

# Working Partners



Tom Dowson has traded since October 1974, and for 31 years of those from the Clarkston Road premises that he still operates with his wife Wilma under the name of TW Scott.

He sees himself very much a survivor of inflation, BSE, e coli O157, and the widespread development of supermarkets.



The bright shop is set up to provide the largest possible display area and there is shelving on the customer's side for impulse buys of chutney, jam, and sauces.

The successful formula at TW Scott that has kept the customers coming through the door has included some innovative products, a range of freshly prepared meat and pastry products, a bright and interesting display and interior, unit pricing and without a doubt the charismatic attentions of Tom and Wilma.

Now as things seem to have turned the corner for butchers, it is time for Tom and Wilma Dowson to think of retirement and the shop has been put up for sale.

[Interested parties should tel: 0141 633 1520]

Those who know the Past President of Glasgow and District Retail Fleshers Association will recall Tom Dowson as a terrier who would not suffer kindly, the interference of outside bodies.

He was highly critical of the City of Glasgow Council's introduction of bus lanes, attitude to waste collection and relaxation of planning restrictions to enable supermarket saturation in his surrounding area. He claims that there are 14 supermarkets within 20 minutes of his shop.



Now it comes as a quite a surprise that Tom sees his local authority as an ally in the promotion of independent shops. Appreciative of the rates relief currently applicable to small shops like his, Tom explained his viewpoint:- "We are not fighting supermarkets now and we are not going to lose any more customers to them. What we are fighting are double yellow lines and bus lanes.

That is the biggest bug bear. We are lucky now because we are going to get parking bays outside at 10p for half an hour on both sides of the road."



City of Glasgow Council reduced Tom's rates by £400 and they have demonstrated further support with the low charge for limited time parking. Councillors are waking up to the prospect of losing votes because of the way local and community shops have been allowed to decline.

"We should be playing on this in a big way" emphasises Tom.

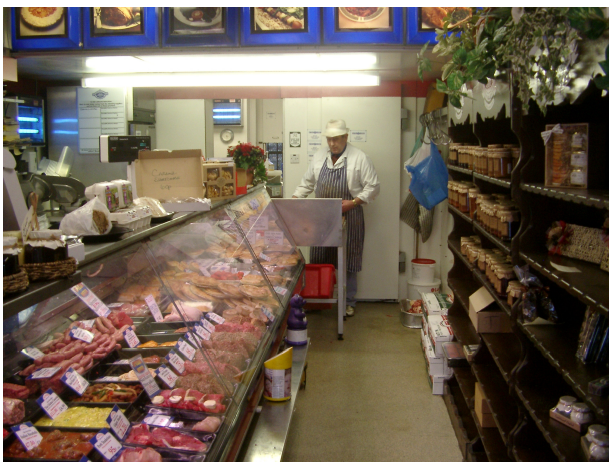
Tickets are from Design Xpress for whom Macnaughton and Watson are agents.



The occupation by local traders of the nearby shoppers' car parking spaces irritates Tom and he welcomes the new parking bays initiative. "We have to have access for customers' car parking."

"The local authority has suddenly got shop friendly with political parties even suggesting rates concessions for local shops. I feel that they are feeling a bit guilty. They sense that the public want the small shops to be there."

This shop boasts a good steak trade with young customers paying £30 per kilo for Fillet and extra stew purchased to satisfy the steak pie trade. Lots of pies are freshly baked daily. 75% of the trade is over the counter with Friday and Saturday being the best trading days. Tom has retained six restaurants "We kept it to the good payers" he added.



Doors open at 8 in the morning and close at 5.30pm so that Tom can deliver his orders on his way home. That might need to change in the future warns Tom:-

"We are open when customers are working and shut when they are not. In the future butchers might need to change and not open until ten in the morning and open to six. It would be interesting to see if there was a better reaction. Certainly if I was just starting out I would think about opening later and shutting later."

"We rely on big sales, customers travel from Cambuslang and Rutherglen so we must be doing something right. They have lots of choice but we run Special offers every week and use unit pricing. Unit pricing means customers know just how much the steaks and chicken fillets are going to cost. I have to buy stew for steak pies and I try to push the sausage trade."



Tom took the idea of his Pork, Black Pudding and Onion Sliced Sausage from Gary Rhodes making this one of those food programmes that are continually repeated. Wilma makes seven different burgers including Peppered Lamb, Chilli Lamb and Mexican Beef. This is mostly through necessity because they have a fair trade in mutton for Indian restaurants.

The burning question of course is how do a husband and wife manage to work together so successfully? Wilma was first to respond:-

"We ignore one another; it's not easy but then when it's your livelihood you just have to get on with it. I don't know how many people have said to me 'I could not work with my husband 24/7'."

Tom already knew what his answer was going to be:-

"I could never say 'I could never work with my wife.' The difficulty in working with your wife is that you would never tell her 'you are doing that wrong' otherwise as you know they are always right. She is always right."

Right or wrong the results on the business have been impressive with Tom summing up:-

"The last couple of years the trade has been very good. I have found it steady with folk coming back in. I think it is with the TV chefs saying 'go to your butcher'. They are all saying that now and customers are asking 'Do you hang your beef?'. Now they realise that the colour should be dark.

"The way the trade has gone, I'd be optimistic about the trade for the future unless there is another bloody disaster waiting around the corner. We have got over all that, the supermarkets are no longer the answer. If people are looking for good meat they realise that they are going to have to go to the butcher for it.

"The publicity the butcher is getting now is usually good publicity. We should be having a go at local authorities now when they are on our side, sitting down with them and highlighting that local people want access to local shops. The public want small independent shops and they have got to try and help them."

