

A Man with a Mission

The advert that pictorially describes the coach trip from Bridgeton Cross to Anniesland Cross invites travellers to enjoy in the scenic attractions of Bingham's Boating Pond and the famous Kelvin Court. It is an outing that is unlikely to be promoted by *Visit Scotland* but one that has been followed by numerous day trippers in search of quality meat and tasty products. With or without Gillespies unusual advertising campaign customers from all over the West of Scotland find their way to the Anniesland Cross shop that is really much more than a traditional butchers.



On leaving Keith High School in Aberdeenshire at 15 years of age Charlie Hopes returned to his roots and started as an apprentice at Galloways shop at 231 Byers Road in Glasgow. Andrew Gillespie's was established in 1903 and incorporated the business of McKellar on the other side of Anniesland Cross.

Charlie took over the business in the early 70s and in 1990 made a major move, bringing the businesses together in a transformed Mission Hall.

The result was a meat emporium that is a real find for any discerning customer.

There are 14 full time staff, most qualified butchers to look after your every need. The business is built on quality supplies sourced predominantly from Bosomworths in Paisley but the friendly, helpful service is of equal quality.



The Mission Hall had plenty of space in which to design a modern shop and production facility, all on the one ground floor level. Separate cabinets for ready meals, hot takeaway food, their own range of cooked meat, fresh meat and speciality meats including veal. In the centre of the shop is a stand alone domed display that can be used to highlight products and really put them under the customers noses.

A traditional, though refrigerated, steak deck is retained for customers to see their beef sliced for them although a unique Gillespies' product is their own make soup that draws customers from far and wide. All the ingredients are fresh; fresh vegetables made with stock made from their own beef bones, ham ends, boiling beef and brisket.

After queues form for Bacon Rolls, Sausages and Egg on rolls at eight o'clock in the morning the opportunity arose to expand that side of things. Co-Manager Jim Whitelock explained that the ready meal trade evolved over time.

"We used to have it in a small cabinet down at the door then when it got busier we were putting in curries. From rolls as takeaways we moved into the ready meals and it grew. The hot food brings a different type of customer – young folk and workers coming in their gear. Sometimes you wonder if it takes something off the shop because it is busy."





The ready meal cabinet is kept stocked until four in the afternoon and with room for 22 different trays, serves up good traditional food that seems to delight the demands in the west end of Glasgow. Lamb casseroles, oxtails, tripe and onions are along side the steak pie and the inevitable curry. The ready meal dishes can be produced when something is not selling so well. Charlie is delighted to proclaim that nothing is wasted in Gillespies.

The shop trades from six in the morning on a Friday and Saturday, 7.30am the rest of the week and closes at 5.30pm. They take two half days per week – on a Monday and Saturday. The Saturday afternoon break enables Charlie to make full use of his Rangers season ticket; he has been a patron of the Members Lounge at Ibrox for over 30 years.

Buying and transforming the Mission Hall that he moved the business into took up many resources. Holidays were banned by Charlie's wife until the bank was repaid and Charlie looks back with happy memories:- "I was coming up for 50; it was hard work but I have enjoyed every minute of it. I'm on my way out, not on the way in" reminds Charlie.



Full steam ahead for Jim Whitelock's soup production



According to Charlie his managers Jim Whitelock and John Aire run the business now but he still starts at six in the morning. "If I come in at half five John's in. If I come in at five o'clock John's in." At the age of 65 retirement has crossed Charlie's mind but again his wife's concern that he would only be at her feet has egged Charlie on to continuing with his early rises. Not that he needed much encouragement one would think. His cheerful disposition and youthful enthusiasm for the trade is undoubtedly a major reason behind the success of the business.

Morning deliveries are done in person by Charlie; keeping it a secret that it is "really a skive" Charlie pitches in cutting chops and working on the block on a Friday and whenever required.

The restaurant trade is not the most important part of the business. "The counter customer is first and foremost. We want the customer coming into the shop and we are getting busier every week. Restaurants are not really what we want."

Gillespies enjoy a good sausage trade and this is the area that Charlie sees as the greatest potential for 2006:- "I think sausages have a long way to go. They are going to be a lot more expensive to the customer but at the end of the day, they can cook them. Fry, grill or stew with a tattie."



This is a shop that's approaching the busy Christmas period with confidence; Charlie predicting "It is going to be a record year. One or two are asking about the turkeys but I have been on the phone once a week to check up on this bird flu but our turkeys are well clear of the bird flu."

Kellys supply all Gillespies turkeys, and they come ready priced in an individual box.