

John and the Holy Grail



For John Taylor hooks are for more than his butcher meat. Displayed proudly on the wall high behind the counter is a cast of a salmon landed by him in September 2008 soon after he obtained his first salmon fishing permit on the River Teviot. The fish weighed 17lb 8oz and put up quite a struggle before the butcher could grab its tail and throw it on the banking. John still fishes mainly on the Teviot but gets the occasional treat to try his luck on the Tweed which is joined by the Teviot at the world famous Junction Pool in Kelso, the Holy Grail of Scottish salmon fishing.

It is in the Border town that John runs the butchers' business under the name of W Wylie. Situated in Horsemarket, the shop is well placed in the heart of what is still a good shopping town attracting custom from a large hinterland. Kelso has a population of 6,385; it is regarded as one of the most charming and quaint towns in the area with its cobbled streets, elegant Georgian buildings and French style cobbled market square.





There is a Lidl, a Co-op and a recently opened Sainsburys in Kelso but John and his staff of four are competition for them. They trade from 7.30 in the morning until five at night, Monday to Saturday. Local beef, lamb and pork is sourced through Scottish Borders Abattoir in Galashiels and for the steady flow of customers, the service is attentive, friendly and caring.



John is a larger than life character but fronting the counter service is Ann Wilson who is ably assisted by her son Allan and the two experienced butchers, John and Ian. John Taylor has the invaluable support of his partner Pamela and his three children – Sacha (5), Ryan (9) and Jade (13). Apart from a fire in the back shop two years ago when a pot of stew ignited the walls, things have gone really well for John since taking over the business in 2005.



After leaving school in Jedburgh, John started in the local Co-operative butchers, then worked at Booker in Galashiels before joining George Miller back in Jedburgh.



Selected as Jethart Callant for 1994 was a big honour for him. It is a three year commitment and the highlight is leading the 200 horses on the riding of the marches in Jedburgh during the first week in July.





John had experience of operating concessions within the Kwik Saves in Kelso and Hawick before getting the chance to take over the well-established Wylie business. He explained:- "It was a good shop and I didn't want to change anything, that's why it's not my name above the door." There was the odd recipe tweak and introduction of ready meals like lasagne and chicken curry. A very attractive vertical vegetable display stand also won the struggle for space with fresh turnips, carrots, onions, leeks, tomatoes and potatoes to compliment the meat.



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Not surprisingly for a shop in Kelso there's a framed Border Rugby Academy shirt for all to see as they come in the front door. This was in recognition for sponsoring two of the junior players. There's room too though for two awards that the business has picked up for its pies.

In their first ever entry in competition Wylie's won a Silver award for their Scotch Pies in 2009 and followed that up this year with a Silver for their Steak Pies. Pastries are an important part of the business and Wylie's also place a lot of emphasis on their haggis trade.

Haggis is promoted all year round with local artist Ian Lees from Jedburgh painting a Burns mural on the shop window that creates a great amount of interest and sales from January until special Christmas artwork is commissioned. Christmas is an important trading period for butchers, and for the staff at Wylie's they can be assured of their bosses best attention, after all the salmon season ends on 30th November.

