

# OCEANOLOGY INTERNATIONAL 2004

## We Visited for You

From 16-19 March, London's new Exhibition Centre (ExCeL) was hosting the Oceanology International for the second time; offering ample, proficient and modern space in the Docklands, it saw a well organised show which attracted a record number of 7,000 participants, visitors and exhibitors. The conference committee was chaired by Prof Graham Shimmield (Director of the Scottish Association for Marine Science). He and his team did a great job in putting together a very interesting programme around the conference theme of "Strategies for Stewardship of our Oceans and Coastal Zone".

In his opening speech, MP Steven Timms, UK Minister for Energy, highlighted the UK government's commitment to promoting energy from renewable sources materialising, for example, in government grants to individual companies building systems to utilise tidal and wave energy.

Vice Admiral Lautenbacher USN (ret.), Under-Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator, emphasised the societal, economic and scientific benefits for the world of coastal and ocean observations. He urged governments, industry, academia and the public "to engage the future now and come together as colleagues of a 'one ocean community'".

Professor Sir David King, Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK Government, highlighted the stewarding role held by the industry and urged all ocean-going industries to recognise the issue of global warming, which he described as 'the biggest challenge facing humanity this century'.

There were more than sixty presentations during the conference. These were grouped into eight sessions, some in parallel, with themes such as Transfer of Science and Technology, Marine Renewables, and Operational Oceanography. A full day was dedicated to Gas Hydrates.

Conference abstracts are available online at [www.oceanologyinternational.com](http://www.oceanologyinternational.com) and the Exhibition Catalogue can be ordered from the same website for the price of £35.00.

### Associated Meeting Programme

More than 30 associated meetings were scheduled around this OI. Some meeting programmes themselves comprised a conference lasting 2-4 days, with many interesting papers and discussions. Examples of these were the ATUV (Advanced Technology for Underwater Vehicles) meeting, the Alliance for Marine Remote Sensing (AMRS) Conference, ESONET (European Seafloor Observatory Network), the GIS Conference, Inland/Inshore Diving Conference (IIDC), MARELEC 2004, Wave and Tidal Technology Symposium & WATTS 2004, and courses organised by the Offshore Site Investigation and Geotechnics (OSIG) Committee.

Most meetings were well attended, some even leaving standing room only. The extended associated meeting programme was welcomed by participants as being an efficient way to participate in the conferences, meet colleagues and visit the exhibition.

### The Exhibition

More than 600 exhibitors had hired stands and there were some national pavilions, like those of Canada, Germany and The Netherlands. This year for the first time saw a Diving Services Pavilion bringing together equipment and service suppliers for subsea operators and civil engineering contractors. Another first was the Marine Renewables Pavilion, there not only as a tribute to the theme of the conference (Stewardship) but also as a sign of the strong growth of this market.

### Trends in Hydrographic Equipment

Oceanology International provides a showplace for all the latest in oceanographic and hydrographic instrumentation and systems. Although the technical papers programme may offer more to oceanographers than to hydrographers, the exhibition frequently addresses the needs of the hydrographic surveyor. Here some emerging trends could be noticed. Data management, although a constant difficulty in the face of new data collection systems, tended

to be less evident. Multi-beam echosounders continue to be a source of great interest, Reson and Kongsberg as well-known brands.

However, these are not the only systems and the debate on acoustically-steered beams or interferometric side-scan systems is well in evidence through the products of companies such as Geo Acoustics.

A key concern for charting surveyors is the ability of acoustic systems to measure precisely clearing depths over wrecks and other obstructions. The count still is out on whether mechanical sweeping can be abandoned in favour of acoustic methods. Other more exotic technology for depth measurement is Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Synthetic Aperture Sonar (SAS) and the CHIRP 3D profiling system. All have a place in the future arsenal of the hydrographic surveyor.

And the airborne laser systems or LIDAR must not be forgotten. This conference brought an old player into the field under a new name.

Swedish airborne LIDAR technology (Hawk Eye), which has been around for some time, is now to be made available in a partnership between the UK Hydrographic Office and two Swedish companies, Airborne Hydrography AB (AHAB) and Topeye AB. This will put another player into the already competitive field, dominated in recent years by the Australian LADS and the North American SHOALS, the latter using OPTECH technology. Although interest in LIDAR is clearly growing, the market remains highly competitive and we await with interest the effect of the new UK/Swedish partnership entering the fray.

Finally, there is the emergence of Automatic Underwater Vehicles (AUVs): costly but an efficient means to obtain detail at great depth and in future likely to compete in shallow waters with survey ships.

The location of ExCeL next to the Royal Victoria Dock enabled the visiting ships (18 in total) to form an integral part of the event - they could almost secure their ropes to the exhibition stands! Besides the visiting ships showing equipment, working possibilities and/or their availability for charter, some hospitality ships were also berthed alongside. These attracted equal attention for product training and introductory sessions and for parties.

Visiting 'working ships' ranged from large to small in size. The NATO 93m research vessel

Alliance, the brand-

new Netherlands survey ship RNIN Snellius, Gardline's well-known Ocean Seeker, the new OSAE survey catamaran Meridian, the Skagerak from GÅrthenborg University and UTEC's Strilbas. Smaller vessels present were the Verifier from PLA Hydrographic Service, operating in her home waters, the CONCAT 1 (transportable in a 40ft container), the Titan Explorer, the Xplorer and others. The smaller vessels gave live demonstrations of their equipment in the Docks.

A well-received OI Show Daily conference newspaper reporting special events and the day's programme was published by GITC, publisher of Hydro international. We already look forward to the 2006 event and hope to meet you all there (again).

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