

OI 2006

A whale, later identified as a northern bottle-nosed, was reported swimming in the river Thames in central London at the end of January, and was thereafter watched by crowds lining the riversides. Unfortunately, whilst being transported back to sea the whale died, the only one of a reported group of three which had passed the storm surge barrier. Apart from possible causes of the whales losing their way, can we extract some more positive news from this story? That the water quality of the Thames is not so bad that these animals were frightened away right at the entrance to the estuary?

But was the death of the whale also related to disturbance of its navigation mechanisms by disorientation and stress from the noise of boats full of media people trying to film it? In both our own industry and in the military we are aware of the problems (ambient) noise can mean for our measurements, but also how our own noise can affect animals in the water, especially those who rely on acoustics for communication and navigation. As a navy diver I can even claim to have some practical experience of underwater noise.

Undoubtedly this whale, whose unhappy final journey took it past the London ExCeL, will be the source of comment at the exhibition centre during presentations at Oceanology International 2006 (OI 2006). Cogently enough, one special session is dedicated to sound and marine mammals that suffer from sound sources like ship's noise, seismic exploration and military sonar; hopefully the knowledge presented will be of benefit to the species.

This subject of marine mammals is just one to be addressed at the conference associated with OI 2006, the theme of which is "Technology in Service to Society". Many other interesting subjects will be dealt with, including Ocean Resource Management, (underwater) Position and Navigation, Security and Safety, Renewable Energy, Ocean Stewardship, Environmental Impact Assessments etc. OI 2006 will bring together manufacturers, users, scientists, policy-makers and so on; no wonder it also attracts simultaneously held meetings of no less than twelve organisations such as ICE, GIS, IIDC and IMCA. For more information on OI 2006 visit the website at www.oi06.com.

The Royal Victoria Dock enables visiting ships to berth immediately alongside ExCeL. Having been reliably informed that not only big survey vessels but also smaller ones are to visit OI 2006, I hope the dock will be used not only as a parking place for the ships but also as a playground for surveyors. They should be able to watch live demos, or even compare the performance of various types of equipment. Such demos can be enhanced by placing "targets" in addition to the artefacts (cars) already there and, as the Inland/Inshore Diving Conference (including related exhibitors) is one of the meetings held alongside this event, recovering them will be no problem!

Hydro International is to be distributed at the exhibition, and GITC will also publish the OI Show Daily. We will have our own presence, so come and visit us on Stand 601 to establish and/or refresh personal contacts. And if you ever intended to write a "Letter to the Editor", but never found time to do so, I will be around and would love to speak to you on any matter to do with Hydro International.