

# New Chair for Geomatics PGB



At the RICS Geomatics Christmas Lecture on 8th December last year a new chair of the Geomatics Professional Group Board succeeded Chris Preston, who had held the position for the last three years. Gordon Johnston brings an interesting raft of skills and experience, particularly in hydrographic survey. GW is delighted to introduce Gordon to members.

Gordon Johnston has spent a working lifetime surveying and managing surveys and spatial data. After graduating from the University of Glasgow he embarked overseas to North Africa for a spell supporting land development projects and after a few years found himself joining what was then the Decca Survey Company, based in the UK, working on land-based survey control for UK and European offshore projects. It was about this time

that his exploits with a Land Rover and MoD assets suggested to the management that he should spend more time at sea, which he duly did!

By the mid 1980's Decca had become Racal Survey and Gordon was again overseas, this time in West Africa, undertaking offshore surveys and construction support work before transferring to the Aberdeen office as Area Surveyor and it was at this time he became a chartered surveyor just as he also became a father.

## Exciting Times

This was an exciting time with the introduction of user graphics and more complex processing of sensor data through computer systems; and of course the development and implementation of Differential GPS and then Wide Area DGNS to replace the long established radio positioning systems. Some of this work was recognised by the Royal Institution of Navigation when they elected him a Fellow in the millennium year 2000.

As chief surveyor of Racal Survey and then vice-president of Thales Geosolutions, Gordon continued to encourage and promote new methods and technologies as well as helping to develop a robust approach for the recruitment of new staff. This interest in the development of the staff and the wider profession led him to become a member of the International Board for the Standards of Competence of Hydrographic Surveyors and Nautical Cartographers (IBSC). As a Board member, then chair (2008-2010) of the IBSC, Gordon helped to introduce the Individual Competency System into the International Standards so that surveyors could demonstrate the currency of their competency to a recognized standard.

## Consultancy in a Time of Great Change

For the last ten years Gordon has been a technical consultant to a variety of companies and organizations in the Geomatics and Spatial Data community. This has been another period of change for surveyors with the issues of climate change, security, the Internet of Things and big data contributing to a dynamic workplace. New technologies and methods offer new opportunities and this is especially true of the coastal zone, the seas and the oceans which are particular passions.

Since 2008 Gordon has been involved with Commission 4 of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), where this interest in the oceans and seas is applied, particularly in the one day Blue Economy seminars and workshops held to promote and develop an awareness of the benefits and opportunities of developing our seas using hydrographic and seabed surveys to facilitate their responsible management in a sustained way.

As a member of the RICS Geomatics Global Professional Practice Board for the past four years Gordon continues to represent the coastal and hydrographic community and is keen to further develop the opportunities for young surveyors and those interested in developing their knowledge and understanding of the seas and oceans for the widest possible community and stakeholders.

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