



**Debbie Baxter**

After leaving school, like most people at 16, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. All I knew was that work wasn't for me just yet. I thought the best idea was to go to college and get some A-levels behind me, so that's what I did. I went to Barnsley College and studied Chemistry, Physics and Biology, as-well as Key Skills in communication, maths and I.T. After 2 years of academic studying and late night partying, I still couldn't decide what career path I wanted to take. I have always been creative and found science too restrictive, and so thought that a year doing an Art Foundation course might help me make my mind up!! So in September 2002 I went back to college to pursue my true passion, Art. I enjoyed every second of that year, it was the best course I have ever done. But a year goes fast and I soon found myself facing the decision of what to do next. The course opened my eyes to many aspects of Art and Design and in the end I opted to take on the chance of a Fashion Design degree at The University of Leeds.

Now although some people think that Art is easy – I mean after all it's just drawing a few pretty pictures right? Wrong!! It was the most challenging 3 years of my life so far. I was an emotional wreck for most of it and by the end I couldn't wait to find a job.

So after a short break, of 4 weeks, I started to attend interviews for various jobs. I applied to practically anything and everything I could, I mean even for a student 4 weeks of doing nothing does get a little boring. It was at this point of scouring the Internet that I came across a survey assistant position at Met Surveys Ltd. So I sent my CV and cover letter off and waited. It sounded interesting and had the opportunity of training on the job, so no previous experience was needed. Perfect for me because at this point I didn't have a clue what a surveyor's job actually entailed.

I was asked to attend an interview some time in July 2005, so thought it best to at least prepare myself a little by going back on the net and finding some information on surveying and the company. Looking back now, I don't think any amount of research could prepare me for an interview with the managing director of the company!! Lets just say about half way through the interview I had already accepted the fact that I hadn't got the job. So, you can imagine my surprise when I was made an offer there and then for the position and shown around the office after the interview.

So again I found myself in the position of deciding what the right career path for me was. But, after a few drinks in the pub – and of course discussing it with friends and family- I thought that of all the jobs I had applied for that sounded the most promising and interesting, so I accepted.

I started on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005, with a training day on the 1100 instrument and setting up the target. The next day I was plunged straight in at the deep end, working on a building survey with a 700 instrument and a MBS, which I must confess I didn't know how to use, so I can understand why my colleague lost her temper with me!

However, after a few months I began to settle into the job role and found that I actually enjoyed it. Even stood outside in the snow didn't phase me. Ok maybe I moaned about it a little, but I got over it, eventually!!.

Then, out of the blue I was asked if I'd like the opportunity of going to college in Worcester to do the TSA Introduction to Surveying course, as a place had become available. After spending most of my life studying, and promising myself that I wouldn't do anything academic for at least a year, of course I said yes.

So in December 2005 I went off to college for my first two-week block. I wasn't sure what to expect and at first I felt like I was back at school. However, by the end of the two weeks the class and tutors alike had relaxed and got to know each other a little better.

The course is run over 2 years and covers all areas of surveying, from the basics like leveling and traversing, to building, monitoring and construction etc. You name it, it was there.

Meanwhile back at work I was beginning to find my feet in the company. I was starting to do my own topographical and building surveys and my confidence within the surveying domain was growing.

By the end of the 2 year TSA course I was a competent person with the underline knowledge of surveying under my belt. I achieved a Merit for the course and even got short-listed for best assignment, which I still think I should have won! Out of 39 students I was the only girl there and might I say I was proud of myself for seeing it through to the end.

So you might be wondering what I'm doing now. I'm still at Met Surveys, still learning new skills and growing in confidence with each job I do. I'm getting more competent and understanding the concepts of surveying, I'm even passing my knowledge onto other people. Don't get me wrong this job is challenging but it's also rewarding. You get to meet a variety of people and work all over the country. I'm even considering doing a degree in surveying in the future.