



A VISIT TO THE DUTCH HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE

BY

THE PRESIDENT OF THE DIRECTING COMMITTEE

THE Directing Committee have realised that it is most desirable to keep in direct touch with the Hydrographic Offices of the States Members, not only through correspondence, but also, if possible, by means of personal visits ; it has also appeared to them that it was more satisfactory for a member of the Directing Committee to visit a Hydrographic Office of a country other than his own, and by carrying out this procedure I think that there is no doubt that the results obtained are distinctly more beneficial to the Office visited and to the visitor, than is the case where a visit is made to the Hydrographic Office of the member's own country, where matters of personal interest might possibly tend to take precedence over other matters of more general interest.

During the month of May I was able to pay a visit to the Netherlands for the special purpose of viewing the hydrographic activities there. Captain J. LUYMÉS, the Director of the Dutch Hydrographic Office, is an old friend of mine, as we had been colleagues on the International Hydrographic Conference of London in 1919, where he was one of the Dutch Representatives ; I must here remark that the association of two Naval Officers, although of different nationalities, in my opinion, invariably facilitates that intimacy which it is so important should be established between the principals concerned.

The Hydrographic Office is situated in a building of the Ministry of Marine, 147, Badhuisweg, the Hague, at a short distance from the city in the direction of the sea ; the Office has only recently been established in this building, and the accommodation for the existing staff, with space for reasonable expansion, appears to be ample ; it possesses that most

eminently desirable qualification that the whole of its personnel and work is concentrated under one roof.

The personnel consists of : —

A Director and an Assistant Director, both of whom are Captains in the Navy ;

Six Cartographers, — of which three are for the compilation of charts ; one for the preparation of Notices to Mariners ; one for the writing of Sailing Directions and Tidal work ; and one for Triangulation work in connection with the coasts of the Netherlands.

Four Draughtsmen for Chart work,

Four Engravers,

Four Chart and Book Correctors,

Several attendants, chart packers and messengers.

In addition, during the winter months, the two Naval Officers who command the two Netherlands Surveying Vessels during the summer, are also employed in the Office, and one or two Officers usually are preparing themselves for the command of the East Indian Surveying Vessels.

With the exception of the Draughtsmen and Engravers, all those mentioned above are Naval or Ex-Naval Officers and men.

The Engravers are housed in the upper storey of the building, where they have the best light ; the basement is used for the storage of Archives and Chart Plates ; in addition charts and hydrographic publications are kept there, and all issues of charts and books are made directly therefrom.

The organisation of the Office appeared to me to be ideal for present purposes, and capable of reasonable expansion if required.

Through the courtesy of Captain LUYMES I was also able to visit the Institute for Coast Lighting, which is situated in an admirable position directly on the shore at Scheveningen ; the Director, Mr. P. VAN BRAAM VAN VLOTEN, who is a Civil Engineer and a very well-known authority on the subjects of lights and lighting, most kindly showed me over the Institute ; its position on the coast, with an uninterrupted view to seaward, allows of trials and testing of lights being carried out under practical conditions ; in the case of many countries it is obviously impossible to have an establishment of this nature immediately on the coast, but, after visiting this Institution, there can be no doubt of the immense advantages to be obtained from the utilisation of such a position.

Another visit which I paid in the company of Captain LUYMES was to the Institution for Naval Instruments at Leiden ; this establishment deals with every description of instrument connected with surveying and navigation for the Navy ; it carries out experimental trials, purchases, tests, and issues of all instruments ; both compasses and chronometers are

included. Work-shops for the execution of repairs of every description are situated on the premises.

The Officers in charge consist of a Director and an Assistant Director, and they keep in close touch with the Naval Officers whose requirements they have to meet.

Another exceedingly interesting visit was paid to the Royal Meteorological Institute at Utrecht, where the Chief Director, Dr. E. VAN EVERDINGEN, kindly conducted me over the establishment which includes a magnetic observatory ; Lieut. P. N. VAN RIEL, a retired Naval Officer, is the Director in charge of the Marine Section of the Institute, and showed me several most interesting investigations which are now being dealt with. There are Branch offices of this Institute at the ports of Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

I was very much impressed with the cordiality of the relations existing between the Director of the Hydrographic Office and the Officers in charge of the above mentioned Institutions, with which the Navy is so directly concerned, which feeling evidently must contribute greatly to the efficiency of all the Services concerned.

I must record my sincere appreciation of the cordiality shown to me, as representing the International Hydrographic Bureau, not only by the Director and staff of the Hydrographic Office, but also by the Officers of the other Government establishments whom I was privileged to meet during my brief visit.

It appeared to me that the Dutch Hydrographic Office has taken the opportunity of its recent change in location to arrange its organisation in the most advantageous manner possible, and I venture to suggest that it is worthy of being taken as an excellent example of what a modern Hydrographic Office should be.

