



Bruce Hodgson had always been interested in furniture making and, having left the army, he decided to go back to college to learn his new trade. After completing a City and Guilds Certificate in furniture making and working as a general manager in a joinery company, he and his wife decided to leave London and move back to Bristol. This proved to be a good move, as Bristol had a long and distinguished history as a centre of furniture making and a valuable source of skilled labour.

Starting out as a sole trader, Mr Hodgson, began making bespoke furniture for affluent clientele. On meeting one of his clients, David Telling (Chairman and founder of MITIE Groups, and an investor in entrepreneurial businesses) he was offered backing to fund larger projects such as house conversions. Artichoke became a private limited company in 1999, with a share capital of

£134,000, half of which came from Bruce and the other half from David.

The marketing strategy was clear. It would all be about producing the highest quality work and backing it up with outstanding service. Most of their clients were high earners, so are cash rich and time poor. Service is what they are looking for. Artichoke's client base grew as a result of referrals and turnover is expected to top £2 million this year.

www.artichoke-ltd.com

Source: The Telegraph

Daisy Coffins

Following the success of their handicraft business Devoncraft, Craig, Alex and Philip Cooper wanted to build another sustainable business that would continue to use natural materials that were readily available in the Far East. Philip Cooper came up with idea of making "green" coffins.

Intrigued by this idea, Craig carried out some market research, visiting funeral parlours, asking questions, wanting to find out the main criteria for coffins. Using this information, the Coopers came up with a conventional coffin shape, that was constructed from large leaves wrapped around a softwood frame.

Start up funds for Daisy Coffins were provided by the main handicraft business, mainly to build two large warehouses that would hold 200 coffins. Daisy Coffins is not a stand-alone business and Craig expects it to reach it's break-even point by the end of the year

The main challenges facing the company was persuading funeral directors to accept alternative styles of coffin made from sustainable materials rather than chipboard or mahogany veneer and to create demand from the end users, the public.

The product was launched at a funeral trade exhibition and they are taking a stand at major retirement exhibitions.

www.daisycoffins.com

Source: The Times

