

# Hydrography - Changing and Adapting

As I sit down to write this periodic column, I am reminded of the story of the grizzled old retired fisherman sitting in a waterfront tavern. It is a dreadful night, rain pouring down, a storm howling. He is asked whether he misses the sea. Puffing contemplatively on his pipe he replies "I'd rather be in here wishing I was out there, than out there wishing I was in here".

My present relationship with hydrography is something like that of the old fisherman and the sea. I maintain a keen interest in the subject and what is going on and I greatly enjoy the company of fellow surveyors. But if I am truly honest, I think I have to admit that I do not really miss being actively involved in the profession.

Hydrography in New Zealand has undergone many transformations over the past eight years or so, as readers of this magazine will be aware. At the end of last year, we marked another change-point milestone in this country. The Hydrographic Office of the Royal New Zealand Navy closed as the Hydrographic Service took overall responsibility for geospatial information in the NZ Defence Force. The survey service is now an arm of the triple-service organisation known (since defence forces the world over love acronyms!) as JGSF (pronounced Jigsif) - the NZDF Joint Geospatial Support Facility.

Founded in October 1949 but tracing its origins back to the founding of the Royal Navy's Hydrographic Office and beyond that to James Cook, the service has always been extremely adaptable. Speaking at the opening of the new facility, which has moved back within the Naval Base in Auckland, Commander Clive Holmes, Hydrographer to the RNZN and Director JGSF said, "The provision of timely and accurate geospatial information and imagery is vital to our Headquarters and Force Elements if we are to undertake successful military operations. The geospatial domain underpins our military planning, command and control, and the employment of forces in a range of activities from assisting civil authorities in natural or humanitarian disasters through to combat operations".

This is a positive change. Indeed, I wrote a paper making a very similar proposal before I left the service some four years ago. The time was then not right (and I doubt that my paper was even remembered as the present arrangement was being planned!) but times change and life moves on. The NZ military has - for economic and political reasons - had to wholeheartedly embrace what is termed 'jointery'; the three services have to work more closely together. The establishment of JGSF is a positive statement of support for the RNZN Hydrographic Service and the capabilities of the military and civilian personnel that it comprises. From times when the future of the Service looked to be uncertain at best, this move appears to have strengthened its place within the NZ Defence Force. The hydrographic part of JGSF will still be responsible for undertaking commercial hydrographic services on behalf of the RNZN in contract to the national hydrographic authority, LINZ (Land Information New Zealand) and such military hydrography as is required.

Hydrography has a long and cherished history and an honourable track record (as the "Old Hydrographers" pages and even the editorial in the last issue of this magazine attest) but we must keep moving forward and abreast of the times. All power to the current generation of surveyors!