



Butchers blade drives the business



At just under 30 miles from the centre of Edinburgh and the same from the English border, Dunbar does not always get its share of the travellers who race up and down the A1. For some it is even considered an irritation as their East Coast train halts to service the 7000 residents of the East Lothian town.

Wikipedia tells you that Dunbar's strategic position gave rise to a history full of incident and strife but Dunbar has become a quiet dormitory town popular with workers in nearby Edinburgh, who find it an affordable alternative to the capital itself. What it fails to tell you is that it has a very fine butchers shop.





Dunbar is the birthplace of John Muir (21 April 1838 – 24 December 1914) who was a Scottish-born American naturalist, author, and early advocate of preservation of wilderness in the United States. A statue of him stands in Dunbar High Street and it is in the shadow of their most famous son that you find the very impressive butchers shop run by Peter Whitecross and his staff of four.



When Peter left Knox High School at the age of 16 he went to work in Colin Peat butchers in his home town of Haddington. There he spent a total of 6½ years and completed his apprenticeship before joining East Lothian Co-op. He followed that with more experience with William Low and John Anderson in North Berwick. It was while with Andersons that Peter got the taste of running his own shop - an Anderson branch in Dunbar. That put him in good stead for taking on the butcher's concession when Kwik Save opened in Dunbar. These proved a big but short term success and at one point he had six of these units stretching west into Edinburgh.



Peter had been chasing the butchers shop in Dunbar for some time but when the previous owner and the shop lay closed for a few months Peter eventually got his chance. He has worked hard on the premises since taking them over in 2003.

More pictures at <https://picasaweb.google.com/SFMTA3/WHITECROSSDUNBAR060213#>



Peter with his staff: Mandy, Dale and Ross.

The refrigeration has all been supplied by Prestige, London through a local representative who is also one of the shop's customers. The Costan display cabinets and the display cases have all been replaced and upgraded within the last three years.

The immediate impression is of a clean fresh, tidy shop warmed with the appealing smell of freshly made pies. The fresh meat counter is well filled with beef, lamb and pork supplied from Malones in Edinburgh. Steak mince and stewing steak form a large part of the red meat sales. In addition there are modern products like Chicken Olives and Pinwheels. The bulk of their poultry is from Gosford poultry North Berwick and Peter stocks Charles MacLeod's Stornoway Black Pudding and Hornig's haggis.

One of the two refrigerated counters is entirely dedicated to ready to eat products and pie sales have escalated since they were introduced a few years ago. Hot food can be bought from a separate hot holding Trimco counter. As a consequence the shop does a good lunchtime trade. The shop supplies local hotels and golf clubs and the local football team.





Throughout the ethos is to trade on quality and service and equally important is to be a part of the community. This is local people supporting a locally run business that employs local staff.

Customers are not so local however, some travel from as far afield as Fife and the shop supplies many of the visitors to the two caravan sites on the verge of town. Add to that good support from town and the surrounding rural areas and you can easily see why Peter and his staff are kept busy every day.

Part of Peter's formula for success has been with meat packs. These attractively priced packs cater for everybody. All age groups have identified these as a major attraction and in themselves generate lots of sales. Some customers leave with three or four at a time.

The shop trades from 9 till 5 Monday to Friday with a 4.30 finish on a Saturday. Peter tried opening on a Sunday working it all by himself. He was that busy he just couldn't keep it going but never noticed any difference in the total weekly sales.

Having settled back to a much more manageable six day week, Peter spends as much of his free time as possible with his wife and two kids and when time permits he is a keen biker and likes to ride his Honda Fireblade. That's his pleasure but for those who know his shop that is a pleasure too.

