

Small Change in Uns surveyed Waters

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I read recently, and with some surprise, that the ratio of the distance from the Earth to the moon compared to the diameter of the Earth is 30:1. Instinctively I thought the ratio was a lot greater. I also read an excellent description of why in mid-winter, the full moon passes high overhead while in summer it crosses low in the sky, along with the background as to why in the South Australian Gulfs, the high tide before local noon is greater than the other high tide until mid-February, then less until mid-October. Interestingly, this treasure trove of information was found in books published many years ago.

Hydrographic surveying has changed markedly over recent years with the advent of GPS technology, multi-beam echo sounders, Airborne Lidar Bathymetry, satellite bathymetry and data processing hardware and software. However, some aspects of our multidisciplinary domain have not changed so much, as demonstrated by the following passages taken from *Wrinkles in Practical Navigation* (Captain T.S. Lecke, 1881) and *Hydrographical Surveying* (Captain W. Wharton, 1882).

While Lecky wrote expansively on navigation and with great wit, he declined to write about the details of hydrography stating "If, however, Marine Surveying should be taken up by anyone who has a natural taste for that sort of thing, with leisure and opportunity for indulging it, he should study such books as are devoted exclusively to it, since it is a subject more difficult than many at first would suppose." He then directs his readers to Wharton, who opens his tome with: "An aspirant to its acquirement [of Hydrographical or Marine Surveying] should have a quick eye, should possess the ordinary good common sense that is necessary to secure success in all walks of life, but above all he must possess boundless capacity for taking pains in details at all times and seasons ... no day seems long enough. To them the interest is constantly kept up. Every day has its incidents".

Wharton goes on to suggest: "The accuracy of the work provides infinite gratification and continual satisfaction that a permanent record will remain to guide hundreds of his fellow-seamen on their way", but warns that: "The advice, 'Sotout, point de zele,' [very roughly: don't get all fired up] does not apply to surveying. Without zeal, and the utmost keenness for the progress of the work, the attention and interest will soon fail; and the necessity of constant application throughout long days and often extended into the night, will soon seem monotonous, and become a bore to one whose heart is not thoroughly in it."

So as we continue our labour with zeal for which "no day [is] too long and no task too arduous" it may be worth reflecting on the notion that despite the amazing technological advances we have seen in our field, much of the wisdom of our forefathers still remains as pertinent today, as when it was written in the 1880s.