

FIFTY YEARS AGO...



The *Hydrographic Review* of November 1927 had much of technical interest in it, ranging from the development of Atlantic steamer routes to "submarine phonotelemetry" (cf. modern underwater *Trisponders*) and a German towed water-pressure sounder which was cheaper to run than the echo-sounding apparatus of the period. The three IHB Directors were all active authors, Director DE VANSAY DE BLAVOUS being particularly good with a fine paper on Ellipsoids and Tables. There is a very interesting paper on the various Prime Meridians, including the 16th Century ones based on the Azores, Canaries and Cape Verde Islands.

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Charts showing the state of charting of the waters of States Members

In view of the recent discussions (1976) of the North Sea Hydrographic Commission on the basic criteria for the definition of "modern comprehensive survey" (Conclusion 35 -- see *I.H. Bulletin*, Jan. 1977, p. 10) we reproduce from pages 51-52 :

"By Circular-Letter No. 43-1922 of the 26th October 1922, the Bureau requested the Hydrographic Services of the States Members, to forward a statement of those of their coasts which were :—

- (a) fully surveyed
- (b) partially surveyed
- (c) superficially examined.

It had been suggested for convenience in giving the information, to draw up charts on which the areas entering into the categories (a), (b), (c), should be coloured respectively red, blue, yellow.

Later on the supply of this same information was requested from a certain number of other States.

The intention of the Bureau, when asking for this information, was to assemble it into a set of a few charts, one for each Ocean or group of secondary seas, which would have represented the progress of the surveys of the coasts of the whole world and shown at which points insufficiency of hydrographic data rendered a particular effort necessary.

The collation of the replies could not take place before the end of 1925, owing to the slowness with they arrived at the Bureau. A draft of the projected

charts was made and presented to the Delegates of the 2nd International Hydrographic Conference (Monaco, October-November, 1926).

But this collation of the replies, and still more the drawing up of the charts, showed that the information received was but little suited to the purpose intended.

The information received disclosed that the States had very variously interpreted the terms: *fully surveyed*, *partially surveyed*, *superficially examined*. Certain countries had given to the expression "fully surveyed" the extremely rigorous meaning of an absolutely perfect knowledge of the depth in the greatest detail; others seemed to have included in this category all coasts sufficiently well known that shipping would run no abnormal risks; the inclusion under the same colour of information obviously uncomparable, would have given an inaccurate result and yet the Bureau could not, of itself, modify the replies received.

Besides, the preciseness of the replies varied. Certain Governments supplied written replies without any chart or precise limitation of the various areas on the seaward side; others who had sent charts, had not indicated the limits of their investigations any the better for that; a last though limited category drew up charts on which each area was marked with accuracy and, in certain cases, these were accompanied by the dates of the surveys.

Finally, certain replies were received immediately, others took 3 years to reach the Bureau, consequently there was a risk that the earlier replies were no longer up to date, when the work was taken up.

There will be found at the end of this volume, after the chart showing the progress of Hydrography in the Netherland East Indies, which accompanies the article on this subject (page 45), two charts of the same kind showing the progress of Hydrography in the British Isles and in Sweden.

The chart of Sweden appears also in a booklet published this year by the Swedish Hydrographic Office under the title: "A small guidance for estimating the reliability of Swedish charts", an analytical note on which will be found in the Hydrographic Bibliography (page 213).

These very detailed and complete charts were selected as representing clearly the type of information which the Directing Committee would like to receive from all Hydrographic Offices, in order to be able to resume the production of general charts which it has had to abandon provisionally."

Readers will find it interesting to compare the chart showing the progress of hydrography of the British Isles at the end of the volume with the similar chart published in March 1975 by the U.K. Ministry of Defence as Appendix 5 to the "Report of the Hydrographic Study Group 1974-75".

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Use of aircraft for surveying

"CIRCULAR-LETTER N° 34-H of 1926.

USE OF AIRCRAFT FOR SURVEYING

MONACO
27th November 1926.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that the Second International Hydrographic Conference recently held in Monaco made the following resolution:

"That those Nations which use aerial photography for surveying and have not yet sent reports on the subject to the Bureau, should do so".

2. — *Should this resolution affect your country, the Bureau will be glad to receive such reports.*

3. — *The subject in question may be logically divided into two sections :*
 (A) Apparatus for and method of taking the photographs;
 (B) Apparatus for and method of plotting from the photographs.

It is requested that reports on these two sections be rendered separately.

4. — *Of course the Bureau will be glad to receive further reports from those Nations which have already sent them, if improvements in apparatus or methods have been effected.*

*I have the honour to be,
 Sir,
 Your obedient Servant
 Signed : G. SPICER-SIMSON
 Secretary General."*

One year later, replies had been received from Portugal, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, the United States of America, the Argentine Republic and Australia. We reproduce below Australia's report from page 68, which contrasts nicely with current plans for using LANDSAT imagery for delineating the Great Barrier Reef :

"REPORT BY THE NAVAL BOARD OF THE
 COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

APPARATUS FOR AND METHOD OF PLOTTING.

The method of plotting from the photographs and which has been employed wherever possible is to square down on to control points which can be identified and plot or photograph to the required scale.

The work carried out has been largely experimental and great difficulty has been experienced over the isolated reefs on the east coast of Australia where it is usually impossible without a vast expenditure of time and material to establish a sufficient number of control points to co-ordinate the whole work.

Future work of this nature will, it is hoped, be more closely identified with a good trigonometrical survey and it is considered that with a sufficiency of well fixed positions along the coast, the photographic material will be utilised to advantage, and that it will be possible to construct an accurate mosaic.

A very large amount of the work carried out in 1926 consisted of reconnaissance flights with the object of obtaining information regarding the general position, shape and number of the coral reefs in unexplored portions of the Great Barrier Reef.

The accuracy of this work is probably not great, but experience has shown that by indicating to the surveying ship the rough positions, etc. of the various isolated reefs, much time can be saved to the latter and a degree of confidence instilled, which is of much value when navigating in the midst of reefs of hitherto unknown extent.

APPARATUS FOR AND METHOD OF TAKING THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

- Camera "L" type 6" F.L.
- Plates — Wellington Panchromatic 5" × 3 7/8"
- Metal Magazines.
- Paper — Austral Star Contrasty.

The above apparatus is recognised as less suitable than the newer types. It is proposed, however, to replace the plate camera by an automatic film camera at an early date."

