

Chromatography Focus

A CHROMATOGRAPHER IN COPENHAGEN

Chris Bevan visits the ISC 2006 in Copenhagen and stays awhile.

Chris D. Bevan, President, The Chromatographic Society

The choice of venue for international conferences plays a big part in attracting delegates and often flavours the meetings with the country's style and customs.

I had never visited Copenhagen before and was expecting a chilly, windy environment full of herrings and Max Bygraves impersonators. How wrong I was; the first few days prior to the conference had me reaching for the sun tan protection and sunglasses. The unusual weather across northern Europe had blessed this Danish city with temperatures expected in the south of France plus humidity that would have not been out of place in an Indian monsoon season.

Holland deserves its prime reputation for cyclists enjoying its flat hill-less terrain, but if Copenhagen is anything to go by, Denmark must rank a very close second. The car is seriously discouraged and the bicycle ownership almost given mandatory status. I have never seen so many curious variants on the two wheeled and sometimes three wheeled dandy horse.

“WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL, COPENHAGEN...” AS THE DANNY KAYE LYRICS GO, SINGALONGA MAX BYGRAVES WAS RIGHT, IT WAS.

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Just about everyone cycles and seems to enjoy it. Unlike in London it seems you can leave your bike almost anywhere and it will be perfectly safe and will even retain its wheels and saddle. This impression of honesty, safety and good nature accompanied us during our two weeks in the Danish capital.



Steen Honoré-Hansen

The ISC 2006 was organised by Steen Honoré-Hansen and attracted some 450 delegates plus a respectable number of students. The lecture programme was preceded by specialist workshops, decorated with medal ceremonies and punctuated by an exciting young scientists session.

Noteworthy was the ISC's unusual and distinctive venue in the Holmen district of Copenhagen. Much like the British Royal Navy, the Danish equivalent had built fortified bastions and a sizeable floating military capability to repel their enemies back in the 18th century. The Holmen district is essentially a former military base, with armouries and warship repair facilities that looked very similar to the garrisons at Woolwich arsenal and Portsmouth dockyard. The University of Copenhagen architectural school has purchased the former barracks, engineering workshops and warehouses and tastefully converted them into lecture theatres and a library.

These proved most suitable for the conference and accommodated the delegates comfortably. Holmen is essentially an island bordered by canals and the islet seaway out of Copenhagen to the sea. The canals are the resting places for some unusual moored marine DIY projects that would grace the pages of House and Home and Practical Boat Builder magazines.

The occupants resembled the flower power folk of 70's San Francisco with lifestyles to match. A stroll through the Holmen streets towards Christiania district will delight the traveller looking for potted tobacco plant substitutes of the smoking kind. Street names such as Pushers St suggest that



Chris Bevan presenting Vadim Davankov with the Martin gold medal



Magda Avramescu (University of Twente) one of the EuSSS' young scientists competition winners

Copenhagen has a rather relaxed tolerance towards soft drug taking and what can be described as an alternative lifestyle. The inhabitants were very friendly and seemed to be enjoying life despite the seedy connotations associated with the area.

The harbour area is peppered with visiting cruise ships resplendent in their flags of convenience and their grander sailing cousins the tall ships of yester year. This is a deep water port offering shelter from the North Sea and appropriately christened "Merchants Harbour" *.

*Copenhagen (Danish: København) is the capital and largest city of Denmark. The contemporary Danish name for the city is a corruption of the original designation for the city, "Købmandshavn," or "Merchants' Harbour" in Danish. The English word for the city is derived from its German name, "Kopenhagen." Copenhagen is home to the national parliament, government, and monarchy, which are all situated in the heart of the city.

The best means for getting to the conference from the hotels is by water ferry making good use of the marine highway that bisects the city. Cycles and waterborne transport seem to be the hallmark of the whole central area of the city. More use of the Thames for getting around the ubiquitous traffic jams in London would benefit from adopting this efficient Danish model.

The conference delegate is primarily interested in the science on display and the activities on offer. Steen didn't disappoint us in both respects. The science was varied and up to date as one would expect from an international conference.

The young scientists session proved unambiguously that good research is thriving in Europe and presentation skills are in the ascendant. Despite the relatively low number of delegates the advantages of having a manageable number was most obvious in the large amount of friendly banter and exchanges of views so often missing in the giant overcrowded symposia. Smallish is definitely beautiful and certainly encourages participation and involvement which generates a true spirit of community amongst separation scientists.

For me personally it was a chance to meet up with old friends and catch up on news. Steen organised a speakers dinner and rewarded them for their contributions by choosing a restaurant that was by any standards superb and homely with an olde-world atmosphere.

Next stop Budapest for ISC 2008!