

The Worshipful Company of Farmers and Duchy College

Challenge of Rural Leadership

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The Challenge of Rural Leadership

During a warm and dusty Thursday in our shearing shed I received a phone call inviting me to attend a two week course in the UK. By Sunday afternoon I was on a flying Kangaroo and arrived at Heathrow on Monday morning. It was a three hour train ride from Paddington station to Newton Abbot and when I finally arrived at Passage House Hotel, I slept for eight hours. I was completely unprepared and had no idea what to expect. The following is my impression of a challenging and thought provoking leadership course.

I would like to thank Duchy College and Nuffield Australia for inviting me to attend the Challenge of Rural Leadership, Jetset Griffith for assisting with travel costs, The Worshipful Company of Farmers, Fairport Farm Software, Grain Research and Development Corporation and Grain Growers Association for assisting with the costs of attending the course. Thank you.



Grains Research & Development Corporation

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Executive Summary

1. The Challenge of Rural Leadership is a two week intensive course that taught valuable personal skills, provided mentally stimulating challenges and offered the opportunities to network with future leaders in agriculture from all over the world.
2. Successful leaders communicate, listen, talk, network and set objectives while harnessing the power of the group. They have;
 - a. the ability to rise above the situation (see the real problem)
 - ~~a-b.~~ an above average IQ (intelligent)
 - ~~a-c.~~ excellent communication skills
3. Effective leadership relies on your intellectual, ethical, emotional, physical and professional 'fitness'. Alongside keeping fit the most important thing leaders do is think, which requires allocating time, using confidants and providing sanctuaries.
4. Leaders don't need to be experts to be successful however they need to understand what resources the organisation needs, resources they lack and how to motivate individuals to achieve desired outcomes.
5. Personal power is a relationship and a privilege that is not causal but consequential. The use of this power to motivate can be achieved by creating a moral force of compulsion (creating a desire to belong that urges people to follow common beliefs), persuasion (both physically and enrichment techniques) and example (how you act in defining moments of making hard decisions).
6. There are three types of problems; tame (management uses 'elegant' solutions to complicated problems relating to stuff and numbers), wicked (leadership asks many questions and applies 'clumsy' solutions to complex problems that have never been seen before) and critical (command needs decisive action to a crisis).
7. Effective media management is vital to get agriculture's message to the wider community. Give the media something useful while knowing what you want out of it, convey your interesting point then repeat it.

Course Overview

The 13th Challenge of Rural Leadership (CRL) ran from November the 2nd to 14th 2008, as an intensive residential course at Passage House Hotel, Kingsteignton, South Devon near Newton Abbot. It was originally developed by the Seale Hayne Faculty, University of Plymouth and is run by the Rural Business School at Duchy College, Cornwall which is sponsored by the Worshipful Company of Farmers. All of the UK participants went through an application process which included an interview.

The course is a blend of hands on activities and mentally demanding lectures designed to develop an understanding and awareness of political, financial, environmental and leadership challenges affecting the future of rural industries. Topical industry issues are investigated in an attempt to encourage motivation and communication within the rural community both nationally and internationally.

Typically a set timetable governed each day which usually started with a casual breakfast at the hotel with sessions beginning around 9am. A group lunch was held at 1am and ran for an hour after which sessions resumed up until around 6pm. A small amount of free time was allowed before the evening meal which immediately lead into the evening session which concluded around 9pm, sometimes later. The dress was neat casual except for formal dinners to which lounge suits were expected to be worn. Votes of thanks and general housekeeping was left up to the group at which we were not highly proficient.

One of the biggest criticisms I have of the 2008 course was the cancelation of numerous speakers. I am aware of administrative issues in the final weeks leading up to the course but missing out on some key industry presentations was a little disappointing.

Overall the whole experience was very intense with a majority of time spent inside a class room focusing on the information being presented. I found the most rewarding elements were the self assessment, motivations techniques and learning about how effective leadership tackles problem. The course taught the group many skills and it is now up to the participants to apply this knowledge. I would highly recommend this course to anyone who would like to be challenged and further their personal development.

Contained in this report is a brief summary of what I learnt and the key points that I thought captured each session.

David Jochinke

Worshipful Company of Farmers, Jeff Beer & Peter Clarke (www.farmerslivery.org.uk)

The Worshipful Company of Farmers is a Livery Company of London. Livery Companies were originally founded as Trade Guilds with the primary objectives of regulating the crafts and professions and taking part in the running of civic government in the City (including electing the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs). Today the aims of the Worshipful Company of Farmers include '*stimulating the development of agricultural education*' hence they have been supporting the CRL for the past 13 years.

Strategic Management, Rob Williams - Business Management

(R.J.Williams@plymouth.ac.uk)

"A common problem with too many businesses is that they are trying to become experts in the wrong market."

Rob ran us through various different marketing and performance models used to analyse, measure and evaluate a business's health. These included Porter's 5 forces framework, product life cycles, how a value chain works within an organisation, the growth share matrix (or the BCG box), how to manage cost efficiencies, what drives good break even economics and the impact of competitiveness upon strategy. He explained that the most effective strategies should strengthen the long term market attractiveness and the business unit strength of any products developed. For example a strong performance and balance sheet are key drivers of good businesses. In a weaker business it is best to improve the performance which will help close the gaps and eventually repair the balance sheet.

Case study, Mark Stevens - Huish Barton, Devon

www.clintondevon.co.uk www.cropmech.co.uk

Our main group exercise was to visit an agricultural business, analyse its performance and subsequently develop a business plan. We visited Mark Stevens who shares farms Devon Estates owned by Lord Clinton at Huish Barton (526 ha). The farm mainly grows winter wheat with break crops and runs about 270 head of cattle. Each field had a 6m margin that was used for the Countryside Stewardship program which equated to around 80 acres or approximately £20k pa in payments. As a part of the agreement Mark looks after 50 of Lord Clintons Red Devon cows and an area of parkland. Lord Clinton provides the land, buildings and infrastructure while Mark supplies the labour, machinery (via contracting business), maintenance and labour. The variable costs and income split is 25% Lord Clinton 75% Mark Stevens. Approximately 50% of the cereals are direct drilled with most of the straw being sold off the field.

Mark also runs Cropmech a business that farms 283ha of tenanted land as well as agricultural and commercial contracting work. The agricultural contracting service specialised in spraying, drilling (sowing) and combining (harvesting) over 35k acres. The commercial side dealt with grain weighing, drying, storage and milling as well as lime distribution and spreading. The equipment used for these activities included trucks to move bulk materials including lime and grain and 6 specialist telescopic handlers for farm/building

works which were also hired out to South West Power. Mark also had interests in two investment properties in Berlin and five commercial/residential properties in Dobein.

The group analysis of Mark's business was tackled by breaking everything into separate enterprises and looked at cash flow, capital, risk and family expectations in order to develop a strategic plan. Individuals were grouped into their expertise which meant we had many teams that became a little raucous at times. However we did manage to achieve the desired outcome and formally presented our confidential findings to Mark and his family.

Genetic Modification, Mick Fuller - Professor of Plant Physiology (mfuller@plymouth.ac.uk)
"A well fed man has a thousand worries, but a hungry man only has one".

Genetic modification currently appears to be a dirty word as far as the consumer is concerned with most people using moral judgement to reject the technology. The discussion included the growing global population and its increasing food requirements, multinational company's control of agriculture and food safety concerns. Mick explained the science and the strict regulations surrounding GM and that the technology could realistically deliver salt, drought and frost tolerant plants in the near future which would increase yields. However the choice will always come back to the consumer, most of whom are unsure about what is truth and myth with regards to the technology.

Organic Farming, David Wilson - HRH Farm Manager (www.duchyoriginals.com)

David is the farm manager for Prince Charles's organic farm. He spoke about his organic philosophy and provided an overview of the farms production. On the arable (cropping) land they use a combination of pasture, ploughing, shading and harrowing to control weeds. They use homeopathy on dairy cows and promote the rare breeds such as Tamworth and Large Black pigs, Irish Moiled, Gloucester, Shetland and British White cattle, as well as Hebridean and Cotswold sheep. They welcome the public to visit the farm and market their speciality produce on the internet.

European Union Agriculture, Neil Parish - European Parliament (www.neilparish.co.uk)

Climate variations and the cultural size of farming operations greatly affect the problems facing the European Union's agricultural policy. Neil explained that the Common Agricultural Policy is all about food production and environmental management even though it is "decoupling" into a Single Farm Payment (SFP) system in the UK. It was very interesting to hear about the political point scoring that occurs in the EU parliament with countries opposing rational/common good policies (at least on face value) on the basis of historical and personal spats. He is also a great believer in farmer and consumer choice between organic, conventional and GM food production.

Nuffield Scholarships, John Stones - UK Nuffield (nuffielldirector@aol.com)

John gave a brief overview of the UK and International Nuffield organisations and encouraged everyone to apply. He mentioned that agriculture needs inspiration, innovation and representation.

International farming, Matthias Hochrein, Thami Mupawose & David Jochinke

Mathias works for Spearhead International who own Farming (Eurofarms, Rovina Agro, A G S Zdounky and Koryčansko) and Real Estate (Eurofarms, Landwealth CZ and Drivedale CZ) businesses. He is employed as an agronomist and consultant for Eurofarms who operate 4 farms in the Czech Republic in Lowlands, Tabor, Hulin and Jihlava which total over 16k ha.

Thami helps run Umlimi in South Africa which is a black owned financial services company specialising in establishing risk managed solutions to the agricultural sector. Its key work is creating successful farms on land that the government has given back to unskilled and unfinanced communities. They form joint venture (JV) companies with underdeveloped community owned farms to provide strategic investments. The shareholding split is 50% community and a temporary 50% split to Umlimi. It involves a long term lease of the community's farm land to the JV while Umlimi provides the management. As a part of the agreement Umlimi must skill the community to transfer management back to them before the end of the JV (approx 15 years).

I presented how we have grown our business during the dry conditions over the past decade. Most of the UK farmers were shocked at the lack of rainfall we receive and low yields we survived on. However when broken down to a return on investment and costs per acre Australia seemed to be very cost effective. It appears that the regulations and urban push onto farm land is artificially inflating the price of any available acres in the UK.

Creative Thinking, Peter Redstone - Barefoot Partnership (www.barefoot-thinking.com)

"Thinking – we only do enough to get by".

Thinking is rarely structured which is why mind maps are a useful way of capturing random thoughts. It allows flexibility and imagination as we continually use the power of thought to ask 'why is it so?' The use of colour in mind maps also helps to retain information and details. Peter also introduced us to PARADE, a system on problem solving that he has helped develop in the Barefoot Thinking Partnership. The main objective is to reframe the problem to remove the symptoms and solve the real issue.

PARADE – 6 step creative problem solving

Problem -Write initial problem, obtain meaningful information, define and understand it.

Aims – Decide what outcomes are desired, what are the intended goals, objectives and outcomes of solving this problem.

Reframe – Refine the initial problem by looking at your aims and describing the problem/situation in a more useful way. This helps find a way of thinking about the real problem that will open up new solutions. This gets past the symptoms and allows us to look at the real problem.

Alternatives – Reconsider consequences and assumptions. A powerful reframe will help provide many new options and using random words can help break old patterns.
The use of mind maps is an excellent way to find more alternatives.

Decision – Weigh up the opportunities and select the most favourable outcome.

Execution – Take action that has real impact.

Leadership & The Problems with Change, Keith Grint - Defence Leadership

(k.grint@cranfield.ac.uk)

“Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them.” Laurence J. Peter.

Management and Leadership use the art of language to communicate and persuade people. This communication can be broken down into two basic forms of direct modes of transmission (one way) and exchange (two way) or the indirect mode of **autopoietic**^[LB1] (people actively scanning communications for issues of interest to them). It is important to recognise these forms of transmission as most speakers attempt to capture the largest audience even though many of them may not be directly involved. We looked at great speeches and how the presenter used performative language (using the power of words) to capture the public’s interest and how they made them memorable. The seven rhetoric techniques of metaphor include emotional appeal, law of three, two part change, irony, discomfort/resolution, word reversal and repetition were discussed and given examples of how they worked. No matter which technique was used the preparation behind the speech showed care with the choice of words and the way in which they were delivered.

In problem management it is the role of those who are made responsible for decision making to find the appropriate style of authority required. One of the greatest problems to overcome is change, as old tricks/methods need to be forgotten to embrace and manage it. Generally all problems can be broken into three types (see figure 1) depending on the time, context and ability to utilise persuasion (to shift the audience’s perception of the problem).

Tame Problems = Management

These are problems that can be complicated but are not complex and have been seen before. These problems always have an answer and it is therefore the management’s role to engage the appropriate process to solve them. Most solutions become easier the more times they are tackled making the answers procedural from which Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) can be developed. These can be called ‘elegant’ solutions because they are neat, tidy and effective.

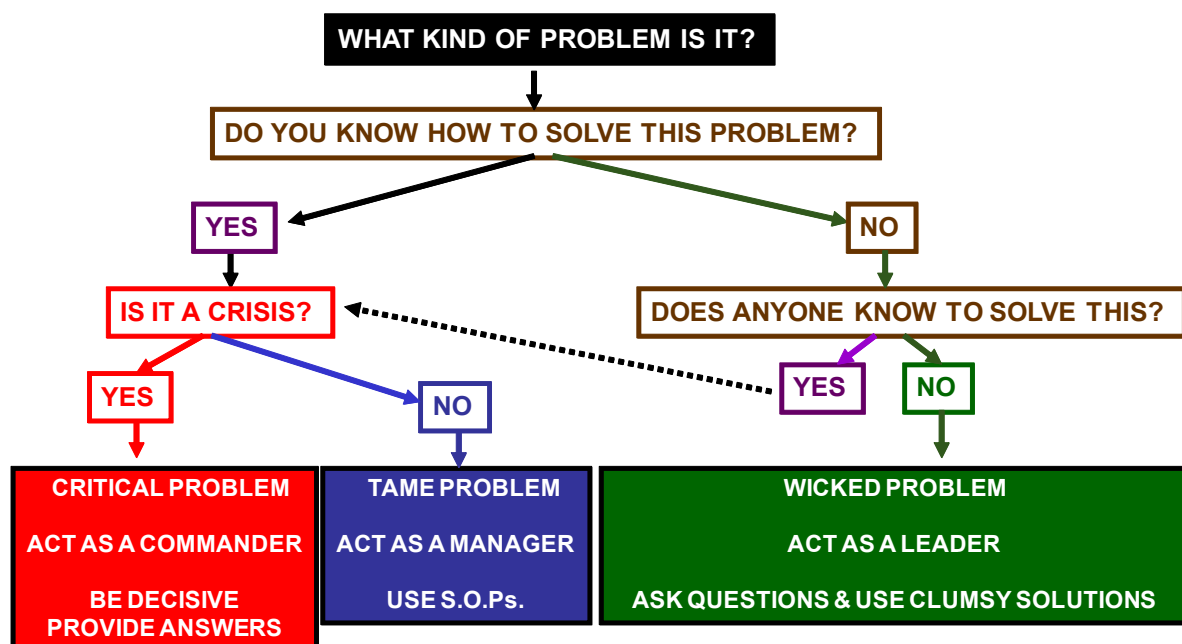
Wicked Problems = Leadership

Wicked problems are more complex rather than complicated and have never been seen before. There are no easy solutions, no ‘stopping’ points to shut down the problem and no clear relationship between cause and effect. Leadership is needed to develop long term, collaborative processes where all stakeholders participate, share the responsibility and ask the right questions rather than a management approach of trying to provide the right ‘elegant’ answers. This is called a ‘clumsy’ solution because it is usually imperfect.

Critical Problems = Command

A crisis which requires decisive action and where there is virtually no uncertainty about what needs to be done is a critical problem. Commanders use ‘elegant’ solutions and justify their actions by framing the context and the time limitations of the problem. Command is all about revoking individuals’ responsibility while giving them permission to carry out an action. Crises like earth quakes or plane crashes are real time problems that demand instant answers which do not allow time for actions to be questioned.

Figure 1. Typology of problems, power and authority



Keith also talked about how the power of logic and rational arguments are limited as many people use these to justify and rationalise, instead of correcting, their actions. Most people rationalise their bad actions in an attempt to justify that they are essentially good (no-one likes being wrong). He also spoke about how personal power is a relationship that is not causal but consequential. Leaders gain power over individuals only if the individuals do what the leader asks. Therefore, power is like a possession that can be taken away. He also spoke about a few different ways to motivate people by coercive power (direct reward/punishment) which uses physical persuasion or taking away individuals responsibility to achieve outcomes, calculative compliance (common beliefs) related to institutions and normative compliance (desire to belong) by creating an identity of heroes/martyrs.

He concluded that leaders communicate, listen, talk, network and set objectives while harnessing the power of the group. Leaders don't need to be experts to be successful however they need to understand what resources the organisation needs, resources they lack and how to motivate individuals to achieve desired outcomes.

Lord of the Flies, Rachel Vowles – Northcott Theatre (rachel.vowles@ex.ac.uk)

On the second Wednesday night we attended a stage adaptation of Lord of the Flies at Northcott Theatre in Exeter. A well known story, it demonstrated numerous styles and affects of leadership in crises. It also shows the power of using made up assumptions rather than factual deductions to control and motivate people.

Military Leadership, Bryan Watters - Colonel Cheshire Regiment (bwatters.dlc@da.mod.uk)
“Military endeavour is all about blood and treasure” & “Leadership can be very lonely”

Colonel Watters spoke about the contemporary military leadership in regards to the loneliness of command and conceptual (how to fight), moral (how to use leadership and management to get people to fight) and physical (the means to fight) dilemmas in decision making. As a leader you need to understand yourself, the environment in which you operate and the people you are privileged to lead while using the trilogy of command (command, leadership and management) to achieve these objectives. You should use your personal not your positional power to motivate (encourage and inspire) your team. He said that the best way to motivate people is by creating a moral force of compulsion, persuasion and example. He also believes that good leadership relies on your intellectual, ethical, emotional, physical and professional “fitness”. Being fit is critical in how you live with the responsibility and accountability of making hard decision. In turn you are measured by these defining moments of making hard decisions. To demonstrate this he explained some heart wrenching decisions he made while working with the UN.

Leadership and Organisations, Jeremy Tozer - CLOE Manager (cloe@plymouth.ac.uk)
“95% of organisational problems come down to clarity”

Management deals with stuff and numbers while Leadership works with people and turbulence. Good processes of mission (defining what is the higher intent of the task), planning (how the team and individuals will work), briefing (explain and confirm the phases of actions) and execution (coordinate resources, timings and constraints) mitigates any confusion. Included in this session was an outdoors activity that involved creating a square out of a piece of rope while the participants were blindfolded. It highlighted that planning, delegation and good communication are essential to clarify the problem and then execute the solution effectively.

Press Release, Andrew Parkinson – Falcon Direct (www.andrewparkinsoncopywriting.co.uk)

Andrew explained that any press release needs a catchy title, should only be 3 - 4 paragraphs in total (two of the most important items), the first paragraph should contain what the issue is about, use the following paragraphs to expand the colour of the story and be sure to attach contact details. Think of the audience, message and response when constructing a press release. The press release was used in later radio and TV interviews.

Media Management, Jeff Welch - ITV Westcountry (*news@westcountry.co.uk*)

Good media = simple message + confident presenter. You should always be prepared, responsive and available when dealing with the media and think about what I can get out of this opportunity. Think of the media as your friend, use them because they need interesting stories (think about what is in it for the media). Linking a story to the bigger picture is a simple and effective way to make your message more attractive but understand that most reporters already know what type of story it will be and how it will be told before they do the interview. Be reasonable and passionate about the message and don't whinge!

When dealing with television you should always know where to look and where you need to deliver your lines. Little things like leg movements, hand positioning and sitting in the seat properly are all important because most people will judge you upon your actions within 3 -5 seconds. Think about what you are wearing, not too posh, no check or fine line shirts (runs and blurs on camera), avoid white (darker colours are better), don't wear advertising and only wear neat jeans when applicable (think about how professional you want to look). If you have the option, try and control the background to help frame your message. Make your point with a smile, nodding and facial expressions help you warm to the presenter (emotion makes you engaging but don't tilt your head), never look annoyed, never raise your voice, if you don't agree with the point just smile, use the presenters name only in tough interviews and make the assumption that the reporter will not help you. Ultimately it is an artificial gateway to a broad audience which is ultimately a big game. The main thing to remember is know what you want out of it, convey your interesting point then repeat it.

To test out our acquired skills we had three interviews, two simulated television (which one was a very short, sharp and pushy and the other in an isolated room relaying answers and questions) and a snappy radio experience.

Farmers Weekly, Jane King – Editor (*farmers.weekly@rbi.co.uk*)

Jane spoke about effective journalism with reference to the Save Our Sprays (SOS) campaign which was assisted by the Farmers Weekly. The aims, audience and the information they were going to use helped the magazine set themes, realistic clear goals and success criteria to measure the campaign efforts. She reiterated the importance of good relationship with the media and the techniques of strategy, clear message and diplomacy to achieve effective press coverage in any campaign.

Marketplace Business Management Simulation - Marketplace Decisions

To better understand strategic management and how we operate in groups we were divided into five teams to play a computer program which simulates business decisions. It was set in the 1980's when computers were first being commercially developed and was based around making a series of strategic decisions which are then evaluated. The simulation was highly complex and involved decisions about global marketing, manufacturing and office locations, what type of computer would be produced, advertising budgets, staff numbers and training and raising finance in a competitive situation. Our team the 'Bill Gates Army' had a good laugh and did quite well to the surprise of Steve and Rob. Our goals of world domination, crushing the competition and profit didn't matter as long as the first objectives were achieved, all went quite well.

Saturday Afternoon Outdoor Activities

To break up the course we headed out to the Dart Moore to do a series of moderate physical activities. Rock climbing, abseiling and some boulder scrambling were all enjoyed in the mild sleety weather. However it provided the opportunity for people to challenge their mental over physical limitations while discussing things as a group.

Music as a Metaphor, Martyn Warren - Rural Futures Unit (*M.Warren@plymouth.ac.uk*)

Initially this session looked at how we communicate by sound and how we work together to create harmony. We talked about the confidence of being in a group, the comfort/relationship/diversity/dynamics/challenges between the group and how to manage other people. This ended with the group singing at Buckfast Abbey after which we waited in silence and darkness to listen to the monks majestically chant their nightly tunes.

Leadership, Management & Strategy, Steve Fisher - Business Strategy and Marketing (*S.J.Fisher@plymouth.ac.uk*)

Steve's main objective was to get us to think and ran us through various characteristics of operational management and motivation. He discussed how most managers get information by verbal communication through their networks and relationships while only working in 10 minute chunks. Steve ran us through an exercise of listing desirable traits of leaders throughout time. Many traits were listed from numerous types of leaders, however he concluded that there are only three tools that an effective leader needs;

1. The ability to rise above the situation and see the problem (overview)
- ~~1.2.~~ 1.2. Have above average IQ (intelligence)
- ~~1.3.~~ 1.3. Be an excellent communicator (communication)

According to this theory the best organisations ideally had well trained staff which are willing and able to be accountable for their actions and who hence gave managers more thinking and strategic time. We looked at the F.W. Taylor's work study theory into efficiency where workers are only paid what is necessary to achieve maximum effort and that management provides supervisors to look after the workers.

According to Abraham Mazlow, F.W. Taylor's theory satisfies the workers physical needs but ignores the individuals' personal needs. Steve showed us a video by Frederick Herzberg from 1968 about how to motivate employees. Fred explained there are two basic techniques that are used in an attempt to motivate people;

1. **Hygiene needs** (the base factors of how you are treated at work, salaries, working conditions) *Kick In the Arse (KITA) method of negative (the stick) or positive (you do good, you get jelly bean!) dissatisfaction avoidance = to move people.*
2. **Job enrichments motivators** (giving employees encouragement, recognition, opportunity to take responsibility and use their initiative) *Creating individual job satisfaction to grow employees = to motivate people.*

In the first factor, management takes away responsibility from the employees and treats them like 'idiots' by setting criteria, narrowing thought and stifling their ability in return for providing physical 'things'. He mentioned this method can cause revenge pain from disappointment which in the future could undermine the higher intent of the organisation. The second thinks about the individual by self checking and looking at what they want to achieve which in turn motivates and builds loyalty. All jobs should be a learning experience and all people should be treated fairly. He uses two simple questions to demonstrate this;

What makes people happy? = What they do!
What makes people unhappy? = The situation they're in!

Steve finished by running the group through four personal evaluation exercises to help define our types, strength, weakness, methods and modes. After completing and assessing each exercise we set goals of what we wished to achieve and areas for personal development. Below are my results of my personal evaluation exercises.

Belbin's Roles in Groups = Monitor / Evaluator & Shaper

Lifestyle Attitudes = Personalistic (high), sociocentric (high) & formalistic (low)

Tri-dimensional Effectiveness Leadership Model
= Effective participating style (high relationship & low task orientated)

Blockages Survey

Strengths = Influential, creative & adequate problem solving skills
Blockages = Team building capacity, trainer capability and lack of managerial insight

Staying Alive, Richard Soffe - Rural Business and Agriculture (richard.soffe@duchy.ac.uk)
People are not rational as we are happy to assonate the messiah due to white noise pressure (the want to take action when in reality no action is the best action). Leaders need time (give yourself permission to set aside time for thinking and family), confidants (feedback of reliable inside and outside mentors/support groups) and sanctuaries (personal place to take care of body and soul). The distinctions of role/self and work/ home life need to be clear or else there will be a chance of being personally lost in the process. As a leader you need to get on the balcony to look over and understand the issues, set direction and create commitment from your team, be strong enough to hold steady in trying circumstances, identify the pressure and tipping points of issues and utilise the management trilogy (individual, task and team). You need to develop a trust of your gut/initial instincts and beware of toxic leaders, assassins and lighting conductors (metaphor for people who bring others down or cause trouble) but be wary not to start to think that you are the king.

And the quotes... *(the ones that I thought were classics)*

Overdraft limits should not be targets

I don't think we should talk about things we don't understand

BOHICA (Bend Over, Here It Comes Again)

If you don't have it in your head (remember to get something), you will have to use your legs (to go back and get it)

Course Contacts

Organisers

Richard Soffe	Rural Business and Agriculture	richard.soffe@duchy.ac.uk
Steve Fisher	Business Strategy and Marketing	S.J.Fisher@plymouth.ac.uk
Jim Geltch	CEO Nuffield Australia	jimgeltch@nuffield.com.au

Participants

There were eighteen participants who attended the course from England, Scotland, Wales, South Africa, Czech Republic and Australia. All were involved in agriculture occupations which included Machinery Dealers, National Farmer Union Policy Makers, Solicitors, Land Agents, Agricultural Bank Managers, Rural Lecturers and a variety of Tenant, Arable, Dairy, and Organic Farmers.

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