

FIFTY YEARS AGO...



JAPANESE HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE DESTROYED BY EARTHQUAKE (*)

No need for alarm — this headline is fifty years old. It was one of those in the May 1924 *Hydrographic Review* (Volume 1, No. 2). The present article celebrates 50 years of the same format of the Review published in both English and French editions. This improvement from the March 1923 edition (Volume 1, No. 1) — which was published in both languages together as is today the *I. H. Bulletin* (started January 1928) — stemmed from revised directives from Member States. Ninety-five editions later the same layout survives.

Looking back at the May 1924 issue — price 5 Swiss Francs compared to about 22 Swiss Francs today — we find discussions of methods employed by the various Member States for engraving and repair of copper chart-plates, and for the new science of echo-sounding by Hertzian waves, in which great ingenuity is revealed in production and recording of the sound source, itself obtained by percussion.

Two articles dealt with the visibility of coastal lights in varying atmospheric conditions; and the Swedish Hydrographic Office demonstrated a new multi-colour lattice chart in connection with their network of D/F stations covering the approaches to Göteborg and the Skaw. Was this the world's first published radio-navigation chart?

The number also carried the abortive correspondence from the Secretary-General (post abolished 1962) drawing the attention of the Swedish and Finnish Offices to the similar light characteristics of the light vessels *Grundkallen* (Sweden) and *Storbrotten* (Finland). Confusion between the two vessels by night had contributed to the loss of the Dutch steamer

(*) The Japanese Hydrographic Service received a large number of their own publications from Member States to replace the records destroyed in the great Tokyo earthquake of 1 September 1923 and subsequent fire, thanks to the IHB Circular Letter issued the very day after Admiral Uchida notified the Bureau of the disaster.

The Hydrographic Department of the Maritime Safety Agency moved again recently, under happier circumstances, into its new complex. This fine building was described in the *I. H. Bulletin* of July 1973.

Cornelis in 1922. Though it was recorded "no reply was received from Sweden" while Finland indicated they intended no change to *Storbrotten*, the charts show that in 1974 characteristics of lights in this area of the Baltic can no longer be confused.

An article, still of consuming interest, was contributed by the Netherlands Hydrographer, Captain L. H. LUYMES, entitled "The use and distribution of original charts". Here is presented an early case for a series of International Charts.

LUYMES postulates that as a result of the establishment of the International Hydrographic Bureau uniformity was gradually increasing in the charts published by the various Hydrographic Offices making them generally acceptable to mariners of any nationality.

"Why is the chart of the North Sea published by no less than 7 or 8 nations? Would it not be preferable to leave the publication to the principal coastal state?" LUYMES asks.

He suggests that the Bureau should compile and publish a catalogue listing, on a world-wide basis, a set composed of the best national charts which complied sufficiently with the requirements of uniformity. In addition it would be necessary to publish an international list of symbols, abbreviations and translations of the most important legends on charts.

Distribution of this international set of charts to shipping is discussed, but their up-to-date correction by Notices to Mariners is passed over somewhat lightly. He makes no reference to the major barrier to uniformity of those days imposed by the large number of Member States who did not use the metric system for showing depths on charts.

The remarks by the President of the Directing Committee (Sir John F. PARRY) on LUYMES' article commenced as follows :

"This article contains proposals which are of great interest whatever the eventual result; in their support Captain LUYMES advances reasons of great weight. Whether any practical solution of the question raised can be evolved by correspondence at the present stage must be decided by the Members themselves; however, in view of the undoubted importance of the subject, it should not be allowed to sink into oblivion and, if no solution is found by correspondence, it should be taken up for discussion at the next Hydrographic Conference".

A "Catalogue of Original Charts" (SP 25) was compiled and published by the Bureau in the 1930s in three parts covering the world. However, the subject fell into oblivion during World War II and was not rescued until the 9th Conference of 1967, but now forms one of the most vital subjects under discussion within the IHO — "The International Chart".

And what else? It was reported that a proposal by Argentina and Spain that the Spanish language should be included among those used by the Bureau, which had been the subject of Circular Letter 48/1922, had received thirteen votes against, four in favour, with two abstentions, resulting in the proposal being rejected.