

# Celebrating Birtley's Apprentices

Birtley Group launched their Apprenticeship Scheme in 2022, as part of their long-term commitment to investing in young people and retaining local talent.

The current apprentices, who are following their 18-month **General Welder (MIG Processing) scheme**, are Dan Jameson, who is in his second year, and Nathan Griffiths, and Joe McCready who are both in their first year.

The trainees are based at the manufacturing site in Birtley, which produces steel lintels and specialist doors for trade, industry, house builders and housing associations, under its Birtley Lintels and Bowater Doors brands. The trio are learning the trade through a combination of firsthand guidance on site and weekly day release for Level 2 academic study at Sunderland College.

Having started a degree in mechanical engineering before the pandemic hit, 22-year-old Dan Jameson discovered his passion for welding following a placement at Tata Steel. Dan said: "Whilst at Tata, I saw people welding and took a great interest into the logistics of it." Dan is now a recognised member of the production team and a reliant operator who can process standard parts without supervision.

Nathan Griffiths, 17, plays for Houghton RUFC and is a keen Sunderland supporter. He said: "I am enjoying the trust in me to work on a weld bench or a spot welder."

Joe McCready, 19, worked as a motor mechanic from the age of sixteen and is keen on boxing and the gym. He told us: "I'm really enjoying working side by side with my colleagues."

Steve Thornton, Lintel Team Leader, and Mentor for the three apprentices said: "The trainees are united in their methodical approach, application, and mature outlook. It's a pleasure to work with them and to support their career development in the field of welding."



(l-r) Steve Dodd, Nathan Griffiths, Dan Jameson and Joe McCready

Steve Dodd, Manufacturing Projects Manager, has overseen the apprenticeship programme at the site. He said: "All of Birtley's apprentices will have opportunities to progress their careers through further study whilst progressing within the company.

"Birtley Group is an advocate for apprenticeships and how the opportunities that they present can provide real skills for life. We're now looking to widen our Apprenticeship scheme, and to create more long-term opportunities for young people."

Applications for the 2024 scheme will open around August this year and can be made on the

Government Apprenticeship Portal. We'll be on the lookout for bright and enthusiastic trainees who can demonstrate their maturity through work experience, placements, and interests.

Billy Lowes has worked in the business for almost 46 years, and he summed up his thoughts on what the apprentices have brought to the Group.

He said: "It's great to see keen, enthusiastic young people joining the business. Manufacturing is a fast-moving environment that's for sure and the work takes drive, energy, and ambition to be the best at what you do.

"Having worked in the engineering industry for as long as I have, I'm so proud to transfer my skills and knowledge to the next generation. I believe that our apprentices are part of the future of this business, British engineering and that of our local and wider communities and economies."