

Edinburgh Reporter chats – Gaynor Salisbury of Loopy Lorna’s Tea House

✘ Not really a morning person, owner and founder of Loopy Lorna’s Tea House, Gaynor Salisbury, is nevertheless a very hard-working individual. She admits she is much happier working in the evenings than in the mornings, but when you are your own boss there are loads of things to do at both ends of the day. Gaynor has had more than her fair share of obstacles to her latest business idea as she told The Reporter during our chat.

“First of all I wanted to open a tea house when I was in my late teens, but it was always put on the back boiler as I went to university and then went travelling. I have owned quite a few businesses. I actually opened Loopy Lorna’s in Stockbridge about 10 years ago, more as a restaurant than a tea house. My kids were really young and I did not see them very much so I ended up selling it quite quickly. In that restaurant I just tried to do everything every day. I learned a lot from that! I learned that rather than doing everything yourself you have to work on the business strategy.

I bought a great book called The E Myth Revisited. It is a fantastic book for anybody starting in a new business, and explains things like overseeing the business and looking at strategy. It’s also a really good read.

After selling the last restaurant I worked for Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce for 3 years as a business adviser. I really, really enjoyed it, but still wanted to do my own thing. I ended up leaving and went to help my husband run his business for a time.

✘ I started planning Loopy's in March 2008. What really gave me the impetus was I went on a goal-mapping course; part of a life coaching course all about following your dreams and vision. That was the key to it all:-I did not want to be on my death bed wondering why I did not ever open the tea house, so I started doing the planning for it.

I did a load of research on teas and then I started looking for premises. It took quite a long time to find them. I spent about six months looking and then found the Morningside Station premises. They were actually already selling to someone else. I used to go in there on a Saturday afternoon and plead with them to sell it to me. In the end they gave in. It was a coffee shop already, but I had plans for it! I could see the potential in the shop, particularly as it is a really lovely corner site. So once I had the premises I then started on all the branding.

One of my close friends, Elke Dossler, runs a design agency called One Shoop. I initially met Elke from [One Shoop](#) at the Chamber of Commerce and we soon clicked. She was in tune with me about doing things differently. She came up with the doyley teapot idea after I had dreamt about the pink teapot. We worked together on all the designs and branding.

On October 17 2008 we then opened and within 15 minutes the ✘ place was full.

We had had the windows covered in pretty wallpaper during the renovation works, and we covered the wallpaper with quirky quotes. So people walking past could see all this, and became quite intrigued. It all really created a buzz and was enough to result in a queue, even though we opened about a month late. We just kept putting up new quotes like "Not opening yet darlings!"

On the first day I was completely understaffed. I ended up in tears. People were complaining about the service, and I had

been adamant about the service being the best it could be. So I closed for two days the following week to recruit and train some more staff.

✘ My big thing is staff recruitment and training. I don't do all the recruitment now as I have a front of house manager, and so I let them do their job. I used to recruit on purely personality alone, but now staff need to have some experience as we are just so busy. It is actually a really stressful job. They need a solid background to cope with the pressure sometimes. It is busy particularly at Church Hill which is a much larger venue.

I was really lucky as I had a close friend, Colette, who ✘ happened to be on maternity leave and who used to run Brewers Fayre restaurants. She stepped in when I was diagnosed with breast cancer two months after opening. She literally moved in with me and the children, along with her husband and their new baby. She took over running my business and looked after me too. Because of her background she is very much procedure led. She makes sure that all the health and safety regulations are adhered to, for example. She makes sure it is all pretty well organised. We are really a good team and are very complementary to one another.

I think we will probably have a birthday party to celebrate ✘ our two years in Morningside and a launch for Church Hill all in one, at some point in the future!

I am most proud of our loyal customer feedback. They seem to really love Loopy's. Of course we don't get it right all the time. But it is great to have that positive feedback from people when we do and there is a real Fan Club out there. Going into both premises now, I still wonder how it all happened!

We will have wifi in Church Hill as it is much bigger, but not in Morningside. It is not a big place and we need the room in

Morningside simply for customer turnover.

✘ I wanted to leave school at 17 and go to catering college, but my Mum wouldn't let me. She wanted me to do my A levels, go to University and become a doctor. I did psychology first and then went back to university in 2000 after a business bankruptcy and did a Masters in Entrepreneurial Studies. I wanted to learn how to run a business properly!

The first business I had was a bed and breakfast. I had been working in Holloway Prison in the kitchens at the time. I then left to open the B & B in Margate. Afterwards I went travelling for four years and came home with a load of Guatemalan clothes and crafts which I started to sell. That went for quite a long time but also went bust as I had not done the Market research properly. I did not realise how many competitors there were. My house was repossessed during that, but after the degree I realised I could actually run a business properly. You learn from other people, but you learn a lot from your mistakes too.

I would like to expand the business further. My plan is to have six Loopy's. I would love to open in Glasgow but really would want to have a Loopy's in New York actually! I have this thing in my head about New York. Loopy's has just been featured in the American travel magazine called Afar. They were kind enough to do a three page spread all about us.

I miss parts of England and particularly the weather which is much milder down south. I never seem to wear a summer dress in Edinburgh! But you can't really beat Edinburgh for restaurants and green places.

When I have time and sometimes when I need to recharge I go to The Hermitage for a walk.

Here is one example of a review of Loopy's from the [blogosphere](#) and here are some lovely photos from Dan Phillips on his website [here](#).

And Gaynor also won the 'Entrepreneur of the Year 2010' at the Winning Entrepreneurs Charity Awards Dinner held at Prestonfield House, Edinburgh in 2010.

Go along to Loopy's today – the experience is gorgeous.

And you can follow the experience on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).