



FIG president Stig Enemark (right) with ICES president Mike Sutton.

Hej, kan ni säga till när jag skall stiga av?

I expect so. It's just a little more than I can manage in Swedish (Hello, will you tell me when to get off?).

I attended the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) working week held this year in the Swedish capital with a group from ICES; all of us gave papers at the conference. Our last day was Midsummer Eve, the main mid-year celebration of daylight, about three hours of dimness at night.

The attendance at FIG this year was phenomenal, over 900 delegates from 95 member institutions, a good indication of the esteem in which FIG is held internationally. ICES member Gethin Roberts was inaugurated as chair of commission 6 (from January 2009) and ICES fellow Andrew Morley is currently chair of commission 10. Our international recognition did not go unnoticed and many contacts were made by us all.

My geospatial engineering based paper was presented in a commercial management session, as the subject transcended both – as well as law, criminal activity and sustainability.



Whilst in Stockholm, Alan Wright discovered his Swedish ancestors at Norra Latin.

Letter from Stockholm

A report of the working week by Alan Wright, the very able leader of the ICES group, will be appearing in a future issue of CES, so I'll give you a few observations. Before the main working week, there were two days dedicated to the history of surveying. Mainly the domain of Alan Wright and Jim Smith (Jim's wife was unwell and he didn't attend this year, a goodwill message was sent from FIG to them both).

Columbia

Among the fascinating facts I learnt from Douglas Batson (USA) at FIG was that the Federal District of Columbia (Washington DC) was originally decided to be a square with 10 mile long sides, falling on both sides of the Potomac River. The boundary was set out with substantial stone boundary monuments at each corner and at 1 mile intervals along each side (except presumably the parts in the river). Many of these survive today and recently a project was undertaken to establish whether they all still exist. Many remain with protection fences, some have been moved due to highway realignment, some are known to have been destroyed or broken up. Only two could not be found or there was no record of what had happened to the monument. Quite a puzzler but a pretty good result.

By an amazing coincidence, another speaker David Doyle (USA) reported that one of the monuments was in his garage. Very recently his survey colleagues were surveying a major highway near the location of one of the 'missing' monuments. A nearby resident mentioned to them that there used to be a big stone at the edge of the road where they were. It was often being hit by traffic and was excavated. The resident thought it looked important and rather than see it sent for crushing, he dragged it into his basement. The survey team knew exactly what it was when they saw it and the resident was just happy to have saved something important. He was very pleased to see it taken away.

David Doyle's garage doubled up as the group's survey store and it was taken there (while David was away on holiday). Imagine his surprise when he returned to find an important monument where the kids' bikes would normally be stacked. Unaware until the conference of the recent research, he was overjoyed to be invited to fill in the last five minutes of Doug's paper, a true example of serendipity.

Incidentally, Columbia used to be a descriptive word for the American colonies, it fell out of use when the South American country was named; it does live on however in the name of the film company.

Qanats — death by surveying?

And what are Qanats? Stathis Steros (Greece) explained, within a paper describing aqueducts, water channels and more from ancient Greece BC500. Qanats are inclined tunnels driven into the hillside in search of water for the valley floor villages. Wells were sunk to the depth of the tunnels to enable two way tunnel driving, more and more wells enabled swift working.

Surveying? The tunnel alignment, inclination, accurate positioning of wells and knowing the exact depth to precisely intercept the proposed tunnel position had all been extremely accurately set out, but how is unclear. Ultimately the tunnel would break through to the aquifer with a plentiful supply of fresh water.

These types of tunnel with aligned wells, discovered last century from aerial photographs, really are called Qanats.

The digging was labour intensive in confined spaces deep underground. One was left wondering what happened when the dozens of diggers in the tunnel broke through, as it inevitably would, into the undoubtedly pressurised water table. A high mortality rate on every job I'd say.

Construction has always been a high casualty area of work. The death by surveying topic was mentioned again in a reference to the survey of Everest recorded in Jim Smith's book, where it was noted that an entire regiment was lost to yellow fever and tigers. Rudolf Wolf we heard, in carrying out the triangulation of Switzerland mid 19th century, had his team of eight on a mountaintop killed by a lightning strike, he survived with a leg paralysed and crawled down the mountain to raise help.

I don't think I'll complain about getting cold and wet whilst completing a survey ever again.

Struve Arc

The UNESCO world heritage site that preserves the record and remaining evidence of the measuring of the earth's shape between North Cape, Norway, and the Black Sea has been described in CES some years ago by Jim Smith. A Dutch science journalist had decided to visit as many of the locations as possible and gave her intrepid story so far.

Jan De Graeve (Belgium) led a discussion about the arc and the patchy records that show the intended extent went across the Mediterranean and followed the 30th meridian through to the south of Africa. Most of the original records are yet to be found, countries and empires have changed much and there are certain to be records somewhere.

A resolution was passed at the final session of FIG to investigate any potential records – museums, libraries, military and government record offices, archives etc – for information and proof, with the intention of extending the UNESCO world heritage site to include the whole arc.

New expressions

A paper from the World Bank on the subject of improving slum conditions included some wonderful and inexplicable expressions; 'knowledge amplifier', 'spatial enablement' and 'social legitimation' which my spell checker doesn't like. There must be whole departments at the World Bank making these things up. Or maybe they put long words into a bucket, throw it in the air and pair up the pieces.

Institution dinner and forum

It gives me great pleasure to report that the Institution dinner is fully sold out, let's hope for decent weather; the member's terrace is delightful for pre-dinner drinks. I also have a full complement of speakers for the forum, which will take place in the afternoon before the dinner.

Two of the country's most prestigious civil engineering projects have their chairmen attending. Doug Oakervee, past president of ICE, is the chair of Crossrail – the major east-west rail project deep under London, due for completion about 2015. John Armitt is chair of the Olympic Delivery Authority, whose remit includes delivering a legacy of vast improvement and regeneration to a neglected part of east London. Joining them are Keith Clarke, chief executive of Atkins and the newly appointed chair of the Construction Industry Council, and Professor Quentin Leiper, the immediate past president of ICE and director of sustainability with Carillion.

The location will be in the Westminster area, handy for the dinner and local hotels. Details will follow soon but I commend you all to come and debate with four very eminent figures from our industry and profession.

Mike Sutton, ICES President

Mike's photo corner



Two sights spotted in Stockholm: I don't fancy Sushi tonight. Byggbitar.se – is this contrived or an accident?



Just before FIG, I went to the Chelsea Flower Show a fairly hardy annual show: They are fairly liberal in Chelsea and who'd queue elsewhere?

ICES Royal Charter Ballot



All Fellow and Corporate members of the Institution will shortly receive through the post a ballot form relating to the Institution's application for a royal charter.

The ballot concerns amendments that may need to be made to the Institution's constitution and bye-laws in order for the Privy Council to approve the ICES charter application.

Please would all members eligible to vote pay close attention to the ballot paper and accompanying literature and vote accordingly. All ballot papers are to be returned to the Institution's independent scrutineers by 15 August 2008.

If successful, the application for a royal charter would be a huge achievement for ICES and the biggest change to affect members in its 39 year history.

The president, honorary secretary and Institution solicitors have all worked tirelessly over the past few years to bring the Institution to this stage in the application process. Please give ICES your time to complete and return the ballot form by the closing date.

The results from the ballot will be announced by post and posted on the Institution's website www.ices.org.uk