



Spotlight on...
women in construction

**CONSIDERATE
CONSTRUCTORS
SCHEME**

Case Study: Robertson Construction

Aby Wallace - Site Manager

1. WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED YOU TO WORKING IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY? HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE JOB AND WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DID YOU REQUIRE?

Many family members built their own homes when I was younger, and I have always wanted to build my own home.

Originally, I wanted to be a nurse; however, I wasn't great with injections. My back up plan was Architecture, so I applied for this university course when in my 6th year at school. I was unsure about the course, so a family friend encouraged me to complete a HNC in Construction at college.

I completed this course, then moved on to complete BSC Construction Project Management at Heriot Watt University. In my 3rd year of university, I competed the CIOB Student Challenge, which was sponsored by Robertson Construction. As my team and I won the Student Challenge, we won a week's Work Experience with Robertson Construction. This then encouraged me to apply for a Summer Placement with Robertson Construction between my 3rd and 4th year of university. I completed the 12-week Summer Placement, and then worked for Robertson Construction, part-time during my 4th year of university. From graduating, I was a Graduate Site Manager with Robertson Construction, then Assistant Site Manager, developing onto Site Manager.

2. TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE. WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY LOOK LIKE? WHAT DO YOU LIKE AND DISLIKE ABOUT THE JOB?



My typical daily role as Site Manager starts at 7am. I start my day by ensuring all activities for the day are planned and ready to go. At 8am, all Site Managers have a daily coordination meeting with all subcontractor supervisors, ensuring all works for the day are planned and coordinated throughout site. From this meeting, I then go on site, ensuring all works are being carried out as discussed, and safely. From then, depending on the day of the week, I will either induct new site operatives, have a weekly site meeting with my allocated subcontractors, site health and safety meetings, meetings with the customers and design team, etc. Quality checks are also carried out to ensure the subcontractors are installing materials to specified condition and high quality.

Things I enjoy about my job is that no day is the same, as the construction industry is fast paced, there is always something new happening every day.

Things I dislike about my job is that you cannot escape the weather! In summer, we are glad to be working outside, however in winter when it is cold and wet, you will unfortunately need to work outside occasionally, although there is nothing a pair of site wellies and waterproofs can't protect you from!

3. WHAT QUALITIES ARE REQUIRED TO DO YOUR JOB?

- Timekeeping
- Organisation
- Leadership and management of people
- Ability to solve problems
- Adaptability and flexibility

4. WHAT WAS THE BIGGEST SURPRISE YOU FOUND WHEN YOU STARTED WORKING IN CONSTRUCTION?

Coming from a rural background, the only people who worked in construction were small builders in the town and family members who worked in the industry but worked in offices. Starting my career in site management, and working daily on site in a management role, I was surprised at how advanced the industry was and welcoming to females.

5. WHAT WERE/ARE YOUR FUTURE CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

My current future career aspirations are to continue progressing in site management, increasing my experience and skill set. I would then like to progress into project management in years to come.

6. HAVE YOU ENCOUNTERED ANY OBSTACLES IN YOUR CAREER BECAUSE OF YOUR GENDER?

Generally, no. However, it is not uncommon for the men in the industry to direct conversation towards the male members of the site management team. This is more common for visitors on site, however not unknown for site operatives to do this. Commonly, once site operatives who have been inducted are then aware that I am a Site Manager, they then are happy to approach me for any assistance on site as they are aware I have the same skill set and title as my male colleagues. In the 6 years I have worked in the industry, there have been a handful of times where I have been assumed to be administrative/office support. These instances have generally been from the older generation.

7. WHY DO YOU THINK WOMEN REMAIN UNDERREPRESENTED IN THE INDUSTRY?

At my high school, the construction industry was never encouraged for females. Even when applying to university and colleges, the construction industry was never promoted to both genders. Into college, I was one of two women in a class of 20. At university, I was one of four women in a class of 30. Starting from an early age, we need to encourage and promote this industry to primary school aged children.

8. WOULD YOU RECOMMEND THAT YOUNG WOMEN SEEK OUT CAREERS IN CONSTRUCTION?

Yes, highly recommend. There is no reason why we cannot work in this industry.

9. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANY WOMEN WISHING TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY?

Go for it, there is nothing holding you back. As I currently work for a large construction firm, there is a large number of women represented, more than I would have originally thought.

10. HOW DO YOU THINK A DIVERSE WORKFORCE BENEFITS THE INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE?

We have different ideas and ways of working to bring to the table, we are just as skilled and knowledgeable as men.

11. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY AND WIDER SOCIETY SHOULD BE DOING TO ENCOURAGE MORE WOMEN TO WORK IN CONSTRUCTION?

Advertise more directly to females. Promote maternity policies, childcare assistance, female PPE, etc – these are things that, as a female, catch my eye when looking at other companies or even articles on LinkedIn. The Gender Pay gap is also something which needs to be acknowledged by companies as this is still occurs in this industry.