60 Seconds with ... Graham Jolliffe



Following a successful career as a Fleet Air Arm Air Engineer Officer, Graham has become recognised as one of the UK's leading Safety and High Integrity Software specialists. Graham has led a number of teams of Safety and software evaluators notably as the Technical Assurance manager for safety at QinetiQ Boscombe Down where he led a team of over 70 Safety Engineers who provided safety expertise for all military aircraft and associated systems. This led to him being awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

He enjoyed many notable successes during his time in an engineering consultancy including acting as Thales' Safety Manager for the Chinook Mk6 Cockpit Display System and Mission Avionic System. Graham became freelance in 2013 and has continued to work on many interesting and diverse projects. These have included a safety review of QinetiQ's weapons testing facilities and providing safety advice to various aerospace companies including Boeing, Lockheed Martin, L3Harris and the Royal Navy. His most recent task was to provide a safety assessment of the Common Infrastructure for the new Dreadnought submarine for BAE Systems Combat Systems Directorate.

Graham is now semi-retired but continues to promote and explore new expedient methods of assessing System Safety and has contributed to a number of safety standards and guidance for which he has been commended. He has also taken an active role in a number of UK and International Safety organisations, including writing and presenting a number of papers for conferences and symposia.

What first attracted you to working in System Safety?

I was working with aircraft weapon systems in the mid 90's and having to determine whether the software had sufficient integrity to enable the weapons to be fired or released safely. This needed a 'systems' view to understand the interactions between software and hardware and the user. So, it was inevitable that I had to address 'system safety' rather than focus solely on the software.

So you've recently retired! How are you finding life outside of work?

I still have work to do with the SCSC as well as a long list of jobs from my wife. If ever I get near to completing them, I'm hoping to play a bit of golf and use my eMountain bike more often.

What aspect of your career are you most proud of?

I've been fortunate to have worked with a lot of very good people on interesting projects. None of us can do our jobs in splendid isolation so I am grateful for all the support and assistance I've received over the years.

Tell us one interesting unusual fact about yourself!

Difficult to choose one fact, but I was proud to represent Great Britain at shooting in South Africa in 1994.

What advice would you give to yourself age 12?

So, I already knew I wanted to join the Navy at that age and I was determined to achieve my qualifications to enable me to join when I left college. It was hard to keep focussed on achieving those qualifications when there were, as now, many tempting distractions. So I would say it's important to have a goal.

Which real-world role model do you get most inspiration from and why?

I would choose Nelson Mandela and Horatio Nelson as inspirational people simply because they inspire others through their leadership and example. What is particularly interesting is they come from completely different backgrounds. Horatio Nelson had a privileged upbringing, but was ahead of his time in recognising the needs of his men. They were well cared for judged by the standards of the day, and in turn, they performed much better than their enemy counterparts. Nelson Mandela had a much humbler background, but his self-sacrifice proved inspirational to millions especially during his incarceration. He could have been forgiven for wishing some form of redress once he had been released and elected president. Instead, he continued to lead by example by seeking reconciliation with his former adversaries.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?

I would love to be able to play a musical instrument but simply do not have the aptitude for it. I can only marvel at the ability of talented musicians.

Artificial Intelligence – a positive revolution or are we all doomed!

Probably the answer is both although there is already software purporting to be AI when it isn't. We are all aware of the benefits the internet has brought in recent decades, but now we are also seeing how it's misuse can have devastating effects on members of our society. The same is likely to be true for AI. It does offer the potential to reduce the possibility of human error, but we have already seen many examples of the adverse side. It's difficult to know how to guard against such threats. I know there is a lot of research being undertaken in this area, but it feels that our current system safety toolkit is inadequate as things stand.