

This time Nick Pelly-Fry from Grand Design Blinds slides into the interrogation chair, where he shares his love for travel, a dislike for Justin Bieber and a tricky test of his linguistic skills.

How did you get into the shading industry?

I studied real estate management at university before working for Manhattan Loft Corporation - a property developer in London - where I learned a lot about high-end residential and commercial projects. As is often the way with smaller developers, their projects come and go and I was made redundant during a lull. At this point, my father Jonathan asked if I wanted to help him grow Grand Design Blinds, which he had recently started up on his own. Not fancying another high-pressure office job, I leapt at the opportunity – and have been on a steep learning curve since!

What motivated you to join the BBSA's managing committee?

I attended one of the regional seminars in February 2020, and was impressed with the work the BBSA does and the passion and knowledge with which Andrew Chalk spoke. Not knowing many people in the industry, I thought it would be a great way to meet people and expand my own knowledge, as well as hopefully helping others too.

Curry club: Kool Korma or Victorious Vindaloo?

Given the choice... I would go for korma, but I would prefer a thali from a roadside café in India. British curries just can't compete!

What has inspired you to keep going during lockdown?

Mostly the responsibility I feel towards my staff, most of whom are my immediate family! The team has really been amazing through this difficult time, adapting to the changes and soldiering on. On a more personal level, though, it is the distant hope of being able to travel again.

Your favourite mode of travel – plane, train or automobile?

This is a tough one. I love travelling, and really couldn't explore the world without planes, but I have been trying to cut down on the number of flights I take, so I intend to make use of the

global train network – I'd love to do the Trans-Siberian Railway one day. I have also recently bought a Tesla, which I am enjoying greatly, and I have a slightly rusty 1973 Jensen-Healey too, which is often more trouble than it's worth. Really, though, my favourite mode of transport is by boat – my family have been on many sailing holidays, and they are the best way to explore.

What's the best thing about our industry – and what needs to be done better?

I love the variety of the industry. It encapsulates all walks of life and a whole host of backgrounds – everyone has a story to tell. However, I also think the industry is very underrated – most people I speak to fell into a career in blinds by accident (including me!), so I do think we need to raise its profile and show that it is in many ways an untapped resource.

Do you have a phobia?

I don't like being wrong! And monkeys... they're too crafty.

Dress to impress or cool casuals?

I'm definitely more of a smart casual person – my days of wearing a suit to work are over!

What or who makes you laugh the most?

My family – there are usually fits of hysterics when we are all together and nobody takes themselves too seriously.

How would you want to be remembered?

My friend once described me as 'the kind of guy whose school had a polo team and sky-diving team but has managed to come out the other side without being an absolute t*sser'.

Outside of blinds, what's your big passion?

Travelling – I'm really missing it!

Name one thing people might not know about you (that you feel comfortable sharing!)



I had open heart surgery when I was two years old.

Breakfast is served: full English or healthy continental?

Full English every time (the heart is fine now – thanks for asking).

What's the best piece of professional advice you've ever been given?

Don't let the customer dictate how you work – it will be the cause of all of your issues!

In your opinion, the best pop song ever...?

Prisoner (featuring Dua Lipa) by Miley Cyrus.

...and the worst?

Anything by Justin Bieber!

How do you think Brexit will affect the industry in the near future?

I think we will lose skilled tradespeople from Europe, which may have an impact on construction costs. But in the shorter term, more delays while everyone works out the increased bureaucracy surrounding importing and exporting goods.

What's the most challenging job you've ever tackled?

Communicating wiring requirements in broken GCSE French in the lead-up to an installation for Eurostar in their Business Premier Lounge at Paris Gare du Nord. Many opportunities for things to go wrong – but luckily it all went smoothly!

What was the last book you read?

The Psychopath Test by Jon Ronson.

Finally, Marmite: Yes to the yeast, or chuck it in the bin?

Love it!