

Craft Journey

LEWIS PIGGOTT

craftsperson at
Bentley Motors





WHAT I DO

I'm an apprentice in the wood workshop at Bentley Motors.

Bentley Motors is renowned around the world for the traditional skills of the workforce and attention to detail that goes into producing the cars. This includes the work we do in the wood workshop.

During my apprenticeship, I've learned many hand and craft skills which helped me understand and pick up the processes. This includes matching and cutting veneer, sanding, the lacquer process and polishing, ensuring the finished part has a smooth and glossy surface before going through final assembly with chrome and electronics fitted. Once finished, the cars are then shipped around the world to customers.

OPPORTUNITIES IN CAR MANUFACTURING

Bentley's apprenticeship programme has been running for decades and covers the traditional Manufacturing and Engineering areas, as well as commercial areas such as Sales and Marketing, Finance and Human Resources. Apprenticeships offer a valuable way of gaining qualifications while at the same time training in roles.

In the craft area, opportunities cover all aspects of building a Bentley. This includes the Wood Shop, Trim, where the leather parts, such as the seats, are manufactured, Paint, which covers all processes of painting a Bentley and Mechatronics, working on final assembly.





WHY BENTLEY?

Joining Bentley for me was an obvious choice as it is the best luxury car manufacturer in the world. The company has a proud history and is leading the way in what the luxury car of the future will be. Also, a Bentley has a real presence and so I'm very proud to say I am part of the process of building cars which turn so many heads. I am delighted I made the decision to join Bentley and have never looked back.



WHAT I STUDIED

I studied English, Maths and Science in my GCSEs and achieved a grade C in all three of these subjects, a requirement to start the apprenticeship. I also chose to study History, Geography, Physical Education and Resistant Materials. My favourite subject was Resistant Materials where I completed a project to plan, research, produce and evaluate a cabinet. With this, I managed to achieve an A* grade which I was extremely proud of and still use the cabinet today, as well as taking that learning into my apprenticeship.

BEING AN APPRENTICE

Bentley is a very well-regarded employer, regularly winning national awards, and I also saw it as a place where I could learn new skills and hopefully add value to what was already a successful company. As I live close by, I regularly see people wearing the uniform with pride, and I wanted to be part of that, building the best cars in the world. Added to that, I have also worked with wood since I left school and have a passion for building things, so joining Bentley in the Wood Shop was an ideal opportunity.

QUALIFICATIONS

During my apprenticeship, I have been able to work towards different qualifications. The apprenticeship itself is an NVQ level 3 in Automotive Engineering. With this, I have learnt all processes within the Bentley wood workshop. At college, I studied for a BTEC level 3 in Manufacturing Engineering along with a PEO level 2 (performing engineering operations). At the factory, I also had the opportunity to complete Bentley's in-house training and development courses, which include German language, presenting, quality and efficiency.

ACHIEVEMENTS

I have achieved many things I am extremely proud of in my time at Bentley. As part of projects, I have produced many things which are now on display to the hundreds of customers who visit the factory every year, including a chess table, which customers regularly try and purchase! I was also chosen to represent the company on a month-long work placement at Porsche in Stuttgart, where I was able to witness for myself the differences between the two factories. I have been part of customer events around Europe where I demonstrated the Wood Shop processes to fans of the brand. Moving ahead, I have been successful in joining the launch team, which works on all Bentleys of the future, a fascinating team to be part of.





CHALLENGES

When I started my apprenticeship, the biggest challenge for me was studying at college. I am not a natural academic and so found some subjects difficult, however by working closely with other apprentices and the teachers I was able to achieve top marks. I also worked with a Maths tutor who helped a great deal and helped me study while at home.

AMBITIONS

As I enjoy it so much, my immediate ambition is to stay working in the Wood Shop at Bentley Motors. I am excited by the idea of working with new products and parts of the future so hopefully I can put my skills to good use in that way and determine what they will be. That's exciting. With continued help from my team and managers, and hard work by myself, I look forward to completing different projects, possibly across various areas of Bentley, to make sure that Bentley will continue to turn heads around the world.



ADVICE

If you're thinking about an apprenticeship, simply go for it! They are an excellent way to learn, work and get paid at the same time. You can also go straight into a job where you already know what's required. Before Bentley, I had already studied for an apprenticeship in Bench Joinery which was hugely beneficial to me. During the apprenticeship, work hard, be proactive and ask for help if needed. Everyone at Bentley and at college was always happy to help when I needed support.

MAKE YOUR FUTURE

Make Your Future is a hands-on programme that is reinvigorating craft in schools.

To learn more about the project visit:
craftscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/make-your-future



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**