

## MEMBER PROFILE

# Going Dutch



What recession? Andrew Williams visits The Dutch Bakery, a one-shop-plus-wholesale family business in Sefton, and finds, from owner Derek Klarsson, that things are looking rosy

### SO WHY ARE THINGS GOING SO WELL FOR YOU WHEN OTHERS ARE STRUGGLING?

Because there is money out there to help build your business. A guy walked in off the street from Invest Sefton, located in a borough to the north of the City of Liverpool, which is there to help regenerate businesses, to keep them going and keep them employing people. From that I got a grant through Sefton Council of £30,000. I also got a low-interest loan of £20,000 from the MSIF – a Merseyside Special Investment Fund for small firms – and every year you get an interest rebate. In total, £80,000 of the £330,000 I've invested in the building and machinery was funded through grants and low-interest loans, which is a massive help to any business. I went to the bank for the rest of the funding,

and have a three-year arrangement with Lombard to pay off the rest of the machinery.

### WHY HAVE YOU DECIDED TO INVEST IN YOUR BUSINESS?

First and foremost because I absolutely love it and I'm born and bred to do it. I think the future is for small independent bakers. We've had a bit of a kicking in the last 15-20 years, but a lot of people are coming back towards the independent retailer. They like shopping locally and they like it fresh, and I've never sold so much bread as now. Our bakery has always been behind the shop and people like that image.

### WAS YOUR KIT OLD AND IN NEED OF A SPRUCE-UP?

Some of it was. We've put in a two-rack gas oven to complement

our deck oven, because if we upped our proving and manufacturing capacity, we had to improve the baking facilities. With the retarder-provers, we've only got one person now coming in at midnight, and not for much longer, and you're just miles ahead of the game with production. Good staff who are willing to work ridiculous hours are harder to find, so the more you invest in retarder-provers, more efficient ovens and roll plants, the better. While it does de-skill the job to some extent, you retain your independence.

### WHAT ARE THE BIG CHALLENGES?

When Tesco Express opened next door, people said: "That'll be the end of you." I thought, if anything, it would improve things for us and we are now £250-a-week better off, because it has a car park and brings a lot of people to the area. We had a fantastic Christmas in the shop – my best so far. The shop is the most profitable side of the business and I'm thinking of opening a second – it's better than wholesale because you've got £4,500 in your pocket at the end of the week.

### WHAT DO YOU GET OUT OF BEING AN NAMB MEMBER?

I get kept informed, week-to-week, month-to-month, so I know what, when and where things are happening. You cannot really class the membership as a fee, because you get free advice on the phone. I've got an issue with the resin floor I put in, and that's gone to court. My first point of call was the National Association, and they gave me advice and put me in touch with a solicitor:

## THE YEAR AHEAD

### DIARY DATES

FRIDAY 8 MAY - MONDAY 11 MAY 2009

### 122ND ANNUAL NAMB CONFERENCE

### THE HIGHCLIFF MARRIOTT BOURNEMOUTH

This year's NAMB Conference will be in Bournemouth, starting on Friday 8 May. Reservations at the hotel itself will be strictly on a first-come, first-served basis.

The event this year is a fantastic opportunity to network with other baking industry executives from around the country and is gaining tremendous support from many allied traders. It will feature three excellent speakers, to be revealed, and will include a banquet night on Saturday 9 May, which is free to members or £40 per person to non-members, and a Fun Night on Sunday 10 May, costing £35 per person for members or £40 per person for non-members.

Other events on the Saturday include a 40-minute boat trip for NAMB members, courtesy of the Western Region, which will leave from the pier below the hotel at about 11am. The boat will cruise around the coast, taking in famous sights and a light lunch back at the pier is included. The trip is only open to members attending the conference.

Also on Saturday will be the NAMB's Annual Golf Tournament. The Neil Houlston Cup will be played at the Meyrick Park Golf Club in Bournemouth, a short walk from the hotel. The course is set in 120 acres of scenic parkland and will provide players with numerous challenges. Tea or coffee and bacon sandwiches are supplied on arrival and there will be a lunch of soup and sandwiches.

**For details of hotel bookings or any of these events, contact Karen Dear on 01920 860117**