

FIG Working Week in Hong Kong

Brian Cou tts

Getting there

For me, the FIG Working Week in Hong Kong began with an overnight flight from Auckland. Being able to travel through the night, leaving at 11.30 pm and arriving at Hong Kong's Lantau Island airport at 6.45 am, is very efficient use of time. However it is compromised by the ability, or lack of it, to sleep in the sitting up position in an airline seat. As a night person the lateness of the flight out was not any trouble. However, the usual airline routine – feeding you first, which takes a couple of hours, and waking you to feed you again more than two hours before landing – takes more than four hours out of the 11¼ hour flight, leaving that much less time for settling into sleep.

Being a night person, arriving at 6.45 am did not fit quite so well with my body clock, even if it was really 10.45 New Zealand time. At that time in the morning Hong Kong is relatively quiet, which was quite a surprise. Processing is very efficient, but the non-arrival of the NZIS display, an aluminium canister with a roll-up promotional panel, meant that I was last to leave the baggage claim area. I had to fill in a lengthy form describing what it was that was missing.

However, once past those hurdles, the MTR train into the city took about 20 minutes, and then on to the complimentary hotel shuttle bus. I was checked into my hotel by 9.00 am. As I went to find my room I ran into Mr Hak Chan (Congress Chairman) and Ms Winnie Shiu (Congress Director).

Later in the morning this incidental meeting precipitated an invitation to lunch with the FIG group that was meeting that day. The new FIG structure has a Council – the President and the four Vice Presidents, and a group referred to as ACCO – the Advisory Committee of Commission Officers. It was this group that I lunched with, and found some old friends. The President, Stig Enemark from Denmark was present, but also Vice Presidents Ken Aldred from Canada and Matt Higgins from Australia, along with the Chairs of all of the Commissions. It was quite a privilege to be in that company.

Exploration

The rest of the afternoon I spent getting familiarised again with the environs of the conference on foot. The conference was based on the Shangri-La Hotel in Kowloon, which had also been the venue for the 7th South East Asian Congress. It was also very close to the main shopping area of Kowloon, and I lost count of the offers that

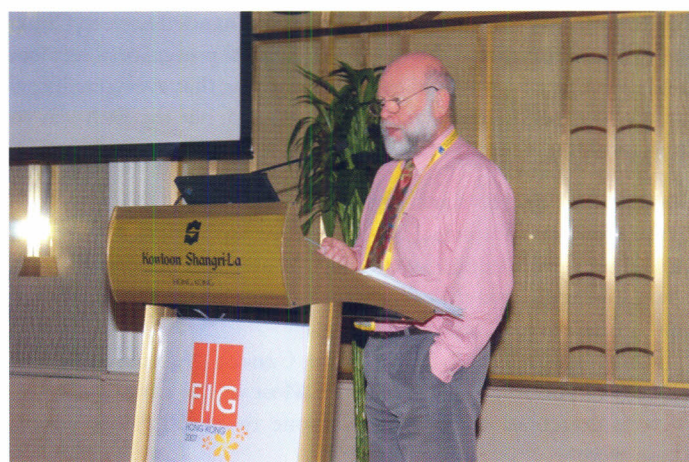
I got from street pamphlet men wanting me to get suits and shirts hand made. Having suffered from lack of sleep the first night was definitely an early one.

The conference

The conference opened on Sunday with the General Assembly, which I attended on behalf of NZIS. President Stig Enemark gave an opening address stressing his presidential theme of 'Fly high but



Brian Cou tts promoting the SEASC in Christchurch October 2007 at the close of the General Assembly.



Chris Hoogsteden delivering his paper in a Commission 7 session.



President Stig Enemark making his opening address to the conference.

keep your feet on the ground' but also reminded everyone not to forget the gumboot surveyor. He also stressed that FIG could not have too many members, and the need to have regional meetings to satisfy the needs of member associations. He challenged all the delegates to find out what the needs of those associations were so that FIG could assist in meeting those needs.

This was followed by a lengthy session where there was a full report of the Commissions, during which the Chairs outlined their work plans for the next three years. This was followed by the usual welcome reception where old acquaintances were renewed and a few new ones made. It was during this reception the red ties and huggie koalas promoting the FIG event in Sydney in 2010 began to appear, as did little red horses (pin badges) from the Swedes, promoting their Working Week in Stockholm in 2008.

Formal opening

Monday brought the formal opening of the conference. It was especially honoured to have the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Land and Resources and Director General of the State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping of the Peoples Republic of China from Beijing, Mr LU Xinshe give an opening address. He spoke of the developments of 'Digital China' and observed that like surveyors everywhere, they were moving from being technology based to becoming information based. He was followed by a Lion Eye Dotting ceremony conducted by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative region, Mr Donald Tsang.

Dr the Honourable Leung Chun Ying, the convenor of the non-official members of the Executive Council addressed the conference. He recalled that he had last addressed FIG members 25 years earlier at the conference in Montreaux where he had discussed how title transfers would be dealt with after Hong was handed back to China in 1997. He considered the question of global professional services and how large a firm would have to be, noting that everyone knew the top four accountancy firms in the world, but the fifth was so far behind the others that no one knew who they were.

Concurrent paper sessions

In the afternoon the usual concurrent paper sessions began, and carried on until Wednesday evening. With eight parallel sessions, it was a difficult task choosing which to attend, and then another one to find where it was happening!

Thursday took us back into the General Assembly and the business of running the federation. Most of the time was taken up with presentations inviting everyone to attend future events. These were –

FIG Working Week 2008, Stockholm, Sweden 14-19 June

- FIG Working Week 2009, Eliat, Israel, 3-8 May
- FIG Congress 2010, Sydney, Australia 11-15 April
- FIG Working Week 2011, Marrakech, Morocco
- FIG Working Week in Rome, Italy 2012.

This was followed by a presentation for the Francophone Surveyors in Quebec in October 2007, following which I was given the opportunity to have the last word, in this respect, to promote the 9th SEASC in Christchurch in October 2007.

The conference closed with the presentation of certificates of appreciation to the Congress Chairman, Mr Hak Chan, the Congress Director Ms Winnie Shiu and the Congress Committee.

I had the good fortune to have anticipated that the conference did not finish until the Friday, so had a free day in which I made a pilgrimage to the Big Buddha, climbing the 289 steps and travelled most of the way up by a cableway system that took 25 minutes and changed direction twice. This was an experience well worth the time and energy involved in 28° at about 85% humidity.

Saturday saw me packed and ready to go with enough time to make a morning trip to the Stanley Market on Hong Kong Island for some last minute souvenir purchases before heading out to the airport for another overnight journey to get home. It was well worth the time, cost and energy to get there, be an observer of the formalities, a participant in the business and paper sessions, and be a tourist for a short time.

This article was prepared with help from Stephen Booth.



President Stig Enemark, the Hon Donald Tsang (Chief Executive of Hong Kong) and Mr Raymond Chan (President of HKIS).



The organisers – TN Wong, Winnie Shiu (Congress Director) and Hak Chan (Conference Chairman).