

FEBRUARY 2024

# The Micron



The staff newsletter of AJ Engineering and NEWCo

## TOP OF THE CLASS!

**An AJ Engineering apprentice has completed his degree course top of the class and with first-class honours.**

Jack Lowes (23) joined the company in August 2019 after applying for a welding job, but after seeing Jack's potential, and discovering that Jack's desire had been to complete a degree at Moray College, he was offered the chance to become the firm's second graduate apprentice.

Jack explained: "I had just finished a HNC in Engineering Systems at Moray College and was working in Tesco. When I started that course, it was supposed to be a degree level course, but unfortunately, the college was unable to commit to this. I'll admit, as it wasn't what I had planned, I panicked a bit and started looking for work and spotted the job at AJE."

Jack joined the AJE team in 2019, but was very quickly offered the opportunity to take on a graduate apprenticeship degree in Design and Manufacturing with Robert Gordons University. He jumped at the opportunity and was given M&E Technical Services Manager, Wilson Burnett as his mentor.

"Working and doing the degree was tough, as I was working full days, then studying at the weekend and evenings. The company ensured I had one day a week to commit to the degree, but I still had to do most of the studying in my own time.

"However, being in the AJE environment was great. Wilson supported me, and it also meant I had direct access to other staff members and expertise if I needed support with specific aspects of the course. One time, Wilson was able to get me help from Narro Associates, a consultant engineering company that AJ Engineering regularly work with, when I had some queries for my dissertation. That kind of support was invaluable and wouldn't have been so easy to access had I just gone to university to study for a degree."

Jack graduated last August, and not only did he qualify with a first-class honours, a few months later he discovered he had also been recognised as the Best Performing Student in the programme.

"The course was tough," explained Jack. "There was a high drop-out rate. There were originally around 25 students, but on graduation day this had been reduced to nine. That nine all ended up with firsts. However, I was pleasantly surprised to



Jack finished top of his class

learn that I had the highest mark and had been awarded best performing student."

Wilson, who started out with Michelin Tyres in 1978 in an apprenticeship in mechanical and production engineering said surprisingly not much has changed: "Back then, we got day release once a week to do our studies, so I could absolutely understand how important this time was for Jack.

Continued on the back page.

[facebook.com/ajengscotland](https://facebook.com/ajengscotland) • [twitter.com/ajengscotland](https://twitter.com/ajengscotland)

Continued from the front page.

“Jack has really excelled and now that he is qualified we are still able to work together. He really is a credit to himself and to the company.”

Wilson added: “The apprenticeships at AJE are massively beneficial not only to us as they are carrying out work and learning the way we want them to, but also for the apprentice as they are gaining valuable on the job experience. I would totally advocate young people doing apprenticeships if they can.”

AJ Engineering is no stranger to taking on apprentices.

Alan James is a time served apprentice, starting out with William Reid Engineering Ltd. By the end of his time with Wm Reid's Alan was a projects director.

In 2017, the engineering and construction company became one of the first in the north to take on an engineering graduate apprentice when the scheme was first launched.

Alan said: “First of all, may I offer my huge congratulations to Jack, who has excelled. He is a great asset to AJ Engineering. Since AJE was founded, we have always had apprentices. They are the lifeblood of the company.

“When the Graduate Apprenticeship scheme was launched, we jumped at the chance to be involved. As Jack says, they are a great way to gain real-time experience in the workplace, whilst also learning.

I was an apprentice and over the last few years, there has been a rejuvenation of apprenticeships which has been fantastic. They are a great way of filling a skills gap. My dream is to one day see one of our former apprentices sitting in my chair, running the company. That would be a proud thing and good for the company.

## AJE INVESTS IN NEW SECTOR MACHINERY

**AJE has made a £700K investment which will enable it to become a key player in the production of transmission structures and employ more staff.**

And the purchase of the new piece of kit, which will be imported from America-based firm Peddinghaus who produce the toughest steel fabrication machinery in the world, is already allowing AJE to bid for work in the sector.

The Anglemaster HD Angle Line is expected to arrive at AJE's Forres-based Waterford site in Spring.

AJE was successful in securing a grant from Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) who have awarded £250K towards the cost of the machine.

Graham Alexander, said: “This is a new market for us, but we saw an opportunity and decided to invest in machine. Electricity transmission is big business throughout the UK and now that we have two bases in England, one in London and one just over the border in Carlisle, we will be looking to offer our services to clients the length and breadth of the country.”

Graham added: “Traditionally the transmission of power would generally happen down the spine of the country out towards the coast. However, with the development of subsea transmission cables and offshore windfarms, things have changed and that means there is a huge requirement for a new network of transmission structures.

“All the parts that are required to make a transmission structure can be manufactured on this piece of kit. It'll be straightforward to install although there will be a supervisor who comes from the USA to oversee its installation. It also means that we will need to employ new staff to manage the orders and operate the machine.



## IN THE FRAME

**Alan and Graham were delighted to receive framed football tops from two local clubs they began sponsorship deals with last year.**

They were presented with the gifts as a thank you from Forres Mechanics and Forres Girls Football Club as a thank you for their support.

Last August, it was announced that AJ Engineering had given its support to Forres Mechanics Football Club by sponsoring their home and away kits.

Then a month later, the Forres Girls Football team were kitted out in new strips when AJE supplied the club with 38 new, numbered strips.



Alan and Graham receive framed strips as a thank you from the two clubs

# DYW

**MORAY**

Developing the  
Young Workforce

## JOBS FAIR

**A team from AJE will be attending a Moray Apprenticeship Jobs Fair next month to inform youngsters of what opportunities there are within the company.**

The company will join around 20 other employers from across the region from various industries who are all currently

recruiting for apprentices now and in the future.

The event has been organised by Developing the Young Workforce Moray and will take place in the Mansefield Hotel in Elgin.

AJE attends many career events both in Moray and Highland and they are a great way to get direct contact with young people as they start out on their career path.

Fiona Anderson who organises the company's attendance at these events

said: “These job fairs are always a pleasure and they are a perfect way to speak to young people in an informal setting to explain all about the opportunities there are at AJ Engineering. We sometimes find that there are some who don't realise the scale of the company and the wide variety of possibilities there are, but equally there are those who come armed ready with questions. We are looking forward to this next event which has been time to tie in with Scottish Apprenticeship Week.”