

FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

An interesting article on the Standardization of Nautical Almanacs of the World, was published in the May 1941 issue of the *International Hydrographic Review*. It was extracted from the *Geographical Journal*, London, August 1940.

'STAR PLACES FOR SURVEYORS.'

For some long time the five Nautical Almanacs of the world, American, British, French, German and Spanish, have divided the work of calculation and interchanged results, so that of the 25 Polar Stars and 489 others whose apparent places were tabulated in the Nautical Almanac, none were actually computed at Greenwich. Between the five, the places of 1279 stars were given, but repeated in different almanacs so that places had to be taken from the various almanacs; but they belonged to different fundamental systems. At the meeting of the International Astronomical Union at Cambridge, Mass., in 1932, Dr. COMRIE had proposed to reform this unsatisfactory state of affairs; and at the following meeting at Paris in 1935, it was resolved that all the star places should be based upon the Third Fundamental Catalogue (FK) of the *Berliner Astronomisches Jahrbuch*, and that the places of the 1535 stars it contained should be published in one volume annually. The first volume, for 1941, has just been published: the calculations made in Berlin, Paris, San Fernando, and Washington; the organization, collation, independent checks, and proof-reading done at Greenwich; and the cost of publication borne by the British Government. For everyday work each Nautical Almanac will publish the places of about 200 principal stars: thus the British for 1941 has one circumpolar and 207 others. Those who for very accurate work want more stars will turn to the volume 'Apparent places of fundamental stars, 1941' just published by Order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, price £ 1.10 s. This volume will be indispensable to surveyors who employ the prismatic astrolabe, and very convenient for those who prefer the quadrantal method with the theodolite; and if in present circumstances the prospects of such international cooperation are dim, the volume for 1941 will be an example for a better future.'

