

HYDRO 2004

We Visited for You

Under the theme 'Diversity', The Hydrographic Society (THS) held its next (and last under the name THS) in the series of biennial International HYDRO Conferences from 2nd to 4th November 2004 at the Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill in Galway, Ireland. The conference as such was well organised, resembling in quality previous HYDROs. Other activities, however, added to the specialities of this particular event. The transition of THS into the International Federation of Hydrographic Societies (IFHS) leant particular significance to the conference, which included workshops and debates. The location being Galway, it was not surprising that much attention was given to the long-term Irish National Seabed Survey (INSS) project. The yearly one-day INSS Seminar followed directly on HYDRO 2004, taking place on Friday 5th November.

Opening addresses at HYDRO 2004 were given by Dr Wyn Williams, Hydrographer, UK Hydrographic Office and Timothy Collins, director of the Centre for Landscape Studies, National University of Ireland, Galway, who spoke about "Early Marine Research Off the West Coast of Ireland". The well-known New Zealand historian Sir Tipene O'Regan opened the series of papers, inviting the audience to reflect a little on the heritage of voyaging exploration, seamanship and scientific imagination which had laid the foundation for the richly diverse and challenging body of knowledge to which we are dedicated.

The remainder of the first day and following morning saw a variety of papers on hydrographic projects, multi-beam data-processing, ENCs and systems. On Wednesday afternoon there were some interesting workshops on data processing, software development and acoustic positioning, and participants joined in debates on GPS and qualification of personnel. On Thursday the programme of papers continued over the full day. Fortunately for those unable to follow every session, all papers and further particulars have been collected in an attractive-looking and carefully edited Proceedings plus Programme.

The Birth of IFHS

As mentioned in the introduction, the chairmen of the National Hydrographic Societies held a constitutional meeting on 1st November 2004 at which the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the International Hydrographic Society were endorsed by signing the written resolution. The Memorandum of Association had been signed and stamped on behalf of the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales on 9th October 2004. This procedure effectively means that the name of the organisation changes from The Hydrographic Society to the International Federation of Hydrographic Societies (IFHS). Paul Hornsby, chairman of the AHS and of the IFHS Council proudly announced the birth of IFHS after the signing procedure.

The day after conclusion of HYDRO 4, on Friday 5th November 2004, the annual seminar on the Irish National Seabed Survey took place on the same premises and many attendants stayed one more day to be informed on the progress of this project. HI has in the past published a number of articles on parts of INSS.

Statistics

Finally, some statistics: about 225 attendants and over 45 exhibitors were registered. The proportion of international to English/Irish participants was about 50% for attendants, exhibitors and presented papers, which clearly proved the international image of HYDRO 4. The Galway Bay Hotel and Conference Centre provided ideal facilities for both conference attendees and exhibitors and its location on the seafront invited many attendants to take a stroll along the promenade. All in all, this was a conference well worthwhile having visited.