



Ian Geddes



Things can only Geddes better...

Last year, Scottish independent retailer Geddes and Mellis had their shop destroyed by an arson attack. Now they're back in business with a new Panasonic Store. Sean Hannam reports

AN attempted break-in at Geddes and Mellis, based in Elgin, Scotland, led to an arson attack, which reduced the store back to its brickwork.

However, just like a phoenix from the flames, the business is now up and running again and has also opened a new Panasonic Store.

Owner Ian Geddes casts his mind back to that fateful night on September 12 last year. "All our windows were smashed, but because they had steel bars on them, no one could get into the shop. But someone started a fire in the office – the store was totally destroyed, apart from the brickwork. We had another shop next door and there's a vent that links the two stores, which meant all the stock in the other one was damaged by smoke and written off."

At the time, the stores were just selling brown goods and vacuum cleaners. However, now Mr Geddes runs a Panasonic Store, which also sells white goods, and he has a multi-brand shop next door, stocking brands such as Dyson and Roberts.

"It took us about six months to get back up and running. We opened in early April of this year," he tells ERT.

"The Panasonic rep had been on at us for years to open a Panasonic Store. It was the perfect chance – we needed to revamp the shop and we were selling 90 per cent Panasonic anyway, so it just seemed right. It's been doing fine – the look of the new shop is bright and modern. We had to make the most of it [after the fire], we could have sat at home and cried. I remember the insurance guy saying to me, 'in a year's time, you'll look



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back on this and laugh'. 'We'll see,' I said'."

Ambience

Specialist company Replan was brought on board to do the refit. Says Mr Geddes: "They were great to work with – there were no problems. We had a minor bother about heights, but that was quickly sorted out. It's a modern store, with a black-and-white colour scheme and all the TVs mounted on the walls. The shop is a lot bigger than it used to be. We've taken out a wall that was burnt down. It's just under 1,500 square feet.

"Replan came up with some ideas and it was very straightforward – it was just a case of tweaking a few

things. We've now got provision to sell white goods and the Panasonic washing machines have been doing very well. The new store has a nicer ambience and it's very spacious with a lot of lighting – it looks perfect."

On current trading conditions, he says: "We had a wee kick when we reopened, but business is tough. People are looking after their finances, but there are days when it's chock-a-block and days when it's quiet. But, on the whole, it's not too bad. We're doing well with TV, including 3D, and also digital still cameras – we've got them in some lovely cabinets."

The business was set up by Mr Geddes's father – also called Ian – back in 1972. "We've got a good name locally. I used to come in during my school holidays when I was 15 or 16, but I started working for him when I left school at 17. I'm 43 now," he says.

"We've got regular customers, but we're always looking at getting new business from other avenues. We try to go that extra mile to help people out."

So, how does he feel now, looking back on that terrible time in September 2010? "It's been the hardest eight months of my life and I haven't had a day off in a year. It's been a hard slog, but when you see the stores now, it's all been worth it."

