

WILHELM SCHWEYDAR

Head of the Geophysics Department
of the Geodetic Institute in Potsdam



1877 – 1959

Wilhelm Karl Schweydar was born on December 9, 1877, in Namiest near Brünn in Austria-Hungary. After his family moved to Glogau in Prussian-Silesia, he attended the local school from 1889 to 1898. His enthusiasm for natural science led him to Leipzig, Breslau and Heidelberg, where he studied astronomy, mathematics and physics until 1903. Subsequently, he received his doctorate in 1904 at the University of Heidelberg on the oscillations of the local plumb line.

Already one year before his doctorate Schweydar got an employment as an assistant at the Astrophysical Observatory in Potsdam. In 1905, however, he switched from astronomy to geodesy and took a position at the Prussian Geodetic Institute, which was also located on the Telegrafenberg in Potsdam. His duties initially included geographic longitude determination for the Brocken-Potsdam route, and leveling at the North Sea and Baltic Sea to determine the tide gauge point. Over time, however, he became increasingly interested in the physics of the earth's body. In 1911 he became head of the measuring station for the determination of perturbations of the plumb line in the "Reiche Zeche" shaft in Freiberg, which was formerly operated by Oskar Hecker. In 1914, Wilhelm Schweydar habilitated at the University of Berlin with a paper on elastic deformations and the rigidity of the earth's body. He then became a honorary professor at the University of Berlin in 1920.

Due to his expertise in the fields of astronomy, geophysics and engineering, Schweydar was appointed head of the Geophysics Department of the Geodetic Institute in 1923. From then on, he was particularly concerned with the development of new measuring instruments; for example, he acquired a patent for a seismograph, and he developed new types of torsion balances for gravity measurements. In 1924, he also introduced a simplified method for terrain correction, which improved the use of the torsion balance in hilly terrain or near buildings. In the same year, he was elected as an assessor to the board of the DGG, and from 1924 to 1943 he was also co-editor of the journal *Zeitschrift für Geophysik*. In 1926 Wilhelm Schweydar took early retirement due to health issues. However, he worked from then on as a consultant for various geophysical exploration companies, such as Seismos or the Royal Dutch Shell Group. He also undertook numerous trips that took him to Mexico, Egypt and the USA, among other places.

In 1929 Wilhelm Schweydar moved to Brione near Locarno in Switzerland, where he died on July 11, 1959 at the age of 81.

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