

International Prestressed Hollowcore Association

17th IPHA Annual Conference in Split, Croatia

The 2012 Annual Conference of IPHA was held in Dugopolje on the outskirts of Split, the 2nd largest city in Croatia after Zagreb. IPHA is the International Prestressed Hollowcore Association and is an Association dedicated to this special field of precast prestressed concrete. It's history goes back over 40 years and brings together a wealth of experience in the design, development, production and marketing of hollowcore floors. It justifiably deserves its reputation as a centre of excellence for anyone involved in the industry and for designers of all disciplines. Membership of IPHA is open to manufacturers of hollowcore and also suppliers of equipment, principal material suppliers and specialised software designers. The current membership comprises approximately 55 companies from 25 different countries from across the globe.

The Annual Conference provides the perfect opportunity for members to get together in a friendly and informal environment where serious matters can be discussed in a convivial and pleasant atmosphere. Members have ample opportunity to meet informally and discuss their own experiences and problems and perhaps to get a different perspective from another part of the world.

The programme is designed to provide a mix of specific technical issues on subjects such as research, development and design along with inspirational presentations on general business matters.

This was the 17th Annual Conference since IPHA was reformed from the pre-existing IECA organisation and its remit expanded to include the slipform manufacturing process and other associated services and suppliers. The host company for the conference was MI Grupa whose main operating company is Mucić & Co.

Mucić is a privately owned company formed in 1992 and which started life in General Contracting but soon built a substantial and impressive factory in Ljubuški in Bosnia & Herzegovina producing structural precast products to serve the many development projects undertaken.

In 2008 they added a hollowcore production facility using equipment and processes supplied by Spancrete® Global Services from America and are able to manufacture hollowcore in widths of 1,200 mm and 2,400 mm in a variety of depths. They also have several other concrete plants within Croatia.

One of the private development projects was the construction of the Hotel Katarina, a 74 room hotel with excellent conference facilities which was completed in 2010 and was the venue for the conference. The hotel is wholly owned and operated by the MI Grupa. Some 60 delegates and guests

arrived during the course of Saturday 12th May at the Katarina Hotel in time for the welcome dinner held in the hotel and kindly hosted by Spancrete® Global Services. An excellent meal and a convivial atmosphere provided the perfect start to the conference proceedings.

The board of IPHA set a theme for the conference which they believe is relevant to the current economic and commercial environment. The economic travails of recent years in Europe and elsewhere are well documented and never has strong and intelligent leadership been more important.

It was therefore decided that the headline for the conference would be:

"Leadership in Industry"

With this title in mind and following the formal opening of the conference on Sunday morning by Seamus McKeague as Chairman of IPHA and Mr Tonći Gabrić, Executive Director of Mucić.



Tonći Gabrić and Seamus McKeague open the conference



Delegates enjoy a tour of the city of Split

The morning session was conducted by Professor Paddy Miller. Paddy Miller is Professor of Managing People at IESE Business School in Barcelona which is among the most highly regarded International Business Schools in the world. The session concentrated on lateral thinking to find new solutions and motivation of management teams in difficult and changing times. The session was interactive and as well as being extremely engaging was very thought provoking with illustrations and parallels drawn from industries as diverse as the music business and the garment industry.

Prof. Miller specialises in the area of leadership and the management of change and as well as publishing various books on the subject has been engaged by many renowned international companies such as IBM, Lufthansa, VW, Caterpillar, Standard Life and Sun Microsystems. He has taught at Business schools of Harvard, Michigan, Cape Town and the University of Virginia.

As is usual with the conference the programme is designed to combine a social and cultural element to the occasion and so following the completion of the day's presentations delegates were given a guided tour of Split on the way to the evening dinner hosted by MI Grupa.

Split is the 2nd largest city in Croatia with a population of 220,000 people and a rich history from Roman times beautifully situated on the Adriatic Sea. Its centrepiece is the remains of the palace of Emperor Diocletian built at the end of the 3rd century AD.

Monday morning saw the delegates leave for the drive to Ljubuški just over the border into Bosnia & Herzegovina to the head office of MI Grupa and the site of their main pre-casting facility. The MI Grupa is vertically integrated with several business units, including general contracting, precast production, quarries and material supply and transport/erection capabilities. Under this structure, MI Grupa is capable of offering "turnkey" building construction services to the market.

The main interest for the group was of course the hollowcore facility and the Spancrete® installation which is now in its 4th year of production. The production set up comprises 3 casting beds of 2,700 mm x 200 m each.

The delegates viewed the production of a 200 mm x 2,400 mm hollow core slab. The Spancrete® GT-240 Production System interestingly produced on concrete casting beds at an average rate of 2.5 metres per minute. Davor Zelenika, the Production Manager confirmed that besides standard slabs, the GT-240 is also capable of producing hollowcore insulated and non-insulated wall panels.

A prominent member of IPHA commented "It is just great that a new manufacturer like the Mucić company had the courage to embrace the 2.4 m product. This is another example of the extraordinary vision of Stanislav Mucić. Site cranes are bigger nowadays and all the old European arguments against 2.4 m widths are redundant. This level of quality and surface finish in a 2.4 m product is unbeatable".

The visit culminated with an impressive presentation of the Mi Grupa by Mr Stanislav Mucić the owner which set out its history and some of the major works undertaken by the company to date and its plans for the future.

The group returned to the Katarina Hotel in good time for the 2012 AGM of IPHA where members were able to review the past year and to discuss the plans for the programme and aims of IPHA going forward.

Monday evening was the occasion of the IPHA Annual Dinner and was a most enjoyable time at the Imperium Restaurant on the water-



Mucić. & Co. / Spancrete® GT-240 Production System



2.4 m wide hollowcore production



IPHA delegation at Mucić plant tour

front in Split with first class cuisine of local fish and a friendly and relaxing atmosphere. The evening also saw the presentation of the Terry Treanor Award of 2012. The TT Award is an annual award, open to all members for innovation in the manufacture or application of hollowcore. It was first introduced in 2005 in memory of the late Terry Treanor who was the founding Chairman of IPHA in 1995.

This year the award went to Prefabricats Pujol of Catalunya, Spain for their contribution towards the education of students in the art of precast concrete. In addition to providing lectures in various univer-

sities and schools, Pujol conduct many parties of students around their factories throughout the year. Snr. Jordi Pujol, the Managing Director of the company received the award from Axel Baumann and Tony Crane.

The first presentation of Tuesday morning was by Prof. Bosko Picula, Professor of Economics, from the University of Zagreb and was entitled "History and Politics of the Balkan region and Croatian accession to the EU"

The history of the region both ancient and modern is complex and for many of the delegates who were making their first visit to Croatia it was fascinating and instructive to hear such expert views and explanations. Croatia is on schedule to join the EU in 2013 and there will therefore inevitably be closer commercial ties with the existing EU member countries.

The presentation from Stjepan Šuvak the Chief Engineer from Mucić concentrated on the current practices in Croatia with regard to precast concrete. As ever, it is of particular interest to the members of IPHA to compare perceptions and practices in different countries. Zsuzsa Toth has recently joined BIBM as European Public Affairs Officer. Her specific areas of interest and expertise are in energy and sustainability. This is an area of increasing importance to all industries and is high on the political agenda of every industrialised country. The concrete industry has a good record of awareness and responsibility on this topic but it is important to be aware of the changes which are taking place all the time.

Zsuzsa Toth was able to explain the framework of the European legislation and to place the requirements into context.

IPHA is a growing organisation as more and more companies recognise the benefits to be gained in co-operation and sharing of interest with others in the hollowcore industry. This year there were 3 new members attending the conference and they were each given the opportunity to make a brief introduction of their company and its products:

- CRH-group: represented by Ergon NV, a precaster and hollowcore producer situated in Belgium.
- Ecoratio: from the Netherlands and a specialist producer of "green" release agents,
- i-Theses: a producer of specialist structural software and situated in Belgium.

They were all warmly welcomed into IPHA

The final presentation of the conference was made by Stef Maas, director "Standardisation & Certification" at Echo Group and a member of the board of IPHA. Echo, in conjunction with Fib and the Belgian Precast Federation put an enormous amount of effort and resource into education and the promotion of precast concrete not only in Europe but all over the world. Stef Maas explained some of the recent projects in Belgium, South America and South Africa where the aim was to raise awareness of the benefits of precast concrete generally and hollowcore in particular both to students and to current practitioners.

It was evident that each and every presentation was well prepared, relevant and appreciated by all delegates. However perhaps of equal value was the impression of an important meeting between friends and colleagues where much interesting information was exchanged in informal conversations in a relaxed and pleasant environment. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION



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German Committee for Reinforced Concrete

53rd Research Colloquium

The Research Colloquium of the German Committee for Reinforced Concrete (Deutscher Ausschuss für Stahlbeton, DafStb) will be hosted this year by the Institute of Structural Engineering at the University of Kassel. The two-day event will be held on 9 and 10 October 2012 and promises many interesting presentations for visitors.

In a total of 19 lectures, members in the participating disciplines will give up-to-the-minute reports on their work on the development and material-specific use of innovative high-performance concretes for a wide spectrum of applications and how nanotechnology can be used to optimise concretes in order

to meet increasing demands and hence make it a "smart material". In addition, the event offers visitors the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the excellent experimental facilities of the Institute, where scientists of various disciplines are working together very successfully. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

www.dafstb.de
www.uni-kassel.de