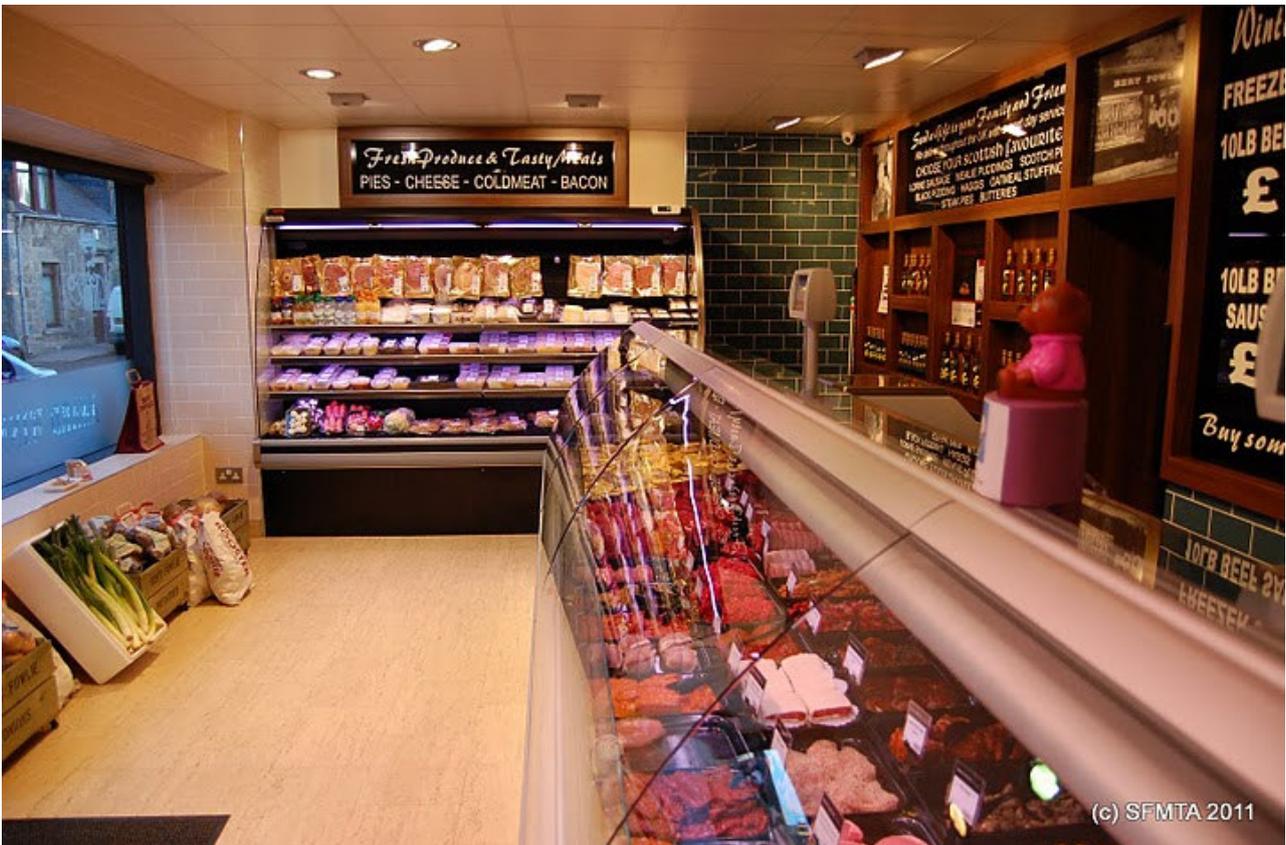


## Designed to Impress



The wow factor was what butcher Hebbie Fowlie was after and at the end of a long route north up the A90 you are not let down when you arrive at this village butchers. Just eight miles short of Fraserburgh in the Buchan village of Strichen, the centre of attention is a smart food shop that was designed to stand out as modern while still recognisable as a butchers. Little wonder Scotland's First Minister, Alex Salmond was delighted to perform the official opening in November 2010 of the newly refurbished retail side of the business.





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Having come to work in his father's shop in 1973 Hebbie had seen trade go through the same sort of changes as most others and in 2010 decided his front shop had to change, the design brief looked a bit like this:-

- Keep that village feel to the shop
- Create more space to introduce and display more products
- Well lit and labelled
- Include a self service chill and ambient units
- Give the customer more room to shop
- Incorporate graphics and signage that can be easily changed

It was timely that Hebbie attended the SFMTA seminar held in Nairn in Spring 2010 on branding and shop design. There he met Maria O'Neill, the Wicklow based shop designer and it was she who assisted Hebbie to distil the ideas that have come together so well to refurbish his front shop.





A major attraction in this shop is the remarkable range of kitchen ready products and products that are easy to cook. The new design allows 52 different raw meat dishes to be on display. Since many of these had previously been hidden behind the scenes, their new prominence was a great boost to sales.

The new look shop was greeted by a fantastic response from customers. The doorway was flattened with the removal of the recess that had jutted into the floor space. Self serve chilled and ambient units were installed expanding the customers' choices and make it easier for them to understand the cost of items since everything is individually priced. Ready prepared meals are now a major range and especially popular with the time poor.

For the traditional customer and those requiring personal service or advice there is still a long and fully stocked serve over counter. The shop is really well lit, the customer has more room to browse and prominent graphics and signage are easy to change.

Maria O'Neill Design has certainly made this shop something very different. Maria met on site after surveying the premises and listening to Hebbie's ideas. She drew up plan layouts and the final plan was agreed with Hebbie, his wife, Eileen and daughter Donna who help run this family business.



The shopfitting was all carried out by Vertex in Arbroath who helped out greatly with extra features to make the shop look that bit special. The wood finished back units were custom built to be assembled on site and under the supervision of Alex Dalglish the team from Vertex worked 12 hour shifts. From starting on a Saturday night the whole refit was completed in times for opening the following Friday.

This business has just kept on raising the bar since Bert Fowlie Butchers was established in 1955. Soon they had three vans travelling around neighbouring countryside to meet the demands of the rural customers. When filling deep freezers came into vogue in the 60's and 70's that became a substantial part of the business.

Hebbie Fowlie came into the business in 1973 and after attending a Scottish Meat Trade Fair in the caird Hall in Dundee in the 80's returned with the first "fancy" meat product idea. Tru Rusks supplied the inspiration and Chinese Style stir fry was born.

That was the first of many products that Hebbie was to try and he became a recognised meat specialist winning numerous prizes in Make it with Meat evaluations. The great publicity that these successes brought was a major boost to the business and customers were attracted from far outside this small Aberdeenshire village.



In 1996 a purpose built cooking area was added and sales of cooked products began to grow. The business benefited from an extension in 2001 and at the same time a walk in chill and deep freeze were commissioned.

Two years on with an eye to the future Hebbie extended sales through his website [www.scotsmeat.co.uk](http://www.scotsmeat.co.uk) then in 2007 a new kitchen, store and staff room for their ready made meal market.

Now the business supports a staff of 26 who Hebbie says are all a great asset to the business putting in lots of effort and ideas to keep things fresh with new products. Whether it is retail, cooked or butchery side everyone makes a great team effort.

The new design creates plenty of room for these to be displayed but attention to presentation is high up Hebbie's priority list. All the kitchen ready products and burgers sold over the counter are heat sealed on the back counter and labelled. When these are used at barbecues Hebbie feels that this attracts considerable attention to his products, projects a professional image and is a great low cost advert for his business.



Consumers are seeking value for money but quality is still of utmost importance. Whether it is a local workman nipping in for something to go with his afternoon 'fly' or someone doing a serious food shop, Bert Fowlie Butchers has all the answers. Not only does the shop and its products look good but there's that wow factor in the taste and value to match.

More pictures at <http://picasaweb.google.com/SFMTA3/BERTFOWLIE010211#>