



DECADE



DUNDEE AND ANGUS
COLLEGE

Liam Rennie

A D&A Spotlight Interview

Building Success: Liam's Journey from D&A to Bricklaying Business

Meet Liam Rennie, a 26-year-old self employed bricklayer whose journey from Dundee and Angus College is a showcase of the positive impact the College can have as it laid the foundation for his career and continues to inspire his future goals.

When you were younger, what did you dream of doing as a job?

I always wanted to be in the fire service when I was younger, however, after being at college through the school link courses, I changed my mind. I came to the College to do an overview of the trades and completed 3-month blocks at a time on different aspects, such as painting and decorating, roofing, joinery, and brickwork.

Can you share a bit about yourself and what you were up to when you first joined D&A?

I was still in high school when I joined D&A for the first time, and I left school at 15 years old to enrol on the Introduction to Construction course.

I originally wanted to be a joiner after my experience on the school link course because I really enjoyed getting the hands-on experience that was different from school. When I was on the Introduction course though I chose to take on the bricklaying as I felt that the lecturers got me and really knew how to make the course interesting and fun.

“School was not for me, I really did not enjoy it, I wanted a more hands-on practical learning.”

I then went on from the Introduction course to complete an NC in bricklaying which is where I started to look at apprenticeships. I first went on to apply for an apprenticeship as a Stonemason with Heritage Scotland, this was very scary as I had never had an interview before, and this was a four-person panel interview. I got through the first stages but did not proceed any further after that, however, it did give me confidence for future interviews having had the experience. I did not give up and the College helped me to get a cover letter and CV completed, as well as advice on which companies to send them to. I then got my apprenticeship with Stewart Milne in 2013.



Thinking about your time at D&A, what are some of the standout moments or experiences that you still carry with you?

I took part in the Skillbuild Competition for students across Scotland, held in Glasgow in 2015 which was the second year of my apprenticeship. I was extremely nervous as I was still learning but I thought that it would be a good opportunity to show off skills that I had learned so far. It was a tough experience but a fantastic one to have been able to be involved with. I felt proud to be chosen to represent D&A at the national level.

I also received Student of the Year through College, and I am proud of my accomplishments. I used this on my CV and application for my apprenticeship for Stewart Milne and I managed to get one of two spaces for a bricklaying apprentice out of hundreds of other applicants. My experiences gave me

something else to talk about and it made me proud to talk about it in the application and interview stages. I was also able to add two of the lecturers as my references for my applications as they were the ones that put me forward for the award.

How did your experiences at D&A lay the pathway for your career? Are there any classes or staff that set you on your path?

There were two outstanding members of staff who set me on my path to bricklaying and a career in construction, it was Gary Knox and Gary Smith. Gary Smith was my lecturer in my school link courses and he originally got me into bricklaying and then Gary Know from my NC years.

The way that they treated you compared to the way I was treated at school is what made my time at D&A memorable and made me want to take the construction pathway. They treated you like an adult, and nothing was too much for them and they went out of their way to help you, the way that they taught you was easy to understand and made it fun too.

Both Gary's provided me with a basic understanding of bricklaying and gave me the confidence to get onto sites. It gave me experience so that I was not just going onto a site and told to get on with it and that made me feel more at ease of going onto a real working site. During the course, I was also given work experience with a local company which also gave me more experience of working on a real site and what it would be like for the future.

What were the first steps you took after finishing your course, and how did your time here shape your career choices?

Getting an apprenticeship only a month after the completion of the course and staying at D&A to complete it.

Once my apprenticeship was completed, I was offered a full-time contract from Stewart Milne as a full-time bricklayer.

Where has your career taken you since those early days?

I continued to work for Stewart Milne for eight and a half years after my apprenticeship before moving over to Persimmons for one year and then went on to become Self-employed and have been doing that for about one year now.

Looking at your journey so far, what are some moments or accomplishments that make you feel particularly proud?

Trade Award finalist (2021) for Trade Person of the Year, I was at Stewart Milne at the time of this Scotland-wide competition. I was extremely proud to have been put forward for this award and even though I did not win it and was a runner-up, it was a fantastic experience and good to be recognised for the hard work that I put into everything.

"I am proud to be my own boss now too and I take great pride in my work, knowing that everything I do is to a high standard."

If you could share a piece of advice with current students based on your experiences, what would it be?

Stick in, listen to the lecturers, if you do not succeed to start with then just keep trying. College can change your life.

What are your hopes for the future?

I want to continue to provide high-quality work that I am proud of, and I hope to come back to the College to be a lecturer at some point. I would like to give back and inspire a new generation of bricklayers just as I was. I would want to treat the students in the same way that I was and give them the chances that I was given. To have the patience to understand that everyone learns in a different way and speed, but to see for themselves what is possible in the industry. I would be so proud to come back and work at the place where it all started for me.



DECADE

