



Who: Peter Wellby

What: Consulting meteorologist/
weather forecaster

When: CCM since 2008

Why: Recognition within the industry
and clients

How: Peter joined the commercial weather forecasting industry in 1978 after graduating from the University of East Anglia.

Based in Aberdeen, Scotland, Peter provided weather forecasts for the offshore oil and gas industry in the northern North Sea. Most of the three years spent working in Scotland was on two-week-on, two-week-off rotation to the Brent oil field, where a permanent offshore weather forecasting center had been established. This center provided routine marine forecasts for the drilling, construction, and production operations as well as local area aviation weather forecasts for helicopter operations.

The two-week-off period was spent working in the Aberdeen forecasting office providing weather forecasts for other offshore locations around Europe. After Scotland, it was on to Singapore to provide similar services to the offshore industries based in the Far East. The forecasting services again involved long periods spent away from the main forecasting center. These included regular four-week-on, four-week-off rotations to Natuna Island, Indonesia, providing aviation weather forecasts in support of helicopter operations for oil companies using the island as a transit point. It also included several periods to offshore construction projects, one of which was the heaviest tandem lift operation performed in the Far East at that time.

From Singapore, Peter moved on to Melbourne, Australia, to yet another new and exciting region of meteorology: the Bass Strait. Still living in Melbourne, Peter took a “sabbatical” from weather forecasting to fly helicopters commercially both in Australia and Papua New Guinea for a period of nine years before returning once again to weather forecasting, now based in Singapore.

After three years in Singapore, Peter returned to Melbourne to set up Offshore Weather Services, and continues to provide weather forecasts to the offshore industries throughout Australasia. Highlights over the past 13 years include many months spent at offshore locations as the duty weather forecaster in direct contact with clients during critical offshore operations in the Gulf of Thailand, advising them on tropical cyclone evacuation and squall forecasting, observing on radar as Typhoon Linda tracked through the Gulf of Thailand in 1997, and recognizing the early development of a tropical storm close to offshore locations in 2003. As the “onboard” weather forecaster for several large offshore construction projects in Malaysia, Thailand, and China, Peter has had the satisfaction of seeing the development and expansion of a niche weather forecasting company competing on the world stage.

In His Own Words: “I joined the weather forecasting industry at a time when NWP was still in its relative infancy and certainly not as widely available as they are today. Weather forecasting was more intuitive and based on limited data. There was no scatterometer data, limited satellite coverage, and only coarse-resolution NWP.

“Today, the duty forecaster has a vast amount of data to assimilate, which in itself is a challenge. There needs to be a thorough grounding in the basic principles of meteorology for all new forecasters, and exposure to how forecasters can see directly and immediately the changes in weather associated with their predictions. This is what we are trying to provide to the new graduates we have employed over the past two years.

“The focus for me over the past 30 years or so has been to not regard my meteorology profession as an occupation but as a service that enables our clients to operate more safely and efficiently. With the increasing focus on alternative energy, the role of the weather forecaster in the energy sector is going to be an even bigger one.

“Being granted the status of Certified Consulting Meteorologist is recognition by my peers that I have obtained the level of experience and knowledge that is required when working within this industry, and conveys that recognition beyond its boundaries to a world at large that is seeking guidance from the services we can provide.”

For more information on the Certified Consulting Meteorologist (CCM) Program, please visit the AMS Web site at www.ametsoc.org/amscert/index.html.

