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**Celebrating 50 years, together**

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# 1961 The Beginning

**61**  
Brian Murphy quits Cyril Lords Carpets and sets up B.L. Murphy carpets

**62**  
Acquires property Beckenham – 'The Mews'

**65**  
Opens shop on the bridge, Beckenham

**68**  
Opens shop on the High Street Beckenham

**69**  
Renames business to Europa Carpet Contractors after "Café Europa" near the Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof

## Hello

This book is a tribute to 50 wonderful years of great relationships, fun stories and shared times. It seems like only yesterday that this closely-knit family business started (in a small house, packed to the ceiling with carpets). Since 1961, there has been plenty to smile about, lots of ideas hatched, and the odd famous client! We've always been able to see the funny side of things (it's hard not to when you're being chased through an Exhibition Hall by a pig!). And yes, we've also had our share of tough times. But never underestimate the power of people who believe in what they're doing. More than anything though, we couldn't have done it without you! **Thank you.**

# 1970

**79**  
Expansion to South Croydon

**78**  
Karen, Kevin and Anthony Murphy join the company

**76**  
Opens on premises in Wildfell Road Catford London SE6

**75**  
Takes on Cross Road East Croydon warehouse – an old Church Hall

**72**  
Brian organises first exhibition at the Beckenham Tennis Week

**76**  
Brian's son Steve joins the Company full-time

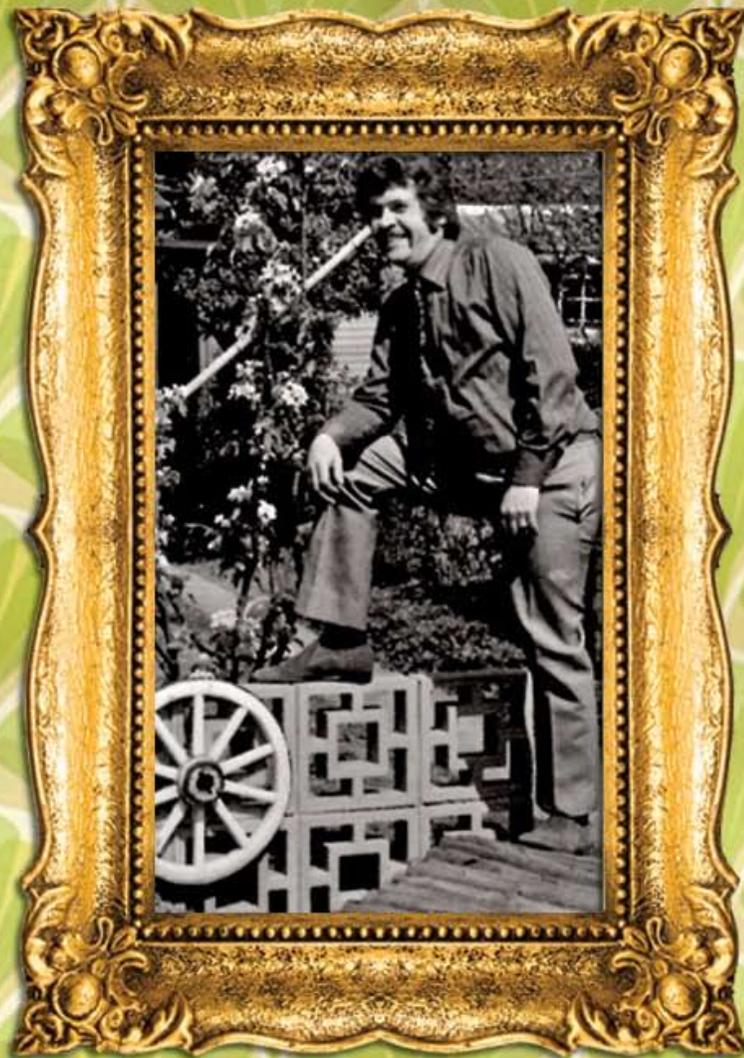
# 1980

**81**  
Takes on warehouse in Churchill Road South Croydon in a residential street at the bottom of an alley!

**83**  
Brian buys Global Furniture Hire by selling his Rolls Royce

**83**  
First furniture hire contract to the IWM in Ayr

**84**  
First major furniture stock acquisition LC20/21/22 – have to take delivery in the Brighton Road A23 - can't get articles down our road!!



# 1960s

**So, the Swinging Sixties sees Brian swing into action as time is called on his employer Cyril Lord. Within a couple of weeks Brian, armed with his trusted motorcycle and sidecar, is ready to take on the world of floorcovering!**

In eagerness, Brian forgets he has a sidecar as he ploughs towards a bus-stop with passengers scattering in all directions – oh well onwards and upwards...

With his first job under his belt, he presents his first cheque to the bank only to find they won't accept it as he has failed to register the Company. But this didn't deter him... Soon his flat in Camberwell becomes overrun with carpet that constantly slides down the stairs, blocking the front door – oh happy days, but Elsie his wife isn't quite so keen, nor are the other residents of the flats!

Elsie is busy doing the accounts and his sister Pam helps hand sew carpets together in the biggest space they have – the bedroom!

Brian takes on a partner, a job share with another Cyril Lord ex-fitter but it doesn't last long! *"Whoever's house the job was nearest to, that's where we'd start. Trouble was, his wife made all the bookings and unsurprisingly, all the jobs were near his house! I'd be the one sitting out on the bike getting drenched while he went in, talked to the customers and got a nice cup of tea!"*

Brian eventually finds his first warehouse in Beckenham, Kent. He breaks into exhibition carpet hire using reusable 40" Criterion cord that he cleans in the yard and hangs to dry over scaffold poles (they are still there to this day!) between the garages. Contracts are now being won for the DTI and Brian finds himself all over Europe and beyond... on one of these trips, Brian finds himself sitting in a café in Frankfurt. He glances up at its name 'Cafe Europa' – Europa is born.

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***"Whoever's house the job was nearest to, that's where we'd start...trouble was his wife made all the bookings and so all the jobs were near his house!"***

# 1970s

*The 70's see the number of shows increasing and The Motor Show is now a busy event for Europa – working on the TVR stand, where semi-naked women draped over the cars are making a big impact on impressionable teenager Steve! Steve knows this is the business for him..*

Never one to miss an opportunity, the power cuts of the mid-70s sees children Karen and Kevin set out a stall on the street selling candles. Brian now goes from "Selling the light" to "hearing voices"... he answers the prayers for two Nuns from the local convent as he comes to their rescue as they are accidentally locked in the Europa showroom at lunchtime! *"I heard the phone line clicking...I lifted the phone and a voice just said Hello, anybody there...? To my surprise two Nuns had wandered into our showroom!"*

While Steve is busy buying orange denim suits and blue suede boots, to impress the ladies from the motor show, the company goes from

strength to strength, even supplying carpet to one of Beckenham's most famous residents, David Bowie at his home in Haddon Hall. *"I've still got an exercise book we used for our accounts with 'Davie Bowie – £6.50' marked in it"* Brian recalls...

In 1976 Steve joins his dad in the company full-time, followed by his other son Kevin, daughter Karen and nephew Anthony. And in '79 Steve junior is born at 2.32am, later to become a third generation of Murphy's in the business. In true Murphy style this doesn't stop Brian and Steve being at Earls Court for 8am that morning though to work on the Royal Smithfield Show, where they promptly get chased by a prize pig as it leaps from its pen!

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***"Hello, anybody there...? To my surprise two Nuns had wandered into our showroom"***



# 1980s

**Europa buys its first fax machine (cost £1800) despite not knowing anyone else with a fax – be prepared, you never know is the cry! Then a call from the US is soon received requesting a brochure to be faxed over (eventual order value – £1000). Who'd have guessed... How did we manage without it?**

The decision to purchase Global Furniture Hire Ltd is to dramatically change the fortunes of the business. Fitting carpet and delivering the furniture at the same time – how can they lose? The bank doesn't agree, or seemingly understand the 'hire' concept. *"Why can't you just sell the furniture after the client has finished with it to keep your cash flow going?"* asks the Bank Manager.

Times were hard as bad debts accrued and knowing Bailiffs on first name terms! But never one to be put off Brian sells his prize Rolls Royce to fund the deal – and then buys a Canary yellow MGB GT – *"Well I need wheels of some sorts...!"*

The 80's proved to serve up many challenges as more staff needed to be employed, staff working long hours, pull outs made difficult because venues had turned the

power off and no lights to work with apart from what came from the vehicles, and drivers falling asleep at the wheel of vehicles on the way home! Health & Safety...No?

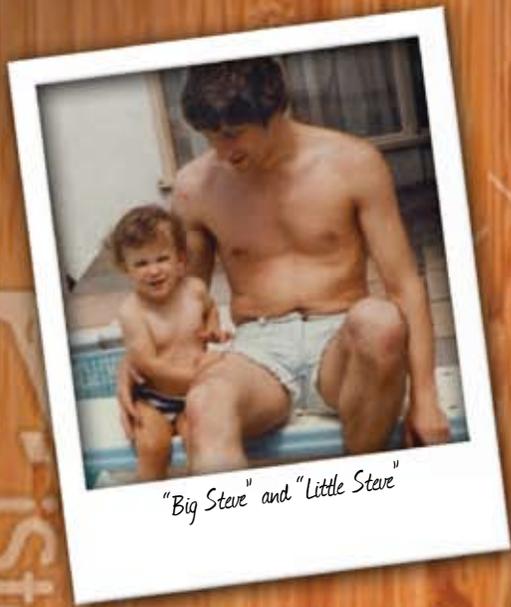
To stay fresh and ahead Brian is now at the heart of the design and build of new furniture, creating some impressive units. Sadly, Steve *"forms the demolition department!"* and manages to run one of them over with a truck before it even leaves Croydon! The new production line sits in Brian's garage at home as Europa continues to grow, much to the annoyance of Brian's neighbours!

By 1987, the business has grown so much that a new warehouse is needed, so Europa moves to Penge. At this time you can drive in one door and out the other piling the furniture in the middle – it all looks a little bit lost... but not for long!

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***"Why can't you sell the furniture after the client has finished...?"***

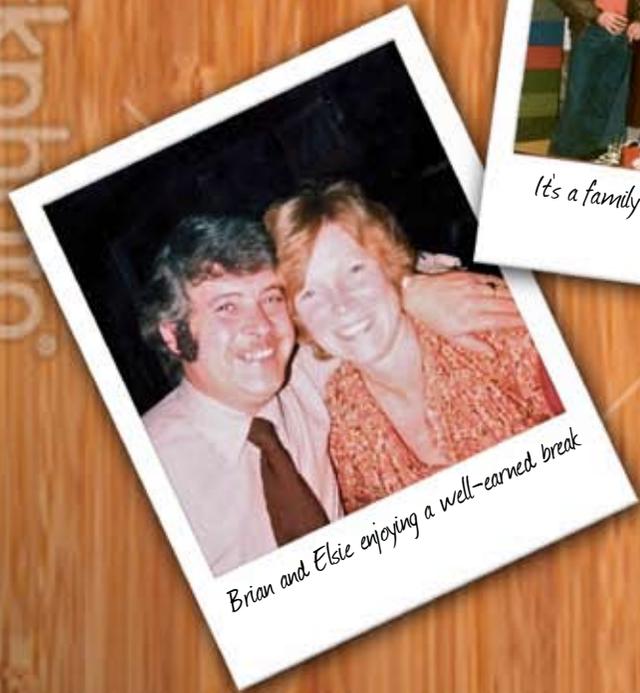




*"Big Steve" and "Little Steve"*



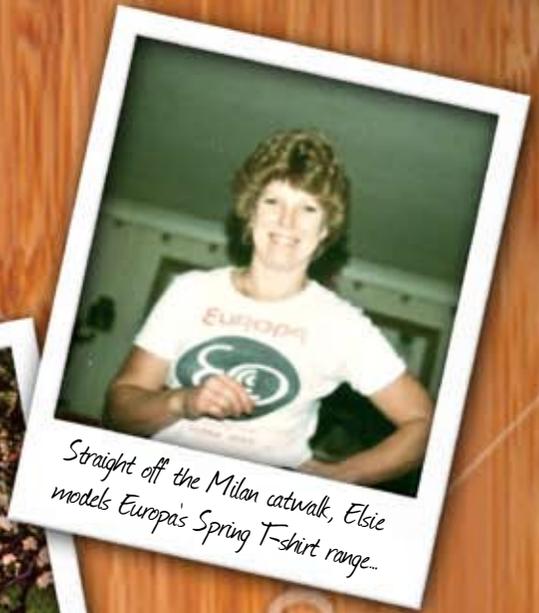
*It's a family thing - the Murphy clan*



*Brian and Elsie enjoying a well-earned break*



*A young Karen already practising her display pose*



*Straight off the Milan catwalk, Elsie models Europa's Spring T-shirt range...*



*Elsie and Sam exhibit Europa's product range*



# 1990s

As the 90's dawned colour choices in furniture weren't great! You can have any colour you like as long as it's well... brownly grey! So changes had to be made... let's add a splash of colour was the decision!

So, Europa then took proud delivery of red, white and brown plastic folding chairs... well it was a start anyway! "*The change*" had begun as more choice and colours soon followed... with trips to Europe to find inspiration and quality soon part of the plan but this also had its problems!

Brian recalls... "*To ensure we were getting the best deals, we drove all day Monday through thick snow across the Alps to visit our main suppliers, finally arriving in Italy on Tuesday morning, tired and gasping for a drink... to be only greeted with a 'hello' and a thimble full of coffee! Confusion reigned... as a mix of Italian and South East London accents clashed we found their MD wasn't even there - he'd flown to England to visit us!*"

As the years click by, opportunities were always around the corner... after a visiting client spots a 10-panel display background created by Brian for a furniture photo-shoot, the moment was seized and a hundred panels are rapidly produced! A few weeks later Europa is supplying its first shell scheme to the organizer in the grounds of the Imperial College – Eurosystem is launched!

"*Let's Go Green*" is now the thought as Europa goes green - not the modern idiom, we just change our branding from the Red, White and Blue of old!

New technology has arrived – the Internet is upon us and as ever Brian is keen to grasp it! So Europa's first website "*goes live.*"

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***"Tired and gasping for a drink...to be only greeted with a 'hello' and a thimble full of coffee! Confusion reigned as a mix of Italian and South East London accents clashed..."***



# 2000s A New Century

The start of the 21st century sees grandson Stephen officially become the third generation to join the family business, followed closely by Sam, who joins her Mum, Dad, brothers, sister and cousin.

Always a *"Snappy dresser"* Steve Junior is sent out to oversee shows. He turns up on site in pink shorts, with impressive thighs, one client swoons and "Legs" becomes his instant nickname.

Names give cause for confusion on a number of occasions for young Stephen... *one instance when manning a service desk, Stephen was challenged for being too young to be on the desk, when asked his name "Steve Murphy" he replied "Then who is your Boss?"... "Steve Murphy" he replied again, with a smile....angrily the venue manager replied "Are you some sort of joker..?" "No Sir -he's my Dad!" So names changed and "Smurf" was born.*

The 'Noughties' also signals a new look for Europa as it embraces the value of Marketing – Helen Cole is brought on board. Now the fun really starts!

The company rebrands with its now instantly recognisable cheeky OP smile logo. The cheeky theme continues throughout Europa's marketing activity with filming viral videos (and nearly being arrested by the Met Police in the process!) to a naked calendar photo-shoot that sends Helen to the brink of therapy, and local residents into a state of bewilderment as MD Steve takes a walk around the streets of Penge in his underwear painted as Papa Smurf! Twelve months later he is seen driving back from a Christmas photo-shoot in a Smart car, dressed as Widow Twankey! Just another day at the office of Europa!

As the 'Noughties' draw to an end, one more member of the family joins – this time it's Steve Senior's daughter – fortunately she doesn't have a confusing name, and Amanda now takes her place in the office!

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***"My name's Steve Murphy." Angrily the venue manager asked, "Are you some sort of joker?" "No Sir – Steve Murphy's my Dad"***



# Fifty years young...

So here we are. Since 1961, Europa has been challenging the way people think about furniture and carpet hire. Thanks to one family's enduring passion for the exhibition and events industry, and for delivering great service, Europa has flourished and evolved over the past 50 years to become the success story that it is today. It's what makes us proud to put our name to our products and, ultimately, what continues to inspire us. If something is good, it will last through the decades.

"It's all about service both in the office and on site. Our passion is to ensure our clients smile and get what they want when they want it, not when we decide the time is right!"

Happy 50th Birthday to us... and to everyone who has been part of our incredible journey and the memories, a huge thank you!

## The Europa team

To be continued...



**86**

Buy our first ever BRAND NEW truck D220 WPL 7.5t Ford Cargo 0813 "Devilwoman"!

**87**

Move into Cleopatra Unit London SE20 8RA – drive into the warehouse through one door, unload and drive out again through the second door!

**88**

Alan first joins the Company

**88**

First time we did IMPA in Rotterdam - still going strong 22 years later!

**85**

After running 7.5t trucks for several years discover we should have an Operators License! (Thought tachograph was what Mexicans ate)

**99**

Our Website created

**99**

Buy our first Heavy vehicle T614 HKO Brand new again- still going strong!

**93**

Buy our first Articulated vehicle

**1990**

**94**

Gary first joins the company

**90**

Eurosystem invented by Brian

**90**

Our first full brochure printed

**90**

Took delivery of our first Forklift truck

**2000**

**02**

Steve junior joins full-time

**02**

Sam joined her Mum, Dad, Brothers, Sister and cousin

**05**

Europa International Exhibition Services Ltd formed

**06**

Helen Cole joins as marketing manager

**06**

Europa rebrands with new OP smile identity

**07**

Our first conveyor belt installed at our Penge warehouse

**08**

We embark on our first viral campaign

**10**

OP character is launched

**11**

Celebrating our 50th year in business