**Background**

James Walter MRICS, 30, is a Managing Quantity Surveyor for Balfour Beatty Ground Engineering (BBGE).

James graduated from Loughborough University with a 2:1 in Commercial Management & Quantity Surveying in July 2010.

James was sponsored by Balfour Beatty through his degree, a pre-requisite for the course at Loughborough, and began working for Balfour Beatty Major Projects in September 2010. In March 2012 he transferred to BBGE and has never looked back!

**Why Piling?**

I decided to transfer to BBGE for a number of reasons, but the main reason was I was looking for a completely new challenge and to gain experience pre-contract, running my own projects, and dealing with complex variations and claims. I was very keen to become a Chartered Quantity Surveyor with the RICS and knew that the experiences offered by transferring to BBGE would help me achieve that goal quicker than potentially staying on a Major Project.

Ahead of the move, I knew very little about the intricacies of piling technology or how Subcontractors operated on a day-to-day basis, but the challenge of learning and developing new skills drove me to take the plunge.

**What is your Role within BBGE?**

My role is currently Managing Quantity Surveyor for the Rotary Piling business. I am responsible for overseeing the commercial performance of our smaller projects and advising our Graduate QS’s and QS’s on specific issues. More recently, I have been Managing QS on one of BBGE’s biggest ever piling jobs (circa £44m). This job has required me working on site permanently, which has meant I’ve been fully integrated into the site team, rather than working remotely like the majority of our projects.

**How does it differ to working for a Main Contractor or on a Major Project?**

I’ve experienced a number of differences working for BBGE that spread across the whole spectrum of the working environment.

I think the biggest difference I experienced was the level of exposure you received to the construction industry, from reporting directly to Senior Management, from meeting face to face with Clients, to identifying, notifying and valuing change.

Whilst I was on a Major Project, a lot of the tasks I carried out fed into reports that Senior QS’s or Commercial Managers used for Commercial Reporting and discussed with the Client by way of Main Contract Variations.

Within BBGE, initially, I worked with the Project QS on a variety of projects spreading all across the UK. After a couple of months, I became Project QS on a number small projects, with supervision from a Senior QS, and had to present the commercial performance of each Project to Directors every month. I also found myself travelling the length and breadth of Britain to liaise with the Client to discuss any Variations or Changes that had occurred on Site.

During my time with BBGE, I have been involved in a wide variety of projects, from piles supporting motorway gantries, skyscrapers, energy from waste plants and airport terminals, located anywhere between Exeter and Dundee, from Cardiff to Norwich and from London to Edinburgh.

**Would you recommend Piling to aspiring Quantity Surveyors?**

100% yes. At BBGE, I have received a wide range of experience, from pre-contract, through to settling final account meetings. Throughout the year, I probably work on about 10 projects a year, varying in size, but every project is different.

This variety means that no day is ever the same and there are always new challenges and problems that occur to keep me looking forward to working in the piling industry each day.

I have found that during my time with BBGE I have learned and developed new skills significantly earlier in my career than I would have thought, which I can take with me throughout my career.