

surveyorcareers

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How do you know whether a career in bridges is right for you? Surveyor tests the water with an advocate.

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| Name: | Thomas Varghese |
| Age: | 31 |
| Job title: | Bridge engineer |
| Qualifications: | Civil Engineering (Hons) Post-graduate diploma in construction project management Chartered Engineer |

Forging links between learning and life

Try before you buy' is a very popular marketing tool, but it now stands to benefit students considering careers in civil engineering too. Bridge engineer Thomas Varghese is among those that see the merit in the migration of this approach, and he is helping students attending Halcrow's summer school.

Varghese works managing projects for Halcrow's bridges department in London, where the company has begun a summer school with Imperial College for graduands. 'They attend some seminars and get some training to help them understand what bridges are, for example,' he says, but that is not all.

Far superior to the work experience of old, where filing and tea making was the order of the day, these students visit different departments during their summer placement and work on actual projects too, 'tasting' the practical side of the job rather than just the theoretical.

'Through initiatives taken up by the college, they work on site, create scale models and join in as the whole team works together,' Varghese says. 'As a graduate, that's when you learn what the different areas of civil engineering are which one can work in, and if you like it.'

Varghese's interest in this approach stems from his own love of his chosen career. However, he was not always destined to be a bridge engineer - the job found him, and that is why he thinks this initiative is important.

After gaining his civil engineering and project management qualifications in India, Varghese went to work for Babbie. 'It was my first year there that helped steer me into bridges,' he says. Then, in 2002, he joined Hal-

crow's London office as a graduate engineer.

'Experience along with fascination helped me make my decision to become a bridge engineer, and then Halcrow provided me with the right opportunity at the right time.

'As soon as I joined I was enrolled on to the training scheme. It was that simple. My training was very well structured, and main credit for that goes to my supervising civil engineer Sam El-Jouzi and other seniors within my skill group. They enabled me to keep up the motivation with a wide variety of projects. This clearly helped me achieve my ICE objectives and progress my training.'

He worked through the company's graduate training scheme, and used the experience of management, design and site supervision he gained to become Chartered in 2007. 'It is not just the chartered status that matters to me but the whole process of chartered-ship, which enabled me to have a structured training and learn.'

Varghese says he enjoys everything he does at work. Now working on design projects as well as maintenance and inspection, he says: 'I think design together with maintenance and inspection broadens one's understanding, because inspection highlights areas for improvement while designing.'

And while the opportunity to design a landmark bridge would be a dream project, he is just as keen to help nurture the engineers of the future. 'One needs to be motivated to progress in training, and a mentor helps to steer you in the right direction.' He would eventually like to take his mentoring further and return to India to work for the company there.



• Sanderson Associates has promoted three staff to associate director level with responsibility for traffic and transportation, detailed design and flood risk operations respectively.

Bob Greenwood (above right) joined the company in 2006 after 30 years in transportation planning at several local councils and now leads a team within the traffic and trans-

portation sector of the business.

Highway design engineer **Peter Maurice** (above centre) worked at Barnsley Metropolitan Council before he joined to concentrate on detailed design and highway construction. **Jason McKellar** (above left) established the flood risk department within the company in 2007 after several years as a principal engineer.



• **Zack Abraham** (above) is the new central government sales consultant for coastal mapping specialist SeaZone following his move from Yotta DCL

• MVA Consultancy has added **Mike Prager** to its senior management team as financial director. He joins from Halcrow where played a major part in the company's evolution into a

global organisation.

• **Hayden Morgan** has moved to Enviros as development director, and will facilitate meeting the sustainability-led requirements of Carillion's clients. His consultancy expertise has included environmental due diligence.

• **Dr Suzy Charman**, a specialist in infrastructure safety, has joined TRL as a senior safety consultant. She brings both infrastructure safety and human factors specialism to the company, as well as research and project management experience. Charman joins from the International Road Assessment Programme (IRAP).