



Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists: 115th Annual Conference

The SLTC Annual conference was held on 28th April at Northampton, UK. There were 75 delegates, and more than 100 people attended the annual dinner. The Wolstenholme Memorial Lecture was entitled "Who are you", and was presented by Professor Basil Kardasis, The Museum of Leathercraft. This presentation explored the concept of the uniqueness of an individual, and how this is added to and refined by education, training and experience. For a truly successful design specialist, the growth of knowledge and sensitivity gained from master to pupil was recognised as central to success. In the international world the advantages that mature and develop from these early relationships were perceived as essential for beauty, excellence and inspiration in design.

The concept of apprenticeship was also part of two further presentations. Stephen Trantum raised the issue in the paper "Efficient optimisation of resources", which explored the need for the expansion and development of traditional resources and industries, taking the leather industry in the UK as an example. The practice of transporting salted raw hides and skins internationally was questioned in terms of environmental demands, when compared to the gains that could be achieved by increased processing at source. Advantages were not only commercial, but would include the development of clean technologies in leather manufacture and, in particular, developing expertise through apprenticeship and education.

Colin Clark also incorporated the role of practical experience in the presentation "The life and times of a tannery service/installation engineer" when he reviewed machine developments, where design and development were entirely focused on the needs of the manufacturer. It was made clear that improvements and advances were firmly based on a secure understanding of materials science and engineering principles gained in practice, and how these could be used to advantage.

The paper "A modern semi-rapid vegetable tanning with high exhaustion" was presented by Eric Poles, where the reuse of used tanning liquors from drum-based systems was described. The outcome from this refined approach to a counter-flow system was not just consistent and high value leather with a significant reduction in offers of tanning agents, but a buildup in concentration of non-tans: this enabled the complete replacement of salt from the traditional acid/salt pickle system.

The elimination of salt was also brought into account in the paper "CO₂ high pressure tanning". This described tanning using only water held in the delimed and bated substrate, the free float being replaced by liquid carbon dioxide under high pressure. This concept has advanced towards practical chrome tanning systems working within conventional temperature ranges. Curiously, liquid carbon dioxide under high pressure produces the same pHs as required at the beginning of conventional acid/salt pickle systems, and a subsequent drop in pressure reduces the acidity in-line with rises in pH that are used for chrome fixation. Traditional acid additions may therefore be avoided, moreover, the absence of free water means that acid swelling cannot occur, and so the system can also remain salt free.

Other presentations included "The value of hides" by Howard Johnson, "The impact of construction product regulations on

leather used in interior design", by Jackie Glasspool, and "Solving the mould problem" by George Toseland.

The paper entitled "Chromium in sediments along the River Nene", concerned chromium levels found within core samples of sediments deposited in the river and flood plains in an area that was central to significant chrome tanning activities until the 1990s. Essentially, it appears that the chromium deposits that remain are permanent locked within the natural clay/carbonates and iron mineral deposits. This was a very detailed snapshot over a period of some 80 years, with very precise dating made possible by levels of cesium -137 usefully deposited from nuclear tests in the 1960s, and more recently emissions from Chernobyl. The findings show fluctuations that largely coincide with industrial activities but, in total, the amounts of chromium that remain are lower than levels that are naturally found in other river/flood plain systems.

Christine Powley-Williams' term as Vice President SLTC came to an end after a six years service that included two years as President of the Society. The new Vice-President for the society is Amanda Michel of LeatherWise Ltd, UK. 🌐

IULTCS: Continuing Professional Development Award



Eric Poles from Silvateam seen here receiving his certificate from IULTCS-IUT Commission Chair, Dr Jeffrey Guthrie-Strachan.

The IULTCS Training Commission (IUT) made the most of the SLTC gathering in Northampton to award IULTCS-IUT Leather Professional certificates to four successful applicants.

The IULTCS continuing professional development (CPD) certification was launched at the IULTCS Congress in Valencia, Spain in 2011 where 11 leather professionals were certified. Certification is designed to encourage individual members to actively participate in leather and related activities and track and record evidence of their development activities over a four-year period.

The IULTCS-IUT CPD has been translated into Spanish and plans are underway to include Italian. For further information please visit the IULTCS website, www.iultcs.org. 🌐