

The Wessex Branch AGM was held in May. To ensure we had a quorum attend we invited celebrated speaker Stephen Carver to talk about making 'gut' decisions. He did this using the Apollo 13 mission to illustrate his reasoning. Because of the quality of this splendid hard-hitting and yet gentle giant of a speaker, we yet again had pretty much a full house, with around 70 attending.

The title of the presentation 'Leadership under stress' set out to demonstrate that no matter how well planned something is, no matter how detailed the processes, specifications, procedures and contingencies are written, just hoping logic will be our deciding factor can be totally misplaced. The addition of humans in all our working inevitably leads to illogical or irrational events to occur. Using extracts from the Tom Hanks Apollo 13 film, which didn't need any input from Hollywood to create problem after problem for the flight crew, Stephen showed how certain events created the ideal situation for the 'Crisis King', Gene Krantz, to show how he could take the expert opinions of his team and still have to make a decision with sometimes a leap of faith.

Now looking back on those events of 1970, we easily forget how different communication was for the flight crew and commanders on the ground in Houston. All those collaboration tools we now take for granted didn't exist, no instant messenger, no Skype, no texting, no video link. In fact, NASA had a rule that only allowed people who had been astronaut trained to have direct communication with the crew in the space craft. This meant all communication from everyone else was funnelled through people who knew what it is was like to be inside the craft hearing those verbal instructions, hopefully ensuring consistency when delivering detailed descriptions of what was required for every new step being undertaken to rescue the crew and bring them home.

Throughout the talk, Stephen amplified what was happening during each phase of the operation with analysis from either his own experiences within the oil and gas industry, or what was now considered modern thinking. And don't forget all these actions for Apollo 13 were nearly 50 years ago, which suggests some of our modern thinking today has been around for a while!

Our thanks to Stephen for yet another very popular and well received presentation for our evening.

Stephen's session followed the branch AGM during which time the following were unanimously elected to serve as the branch committee over the coming 12 months:

Daniel Jane, Elizabeth Russell, Jędrzej Gorka (new), Joe McNeil, Roger Atkinson, Russel Jamieson, Stan Symons, Trevor Marshall and William (Bill) Murray.

In addition, several folk kindly offered to either:

- Be co-opted on to the committee at a future meeting
- Provide more informal support of the committee as and when required

The officers of the committee, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer will be elected at the next committee meeting, 13 June.

Trevor Marshall
Wessex Branch Vice-Chairman