

The staff newsletter of AJ Engineering and NEWCo

SCOTTISH APPRENTICE WEEK

RISING THROUGH THE RANKS

AJE former apprentice Lee Evans has become the foreman of the new site at Waterford.

Lee Evans (31) secured an apprenticeship with AJ Engineering in 2007 and to mark Scottish Apprenticeship Week which runs until March 5, he shared his journey.

Lee said: "I never actually intended to become an apprentice, instead I was going to go into the army, but I needed a trade so started a pre-apprenticeship in fabrication and welding at Inverness College. As part of my course, I had to do two days a week with a company and I applied to AJ Engineering and Varis Engineering. I got my days at AJE and at the end of my first year, Alan offered me an apprenticeship. I jumped at the chance as I knew that an apprenticeship was one of my best options."

Lee worked as an apprentice fabricator/welder for three years and at the end stayed with AJE: "I think I must have made a good impression and I wanted to stay as they had looked after me."

However, a few years later he was offered a position with a different company, so for a while moved on.

"The offer was a good one and that is the only reason I moved away from AJE. However, the job ended up being not quite what I expected and eventually after joining Rennie Fabrication which later amalgamated with AJE, I found myself back in Forres. Malcom who



owned Rennie Fabrication spoke with all the staff about whether we wanted to come across and join AJE with him and it never crossed my mind to go anywhere else."

However, Lee's time away stood him in good stead as he had learned to manage teams of people and had experienced a lot of on-site work and working away from home.

"All of these experiences have shaped me, but I dare say if I hadn't done my apprenticeship, I would have still ended up at AJE, but I would not have progressed as far as I have today.

"Doing an apprenticeship is hard work. It's not a cop out option. I don't know any apprentice who goes home at night and switches off. You are always thinking about your day and then you have your college work to get done as well. You are also generally just out of school or college and you're meeting new people, visiting sites and that can be quite intimidating."

Speaking about his new role, Lee who lives with his wife Jennifer and two sons Rhylee (9) and two-year-old Oaklee said: "I did dream of one day progressing through the company and I have always wanted to better myself. I am doing it for my family and my eldest son is proud of my new position.

"I think having been an apprentice I can help the guys I work with better. I have been there and I know what it's like. I've been in their shoes. That said, I am also learning every day. There is never a day where we don't all learn something new."

However, if you think this is as far as Lee is going, think again.

"Being a foreman is still a manual job with added stress and responsibility. I look up to the likes of Matt MacPherson and Craig Johnston. Their jobs are tough as they are managing staff but also managing their own projects, but one day I would like to think I could be doing a similar job to them."

You canna shove AJ staff off a job

A JOB on the island of Canna to replace some roller shutter doors almost ended up being a rollercoaster of a ride home for an AJE team.

But the team's dedication to the job, customer and a desire not to get stranded saw them work round the clock in true AJE style to get the job complete!

Just what happened?

The team were deployed to Canna by the National Trust for Scotland to replace three roller shutter doors as the existing ones were beyond repair.

They arrived on Monday February 1 with the aim of returning by ferry on the Thursday of that week.

However, by Tuesday, the Thursday ferry was cancelled due to an adverse weather forecast! The team had two options, return on the Wednesday or stay until the ferries started running again!



Not wanting to leave the client with a half-finished job, the team worked until 3am on the Wednesday morning so the doors were installed and operational. Bleary eyed, they then caught the Wednesday morning ferry home ensuring the beat the storm!

AJE Director Graham Alexander said: "It's great when we go above and beyond to ensure we overcome challenges, so the client gets what we said they'd get, when we said. It also meant another job could be brought forward for the team to start on the Thursday."

Team returns to historic Scapa

A team from AJE will return to Lyness on the Island of Hoy to complete a project which was started last August on a historic visitor centre.

The project has involved the enhancement of interpretation and displays, the creation of a building which will house an exhibition space, café, toilet facilities and information areas.

Now the team will return to work on the restoration of the existing pumphouse and boiler house which will both be clad.

Orkney Islands Council secured a grant of £1.155 million from The Heritage Lottery Fund for the project.

General manager, Graham Alexander who is leading on the project said: "This project has huge historical importance and we are delighted that we are now coming to the end of it. The works have involved involve input from our teams at our headquarters in Forres, but also the skill of our employees at our sister company NEWCo based in Fort William."

"There were two existing steel chimneys which are historically significant. The NEWCo team took the chimneys away for one to be repaired and they made a replica of the second one which sadly could not be restored."

He added: "There are huge logistics with this type of project but AJ Engineering is no stranger to working in remote locations so the contractors are in safe hands."

Scapa Flow served as a sheltered harbour for British ships during war, with some 12,000 people once stationed off the Orkney isle. Lyness became the naval headquarters in Orkney during 1919 before works were undertaken to further enlarge the base in the 1930s.

Schools out for all weathers



Pupils from five primary schools across the Highland region will be able to play and learn outside in relative comfort thanks to a project handled by a team at AJ Engineering.

Working for Morgan Sindall on behalf of Highland Council the scope was to provide five primary schools with extension canopies.

Three of the five canopies have now been completed and it is hoped that the final two will be completed this month.

Project Engineer Rob Williamson led on the project which involved using the workshop at the Greshop in Forres alongside the new multi-million pound premises at Waterford to fabricate the main steel canopy frames.

Rob who joined AJ Engineering last October said: "This has been my first full project(s) with AJ Engineering and it's going very well. We were given architectural drawings from the customer and Pat and Alan worked from these.

Pat designed the main steel canopy structure and Alan designed the cladding canopy roof. There are five schools and whilst each canopy design was similar, each site was different regarding canopy dimensions and finished colours, so each school had to be treated as individual designs and projects. The designs were then fabricated in the workshops and taken to Elgin to be galvanised and they were powder coated in Cumbernauld. That in itself took a bit of logistics."

He added: "We then had to hire a specialist vehicle to use on site so that we could lift the steel columns into position. This is the first project that I have worked on in its entirety and I am pleased with how it has gone; I give a huge thanks to all those in the team who have helped me along the way."

The three school sites which have been completed are: Obsdale in Alness, Auldearn and Ardersier. Kirkill near Inverness and Duncan Forbes at Culloden are expected to be finished mid-March.

