

MACHINERY

incorporating Sheet Metal Industries

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Experience of a lifetime



As a past apprentice engineer, having gone through the Engineering Industry Training Board (EITB), City & Guilds and BTEC route, plus variously training across multiple company departments over a period of five years in the 70s, my visit to the AMRC Training Centre (p14) was a real treat.

I had previously visited the Rolls-Royce, Derby training school when that opened in 2008 and was impressed. It was a refreshing change and demonstration of the realisation that apprentice training was again being seen as important. Not that company's such as Rolls-Royce hadn't been training apprentices, but the shiny new Learning and Career Development Centre elevated even that large company's efforts.

Other, smaller engineering companies' similarly impressive activity has also demonstrated renewed commitment to apprenticeships in recent years, including KMF Precision Sheet Metal, Newcastle under Lyme, which built its own training school in 2009 and today runs a competition to inspire youngsters (www.machinery.co.uk/30230 and www.machinery.co.uk/58598).

Of course, government efforts to boost apprenticeships have delivered a kick to raise numbers in recent years, but with that has come a muddying of the waters in terms of what an apprenticeship means to many. Indeed, in 2012 *Machinery* argued that the apprenticeship brand was being devalued by its application to short training courses that lack the rigour, depth and breadth of a traditional, technical apprenticeship (www.machinery.co.uk/43618). In the 1970s, there was no question: an apprenticeship was clearly linked with a technical activity that required both hands-on and academic endeavour; and five years' effort was the norm.

Today, the AMRC Training Centre sets the bar for a new standard of engineering apprenticeship. For it not only sees the solid hands-on technical and related academic training that a 70s' apprentice like me appreciates; it does so in a very modern setting, sets out to produce well-rounded individuals via broader study and experience, and additionally offers a clear pathway to degree-level education.

This is far better than apprenticeships of the type I undertook offered and that's why I was so very impressed. The only negative? The description 'apprenticeship' rather downplays the fantastic experience on offer. ■

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