

Advances in marine ichnology – Foreword

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Ichnia 2008 – the Second International Congress on Ichnology – was held in Cracow from 1 to 5 September 2008, with 71 talks attended by more than 115 registrants. Specialists on every aspect of this very broad field were invited to present their work, and manuscripts were solicited for two theme issues of which this is one. The other is *Advances in marginal-marine and non-marine ichnology in Geological Quarterly*, edited by Grzegorz Pieńkowski, Anthony J. Martin and Christian Meyer.

History is inescapable in a city with such a rich past as Cracow. The initial session was held in the Jagiellonian University's richly appointed ceremonial meeting hall, with paintings of alumni such as Copernicus and

Pope John Paul II overlooking the proceedings. We were honored to hear first an address from the Vice-Rector of the University, Professor Andrzej Mania, who spoke on humanistic aspects of scientific visits to Cracow.

Appropriately, of the world's ichnologists Dolf Seilacher was invited to give the first scientific talk. He chose to begin with a somber apology for the Germans' invasion and occupation of Poland during his youth – meaningful words from a man who had served in the German military. For it was in this room that, shortly after the Nazi takeover, the faculty of the University gathered and were arrested to be sent to a concentration camp. It is one measure of how much the world has changed within two generations.



The talks and posters that followed over the next few days were as diverse as the presenters. They included work on virtually every aspect of ichnology, and much of it was at the cutting edge of the field and exciting. But it was not all hard science. Ample opportunities were arranged for the attendees to socialize together, including a sumptuous dinner party held on Wawel Hill, the old royal castle of Cracow. Field trips before, during, and after the conference showed off the best regional exposures that Poland has to offer. The international reputation of researchers on the Carpathian flysch and the Holy Cross Mountains has been put into proper perspective, especially in conjunction with a visit to the Marian Książkiewicz collection in the Jagiellonian University's Geological Museum – surely the most extensive collection of trace fossils currently on exhibit anywhere in the world. Another attraction was Dolf Seilacher's Fossil Art exhibit, consisting of full-sized casts of natural exposures showing intriguing trace and body fossils; this was held at the Geological Museum of the Institute of Geological Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Capping the event, after a rainy soccer game on the great Błonia lawn, was the conference dinner, 125 m underground in the mediaeval Wieliczka Salt Mine. A fine meal was had as folk musicians and dancers performed in front of us, whereupon the audience was invited to join the dance. The themes set by the first Ichnia in Argentina in 2004 (stimulating talks, wonderful field trips, good eating, and a taste of local culture) were thus followed with success in Poland.

In this theme issue, the reader can sample a few of the presentations that were delivered at Ichnia 2008 on the general topic of marine ichnology. In this collection are articles on the cutting edge of deep- and shallow-marine ichnofacies as well as papers on particular ichnotaxa, and one that crosses the boundaries of history, art, and science. There is even one that unravels a murder mystery with a hint of passion. We hope you will enjoy these talks in their written form as much as we did when they were first presented by their authors in Cracow.

