

38th (2016) ICMA Conference was Successfully Held in Lyon, France, April 17-21, 2016

By Dr. Karen Luke

The Thirty–Eighth International Conference on Cement Microscopy co-sponsored by Ecole Des Mines de Douai has taken place successfully in Lyon, France with around 90 delegates from 20 countries in attendance. Over 30 technical presentations were given on a diversity of topics on cement and concrete illustrating the value of microscopy techniques. Topics included clinker phase composition and clinkering manufacturing processes, properties of mortars and concrete containing supplementary cementitious materials or fillers, alkali activated blended cementitious systems, hydration of sulfo-aluminate cements and belite cements, pure phase studies, influence of admixtures, quantitative analyses and complimentary techniques and historical aspects from durability to restoration. The program also hosted two panel sessions, one on microscopy and its role in sustainability from a manufacturing perspective that focused on new binders, method for predicting clinker mineralogy and applications of solid-state NMR in the development of sustainable cement blends. A second panel session on microscopy and its role in concrete sustainability discussed microstructure-macro property relations in sustainable cement blends, strategies for evaluation of non-Portland or alternative cement and on indirect methods for characterization of pore structure of various hardened cementitious materials. A small exhibition of equipment, Pelcon Materials and Testing ApS, Bruker/Synergie4 and Optics Concept, was set up outside the conference room with exhibitors providing informative question and answer discussions during the coffee break networking sessions.

The final day of the conference consisted of a visit and tour of the Lafarge-Holcim Research Centre, L'Isle d'Abeau, France. Additional technical presentations were given by Lafarge-Holcim personnel on aspects of their current research, followed by a buffet lunch in their showroom where various products and technologies were on display. After lunch a tour of the research center laboratories and an outside area exhibiting large sections and displays of concrete was provided to the delegates.

Social events organized during the conference consisted of tours of two museums and the ICMA hosted reception. The first museum, Musée Urbain Tony Garnier (Tony Garnier Urban Museum) was that of an interpretative center and presented an exhibition called *Sacré béton! de la haine à l'amour* (Damn concrete! From hate to love). It showed the history of concrete from Roman to present day times with an emphasis on changing the association of concrete as a social urban jungle to that of a material of modern design. A love of concrete was perhaps illustrated in extreme with an haute couture intricate lace gown made of concrete. The second was a tour of Le Musée des Confluences (Museum of Confluence), a contemporary museum with an amazing architecture that exhibits the confluence of knowledge, science, technology and society and is aptly situated on a peninsula at the confluence of the rivers Rhône and Saône. In the context of the ICMA

this tour was directed towards the architecture of the building. Opened to the public in December 2014, the architecture is post-modern deconstructivist characterized by fragmentation and non-rectilinear shapes constructed of steel concrete and glass said to resemble a floating “Crystal Cloud”. The building is both a science centre and anthropology museum and is composed of three main exhibitions that deal with the questions "Where do we come from ?", "Who are we ?" and "What do we do ?" and time was given for a short tour of at least one of the major exhibits. At the ICMA hosted reception, which was notable for the exquisite variety of delicious French cuisine and live DJ, awards were presented to the speakers and members of the executive board in appreciation of the efforts that made the conference a success. A conference, delegates praised for both the high standard of technical content and great networking opportunities. The Social events were also well received.

Activities planned by the Spouse and Guest Committee commenced on the Monday with a morning meeting followed with joint lunch with ICMA delegates. This was followed with the assistance of Dr. Le Coustumer (host), by a two hour guided tour of “Lyons Oldest District”. Walking on pebbled streets, through passageways called “Traboules”, amidst beautiful architecturally designed buildings provided an excellent perspective of the historical old city and the lifestyle of that time. A planned boat tour was cancelled due to rising water levels and the time was spent on a brief shopping spree (Lyon is the third largest city in France and noted for its famous silk weaving and high quality products) and visiting some of the city’s historical sites such as the Cathedral and the Outdoor (Hadrian) Theatre, both strategically built on the Fourvière Hill overlooking the river, and other magnificent buildings and gardens. Spouse and guests also joined the ICMA delegates on the museum tours, the Lafarge-Holcim tour and at the ICMA hosted reception. There was also a free day to spend as they wished. Overall it was considered a pleasant, enjoyable and educational experience, a chance to meet new friends and opportunity to see the beautiful city of Lyon.

The success of this conference is through the efforts of the ICMA Executive Board under the leadership of Dr. Arturo G. Nisperos (General Chairman) and the European host, Dr. Vincent Thiery and Dr. Philippe. Le Coustumer.

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