

60 Seconds with...Tim Kelly



Tim has worked for over 25 years in the domain of high-integrity and safety-critical systems engineering. As full-time Professor in High Integrity Systems at the University of York, he has been at the forefront of the development of best practices in the field, and he has published over 150 papers in international journals and conferences. In 2019, following his ordination in the Church of England, he became Assistant Curate of Beverley Minster.

What first attracted you to working in the field of System Safety?

I started working (as a sponsored student) in a Rolls-Royce centre in Derby called the High Integrity Systems and Software Centre back in 1991. It was the software engineering angle that had attracted me at first. However, when I started to see the applications of software to safety-critical systems such as the aero-engine FADECs (Full Authority Digital Engine Controllers) I became more interested in the need to make sure that we 'got it right' and the engineering methods required to help develop and assure these systems.

What aspect of your career are you most proud of?

I am proud of my role in developing the Goal Structuring Notation (GSN) and that it has been so widely used by engineers developing safety cases across the world in so many different industries. When used correctly, it has helped many people to be clearer about the nature of the safety arguments that they are making, and the strengths and weaknesses of those arguments.

What advice would you give to yourself age 12?

Stick with the computers Tim. You'll have a lot of fun!

What worries you the most about the future of System Safety?

In the same vein as Haddon-Cave's concerns in the Nimrod Report, I worry about the commoditisation of system safety, i.e. it becoming something we pay others to do for us rather than it involving the significant intellectual input of design and operating authorities.

"Stick with the computers Tim. You'll have a lot of fun!"

What's your most favourite quote or motto?

"The Devil is in the Detail"

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

Play the guitar!

If you could be any fictional character, who would you choose?

Harry Palmer (from the John le Carré novels).

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

When doing my PhD - "You've got to start with an idea that seems simple, because it probably isn't!"