

# Advances a Hundred Years Ago Mirror Those of Today



GW was launched nearly 25 years ago as *Surveying World*, then as now a joint product of RICS and a Dutch publisher. In between, there have been numerous changes, not just to the title but to the style, publishers, editor and above all, the business of chartered land surveyors.

An old land surveyor with a passing nod to allegedly the world's oldest profession, once said, 'I am a professional; I do it for money!' And it has been money that has driven the development of the profession with more than a little help from the military; we should never forget that human conflict has been the key driver for new technology, beginning with more efficient map-making. I was reminded of this recently at a Defence Surveyors Association symposium which heard a presentation on Surveying Egypt and Palestine

1916-18. That period was barely 15 years after the first manned and powered flight by the Wright brothers, yet by 1917 aircraft were being used for ground bombardment, air-to-air combat and aerial photography for mapping, both on the Western Front and in Palestine. That period too saw rapid advances in wireless communication, used by the Allies in the Middle East to gain advantage over their Ottoman enemy. At the same time, the siege of Gaza witnessed the last cavalry charge by the British Army (to be correct it was the Australian Light Horse under British command).

The first 17 years of this century have seen equally rapid change but with much wider impact on global humanity, testing its ability to absorb and adopt new digital concepts like Google Earth, smartphones, cloud computing, software as a service and social media, the influence of which, for good or ill, is still unfolding.

## Relax, we're in an Expanding Business

Over the years surveyors have often worried that they were about to be put out of business by the machines (back in 1949 someone predicted the world would only ever need six computers). They have had to contend with and adopt EDM, laser reflectors, GNSS, aerial and spaceborne imagery and laser scanners; all the time with ever more powerful computers to drive measurement technologies like photogrammetry and point cloud analysis. Despite worries that machines would put almost everyone out of work, they have, like the ever-expanding universe, continued to grow the market for geospatial applications into areas of measurement hitherto uneconomic or entirely novel (think movies).

I am writing this editorial for once not as an introduction to the issue's contents, much as I commend it to you, but because this is my last as Editor. You will see below a brief portrait of my successor: he will already be known to many of you. I am sure you will be in more than safe hands. Ian will carry forward GW and I am sure we will introduce new features and authors as our business expands.

In the meantime I want to say thank you to all the hundreds of contributors over the years who have provided such interesting copy, providing at least for me an outstanding education, at least to PhD level (!) in all aspects of measurement and surveying in all its myriad applications, even if as a professional I did it for money! Thank you for your time, patience and knowledge. I wish you all well.

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