

# THE JOURNEY OF A SCAFFOLD APPRENTICE

Constructing a Career: The journey of a Scaffold Apprentice

## JACK DRINKWATER

Like many others, I was unsure of what I wanted to do with my life when I left school. I worked multiple part-time jobs as a bartender, kitchen porter, and landscaper while going to college, where I studied music, the only subject I enjoyed. I enrolled in the music course without a clear plan, hoping to figure things out along the way.

During this time, my dad started working at Crossway in the Commercial Team. This led to my part-time work in the Warehouse Yard there. After a few years, when my courses ended, I was asked to help on-site as a labourer for a week at a local job in Hebden Bridge. There, I met scaffolders like Matt Dyson and Steve Rose, who I quickly got along with. My first day on-site revealed the fast-paced and tough nature of the job, and I gained a deep respect for the knowledge and skills of all the workers.

To my surprise, I began to enjoy the work and stayed on-site, eventually working on my first full project at Greenhead College in Huddersfield. It was a challenging start, using 21ft tubes, longer than the ones I handled in the yard. Looking back, I'm glad this was my first project because it broke me in. Now, handling a 13ft tube seems easier.

After completing my COTS training and labouring for a while, I decided to join Crossway's apprenticeship scheme to gain my scaffolding cards. I enjoyed learning the trade, improving my skills, and working with a great set of lads on high-profile jobs, such as Lancashire County Cricket Club and a 23-story new build at Outwood Wharf, Salford. Starting my training was humbling as it made me realise how much I didn't know and that there is always something new to learn every day. The good thing about the lads at Crossway is that they will always teach you if you ask and respect you if you put in the work.

I am now waiting to complete my Part 1B and feel I have improved a lot since not being able to turn a spanner when I started. I am currently working on Trinity in Halifax, a Grade II listed building refurbishment using system scaffolding, adding another element to my training.



It is rewarding to see my own improvement and the results of jobs I have helped erect. Every day brings something new and serves as a lesson, exposing me to different people and places. It certainly exceeds every expectation I had about the job.

The biggest challenge is not just the physical strength required but also the mental challenge of understanding measurements, numbers, drawings, logistics, and methods, all while working safely. It is far harder than I anticipated and can be draining at times.

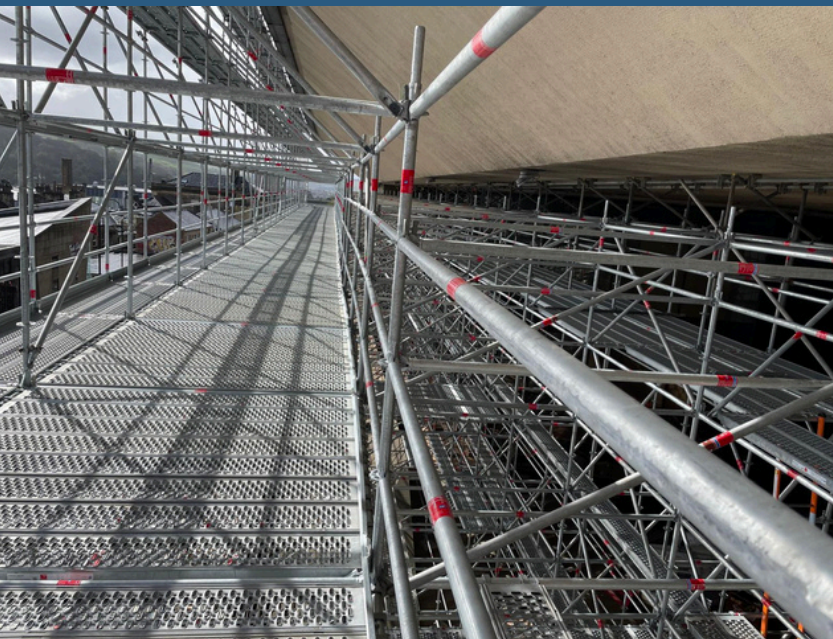
My advice to anyone considering an apprenticeship in scaffolding at Crossway is to ask about things you don't know and keep trying to learn. You won't get anywhere by being lazy and uninterested, and gaining respect from your colleagues is crucial as everyone has targets and works together to achieve them.



GREENHEAD COLLEGE



“Jack is a hard-working apprentice who is always asking questions and wants to learn as much as he can. Jack gets stuck into any task given to him and isn't shy to ask the scaffolder he is working with to explain what the next step is or how he could have done it better. Jack is an asset to the team and is always wanting to work on our major projects.” - Luke Schofield, Contracts Manager



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