

## IIHSM Annual Report for 2018-19

Your officers Jim Smith, David Wallis and myself met twice this year in UK, during last year. We are all getting older and have medical restrictions for travelling so a new generation is welcome to join us and to prepare future events. Anyone interested in joining should contact Jan De Graeve. John Brock organized the latest history days and has been our representative to the General Assembly of FIG.

In 2018/9 we celebrated here in Belgium the “Surveyor of the Year” Aime Laussedat as the father of Photogrammetry. 2020 is the year of Simon Stevin (born in Brugge 1548 and died in 1620 in den Haag) for whom we are preparing a full day of historic papers just prior to the FIG conference. Local authorities will be invited to participate.

At the end of 2018 Jim Smith and Jan De Graeve finalized their “OPUS MAGNUS” *Notes on the history of the size and shape of the earth* of 2250p covering all times and civilizations worldwide up to the 1950s, in five volumes. The result of 35 years of intermittent reading and research, the list of consulted works exceeds 80p. It is hoped that this will be made available by our colleagues in the Republic of South Africa, as most of the documentation is based upon R S Webb’s notes, discovered in 1984 in the library of the then Trig Survey of South Africa it now has a different title) transcribed and greatly extended since. See also the biography Jim published as *R S Webb (1892-1976) From Shropshire to Paarl via Geodesy and Lesotho*. Jim has also produced a research document of 500p. on *Meridian Arcs in East and South Africa with emphasis on the Arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian*,

This year the Struve committee met in Russia. Our colleague Vitali Kaptjug, previous secretary to the Russian Academy of Science, had prepared the research and rediscovery of the 2 points on the island of Hogland not really accessible for tourists, joining Scandinavia to Estonia. You will remember that FIG endorsed our project to see the Struve Meridian Arc inscribed as a World Heritage Monument of UNESCO. IIHS&M was at the origin of the research, the coordination and final adoption of the project by all the ambassadors to UNESCO in Durban 2005.

Personally I have worked hard to recreate and try to replicate the scientific library of Gerard Mercator with original 16<sup>th</sup> century books. This is an ongoing project to try and determine how G Mercator invented his projection with increasing latitudes

Jim and I have promoted the Struve meridian Arc, as officers of IIHS&M, we coordinated the work of all ten countries, we chaired the work over many years and did most of the preparation work, the research, the basic texts and the Finnish delegation then finalized the document; to present for signature to the 10 delegations and together we presented the official demand in Paris at the UNESCO in 2004, without any financial support.

After my intervention with the responsible ambassador who presented the dossier in the Durban meeting in RSA, the UNESCO ambassadors unanimously voted for the Struve Meridian Arc and put it on the World Heritage List in 2005.

Since then Jim and I have worked on the enhancement of the Arc through Africa. We presented the approved project to the UNESCO delegates to the 10 countries, some of whom do not see

the interest of the extension through Africa, although Struve himself had made this proposal as had Gill and preparatory explorations were carried out in Turkey and Greece. Work continues with the African and European countries concerned. A few copies of the two Struve volumes in English are still available. Enquiries to Jan De Graeve via \*\*32 479 99

At the FIG Congress in Istanbul in May 2018 John Brock presented a paper titled: "The Distance Slabs of the Antonine Wall – The Surveyors' Record Carved in Stone!" in one of two History Sessions at which there were four other speakers talking about various historical matters from the USA to Copernicus and Turkey. In Norway he attended the FIG 7.18 Commission 7 event at Bergen then made a visit to the FIG Office in Copenhagen.

In September John Brock was at the Surveyors Rendezvous in New Orleans, USA which is held by the Surveyors Historical Society of the USA, then in October attended the IMCOS (International Map Collectors Society) Seminar in Manila and Hong Kong where many historical papers on mapping and surveying history were given at the Ayala Museum in The Philippines and Hong Kong Maritime Museum respectively.

2019 started with a presentation on the Antonine Wall Distance Slabs at the Association of Public Authority Surveyors (APAS) held at Cypress Lakes Resort in the Hunter Valley Wine District (near Newcastle).

On Sunday June 9<sup>th</sup> there is to be a full day History Seminar at Medlow Bath in the Blue Mountains, called Majestic and Magical Mountains History where eminent speakers will make presentations about surveyors of the mountains regions of NSW and Gallipoli.

In 2020 John Brock has been invited to co-organise a one (or two?) Day History Seminar for the FIG WW in Amsterdam by the LOC so planning is well in hand. There are also intentions to have history sessions at the Working Week in Ghana in 2021. It is also hoped to have an event in Cape Town for the FIG Congress in 2022.

#### Coming events

2019 FIG Hanoi. History session on the Wednesday has four papers listed.

2019 July. ICC meeting in Tokyo – JB to give a paper on Ino Tadataka: Japan's Most Famous Surveyor!

2019 June 9. Full Day History seminar. Blue Mountains, Australia

2020 FIG Working Week. Amsterdam. History session.

2021 FIG Working Week. Ghana. History session

2022 FIG Congress Cape Town. History session

2028 For the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FIG there is a proposal for a compilation on the history of FIG. For those with a long memory a similar publication was done for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Anyone who has relevant information of any sort please watch for further details.

J De Graeve. Director of IIHSM.