

The Taste of Honey in Thornhill



Jack Meade has just celebrated 21 years in business at Thornhill Stores and he still loves going to work every day. The butchers, greengrocers and delicatessen on Drumlanrig Street is very much at the heart of the community and he and his wife Barbara enjoy being part of it.

The quality of their meat is praised throughout the region and they are keen to provide an ever growing range of products to keep the customers coming in the door.





The shop has just been awarded the Dumfries and Galloway Life Magazine Retailer of the Year award. No mean feat since this is a popular vote cast by consumers. Jack and Barbara were presented with their trophy on Wednesday 10th November at Easterbrooke Hall.



Core to the business is the traditional butchery, selling quality meat, game and poultry that is all sourced in Scotland. Equally popular is their well stock delicatessen offering a wide selection of cooked meats, Scottish and continental cheeses, pates, olives, pies, salads and a range of oatcakes. Regional chutneys, marmalade and honey are also available.



Jack started in business having left Dumfries butchers James Wallace to start his own business. The former premises of Marchbanks the butchers was refurbished and re-opened by Jack in 1989.



Although born in Yorkshire Jack moved at an early age to Maidenhead where his father took on a butcher shop with its own abattoir. From the age of 14 he worked in his father's business but then went off to do National Service where he served as a radio operator in the Air Sea Rescue arm of RAF Coastal Command based at Invergordon.

Back in civvy street Jack trained with Marconi before his father invited him to join in his latest venture – a contract kill abattoir that branched out into wholesaling.

The road to Dumfries however had many more turns to take. Jack worked with Borthwicks, City Meat Wholesalers and Buswells in Northampton before going overseas with Spillers who were developing abattoirs on green field sites in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Nigeria.



James (Second left) has been with Jack for two years and Hazel (right) for six years. Scott (left) works on Saturdays.

© sfmta 2010

On returning to England Jack ran with his own abattoir but with good memories of his years in Scotland he soon moved north to resume in the butchery trade where he had started.

Jack said:- "I knew when I came here that I didn't want to be just another butcher. I feel that you have to offer a wide range of products. We've been doing fruit and veg for about a year and that is partly down to a good customer who was always asking if we would think about it. We've tried in and it has been a success."

The business is built on selling a range of products but he freely admits that fresh fish didn't work out but the shop bulges with sauces, cheeses and deli products. So much so that the addition of fresh fruit and vegetables has had to be placed outside the shop.



© sfmta 2010



© sfmta 2010



Jack and Barbara have always enjoyed going to shows for ideas and recently held an open day in a local hotel to showcase all they sell. They enjoy meeting local people and showing what they have to offer.

"It's nice when you get up in the morning and you want to go to work; it's a vocation" added Jack. "This is the longest time I have spent in one place but that's down to the people here, they are so nice and supportive."

Sourcing is extremely important to Jack whose experiences along his career path have honed him into a specialist livestock procurer. He matures his beef for 21 days and it is primarily supplied by Millers of Speyside with augmentation of supplies from Clyde Valley Farmers at Wishaw. All properly hung and perfectly butchered. Border Meats at Lockerbie supply local lamb and Thornhill Stores pork is from Robertsons of Ardrossan.

The local area has an important tourist trade based on fishing, shooting and cycling. This has created a self catering market that Jack Meade finds important, estimating that 40% of his trade can come from that sector – no doubt assisted by the fact that all the traffic travelling up and down the A76 from Annan to Kilmarnock has to pass through Thornhill. The shop is open daily until 5.30pm but stays open until 6.00pm on Saturdays to catch the local shoppers who might have been in Dumfries or further afield on their Saturday afternoon.

After 21 years in business Jack is now serving the children and grandchildren of his original customers. As they stand at the counter they might be lucky enough to rub shoulders with the local gentry with the Duke and Duchess of Buccleuch, local pop stars Franz Ferdinand and an extremely well known vegetarian celebrity who shops with Jack and Barbara for her husband's meat when on holiday locally.



More Pictures at <http://picasaweb.google.com/SFMTA3/THORNHILLSTORE#>