

How much is that piggie in the window?



For most retailers trading on one of the busiest trunk roads in Scotland with little parking on the doorstep would be a distinct disadvantage but not so for butcher Kenny Milne.

Having survived all that has impacted the meat industry in the last few decades Kenny is not one to let the latest retail trends set him back. All the traffic travelling in and out of Aberdeen from Inverurie and Inverness passes his Bucksburn butchers' shop and while like most he would like more footfall on the street, his presence is well known because of his striking shop front. Kenny explained the theory behind it:-

"We promoted our new image through Facebook, our new sign, our van and the pig in the window. When I meet folk they ask if I am the butcher with the pig in window or with the pink sign. It makes me stand out.

"We used pink to introduce a feminine side to get away from the macho image. It was a decision to redress the balance and something that really caught peoples' attention.

"The idea came to me when East of Scotland Contracts sent out a sample carrier bag. It was one of Chapman's and it carried a pig, a sheep a chicken, moo and baa. I spoke to Carri at East of Scotland and asked her to incorporate the three figures. What she came up with looked very good, so we went with that."





The only vehicles that can park at the door are those waiting for the traffic lights to change on the A96 but custom has grown with the higher visibility. There is no shortage of competition in the form of the major multiples and discounters but many customers still stop in the nearby car parks and some even travel great distances to shop at H&S Milne.

Trade comes from all across the City of Aberdeen, from nearby Dyce and slightly further out communities like Newmachar.

"As time progressed we saw the need to diversify and offer something that was appealing to a younger market. Hence some of the products we have in the cabinets. I think it is fair to say that we now have a much younger clientele especially on a Saturday.

"The big problem for us is traffic. It is surprising how many folk would rather eat something of lower quality rather than walk five minutes from the car park.

"While customers talk about the difficulty in stopping their cars, we still have three or four generations of the same family shopping here. They may have scattered a wee bit but they still come back for something that they are used to. Hopefully quality is something to do with it.

"We are fortunate that we have a clientele that stand by us and now have confidence in our products."





Photo : Kenny, Laura, Danny and Andrew

The Milne business was started 34 years ago by Harry Milne when he took over the Bucksburn butchers from Tommy Cooper. He had worked as supervisor in the boning hall with Donalds at Portlethen before buying one of his mother's family fish and chip shops in Aberdeen. He ran this for over a year before selling to buy another chipper business in Forfar and it was that shop which was Kenny's destination when he left Forfar Academy in 1985.

Harry had worked in this shop in the sixties when it was owned by McIntosh the Butcher and moved back to Bucksburn to develop the business it his own right until he retired in August 2014. After a year running the Forfar shop, Kenny moved to work as an apprentice butcher to his father back in Bucksburn, where he had previously attended Middlefield Primary and Northfield Academy. Kenny now sources his beef and lamb from Scotbeef at Inverurie, pork from Millers of Speyside and supplemented with top up supplies from Munro's in Dingwall.

A full range of pies has grown steadily - mince pies, steak pies, bridies, sausage rolls. The pastry business got a boost when Kenny lifted the Diamond award for the North of Scotland steak pie. Most of these are sold over the counter with only puddings and haggis being wholesaled.

Venison and blackcurrant sausages are their most acclaimed but Milne's drive success out of making a range of appealing sausages. Saturdays are still the busiest days kicking off early and making it hard for the staff to stop for breakfast or lunch.





"We work really hard and some of those out there who are struggling a wee bit need to look at how much effort they are putting in. Before you could lock the door and go home and forget about the place for a few hours but now I go home and answer the comments on Facebook and emails. We are open all hours!

"Facebook has been really good for us. We have just short of 1500 followers and found posts a boost for business especially when made on a Saturday between 7.30am and 8.00pm. It seems to be the most successful time to either get a picture out or a deal."

Milne's offers are varied and often. Lean packs have been popular attracting custom from local gyms. Special offer breakfast packs for £6 if customer spend is £20 or above and four beef olives for £6 are the kind that boost sales.

"On the back of Christmas we have had quite a few new customers. Where folk have eaten at somebody else's at Christmas, they enjoyed it and asked where they got it."

Personal recommendation has made people make the effort to visit H&S Milne. This, now highly visible, butchers' is a major attraction amongst the local retail community and continues to be the heartbeat of Bucksburn.

Bucks Burn is the name of the stream that passes through the suburb that it is named after as it flows into the River Don but customers are definitely not 'passing the buck' when it comes to sourcing their meat and meat products at H&S Milne.

