

MEET JASON RATCLIFFE

Finalist for the RICS Matrics Residential Property Surveyor of the Year Award 2023

JASON RATCLIFFE ASSOCRICS

Surveyor and Director at Steren Surveyors



What was your background before becoming a surveyor?

When I left school I was a guitarist and studied at the Academy of Contemporary Music. I had a great life in Cornwall with my wife and children, but being a musician didn't provide an adequate living for me and my family so I decided to seek something more sustainable. I knew I was good at sales and loved legal, so I took a Saturday job at a local estate agents. I completely loved it and was pleased to take on a maternity contract which got me in the property door. When a job then came up as a Sales Estate Agent, I jumped at the opportunity and they trained me up.

What inspired you to become a surveyor?

I felt like I wanted more from my career. In my role as an Estate Agent I was interacting with surveyors regularly so I got a feel for their role and felt like it was something I could do and enjoy. Between these interactions with surveyors and then studying for my Masters in Real Estate Management at the University College of Estate Management (UCEM), I was advised to do some shadowing, which I did and I've never looked back.

What qualification route did you take and why?

I studied at UCEM and shadowed a qualified surveyor every Thursday. One of the surveyors I was shadowing needed an assistant and, since I already had marketing and business experience, I ended up learning on the job full time.

I chose the AssocRICS direct pathway with 4 years' experience and gained my Masters degree.

During Covid, the firm I was working for was bought out, so I took the risk of setting up by myself, and that's when Steren Surveyors was born.

What has been the highlight of your surveying career so far?

Being able to make a change to the way surveyors are perceived. As a company, Steren Surveyors provides a personable service that you wouldn't necessarily get from a more 'old school' surveyor - this is apparent from our client feedback and Google reviews. We offer post-survey care for every client which guarantees they get to speak to the surveyor, which is what many clients want. In addition, we're the only surveying firm recognised by RICS to cover park homes, which is something that makes me incredibly proud.

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We love helping people to discover if surveying is the career for them.

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I recognise how difficult it can be when you first start out in the surveying industry, which is why we mainly employ surveyors in training, and also offer mentoring opportunities to help get them out on site. Many of our team are currently going through the Sava surveying diploma, which offers a fantastic route into the industry. We love helping people to discover if surveying is the career for them.

What do you love most about being a surveyor?

I like disturbing the peace. We take on a lot of cases for expert witness and offer our support for people who have experienced a breakdown in trust with contractors etc. and where this has had an impact on their mental health. It's a great feeling being able to help clients build a case and just generally be there for them in difficult times.

The learning is also a highlight. I'm currently halfway through my PhD in Thermal Optimisation which I then intend to bring into the business.

What advice would you give to anyone joining the profession?

Why wait? It's easy to make excuses - I don't have enough time or money - but you never get out of that cycle unless you do something about it. You might have to sacrifice some family time or make an initial investment to get your foot in the door, but you should go for it.

How does it feel to be a finalist in the RICS Matrics Surveyor Awards 2023?

It feels great being a representative for those who haven't had an easy route into the profession. Being recognised for your positive impact on the industry is fantastic for credibility.

I've had to learn recently that your health isn't something that is just given to you. I was ignoring my body and was very unwell as a result. I now tell my team not to let the 'wellbeing speak' be white noise. If they need to hit the brakes, then they can. As a finalist, I feel I should be a strong advocate for surveyors putting their wellbeing first in what can be a very fast-paced industry.

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