

Back then it wasn't RICS's Strong Forte



GEO Business 2015 reflected the wide variety of practice in geomatics. But we don't attempt our hand at them all - unless perhaps the professional institutions want us to?

London's GEO Business conference and exhibition in May built on last year's inaugural event, attracting many more visitors this year. Conference delegates will have had a very wide menu of sessions and presentations from which to choose in addition to the workshop sessions. There was indeed something for just about everyone as you will discover in our report on the conference. Begins on page 19.

Now isn't that what geomatics is supposed to be all about? A big multiple-choice menu of options. We stay abreast of the many technologies and specialist services available to

help clients achieve their aims. Whether it's planning a new road through unmapped jungle, finding a route for a high voltage transmission line, a boundary survey between two or more properties or investigating buried utilities or archaeological remains, we have the tools to do it. Because surveying is an applied science – applied in many, many different areas – knowledge about the application is gained in the form of specifications and tolerances. But understanding these requirements, including the risks, only comes with the understanding of how survey data is applied and that comes from enquiry and experience. The Crossrail article (page 16) is a typical example.

We Specialise

Now here's the rub. None of us are skilled or experienced in all of these activities, even if in our early training we might have covered a bit of each. In our working lives we specialise. Some will work for large organisations to provide a mainly topographic survey function; others will work for survey firms in a similar capacity. Some specialise in measured building survey for development and letting, others in hydrographic surveys. Of course, over their working lives, many will have a career that spans more than one area of practice.

What we don't do is to try and do all of these things concurrently. This is reflected in our industry's professional bodies albeit too often in a rather muddled way. The Chartered Institution of Civil Engineering Surveyors one might think, with the clue in the title, are specialists in civil engineering and construction. The RICS of today, whilst claiming domain over all aspects of surveying, would probably concede that civil engineering has not been their strong forte. Indeed, back in the 1960s, it was exactly that, coupled with an exclusive 'professionals only' and often arrogant attitude towards surveyors who worked in construction that triggered the launch of CICES back then as the Association of Surveyors in Civil Engineering.

Now whilst not wanting to sow dissent where there is now harmony through good working relationships between both bodies, perhaps someone can tell us why CICES publishes articles on heritage and archaeological surveys and international boundary surveys? In the absence of an impending merger, I am not advocating that we start demarcation squabbles between our professional institutions but that perhaps both bodies include in their memorandums of understanding and other formal relationships something about the principal areas of practice in which they're engaged.

Wide Coverage

Just to emphasise, whilst this journal has sponsorship from RICS, it is an otherwise independent publication. As such we will always try to cover as wide a range of geomatics practice as possible. In this issue, you will find a major article on how Morgan Sindall's survey team working on a Crossrail contract have installed and managed a complex monitoring system to meet the requirement of Network Rail and the Docklands Light Railway (begins page 16).

We also have a report on Survey Ireland, which took place in May following several years absence from the calendar as the country pulls itself out of the problems that arose from the banking crash of 2008, an event which hit surveyors particularly hard. Hydrographic surveyors are also catered for with reports from Ocean Business and the event's special day devoted to the Blue Economy. We have a report from the world-surfing John Brock on the FIG working week in Bulgaria, but don't expect a technical account! Meanwhile, Tom Bramald and Karen Allenby report on where Newcastle University Geomatics graduates go after leaving university.

Lastly, we say farewell to Ken Hall who died suddenly in April. Ken was a member of RICS Council, former chair of the Geomatics Professional Group and president of CICES. A great surveyor who lived life to the full but left us all too soon. We also mark the passing of Frank Shepherd, whose textbooks on engineering surveying were the mainstay of many a surveyor's kitbag.

Enjoy the summer.

This article was published in Geomatics World July/August 2015

