



## Scottish Butchers Shop of the Year 2013

The Aberdeenshire town of Huntly is in the heart of quality beef production. There is still a mart on the outskirts of town and the place has a true feel of a traditional market town. The square is still the centre but the retail environment has changed somewhat since the opening of both an ASDA and Tesco superstores within a week of each other in Spring of 2006.

It is in Huntly since 1963 that Forbes Raeburn has traded and their butchers' shop in Bogie Street has



always been well known and respected. In 2013 it quite rightly took the Meat Trades Journal (MTJ) title of Scottish Butchers Shop of the Year. Awards like this however don't come with just doing a good job, having a nicely fitted out shop or being popular with customers but it does help!

This is no ordinary butchers shop as Fred A'Court the MTJ's head judge in the Butchers Shop of the Year, discovered.







Certainly the first impressions are really good. This shop looks the part after a classy refit in February 2013 but the standard of finish and efficiency of layout extends into the equally impressive processing and manufacturing areas behind the shop.

Everything about Forbes Raeburn & Sons is exemplary - product, quality, diversity of product range, spectacular displays and meticulous hygiene standards that remove any food safety risks associated with selling fresh meat and ready to eat. The shop itself would not be out of place in Harrods and it's the kind of shop where you can have time to browse and succumb to the tasty and inviting things that are there just for you to select.



This has not happened overnight of course. Forbes Raeburn had worked for Gordon Rhind in Huntly for over 23 years since leaving school, before going into business for himself in the current Bogie Street premises. The chance to buy Rhinds Gordon Street shop came along in 1972 and that business expanded in the 1990s into a bigger property along the road.

When Charles Raeburn left The Gordons School at the age of 16 in 1974, he had no reservations about going into the family business. Like most butchers businesses in the seventies, they were big into freezer filling and picked up on the catering side as well. Retail was not a problem, the town was busy and so the butchers were busy.



Charles took part in early product evaluation winning one of the first Diamond awards for Balmoral Pasties in the 1994 Make it with Meat Awards. Trade developed with wholesaling to 22 corner shops and convenience stores and around the same number of hotels and restaurants within a 50 mile radius.

Tradition followed that his son Gary, joined him in the business in 2003. Gary had phenomenal success in Meat Skills competitions coming runner up in the Meat Skills Challenge in 2006 and winning the Young Butcher title the next year.





Names to go here plus Gary and Charles

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He was awarded the UK Young Butcher of the Year award in 2010 and then won the next two Scottish Butcher of the Year awards in 2011 and 2013. Gary has represented Scotland at international skills competitions in England and Ireland. He made a television appearance in BBC3's 'Chop Idol' and is a regular demonstrator on the Quality Meat Scotland stand at the Royal Highland Show.

His success further raised the profile of the Huntly butchers shop and helped Gary improve his presentation skills. But Gary's success is not just limited to meat skills, he had always helped his grandfather raise sheep and for the last ten years he has bought a beast in the store ring to finish in a Young Farmers Club competition.

The ever growing business demanded more room and the space within the Bogie Street premises re-designed to cope. The shop was refitted from back to front. Gary explained:-

"We were limited to what we could do. Now there can be a lot of different things going on at the one time whilst before you could only do one thing. It has made things a lot easier and then having won the Scottish Butchers shop it has just taken off."



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The shop refit started in February 2013 and was completed in four weeks. Owning another butchers shop in Huntly allowed the Bogie Street shop to close temporarily for four weekends without removing the service to customers.

The shop was designed by Charles and Gary themselves, the British made cabinets were supplied through Excel Refrigeration. Local tradesman were then project managed by a local architect, John Wink. Plans submitted on Christmas Eve were approved in January and work was done by local tradesmen over four weeks at times 24 hours per day.

In addition to Charles and Gary the shop employs a staff of 6 full time plus one part timer and they are open 7.00am until 5.00pm except Sundays. The refit changed the way of selling cooked meats. Now all cooked meats are sliced, vac packed and displayed in a refrigerated wall unit. As well as providing benefit to customers in increased shelf life this has eliminated waste and potential food safety risks. The result has been that Raeburns cooked meat and pie trade has doubled.

The front shop staff can concentrate on selling and ensuring that customers every need is met. The shop layout allows customers to spend waiting time browsing and also with everything pre priced then they can shop confidently knowing how much they are spending.

In addition to what Gary brings on, Raeburns beef and lamb is sourced from local farmers and supplied through Rhinds in Elgin and Scotbeef in Inverurie. The maturing beef hangs in a chill room with a window that fronts into the shop. Labels are very visible and those good at reading sideways can see the evidence of a local sourcing policy. Pork is supplied from Millers of Speyside.

Huntly is a town of around 4,500 people. It is the home of the Gordon Highlanders and has a visitors centre for Deans shortbread. The town's shop types have changed a bit since the two supermarkets opened in 2006 but currently there are surprisingly few empty shop units.

Forbes Raeburn's new look shop coupled with their quality meat, reputation and impelling presentation has made the butchers a really good reason to shop in Huntly.



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