



History Workshop's enthralling presentations

by John Brock

Joining over 1500 guests in Rome from over 100 countries to attend the biggest ever FIG Working Week in May this year and hosted by the Consiglio Nazionale Geometri e Geometri Laureati, **John Brock** reports on the History Workshop that preceded the main event and several visits to historic sites with surveying and mapping links.

Having seen prior information on the *Instituto Geografico Militare* in the legendary Italian town of Florence I planned my fast train trip before the History Workshop. Upon arrival I found my way to this establishment where the very cooperative security guard arranged for the librarian to take me on a private guided tour of this really fantastic repository of historic surveying instrumentation and maps.

There is a corridor lined with stained timberwork bearing gilt paintings of ancient measuring equipment and survey scenes painted by one of the talented and enthusiastic staff of the Military Geographic Institute. This place is a must for lovers of surveying history but advance bookings must be made even though there is no charge for a visit. While in Florence another must-go for those who delight in the heritage of measurement is the newly named Galileo Museum (formerly the Museum of the History of Science), which has on display some superb examples of early measuring devices some actually used by the famed inventor of the telescope himself along with original editions of his texts on various instructional techniques associated with the usage of his innovations, some of which could be utilised for accurate distance determination.

As a precursor to the working week, the History Workshop conducted by the FIG International Institution for the History of Surveying and Measurement (IIHSM) attracted over 50 attendees from 12 countries. IIHSM Chairman Prof **Jan De Graeve** from Belgium welcomed guests with a stirring introduction and later a brilliant presentation on **Gerhard Mercator**, surveyor and map-maker (1512-1594) to celebrate the 500th anniversary of his birth.

A solemn moment

After a minute's silence in commemoration of the recently deceased Prof **Michael Cooper** the first speaker, **Michael Ferrar** (an ex-pat English architect who has lived with in France for over ten years) gave a thoroughly enthralling presentation, which he dedicated to the memory of our great colleague. Prof Cooper would have been extremely proud that such a great set of research was released in his memory. Michael showed details of wooden circles dating to c. 3000 BC, which demonstrated extraordinary measuring capacity in the formation of the circular layouts and construction of the mysterious structures in both elevation and position.

Next, Scot **Alec McEwen** from Canada gave a fascinating overview of the dispute between

Canada and the USA for the ownership of Machias Seal Island off the coast of Nova Scotia, which has been smouldering for many years. Canada stakes a solid claim for this island since the construction and continuous occupation of the lighthouse on this wildlife sanctuary. Final possession will be fought out in the courts.

Our third speaker was **Walt Robillard**, a US lawyer specialising in land boundary disputes. He made a strong case for the "fourth" man of Mount Rushmore, President **Teddy Roosevelt**, to be included as an honorary surveyor for his exploration of the Amazon River area of South America. He discovered an unknown river but for many years his find was discredited. More recently his find has been ratified and acknowledged with naming of the lost river in his honour. Surveyors already claim the other three heads of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln as their own. Walt also made a presentation for his mate "Bob" who was unable to attend. This was associated with the land dealings of the 1600s.

Our Norwegian speaker **Bjorn Ragnvald Pettersen** detailed how Norway was introduced to geodesy and astronomy as academic surveying disciplines was followed by Jan with his Mercator paper. Jan also filled in for Jim Smith who was unable to attend with a brief update on the possible extension to the Struve Geodetic Arc World Heritage Monument right to the end of the African continent.

After lunch at one of the many sumptuous boutique food cafes we were most privileged by the attendance of the FIG president CheeHai Teo who gave us an inspirational address of enthusiasm for the colourful history of our profession for which we were all most proud and appreciative.

Roman surveying and mapping

Michael Ferrar then returned with a brilliant tale of the "The Roman World Survey: Before, After and its Legacy" during which we were left with little doubt that a plan of this world survey had been made at the turn of the millennium after Christ; most probably brought to its completion through the work of Marcus Agrippa's sister **Vipsania Polla**, who had married **Caesar Augustus** the incumbent Emperor of Rome.

It was now my turn to bring everyone's attention to the priceless masterpiece of cartography which hangs in the Norman Cathedral at Hereford known as the Hereford *Mappa Mundi* painted in about 1290-1300

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Over 50 delegates from 12 countries attended the workshop, which took place ahead of the FIG Working Week.

by **Richard De Bello** (of Haldingham). Prominent notations on this map pronounce that the 'Survey of the World' was initiated by **Julius Caesar** who gave instructions to four surveyors to carry out this monumental assignment – **Nicodocus** to measure the East, **Theodocus** the North, **Policlitus** the South and **Didymus** the West.

The map actually leaves out the fourth surveyor and wrongly states that the North and West were surveyed by Theodocus alone. In the bottom left hand corner of the chart the author has even made sketches of three of the four surveyors receiving their written orders from Augustus Caesar. The last surveyor is said to have returned 32 years, 1 month and 20 days after his original departure to present his fieldwork to a very patient Emperor it would appear.

Cadastral chief

We were once again singularly blessed with a greeting from the Head man of Italian Cadastral Surveying **Marco D'Alesio** whose congenial Italian greeting was most elegantly translated into English by Sarah Tyacke who is the President of the International Map Collectors Society.

Our fourth speaker in Session 3 was the very distinguished Italian Professor **Mario Bevilaqua** who talked about the contents of his recently published book *Piante di Roma dal Rinascimento ai Catasti* (Maps of Rome from the early 16th century to 19th and 20th century Cadastral Surveys). In attendance for this talk were the President of CNGeGL **Fausto Savoldi**, FIG Congress Director **Enrico Rispoli**, FIG Rome secretary **Maria Scorza** and many other dignitaries from Italian surveying. A most unexpected act of generosity was then made by the Italian delegation when every participant in the History Workshop was given a copy of the Professor's recent book and both he and his co-author **Marcello Fagiolo** autographed each recipient's publication. Such generosity and hospitality with afternoon tea created a most cordial atmosphere for our visit to Rome for which we were all overwhelmed and thoroughly grateful to our warm hosts.

Jesus, da Vinci and DVDs

After this incredible welcome to Rome I was then obliged to give a shortened introduction to my treatise on "Jesus Christ, Superstar Surveyor" to curious interest which was then transformed into thrilling excitement by our US surveying history guru **Brian Blevins** who demonstrated how **Leonardo da Vinci** was also a prolific career surveyor producing many exact topographical and boundary plans of some very difficult areas of Italy to where access was most formidable. What better way to finish off a memorable History Workshop than with my most recent DVD show of 15 of the world's most notable TV shows from 1959 to 2009 which had been shown for the first time in the world at the GEO 12 spectacular in the UK in March this year.

Being held concurrently with the History Workshop for the first time in FIG history was the Young Surveyors Conference on 4 and 5 May at which over 120 young surveyors from 40 countries participated in discussions based on the theme of "Knowing to Create the Future." We Australian surveyors are hugely proud of our very own **Kate Fairlie** who is the current chair of the FIG Young Surveyors Network who presided over the proceedings of this most important initiative offering the youth some encouragement to take up the challenges confronting the surveying profession in the future particularly through a greater involvement in the activities of FIG.

On Saturday about 25 of those who had been at the History Workshop met with Jan De Graeve outside The Vatican entrance to be guided through the extensive network of museums by a most entertaining and very funny guide who hailed from Napoli. The many galleries of priceless paintings and sculpture were incredible but the pick of the halls had to be the *Galleria Geografica* which is a 120 metre long hall adorned on each side with large scale-painted maps of all of the provinces of Italy plus an old and new map of the whole country painted by a man called Danti between 1501 and 1504. Any surveyor or map enthusiast who does not get to see this most superb gallery of brilliantly mastered maps has missed out on one of the unknown treasures of The Holy City.

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