

THE NETHERLANDS HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICE.

The Netherlands have a tolerably large Hydrographic Service, which is explained by the fact that its work includes not only the survey and control of the coast and estuaries of the Netherlands, but also the survey and charting of the seas of the Netherlands East Indian Archipelago and of the Netherlands West Indies.

The East Indian Archipelago extends over approximately 46 degrees of longitude and 17 degrees of latitude. It contains nearly 2,000 islands, of which the estimated length of coastline is 25,000 nautical miles.

Marine surveying in the Netherlands has taken place since many centuries and although it is known that Dutch charts of the East Indian Archipelago were used in the 16th century, no exact date can be given of the year in which marine surveying was actually started.

It will be understood that these charts look rather crude by our standards but they served their purpose. Meanwhile however the technique of surveying has progressed and the charts have improved. The Netherlands have been completely surveyed and the charts are checked during the summer months by two small surveying vessels, one of about 350 tons displacement and one, which has been temporarily borrowed from the Netherlands Pilotage Service. A new vessel is being built and is expected to be ready in 1950.

In the East Indian Archipelago a systematic survey was started in 1858 and has since been carried out. Only some minor parts of the South coast of Java and the Southwest coast of New Guinea have not been systematically surveyed, although adequately charted. Unfortunately the four surveying vessels, of about 1100 tons displacement, which were operating in this area, were lost during World War II and although the most urgent work is at present being carried out by two converted ships, two new surveying vessels are being built in the Netherlands.

The survey of Netherlands West Indies has always been done by surveyors on board H.Neth.M. ships, when stationed in this area.

About 20 charts are issued of the Netherlands, 340 of the East Indian Archipelago and 10 of West Indies. No charts of foreign seas and countries are published by this Office, while H. M. ships and merchant vessels of the Netherlands mostly use British Admiralty charts for these parts of the world. Up to World War II the charts used to be engraved on copper, which work was carried out by French and German private firms of engravers. The large and small corrections only were executed by the engravers of the Hydrographic Office, while copper engravings also were transferred onto stone if the number of copies to be printed exceeded 150. For the correction of the copperplates, the absolute engraving was first filled up by galvanoplastic precipitation of copper, which was done in the Office, like the steeling of the plates before printing. At present however the Office is switching over to the photo-lithographic process from plastics on zinc. All printing however is done by private firms.

The Netherlands Notices to Mariners deal with the whole world. This work is carried out by a retired Naval Officer, who compiles them from original Notices to Mariners and from other sources. They are published daily and are also printed by a private firm, just as other books, directories and scientific treatises published by the Hydrographic Office.

The whole of the personnel and work is concentrated in one building of the Ministry of the Navy at 171, Badhuisweg, The Hague.

The official composition of the staff is as follows :—

The Hydrographer and an Assistant Hydrographer, both of whom are naval officers, respectively with the rank of flag-officer and captain or commander;

Nine cartographers, of which four are for the compilation of charts; one for the preparation of Notices to Mariners; three for the writing of Sailing Directions, tidal work and instruments; one for photogrammetry, radio aids to navigation and general research work;

Seven draughtsmen for the chart work; two engravers; fourteen chart and book correctors; several attendants, chart packers and messengers.

In addition, during the winter months, the two naval officers, in command of the two surveying vessels in the Netherlands during the summer, are also employed in the Office, besides sometimes some of the junior officers. Furthermore usually one or two officers are preparing themselves for the command of the surveying vessels in the East Indian Archipelago.

Archives, chartplates, charts and hydrographic publications are stored in the basement of the building.

Finally a branch office was set up in Batavia in 1946 and has since been established. At the head of the Office is a Commander of the Royal Netherlands Navy, whose address is "Staf Officier Hydrografie, Marine Postkantoor, Batavia C, Java".

In this Office all charts and books, issued by the Hydrographic Department at the Hague, are obtainable, while a link is formed between this Department and the surveying vessels operating in the East Indian Archipelago. All the results of these surveys, however, besides further hydrographic information, are forwarded to the main office at the Hague for further publication.

