

# Serving Tasty Bites at Blantyre Butchers



The life of David Livingstone (1813 – 1873) is a source of pride for the people of Blantyre but his influence stretches far beyond his home town. Livingstone explored Africa opening up routes, mapping rivers and discovering waterfalls.

In 1864, Livingstone led an expedition to discover the source of the Nile. After many years, Europeans and Americans became concerned and so in 1871, the publisher of the New York Herald hired Henry Stanley, a newspaper reporter, to find Livingstone.

After nearly eight months he found him in a small village on the shore of Lake Tanganyika. When he walked up to him, he took off his hat, and said, 'Doctor Livingstone, I presume?' The phrase stuck as a way of greeting friends who had possibly not met for a while.

Since May 2018 the residents of Blantyre have not needed any explorers or search parties to find their town's latest favourite. On the town's Glasgow Road, Steven Strachan has fulfilled his long time dream of opening his own butcher's shop and its success has been heralded near and far. So much so that Strachan Craft Butchers qualified to represent Scotland in the new shop category of the 2018 UK Butchers Shop of the Year in London.







Steven, brought up in Blantyre, left the local Calderside Academy at the age of sixteen to become a counter assistant at Henderson's in Hamilton. Pursuing a pathway achieving a Level 2 and Level 3 SVQ in Meat and Poultry Processing, then a Craftsman Certificate and Federation Diploma, Steven worked his way up to become the shop manager.

After six years as manager he fulfilled his ambition to open a shop of his own. 'Peters Family Butchers' in Steven's home town had been closed for twelve months. He explained:-

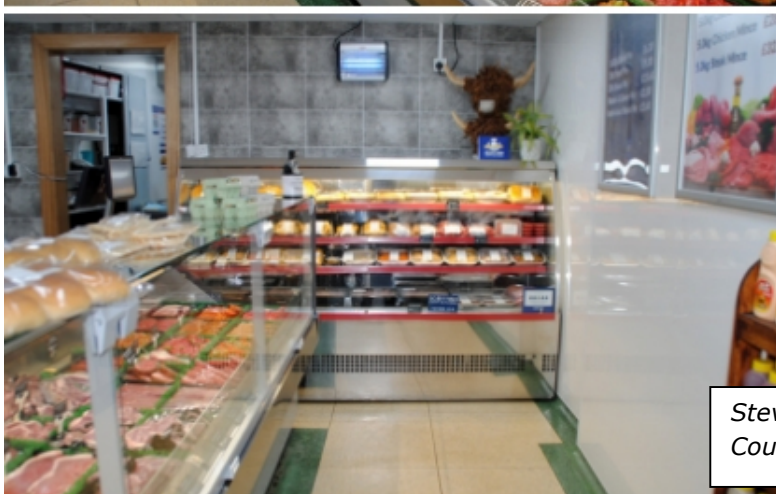
"We weren't sure at first because there was a lot of work needing done, but thankfully myself and Nicola had been saving hard the previous two years for a house deposit, so we decided to invest this money to follow the dream of owning our own Butchers Shop. We spent three months renovating the shop, all the family mucked in and helped sort the place out."

The 'back to bare walls' refurbishment included fitting a new chill system but all the hard work proved worth it when after great local anticipation the shop opened in May.

"The customers could not believe the range of products, how good the display looked and how good the place looked. Everyone commented on the cleanliness of the shop. The reaction was great and folk still say that this is the best thing that has happened to Blantyre."

The re-opening of the butcher's shop has had a positive effect on the street. The charity shop next door was first to undertake a refurbishment but Steven added:-

"It encouraged other local businesses to improve their look and the street has begun to thrive again. Footfall has increased and trade has improved all around."



Steven with fellow trader Bobby McKean of the Country Shop stocks fish, fruit, veg and flowers.



Steven's father, John Strachan, came out of retirement and with his experience of retail now helps out.

"We opened at nine am on 19<sup>th</sup> May, it was a Saturday. We had done a Facebook promotion for a £30 Extra Lean Protein Pack and we had over 100 pre orders. It meant that we had to work to midnight the night before we opened. It was unbelievable, Nicola and I cut the ribbon at nine o'clock in the morning with all staff and parents present.

"Customers were waiting on us opening and it was queued out the door all day. We knew all these people were coming in for the pre ordered packs so we had the counter fully stocked but it got completely wiped out. It felt so good and for the first four or five weeks we were constantly busy before it evened itself out."

Average sales are high, some are noticeably big sales and already the shop has a good loyal customer base. With confidence high Steven and Nicola decided to order new display counters. A stylish square fronted Venus 3750 remote model for raw and a Venus 1250 square fronted for cooked, were fitted in September by Capital Cooling.

Here lies one of the shop's secrets - a well stocked colourful counter and cuts to whatever the customer is wanting. "We turn no one away, all our staff are really good with customers, they know how to look after them.

Steven's wife Nicola serves on a Saturday, always smiling and buzzing, she is chirpy and very popular with the customers.

Stephen O'Hara (23) travels to work from Wishaw and he has achieved his Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship and is thoroughly enjoying working for Steven.

Gwen Miller is in charge of the bakery making all sorts of pastries and pies, ready meals and she also serves on the counter.

Beef and lamb is sourced from John Scott Meats in Paisley, chicken is from Direct Poultry. The shop supplies M&D's theme park and several cafe / takeaways and convenience stores but the bulk of trade is over the counter.







Already they have won awards in the Craft Butcher Awards for their products, their extensive range of value added products includes Chicken Pizza, Chicken Scrumptious, Hunters Chicken, Tomato & Basil Meat Balls and they also offer a range of ready meals and even garlic herb potatoes. Steven continued:-

"This is the best move we've ever made, it's what I've always wanted. I have wanted my own shop for the last seven years, so when this came on the market it was a 'now or never' decision. It's been a privilege to open my own business in my home town'.

Steven joined in the 'Butchers At The Heart of The Community' campaign to raise funds for a defibrillator. They have now reached their target and are in the process of ordering the defibrillator and security box, and hopes to have it installed outside his shop very soon. This will be a very visible demonstration of just how important customers are to the business.

Customers enjoy the chat, the friendly helpful attentive staff with their cooking advice even when no questions are raised. There are some who have still to discover the place but if a missionary returns from deepest Africa it's just too bad Steven can't lift his hat and ask "Doctor Livingstone, I presume"?

