

STORES

Are happy Days here to stay?

The new Days department store in Carmarthen is that rare beast, a large store opening. But how does the offer stand up? **John Ryan** ventures inside to find out

Department stores should be simple places. Popular opinion has it that they are either 'houses of brands' or 'branded houses'.

The former is a collection of labels and names under a single roof and the latter an emporium where a large proportion of the offer is branded with the name that is on the fascia.

The freshly opened Days department store in Carmarthen is very definitely a house of brands.

And at this point, it is worth noting the store's provenance. Days is the brainchild of Philip Day, retail entrepreneur and owner of the Edinburgh Woollen Mill group. Over time, Day has hoovered up brands that used to fill our high streets but which have gone the way of all flesh.

This means the likes of Peacocks, Jaeger, Austin Reed and Ravcl are all being given a new lease of life in downtown Carmarthen.

And from the moment the shopper enters the pedestrianised Guildhall Square, it is clear that this is a store of brands that you know but can't quite remember when you last saw them.

Brands ahoy

The reason for this instant recognition is the windows. These are simple affairs where white vignettes feature mannequins posed with a single brand per window. It's a case of brands ahoy with the word 'Days' above the windows in an equally plain white font against a black background.

Entering the two-level store, the ground floor is devoted to women's clothing and footwear with a smaller area for kidswear.

A quick glance around will be enough to establish that although this is a house of brands, all of the names on display are given their own space and afforded the same treatment in terms of visual merchandising.

The monochrome promise of the exterior is made good inside with the perimeter having a high-level black strip on which the name of each of the brands is emblazoned in white.

The original font for each brand has been maintained, but it is a job lot as far as maintaining consistency across the floor is concerned, with all conforming to the black and white diktat.

The mid-floor equipment is relatively low-rise and low cost, with black metal tables and rails forming the bulk of what's on view and offering a contrast with the cream-tiled floor.

All of which is acceptable and stands up reasonably to the local competition, even allowing for a somewhat Grace Brothers feel to the whole.

Owing, however, to the number of brands that are housed within this space, adjacencies do look a little curious with premium sitting cheek-by-jowl with value labels and all displayed in a similar manner.

'Have a nice day'

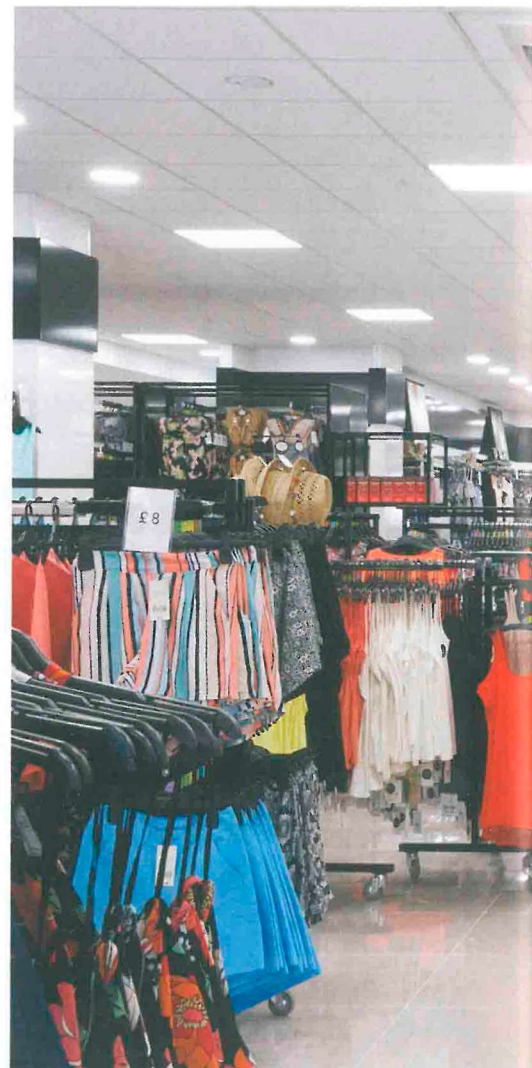
A staircase, with a sign in the stairwell encouraging customers to 'Have a nice day', leads up to menswear, home and a cafe.

The cafe is the first thing that the shopper encounters at the top of the stairs and looks like a cross between Debenhams and BHS of old.

It is neat, clean and inexpensive, with the black-and-white theme being continued and a grey serving counter completing the picture.

An exposed brick wall adds a touch of heritage to proceedings and a few local diners were tucking in on the morning of visiting.

It is a job lot as far as maintaining consistency across the floor is concerned, with all conforming to the black and white diktat



Immediately adjacent to the cafe is a corner space that has been turned into a 'Kitchen Shop', selling cutlery, crockery, mixing bowls and tea towels.

Menswear lies just beyond the cafe and as with the layout downstairs, here it's a matter of Frankenstein brands that have been brought back to life.

Displays are uncompromisingly mainstream and densities are high with the offer being aimed at what would appear to be a more mature shopper.

Homewares, where the principal display is a pair of double-bed roomsets with the legend 'Designer' behind them, at the back of the floor, is reached by a broad walkway.

Other elements worth noting about this store are the cash desks, the back walls of which do bear an uncanny resemblance to Next a couple of generations ago, and the ambient lighting, which is generally the same throughout.

Plans are in place for this to be the first of several Days stores.

Other than the many brands that are on offer, the only question is whether there is a sufficient point of difference in what has been done for this store to flourish. **RW**

See more pictures of
Days in Carmarthen
Retail-Week.com/Days-gallery



Days

Carmarthen, Wales

Opened May 25, 2017

Number of floors Two

Proposition A house of brands

Ambience Department store functional

Highlight The cafe



Above: the in-store cafe with exposed brickwork

