

Book Review

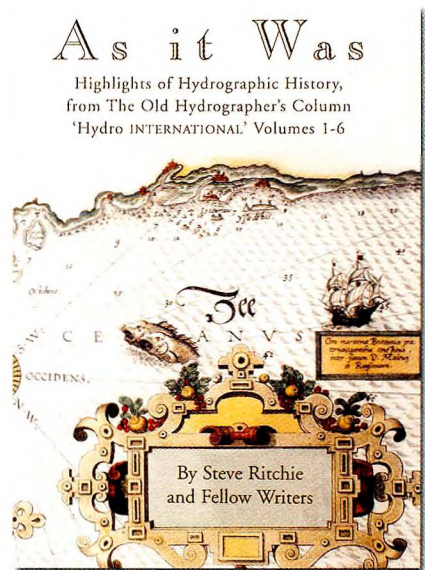
As it Was – Highlights of Hydrographic History for The Old Hydrographer's Column 'Hydro INTERNATIONAL' Volumes 1-6

By Steve Ritchie and fellow writers, 118 pages, ISBN: 90-806205-5-6,
published by GITC bv, The Netherlands, 2003

As the editor I took up the privilege of writing this review myself. One may say that it is already incestuous for this journal to review a publication in the same stable but this book and its collection of stories deserves as wide publicity as possible.

Readers of the Review may note that we usually try to start off with an historical article, although this one unusually happens to lack one. However the need to include an historical article is based on the argument that most people find history interesting, while technical articles will normally attract only those who are specialists in the particular field described. Hydro INTERNATIONAL has approached the interest in history through the articles described in this book. They are in the main, relatively short and above all easy to read and well illustrated. With ten issues of Hydro INTERNATIONAL now being produced each year it is easy to 'lose' some particular article that interested the reader under a pile of back issues. It was therefore a good idea to compile all the historical articles in a single volume and that is what we have here.

One can hardly discuss this book without discussing its principle author, the 'Old Hydrographer'. It is normal for most of us to think of writing history as the years go on but Steve Ritchie has spent a large portion of his life writing



history, besides the many other major contributions that he has made to the profession of hydrography. Having now reached a very venerable age he continues to pour out a mass of historical writings and this volume represents another fine record of his achievements. Steve, of course, is not the only writer here but he, it must have been, who persuaded the other authors to make their various contributions and no doubt, carefully encouraged them to write in a style that would provide a reasonably consistent style. He does not stop. In April he was at the History of GEBCO Conference and recently he has

returned from the History of Oceanography Conference in Kaliningrad. Perhaps we will see another volume soon!

'As it Was' includes just under fifty articles covering a wide range of history in hydrography's broadest meaning. This includes not only chart making and the surveys needed to produce the charts but oceanography and geophysics. Instruments used in all these fields are the subject of some of the articles. Geographically, as might be expected, it has no limits, from Far East to Far West and the practitioners coming from many countries. The articles are all short and most readable. References are limited to a few notes that will lead the interested author to further reading. Perhaps it is a pity that a publication that so well describes history and hence provides a record of progress, was pub-

lished with soft covers, even though the design of the cover is most attractive. It is unfortunate that the title does not appear on the spine. This last remark comes from hearing an author recently discuss the importance to his sales of having the title so presented. Nevertheless between the covers the text, illustrations and layout are most attractive.

Although this book will primarily find its readers in the hydrographic and oceanographic communities it should excite interest from a broader audience as it describes man's struggle to conquer the seas, not by military conquest but by scientific endeavour.

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