**All-female Scottish butcher cohort aims to drive Scotch business after Northern Ireland trip**

Business development, retail inspiration and new product ideas were key research areas when the first all-female cohort of Scottish butchery business managers and colleagues visited leading Northern Irish butchers recently.

The trip, organised by Quality Meat Scotland’s (QMS’) Scotch Butchers Club, saw the group visit seven members of the Elite Butchers of Northern Ireland, an organisation of 16 proactive independent butcher businesses.

There are more than [250 members](https://makeitscotch.com/the-scotch-butchers-club/butchers-search) of the Scotch Butchers Club, a QMS scheme for butchers across Scotland who are committed to providing assured, high-quality Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork to their customers.

Gordon Newlands, Scotch Butchers Club manager, said: “There are few women in butchery in Scotland, so it was really great to support this recent trip. These visits give first-hand insight into what leading businesses are doing with their produce, and provide ideas and inspiration to help our members drive sales of our Scotch and Specially Selected brands.”

Laura Black from Hugh Black and Sons, which has 13 butcher’s shops across the Central Belt, said the trip was a great business-focussed opportunity. “My husband Hugh has been on these trips before and always found them very useful. I liked the sound of this one, being all female. It was perhaps less intimidating, and the camaraderie with the group was fantastic. That being said, I think I would feel more comfortable going on any trip in future.”

The seven businesses visited were ‘impressive’, she said, with several different business models. “They all had well fitted and laid-out shops with a great range of products, and there is a move towards much more of a self-serve set up, rather than mainly over the counter sales. They were particularly forward thinking when it came to value-added products and ready meals, and their packaging was impressive.”

Laura said her business is now implementing changes as a result of the trip: “We are currently planning new fittings in several of our shops and will be looking to make more space for self-serve products. We are also in the process of working on a new range of value-added products, with some ideas taken from the products and packaging I saw during the trip.”

Gordon added: “Visiting businesses in different countries with a similar outlook on trade is a really useful opportunity. Many of the businesses we saw are driving sales through their own shops, and through satellite shops with stand-alone counters. The shops we saw were outstanding, with the focus on retail at every opportunity – providing inspiring ideas for everyone to take home.”

* For more information on the Scotch Butchers Club, including inspiring recipes and finding member butchers, see <https://makeitscotch.com/the-scotch-butchers-club>

**Photo caption:** The first all-female cohort of Scottish butchery business managers and colleagues visited leading Northern Irish butchers on a QMS Scotch Butchers Club research trip.

Left to right; Laura Black (Hugh Black Butchers), Ariane Bennet (D.H. Robertson Butchers), Laura Black (Coopers Butchers), Kieran McAtamney (Owner, K. & G. McAtamney), Louise Forsyth (Forsyths of Peebles), Cath Wilson (Forsyths of Peebles).