

Where to shop – The Dragonfly Gifts on Broughton Street

Louise Nichol who owns The Dragonfly Gifts on Broughton Street is a multitasker, although she just calls herself busy. She owns and runs the lovely gift shop, and also works for RBS as a Supply Chain Manager.

She looks after the shop's admin at weekends, and when she's not doing that she hangs out with her two cats, Pushkin and Poe, her horse Honey and a very understanding husband, Brian. Oh and to keep herself from wearying she also makes candles, cushions, jewellery, stained glass and up-cycles when she can too.



Louise Nichol of Dragonfly

Louise explained why she started the business in August 2011. She said : "I wanted a business that I could leave the corporate world that I live in and I wanted something that I could really 'create', something that reflected me and who I am. Even though I bought a going concern, I've spent a lot of time and effort making The Dragonfly a true reflection of my vision, and something that would grow with me as I moved away from the corporate work and my day-job at a blue chip company. I always loved shops of this kind, and thought about owning one myself. I used to spend weekends with my husband watching footfall into shops in various areas of Edinburgh.

"We used to sit in bus shelters or hang out in cafés getting a feel for the vibe in the area. This shop came onto the market and we loved the Bohemian feel of Broughton Street, where we had been, so I knew this was the one I liked the look of. The lady who owned it before had baby wear and cards, but we have extended the home range and we have more individual artists, perhaps our things are a little bit more unique.

"We probably have about half traditional suppliers and half independent suppliers. Some of the things we sell, people make themselves.

"I make candles too, so I understand smaller suppliers who fit us really well."

She explained that the suppliers are independent and individual and I suggested that was probably a bit like Louise herself. She then explained she is also a mentor and helps with ESpark which mentors small businesses starting out. So occasionally if a supplier comes in with a new product which is perhaps not well packaged, but is a lovely product. She is able to help them with that, as well as selling their products for them.

There are a few trade shows that she goes to each year across

the UK, but sometimes she gets emails from potential suppliers with new products to add to the already burgeoning range of gifts that The Dragonfly stocks. She is pretty discerning though.

Louise continued : “We have to see the quality, as it is the quality that is most important. If it is worthwhile then perhaps the producer can do something slightly different with it and I can make suggestions about that.”



Some of the stock that Louise handpicks for her shop The Dragonfly Gifts

The stockroom under the shop is packed with more lovely things, but there is usually one of everything on display.

Customers can buy online but the shop is also open seven days a week. The shop is packed with lovely things and Louise is keen that customers have a nice time when they are there.

“For me, it’s all about the customer and their experience. Our lovely customers are so important to us. A simple smile and

hello, thank you and goodbye costs us nothing, but isn't it always the simple things that work best?

"We want them to feel welcomed and relaxed when they come in to see us. We can leave them in their own world to mooch around, or help if they've got that challenging individual they need to buy the perfect gift for. Sometimes, we can offer a little inspiration and our suggestions often hit the spot perfectly.

"We work hard to maintain a mixed variety of stock, from traditional suppliers to small, independent artists. We want our customers to be happy with their purchases and to trust us so quality is vital. But that doesn't have to come at a cost so we look around for affordable quality."

The Dragonfly team consists of Sophie and Elfreda who do a split shift through the week, Marie (yes that's Louise's Mum) who helps cover holidays and joins her when she goes to trade fairs. With background help from Diego the technical expert, Jack the wages man and Louise's husband, Brian who doubles up as the handy man...and Louise of course!

