

## Q&amp;A

JAMES  
+  
SOLAM  
SIZER

SA Architectural Services

**Are you local?**

Yes we are based in Brundall in Norfolk, and cover the whole of Norfolk and Suffolk.

**Can you tell me a bit about your childhood, family life?**

I grew up on a farm in Suffolk. It was during tough times of the 1990's and I had to work when on school holidays. I enjoyed parts of it, particularly working outside. As I said times were tough, and when I finished school I had to decide what to do, whether to concentrate on study, or go into the farm. I think my Dad was a bit disappointed about my choice, but I think it was the right choice for me.

Solam grew up in Colombia, daughter of a Bank Manager and stay at home mum, she had a traditional Catholic upbringing. She left school and went to University to study architecture. Solam was a gifted student, and passed with ease. In 2000 she decided to come to the UK to study, met me, and stayed! Solam is a great asset, she set up the business and ran it for 18 months with just a little help from me on evenings and weekends whilst I was employed.

**Why do you love what you do?**

The variety of work, and the ability to help people, not just in a practical or vocational sense, but also we can provide our services to those less fortunate than we are. We believe in the local community and building a better one. We want to help make a difference to people's lives, to create light, space, and style in what can be a dull old world at times. Above all we enjoy watching people as their dream is brought to reality.

**How long have you been married?**

Since 2001, so almost 15 Years.

**What qualifications do you have to have to do what you guys do?**

Solam has a degree and diploma in Architecture, an HNC

in construction, and is a Chartered Member of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists. She sits on the Board for education and assesses the suitability of University Programmes. She also assesses applications from individuals for membership of the Institute.

I am also a member the CIAT and am a Chartered Building Engineer (CBuildE MCABE) This is the Chartered Institute that most Building Regulations Inspectors Join. We hold all requisite qualifications and insurances to provide a professional design (and build) service.

**How long did it take to become qualified?**

It took Solam 5 years in Colombia to do her Architecture degree, since then she has become a Chartered Architectural Technologist here.

I did an HND in Civil Engineering through work which took 3 Years. I then compiled a portfolio of my experience, and went to Interview to become a Chartered Architectural Technologist and Chartered Building Engineer.

**When did you start your own business?**

The business has been going for 3 years.

**Do you enjoy working together?**

Very much. Obviously we sometimes don't agree, but generally it runs smoothly. I'm living proof that the urge to kill me hasn't got that strong yet!

**You do lots to give back to community, can you tell us about some of your projects you're doing and about going to The House of Commons?**

Yes we do we enjoy working for not for profit organisations and charities.

We have designed and are project managing an extension to the Red Balloon Learner Centre in Norwich, It is a small independent school looking after bullied children outside of main-

stream education. I was invited to the group's annual reception at speaker's house inside the House of Commons, where I met several Lords and Ladies involved with the Charity. A great cause to be involved with, and an interesting night out.

We are also working on a project for a philanthropist to restore a Broadland Wind-pump to working order. The rest of the site will be used as an off grid retreat, respite centre, and educational establishment. A really interesting development which I hope to cover in next month's YLM.

**You have won awards for some of the projects you have worked on can you tell us about them?**

We won a design award for a project with Broadland District Council This Year for work to a listed building. That was a great achievement for such a young practice.

**What are your plans, hopes, dreams for the future personal and business?**

We hope to build a sustainable business and create employment for local People. We now have 2 employees and are looking to grow the team slowly over the next few years. On a personal level we'd like a bit more downtime, as all of your self-employed readers will know, getting a business of the ground is hard work.

## TROUBLE AT THE HALL

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any of us cherish the historic landscape we have here in Norfolk and Suffolk, the wonderful diversity of the built environment, ranging from historic ruins dating from the Roman, Norman, and reformation periods, to the notable ecclesiastical buildings, gathering places, and dwellings. Many of our towns and villages are blessed with listed buildings of national significance, among other significant local buildings.

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These buildings require a great deal of care; time, effort, and of course money to maintain and upkeep; you see historic buildings are rather like living, breathing, beings.

Refurbishment work undertaken to them must be done in a sympathetic way, using traditional materials. Lime products are more porous and allow the passage of warm moist air from the inside to flow naturally out, commonly referred to as "allowing the building to breathe". Serious defects can arise very quickly if this process is prevented by the inappropriate use of incompatible modern materials.

Of course other defects can arise spontaneously through woodworm infestation, damage to leadwork waterproofing (including that caused by precious metal theft).

Dealing with these defects in process requires considerable expertise and judgement to ensure they are properly resolved, and do not recur. This often means undoing some of the mistakes of the past, the second half of the twentieth century in particular. Good examples of this can be found in a



project we are undertaking at a Grade II\* Hall in south Norfolk.

The Hall was first mentioned in record in the will of John Sherman (1597) who bequeaths "my New Parlour and my New Hall with Chambers over the same" to a lucky relative. The building developed thereafter, with some wonderful additions, particularly the tower, thought to be added in a c. 1640-1660 refurbishment. Generational development has given rise to an eclectic mix of dissimilar styles which adds to the Historic and evidential significance. All was well until some refurbishment work in the 1970's and 1980's saw the building sealed with sand and cement render. In the last 30 years the building has decayed more than in the last 400!

Damage has been caused to the structure by interstitial condensation (condensation inside the wall) resulting in wet rot, dry rot, common furniture beetle and deathwatch beetle. The first two defects are directly attributable to this substandard work, In addition it created the perfect environment for the woodworm species to thrive.

Words by James Sizer  
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Rectification of defects in historic buildings