

Puddingstone Place

case study

Love at first bite

When super-cook Tracey Blair heard that her local cafe was up for sale, she spotted the business opportunity she'd been waiting for.

If you ever find yourself wandering down Callander Main Street in Perthshire and spot a slab of rock in the window of a charming little cafe/restaurant, you'll know you've arrived at Puddingstone Place – a well-regarded local hangout that owner Tracey Blair had been dreaming of buying for more than a decade.

Formerly known as Munchy's, the café/restaurant is where Blair used to take her children as an occasional treat, and she long felt an affinity for the place that she admits is hard to explain.

"I just always fancied it," she says. "It's not a big place, and I knew I could do most of the work myself. I often said to the previous owner that if he put it on the market, he should let me know."

That day eventually came in 2017, and Blair – who had already worked in the kitchens of various local cafes during her career – felt that she had to strike. "I couldn't see any future for myself but this," she says. "I knew it was meant to be."

That slab in the window was put there by Blair as a talking point for first-time visitors, to whom she is happy to explain that it is a piece of puddingstone. "I never liked the old name and when looking for a new one an elderly lady who had been coming here for years told me that the building was once called Puddingstone House, because it's built from local puddingstone," she says.

All hands on deck

Before the cafe/restaurant was renamed, Blair first had to buy it – which she did with the help of broker Alison Hunter of ASC Finance For Business. Hunter guided Blair through her application for financing from the Royal Bank of Scotland, and with further assistance from Royal Bank of Scotland Business Development Manager Sarah Delo and relationship manager Deana Baird, the deal was approved.

Once summer was out of the way, Blair shut up shop for some major refurbishment work – an endeavour that became more alarming by the day as dry rot and then woodworm were discovered. But the new owner stuck with it and eventually emerged with the kind of premises she'd always dreamed about.

There have been other obstacles – but they're nothing that Blair hasn't been able to deal with. "I'm still slightly terrified of the business side of things – the paperwork and all that – but I'm learning all the time and it's all working out," she says. "If I can do it, anyone can."

Blair says that the decision to buy and run her own business was the best thing she ever did. "There's never a morning when I wake up and I go, 'Oh no – work!'" she says. "I enjoy every day. I'm doing pretty well and the tourists are just starting to come back to Callander for the summer. My plan is to keep doing what we're doing – because we're doing a great job."

For more information contact Business Development Manager Sarah Delo at Sarah.Delo@rbs.co.uk

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