



Young Mover Profile: Tom Ryan

As the third generation to join the family business of Ryans Removals, you may conclude that Tom Ryan felt obliged to enter into the removals industry to continue the family trend. Far from it. Charlotte Freestone spoke to Tom about his road to removals and his thoughts on the BAR Young Movers .

Ryans Removals came into fruition when Tom Ryan, Tom's grandfather, began the business with his wife Eileen, and his two sons, Keith and Tom's father David, who is now the managing director. When the business began it operated from Tom's grandfather's house, using just one phone line and one truck. Since its conception the company has grown substantially now owning six trucks, employing 15 staff and operating out of two warehouses and one office. Ryans Removals also owns and runs the Birmingham South franchise of Simply Store.

Despite these obvious strong family roots within the removals industry Tom said that he never felt any pressure to become part of the business, quite the opposite in fact. "My father sent me out to what he called 'the real world' to work at several different places to see what it was like," Tom said. "While he was confident I would choose to follow in his footsteps he still let me make my own choices and supported me in whichever way he could."

At this time, Tom spent time working at Aston Villa FC, Linpac Environmental and Midconsort Travel to name a few before following his heart and joining the family business in January 2000 aged 19. It seems really that was all he ever wanted to do: "I always wanted to take on my family's company, who wouldn't?" He said, "Seeing the vans pull up on the Friday for the lads to collect the wages sent shivers down my spine seeing my name on the bright blue trucks!"

Tom knew he wasn't made for a nine to five office job, with the freedom and diversity of the removals industry appealing to him. He said. "I doubt there are many industries where people from all over the country, even the world, can get together after months apart at times and still have so much in common in their day to day activities. It's almost like they have been working with you at your company, it's so surreal at times."

Although Tom was fortunate enough to experience the removals industry before he decided to become part of it, he believes that having a family connection in the industry and being seen as 'the boss' son' has been hard at times. "Nothing in life comes easy. Moving into the industry was easy because there was no CV or interview, but the route you take after is very hard but rewarding."

Tom began work within Ryans Removals on the vans on a set wage lower than the minimum wage because he was still living at home. His

first job was a removal from Solihull to the Yorkshire Dales ... in the snow. A challenging first day which Tom remembers clearly, "We started at 8am and finished at 2am the following morning. We were working with lovely customers who put us up for the night and then cooked us dinner at 2am. It was hard work but I wouldn't have changed my first day for the world."

Tom continued to work on the vans for two years before he was taken into the office to learn

the inside running of the business. "My father made sure I learned all areas of the business, so in that way I have had it easy, but the pressure of living up to expectations is hard. Your name might be on the vans but you are still working very hard on a basic salary to begin with."

Ryans Removals now finds itself catering for prestige removals and commercial moves and, because of this, understands the necessity of the BS Standards. The company has applied for BS 8522:2009 and BS EN 12522:1998 and its next step is to apply for Commercial Moving Group membership.

Tom is keen for the business not to stand still and hopes to see it grow in size while still retaining the personal touch with customers. "My only worry is that as we grow we might find it hard to retain the personal touch," he confided. "I'd love to get some advice on this from some of the larger BAR companies who manage to do this. I want to offer the highest level of service that I can."

As an ambitious young mover himself Tom has found the Young Movers Special Interest Group a great help, both personally and commercially, helping him to build up great relationships with others, such as Tom Bourne of UTS Bournes, Sarah Lane of Britannia Lanes of Cornwall and Colin Craib of Luxfords. "Without the Young Movers Group I doubt I would have met and worked with all of these people. Loren Webster has done a great job in setting it up."

It is good to hear that Tom, as a young mover, believes the industry to be very progressive and constantly looking to modernise and implement new ideas and technology. "I have seen improvements in the packing materials and storage containers with the recent change to steel rather than wood," Tom said. "Office-wise the days of the pencil and diary are slowly fading. There is plenty of different software available for removal companies now to manage everything from their estimates right through to the invoices."

So, as a relative newcomer to the industry, would Tom recommend it to others? "I'd definitely recommend the industry. Every day is different. If you work on the vans there is no need for a gym membership and if you are office-based there is never a dull moment – and when it is quieter in the winter you are grateful for the peace and quiet!" he joked.

Tom concluded, "On a more serious note though, I think the industry is recovering slightly after the recession and people joining the industry will have a great career for a long time."

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Top: Ryans Removals on location; Above: Peter Gawthrop of QSS with Ryans Removals staff having completed training