



**14<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CLAY CONFERENCE,  
CASTELLANETA MARINA, ITALY  
14–20 JUNE 2009**

What an amazing week! No fewer than 654 delegates from 49 different countries attended the 14<sup>th</sup> International Clay Conference, which took place at the Calané Conference Centre in the Nova Yardinia resort, just 4 km from Castellaneta Marina on the Ionian Sea. During the plenary lectures, the delegates were taken to the surface of Mars; they accompanied carbon dioxide into aquifers deep below the Earth's surface; they learned that clays, which may have played a role in the origin of life, can also harbour extremely toxic dioxin molecules; and they were treated to a historical review of clays and mudstones since their first mention by Agricola in 1556.

Given that 42 keynote lectures and 24 invited lectures set the scene for over 408 oral presentations, attendees had to be well organized to identify, locate and listen to the talks most relevant to them. The design of the conference centre ensured that accommodation, the lecture venues, the restaurant (and the pool) were all within a short distance of each other, making it easy to move among the 43 sessions covering eight different themes ranging from the bio-clay interface to nanomaterials via medical applications and planetary mineralogy.

There were also 548 posters on display over five days, and attendance at the poster sessions was first rate. Few poster authors went away without having endured a good-natured cross-examination of their work – a particularly important aspect for the very large number of student presenters, given that the development of young researchers is a key aim of AIPEA.

Several clay scientists received individual recognition during the course of the conference. Dr Jock Churchman (University of Adelaide) was named AIPEA Fellow for his long-standing contribution to clay science, and Dr Yoshiaki Fukushima (Senior Fellow at the Toyota Central Research and Development Laboratories) received the AIPEA Medal for his contribution to the field of clay nanocomposites. Note that the AIPEA Medal is provided by Tolsa SA via the Spanish Clay Society (SEA), which gives me the opportunity to congratulate the SEA on its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in November 2009.

In addition to the above awards recognizing established clay scientists, AIPEA strives to encourage and support young researchers. The Bradley Award is the most prestigious and hotly contested prize, and on this occasion was won by Marek Szczerba (Polish Academy of Sciences, Kraków), who presented his work during a plenary lecture. AIPEA Student Travel Awards were given to help the following students attend the conference and present their work: Pauline Andrieux (Université de Poitiers), Michael Cheshire (Indiana University), Marian Matejdes (Comenius University, Bratislava), Adi Radium (Hebrew University of



Reiner Neumann, Gina Gianossi, Jeanne Percival, Dave Bish, Claudia Belviso and Saverio Fiore relaxing during the conference dinner at the end of a busy week



Reiner Neumann carrying the AIPEA flag to Brazil, which will host the 15<sup>th</sup> ICC in 2013



Saverio Fiore enthusiastically participating in an evening's entertainment

Jerusalem) and Hongji Yuan (Indiana University). Behind the scenes, a team of assessors worked hard throughout the conference attending oral presentations and posters given by research students. After focused yet friendly debate, the prize for best oral presentation went to Holger Seher, with Rosa Marques and Bethany Ehlmann jointly coming second. The prize for best student poster went to Lenka Herzogová, and the runner-up was Adebukola Adegoroye. The pre-conference AIPEA School for Young Scientists, entitled "Interstratified Clay Minerals: Origin, Characterisation and Geochemical Significance" and held at the University of Bari, provides another example of AIPEA's commitment to the early-career development of clay scientists.

During the AIPEA General Assembly, President Dave Bish introduced proposed amendments to the AIPEA Statutes and By-Laws, which had been recommended by Council. The General Assembly voted in favour of the amendments. The revised Statutes and By-Laws can be accessed, along with much more information on AIPEA and the awards described above, on the recently updated AIPEA website, [www.aipea.org](http://www.aipea.org). Dave also took the opportunity to praise the efforts of Rob Schoonheydt for his 22 years of continuous service to AIPEA and to give his heartfelt thanks to Saverio Fiore and his team for the several years of hard work that went into the preparation and successful delivery of this record-breaking conference. Judging by the resounding applause from the assembled AIPEA members, they were in full agreement with Dave's sincere comments.

Saverio Fiore and his organizing committee also put tremendous effort into providing an excellent programme of entertainment each evening, and plenty of photographs were taken of individuals and groups getting into the swing of things and 'letting their hair down' (for some interesting examples visit [www.14thicc.org](http://www.14thicc.org)). The half-day excursions to the UNESCO World Heritage sites at Sassi di Matera and Trulli di Alberobello also proved very popular.

As incoming President of AIPEA, I would like to add my thanks to Saverio and his team for the conference's outstanding success. The meeting achieved an amazing level of participation against a gloomy financial background, which, as Dave Bish said in his opening message, is a powerful testament to the vitality of the international clay science community. I sincerely hope that this momentum will be maintained for the next International Clay Conference, which will take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2013. Last, I would like to formally recognize the contribution made by Dave Bish and the outgoing Council and thank them for all the hard work and resulting progress made during their term of office.

**Chris Breen**, AIPEA President