

Educational Corner "Stones" - DISTURBED? GO FIGURE!

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During the course of a Comprehensive Review of a firm, the reviewer normally examines the files of eight surveys provided by the firm, and prepares an audit of the work relative to relevant Standards, Guidelines, Regulations and accepted common practice. During the process, a field inspection is usually made of three or four of the surveys.

While the purpose of the Comprehensive Review is to identify issues or areas of non-compliance for the attention of the firm being reviewed, the reviewer cannot help but notice minor issues, which in themselves are insignificant but which point to more significant problems.

For example, in a recent group of reviews, it was noted that several plans by different surveyors showed found evidence on surveyed corners with the conventional symbols and the notes "I.B. disturbed." Often no indication of the distance or direction of the displacement from the corner was shown and, in some instances, the identification of the firm that planted the bar was not shown. In some instances, when the monuments were examined during a field inspection, the monuments appeared to be upright and undisturbed.

The field notes for those surveys, usually reflecting total station or radial survey methods, did not indicate that the monuments were leaning or bent but simply included them in the listing of various monuments, building corners and fence corners tied in from temporary traverse stations. Effectively, it appeared that the field staff had simply tied in all the found bars and topographic detail, held a couple of bars or building ties as the basis of the survey, planted one or two monuments by radial measurement after some undocumented field calculations, and dumped the file for the office staff or surveyor to analyze.

The reviewer, armed only with the infor-

mation provided in the file, tries to understand why the found monument, which may have looked undisturbed in the field, was called off the property corner. Was it removed and replaced in the

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wrong position by an owner during landscaping or fencing, or was it rejected because it did not agree with its theoretical position as calculated in the survey office? If it was bent or disturbed, why was it not spun out and replaced? Who planted the contentious bar, and is it an original monument that should have been "accepted?" What evidence was available and relied upon at the time when the bar was planted? Was sufficient research made into the records of the firm that planted the bar before it was deemed to be in the wrong position?

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Asking these questions as the result of an ambiguous note on a plan may appear to be making a mountain out of a molehill, but if field staff do not look for the markings on found monumentation and if files contain little evidence of research into the records of the surveyor that planted the conflicting evidence, then there may be cause for concern.

Similarly, if the field notes do not show how the survey was made and which points of evidence were held for street line and for direction of sidelines, the reviewer is left, as a subsequent surveyor would be, unable to determine what was done and why it was done.

Whether the Survey Review Department has difficulty interpreting the contents of a survey file is relatively unimportant. What is important is whether a surveyor, to assist another surveyor or in the event of litigation or of a dispute, can produce comprehensive records showing how a survey was done, how the evidence was assessed, and what facts were relied upon. In this regard, Ontario Regulation 42/96, Section 9, requires that field notes "contain a clear and detailed account of everything found, observed, and done in the field in the course of and relevant to the survey," and this requirement extends to and includes fields notes of a survey made by total station or radial survey. Comprehensive Reviews, and the reports flowing from the reviews, hopefully provide the type of input required by surveyors to help them assess their practices and procedures. Some of the issues raised or questions asked may appear to be inconsequential or irrelevant. Occasionally they are, but as illustrated above, they can often assist a firm to recognize a potential problem or a facet of its work that warrants attention.



THE FIXED LINK
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