

WHO'S WHO IN CONSTRUCTION 2005

Right time, right place

Property professionals agree that the three most important elements in successful transactions are location, location, location – and for Pollie Jelfs, director at Fusion Building Consultancy, that adage couldn't be more appropriate.

That's because this is a woman who was definitely in the right place at the right time.

In 1995, following the completion of an honours degree in building surveying at the University of the West of England, Bristol, Pollie moved to Birmingham to join its burgeoning property scene.

"I love this city," says Pollie, who was born in Ross on Wye.

"When I moved here from university, it certainly felt like the right place to be, and it still is. Some of my friends moved to London but I knew that Birmingham offered the best opportunities for me and I was right."

Before joining Fusion last summer, Pollie enjoyed a six-year stint at CB Richard Ellis, where she was an associate director, working on flagship projects such as Star City and Five Ways Leisure.

Set up in Birmingham and Guildford in March 2002, Fusion provides the full range of specialist property services such as project management, due diligence, cost consultancy, building surveys,

dilapidations, party walls and planned maintenance.

Clients include owner-occupiers, landlords, tenants, investors and commercial property developers.

From a standing start, the company already has an annual turnover of £1 million and an eight-strong team with further recruitment planned.

While its Guildford offices is just beginning its growth, Birmingham has recruited new staff and is preparing to expand its Birmingham operation further, taking 2,500 sq ft in a newly-refurbished building on Ludgate Hill.

Was the decision to leave a large agency such as CBRE and join a firm of independent building surveyors a difficult one?

"Not at all," says Pollie.

"There is an opportunity to steer my own ship here and really make a difference. The fascinating thing is that when I talk to people now they are very interested in what a company like Fusion has to offer."

"Being independent means you can provide top-quality, personal service to clients with full day-to-day interaction from directors."

"As we have come from larger practices, we know all the consultants and contractors in the market and we feel that we are much more flexible and responsive than our



Pollie Jelfs,
director at
Fusion
Building
Consultancy

competitors. So far, all of our business has come via recommendation, so we must be doing something right."

Pollie is overseeing interior fit-outs for six Rosemary's Health Food shops as well as project managing a large-scale refurbishment of old

bank premises on Bennetts Hill. Recently, she and her co-directors surveyed a portfolio of 130 properties in Scotland, York and Chester for developer Earthquake.

"That was a real team effort and involved producing full building surveys, detailed drawings, and

video and photographic records of each property," says Pollie.

It's clear that she relishes every aspect of her job, but where did the interest in surveying originate?

"My grandfather was a land surveyor, so there may be some far-off genetic predisposition there," says Pollie.

"However, it was actually my physics teacher at school who suggested that it would be an interesting career and after looking into it I decided to go for it."

When asked whether there have been any barriers to Pollie's rise through the property ranks as a female building surveyor, her natural modesty becomes apparent.

"People didn't take me seriously when I first started out and, as a major part of the job is going on site, chairing meetings and issuing instructions, this did provide something of a challenge," says Pollie.

"But I haven't experienced any such problems for a long time now. In fact, I think that being a female is a distinct advantage. People remember you and that's great."

Outside work any spare time is spent with husband and co-director Steven renovating their grade two listed Georgian farmhouse in Worcestershire.

Of her plans for Fusion, Pollie is keen to emphasise her and her co-directors' wish to retain the company's independent ethos.

"While we are ambitious for the company, we feel it is vital to retain the personal touch that gives us our main differentiator," she says.

"Clients like the day-to-day contact with directors and through this approach we can maintain a high quality of service and advice, so at the end of the day we can walk away and always know we have given each job our best."