

International Institution for the History of Surveying and Measurement

Report for 2017-2018

Dear President and colleagues,

For many years we have warned you all, that the members of the History group within FIG are aging and we asked you to come and join us. David Wallis, our honorary treasurer is approaching 90, Jim Smith our devoted secretary (age 82) is now nearly housebound looking after his wife, and I had some medical problems for long flights so I could not attend the FIG meeting in New Zealand and I will probably not be able to attend the meeting in Istanbul. Younger members are encouraged to come and join the history group, and would be very welcome.

Since 1985 when we organized colloquia on the history of surveying, first as part of commission 1 then as commission 0, but we only obtained an official name in 1994 at the FIG gathering in Melbourne. There we became known as the International Institute of History of Surveying and Measurement. That year we had a lecture on Struve, presented by 3 authors, from 3 different countries in a joint presentation and as commission 1 chair I proposed to the General Assembly to prepare a dossier and submit a case to UNESCO to have the Struve Meridian Arc inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Jim Smith and I together with our colleagues of the 10 countries concerned: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine researched and prepared the documentation to present the project to UNESCO, who approved the work and, with an unanimity vote of all the ambassadors to UNESCO, inscribed our project on the World Heritage List in 2005.

This was a great achievement for our profession world-wide, and it was the first scientific project as well as the first with such multi-national involvement on the World Heritage List. Then in 2008 Jim and myself have, on demand of all 10 countries concerned, translated the two-volume 1000 page Report compiled by Struve, written originally in 19th century French, into two similar volumes in English, to make it available for all. Unfortunately only Norway and Sweden have paid their contribution to the translation of the work and 8 countries have not yet paid their commitment, arguing the financial crisis.

Since then we have prepared for an enhancement of the Struve Arc, with the approval of UNESCO. Jan de Graeve met the delegation in Paris in May 2016 and we have contacts to include the 30th meridian through East Africa and also with delegates for the link between the European nations and northern Africa. That link was only realized in 1955, after 75 years of intermittent work.

South Africa reports that invitations to partake and technical details have been passed to 8 of the countries concerned. There is a possibility of around 50 points between Helwan in Egypt and Buffelsfontein in South Africa forming the representative points out of a total of 603 survey points over 63° 47' latitude. (For the Struve arc there were 34 points between Fuglenaes and Staro-Nekrassowka out of an overall total of 265 survey points over 25° 20' latitude.). Additionally the Governing Council of the RCMRD (Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development) resolved at its meeting November 2017 to

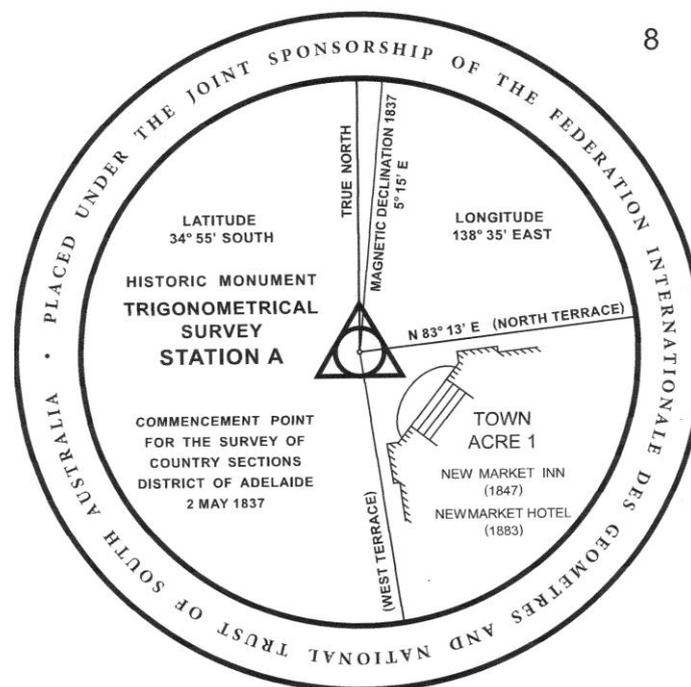
Encourage those member States, through which the 30th Arc of Meridian traverses, to participate in the proposal for the inscription of the 30th Arc of Meridian as a World Heritage Site.

For the connection between the 30th arc and an area towards the southern end of the Struve arc Ivan Aleksic is pursuing the possibilities. Any readers interested in assisting him in this can get in touch with Jan de Graeve via the FIG Office.

Every 2 years the delegates of the Struve concerned countries meet and the last meeting was in Estonia, where the extension to Spitzbergen (Nova- Zembla) was proposed by the Russian delegation so next year the meeting will be in Russia, possibly on Hogland (this island is a secret military base of submarines) situated between Scandinavia and the Baltic states, but more probably, in Saint Petersburg.

Jim Smith has worked with colleagues of South Africa on the meridian Arc and this Report has been presented during the IIHS&M conferences . This arc measurement has secured the scientific rigour of the cartography of the East African countries and made the infrastructures possible a great achievement. Jim is finalising the 650p book and will soon be seeking a publisher.

In Australia an historical trigonometrical station “A” in Adelaide at latitude 34° 55’ South and longitude 138° 35’ East is being commemorated by a bronze plaque sponsored jointly by FIG and the National Trust of South Australia. The idea for this has been pursued for some while by Kelly Henderson and Jan de Graeve and now the result will soon be visible.



Jim and I have been working together since 1985, that is over 30 years, compiling Notes on the History of Meridian Arc Measurements in determining the size and shape of the Earth. It is hoped that this work will be completed during this year. It will be some 2200pages of text and illustrations strictly in the form of Notes and will be available in 5 volumes, hopefully before next FIG general meeting.

The excellent History Symposium in Helsinki last year in connection with the Working Week had a full house crowd with superb presentations. The Symposium was organized by John Brock – the younger member of our Institution. John Brock also made it to the Article of the Month, which is now the fourth FIG Articles of the Month so far giving focus onto Surveying History.

Dear president and colleagues, personally I do regret that I will probably not be able to present this message at your General meeting , but I go on working to reconstruct the scientific library of Gerard Mercator, in the original 16th century books. Similarly Jim regrets that in the 50th year of his association with FIG it is unlikely that he will be able to attend. We welcome our colleagues to come and join us and we will continue to answer questions on the history of surveying/surveyors and past instrumentation. Hoping to meet you at the 2019 FIG Congress.

Jan De Graeve and Jim Smith

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