

IIHSM Report for 2016

After our report to the general Assembly in Christchurch the IIHS&M organized a one day symposium led by our PR man John Brock. Regretfully we personally could not attend due to medical problems. Jim Smith could not attend due to his wife's requirements of close attention and David Wallis, our honorary treasurer, is also now at an age where travelling is no longer advised. Hence we are in need of several new members who can be active.

This year in Ghent University we have attended the opening of the exhibition of the EDM instruments of the Wright - Draper donation to the University Science museum. For many years, with others helping, efforts were made to house the exhibit in the UK did not materialize. Hence the move to Ghent finally arranged through the efforts of IIHS&M officers.

In Uppsala Sweden we have "discovered" and then attended the auction of, the earliest known theodolite of 1566 by Ulrich Sniepp for sale, it sold for 3 000 000 S.krone which equates to over 300.000€. This item from a Swedish army collection has apparently remained in a Swedish collection.

We have been contacted by Imre Demhardt , chairman of The History Commission of the ICA (International Cartographic Association) with regard to the possibility of future joint meetings.

Concerning the Struve Meridian Arc that we put on the World Heritage List of UNESCO in 2005. Every 2 years there is a meeting of the 10 countries concerned namely: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine; local actions by each country are communicated centrally where the IIHSM is also represented.

In May 2016 we met with the director of UNESCO projects to inform the community of the aim of enhancement of the project over the central European countries , till Greece and Crete, crossing the Mediterranean Sea and along the 30th Meridian Arc of Africa, to extend the cover to 105° of latitude . This was indeed the original aim, signed by all countries concerned in the original documents to UNESCO and has been under preparation for the last 10 years due to the efforts of Jim Smith in particular and to a representative from Serbia for the central European countries and to our colleagues in RSA for both parts of Africa, from Egypt to South Africa. We welcome all Surveyors – General of the Concerned East African Countries to contact us for further cooperation and for local fieldwork and control of the existing trigonometric points of the original 30th meridian Arc.

We look forward on this occasion here in Finland to exhibit the 1000 page Struve Report, Jim Smith and I translated several years ago from early French into English, on the demand of the 10 countries involved by the Struve Meridian Arc. Copies can still be purchased through Jan de Graeve.

The year of the Chernobyl disaster we had prepared an exhibition on the figure of the Earth, which was due to travel in Finland, to commemorate the expedition by the French Academy in 1735, but was cancelled on the last minute. We wanted to take it there as a first occasion so the people in Lapland could see the fruit of nearly 300 years of measuring their country and researching the shape of the earth.

In 2017 the University of Princeton will digitalize a 1525 original Ptolomaeus document that is an important and uniquely annotated edition. This is possible due to the bringing together Of the 2 parts, the text from my collection and the Illustrated maps, bought 100 years ago by the University.

I have worked hard in recent years to look for and collect works of the famous surveyor and cartographer Gerard Mercator, so as to reconstruct his scientific library and to try and explain how he invented his projection with increasing latitudes, still in use today 450 years later and still unexplained.

We hope to deposit at the office in Copenhagen the original reports of FIG since 1878, when it was created, to reconstitute the archives of our international organization.

We welcome colleagues to come and join us to study history of our profession

Jim Smith
Honorary secretary

Jan De Graeve
director