

Gen “Y” Seminar and World Hydrography Day

The London Branch held a joint meeting with the Uk Hydrography Office aimed particularly at Generation Y. The meeting, held in the impressive surroundings of Trinity House, took the form of a seminar, with speakers including Kaushik Roy AFNI, HSE manager with MOL LNG, Kuba Szymanski FNI, Secretary General of Intermanager, and John Bazely MNI, head of the school of professional studies, at Warsash.

Kaushik Roy looked at the challenges facing both the industry itself and the young people just entering it, asking what we need to do to make shipping the industry of choice. The answers – providing good role models, increasing awareness of the industry and the possibilities it offers, and developing good leadership models within the industry, may seem obvious, but are none the less important for that. He emphasized that we must view seafarers as assets not costs, and the measures necessary to retain them as investments rather than outlay.

Kuba Szymanski suggested that in fact, the differences between the generations are not so great – many of the things that young seafarers look for now are exactly the same as those the generation above them were looking for when they went to sea. In many respects, the onus for improving the industry lies not with those who are just entering it, but with those who are already there. If young people are to remain motivated, they need to be shown the positive side of the industry. ‘Generation Y can check and challenge us - and what do they see? That we as an industry lack self-respect. Is it arrogant to say 'Yes, I am a ship manager, but I was at sea, and I was good at it?’ he asked. A focus on mentoring is a vital part of this process if recruitment and retention are to continue.

John Bazely MNI spoke directly to the title of the event, asking how we can overcome the challenge of ensuring the next generation of seafarers can acquire and use both traditional and modern navigational techniques? He reiterated that we need to think about what we are training and why. It is not enough just to focus on using modern technology to teach, we need to make sure that technology is applied in a realistic and effective manner. Maritime education has always been about critical thinking and problem solving, and this is now more the case than ever. ‘The ‘Y’ generation have the skills and the capacity - we just have to make sure they can use those skills to good purpose,” he concluded. They're more adaptable - what's holding them back is the limitations of the industry and the hoops we are making them jump through.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion, with the large number of cadets and junior OOWs in the audience making their voice heard. The question of the visibility of the industry came up several times, with several people making the point that, while going to sea remains an attractive career – possibly more so than it was in the recent past - few people outside it are aware that it exists – and we may be losing a lot of good people due to our own invisibility.

The event concluded with the UK National Hydrographer, Rear Admiral Nick Lambert, presenting the UKHO’s Alexander Dalrymple award given to Dr Nishida , the former chief hydrographer of Japan, who has been instrumental in establishing hydrographic units in countries around the world, and played a key role in the major resurveying and recharting of Japanese waters that followed the 2011 tsunami.

A thoroughly enjoyable reception afterwards ensured that the conversations begun during the Q&A session continued into the evening.