

In November 2012 Tony Morrison and John Forrest gave the Anglo Peruvian Society in London an account of the InterOceanic Highway after its first year of completion. With two speakers the presentation ran for 1hr 45 m and this page presents the main points. Many of the illustrations have not been included.

The InterOceanic Highway: The missing link in the exploitation of Amazonia?

For decades a road linking the Amazon heartlands to the Pacific Ocean was on the drawing board. It is now a reality with the opening of the InterOceanic Highway connecting southern Peru and its ports to the Brazilian states of Rondonia, Acre and beyond. Will this open up the rainforest to extensive soya bean farming and cattle ranching to supply Far Eastern markets or will it bring a range of economic and social benefits for the local people?

*The author and filmmaker, **Tony Morrison** and **John Forrest**, Chairman of the Tambopata Reserve Society, will take us on a journey along the Highway. John recently travelled the lesser known 'Route 4' link which runs from Juliaca to Puerto Maldonado where Tony, who was travelling along the Highway just a few days ago, will continue on in to Brazil. Both speakers will reflect on the likely impacts of the Highway on Peru.*

John opened the evening by looking back to the 1960's and the birth of the road plan.



Peru's President Fernando Belaúnde [1963 -1968] and a second term [1980 - 1985] was an architect by training and a politician who pushed for road building to integrate distant parts of the country. Belaúnde began the construction of the Marginal Highway [Carretera Marginal de la Selva] a route along the forested eastern flank of the Andes mountains and joining existing trans-Andean roads crossing to the Pacific. Another Belaúnde plan was to link Peru with the Brazilian road system then being developed in the Amazon basin.

Even more ambitiously Belaúnde had a grandiose plan to move the Peruvian seat of government from Lima to the Amazon. Some would say his plan was simply a dream

based on the creation of the new Brazilian capital, Brasilia [built 1956- 60] and sited in the centre rather than on the coast. In the case of Peru almost sixty percent can be called Amazon land and most of it is sparsely populated - for Belaúnde it was a region to be opened-up and used.

The newly completed InterOceánica Sur road linking the Pacific ports of Ilo, Matarani [see *Islay near Mollendo*] and San Juan de Marcona on the Peruvian coast is a marvel of planning and construction. A consortium of Peruvian and Brazilian companies led the giant Odebrecht and Camargo Correa were responsible for the work financed in the order of 1.9 billion US Dollars by international development banks. The work was divided between the companies with each working on different sectors or tramos.

Looking eastward towards the Amazon forest two routes lead over the mountains



