

# Family-run business has its feet firmly on the ground



Above, the team at the firm's headquarters. Below, (l to r) Julie Herbert, Lee Devenny and Jodi Malpas.

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**E**VEN after 25 successful years, it's important for a company to keep its feet on the ground, and there's no doubt that's the strategy at Northampton-based A&L Paving.

The company has been providing paving, slabbing and hard landscaping services since it was set up in 1987 by Arthur Kellett and Leroy Herbert, and has moved on from its early contracts for domestic driveways and small sub-contract projects with construction firms to multi-million pound deals at the likes of the Olympics site and at Birmingham's Bull Ring shopping centre.

Arthur Kellett retired some years ago now and Leroy runs the company along with Operations Directors Pat McMahon and Richard Ferrison and Dan Herbert. Leroy's wife Julie is company secretary and Pat's daughter Jodi Malpas is health and safety coordinator, while her husband Aaron Malpas is site manager and manager of domestic projects and Lee Devenny is the company buyer.

"It is very much a family business," said Leroy Herbert, "although when we started it was just Arthur and myself working from offices in our cellar, with Julie taking care of all the admin and finance."

"Arthur and I had worked in the paving business for some time when we decided to go it alone. Arthur is older than me and had the confidence and expertise to aim high and really get the company off the ground, while I guess I brought a younger perspective and more modern skills to the business."



A&L Paving Directors (l to r) Pat McMahon, Richard Ferrison and Leroy Herbert.

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"We picked up work from people we knew within the sector and as we developed we then secured repeat orders along with recommendations as a consequence of our high standard of work. Within a few months of starting, Julie's brother Pat McMahon joined us and by then we had a couple of regular teams out on site, working mainly in and around the county."

A&L Paving moved to premises on Stimpson Avenue, before building offices at their yard in Harlestone Road. Ten years ago, the firm moved to its current base in Millbrook Close, off St James Mill Road.

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# Projects take paving firm to all corners of the world

LOCAL clients are the foundation stone of most businesses, and that's most certainly the case at A&L Paving, with the company as happy to lay a new driveway at a private home in Northamptonshire as it is carrying out work on multi-million pound contracts.

But it is the work the firm does slightly further afield that has sealed the reputation of A&L Paving, a firm founded 25 years ago by two local men and which now enjoys regular success in tendering for large contracts, including the majority of the infrastructure work at the Olympic site in London.

Operations Director Pat McMahon, said: "A few years ago, at the peak of the building boom we could have up to 100 people working within the company, a lot of them on a temporary-term basis to cope with the amount of work we had. This was back in the days when lots of houses were being built and we had the contracts to do the driveways and estate roads for the likes of local developers Westbury Homes.

"Today, however, it is quieter in the building sector although we are still carrying out this type of work, but not on the same scale and where we could engage men in the short term this is not now an option due to the changes in employment legislation. Our reputation means we can bid for much bigger contracts, like the Olympics scheme, which is why the company is going from strength to strength."

A&L Paving initially secured work at the Olympic site with Skanska through the Competefor portal,



which was set up so that contractors could express interest in Olympics contracts and register their company profile. Since then, subsequent projects for Bam Nuttall, John Doyles and Sisk have come the firm's way.

The profile that A&L Paving was able to post on that portal included a number of prestigious jobs, including the work they carried out on the redevelopment of All Saints Square in Northampton, which won them an award from The Worshipful Company of Paviers, an organisation that recognises companies that produce modern paving work that upholds the traditional skills and aesthetics of the sector.

A&L Paving can also list Birmingham's Bull Ring shopping centre among its recent projects, as well as work for the MoD at RAF bases in the UK, at Brize Norton, Benson and Shrivenham and somewhat further afield in the Falklands, where Richard

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Ferrison spent two months project managing the laying of a new service road at Mount Pleasant RAF base; and at Oxford University's Christ Church college where paving dating back hundreds of years had to be taken up, numbered piece by piece, stored for a year and then re-laid in exactly the same state as it had been originally.

Most recently, the firm won its biggest contract to date, a £3.5 million project at the North Middlesex University Hospital.

"We've come a long way from the early days of two blokes in a van, but that's because we've gradually built the company up to where we want it to be," said Commercial Director Leroy Herbert.

"We should also be thankful that we have been fortunate to have built up a client base as good as ours with the direct help of our committed suppliers and not forgetting the valued contribution from our diligent and conscientious workforce.

"Arthur and I had both learned our trade and we were lucky in taking on a good balance of people we had worked with before, who knew what they were doing and young people who wanted to learn. Those young lads would come to us at the start of their working lives and then go on to set up their own companies, running their own teams, and often coming back to sub-contract for us when we needed them.

"Times have changed, though, and there's quite rightly a greater emphasis on health and safety now, both from the point of view of the employee and for those who will be using the paving we put down.

"Where once we would lay kerbs by hand, it is now done by machine in accordance with health and safety regulations."

A&L Paving has built up a Health and Safety Management System, run by Jodi Malpas, to support its operations. The policy document sets out the firm's commitment and outlines its approach to effective health and safety management, not just to meet requirements but to deliver a healthy, safe and secure working environment for employees and anyone else affected by its work.

"Touch wood, we haven't had any major accidents, but it's important to us to make sure we follow regulations," said Leroy Herbert. "It's that approach, and our safety record and good working practices that have stood us in good stead over the years and put us in a position to tender for big contracts and win them. If you are able to show that you're accredited and fully compliant, then you will be in a better position to win the work.

"Mind you, we did once tender for work at Buckingham Palace and didn't get it – so maybe it doesn't always work."

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Above, Contracts Manager Aaron Malpas. Opposite page, the A&L Paving team outside the Northampton headquarters. © Business Times

Top (left to right) Cambridge Cattle Market and the T Mobile HQ in Hatfield. Below (left to right) All Saints Square in Northampton; The Bull Ring, Birmingham; Mount Pleasant RAF base in the Falklands; a local, domestic project.



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