



# FIG Sydney 2010: Surveying History and Congress

By John Brock

GW is indebted to **John Brock** for this report from the FIG Congress that took place in Sydney in April and particularly the special workshop on the History of surveying. Readers, including the Editor, will be envious to have missed this fantastic event.

**H**aving just had over 2000 guests in Sydney from over 100 countries attending the XXIV FIG Congress in Sydney, we are feeling much more relaxed that we have hosted a fine event for the enjoyment of the participants. Some "poor" visitors have been forced to stay in our great city for an indefinite period due to the Iceland volcano eruption. They are so upset!

However, I am very proud to announce that the two-day Workshop conducted on behalf of the FIG International Institution for the History of Surveying and Measurement was most well attended with 108 on Friday 9 April at Parramatta Old Government House and 133 at the Dixon Room of the Mitchell Library on Saturday 10 April. Seeing that the slogan of the Congress was "Facing the Challenges – Building the Capacity" we went "beyond the capacity" of 130 at the second day of the event!

Chairman of the History Institution, Professor **Jan De Graeve** from Belgium, led the delegation with inspirational introductions on each day along with a brilliant presentation on Gerhard Mercator, Surveyor and Map Maker (1512-1594) on the second day. On the first day he was joined by our impressive New South Wales Surveyor-General **Warwick Watkins**, who told us about our most famous S-G Sir **Thomas Mitchell** in stirring style.

## Surveyor-Generals day

Day one was the reserve of the Australian Surveyors-General with all the S-G's from each mainland State and territory giving a presentation about their own first or most renowned predecessor, apart from the Tasmanian S-G **Peter Murphy**, prevented by a funeral on his island state.

On arrival guests were greeted with early morning coffee as well as the poster display featuring the first Surveyor-General of New South Wales **Augustus Alt**. Our second speaker was **John Tulloch** the Victorian S-G who gave us a colourful account of his state's first surveying leader **Robert Hoddle** followed by the S-G from the west **Mike Bradford** passionately extolling the tale of his own first S-G of Western Australia, **John Septimus Roe**, before we feasted on scones with jam and cream in true English tea style.

Session two saw the current S-G from South Australia, **Peter Kentish**, introduce another former SA S-G, **John Porter**, whose authoritative narrative on the first S-G from their state Colonel **William Light**, was enough to pump up the pride of any raw blooded

surveyor. SA historian **Kelly Henderson's** enduring campaign to have Light's design for the City of Adelaide enshrined on the UNESCO World Heritage List garnered much support from the crowd.

Our northernmost S-G from the Northern Territory, **Garry West**, related the hardships and determination displayed by the SA S-G **George Woodroffe Goyder**, who was the intrepid explorer who succeeded in settling the Northern Territory after others had failed.

Session three saw a most rousing joint presentation by the S-G of the Australian Capital Territory **Bill Hirst** and Dr **David Headon** on the design and survey of our national capital Canberra, which was an exhilarating eye-opener to all present.

It would not be a true blue Australian surveying history seminar without the pre-eminent individual on the subject, **Bill Kitson**. He gave us a glowing testimonial of his state's first S-G, **Augustus Gregory** and was introduced by his state's incumbent Chief Surveyor Dr **Russell Priebbenow**, who provided an insight into the early surveyors of Queensland.

## Homage to Augustus Alt

With the completion of our final speaker, it was time to take 108 guests to the grave site of the first Surveyor-General of Australia (New South Wales at the time) Augustus Alt, who was buried in St John's Cemetery in 1815, to raise a toast to him and all Surveyors-General who have been an essential element in the formation and development of our great country. Wine was generously donated by one of our own legendary surveyors **Bob Linke** from his own family winery.

On the return to Old Government House we viewed the only remaining artifact from Governor **Brisbane's** Astronomical Observatory. This is the telescope mount, bearing in its upper base the broad arrow placed by S-G Thomas Mitchell during his conduct of the Trigometrical Survey of NSW in 1828.

It was now time for a magnificent cocktail party sponsored by the NSW Surveyor-General **Warwick Watkins** – a special welcome to Australia, in advance of the official FIG Welcome Reception held at the exquisite Sydney Town Hall on Sunday evening for about 1800 guests.

## International day

On Saturday it was the turn of the international surveying leaders to treat the audience to a day of presentations about the

*"... campaign to have Light's design for the City of Adelaide enshrined on the UNESCO World Heritage List..."*

