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# THATCHERS

— THE FAMILY CIDER MAKERS —



Hi, I'm Tom Powell and I'm an apprentice here at Thatchers studying my level 2 food and drink process operator qualification.

## **My Background:**

I joined Thatchers from Backwell Sixth Form where I studied Maths, Physics and Product Design.

I was inspired to do an apprenticeship because of my brother actually! I once saw his pay cheque and really wanted to earn my own money but continue studying. I am more of a hands-on practical learner too, so it suited me much better.

I found out about the apprenticeship scheme at a career's day at Sixth form. But it was always in my mind at the end of my GCSE's too. I did some research and saw that Thatchers had a career open day which I was sure to attend and it really helped to give me a real insight as to life working at Thatchers. So, for anyone applying I would recommend attending these days.

## **Application Process:**

As part of the application process Thatchers also invited me in for a 'day in the life' style interview which was really beneficial not just for myself but for the company so they could get to know me better too in a work environment. It was from this day on that made me want the job even more as I knew exactly the kind of work I would be undertaking.

My tips and advice to other students would be to just make sure you have a solid CV with lots of references to the experiences you may have had even in your personal life. At the start of your career companies know you won't have much work experience but Thatchers seem to be really interested in life experience. I'd say in order to be part of the team you need to show you're not afraid of hard work, you're proactive and you use your initiative it's also showing how you're a team player to as most things involve team work to get a job done in production when you're all aiming for the same goal. You also need to know other people's job roles within the business to get on.

## **Current Role:**

A day in the life is so varied, especially as I am continually moving around different departments getting to know what they do and how they work. But during my time in primary process I was mostly outside running the tong. The tong is a piece of machinery whereby the apples get loaded into upon delivery. Each time a delivery comes in I am responsible for weighing the load, then guiding them to unload the apples. My main responsibility throughout all of this is to ensure the machinery is running smoothly

and as efficient as possible as this is where the process starts. So, the delay will have a knock-on effect for the whole process.

**My experience so far:**

Considering I have only been doing my apprenticeship for a few months I have been fortunate enough to experience quite a vast number of different things across different departments. One moment that particularly stands out for me is when I was asked to help in Bottling. They were a man down on the depal – this is the machine that you hand operate to essentially lift a layer of bottles from a pallet to load on to the line. You control a half tone crane with your own body weight – it was like a very long workout having done this for 8 hours straight. The team were really impressed how I kept up the pace and then I found out they were running at double the speed that day. If the line runs out of bottles then it stops, so it's crucial to keep production going.

My confidence is by far the biggest skill I have developed since starting my apprenticeship. This was something I really lacked before joining, but being in such a hands-on role you just must out yourself out there and get stuck in. Having been brought up on a farm I am fortunate enough that I am used to working hard and getting my hands dirty! This has helped shaped me into the type of worker that I am today. For me I want to be the hardest worker and be the person that people come to if they have a problem because they know I will help them get the job done.

**What I'm most proud of:**

The thing I am most proud of is when I worked a night shift with just one other member of staff, it was a challenging shift as all of the mash tanks were full which meant we couldn't process any more cider. We worked tirelessly to reduce this down and pump it through so that we could start processing more and help the team next on shift. It felt such a great sense of achievement.

**Top tips:**

My best advice for other students would be to always remain calm and positive and just enjoy what you do. This really does help to keep moral up when you are working long hard shifts!

My goal is to be offered a full-time role at the end of my apprenticeship in the team and get as much experience in the in a production company.

I would recommend an apprenticeship to anyone considering it. You learn so much more on the job than the qualification itself. The qualification is simply a bonus and what's great it's not a long course I should have it completed within a year.

Thatchers really is an impressive place to work if you want a career in production or engineering. The canning line is very high tech and fascinating.

