

DESIGNS BY DENISE KENDALL OF RHYL

North Wales Living magazine editor Don Hale took time out to visit Designs by Denise Kendall & the Wedding Centre in Rhyl to see what really happens behind the scenes of a well-known design and fashion store, when brides and their entourage prepare for their big day. *Photographs by Stéphanie Durrant.*

RHYL'S Wedding Centre is a fabulous Aladdin's cave of spectacular garments and accessories to ensure everything goes smoothly on a bride's special day.

Generously spread over three large floors on Wellington Street in the centre of the town, the business includes a thriving retail store on the ground floor, the Bridal Suite on the first floor, and the production and wholesale department on the top floor.

The whole building is packed with a vast range of top quality bridal gowns, sparkling tiara's, fascinators, shoes, handbags, earrings, ring cushions, teddy bears, hats, capes and a host of other essential accessories.

Meticulously run by proprietor and designer Denise Kendall, who was a delightful host, she never tired of answering my questions, and eagerly explained just how she had managed to build up such an impressive and successful business over more than two decades - and

why she had opted to move into the centre of Rhyl.

Designs by Denise Kendall, was previously based on a nearby Industrial Estate and she decided to hit town during the Spring of 2005, to take over an established outlet on Wellington Street, run by Claire Mitchell.

Denise was intent on establishing her own label and presence and told me how she was determined to develop and satisfy the demands of a growing number of customers, who required top-quality bridal and fashionwear.

Talking to Denise however, was at times like talking to a moving target, she was constantly busy organising operations, and admitted that she also runs another store at High Street, at Connah's Quay; plus a franchised operation known as Images in Market Square, Holyhead.

She outlined her wholesale business plan and told of other regular contracts with firms in Manchester, Leicester, Cardiff and indeed all over the world, and said this was another part of her thriving overall >>



Above Olivia Kellett who works with her Grandparents at the Royal Hotel in Colwyn Bay

Above Michaela Barkley who is a Midwife in Liverpool.

business plan.

And on the retail side, she confirmed: "We make and sell a quality range of bridal wear, and everything for bridesmaids, pageboys, brides' mothers, christening wear and a full range of mens' wear, with many wedding dresses imported from the Far East and from Europe.

"We only started making wedding dresses a few years ago – but it has all really taken off since coming here. We make our own wedding gowns and costumes and we can do all the fittings - catering for everyone from babies to adults."

Denise was very keen to acknowledge the generous assistance of her work colleagues, and particularly of Sandie Joyner, the manageress of the Bridal Suite and the company's main wedding and dress designer.



Above Denise Kendall (Proprietor) with wedding and dress designer Sandie Joyner

Below Michaela Barkley with Sophie Roberts who works at the store



"Sandie is a fantastic designer," she announced with obvious pride. "She studied fashion and design at University, and is a Rhyl lady who has been with us since school.

"People now come from all over the country to view, discuss and buy our dresses. They have a wide range of demands and requirements.

"The brides wear section is very popular, together with evening wear, dresses for the brides' mother and a range of Carnival dresses. Everything is made to measure."

Sandie suggested the warm friendly atmosphere of the premises played a key role in satisfying the needs of customers. "We have a good team here. They have experience and we are all very friendly," she said, adding with a smile: "The girls are brilliant, and we work well together."

Sandie though, played down her own important role, but admitted they were all determined to help customers choose the correct gowns and accessories for their perfect day. "We are quite happy to give advice," she said. "We have lots of ideas and a varied range to suit different people. We can provide made to measure, or off the peg garments."

She is a very bubbly and lively character, and despite her youthful appearance, has a wealth of experience and numerous qualifications to support her dressmaking ideas.

Sandie spent 5-years in study at higher education, attending Bolton University where she obtained a BTEC in Fashion & Textiles, an HND in Fashion Technology, and later secured a prestigious BSc in Textile & Design.

Originally from Birmingham, she moved with her family to Rhyl at the age of 4 and loves the region – and has even bought a house nearer town.

Both Denise and Sandie were keen to promote the personal touch, and agreed that most brides and their mothers still liked to come and chat about their requirements, without the pressure of major retailers.

The Wedding Centre offers a tranquil haven where customers can actually see examples of quality gowns. Prices varied from about £180 to nearer £1,500 and the modern bride now has a wide choice of colours available.

Sandie explained that satin, chiffon and silk remained the most popular materials, and said they offered a comprehensive range of top labels.

She revealed: "The Hollywood Dreams line is probably our top seller. In addition, we also have Benjamin Roberts, Essense, Sacha James, Venus, Alfred Angelo and Trudy Lee - in addition to our own designs."

The Tiara display included examples from Blue Moon, Puritan, Trudy Lee and Richards Designs; whilst models from Katz and Shades amongst others, ably supported the impressive shoe section.

As she could see me checking that our photographer had captured all the right images, she added: "Everything is made to measure and customers can both feel and try on sample dresses, or other items. People seem to just love coming here."

It was a sentiment that I readily accepted, and fully understood. ■

For further details about all their range of stock and designs, please contact The Wedding Centre, 6 Wellington Road, Rhyl. Tel 01745-361166. Website: www.designsbydenise.co.uk

BRIDAL COMPETITION:

Designs by Denise Kendall are holding a special Bridal Competition until 31st January 2005. All you have to do is call into their store on Wellington Street, Rhyl and fill in an entry form. There is no obligation to purchase and you could win a £400 bridal gown, an adult bridesmaid's dress or a flower girl's dress.



Bridal assistant and fashion model Gemma Jennings

Below From Left, Michaela (Cousin to Bride) , Irene (Friend to Bride), Angela (Bride), Laura (cousin to the Bride Angela)

