

The 2008 British Orthopaedic Association Annual Congress

By David Adams, BOA Chief Executive

By common consent, the new BT Convention Centre in Liverpool is an excellent addition to the range of purpose-built venues in the UK and facilitated the holding of the annual BOA congress in the city for the first time in over 30 years, fittingly during the city's year as European Capital of Culture.

Over 750 delegates attended over the 3 days of the meeting, on a par with attendance in recent years. Nevertheless, BOA Council is concerned that numbers are not rising and intense discussions will be held over coming months to identify the reasons why more of the 3,000 orthopods in the UK do not attend and to assess ways to reinvigorate the programme so as to attract many more. The coming introduction of formal GMC requirements for revalidation and recertification will, we hope, stimulate such attendance.

The spacious exhibition hall was welcomed by industry and 108 companies turned up (23 of them first timers at the BOA) to demonstrate their support for the BOA, to display their products and services and to network with surgeons and colleagues. 1268 square metres of space were sold. Among many innovative, imaginative stands, President Steve Cannon and Honorary Secretary Peter Kay were hard

put to select the best stands but finally awarded the accolades for large and smaller stands to Biomet UK and Judd Medical respectively.

Despite the obvious success of the venue, many companies expressed disappointment at the relatively low volume of traffic to their stands, even though all catering was as usual located within the exhibition hall and posters were sited at the rear of the hall to entice delegates through the exhibition. This remains a source of concern for BOA and will be considered in their debate on the future of the congress.

A social and cultural highlight of the meeting was a son et lumière display for delegates and industry in the magnificent interior of the Anglican Cathedral. The ashes of Sir Robert Jones lie in the cathedral and many took the opportunity to photograph and be photographed before the plaque! The impressive organ was demonstrated to best effect as the architectural highlights were gradually picked out by careful lighting, culminating in a stirring rendition of Jeremiah Clarke's Prince of Denmark's March (Trumpet Voluntary).

Overall, the experience was so positive that an immediate reservation was made for a return to Liverpool on 2012.