# Meet Tom: our award-winning Vehicle Damage Assessor

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Meet Tom, one of our UK Motor Engineers and Vehicle Damage Assessors.

We caught up with Tom to chat through his role, following his recent recognition as the Vehicle Damage Assessor of the Year at the Bodyshop Magazine Awards.

**Congratulations on being named Vehicle Damage Assessor of the Year! How did it feel to receive the award, and what does it mean to you personally?**

The Bodyshop Magazine Awards are widely regarded as the pinnacle of recognition in the vehicle repair industry. Progressing through the rigorous IAEA assessment process, competing against some of the industry's most talented professionals, and being named Vehicle Damage Assessor of the Year felt like a massive achievement.

I have always held these awards in the highest regard, so this recognition is incredibly special. It reflects not only the hard work and experience I've built throughout my career, but also the talented colleagues who have supported and inspired me along the way. It's a moment I'm immensely proud of.

**For people who aren't familiar with the role, what does a Vehicle Damage Assessor do? Can you walk us through a typical day?**

My day starts by reviewing total loss vehicles to determine the appropriate salvage category. I then move on to my main workload in the Emerging Vehicle & Supercar Team, supporting claims involving vehicles that are new to the UK market or classified as luxury, prestige, or supercars. Some claims are straightforward repair reviews; others are high-value, technically complex cases requiring hours of investigation.

Where repair methods or technical information are limited, we work closely with repairers, manufacturers, and industry experts to ensure repairs are completed safely and to manufacturer standards.

**What first sparked your interest in vehicle engineering and damage assessment, and how did your career path lead you to Admiral?**

I fell into the industry when I left school, applying for jobs that looked interesting, and my first opportunity happened to be in the body shop sector.

I progressed from apprentice to management and engineering roles, gaining experience across all areas of vehicle repair. The Vehicle Damage Assessor (VDA) role stood out because it sits at the centre of the repair process, requiring broad understanding of vehicle construction and repair methods.

I'm a technically minded person who enjoys understanding how things work, and the role's complexity continues to motivate me today.

**When assessing vehicle damage, what are some of the key things you look for that most people might not realise?**

Modern vehicles are designed to redirect collision forces away from the point of impact to protect occupants and maintain structural integrity, so our assessment extends beyond the visibly damaged area to the vehicle as a whole.

Repairs are also far more complex than in the past, as manufacturer repair methods must be followed to return the vehicle to its pre-accident condition safely. For example, a seemingly straightforward boot floor replacement can require replacing both quarter panels and sometimes the roof structure, significantly increasing cost and repair time.

Ultimately, our priority is to ensure every repair is completed to the correct standard, so customers get their vehicle back knowing it's safe and performs exactly as the manufacturer intended.

**How does your work help customers after an accident?**

Our role is to assess the vehicle and identify all repairs required to restore it to its pre-accident condition while ensuring manufacturer repair methods and safety requirements are followed.

Safety must always be at the forefront of a VDA's decision-making. A good VDA looks beyond the estimate alone, considering factors such as vehicle construction, repair methodology, and parts availability.

A VDA's responsibility is to ensure the vehicle is repaired correctly, safely, and efficiently, balancing the needs of the customer with the technical requirements of modern vehicle repair.

**What's been your proudest moment in the role so far, and what advice would you give to someone considering a career in vehicle damage assessment?**

There have been many proud moments throughout my career, from completing my apprenticeship and becoming a full member of both the IAEA and IMI, to progressing into an Engineering role within Admiral. However, winning Vehicle Damage Assessor of the Year stands out as my proudest achievement.

For anyone considering a career in vehicle damage assessment, my advice would be to stay curious and never stop learning. Vehicle technology is evolving constantly, from advanced materials to electric vehicles and driver assistance systems, so being willing to develop your skills is essential. It's a rewarding

career that combines technical knowledge, problem-solving and customer focus, and there are more opportunities than ever for people looking to build a career in the automotive industry.