people what the products could do. "Imagine when you painted a car, yes it was shining but when you painted with our paint, you could see your face in it! It was like a mirror! If you had two cars next to each other, any person, could look and see there was a dramatic difference between the two. And you didn't have to polish it. So you could

paint the car and eliminate an entire day's work!"

In the first two years Dereck and his team visited nearly every body shop in Barbados to show automotive repair people how to use the products in their own environment. In this way the company developed a good bond with their customers, "they changed from seeing us as somebody that sold them paint to seeing us as someone that helped them do a good job. They could earn more; they felt more pride because this product was a whole different level of performance. They became very loyal. And the customers could see a big change. It made them look much more professional." The strategy was extended to hosting demonstrations to the public at Automotive Art, another industry first. They became so successful that after the first few, they scarcely had to advertise.

Outside of manufacturing, Automotive Art was established with its sights set firmly on retailing. To this they also brought a refreshing new approach. Before they got involved, automotive supply stores were somewhat of a dirty business.

Stores were not eye-catching; they were typically a bit grungy with paint all over the counter. They tended to carry a small selection of goods that were available only from behind the counter. Automotive Art was able to capture market share by broadening the customer base, introducing more customer friendly stores, offering educational programmes and cutting-edge products with enhanced performance. When they started in 1990 there were probably 15-20 companies selling automotive paint but the immense importance of the new technology was such that within two years there were only two.

With the new generation of technological products dominating the market, Valentine's share had declined (coincidentally it was bought out by BASF in their centenary year) and the importance of manufacturing diminished. In 1992, Doug Armstrong joined Automotive Art to head up the retail division, spearheading an exciting array of automotive accessories the like of which Barbados had not seen before. Attending several tradeshow Automotive Art was able to snag the distribution rights to the Caribbean for several lines that were as yet unrepresented. The size of the islands and the complexity of entering the markets was a barrier to many but presented a great opportunity for the young ambitious company. As the Automotive Art brand increased in strength, it was decided to re-brand the Harris Automotive products under the new label. Exports continued to strengthen and Automotive Art swept into new markets throughout the Caribbean.

Increasingly retailers were brought from around the Caribbean to their Barbados headquarters for training and when they

saw all the other things Automotive Art were doing – the tyres, wheels, batteries etc, they showed a keen interest. Out of this, Automotive Art began to franchise stores throughout the region, selling turn-key operations with mandated standard operating procedures for every business activity. Instead of just selling products, they could now sell knowledge. Approaching 2000, Harris who still held a 50% partnership in the company, was assessing possible future business strategies, the result of which could potentially have major implications for Automotive Art. Up until this time the partnership had been a smooth one. Dereck remembers fondly how he benefited from the experience of Ralph and Andrew who sat on the Automotive Art Board and were a steadying influence in the early days to his sometimes excessive exuberance! “They were brilliant directors and brilliant shareholders in that they never troubled us. Just offered advice and we made our decision for right or wrong. And once the decision was made, everyone was on board, even if they didn’t agree with it in the beginning.” He now took his concerns to the Board and it was agreed to transfer the Harris holding to the individual shareholders and in so doing the two businesses maintained their relationship and at the same time established a greater level of independence.

Today Automotive Art owns retail stores in Barbados and Saint Lucia, has a distribution center in Florida, and is a major shareholder in an Automotive Paint factory in Poland. Automotive Art Paint is sold in over 80 countries globally, including 23 franchise and distributor markets throughout the Caribbean, South and Central America.



*Automotive Art, Welches, Barbados*

“Great people build great businesses not the other way round. You have to get the right people at the right time and when they are not right, you have to recognize it and change fast. You’ve got to recruit great people. Keep them focused, keep them challenged and give them opportunities. We have done that very successfully. And those people have made us successful.”

Dereck Foster, Executive Chairman Automotive Art





*Top: Automotive Art sponsored kite at the annual Kite Flying competition held at the Garrison Savannah; Bottom Left: Automotive Art Director Andrew Phillips leading a Barbados Rally Club Briefing Meeting for a sponsored event; Bottom Right: Automotive Art Co-Founders Dereck Foster and Hugh Blades showing Prime Minister Hon Owen Arthur a new state-of-the-art computerized mixing system.*

# Harris sets regional roots

Beyond Barbados, Harris continued to increase its investment in the region in an attempt to increase volumes and lower production costs. Despite the tough economic conditions that affected all territories in the early 1990s the overall group performance was strong, which Chairman Andrew Phillips felt was particularly pleasing “as it is considered the aim of any company to come out of a recession with a greater share of the market than it went in with, even at the expense of some profit.” From their experience in Dominica and in Saint Lucia the company learned that they stood to earn a greater stake of the market when they had an active presence, plant or distribution company within that market and based on this they set out to spread their network in the region.

## Dominica

Regrettably, the sister company in Dominica turned in a disappointing performance when sales faltered terribly in 1993-1994. This was most likely a result of a lack of management focus and a consequence of the distraction of the multiple other new enterprises Harris had entered into or were pursuing. While the local market remained strong, 65% of Dominica sales were exports and without clear focus and direction, sales flagged. The executives resolved to do better and the figures rebounded. The factory which had been built in 1987 was also expanded slightly to respond to future needs.

## Saint Lucia

In Saint Lucia, a joint enterprise in a small retail outlet, Colour World of Paints, had been surprisingly successful considering the markets tolerance for low-cost and often

low-quality paints. Despite this level of competition Harris was able to establish a considerable following and by 1993 was considered to be the market leader. When offered inviting concessions by the Government, Harris decided to set up a basic factory operation and warehouse on a rented lot in the north of the island which opened in 1994. The Saint Lucian company produced mainly Boss emulsion and was successful in growing the sales base considerably, turning in an outstanding performance in 1997, up 30% on the previous year.

## Guyana

Located on the South American continent poised for development, Guyana was of considerable interest to Harris. The company investigated many options of entering this market as a manufacturer and when it proved to be unfeasible, they decided to open a retail outlet to distribute imported paints. Importantly Harris Paints Director, Robert Jones had well-located property in central Georgetown and also owned and operated an established distribution agency there among other enterprises, which was a considerable asset. The modest enterprise was financed to produce an estimated GYD 45 million per annum but by November 1993 sales were already twice that figure. The company had achieved a high level of acceptance in a very short period and to grow the operation beyond the capital city now required further financing and investment in a sales vehicle and staff. By 1996 the company had established a very good distribution network extending to the country districts and hoped to start manufacturing in a couple of years. While

they did achieve this benchmark and there were plenty of challenges of working within the territory, all agreed that Guyana was bursting with potential.

## Trinidad and Tobago

By far the biggest disappointment of the decade was a move to enter the difficult Trinidad market which was home to several manufacturers who, due to home manufacturing advantages, could produce very competitively priced paints. Encouraged by the good results in Saint Lucia, Harris sought to enter into a similar joint enterprise with Trinidadian distributor Laughlin & Degannes in conjunction with agent Ken Marhue. The aim was to capture 5% of the market by targeting the top end or quality niche and at the same time to gain a footing in less competitive categories such as textured finish, Feb building products and automotive products. The venture which started in August 1991 was a bust. Harris Chairman explained the grim news to the Board on 30 December 1993. “A deepening recession in Trinidad and Tobago has played havoc with the paint market there... We have been unable to remain competitive without compromising the quality of our products and have been losing both sales and profitability to the extent that a decision was taken earlier this month to close operations in Trinidad until such time as we can find a way to market our products to the niche market that is prepared to pay for quality products such as ours. Unfortunately this means the loss of virtually all of our capital... some USD 77 000.” To make matters worse when Harris shipped the remaining stock, some nine containers to Guyana to be sold, they arrived in an appalling condition estimated at a further USD 20 000 in damages.

# stake in US chemical company

When Harris Tampa made plans to move north, the company's Chartered accountant and Financial Officer, Steve Borusovic decided to stay in the Sunshine State and start a chemical distribution company. Steve had developed a strong collaborative relationship in the early years with the struggling Barbados company and Harris needed a convenient supply centre and was happy to become one of his first customers.

Through Xport Marketing Services (XMS) Harris bought a large proportion of the raw materials needed for production. Apart from the regular shipping services available from the nearby Miami port, XMS extended exceptional conditions that were very beneficial to the young Harris operation

which had extremely limited resources. Most distribution companies operated on large minimum order quantities but Steve allowed Harris to purchase smaller, more feasible amounts, warehousing the remainder for purchase, as and when needed. At the time, credit facilities were extremely hard to come by for a small company in a far-off island community, which to be fair, most people could not even identify on a map. However, XMS gave Harris a generous line of credit which provided critical relief when Harris was under the most severe financial pressure. Throughout their relationship the two companies grew together. In 1992 Harris took up an offer to buy shares in XMS (which they held for a period of just over 10 years) and the chemicals company expanded both its US operations and extended its service to other sectors in Barbados.

Above all, the most valuable result of the partnership was the close, personal relationship that was struck up between Steve Borusovic, Andrew Phillips and particularly Ralph Johnson from the day they met some 50 years ago. The feisty New Yorker, affectionately known as 'The Russian', is credited with getting Ralph on the golf course, from which he never looked back and they shared a warm, enduring friendship for many years.

# company concerns

Twenty years on Harris was in a very different place. The company was estimated to have about 43% share in Barbados at the beginning of the decade and by bringing new technology and products to market, diversifying into related categories and expanding investment within the region, over the next 10 years, Harris became the brand to beat.

Managing the growth came with its challenges. Was it too much, too soon? This was certainly a concern to Andrew Phillips who wrote to Ralph Johnson in a letter dated 18 January 1993 where he considered “that the very future of Harris Paints is threatened by the spate of diversifications that have taken place. I hasten to say that each of the projects is a good one...if carefully looked after but I feel that each one of them is a potential disaster if not properly controlled and I do not feel that we have the manpower in the existing organization to look after them”.

Up until this time the company had operated without any formal plan and the Chairman continued to place pressure on the Board to consider a more strategic approach to the future. In essence, they were in agreement that considering the number of disparate enterprises, a more centralized approach to raw material purchasing, financial management and export and sales planning areas would be advantageous. It would allow the company to leverage bargaining power, take advantage of economies of scale and ensure that energies were working together toward agreed objectives. While the mythical Five-Year Plan never materialized, staffing issues and areas of responsibility required were to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Approaching the end of November 1992 Andrew Phillips expressed a deep and irreconcilable conflict of interest which arose from being a director and shareholder of both Harris and his own company (Fencing and Industrial Coatings Limited) which was being negatively affected. He proposed to resign from the Board. Instead, the company offered him a paid position at Harris in charge of overseas territories. David Tindale, who was General Manager, was now taking on more responsibility than ever within the organization and would need an assistant. Further to this the company looked to fill the positions of Group Marketing and Group Finance Director.

The cost of production was a perennial worry and the Sandiford regime of the early 1990s proffered little to manufacturers and had already seen off large microchip producers Intel. The Harris Board deliberated whether Barbados was the best base for the company operations and hired consultant Bill Bowers to undertake a feasibility study to research the design and cost of a modern factory in Dominica. In an effort to reduce overheads and tax liabilities, the company was restructured and after a valiant struggle Harris finally decided to sell the nail operation. Cost cutting was the top order of the day. Andrew was in the habit of sending a weekly circular of observations. Typical were headings such as ‘Savings by Using Group Purchasing Power’ addressing 1) Travel 2) Outward Bound Freight and 3) Purchasing of Stationery – signed off in his ebullient style “That is all for this Friday!” David Tindale was also widely recognized by Directors as having done a tremendous job of managing the day-to-day finances and controlling costs in difficult economic times.

For the most part, Harris sailed through the 1990s with only a few bumps and bruises mainly from the debacle in Trinidad. Despite this it turned out to be one of the most difficult decades in other respects due to the loss of top executives, close friends and colleagues who all were considered to be vital men in their prime. These included Board representative Mickey Hutchinson in 1991, General Manager of Dominica, Ninian Marie (1996) and Chairman of Harris, Andrew Phillips in the same year. To a degree the close of the 1990s marked the end of an era.

“The very future of Harris Paints is threatened by the spate of diversifications that have taken place. I hasten to say that each of the projects is a good one...if carefully looked after but I feel that each one of them is a potential disaster if not properly controlled...”

Andrew Phillips



# smart growth

2000-2012



# smart growth

“If you don’t know where you are going, you might wind up someplace else..”

Yogi Berra

On the heels of the predominantly buoyant and fertile 1990s, it could be said that the new millennium would quickly deliver ‘The Good, The Bad and The Ugly.

In an event that shocked the world, The Ugly unfolded on 11 September 2001 with the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York City. The fear and considerable fallout was felt far and wide negatively impacting the airline industry and particularly long haul travellers. The Caribbean is said to be the most tourism dependent region in the world that accounts for about 750 000 direct and indirect jobs. The Caribbean Tourism Organization estimated a 16.7% decline in tourism (air arrivals) in the period September – December 2001<sup>1</sup> (the first decline since 1981) which knocked many Caribbean islands, particularly Saint Lucia, sideways.

However more fruitful times lay ahead. During the decade Harris invested much thought in adapting its strategic focus for the new global economy and developed a key partnership with ICI and subsequently Akzo-Nobel, the largest chemical company in the world. Harris continued to strengthen its position in the Caribbean by opening new factories in Saint Lucia and Guyana and undertaking an ambitious purchase of a locally owned and well-respected manufacturing operation in Jamaica, Brandram-Henderson, better known as BH. Barbados also expanded its facility by adding a new warehouse and retail store in 2006. In general, by the middle of the decade optimism returned and many Caribbean economies were uplifted by the preparations to host the 2007 ICC Cricket World Cup for the very first time. Across the region this included the construction of 12 new stadiums and 20 upgrades. Such was the enthusiasm that one Development Director



*Kensington Oval Barbados; World Cup fever gripped the Caribbean 2007*

at ICC Headquarters in Jamaica was quoted as saying “I would think that if any country failed [to meet the preparation deadlines] at the Cricket World Cup that the government would collapse.”<sup>2</sup>

There are two sides to every coin and while Harris aggressively tackled the need to redefine and restructure the company for future growth, it came at considerable expense. The result of many large-scale initiatives occurring at the same time meant that coffers were being emptied rapidly. The management of these endeavours became increasingly overwhelming, distracting executives from the business basics on which it had been built. To make matters worse, a downturn in the global economy unfolded in 2008. A US recession was sparked in part by the collapse of the housing bubble and risky lending practices by financial institutions, many of which folded. Europe fared no better with turmoil in the Eurozone. The negative

shocks reverberated to the Caribbean, with tourism dropping in Barbados alone by 5.4% in 2009 which was followed by a subsequent slump in the building and construction sectors by approximately 30%.

Despite the adversity, (perhaps some of the toughest conditions the company has had to endure) Harris has been able to re-engineer the organization, hiring top executives experienced in the paint industry and by endeavouring to recruit the best of regional talent to add critical depth and flexibility. Harris has restructured and invested in systems to increase operational excellence and efficiency. It remains committed to providing customers with products made to quality standards of an international level. Most importantly, Harris is confident that it is better positioned than ever to be the leading paint distributor in the Caribbean and to move the company forward in the future.

<sup>1</sup>Arley Sobers. Caribbean Tourism Overview. <http://www.onecaribbean.org/content/files/TourismOverview.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Carol J Williams. Caribbean Islands Scramble to Prepare for Cricket World Cup. Los Angeles Times. 2 April 2006

# leadership

The context of the decade is set against the critical crossroads Harris reached in terms of the leadership of the company. Ralph Johnson and Harris had grown to be virtually interchangeable but inevitably after 30 years of leading the business, Ralph was keen to take a less active role to enjoy his many other pursuits. In 2005 Ralph sold a number of shares (though retaining his position as Chairman) to business partner Robert Jones which established Robert by far and away as the largest Harris shareholder.

While Robert still had significant commitments in both Guyana and Venezuela, as President of Harris he was enthusiastic to develop a clear set of objectives and strategies that would support the growth of the business and effective future performance. In collaboration with Miami-based business and branding consultant David Punchard, Harris took a fresh look at the business and the best opportunities for future advantage. As a result, the company set course on a number of valuable and far-reaching projects which absorbed much of the energy and attentions of senior management. This was compounded by the demands of the acquisition of BH Paints (Brandram-Henderson) in Jamaica. But in the maelstrom of activity, fundamental operational issues were being overshadowed and the business suffered.

To his credit, President Robert Jones, realized that Harris needed to bolster its bench strength across departments and looked to recruit a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who had blue-chip international experience in the paint industry capable of bringing the company in line with modern standards and international best practices.



*L-R Robert Jones and Ralph Johnson in discussion*

He could think of no better candidate than Ian Kenyon who had represented ICI at negotiations in Barbados in 2007 and who had worked in the Caribbean, Europe, UK and Canada. Harris was pleased to welcome Ian to the team in 2009.

Under Ian's leadership Harris has been able to marry the core strengths on which Harris was founded with a progressive business outlook. "There are three things that have always been essential to Harris and always will be. There will be no compromise when it comes to quality in the can, colour and customer service." He believes that these business basics are key to success in establishing relationships, growing markets and edging out competitors.



# re-evaluating business strategies



*Business Development Conference Madrid 2012*

Much had changed since, what seemed like simpler times, the early 1970s. Harris now had operations in four different territories, manufactured a myriad of different products including decorative paints, fencing, building products, textured finishes and specialist coatings, which were sold in 14 different countries. The business had become choked by immensely complex unwieldy processes that stood in the path of efficiency and essential vitality for growth.

In addition, local companies were increasingly at risk from foreign competition as regional governments came under pressure to commit to the GATT frameworks (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) dedicated to free trade and open markets. Despite concerns, the outcome seemed inevitable and it was therefore more important than ever for Harris to become leaner and meaner in order to survive the threat.

The coatings industry itself had also become significantly more sophisticated due to advances in chemical engineering. The new generation of highly technical products required large scale research and development investment and an extremely high level of production capability well beyond the reach of small-scale manufacturing operations. This meant that there was a new necessity to forge partnerships with industry leaders to stay abreast of advances in the field.

These were some of the challenges that prompted the first management retreat which was scheduled in September 2000 and gathered together senior management

to develop a plan and clear vision of the future. Corporate identity and branding specialist, David Punchard who Robert Jones had met when David worked in Venezuela, was drafted in to help guide the process. He was instrumental in helping Harris focus on the strength of their intangible assets – the experience, brands and route to market developed over many years. Robert Jones emphasized the point: “most people trying to get to this market are not interested in our factory operation or our trucks which are easily replaced but in the brands that we have, the recognition and trade links in over 14 countries.” This became a major underlying principle guiding strategic initiatives.



*Harris attend a number of Licensee meetings with ICI which was acquired by Akzo Nobel the same year.*

# retail innovation

The retail environment plays a vital part in the customer's purchase decision and is the main platform outside of traditional advertising, where do-it-yourself customers and contractors interface and learn about the brand. There are a very large number of variables to be taken into consideration which affects decision making and product perception. Over the years Harris has been fastidious about merchandising activities, signage, quality of product labels and the replacement of damaged cans all in an effort to reinforce the quality image of the brand. However, in an increasingly competitive and complex market these activities were no longer enough to set the brand apart. Harris therefore went back to the drawing board to develop a multi-faceted approach to re-energize retail operations.

The first part of the plan was to re-brand the 30-year-old 'Dura' range. In the past most of the advertising dollars had been put behind the Harris name but this was a targeted effort to produce a strong, forward-looking, consumer brand that would not only generate excitement, create a high-end image and modern aesthetic but one that could project across international markets. The result was the new fashion brand Ultima which was launched in 2001 formulated using advanced colour technology which offered customers a superlative range of over 6 000 colours. At the same time, Harris upgraded the in-store automatic computer tinting systems with state-of-the art equipment capable of producing paint faster and more conveniently with unsurpassed accuracy. While retailers would need to maintain stock of the most popular colours for grab-and-go customers, they could satisfy the growing designer trend by producing virtually limitless custom colours on demand with no added inventory.

Typically, hardware and general supply stores cater to a wide variety of customer needs and provide thousands of products. It is therefore important for customers to be able to easily identify what they need with the minimum of frustration. The second part of the plan aimed at playing a more effective role at managing Harris' in-store communication. This was achieved by promoting a 'store-in-store' concept, branded and renamed Harris Colourcentres, a distinctive space designed to showcase and heighten awareness of Harris products. The spaces are equipped where possible with the Language of Colour™ display units, a specially developed and unique system to assist customers with easy colour selection and coordination. In combination, the new premium paint, ultra-modern colour system and bright commercial concept served to further elevate Harris' status as colour specialists and the leader in paint products.

To further build on these successful strategies Harris has continued to reinforce its product range which includes wood care, metal care, marine, building and other specialty products. The company has particularly benefited from broadening the range of sundry items such as brushes, rollers and other preparatory and paint related products, which at one time only accounted for as little as 3% of overall sales (industry averages are 18% in Europe and up to 25% in North America). As part of the Colourcentre concept these ancillary products play a valuable part in providing Harris customers with a one-stop shop for all their needs for any paint project.

Harris distributors, dealers and retailers are and continue to be the backbone of the paint business which service established and loyal segments of the market. These



partner affiliates are supported by a full range of Harris products, top technology, communication tools, training and sales promotion programmes and customer service. The company continues to look for opportunities to increase their share of the market across the Caribbean. To this end the company has entered into a number of different types of retail arrangements including its own stores, joint ventures and store-in-store concepts where the retailer benefits from the Harris Brand experience in its entirety. And going forward the range of retail formats will continue to grow as Harris seeks to offer all its customers the ultimate Harris Brand experience!

# expansion

Over the coming years Harris considered many ways in which to extend their network, taking into account possible synergies with other conglomerates in the region and contemplating a possible bid for Pinturas Montana, a Venezuelan paint company with links to the Caribbean, Argentina, Mexico, Columbia and the US. Although these did not end up being paths pursued, Harris did encounter a company in Jamaica it thought was about the right size and price for an acquisition. The deal was sealed in the new territory in 2006 which provided a strong base for Harris in the northern Caribbean. While Brandram-Henderson (operating as BH Paints) in Jamaica also had established links to Belize and Cayman Islands, the most significant potential was within the country itself which Harris estimated could be expanded from 15 to 25% market share.



*Aerial view of original Harris factory lot in Wildey (Wildey A).*



*Adjacent lot opposite Sanitation Service Authority base, earmarked for the development of Wildey B - warehouse, retail store and corporate offices.*

In other developments Harris decided to expand their facility in Saint Lucia, completing a new factory in 2001 and opened a manufacturing operation in Guyana in 2006 in the hopes of lowering overheads. Space at the Barbados factory had become critical and in 2002 plans were submitted to develop a neighbouring site (Lot 1 and 2) which serves as the corporate offices today. Construction of the new 8000 sq ft warehouse started in October 2005 and the building which included offices and a new retail facility (sometimes referred to as Wildey B) was officially opened in August 2006. Subsequent improvements were also carried out to the original building to maximize space.



*Senator Hon. Lynette Eastmond, Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development officially opens the new Harris Paints Corporate Headquarters pictured with Chairman, Ralph Johnson at the ribbon cutting ceremony.*

# Marguerite prizes people



uniqueness of the region. “We have a rich tapestry of cultures in the Caribbean and although as Caribbean nations we share much in common, we each are intensely proud of our individual nations. One of our key onboarding orientation activities is the need to share with staff our support of diversity, as we do value same.”

Certainly, the environments present challenges such as differences in language, educational and technological development and the cost of travel in the region, however Mrs Desir believes that it also presents tremendous opportunities. “Embracing diversity is central to building strong teams. Every team building theory states that to build a great team, there must be a diverse group of people on the team — a collection of individual experiences, backgrounds, and cultures that can view problems and challenges from a wide variety of lenses.” Further to that, she stresses that people give Harris the competitive edge; the company seeks to train staff according to international best practices to deliver superior customer service consistently both internal and external and this can only be truly effective when combined with the local knowledge and relationships within the Caribbean.

The Regional HR department has developed management plans that can be categorized in three broad areas that relate to individual, career and organizational objectives. Activities include assisting in identifying employees’ strengths and areas of potential development through the use of performance reviews, training programmes and testing; matching individuals with the most suitable jobs and career paths within the organization; and organizational

Getting down to brass tacks with Marguerite Desir; Harris’ Senior Vice President of Human Resources (HR) is in agreement with the great American statesman Colin Powell: “Organization doesn’t really accomplish anything. Plans don’t accomplish anything either. Theories of management don’t much matter. Endeavours succeed or fail because of the people involved. Only by attracting the best people will you accomplish great deeds.” That is the key, she believes in accomplishing outstanding achievements.

Since joining the company in 2006, Marguerite initiated the centralized operations of the Human Resource functions companywide. Harris and BH directly employs on average 250 full time staff and 50 temporary staff through out the year. While plants are run by primarily country teams, Harris has a multi-national team of departmental managers that work broadly across the region. Marguerite notes that the specific geography and diverse cultural heritage of the islands contribute to the

development which incorporates aspects such as change management and focuses on aligning human (and other) resources with the wider business strategies and objectives.

But there is more in the mortar than the pestle and you can find Marguerite behind any number of company activities that extend beyond the traditional work focus. She particularly enjoys bringing people together through shared experiences which she believes is essential to promoting understanding, a culture of friendship, cooperation and productivity. Marguerite and the HR team have organized many social outings and inter-company exchanges and they continue to spearhead programmes aimed at enriching the lives of people wherever Harris markets its products and

services. Marguerite understands that people are often motivated through the quality of their relationships and that recognition and appreciation on a job well done are important to maintaining a positive performance.

Since joining Harris as Human Resource and Marketing Manager initially, Marguerite is currently not only the company's most senior HR executive but is Head of the Business Units in Antigua, Dominica, Guyana and Saint Lucia and she is a Director for Harris Paints International and all its subsidiary companies.

The multi-talented professional is further distinguished by attaining 13 years' banking experience prior to joining Harris

and two years in the telecoms industry where she gained valuable technical skills in her position as Head of Customer Service responsible for retail stores and the technical service centre. Among her current ambitions are developing Harris' Training Academy which was launched to assist in educating and training employees across the region and establishing Harris as an employer of choice and a magnet for top Caribbean talent. The endlessly energetic Marguerite, credits her positive and courteous attitude for her success both personally and professionally. Her advice to young professionals is that above all a person's attitude determines his or her success in business and career growth, more so than their qualifications - their degrees and work experience.



*Marguerite Desir visits Dominica and cooks a meal for staff just a few short days after Hurricane Maria*

**“E**mbracing diversity is central to building strong teams... a collection of individual experiences, backgrounds, and cultures that can view problems and challenges from a wide variety of lenses.”

Marguerite Desir

# Industrial Supplies Inc (ISI)

One of the major challenges the company experienced was the ability to respond to customer orders quickly and completely. As Harris added new operations each factory monitored their own requirements and dealt with a large number of raw material suppliers, placing orders and managing shipments more or less independently. This also included orders for ancillary stock items such as paint brushes and rollers that complement paint products in stores. Coordinating shipments with different lead times was tremendously difficult and subject to delays; shipping services to the region were limited and often larger quantities than necessary had to be ordered to make up minimum volumes required. The bottom line was there was a lot of duplication, numerous costly inventory and stock issues and the system simply was not meeting its objectives. There had to be a better way.

To this end Harris formed a new company Industrial Supplies Incorporated (ISI) in 2007, to focus on the procurement and distribution of raw materials and ancillary products across the Caribbean. The centralized system would have several advantages in tightening up stock management, rationalizing product lines, improving cash flow and shortening supply chains. In addition to the procurement of raw materials ISI is also responsible for a central warehousing facility in Miami. By having a ready store of easily accessible stock items, shipments can be more easily coordinated, become infinitely more predictable and therefore Harris is better positioned to deliver "On Time and In Full". Luke Ticknor, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing

at that time explained "Miami was the obvious choice being central to the region. It is used as a major transit point for Latin America, Central America and the Caribbean and for shipments coming from Europe and China, being held in storage there, being broken up and redistributed out."

By holding stock in Miami, Harris is able to manage stores of raw materials purchasing ahead of price increases which have become a significant cost factor due to on-going global shortages. The operation will also help the company achieve reliable deliveries in a predictable time frame (about two weeks depending on the destination). Where inter-island shipping within the Caribbean is often poorly serviced, there are multiple ports and shipping lines in Florida with lots of regular runs coming out to the Caribbean. What is more, if needed there are specialist companies that deal with Less-than-Container-Loads (LCLs) so ISI is even able to provide quantities of a whole portfolio of products to small customers.

More recently ISI has added a third objective to its portfolio; to distribute Harris products from its North American location. The ISI sales team will be spearheading export sales to northern Caribbean territories and Central America.



*Harris warehouse team aims to ship products on time and in full.*

# better access to information

The systems that had worked in the past were no longer robust enough to stand up to the increased size and complexity of the business and it was clear that Harris needed to make considerable investment to upgrade IT capabilities throughout the company. It was hoped that the new systems would lead to more accurate information produced consistently across the region and timely production of reports.

In 2003, Harris initiated what would become a rather gargantuan task. It encompassed a new upgraded billing system for retail sales; an inventory program for manufacturing, the installation of a new accounting system; implementation of new chart of accounts, as well as upgrades to the overall computer system and IT infrastructure needed to support and regionally integrate the new systems. The process was protracted and cost in excess of USD 1 million but was considered the 'bitter pill' that the company needed to swallow in order to set a firm foundation for future growth.

Slowly work progressed and the new billing system was working in the Wildey Colourcentre by December 2006; computers had security upgrades and back-up systems in place the following year and the manufacturing program was 95% complete by December 2007. The whole process could be looked at as a learning experience but during the time it took to implement, Harris gained a significantly better understanding of what it actually needed and in essence the new system fell short. Robert Jones,

Harris President observed: "What we did was understandable. We took what we did and tried to do it better. We spent a lot of money for the right reasons but we missed the mark."

Such systems are very complex and highly specialized fields and even extremely large and resourceful companies experience severe difficulties. One project manager estimates that 80% of new software applications and 67% of reengineering efforts are abandoned or fail to meet deadlines or the projected cost benefits. Mr Jones concedes that if they knew then what they know now the company would have taken a different approach opting for custom systems to optimize both retail and manufacturing environments.

In 2009 Harris added further modules creating an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system or integrated information platform that is able to address wider aspects of organizational management such as customer relationship data, key performance indicators, departmental reporting functions and human resource administration. "It's been a great deal of money, time and effort to create", admits Jones, "but we are proud that we finally have a tool that can provide sound information to support informed decision making and despite the disparate geographical locations of our offices, link staff members around the region to promote communication and the sharing of ideas."

**“**It's been a great deal of money, time and effort to create but we are proud that we finally have a tool that can provide sound information to support informed decision making...”

Robert Jones, Harris President



# Cuprinol opens doors

Most of Harris' accomplishments have come as a result of a good deal of hard work and perseverance and on a few rare occasions, such as winning the Cuprinol account, lady luck has helped open avenues and opportunities that could not have possibly been foreseen.

Cuprinol is an established and well regarded brand of protective wood treatments used particularly for outdoor decking, fencing and garden buildings. The trade name is said to have derived from the original formula used in Denmark (c.1911) to preserve fishing nets, (Copper in Oil). In the UK the brand is widely recognized and synonymous with summer.

It was by some good fortune then that David Tindale, Harris Managing Director was in the office at 4.00 pm on a Friday afternoon when he received a speculative phone call from Cuprinol Export Manager, Paul Lewis. Looking at his watch, David amiably suggested they meet at the Carib Beach Bar to discuss what was on his mind. So over a couple of beers in late 1999 Paul, who was responsible for global export sales including Saudi Arabia, Asia and Africa, explained his position; he had been unhappy with the review conducted with the local company (a Harris competitor) who currently produced a range of Cuprinol wood coatings and preservatives under license and was looking for an alternative manufacturer/distributor. Paul quickly learned that Harris had both the production capabilities and an impressive Caribbean-wide distributive network built up over nearly 30 years of operation. Harris on the other hand already carried a similar product but on deliberation it was decided that Cuprinol had a stronger pedigree regionally and furthermore it was an almost irresistible opportunity to one-up the opposition!



*Paul Lewis of ICI, Cuprinol with Wayne Roach and Harris Managing Director, David Tindale at Trade Expo*

David and Paul Lewis forged an instant relationship and within a couple of months Harris was appointed by Cuprinol. In March 2000 David Tindale set out on a familiarization visit to the plant in England and quickly realized that considering the specialist nature and relatively low-volume of the products it would be more cost effective to import the finished items from the UK. Of additional benefit was that the products would come in the full livery which could not be matched by local production and would add value to the brand and its overall presence on the shelf. The line was enthusiastically launched in Barbados and across the islands with training activities and strong promotional support.

The real value from this alliance however would not be from sales alone but the doors it would open. Cuprinol had, as it happened,

been acquired and was now owned by ICI, one of the world's largest suppliers of specialty products and paints including leading brands such as Glidden, Dulux and Ralph Lauren. At the time they had little to no investment in the Eastern Caribbean and it was primarily through the good offices of Paul Lewis who promoted Harris internally and brought them to the attention of ICI. It is remarkable that a chance phone call led to an extremely significant collaboration with the parent company and would help shape the history of Harris.



# the ICI partnership

Following the establishment of business with Cuprinol, Paul Lewis promoted Harris within ICI circles as a potentially valuable distributor in the Caribbean. Through Paul, Harris was first introduced to Tony Myers, ICI's head of Decorative, Licensing and Export Business based in the UK who did a commendable job in allaying Harris' concerns about working with the powerful conglomerate. Due to the geographic location of the island, it was decided that negotiations would best be handled through ICI's North American business in Cleveland, Ohio and specifically Gerry Amato, Vice President of International. Under Gerry's leadership, and alongside his protégé Steve Nelson, Sales Manager for the Caribbean, terms and conditions of the contract were drafted and an agreement was signed November 2001 (effective 1 January the following year). Harris has had a special place in Steve's professional life: "Harris Paints is one of my proudest success stories", admits Steve, "it was early in my career and Harris was the first client that was truly mine that I took from start to finish. I gained a ton of experience with Harris. It was really a big deal for me and it means a lot!"

From ICI's point of view the relationship was wholly opportunistic rather than part of a regional strategy. Steve notes, "it would have been a logical partnership but we didn't have any prior relationship." The conglomerate did have some interests in the region from as far back as the 1950s and 60s but these were mostly in the northern Caribbean especially in Puerto Rico where Glidden was very dominant in the market and then to a degree in Jamaica, Grand Cayman and the Bahamas. In the south ICI had developed activity in Trinidad and a Glidden licensee in Aruba. "On the whole the eastern Caribbean was a bit of an unknown. Back then there were very

high duties on imported paints and therefore the region was never developed. Other than Berger who we were battling in Jamaica and Trinidad, the area was a bit of a mystery to us."

No time was wasted in getting off the ground with new initiatives. Harris planned to continue with Cuprinol and was also very excited to add the famous Dulux brand to their portfolio which utilized ICI's specially developed advanced colour system. Since the 1990s Harris had made colour king by being the first to introduce retail tinting technology and providing customers with an unsurpassed choice of colours. Rather than run two systems, Harris now decided to adopt the new, cutting-edge technology across the board, to maintain their dominance in colour and to continue to provide the highest quality and standards to the Caribbean region. To coincide with these events, Harris also felt it was the logical time to re-brand its own label 'the Duras' (Duracote, Duratone etc) which it had sold since the 1970s and launch a modern, new-look brand for the future that would become known as Ultima. It was a monumental task.

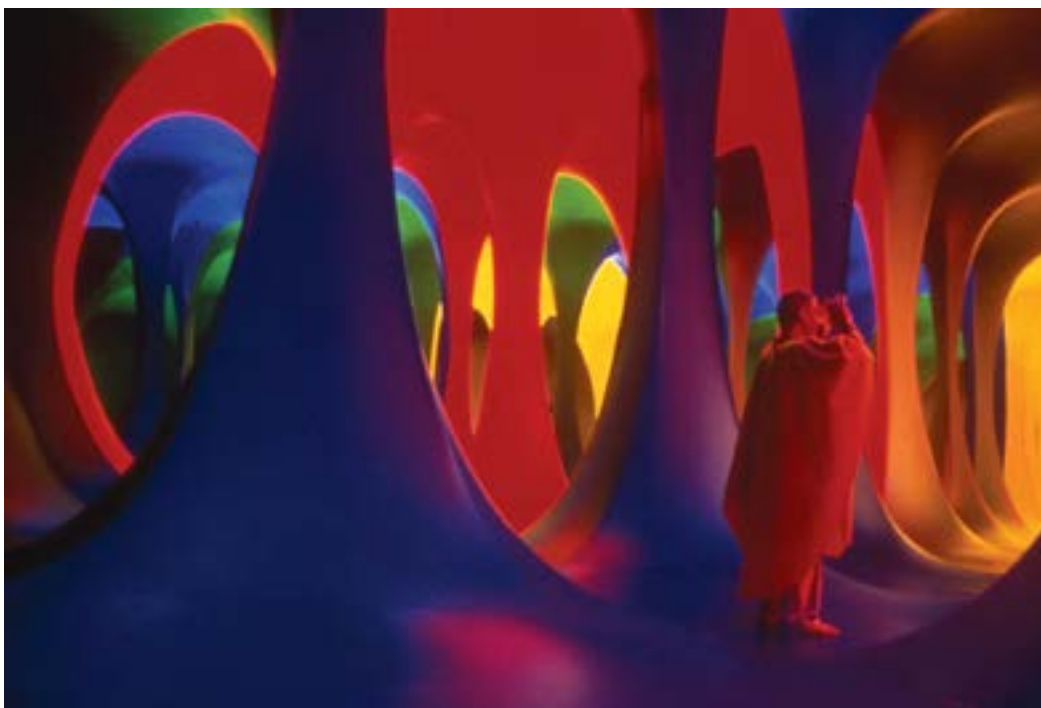
Unfortunately Dulux, the UK's premium brand, never really got off the ground. It was manufactured in Barbados as Harris Dulux and positioned as the choice for professionals. "It didn't work out the way we hoped I think mainly because we overestimated the power of the Dulux brand name on the local market", says David Tindale who was Managing Director at the time, "it was marketed at a premium price point and a lot of people simply didn't remember it." To be fair, he admits that perhaps Harris didn't put enough weight behind the range and that it got overlooked in the mix. On the other hand Ultima which

also launched in 2002 amidst much fanfare was very successful. Steve Nelson remembers the spectacular Ultima television commercial that featured a dramatic action landing by a man in a hang-glider. "It was genius" he admits and adds ruefully "I knew that night that Dulux didn't have a prayer!"

Despite these bumps in the road the relationship with ICI grew stronger. "What we found out after a while was that Harris is a really nice company to work with" confesses Steve and adds with



*The Harris-Dulux Colour Display*



*Harris presents Colourspace, an interactive installation in association with Dulux March 2002, Barbados*

a grin, “and they are always hungry for more!” Encouraged by Harris’ enthusiasm, arrangements were soon being discussed to expand the product portfolio to include Hammerite metal finishes and Polycell products including fillers, sealants and tiling aids, packaged under the Harris Brand.

Perhaps one of the biggest sectors ICI has helped open for Harris is in High Performance Coatings or HPCs. David Tindale was quick to respond to Steve’s advice about the opportunities that existed in industrial maintenance and by 2004 Steve had organized a Devoe Coatings Training Seminar in Barbados with Harris representatives from around the region about this range of extremely advanced and technical products. The potential did not escape at least one attendee that Steve remembers clearly, a rep from Guyana by the name of Kevin Welch who declared he intended to make something of Devoe in his home market. “I understood that Guyana

was a difficult environment so I didn’t take his declaration all that seriously” remarks Steve “but I lived to realize that I seriously underestimated him and I had no idea what he could do.” Kevin embraced Devoe wholeheartedly, he had the passion, the opportunity and did incredibly well. “Before you knew it we were not only dealing with steel but in floor coating systems as well. Not only was he NACE certified (a special anti-corrosion certification) he qualified to teach NACE classes too!”

Over the course of the first few years working together, ICI helped Harris balance its portfolio of products and brands but it was not until after the purchase of the Jamaican subsidiary in 2006 that Harris became more open to strategic input. This could have been, in part, due to the fact that at the same time, the period covered by the initial agreement was coming to an end and contracts with ICI would be up for renegotiation. To this end Harris had been

working on a five-year business plan to present to ICI executives. In February 2007 ICI introduced Harris to a business planning methodology developed by MIT3 Professor Arnaldo Hax, which they had worked with successfully in the past and believed could be useful to Harris. The session was followed by a strategy meeting held at an ICI marketing conference in Dubai later that year, attended by Tony Myers leader of ICI’s Decorative Licensing and Export Business in the UK, Steve Nelson and Harris executives including Robert Jones, President; David Tindale and consultant, David Punchard. Although the success of the meeting was limited as the detailed prerequisites for HAX could not be met, it was the first cooperative effort at strategy and was indicative of the depth of the relationship.

The 2007 contract negotiations now fell to Steve Nelson and to his then direct report, Ian Kenyon (who would later take up the Chief Executive Officer position at Harris) who flew down to Barbados, 12-13 April having hammered out most of the important points earlier that year. Steve recalls he had envisaged a very smooth transaction but became frenzied when he received a number of last-minute request for changes in the contract moments before he caught his flight. Fearing the agreement would fall through, Steve called David Tindale and arranged to meet later that evening to get a grasp of the situation before their meeting the following day. Although things worked out well in the end it was obviously a tense moment and Steve maintains “I honestly think those couple of Extra Old’s at Nelson Arms saved the relationship on that occasion.”

No sooner than contracts had been signed than rumours started to swirl of a buyout of the Dulux paint maker ICI by chemical giant Akzo Nobel. Over the next eight months Akzo made three separate bids to finally clinch the takeover of the British firm which, according to 2006 figures, had some 26 000 employees and sales of USD 15.8 billion. This news may have filled Harris with some trepidation for fear of losing hard won relationships in the amalgamation process but on the other hand it could be a tremendous opportunity; by association with ICI it now placed Harris in a relationship with Akzo Nobel, who through the acquisition became the undisputed global leader in the USD 85 billion coatings industry, streets ahead of their nearest competitor.

In a further twist, Harris was seeking to strengthen its senior management capability and looked to recruit a top-shelf individual to take the company forward. Obviously impressed by his credentials and the fierce negotiating skills he had displayed in the Boardroom in 2007, Robert Jones, Harris President approached an ICI insider for the role. Ian Kenyon joined the Harris team as CEO in 2009 bringing 25 years experience in the international paints and coatings industry across the UK, Europe, North America and the Caribbean. His unique knowledge of ICI operations and products has been an additional benefit in helping Harris make the most of the alliance.

Harris executives acknowledged that Akzo did not have the history of working with licensees that was very much a tradition at ICI but believed the accord was a win-win for both sides. Steve Nelson assured, “nothing has really changed from Akzo’s perspective. Like all long relationships, it’s like a marriage

and there are ups and downs. If you have good partners you should stick with them. Ultimately it has to be what both parties want.” He recognized the positive strides Harris was making in the region. “Harris is growing so my hope is that we can continue to grow together and I look forward to another twelve years of collaborating with Harris in the region.”

“One of Harris’ boldest moves was their investment in top-of-the-line automatic tinting machines across the region. Being tops in the Caribbean means being tops in technology and Harris is positioned as the leader in colour.”

Steve Nelson, ICI Executive



Steve Nelson, Vice President International Markets, Akzo Nobel

# high performance coatings

When it comes to endurance, toughness and the ability to withstand extreme conditions, High Performance Coatings (HPCs) are the Olympic athletes and 'Iron Men' of the coatings world. This category of elite products utilizes leading-edge chemical technologies designed to stand up to punishing conditions such as intensive corrosion, UV degradation, fire, abrasion, aggressive chemicals, proliferation of bacteria/biological growths and sub-sea conditions. They are used to provide outstanding levels of protection to concrete and steel surfaces subjected to highly demanding environments.

Long before the term HPC was common currency at Harris, the company had in fact offered a few products in this special class of over-achievers which would include specialist marine coatings and Superglaze, which was a hard, glossy industrial-strength epoxy paint in grey or red for concrete surfaces. However, to develop the range into a meaningful category necessitated top technological support and resources that were beyond the limitations of a small independent manufacturer.

Further to the relationship that burgeoned with ICI in 2001, Harris recognized that the industrial maintenance sector utilizing specialist HPC products, could be potentially valuable and open an entire new area of business. Their interest resulted in a distribution agreement with the Devoe range of products which Harris launched with specialist professional training seminars for Harris representatives and trade in 2004.

Owing to their astonishing durability, HPCs are utilized in high-traffic areas such as commercial buildings in the worlds of leisure,



*High performance commercial kitchen flooring*

hospitality and retail and in non-stop, around-the-clock operations such as airport facilities. They provide hygienic seamless surfaces in medical and food processing operations and are used in some of the harshest environments found within the fields of oil, gas and chemical industries. HPCs are utilized in the maritime world and in industrial settings such as ports; mining operations; power plants; pulp and paper processing and water management facilities.

The possibilities were not lost on Harris representative, Kevin Welch who embraced the new direction wholeheartedly, immediately pursuing the industry recognized NACE (National Association of

Corrosion Engineers) Certifications. Based out of the Guyana office Kevin built business contacts not only in Guyana but also in the key markets of nearby Suriname and Trinidad. These territories he felt, offered a preponderance of industries that could benefit from long-lasting HPC solutions that would meet safety standards, reduce the need for costly maintenance or re-application and protect assets from degradation by all manner of environmental factors.

Propelled by Kevin's enthusiasm and natural flair for understanding customers' needs, Harris very quickly carved out a new role for themselves in this, until now, untapped segment. Projects ranged from temperature resistant and anti-corrosive coatings for

tanks and pipes in the oil and gas sector; long lasting roof coatings and customized ultra-durable, protective floor surfaces for heavy industries, food processing and medical sectors. The rising demand, particularly in terms of concrete surface and floor coatings, can be attributed to the wide scale adoption of the HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) standards and management system by government health and safety agencies which promote the use of durable, seamless, impervious finishes that are slip resistant and easily cleaned.

In the meantime, the Devoe brand was reorganized as a division of International Paint's protective coatings division which called for a new round of paperwork. CEO, Ian Kenyon remembers "It took nine months of negotiation to get us to a point where we could sign the contract. International Paint only has about three or four distributors around the world so they are very selective. But they liked what they saw in terms of what Harris brought to the market. We have the largest NACE certified sales force in the Eastern Caribbean. They saw the pedigree of that talent that we have. They saw that what we needed was the technology solutions but we had the people and it was a marriage made in heaven."

The strategic partnership was finally signed in May 2011 affording Harris the opportunity to consolidate and grow its HPC market yet further and allowing the company to offer a full range of HPC solutions. Harris reported that their HPC segment had been growing rapidly in recent years and currently represents about 10% of total sales and future indicators are very positive.



*(L-R) Eifion Jones, Martin Criado of International Paint*

"The introduction of HPCs in the Harris portfolio has not only opened up a whole new area of business but beyond that it has allowed us to move into new segments", explains CEO Ian Kenyon. "A key example is in Guyana where we have just provided all the coatings for the flagship hospital there. Harris was able to provide the full spectrum of coatings required, from hygienic floor and wall surfaces used in wards and operating theatres, to textured coatings for exterior walls. Virtually every surface is protected by Harris. Not only are we able to offer total solutions but it now opens up new possibilities within the medical sector across the Caribbean and perhaps even further, to go into new geographies."

At this time Harris had more than 30 trained representatives operating in 15 countries across the region and a number with direct training from International Paint. To date, at least 90% of this business is outside of Barbados with principal potential markets in Jamaica, Suriname and Guyana. Due to the unique nature of each job and the highly technical nature of the products, Harris representatives offer bespoke solutions and coatings systems designed to fit the particular needs of the customer: the project goals, challenges, environment, product options, budgetary limits and life expectancy and warranty needs.



*Installation of high performance floor system at Staatsolie – Suriname's National Energy, Oil & Gas Company.*

The winning combination of local market knowledge, expert training, access to world-class technology platforms and solutions has put Harris as the leader in the race. Harris now has the ability to compete successfully with companies from outside the region. What is more, Harris delivers the long-term service support and accountability that extra-regional companies often do not, once the products have been sold. Case in point, claims CEO Ian Kenyon, is the Suriname State oil refinery, Staatsolie, who requested coatings specifications for pipes and plumbing that sustain temperatures of up to 212F. "They received quotes from other American companies. They came to us because we offer the best value proposition. We have the world's leading manufacturer of HPCs supplying technologies to us, and we deliver the service. We consult with the client, we present solutions that will solve the problem for the customer and provide appropriate implementation support and assistance."

Up to 2012, Harris' list of blue-chip regional clients included Sol Group, Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco, Sandals Resorts, Demerara Distillery Limited and Nestlé.

# what is NACE?

NACE International has established widely accepted corrosion controls and standards relied on by many industries throughout the world. Further to this, they provide strong educational programmes and leading certifications that develop experienced, highly skilled professionals to work in this special field. The organization provides the expertise to thoroughly assess projects, recommend fitting solutions and to implement them according to specifications.

Originally known as the National Association of Corrosion Engineers (NACE), the body is the world recognized authority for corrosion control matters and is now renamed NACE International. For nearly 80 years this organization has been dedicated to protecting people, assets and the environment from the effects of corrosion. In that capacity they are involved in many industries from chemical processing and water systems to transportation and infrastructure.

Corrosion prevention concerns resistance to some of the world's harshest most demanding environments and calls on the latest advances in chemical technology. NACE certifications include technical knowledge of high performance coating applications, control of metallic corrosion using cathodic protection methods and inspection fundamentals.





# shocks and surprises

2013-2022



# a bumpy ride

The past ten years have been anything but smooth sailing. When words like volcano, hurricane, pandemic and war all characterize the period, its not an over-exaggeration to term it turbulent.

Having said that, as any artist knows you don't get light without shade. The many volatile and challenging circumstances experienced called for swift response and Harris answered that call in spades. "It has been a very tough road and in some ways, we have been extraordinarily lucky", said CEO Ian Kenyon who revealed that the Harris Paints Group managed to grow their top line each successive year except for 2020. He indicated that despite some extremely formidable pressures, he was delighted that the company would celebrate its 50th anniversary (2022) having achieved its best financial year ever. Quite an achievement all things considered.

During the period, Harris racked up an impressive string of achievements. Right off the bat, the company launched its new technology-packed premium line of decorative paint, Ultima Plus (2013) which quickly became the company's top seller; it introduced a new commercial brand of paint to provide professionals with more flexibility; and a special environmentally-friendly interior paint that meets zero VOC architectural specifications.

Undeterred by the 2020 pandemic which caused national shutdowns across the Caribbean, Harris Paints completed testing on a revolutionary new paint tinting system; opened a new state-of-the-art factory in Antigua and launched the first of their new generation 'one-base' products (typical traditional paints have about four bases) during a period of restricted travel therefore resulting in the company's first webinar.

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“The best way to control the future, is to invent it.”

Alan Kay, Computer Scientist

Innovation has been key. It has been a driving principle of the company since the 1970s and CEO Kenyon is himself an ardent advocate of innovation which has been a focal point of his career for over 30 years. Alan Kay, a famous US computer scientist is credited with saying “the best way to control your future is to invent it” and the Harris CEO agrees, innovation creates excitement in the marketplace; adds value for a customer by solving a problem and enables the company to win and retain market leadership.

What has made the difference, claims the Chief Executive, is that Harris grew out of a customer-centric philosophy and not a manufacturing led outlook. This, he says, was critical, for example, when launching Ultima Plus. Over 90% of customers surveyed had concerns about the sun’s wear and tear and mildew resistance. By listening to these concerns Harris subsequently introduced new high performance colourants and special biocides for longer lasting performance and this led to sales of over USD 50M in less than 5 years!

While it is important to listen and be open to new ways of doing things, Kenyon points out that innovation is a process and that idea generation is just one part. “You certainly have to have the right culture” but he stresses, “this has to be supported by the right organizational structure, one that is fast, flexible and adaptive. We have also had a Board that were willing to take calculated risks - risks which we work to reduce through the use of business analysis tools, testing and quality management processes.”



*Directors at Harris Paints celebrate the contribution of Ralph Johnson at Harris' 45th Anniversary event*

Harris also has close relationships with global industry organizations outside the region which goes a long way to keep the company competitive. The global paint market has undergone tremendous consolidation and as a result a few behemoths tend to dominate. However, Harris has overcome this threat by banding together with other high quality, smaller companies in order to access the best pricing, top research and technology and best practices across the board.

“It’s been game changing”, says Kenyon. “Through organizations like CRGI we have access to the top paint testing facilities to ensure we meet world standard. Membership of selective buying groups have been more critical than ever especially since 2020. This was the start of a spiral of rising pricing due to global transport issues, labour shortages, increases in the cost of oil and impacts on nearly all raw materials. Having these international linkages have been critical not just to survive but actually thrive as many of our local competitors have not enjoyed the same partnerships and suffered accordingly. Kenyon stated “ Our partners and suppliers have been tremendously supportive. They even pledged thousands of dollars worth of relief support to Dominica after the massive hurricane strike in 2017. What more could one ask for?”

The Caribbean paint manufacturer was honoured by being invited to join the prestigious Nova Paint Club in 2017, an organization of the leading independent coatings companies in each part of the world – a further endorsement of the Harris leadership position in the region. Nova has a select global membership that includes North and South America, Europe and Asia with operations on every continent and facilitates valuable exchange of technical information, technological advances, and sharing of expertise in all areas of operations.

There was further recognition. Harris Barbados picked up a productivity prize in 2015 awarded by the National Initiative for Service Excellence and Harris Saint Lucia continually reaped operational plaudits from the St Lucia Manufacturers’ Association awards, held every two years. The company also continued to improve and monitor processes used at all its operations and is certified by SGS Canada, to meet the requirements of ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management Standard - an internationally recognized benchmark.

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## Slow growth across regional economies

From an economic standpoint, the overall forecast was slow growth across the regional economies. However, steady visitor arrivals continued to keep the tourism driven countries ticking forward. In fact, tourism got a boost with more heads on beds from 2015, thanks in part, to plummeting oil prices that dropped from USD 130 a barrel in June 2014 to just USD 42 by February 2016.

Barbados though was a big concern. The country had suffered 23 credit downgrades, creating a poor climate for investment and by 2017 there were loud rumblings of risk of devaluation. The Governor of Central Bank's Report that year indicated that the declining stock of international reserves held were just over half the 12-week benchmark of import cover required. Barbadians were in disbelief that it could come to this and made their feelings clear in the 2018 general election with a landslide victory for the Mia Mottley led Barbados Labour Party, winning all 30 seats in the House.

In a stinging speech just two weeks after taking office the Hon Mia Mottley addressed the need to act, to stop the “hemorrhaging and decay” caused by the mismanagement of the previous administration which had left Barbados, according to the IMF Chief of Mission's Report, in “a precarious economic position”. She called the situation “calamitous” and said unless the country addressed its debt, which consumed more money than the Government wage bill and more than the education and health budget combined, they would be devoured by it. Her administration swiftly introduced the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) programme aimed at getting the country back on track and agreed assistance from the IMF later that year; Barbados' prospects quickly began to improve under the new leadership.

By far, Jamaica is the country that has offered the most growth potential for the Harris Group and while steady gains have been made, the 2015 discovery of oil in Guyana

has vastly shifted the fortunes in favour of the South American country, as the new rising star of the region.

Based on current estimates and more discoveries, Guyana is projected to be a global oil power in coming years. Ernst and Young Services forecasts that Guyana's non-oil economy will grow 7.7% this year (2022) and a massive increase in GDP of more than 45%. “We have seen a huge upturn in business especially in protective coatings due to the oil exploration”, said the Harris CEO. “There is renewed optimism and energy in the country which has been stymied for too long and to their credit, the Government are doing all they can to push the development of the economy and that will be very good for our business.”

## Guyana is projected to be a global oil power

Fate, unfortunately, was not so kind to Dominica, where the Harris Brand enjoys



*Saint Lucia reap top awards from the St Lucia Manufacturers' Association for the fourth consecutive year in 2018. In 2020 the team celebrated again, five straight years in a row.*

about 85% market share. In September 2017, the small island was pummeled by the mammoth Category 5 hurricane, Maria and left a trail of damage across the northeastern Caribbean. “it was gut-wrenching” exclaimed Kenyon “to watch the satellite images from the sidelines and at first it was very difficult to get word, but little by little in the aftermath we were able to discover that all our employees were accounted for and that by some miracle the factory was one of the very few buildings left intact.” Even more mind-blowing is that employees almost immediately launched a clean-up operation and had the factory back in working order just nine days after the event. “The team were truly extraordinary and Dominicans on a whole, I believe, have earned the respect of the world with their resilience”, claimed the CEO. “ Without skipping a beat, the country went full on into recovery mode”.

Due to climate change the world, in general, is seeing more extreme weather events. However, the Caribbean, made up of small island developing states, will be on the front lines and the region is expected to see increases in temperatures, floods, drought, rising sea levels and more frequent and intense storms in the future.

Another major threat the Caribbean has faced is increased pressure, particularly between 2015-2018 from banks de-risking, reducing access to competitive financial services. These include vital international payments such as wire transfers credit card settlements and foreign currency transactions. There has been a steady decline in correspondent banking relationships in the Caribbean as institutions across the world deem the region too small to be profitable due to high compliance costs and the perception that it is a high-risk jurisdiction. To cap it off, Harris, who had partnered with the Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank) originally serviced by Mac Anderson, learned in 2018 that they were selling their business in nine small markets including Guyana, Dominica and Saint Lucia.

This was the reason behind Harris changing banks to First Caribbean International Bank (CIBC-FCIB) which has improved service levels but it is recognized that the threat persists.

There had been bumps in the road but no one could have predicted all that has ensued in 2020 and beyond. On 3 March the CEO forecast, at a Board Meeting in Saint Lucia, that Harris was on track to record its best

ever trading results by the end of June 2020. Yet two weeks later Covid-19 hit the Caribbean and turned the total picture on its head, with widescale national shutdowns affecting business across the board. Some production for export was permitted albeit operating under very constraining conditions but the overall result was that sales plummeted across the region in the final four months of the financial year.



*Harris staff unload relief supplies. Harris locations were used as collection points for donations by members of the public to aid Dominica after it was struck by Hurricane Maria*



### The pandemic was one of the triggers setting into motion a whole slew of supply chain issues

As the saying goes “When the going gets tough, the tough get going” and that’s how Harris tackled the challenge. When there was no or very reduced public transport, the company organized carpools to keep doing what could be done; and when hand sanitizer couldn’t be sourced, they decided to make their own. According to Kenyon, the HR team across the region should take a bow for their dedication to the welfare of the staff and their families; their continuous communication and educational effort and their overall management was akin to the magnificent job of health workers around the world.



*Coping with threat of coronavirus.*

“The past ten years has been a rollercoaster and the sheer number of challenges, I believe, is unprecedented”, noted the Harris boss who predicted that the volatility seen in recent years is likely to continue. “These pressures”, he said “also give rise to creativity and learning how to do things differently and better. I think the pandemic has taught us a lot; it has brought us closer together as a team and the silver-lining was that people rediscovered their homes and spent more time and money on improvements and renovations. All these factors combined, to bring Harris our best year yet.”

remembered:

# Ralph “Bruggadung” Johnson

1932-2021



The Harris family and executive was deeply saddened at the passing of founder Ralph Johnson on 27 May 2020. He retired in 2009 and as Chairman Emeritus he continued always to take an active interest in Harris and liked to be kept up to date in all that was going on.

The Prime Minister of Barbados, the Hon Mia Mottley, paid tribute to his achievements referring to him as “a Builder of Barbados” and “a very successful post-Independence industrialist” who led the way in exporting locally-made products into the Eastern Caribbean. Speaking of his approachability and down-to-earth attitude, she said above all, “Bruggadung was Bajan – and you could

not miss it in the way he interacted with others. He was Bajan by name and by nature and anyone who knew him, knew that what you saw, was what you got with him”.

On his passing, he received many accolades from the sporting fraternity. Ralph was a keen sportsman and had participated in his younger days in boxing, water-polo, football, motor-racing and rallying and later in squash, sailing and golf, getting involved in many committees and the development of youth sports. He was instrumental in starting a national lottery primarily for sports development and he was proud to serve on the Olympic committee for 30 years, 28 of which he held the post of Vice President. In 1997, he was honoured to be awarded the Gold Crown of Merit for his outstanding contribution to business and sport.

Having seen the economic landscape change much since Harris Paints was started, Ralph was a fervent supporter of the local manufacturing sector and served as President of the BMA 1990-92.

Chairman of Harris Paints, Robert Jones shared a close friendship and professional relationship with Ralph for several decades and said “he was very supportive of the senior management team we had handpicked and then worked closely with for over a decade. That team has since built and expanded the company’s products and services while maintaining the core values that Ralph helped establish.”

CEO Ian Kenyon said he felt especially

blessed to have been afforded the opportunity from Ralph to guide the company in the last decade and remarked, “Ralph was our biggest champion. Thanks to him, we have a company with a bright future, founded on unique values and driven by a never-ending passion to innovate and constantly improve the customer experience.”

Ralph’s initial vision in 1972 and his leadership throughout the years led Harris Paints from a local manufacturer punching above its weight, to being one of the Caribbean’s leading supplier of architectural finishes, building products and paint. Ralph’s passion for innovation and his energy remain at the core of our company’s DNA, a credit to his immense contribution.

A champion, a mentor and an inspiration; his legacy will live on.



*At the 2019 Andrew Phillips Memorial Stages Rally at Vaucluse, Barbados (L-R) Wendy Del Castillo, Ralph Johnson, Wynona Phillips and John Marshall.*



# memories of bygone days

## a tribute to Ralph Johnson

Both Cecile and Wendy knew of Ralph from a young age and later joined Harris Paints Barbados in the early 1980s. At that time they did not realize that they not only got a new boss but someone they would come to consider a father figure and who would make a lasting impression on their lives. Below is a selection of their memories:

“My earliest memory of Ralph is as a young child. My parents would take us on Sunday afternoons to the old Seawell Airport to watch the planes landing and taking off. There I saw him wearing huge gloves guiding the planes in to park on the tarmac. Little did I know at the time that this same person would be so instrumental in guiding me along my career in my adult life.

I have often said that ‘The Boss’ as we affectionately called him, had a sixth sense and that is the ability to win the hearts of people of all walks of life. We did our jobs with the knowledge that we were respected as team players and our loyalty to do a good job for the Boss was a foregone conclusion.

The Boss’ door was always open for us staff (once you could catch him there!) and he would be always willing to lend a listening ear and take our suggestions which made you have a sense of being appreciated.

I used to sit outside of Mr Johnson’s office next to his Secretary Suzette Edghill. In those days we had the telephones where the buttons would light up when the phone was in use. Mr Johnson was known to have very long telephone conversations and the calls would be backing up. We discovered a sign to tell if he was soon finishing. The Boss would lean back in his chair and ‘lay float’ during the long conversations and we would hear the chair squeaking when he leaned forward



*Wendy Del Castillo*

to an upright position - that would signal that the conversation was being wrapped up and we would have the all clear to put through another call!”

Wendy Del Castillo

“I met him at about the age of nine at Dunford House, Fontabelle when he managed The Merryman and sold water skis. Of course, I never imagined at the time the paths our lives would take.

Mr Johnson, or ‘The Boss’ as he was more familiarly known had a very special bond with us and used to christen us with some special titles; we were honoured to have Lords, Sirs, Mistresses and Miss titles bestowed on us and we hoped one day that he himself would be granted a knighthood.

We remember the old-time Christmas Eve office parties. Work stopped at 11am and



*Cecile Herbert*

the party began at the office but who knew where we would end up. We would swing up by Coles Printery, where they were usually having a blast, then head down to town to a bar called The Office (now Nelson Arms).

One Christmas luncheon that stands out was at Brown Sugar. You could say that we overstayed our welcome and Michael Carter begged the kitchen staff to make more Jug-Jug. Finally they told us that they were closing, and Mr Johnson said ‘Let’s head to Casuarina Hotel’ where we continued to party with things getting really wild. Suzette Edghill was drinking some blue drink which had her rocking down the place. Linda Marshall’s shoe ended up in a tree and thankfully James Johnson (who was only a young boy back then) was there to retrieve it!”

Cecile Herbert



in loving  
**memory**

We love to remember the glad times, but there have been sad times too. Over the past ten years, Harris and BH Paints have lost too many of their dear colleagues and friends, gone too soon. Here we honour their memory; applaud their contribution and friendship; and remember them in our hearts.



**David Archer**

Finance Officer/Human Resource Assistant  
20 September 2020  
HARRIS PAINTS GUYANA

**David Mayers**

Technical Officer  
9 April 2020  
HARRIS PAINTS BARBADOS

**Sandra Graham**

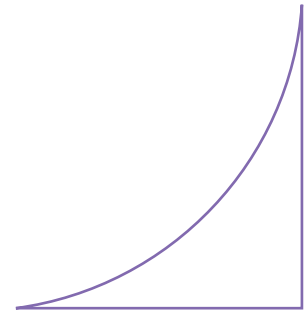
Vice President Procurement and Sustainability  
10 October 2019  
BH PAINTS, JAMAICA

**Ryan Maynard**

Senior Production Assistant  
11 November 2015  
HARRIS PAINTS BARBADOS

**Cecil Whyte**

Technical Consultant  
1 October 2015  
BH PAINTS, JAMAICA



# acts of God

The last decade has been beset by large hurricanes and devastating storms causing death and destruction across the region. In fact, the 2020 Atlantic hurricane season was named as the most active year on record (as of April 2022).

Speaking at the Summit of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in 2021, the Prime Minister of Barbados, Hon Mia Mottley admonished world leaders in her address, for the inadequate support of small island developing states that have suffered: “Failure to provide the critical finance and that of loss and damage, is measured my friends in lives and livelihoods in our communities. This is immoral and it is unjust.....We have come here today to say, try harder, try harder because our people ...needs our action now”, she said.

The threat is very real and there were several extreme events from 2015 affecting Caribbean peoples and countries in which Harris operates. Due to the company's extensive and established network and experience in logistics, Harris was well positioned to respond.

## Tropical Storm Erika, 2015

The storm that hit Dominica on 27 August resulted in 13 deaths and about USD 483M in estimated damages. Torrential rain triggered massive landslides and flooding causing widespread destruction that left the entire villages of Petite Savanne and Dubique uninhabitable.

On hearing the news, Barbadian businessman Paul Johnson, Ralph's brother, put a plan together along with some close sailing associates to deliver relief supplies loaded on their jointly owned fishing vessel. It took three flat-bed trucks, a pick-up and a transit van to freight the food, water, medical items and other necessities donated by the many companies and concerned citizens that responded. The boat was so packed to capacity, the crew had to take turns sleeping in a small passageway during the journey. On arrival in Roseau, they were met by the staff of Harris Paints who were a great help in unloading and providing storage to facilitate distribution of supplies.

## Hurricane Irma, 2017

In the early morning of 6 September, Irma struck Antigua and Barbuda with Barbuda experiencing a direct hit. It was later recorded as one of the most intense hurricanes in history sustaining Category 5 status for three days. Not two weeks later, the twin island was further affected by Hurricane Maria. When the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres described Barbuda after the storms he said” I have never seen anywhere else in the world a forest completely decimated without one single leaf on any tree...in every community, most of the buildings are destroyed or heavily damaged.”



It was somewhat of a miracle for Harris CEO to learn that, on the whole, our partners in Antigua had emerged without critical-level damages. Further to a donations drive, Harris was able to send two containers of relief supplies to the National Office of Disaster Services in Antigua. These included supplies donated by Harris Paints, the public as well as items by agencies that needed shipping support including the Barbados RSPCA who provided animal feed and supplies and the United Nations Population Fund (UNPA) that provided over 1 000 dignity kits.

## Hurricane Maria, 2017

Dominica is one of the smallest and most vulnerable islands to hurricanes and it suffered its most devastating blow to date when Hurricane Maria hit on the evening of 18 September.

A global emergency response agency that deals with humanitarian crises reported that hurricane forces resulted in “intense storm surges, torrential downpour, overflowing raging rivers and extremely high winds across the island, left 31 people dead, 37 missing. 65 000 people, around 80% of the population, were directly affected and more than 90% of roofs were damaged or destroyed...”

The Harris family looked on in horror. Harris immediately activated an emergency response team to spearhead relief activities and a communications programme “Help Us Help”, to drive awareness with collection centres in Barbados, Jamaica, Guyana and Saint Lucia.



*Aerial view of the devastation in Roseau, Dominica on 28 September 2017 (Photo by Jose Jimenez, Getty Images)*

Word slowly trickled in from staff, principally Roslyn Sorhaindo, Retail Services and Export Sales Manager who, from her home, over the critical days after the impact, was able to get word of other employees.

Mercifully, no Harris staff members were lost in the catastrophic event which had to be deeply traumatizing; damage was sustained to virtually all their property, with two people completely losing homes.

Amazingly, the factory also had very little damage. It had flooding and had lost a few tiles off the roof. It seems that a neighbouring property had made some changes to its boundary affecting the course of the waterway nearby and that had saved the factory!

The Dominican team were urged to take their time to attend to their personal situation with assurance they would be on full pay until such time as they could return to work but in “two twos” they were back at the factory and in full clean up mode.

With the country in disarray and facing shortages, the Harris Group arranged USD 30 000 of supplies especially for employees and their families. In addition, all Harris locations were conducting a collections drive and received overwhelming support. “If there is one thing that has come out of this terrible devastation,” said John Marshall who heads Harris Paints Barbados, “it is that Caribbean people unite to help each other and we have seen a heartfelt response across the board. For us it’s simple. The Caribbean is our home. It is where we live and where we do business. We have real

ties to these communities and every year we face the threat of hurricanes together. One of the biggest fears, of course, is losing one's home and the home is something at the heart of what we do." Harris also approached partners, a paint guild of 77 paint companies in North America, Europe and Latin America in a plea for Dominica and were rewarded with a donation of USD 200 000 in recovery and rebuilding materials for the country.

On top of this, as a result of aid and recovery activities, Harris was able to raise USD 30 000 in cash donations and coordinate for shipping about 100 tonnes of donated items (the equivalent of about 120 palettes) or six container loads to Dominica's relief efforts. In a presentation ceremony Prime Minister, Hon Roosevelt Skerrit praised Harris for its commitment to Dominicans over the years and expressed gratitude for the gesture.

Harris would like to acknowledge the many persons from around the region and far afield that lent support and made contributions. Harris President, Robert Jones said, "I am so encouraged by the remarkable response from the public and appreciative of the trust they have put in us. I am grateful for the spirit of cooperation and partnership that has prevailed. I am inspired by the resilience of those that have been hardest hit and most of all, I want to thank every one of our staff for giving so much of themselves and together, in helping us make Harris a company we can all be very proud of."



*Marguerite Desir, Harris Paints presents cheque in support of Dominica hurricane relief efforts to Prime Minister, Hon Roosevelt Skerrit*



HELP US HELP



HELP US HELP

**DONATE  
HERE!**

WATER  
MEDICAL SUPPLIES  
LINENS & CLOTHING  
CLEANING PRODUCTS  
CANNED FOOD  
TOILETRIES, ETC.



## Murphy's Law in Action

The summer of 2017 spelled disruption and destruction in several locations in and around the Caribbean Basin causing loss of life and impeding business activities at every turn. In the case of Hurricane Maria, it had a direct impact on Harris' operation in Dominica and its ability to service orders for export markets which had to be rerouted to other Harris production facilities. There

was also a cluster of calamities that severely affected the operations of several raw material suppliers in the region causing stoppages and delays of vital items needed for paint production. It started in August 2017 with flooding in Houston, then a serious earthquake in Mexico; a supplier in Dominican Republic suffered a fire; and both the canning plant in Puerto Rico and Harris'

regional distribution centre in Miami were hit by hurricane damage. The long supply chains of getting goods to the Caribbean is already very challenging and Harris procurement teams utilize mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of disruption. However, that summer, it seemed that literally anything that could go wrong, did go wrong – just as Murphy surmised all along.



## Covid-19 Pandemic

All our lives were turned upside down as the Covid-19 pandemic became a reality, unfolding after March 2020, sparking shutdowns, restricted movements, physical distancing, routine hand sanitization and mask wearing around the globe.

Harris Human Resources department sprung into action to educate employees, develop working protocols, implement safety activities, facilitate vaccination and testing where applicable and implement strategies to maximize work opportunities in six countries with different impacts and government mandates.

The pandemic forced the adoption of new approaches. It normalized work-from-home, gave new priority to digital advertising (not just for young people anymore) and online meetings and webinars became standard operating procedure. Fortunately, Harris had implemented the Microsoft 365 platform and had adopted Teams (an online collaboration tool) prior to the pandemic so in that respect managers hit the ground running. By November, Harris launched their new Ulttima Plus technology in Antigua virtually.

However, there is no getting away from it; it was far from normal. With a high degree of uncertainty, budgets were done and redone two, three and four times. Store teams were retro-fitted with plexiglass; hand sanitizer stations and customer sign-in books for tracking purposes were implemented; and marketing considered new ways in which to reach and service customers under these new conditions, launching the “Break out the Box” video series to provide home decorating tips with designer and Harris Colour Design consultant, Melissa Browne.

Two years on, Covid-19 did not prove to be the commercial catastrophe that was feared. In fact, after the immediate fall-off caused by shutdowns over the summer 2020, sales recovered surprisingly well. Spending more time at home, customers prioritized home projects and invested in making their surroundings more comfortable. In many cases, with travel curtailed, they put savings into long awaited renovations or added valued extra space to their home. This is not to minimize the very many people that were critically impacted by loss of income mostly through the very hard-hit tourism industry. Many people were critically affected and in need of assistance. However, like the old adage, “Necessity is the mother of Invention” Covid-19 also gave rise to new found creativity and entrepreneurship.



### Changes to Better Protect You

|  |   |                          |  |
|--|---|--------------------------|--|
|  | <p><b>Fewer People In Store</b><br/>Restricted store access to limit number of persons in store at one time.</p>    |                          | <p><b>Frequent Sanitization</b><br/>We will break periodically to re-sanitize hands and high-touch areas throughout the day.</p> |
|  | <p><b>Prepare to Shop Safely</b><br/>We ask that shoppers wear face masks and sanitize hands on entering store.</p> |                          | <p><b>Mandatory PPE</b><br/>Our staff will wear protective gear because we care about you!</p>                                   |
|  | <p><b>Physical Distancing</b><br/>We ask that people stay approx. 6ft apart while shopping or queuing.</p>          | <p><b>Stay Safe!</b></p> |  |





*Ash inside and out: Barbados; Heavy ashfall covers Barbados on 12-13 April forcing a national shutdown. The island remains on edge for two to three weeks uncertain when it will end. The national clean up effort costs the government BBD 22M.*

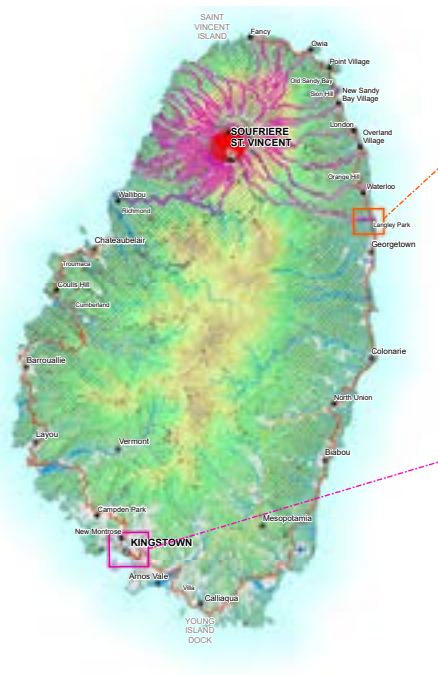
## Eruption La Soufrière, St Vincent 2021

As if hurricanes were not enough to contend with, in 2021 after months of rumblings and increased activity, the La Soufrière volcano at St Vincent's northern end, emitted a series of massive eruptions for the first time in over 40 years.

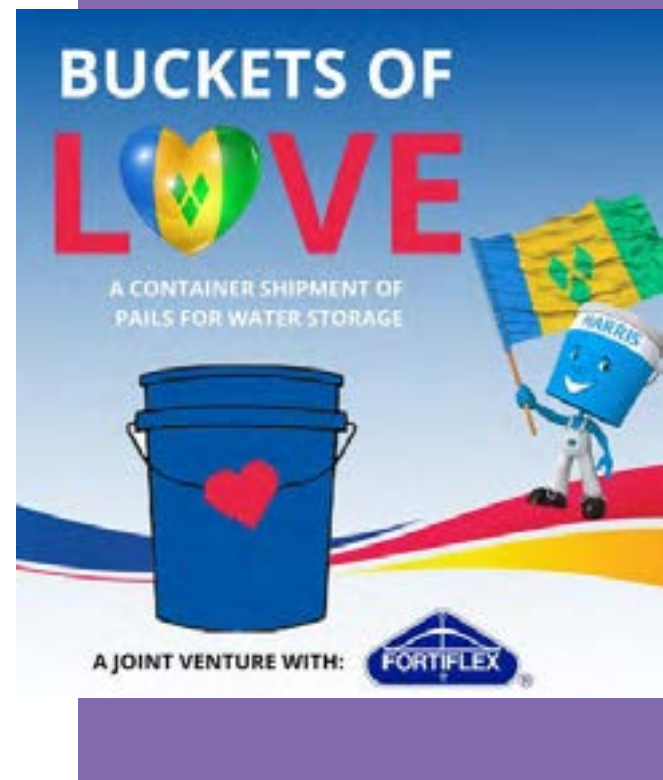
13 000 residents in the red and orange zones nearest the volcano, about 15% of the population, had to evacuate due to suffocating, thick ashfall and noxious fumes and about a third of the country's agriculture was wiped out. The unimaginable conditions were crippling. In a BBC report, emergency officials described the landscape as a "battle zone". It is incredible that no one was killed.

So violent was the explosion that an ash plume was sent 26 000 ft into the air and carried on air currents in an easterly direction affecting southern parts of Saint Lucia and covering Barbados, bringing the island to a standstill.

In the wake of the eruption, there was a huge demand for plastic pails to hold foodstuffs and water and to protect them from contamination by ash. These were itemized on the high priority items requested on the Immediate Needs List of the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO). As a result, Harris approached packaging supplier Fortiflex and in a joint effort, they were able to arrange a container of nearly 2 000 food-safe plastic pails for St Vincent. These were distributed by their longstanding retail partners and leaders in the business community in collaboration with emergency agencies.



Map CDEMA: St Vincent and the Grenadines  
- La Soufriere Volcano, 30 April 2021



# project fusion



For a manufacturing company working over several sites, selling through numerous countries, getting on the same page, as they say, is essential to managing the business. Without a single source of real-time information, processes quickly become complex, unwieldy, difficult to maintain and are unable to deliver optimum results.

This was just about where Harris was, in the years approaching 2015. The company had been operating too long with a “Frankenstein” model patched with applications but it was evident that this was not sustainable and that the company would benefit from many efficiencies from a centralized, fully integrated platform through which to manage core business functions.

Under the leadership of the then VP of Finance and Information Technology, Andrew Fairley and his right-hand man, Kerry Plummer (today the Senior Manager for IT), they put forward a plan designed to transform the business infrastructure. The

multiple measures proposed would provide increased efficiency, productivity, enhanced functionality and security while reducing the redundancies, silos and the painstaking processes that were necessary to extract data in the past.

Dubbed Project Fusion the plan was greenlighted in 2015 and was phased over the next five years. It not only put all Harris businesses on a much stronger footing but positioned the company for future growth.

The data connection between all the Business Units (BUs) was key and Harris invested in a top-of-the-line data super-highway - a faster, more reliable fibre connection to ensure a high level of accessibility and data privacy. Instead of managing numerous servers up and down the Caribbean, the system was redesigned using a few main servers in Jamaica to host all information. The virtualized environment could be managed remotely. To ensure a robust network, all the main components of the IT ecosystem were duplicated to reduce risk of outages.

With the groundwork laid, the company set about upgrading the ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) system which had considerably more muscle than its predecessor offering multiple integrations and improved functionality for marketing, sales, production and inventory management. At around the same time, the Microsoft Office 365 Platform was implemented which meant that the whole company was now using the same version of the same software which could be controlled centrally. It provided access to files anywhere and improved business continuity through secure cloud storage and offered employees many more tools and options for communication and collaboration.

Among the most used tools is Microsoft Teams which has become a staple within Harris. Fortunately, it had been introduced a year or two prior to the pandemic but Covid-19 shutdowns and extended work-from-home mandates moved the application from a convenience to a lifeline for many.

The IT transformations under Fusion affected nearly every aspect of the business. In stores, the Point-Of-Sale systems were replaced with a new ERP compatible one, reducing manual operations, increasing speed of checkout and offering new functionality. Of course, there was a cost to upgrade but there were also significant savings made on reduced maintenance and consumables. A very powerful new predictive business intelligence tool was implemented to better manage inventory, procurement and production schedules to meet demand. Prior production software had not been ideal for process manufacturing and in the warehouse, different BUs used different tools. These ‘packages’ were now upgraded resulting in numerous benefits including improved stock reporting and management.

Managing change is never easy but Kerry believes that having a phased approach and working closely with a cross-functional team including leaders, sponsors and key personnel across departments and business units was key to getting it done as well as the leadership of Andrew Fairley, who he credits highly with providing critical counsel, encouragement and motivation.

As for Kerry, he is at his happiest transforming the business, providing tools that allow employees to work smarter not harder, providing automated solutions that contribute to efficiency and keeping up with the pace of change through a love of learning.

# learning curve

The Human Resource department further developed the Harris Academy in 2021. All internal and external training falls under the mantle of the Academy which aims to develop skills for the paint industry.

The Academy launched a new online platform through which staff can access a wide variety of materials. “The online format is ideal for a regional organization” said Marguerite Desir, the VP of Human Resources. “In an in-person session a lot depends on the trainer and the learners’ attention on a specific day but online, materials are consistent and can be accessed at a time convenient to the learner; its highly flexible according to the desired pace. “

In addition to industry content, Harris has added skills training on a wide number of topics through a key partnership with an online learning educator. The Academy is an important factor in developing the talent within, driving exceptional customer service and increasing efficiency.

Online learning also fits well with the different types of jobs and working models. During the pandemic, there was a great rise in employees working from home which has indelibly changed the outlook on the world of work. The company recognizes that for a section of the talent pool this will continue to be attractive; at the same time, in-person meetings can do a lot to build relationships, increase understanding and cut down on back-and-forth emails, in already overloaded inboxes. Harris’ HR department will continue to offer flexible working arrangement to employees for the best productivity and broadest appeal. The top HR executive says, “We want to attract the brightest and the best; people with different skill sets, experiences and ways of thinking because we believe that’s how to generate the best ideas, to drive innovation and make the company stronger”.



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# new branding rolls out

The Harris fleet is newly wrapped and ready to roll. Company vehicles across the region are sporting a racy new livery featuring the company's signature red, yellow and blue.

Brand guidelines were introduced 2021 to help manage the brand image incorporating the new colour flow element. Company vehicles sport the new look around the region.



# grab 'n go gets a makeover

The budget busting Excel brand received a packaging and campaign refresh in 2017. The range provides a fashionable bright Caribbean palette, at a “dreamy low price”. Among the eye-catching POP materials were full size standees showcasing actual paint colour. Shoppers on tight budgets loved the new look and trendy materials.

The interior/ exterior Excel line features 30 flat emulsion colours and 10 in gloss oil.

LIKE A HEAT WAVE

MY PATIO IS HEAT WAVE

BH EXCEL

Easy to choose. Easy to use. Easy on the pocket.  
Colours you'll love at a dreamy low price.



BOOM! SHAKE THE ROOM

MY BEDROOM IS PINK EXPLOSION

BH EXCEL

Easy to choose.  
Easy to use.  
Easy on the pocket.  
Colours you'll love at a dreamy low price.

# focus on professionals

The two main consumer segments in the paint business are the do-it-yourself (DIY) market, also described as householders or homeowners and the professional segment. Professionals use paint as part of their work, for commercial purposes; the term embraces a wide number of businesses from construction companies; metal work and engineering outfits; all manner of enterprises from offices to hotels to large production plants and paint and maintenance contractors. Both segments are important but professionals are the frequent buyers so one trade customer typically has several residential and/or commercial projects a year.

This alone might seem reason enough that Harris implemented a key strategic focus on the trade or pro sector from 2014 developing a Pro Club, Pro Desks in stores and a new brand of Commercial paint specifically designed for use by professionals, the first regional manufacturer to do so.

However, there were many other contributing factors. For one, the aging population. According to data from World Population Prospects (the 2019 Revision), a report by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, by 2050 25% of persons living in Europe and North America could be 65 or over. The current US statistic is about 16%.

The Caribbean has one of the fastest aging populations in the developing world (except for Haiti, Belize, Dominican Republic and Guyana) mainly fueled by declining birth rates; increased life expectancy due to

improved health standards; high rates of outward migration especially among young people and significant numbers of older returning nationals. As persons age, they are far less likely to take on projects themselves but direct them, hiring painters or a company to carry out the work.

Where small island economies were at one time below the regard of international paint companies, without protections, global paint brands have become increasingly aggressive in the Caribbean where they take aim at professionals with a high volume of projects to quickly achieve market penetration.

With exceptional experience, technical expertise and quality products, Harris has been servicing trade business since it began operations though not all customers knew the range of services being offered. Until this time, the marketing budget was primarily funneled into general awareness and promotional campaigns and little was put towards pros. The company now started to craft communications designed to elevate this market segment and draw attention to the many services that Harris offers the sector, developing new ones to eliminate customer paint points.

On top of a new logo and brochure outlining benefits of Harris' Pro Club, the company provided additional colour services to pros. It implemented new protocols designed to enhance colour consistency over multiple orders and introduced digital renderings to help customers facilitate the sometimes time-consuming colour selection process.

The Pro Club was launched in 2015, with key locations featuring Pro Desks to facilitate quicker order processing and sales efforts were supported by a programme of special promotions and communications. One of the most successful initiatives was the provision of the Harris A-Z Paint Guide designed to help professionals identify the correct Harris system to successfully paint virtually any surface, which was made available in 2018.

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- ↳ **PRO DEALS** – exclusive offers!
- ↳ **TECHNICAL SUPPORT** – from experienced professionals
- ↳ **COLOUR/PRODUCT SAMPLES\*** – test and trial solutions
- ↳ **COLOUR VISUALS\*** – show clients how colours will look for existing projects
- ↳ **QUALITY GUARANTEE** – local customer support
- ↳ **DELIVERY AND MORE!**

**JOIN NOW**

Simply register in store or online. Application available at: any Harris Colourcentres (Fitz Village/ Witley/ Six Roads) or [www.championsofcolour.com/professionals](http://www.championsofcolour.com/professionals). Receive notification of your club cash account in 3 business days.

New Members GET a **FREE A-Z Paint Guide**. Systems to paint every substrate and solve common paint problems.

For queries or more information call 256-5498 or email: [xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

Professional customers were given more paint choices in 2017 when Harris launched a new brand specifically with contractors in mind. Ultima Plus the premium brand is still the most suitable for projects that require maximum durability but not all projects are created equal. Contrary to popular opinion and reality television, contractors often face serious challenges to turn a profit. Harris identified that there was room for a mid-level brand suitable for specific projects that could provide contractors with a lower-cost option but that was more than capable of doing the job.

The Pro Speed Cover brand is an all-emulsion line for fast drying and quicker work production. The flat and eggshell finishes are especially cost effective; they utilize special rheology and cover more area, over 20% more on average, than a regular can. The high shine gloss emulsion, excellent for windows, doors and cabinetry, looks like oil but dries up to 30 times faster and its Fuse Fast technology causes paint to harden and cure quickly so that newly painted surfaces don't stick together.

The brand has established keen markets particular in Jamaica and the OECS and it is doing very well in Guyana where thousands of new homes are being built. Used strategically it can provide significant savings on suitable projects such as housing developments (many of which are later personalized by new owners), areas that are frequently and routinely refreshed: income investment rentals (Airbnb) and secondary low-trafficked areas.



Harris launches its Pro Speed Cover brand



# pro shows

To showcase the full range of solutions to professionals, Harris organized a Pro Show in 2016 in Barbados and 2017 in Kingston, Jamaica. The one-of-a-kind events showcased several presentations on key topics and featured international suppliers. In Jamaica the event was the key launch platform for the

new contractor brand. In announcing the Pro Show, Harris Paints' Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Orlando Vasquez, explained: "Owing to the need to be more competitive, some contractors have been calling for a lower cost protective building coating that can reduce their overheads

substantially and help drive their business, while delivering serviceable performance. That has been the major motivation behind the development of this new brand."



*Harris and BH Paints promote the wide range of solutions to trade at Pro Show Events; (Main image) Colin Deane, Trade Sales Representative, holds guests in rapt attention as he shares wise advice and technical expertise*

# support for manufacturing sector

Two of Harris' highly experienced Business Unit (BU) Heads were elected to lead their respective local manufacturing associations.

Marguerite Desir, Senior Vice President, Human Resource and Head of BU Antigua, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Lucia, was recently re-elected as President of the St Lucia Manufacturers' Association (SMA), a position she has held since 2018. John Marshall, Vice President, Operations and Head of BU Barbados, was elected President of the Barbados Manufacturers' Association (BMA), 18 August 2021.

At a time when the manufacturing sector and the national economy is facing its toughest challenges, both the SMA and BMA provide a support network for its members to foster post-pandemic growth, promote trade, improve best practices and build greater resilience amidst ongoing supply chain delays and high fuel costs.

"The SMA Executive Team remains committed to working with all manufacturers and other stakeholders to ensure continued and improved best practices and delivery of excellent products and services both for the local and international markets," says Mrs. Desir, who has been with Harris Paints for over 16 years. She brings extensive knowledge of the Caribbean business world, unwavering commitment to the manufacturing sector in Saint Lucia, and a personal approach to her role as association President.

"I enjoy bringing people together through shared experiences, which I believe is

essential to promoting understanding, a culture of friendship, cooperation and productivity," she says.

In comparison to other private sector representative bodies, the SMA, which was formed in 2002, may be considered fledgling in terms of outreach and capacity, but Mrs. Desir believes strongly in its message and its membership. "Evidence has been shown, by way of international accolades, that Saint Lucia's manufacturers produce world-class products, and we work hard to promote them locally, regionally and globally."

Before being elected President of the BMA, first incorporated in 1964, John Marshall previously served as the Chairman of the Association's Construction working group. He has accumulated more than 25 years' experience in sales, marketing and CRM analysis, which will help the BMA build on its impressive performance in terms of exports and contribution to GDP while advocating for the local manufacturing sector.

"Having served as an executive member of the BMA, I am confident that we will collectively continue to build on the resilient performance as a team," Marshall says. According to the Central Bank of Barbados quarterly review for the period Jan-March 2022, the economy grew by 11.8% and manufacturing was up 5.4% having endured some extremely challenging post-pandemic conditions and supply chain issues.

"The BMA, of course, commits to its service in the manufacturing industry, being proactive to facilitating improvements where necessary, and tapping into new niches for expanding our brand."



*Marguerite Desir*



*John Marshall*

# Harris revolutionizes paint making

In a striking move, Harris is the process of unveiling new-style products powered by Quantum Technology. They are made on a new kind of tint system that utilizes unique technological advancements and a completely different approach to how paint is made.

The initiative, which has been three to four years in development after identifying specialist equipment partners, is set to change the standard method of tinting that has been the norm in the industry for the last 60 years and produce even more brilliant colours.

No longer will retailers have to buy four bases of a product in order to tint the full range of colours. With the new master system retailers can tint any colour from just one base. That is virtually unheard of in the industry.

“What matters, is being able to provide paint colours that match customers’ expectations and will look as good as they imagined”, said the CEO, Ian Kenyon. “Tests on our products powered by Quantum Technology have shown that the new system has superior accuracy and precision when compared to traditional methods of tinting and produces cleaner, clearer colours”. He pointed out that the new dispensers could drop the smallest amount of colour “many times smaller than what traditional dispensers are capable of” and therefore could produce more accurate custom matches.

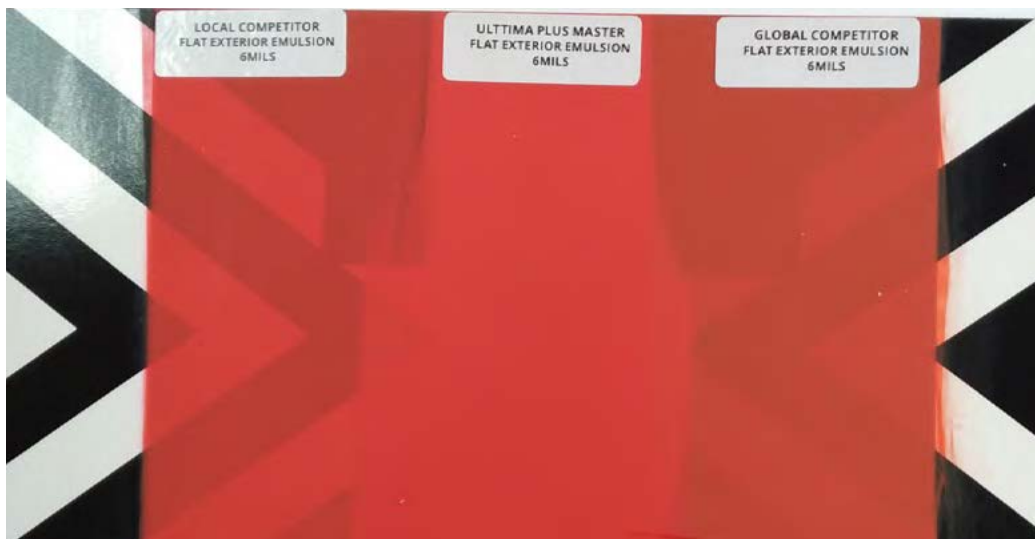
The company installed 15 new dispensers in retailers across Barbados in April 2022 and further implemented the new system in Jamaica at distributors of BH Paints in the

latter part of the summer. These can now produce the company’s next-gen products made with Quantum Technology. According to Maxine Cunningham the Retail Services Manager, Key Accounts in Jamaica, “the new system is a lot more cost effective for retailers. The price of product is about the same but retailers will require less units of stock than before, they will have less capital tied up in inventory and more space available in their warehouse. On top of that, due to the complexity of the four base system its more difficult to project demand and what colours customers will order; with the new system retailers are much less likely to run into outages which in the end, means more sales.”

As a member of the Nova Paint Club, Harris first learned of the new technology during an industry meeting in Italy. The Vice President of Technical Services and Innovation attended and instantly saw the tremendous possibilities. The company started doing the foundational work almost right away.

Kenyon stated that Harris was perfectly positioned to take advantage of the new technology. “The advanced dispensers are pivotal to our new style products”, he explained “and the big players in the market are simply too big. It would be too much of an undertaking for them to switch systems but Harris is small and agile enough to be able to adapt and take advantage of these new innovations.”

The tint technology that Harris is bringing to market has been granted patents for 13 new technological innovations. Moreover, Harris has itself been granted an international



*Black and White Card shows three samples of red paint. All paint is applied at 6mil or two coats. The one in the centre is Harris Ultima Plus with Quantum Technology which completely hides the black and white design in background. To its left and right are examples from international and regional competitors.*



*Clockwise: Annmarie Ancel, Assistant Sales Manager, puts the new Mini Pot Machine at Premier Plaza Colourcentre, Kingston through its paces; Don Gooding, Colour Officer has been pivotal to the installations across the region; New dispensers installed ready to mix next-gen products powered by Quantum Technology; Installation of hardware in stores*



patent for developing a key component that contributes to the clarity and accuracy of the colours. “Our Quantum Technology which powers our new style, one-base products bring together many elements; engineering, chemistry, colour science, pigments and special formulations to produce better than ever colour results for our customers” added Kenyon.

After extensive development work, refinement and testing Harris implemented the first master system location in Antigua in 2020 with master bases being made in the new factory there for Ultima Plus, Flat, Satin and Porch & Patio – the top selling emulsions. Their agent there, Jason Goddard of Paint Plus, loves the new concept and said “the special patented pump technology used on the new tint machine is much more advanced and reliable so you don’t get colour variances as you do with other pumps that degrade slowly over time. In general, it’s a much simpler system with less risk of operators grabbing the wrong base and if there are issues, having tech support that can tap in remotely is definitely a benefit”.

Currently in three country locations, Harris intends to continue expanding the system across its network. “We are extremely happy with ease of use, the performance of the machines and the exceptional colour results we are seeing” said the CEO.

Despite hundreds of hours of colour testing both in and out of the lab, Harris has taken the extra step of having its new Quantum products performance tested by an independent, international paint laboratory. “Samples of our paint and competitive products are tested across a range of properties” explained the company’s top technical expert. “They are, what we call, ‘blind tested’. That means that scientists that conduct the tests cannot identify which company a sample belongs to. An analysis of the test results proved that the paint performance of the Harris products overall, outperformed competitors”.

*New style dispensers that control all aspects of colour and can produce new one-base products*

As a result of the new system, Harris can now also offer customers very small pack sizes designed to help test colour at home. Colours can look different in different lighting conditions and when placed next to other colours and Harris is excited to offer customers an easy and affordable way to find the colour that works best for them in their space. They have invested in two vending style machines that can tint all the Ulttima Plus standard colours (well over 1 000) and produce a small yogurt pot sized container of colour in under two minutes.

“Before the smallest size we could tint to with accuracy was a quart but if you want to test out a bunch of colours, that could get quite pricey” admitted the CEO. “Customers have been asking us for a smaller pack size for some time but we simply didn’t have the capability to do that accurately. Our new mini pot machines are incredibly unique. We actually have the only machines in the world like this right now running the most recent, fastest software, offering samples in two finishes and utilizing them in our stores.

Harris will gradually migrate their entire range of decorative coatings to the new system using a phased approach and expect to have made the transition across all markets in less than five years. “We see a host of benefits with Quantum”, said Kenyon “the system is much simpler and therefore removes a lot of the headaches; it delivers better than ever colour results and reduces instances of mistints; it makes products like our new mini pots possible and is overall more efficient.”

It’s a full circle moment for Harris. Roughly 30 years ago the company made a splash by introducing the first computer colour matching system in the region. Up until then, customers only bought ready-mixed product. It is fitting that after 50 years in the industry, they are again blazing a trail of innovation.



# Mini Pots Massive ideas!

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# focus on the future

From decade to decade the team at Harris has worked hard to streamline operations and to maintain the best competitive form possible, like the boxer preparing for a prize fight. The company is always working to improve efficiency and keeps a sharp eye on key performance metrics. Unlike when the company was first established, the company routinely plans and reviews strategy where major decisions are heavily data driven. However, as every great athlete knows, the goal posts don't stay put. Conditions change, there are ever new developments designed to gain that competitive edge and those that fail to embrace the future or adapt, will surely fall behind.

Progress is not always in a straight line. Chairman Robert Jones is often reminded of an Irish joke: "A tourist travelling through the countryside stops and asks a local farmer for directions to a well-known town. The farmer looks very worried and sagely admonishes: 'If I was trying to get to where you want to go, I wouldn't be starting from here.'" Robert chuckles and admits that Harris grew organically, adopting the best strategies available to them at the time. However, he notes that the world has changed tremendously in the last 35 years, on many different levels, essentially driven by the extraordinary advances in computer technology. Due to the exceptionally fast rate of change, businesses are under continual pressure to re-evaluate their systems and processes and quite often approaches that once worked well, no longer stand up to the demands of the evolving marketplace.

One of the keys to Harris' success is that they have been historically quick to embrace change. The company, despite their modest

size, set out to be technologically progressive and bring new innovations to Barbados and the Caribbean. Their hosts of 'firsts' have been well documented.

Technology is a critical cornerstone to the brand and CEO Ian Kenyon is adamant that Harris will continue to be proactive. "We are very excited to complete the installation process of our new innovative tint systems across the region and expand our portfolio of products that are powered by Quantum Technology delivering exceptional benefits to all types of customers." While technology often drives product development, the CEO is quick to point out that it will be key in developing future services to make life easier for customers and to better communicate with them.

The company expects that there will be more volatility in the future. To stay centred in demanding situations, a business must be fortified by strong values. In the 1970s these were a reflection of the men at the heart of Harris, the founders and the many close friends and associates that became shareholders. The unusually tight-knit unit was characterized by a deep sense of respect and trust that allowed for a frank and open discussion of ideas and perspectives without recourse. The company has been exceedingly fortunate to have maintained very many long-term relationships in the Boardroom which have provided stability, continuity, experience, diversity and the strength to overcome substantial challenges.

"The quality of everything that we do is underpinned by the quality of our partnerships", exclaims Ian Kenyon. "Just as these relationships provided the core

strength needed to survive the early years, today the market is getting more international, more global and more competitive. Our future lies in establishing and maintaining successful long-term relationships with the right suppliers, retailers and customers."

Over the decades, Harris has been blessed to have had many enduring and fruitful relationships with retailers and agents across the Caribbean. These include Coreas/Ace Hardware in St Vincent, L L Ramdhanny & Co Ltd in Grenada and TDC (St Kitts & Nevis). In Antigua, Harris has worked successfully for many years with David Goddard of Paint Plus, an exclusive retailer of Harris products and looks forward to continued business with Jason Goddard at the helm. Through BH Paints in Jamaica, both Brumalia Hardware and Stewart's Hardware represent long-lasting ties, along with others such as K-Ban Hardware, Impact Hardware and Tools Hardware. There are of course many more Harris would like to recognize, who continue to make a valuable contribution and be an important part of the wider organization. It is Harris' fervent wish to build and strengthen all such partnerships and so grow strong Caribbean companies for the future.

The Harris team is energized as it looks forward to an optimistic future which they believe is full of opportunity. In order to grow and achieve top results, Harris strives to attract and maintain the region's top talent. The company intends to stay true to its Caribbean roots and as a corporate citizen supports the communities in which it operates. The very principle on which the company was founded was to provide customers with the best quality products

at the best possible price and Harris has never been more customer focused. By listening carefully to what is important to customers, Harris intends to continue to deliver leading-edge innovations through effective partnerships and products that answer consumers' demands for convenience and care for the environment.

Strengthened by the lessons and traditions of 50 colourful years, Harris is prepared to embrace a yet brighter future that is built through hard work and steadfast determination, carved out one colourful day at a time.

“Change your opinions, keep to your principles; change your leaves, keep intact your roots.”

Victor Hugo

# two generations of Scantleburys at Harris

Harris is extremely proud to be associated with two generations of Scantleburys at the company's Barbados business. Susan Gill (née Scantlebury) worked first as a Sales Associate and then moved into a different field, in the role of Senior Inventory Assistant, where she helps manage the warehouse and expedites orders both locally and around the region. She continues a family tradition. Her father started with Harris, back in the 1970s, conducting deliveries and after a period of long service, retired. Susan, who joined Harris almost 17 years ago, together with her father's work history, are a near match to Harris' own 50 years. Congrats!







*Crop Over Festival, Barbados (c 1984)*

**H** Harris is here to stay

**A** A force to be reckoned  
with every day

**R** Remember our aim is  
always to please you

**R** Rewards and dedication  
are a must for us too

**I** Innovating and being  
competitive comes easily

**S** So come on in and be part  
of our Harris family

A poem by Jennifer Husbands  
Retail Services Representative



**“F**ind people that are better than you,  
who are experts in their field. Look for  
people who are passionate, can add knowledge  
and have a strong desire to succeed and then  
know how to move out of the way!”

- Harris Leadership Code

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