

**Don Brothers, Buist – Forfar**  
(the great Forfar business story)

Don and Low is one of Scotland's oldest textile companies tracing its history from 1792 up to the present day, and has been the principal industry in Forfar for over 200 years. Its business originated in buying and selling “osnaburgs” - mostly sold through London to the United States and the West Indies. The firm developed its own local manufacturing and loom facilities, but the greater part of the weaving was done by weavers in their own homes.

In the mid-1800s the company began to spin and weave jute in Forfar, imported by Dundee merchants from Calcutta. With the advent of the power loom it extended its weaving operations, with local spinning capabilities of 10,000 spindles, producing 180,000 miles of yarn per week. The business grew steadily through acquisition & merger.

In the early 1900's a slump in linen business pushed the company to concentrate its spinning and weaving business on jute. But during the 1930's cheap labour rates in India forced the company to modernize its factories. After WWII the company expanded and diversified its manufacturing base. In 1960 Don Brothers, Buist & Co amalgamated with Low Brothers & Co (Dundee), a merchant house, thereby integrating the production and sales sides of their business. Further mergers strengthening its industrial textiles and manufacturing capabilities.

During the 1960s polypropylene was introduced into the manufacturing process and later it moved into merchandising PVC and polyurethane coated fabrics for the protective clothing and tarpaulin industries. In 1977 a modern local factory for the extrusion of polypropylene yarns was acquired and by the 1980s the group had become the second largest polypropylene textile extrusion and weaving unit in Europe. In 1986 is started new non-woven capabilities and the group was bought by Shell UK. Since 1999 Don & Low has been part of the multi-national Thrace Group. Don & Low is still based in Forfar.