

News

8th Young Geotechnical Professionals Conference Report

After about 17 months in the organizing the 8YGPC was held in the Copthorne Hotel, Oriental Parade, Wellington on the 5th - 8th November 2008. The organizing committee had high hopes for the conference and it went off with a bang, quite literally, fireworks in Wellington Harbor. Ok they might not have been for us technically, but thanks for Guy Fawkes all the same.

The conference was attended by 45 delegates, 6 committee members - 2 of whom were multi-tasking as mentors (Lis Bowman of UoC & Ross Kendrick of Maunsell), 2 mentors (Gavin Alexander of Beca & Bruce Symmans of Tonkin & Taylor), and with keynote speaker John Atkinson of Coffeys & City University, London. One third of the delegates came from over the sea in Oz, and 38% of the delegates were females - I wonder, is the field of Geotechnics leading the way in gender equality?

One rule of the conference was that every one of the delegates must present their paper, in 10mins. Some had issues keeping to the time limit, but the water pistol dealt with those overrunning. The general consensus is that we all learnt something from all of the presentations, and the proceedings will be well thumbed.



The conference started with welcome drinks (and those fireworks) on the evening of the 5th, with a full day of presentations on the 6th followed by the conference dinner, which included a trip up the Wellington cable car, a quiz, and a talk by John Atkinson. The 7th was a half day of presentations with the afternoon comprising of a gourmet BBQ lunch on the Wellington fault line with a field trip along the fault line. Unfortunately the field trip day was the worst day weatherwise but luckily the worst of it held off till after lunch when we were all safely on the bus. Another fabulous dinner on the evening of the 7th after which the committee showed the delegates the best spots along Courtney Place! The final presentations were

held on the morning of the 8th with winners of the awards announced after lunch.

Two awards were up for grabs, judged by the mentors; one for the New Zealand delegates (sponsored by the NZGS), the Young Geotechnical Professionals Award (YGP), and one for the Australian delegates (sponsored by the AGS), the Don Douglas Youth Fellowship Award. The winner of the YGP award was Hayden Bowen from Tonkin & Taylor for his paper and presentation on *Pile foundations in liquefiable soil - A case study of a bridge foundation*. The Don Douglas award winner was Joel Gniel from Monash University for his paper and presentation on *Predicted site behavior of geogrid encased stone columns*. The mentors also felt that special mentions for their presentations should go to: Cary Everett, Sian France, Tariq Rahiman, Chris Soutar, Owen Woodland & Carol Yan.



Enough from me, here are some "sound-bites" from the delegates & mentors on the 8YGPC;

- It was a very good to meet other professionals with similar amounts of experience. I liked the informal nature of the conference and enjoyed the field trip, learnt lots.
- A very well organized and informative conference. I had high expectations and it exceeded them.
- Fantastic conference, well organized and set up to ensure delegates felt comfortable meeting and presenting in front of their peers. Great atmosphere, fun people and highly recommended for those that haven't attended a conference before.
- The 8YGPC has been a very rewarding experience for me. The informal nature of the conference encourages dialogue & discussion between the delegates and it provides a relaxed atmosphere in which to present. I will definitely be recommending this to my colleagues. Awesome experience so much learned and gained. Great people and contacts for life.
- The 8YGPC provided an interesting cross-section of activities of professional consulting engineers and research students. A thoroughly enjoyable event with great networking. Great conference where I almost lost my wedding ring!
- Fun filled, great variety in activities and presentations, definitely worth coming to.
- I was very impressed with the wide range of project experience and academic research presented by the delegates at the 8YGPC. The presentations were extremely well delivered, and stimulated thoughtful and insightful debate. I greatly enjoyed the camaraderie and the open sharing of knowledge - Gavin Alexander

On behalf of the 8YGPC committee we would like to thank all the delegates for their papers, presentations & enthusiasm, the mentors for the time & feedback, John Atkinson for his insight, our companies for allowing us the time to organize the conference, and finally to our generous sponsors, Thank You. See you all at the 9YGPC.