

Apprenticeship Case Studies – Reece Woods, Apprentice Drystone Dyker, Tom Nelson Stoneworks



Reece is from Drumnadrochit and attended Glen Urquhart High School. We caught up with him during the summer to find out more about how he became an apprentice Drystone Dyker and what he hopes to achieve.

Before you left school, did you know what you wanted to do?

“Yes, I wanted to be a car mechanic. I was always interested in engines and had been to the Friday sessions at the College. I heard about apprenticeships at school and knew this would be a good option for me, as I could learn and earn a wage at the same time.”

What were you doing before you started your apprenticeship?

“I went to College for a year and did car mechanics, but the course was more about technology where you plug a computer into the car and it tells you the problem, this wasn’t what I wanted to do. So, I kept busy working in a hotel kitchen where I progressed from kitchen porter to commis chef. I did think about a career as a chef as it was interesting, but not quite what I wanted to do, so I kept looking for an apprenticeship. Covid lockdown stopped everything, and then I got a start with Tom.”

Can you tell us about your apprenticeship?

“I started my apprenticeship in September 2020. It’s good to work for a local employer as I get picked up in the village. I was also lucky I knew a bit about the job as I’d done work experience with Tom while I was at school. I mostly work outdoors which I like, but it can be hard when it’s cold and wet. I like that I work Monday to Friday from 8pm to 5pm and have weekends and evenings free. The work I do includes packing the center of drystone walls; sorting stones and helping build walls. Tom and Neile are easy to understand when they explain work to me which makes the job enjoyable.”



What do you enjoy the most?

“I really like my job, particularly being outside. I enjoy seeing new places that I probably wouldn’t have gone too if I didn’t work here, like a job we did at the other side of the Loch.”



What has been the highlight of your apprenticeship so far?

“Definitely working at a bothy! We had to take quads out on the hill, which was fun and of course the work was interesting too! Later in the year when we go back to work on the interior walls, I’m taking my fishing rod with me, I might even catch my dinner!

What qualification will you gain?

I’m doing a rural skills qualification which includes units on stonemason work. I gather evidence for the units by completing work tasks. My assessor Jim is very helpful, he sets work I need to evidence, and I then do this with Tom and Neile. I was given a laptop as part of my apprenticeship so I can write up my assessments at home.”

And what about the future, what do you hope to do?

“I am being kept on with Tom at the end of my apprenticeship, which is great as it is a great place to work.”

Would you recommend an apprenticeship to other young people?

“Yes definitely. It has been a great experience. Doing an actual job is a good way to learn, I find it better than just being in a classroom as I prefer doing practical work.”

Final Word from Tom

“I decided to take on an apprentice to help with our increasing workload and further down the line I will do less hands-on work, so Neale will need another person to work with. The benefits of employing someone local are mainly logistical for travel, and I have always tried to use local guys and help the local community that way.

Because Reece had been on work placement through GHS with us, he knew what was expected of him. Seeing his confidence and self-esteem grow over the last year has been a highlight of the apprenticeship. He loves being outdoors and doing something worthwhile for which he is also appreciated.

I would recommend taking on an apprentice. If I had any advice to give other businesses, I would say, be patient and remember that we were all young at one point trying to find our feet.

We need to train and nurture our young people and apprenticeships are a great way to do that.”