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What am I doing here

GLYNN HENDERSON, Safety advisor, occupational risk management, Scotland

I left school at 15 to work as a printer in the days when they used hot metal and the machines had no safety guards. I handled lead, used all sorts of hazardous chemicals, was subjected to deafening noise and breathed air that was thick with ink spray, all without any kind of protective gear.



As an apprentice I got my hand trapped in a machine and was lucky not to lose it, but those were the risks we thought we had to put up with.

I came to BBC Scotland in 1982 to run the printing and stationery department and, compared to the workplaces I was used to, I thought I'd died and gone to heaven.

I've always sought out adventure and got a kick out of taking risks. My parents brought me up on skiing, climbing and camping and in my early 20s I ran a karate club for nine years and got to second dan. I was also a founder member of a pistol shooting club and even had bullet making facilities at home.

My favourite weapon was my Colt 45 semi-automatic, which is the standard side arm of the US army. With my knowledge of martial arts, Okinawan weapons training (including nunchakus – the sticks joined by a chain you see in the movies) and shooting, I taught self defence and personal security for a course called 'counter measures' where my boss was an ex-Marine. I still enjoy skiing, sailing, mountain biking and riding my motorbike.

In my younger days I certainly lacked an instinct for self preservation and was inclined to take risks that resulted in a few broken bones and one or two near death experiences. I learned about safety long before I took it up as a profession.



During that time, through the BBC's attachment system, I had moved into facilities management, and had several separate spells working around Glasgow buildings and also enjoyed a six month spell in Belfast, which was fascinating at the height of the troubles – and a little intimidating, although the people there were wonderful to me. But it was after the fatal accident involving a

member of the public on the Noel Edmonds Late Late Breakfast Show in 1986 that a number of jobs were advertised for co-ordinators to deal with the administration of safety issues in the nations and regions, including Scotland.

At my interview I was asked: 'So Glynn, what do you think you can bring to this post?' I ran through my activities and my many mistakes that had resulted in pain and injury. I said I had become highly switched on to safety and felt I would make a good poacher turned gamekeeper. I got the job.

I'm now 55 and nothing beats years of hands on experience, although as I progressed to the role of safety advisor the BBC decided to formalise our qualifications and I attended Glasgow Caledonian University to complete a formal diploma for the management of health and safety.



Along with my fellow safety advisor Nick Roxburgh and occupational health advisor Angela McLean, we provide guidance, assistance and training to managers and staff on the risks they may encounter, safe working practices, how to comply with health and safety legislation and, most importantly, how to reduce the likelihood of accidents.

We work with all programme genres from dramas like River City to the children's Saturday Show, whose producers come to us particularly for advice when they've got new games to play. We'll always look at them from the child's point of view. I've also been working on a documentary series called Coast, helping the producers re-enact the Highland clearances using local villagers, which required them using a public road.

The expertise within occupational risk management, as a BBC wide team, covers health, safety, fire, security, environmental issues and more. I think we provide support that is second to none. Our responsibilities spread across 14 premises from Dumfries in the borders to Lerwick in the Shetland Isles and we've just about completed our assessments of safety issues in the new Pacific Quay building. We have a lot of

experience of refurbishment and ask questions about everything – even changing a light bulb.

Working with productions we try to be pragmatic and have a 'can do' approach, to enable rather than hinder, and it's only on the rarest occasions that we have to say that something cannot be done – and we'll always try to suggest an alternative without risking life and limb.

>A Few facts of Life

If you weren't a safety adviser what would you be doing? I would probably have followed the facilities management route and ended up being taken over by LST by now, but I would have loved to be in visual effects or stunts.

Any personal ambitions? Keep life fun right up to the end.

If you could choose one BBC programme to have worked on, from any era, what would it be? I have worked on so many brilliant programmes in BBC Scotland that I can't think of any one programme I would have wished to work on more than another.

Favourite sport? Anything that involves me being on mountains or water. Great fun!

Tell us a funny thing that happened to you at work. Just recently I was introducing my colleague Keith Murray to candidates on a training course and I completely forgot his name. He thought I was winding him up. It must be my age.

If you could have four people to dinner from any era, who would you invite and why? My parents to tell them the things I omitted to say when they were alive, Billy Connolly to keep us all laughing heartily and Jools Holland to turn after dinner into a rip-roaring party.

Is there anything about the BBC you would change? I think it is changing enough without me sticking my oar in.

Do you have a favourite saying? What's for you won't go past you.

What is the best place you've ever visited? So many brilliant places but just winning by a nose, New York.