



NEWSLETTER N° 1, May 1998

Dear Map Friend,

It has taken some time to create the basis for the official launching of the Circle's activities. However, its establishment as a non-profitmaking Association under Belgian law (ASBL in French) is now well underway, and it is hoped that in the next Newsletter, scheduled for September, a functioning Committee and its Members can be presented to you.

In the meantime, and in order not to lose any of the momentum created during the first meeting at the end of March, it was felt appropriate to issue this note so as to keep all those interested in the BIMCC informed about what happened so far, and what is planned next.

The beginnings

The idea of creating an Association of map enthusiasts in Brussels first emerged during the 1997 International Symposium organized in Budapest by IMCoS, the London-based International Map Collectors' Society. Wulf Bodenstein, IMCoS member in Brussels, accepted the challenge and started setting up the Circle. The first problem was finding a suitable meeting place, and he was fortunate in being given access to one part of the College Saint Michel, conveniently accessible by public transport and offering private parking facilities, where a large assembly room with a long table and ample seating capacity could be rented, through the good offices of Brother René Hanssen.

In cooperation with Philippe Swolfs, the Belgian Representative of IMCoS, a hand-out in four languages (English, French, Dutch and German) was then prepared, inviting to a first, informal meeting. This was distributed to about one hundred addressees susceptible to

being interested in the new venture. Participants were encouraged to bring along an item from their collection which they found particularly interesting or which they wished to find out more about from specialists in attendance; as it turned out, many people *did* show up with maps, atlases and books with maps. There was excellent support from IMCoS, especially through the columns of its Journal, and with a great deal of personal engagement and a good measure of improvisation the inaugural meeting was set up in a relatively short time.

First Meeting of the BIMCC, 31st March, 1998

As from 6.00 p.m. that day, 34 people of seven different nationalities gathered in the assembly room of the College St. Michel where, after informal introductions around some drinks and sandwiches, the proceedings were opened by Philippe Swolfs who had agreed to chair this first meeting. English had been adopted as the working language. A warm welcome was extended to all who had accepted to join in this new venture, and especially to the nine participants from outside of Belgium, among whom a strong UK delegation with three IMCoS Officers and Francis Herbert, the Curator of Maps at the Royal Geographical Society. Hans Kok, the IMCoS Netherlands Representative, was present, as was the former Belgian Representative Itzhak Sperling whose wife kindly assumed the charge of collecting the admission dues.

The presentations

Joost Depuydt of the University Library (Leuven) was the first to be given the floor. He recalled that a number of events were being staged this year to mark the 400th anniversary