



Erskine Butcher spans the years



After thirty years in business few butchers can imagine any greater satisfaction than having four of your 11 grandchildren working alongside you in your very own successful butchers shop.

That is the joy that is somewhat uniquely enjoyed by John Mitchell who at the age of 73 can take it easy and rely on his young staff and family members to uphold the fine standards of service and quality that has been the backbone of his Erskine shop. In total there are seven members of staff including the third generation Ryan, his sister Anna and cousins Isaac and Dean.

In 1985 the Scottish Regional Manager for Alex Munro butchers who had been in charge of over 100 shops decided to go out on his own.

John Mitchell started with a shop in Paisley, added one in Toryglen and then another in Erskine. John had been an area manager for Munros while still in his 20s but it was clear, even for someone with his considerable experience of managing numerous shops, that the Erskine shop in the busy Bridgewater Shopping Centre was more than enough. He sold the other two and concentrated all his efforts on that one.





Mitchells of Erskine occupies a prime site in the middle of the run of shops. The butchers shop is a vital part of the shopping mix and it is a first class operation selling quality meat in an attractive and contemporary way. The staff exemplify the traditional image of the friendly butcher and to serve their diverse customer base has its doors open seven days a week.



Erskine is a commuter town at the western extent of the Greater Glasgow conurbation, bordering Bishopton to the north and Renfrew, Inchinnan, Paisley and Glasgow Airport to the south. At the time of the opening of the Bridgewater Centre Erskine was expanding from being a small village settlement to a vibrant new town, boosting the population to over 15,000.

In 2014, it was rated one of the most attractive postcode areas to live in Scotland no doubt consolidated by having a first class butchers.



The business is now so well established that all the customers are known by name, when they are expected is predictable and what they prefer to buy has been registered long ago. That familiarity has brought a committed loyal customer base.

John has developed his staff and relies heavily on them. His shop manager Sean Lewis has been with him for 12 years. He started in the shop in 2006 at the age of 14 working after school, took on an apprenticeship at the age of 16 straight from school and having achieved SVQs at Level 2 and then a Level 3 was supervising at the age of 19 and manager from the age of 22.





Scott, Ryan, Jason and Sean

Sean has been given freedom to run the business and he believes that it is booming because of the youthfulness it projects. He has given the counter a new lease of life with new products:-

"Talking to the customers and getting to know them rather than just standing and butchering. With permission I would give the wee girl that came in with her mum a lollipop."

John's grandson Ryan King started as a Saturday boy also at the age of 14 but after a brief period at Napier University studying how to be a better sax player, in 2016 he committed full time to the butcher's shop.

In 2017 Ryan (below) was a finalist in the Craft Butchers Training Awards in the Level 2 category and in his nomination, Ryan's assessor Gordon Wallace wrote:- Ryan carries himself with an assured disposition a characteristic which it became clear in a short space of time was well-founded being based on sound skills and a critical understanding of the raw material he works with. His first assessment elicited assessor comments of "a very confident, mature and able young man".

Ryan considers it crucial to retain traditional butchery skills and added:- "It is important that people use a butcher rather than use supermarkets. The meat is not the same and not treated in the same way."



John Mitchell and Sean Lewis gave support to get treatment for a local cancer victim.





The latest speciality is Italian Sausages made to a proper authentic recipe.



The shop sources its meat from by local suppliers with a tight specification that ensures sides of beef delivered in at 160-170 kilos per side. Sean stressed his preferences when it came to buying in beef:-

“Two weeks old, has to be a heifer, I don’t want a long skinny one rather short and bulky. Chicken is a big thing too with us going through 100 to 120 kilos of chicken fillets every week.”

The chicken is sold in all sorts of ways coated, dipped, kebabed and the shop has a very good sausage trade, selling around 450 bars of lorne sausage every week, all hand mixed and hand blocked.

Mitchell’s steak pies are another major attraction and firm favourite. The secret of the pies is the good quality meat in them, cooked to perfection. John Mitchell has never fired off the steak pies, leaving the customer to enjoy that first appeal of a freshly fired pastry on the top of their steak pie.

Mitchells were one of the first units to be occupied when the Bridgewater Shopping centre opened. They were adjacent to Morrison’s then but now are across the car park from them with Aldi now occupying the vacated unit.

Parking is a key advantage and customers come from far and wide, from the Clyde’s south bank, from Govan and Renfrew. The Erskine Bridge opened in 1971 and it allows customers to reach Mitchells from the likes of Old Kilpatrick and Clydebank.

So after thirty years in business Mitchells of Erskine is an essential part of the local retail landscape. This shop challenges other butchers to tell them that they have a younger staff and given that, one could confidently predict that thirty years are just for starters.

