

## IHS&M Report for 2020-2021

During the 2020 year we had to keep safe and the Congress in Amsterdam had to be cancelled and postponed to 2021. During this year activity has been low key as many surveyors were forced to stay home or not to perform professional activities to avoid all contact with clients, associates or members of staff and colleagues.

Jim, our devoted secretary, had to endure the passing away of his wife, who for so many years enjoyed the company of colleagues at FIG meetings. Jan has had mobility problems all year long and finally had an operation on his spine and he is recovering.

During the last 25 years or so Jan de Graeve and Jim Smith have taken considerable interest in the Struve Geodetic Arc as they were among those who, in 1995, decided to seek UNESCO Historical Monument status for it and this was confirmed in 2005. That success spurred on activities to record relevant material in considerable depth. This was very much based on the work of Ronald Stretton Webb\* (1892-1976) whose copious notes made between the two World Wars found after his death, a resting place in the library of the then Trig. Survey Dept in Cape Town – since when the Dept. has had several changes of title.

With the two of them now getting aged it was thought a good idea several years ago to endeavour to get their findings published while they were able. That has led to the arrival of 7 volumes in total near 3000 pages under the auspices of FIG Foundation, John Hohol and the considerable generosity of Trimble. The first 5 volumes cover *Notes on the history of determining the size and shape of the earth using meridian arcs*. Volume 6 is *Meridian arcs in East and South Africa with emphasis on the arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian* and volume 7 is the *Connection between the Struve Geodetic Arc and the Arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian*.

Volumes 6 and 7 are expected to be particularly helpful in the efforts to obtain UNESCO agreement to an extension of the Struve Monument to incorporate the 30<sup>th</sup> Arc. Publication is expected to be during May 2021.

\* Webb and his work were described in *R S Webb From Shropshire to Paarl via Geodesy and Lesotho* by J R Smith and published in Johannesburg in 1995 by the South African Council for Professional and Technical Surveyors.

During the pandemic that forced many out of work by the authorities, Jan managed to concentrate in reconstituting the scientific library of Gerard Mercator, 1512-1594, with original 16<sup>th</sup> century books and is preparing a book on the subject for the end of 2021. During the year Jan also gave some power point presentations on early Roman surveying instruments and on the Struve meridian. The meetings of the Struve committee have also been postponed and we hope to meet our colleagues later this year in Norway.

We hope the virtual meetings will have an active audience. We thank John Brock in Australia for encouraging the history of surveying by his conferences and public meetings, and the efforts of Patrick Vorster (South Africa) and his input to the efforts of getting the Arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian possibly added to the Struve Geodetic Arc UNESCO Heritage listing. We also helped with some

information to questions asked by colleagues and historians over the year. See separate sections below.

### **Report from Australia. John F. Brock, International Representative**

The onset of the Covid pandemic has caused much cancellation of personal attendance at many history meetings, not to mention the double cancellation of the FIG Working Week in Amsterdam for 2020 and 2021. Best wishes and sadness are related to the LOC and FIG Secretariat for their untiring efforts to plan for the on-line conference which is soon to begin from The Netherlands. I was forced to cancel (postpone?) 5 overseas trips in 2020, three of those being international history conferences? I can only trust in the good faith of the airlines and travel agent suppliers to honour any re-scheduling of these events and their travel/accommodation components for a future time? Even the Surveyors Rendezvous planned to be held in Ohio, USA was postponed, but with no definite future date yet scheduled due to the great uncertainties of international border re-openings this event is in limbo? Further doubts are cast upon any re-commencement of international travel before mid 2022, which would most unfortunately place the FIG Congress at Cape Town in some jeopardy? So the waiting game is ticking away for any planning for a History Colloquium in South Africa next year for live attendance?

The 2023 Working Week in Florida USA may be the next opportunity to plan for a Surveying History Seminar Day, but the next few months of worldwide Covid vaccinations should determine as to whether we can proceed with staging the SA History Day – “The Cape of Good History” with a short-list of brilliant presenters begging for me to extend them the invitation to take part in this much anticipated event in South Africa. I am very close to the Cape Town LOC members and I offer them any assistance which I may be able to provide to them for next year’s Congress, despite the approximately ten (10) hour time differential between SA and Sydney.

With regard to all of our members of the FIG family I extend my sincere best regards and keenly look forward to the day, very soon (?), when we can once again meet together at a future FIG event somewhere in the world.

### **The Struve Arc World Heritage scheme Patrick Vorster.**

As a reminder, the scheme for its possible extension to take in the whole of the Arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian is at present still preparing the documentation to have the seven South African sites declared as National Heritage sites. This is necessary preparation before any case for UNESCO acceptance can be started.

Readers will recall the magnitude of the African Arc of the 30<sup>th</sup> meridian as a chain of survey triangulation stretching from Port Elizabeth in South Africa, to near Cairo, in Egypt, through twelve countries and approximately 64° in latitude and 7,120km in length. It comprises of 610 surveyed points in survey campaigns carried out between 1879 and 1954. A provisional selection of 52 of the 610 stations have been identified for inclusion in the serial nomination list.

Invitations were sent in 2018 to all the countries involved. Just 2 have so far responded. Further progress is in limbo since it is now thought that a better approach should be possible via e.g. an international organisation like FIG through its national representatives in the particular countries. This will be developed during the coming year.

**Membership** In recent years the IIHS&M has lost several of those members who started its introduction and organized the historical events at the various FIG gatherings. Any reader of this who is an attendee at the gatherings who would like to join in the group please contact Jan de Graeve on e.mail [jan@degraeve-geo.eu](mailto:jan@degraeve-geo.eu)