

International Course on Geotechnical and Structural Monitoring Poppi, Tuscany, Italy – June 2014

John Gadsby

Continuing education courses on Geotechnical Instrumentation for Field Measurements have been held in either Missouri or Florida every second year for the past 40 years, with John Dunnycliff as the course director. That series of courses has now been replaced by an annual course in Tuscany, Italy—the first edition took place in June this year. The theme of 2014 course was changed to Geotechnical and Structural Monitoring (GSM), and billed as an International course. The course was directed by John Dunnycliff and organized by Paolo Mazzanti

of NHAZCA (Natural Hazards Control and Assessment) - spin off of “Sapienza” University of Rome.

Poppi is about 40 km east of Florence and about 30 km northwest of Arezzo. Poppi is considered one of the most beautiful towns in Tuscany with the spectacular tenth-century castle of the Guidi Counts situated on the hilltop that dominates the surrounding countryside. The course was held in the castle.

The GSM was truly an international gathering and probably the most international for any engineering short

course. The course attracted some 100 participants from 27 countries with 18 different languages. The language of the course was English and yet for 80% of the attendees this was their second language.

The three-day course covered three principal topics: basic concepts of monitoring; types of geotechnical and structural instrumentation; case histories and the lessons learned. In contrast to the Florida courses GSM included substantial content on remote monitoring systems such as GPS, Laser and Radar systems, with a look also at satellite monitoring.

The presentations were given by an international group of leaders in the geotechnical and structural monitoring community. All lectures were given using a standard PowerPoint template that gave a uniformity and clarity to the presentations.

The section on case histories covered a wide range of monitoring programs for almost every type of engineering structure. These case histories illustrated the importance and diversity of geotechnical and structural monitoring projects and the advances made in the past 60 years.

The 2014 edition of GSM was a great success. Anyone in the monitoring community should add this course to his/her list of “to dos” for the following reasons:

- It is the only comprehensive course on geotechnical and structural monitoring;
- It is exceptionally well organized;



Tenth century Poppi Castle.



Course organizers. Left to right: John Dunnicliff, Paolo Mazzanti, Alfredo Rocca, Ambra Argento, and Elisa Brizi.

- It is a great opportunity to network with an enthusiastic group of engineers and scientists;
- Add to this the beauty, culture and warm hospitality of Tuscany; and

- Where else do they close down a town's main street for an engineering banquet and serve gourmet Tuscan food? Wine too!

The good news is that a second edition will be held on June 4, 5 and 6, 2015. I suggest you sign up now (www.geotechnicalmonitoring.com). Traveling to Tuscany just for a three-day engineering course may seem onerous, but you can always extend your visit by adding a vacation and joining one of the nearby world famous cooking or wine schools.

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