

Apprenticeships

A day in the life of an Aldermans apprentice

Chris Oaks

At school what did you most enjoy, or excel at?

I was very much a practical person at school. I loved my sport, such as Rugby and Athletics.

What was it about engineering as a career that appealed to you?

While I was still at school I was offered a part time position with a local engineering company. I started off with the basics: cutting material, drilling holes, sweeping the floors and making tea. As time progressed I was given more challenging jobs, such as welding support pillars for buildings. Once I started to become more involved with fabrication and welding, I realised I would quite like a career in engineering.

Why did you decide to pursue an apprenticeship?

I came to Aldermans with just a couple of years' experience, but with no qualification to back it up. Although I was very capable of doing my job, I knew the fact I wasn't qualified would potentially hold me back in the future. Aldermans offered me the opportunity to start an apprenticeship which was an offer I couldn't refuse!

How did you find your apprenticeship placement?

Shane Heaney, the production manager at Aldermans, asked me if I'd be interested in the Apprenticeship Scheme.

Why did you choose to work at Aldermans?

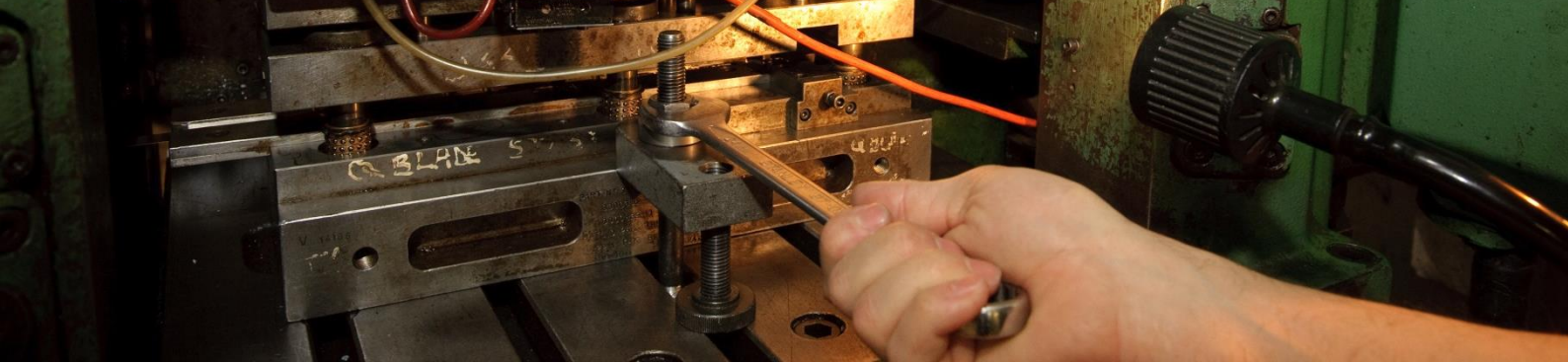
I'd recently moved down to Plymouth from Suffolk. Aldermans was local and, compared to where I had worked in the past, looked a very professional company. Everyone was very welcoming from day one, so I knew it was definitely a place I wanted to stay.

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Above: Chris, right, appearing in the promotional campaign for the Plymouth Manufacturers' Group apprentice jobs fair 2018.
Right: Hard at work in the welding bay.





When did your apprenticeship start and end?

I started my apprenticeship in September 2016, and it will finish in 2019.

What do you do on a typical day at work?

My work varies from one off fabrication to high unit jobs. I've recently taken over the 'door cell' at Aldermans, producing computer cabinet doors for a company called Rittal.

How has Aldermans helped you to develop your skills?

Before I came to Aldermans I'd only ever used the MIG/MAG welding process. Aldermans provided me with a modern TIG plant to develop my skills. After three months of practice I felt I was competent enough to undertake most TIG jobs given to me.

During your apprenticeship, what have you achieved that are you most proud of?

The 'vertical up' position using the MIG/MAG process was always something I wasn't very good at. But by being given the opportunity to practise at college, I managed to become quite handy at it!

What would you say to others who might consider an engineering apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are a great way of gaining qualifications while earning money - although, in my opinion they are best suited for individuals still living in the home environment, as most apprenticeship wages aren't sufficient enough to live comfortably on your own.

What have you learned about being an employee?

Aldermans is one big family, and everyone will go above and beyond to help you.

How has your apprenticeship helped you plan the next steps in your career?

The apprenticeship has given me a much deeper understanding of what options are open to me as a welder and fabricator.

What's the most important thing you've learned about yourself during your apprenticeship?

I've learnt that I'm capable of doing anything if I put my mind to it.

About Aldermans

A family firm, established in Plymouth for over 45 years, we're one of the region's best-known and respected metal fabricators.

Combining traditional skills with the latest technologies, we offer our clients an integrated metalwork service, from design and prototyping to small or large-scale production runs.

Our technologies include press tooling, pressbrake folding, CNC machining (lasering, punching, milling, turning), cutting, welding, assembly and kitting, and powder coating.

We are proud to hold the EN ISO 9001:2015 quality management certification, plus ISO 14001:2015 for environmental management, and OHSAS 18001:2007 health and safety management.

As well as investing regularly in the latest technologies, we also invest in our staff through training in manufacturing management techniques, such as lean manufacturing and Six Sigma.

We are an active member of PMG, the Plymouth Manufacturers' Group.