

22nd World Muscle Society Congress Saint Malo 2017



Gulls on Guard through Ebb and Flow of Science Manifesting Extra Muscle

From the backdrop of mountains and hot, sunny plains of Southern Spain in 2016, it was on to the wild waves and rugged coastline on Brittany's northern coast for muscle crusaders gathering ahead of the 22nd World Muscle Society jamboree at the *Palais du Grand Large*, congress centre in Saint Malo, with its captivating view onto the broad beach and open sea.

Early October, and the town's residents might normally be settling into a quieter routine, the tourist trade having subsided as the winter months approach. However, any notions the local working population may have had of enjoying evenings sitting at table in front of a crackling fire, consuming boeuf bourguignon accompanied by a glass of merlot will have been briskly sidelined with the onset of a sudden invasion of muscle fanatics as they marched out of train station, decanted themselves from the town's ferry port or descended from the clouds into the local airport. Time for local restaurant owners and retailers to take their positions in readiness for the influx of scientists and medical professionals who would require hearty daily sustenance to fuel their minds for the intensive intellectual stimulation, while their accompanying persons would need to satiate their curiosity exploring the local historical attractions and capturing a little piece of Saint Malo to take home as a souvenir.

Prior to the start of the congress, the Institute of Myology in Paris had been the setting for the 15th pre-congress Teaching Course and had attracted 45 delegates from 15 countries worldwide. Once again the course was a great success, thanks to the academic team involved with the organising and teaching. They certainly delivered on the three 'E's' of the WMS, and one co-organiser in particular is reported to have revealed a different side to his usual quiet persona, and stirred much **excitement** with **entertainment** while delivering **education** for the course attendees with his extrovert antics. And this year, an especial big thank-you to Marianne de Visser, a founding organiser of the Teaching Course in 2002 who had been involved with great energy every year since: she declared that she was now standing down after 15 happy and fulfilling years.

With posters all pinned in position thanks to the invaluable help of the local organisers' volunteer support team who had guided many newly arriving delegates through the labyrinth of poster areas to the specific location for their posters, the Congress launched on Tuesday evening in the *Auditorium Chateaubriand* in traditional fashion with a warm welcome to Saint Malo and welcome lecture. Our star co-host, Gisèle Bonne, fronting the Local Organising Committee with co-chair, Thomas Voit, welcomed delegates to the congress. Gisèle was



A friendly team of volunteers with sunny smiles and T-shirts to match helped delegates settle in. The Auditorium Chateaubriand with space for 750 persons offered comfortable seating for the long lecture sessions.

pleased to see the emergence of a good number of young myologists joining the conference, and paid tribute to the ‘father’ of French myology, Professor Michel Fardeau. Unfortunately he was not able to attend this conference, but his decades of devotion to his work at the Institute of Myology in Paris had pushed the boundaries of knowledge and established the strong French presence on the world stage in myology.

Concluding her Welcome speech, Gisèle Bonne introduced Xavier Bailly, Administrator of Mont Saint Michel Abbey and Carrouges Castle under the Ministry of Culture, and a National Lecturer for the Ministries of Culture and Tourism. In his Welcome lecture, Monsieur Bailly introduced delegates to the extraordinary history of Mont Saint Michel, evolving from a large rock in the sand with a small settlement in the 8th Century, to today’s thriving community and major tourist attraction crowned by the imposing Benedictine Abbey. Most delegates had signed up for an excursion to visit Mont Saint Michel which they would enjoy later in the week.

Moving from the auditorium, the evening’s entertainment continued with the Welcome Reception in the spacious *Jacques Cartier* rotunda and adjoining *Grand Large* hall which offered guests a great view onto the old town surrounded by its imposing ramparts and the *Fort National* on its small tidal island; and stretching Northeast, golden sands and open sea. Myologists could be intoxicated by both vista and *vin rouge* as they sampled the regional wines and consumed tasty canapés of crab en croûte, creamy salmon surprise, cheese roulades and stuffed baby tomatoes. The hall buzzed with the animated chatter of myo-aficionados, as members of the world muscle community, normally having to make do with email and Skype to bridge continents, could finally come together in person and exchange news and ideas, sparking the neurones and warming up the mental muscles in readiness for the ensuing days’ academic events.

Wednesday morning arrived. Following some exciting “next generation sequencing” in the last 12 months within the Executive Board, WMS had seen a change at the top as founding



No time to spare: with over 500 posters at this congress, delegates marched from one presentation to the next with great determination, absorbing as much new myo-knowledge as their minds would allow.

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