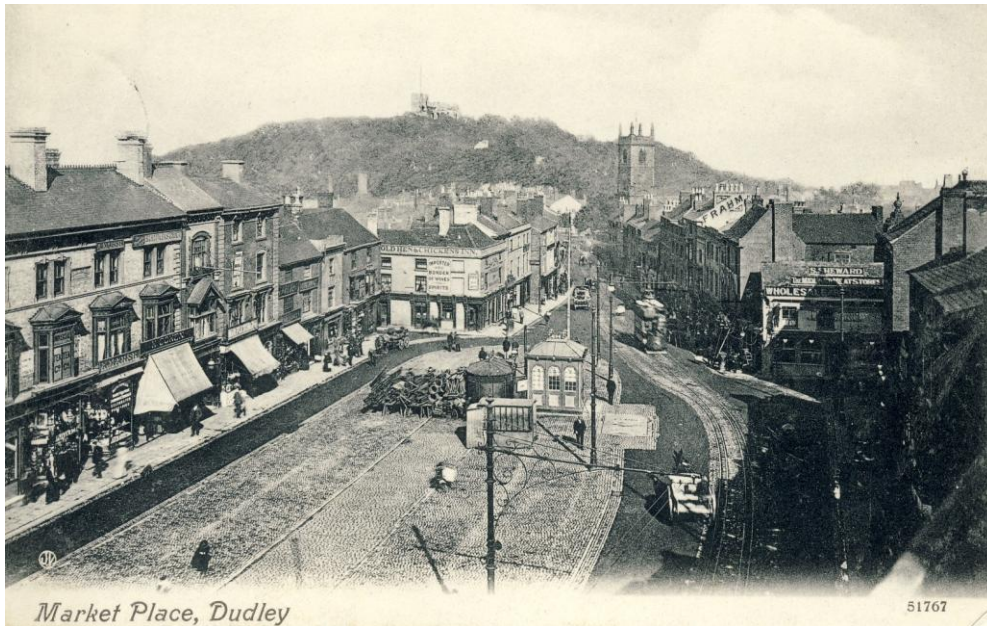


FULCRUM is the newsletter of ISASC(E), the International Society of Antique Scale Collectors (Europe). It is published in February, May, August and November. Contributions should be sent to the Editor, John Knights.



Old Weighbridges

Here (left) is a postcard circa 1905 showing the Market Place at Dudley in the so called Black Country in England. The interesting looking 'shed' with the ornate Queen Anne windows is the Town Weighbridge which was *in situ* until the 1930s. The plate can be seen in front of the hut



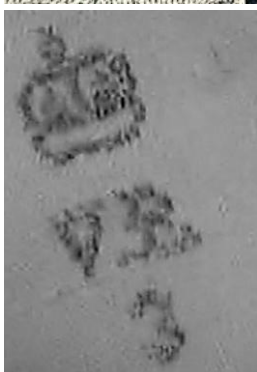
(below left).

Look Alikes

Back in 2009 a pair of Queen Victoria's Bloomers were sold for £4500 at a Derbyshire Auction room. The mighty garment had a waist



measurement of 50" (127cm) (being modelled (right) by someone of somewhat more modest proportions). The regal pants were authenticated by the embroidered Royal Cipher (below left); a



symbol not totally dissimilar from the verification marks on trade equipment of the age. VR3 is an Edinburgh stamp from the period 1887 – 1901.

Banting

After a few editions of absence I'm pleased to announce the

return of the ‘fat lady destroying a scale’ postcard. The two cards shown below come from an article about William Banting, provided by **Alex Harrison**. Banting wrote his pamphlet ‘**Letter on Corpulence Addressed to the Public**’ in 1863. Banting, who was an undertaker, was exceedingly obese which caused deafness (presumably because his ears were too fat!). He in effect predicted the, now fashionable, ‘low carbs’ regimes by eschewing ‘farinaceous’ foods which proved successful.

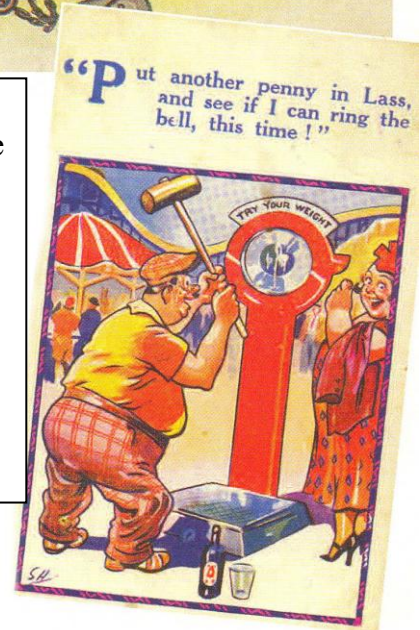
It would seem that up until that time there was little appreciation of any correlation between obesity and health. Being underweight was seen as a sign of poor health so conversely being as fat as possible was regarded as beneficial. This has some resonance even in our own time.

After the strictures of wartime rationing, children of the ‘baby boomer’ generation were encouraged to eat dairy and sugar products, when they became available. This was despite the fact that wartime privations had, apart from the bombs and stuff, been rather more beneficial to dental and cardio vascular well being.

The name Banting, being one of those happy ‘ing’ eponyms that effortlessly ‘back transforms’ into a participle, gave rise to the verb **to bant**, ie to go on a weight reduction regime (much as the verb **to oertle*** has been derived from **Oertling** in the lexicon of scale collecting).

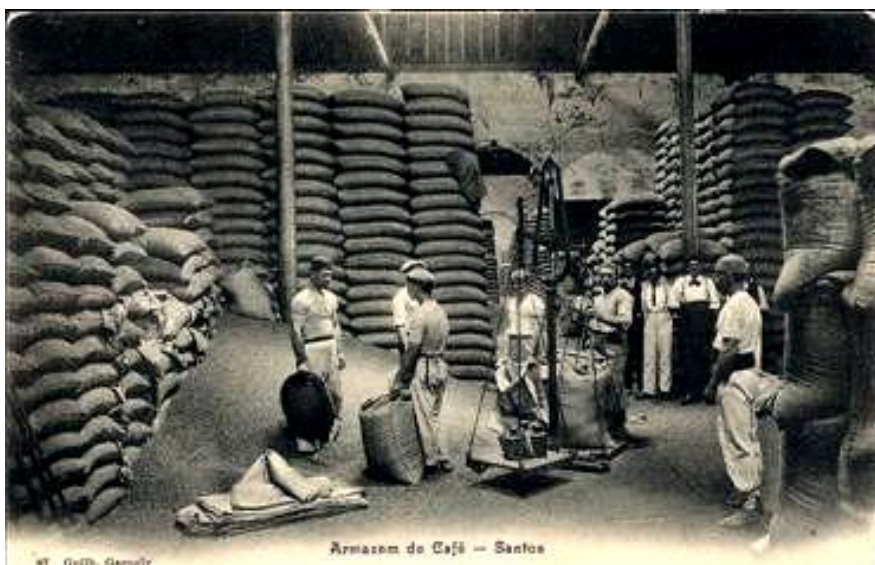


Above a conventional ‘scale destruction’ card. Below, a somewhat more surreal example where the man has mistaken the person weigher for a ‘Try Your Strength Machine’



There’s an awful lot of coffee in Brazil

Left we can see some of it being weighed into sacks. The scale appears to be an iron beam scale with Dutch end bearings. Santos is the largest port for the export of coffee and even boasts a Coffee Museum. I would suspect that the packing process is a little more



***To oertle: to conduct a search for rare instruments manufactured by the Oertling Company.**

cf. Q **Do you like Dorking?**

A **I don’t know, I’ve never dorked!** (*for the benefit of non UK members Dorking is a town in Surrey, England*)

mechanised these days. We thank **Vernon Denford** for this interesting postcard.

No Peas for the wicked!

I spent my working life in Local Government but I never told my mother!

She thought I was the piano player in a whore house and I didn't want to disappoint her. I passed my time, however, in various Weights and Measures and Trading Standards Departments where we regarded ourselves as the provisional wing of local administration and tried, with some success, to eschew the grosser bureaucratic nonsense that afflicted our ilk.

Do not imagine that the job was always one of sedentary pen pushing! We sometimes found ourselves undertaking some quite physical and, in retrospect, dangerous activities. We pushed around ton roller weights in the days when personal protective clothing consisted of a brown dust coat one size too small. We climbed tall ladders to peer into cavernous hoppers and ensure they were either empty or full (I can't remember which or why), we were frequently exposed to various dusts, fumes and noxious vapours now reported as having long term injurious effects (which is probably why I can't remember more about the hoppers).

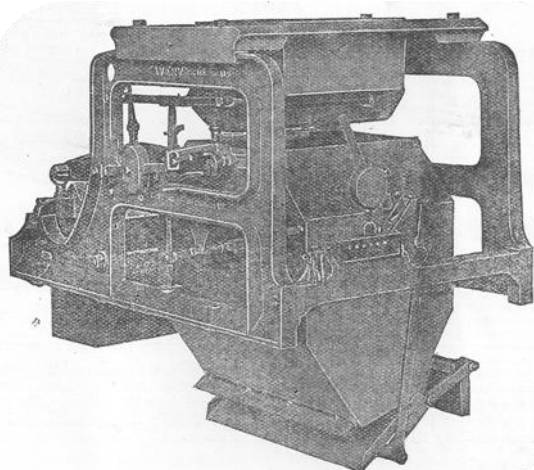
Peas are big in Lincolnshire where they are grown on an industrial scale, initially for canning and later for freezing. Today they are weighed on weighbridges as they arrive at the processing plant but formerly the weigher of choice was the so called automatic scale, aka batch weigher. The names of the components of the automatic are worthy of poetic declamation! 'Knock-off lever', 'slot joint lever', 'drop bar lever', 'loop toggle', 'weight toggle', 'pendant (with of course, the requisite 'pendant steady lever')' and 'beam plunger' to name but a few. The key to the success of the device was the 'compensating bar'. This had to be set up to allow for the unweighed material, yet to land in the hopper after the feed gate closed. This was a fiddly business and often caused difficulty. One summer's day in the early 1970s, having nothing better to do (this was local government) I wandered down to the nearby factory where I knew consignments of peas were being delivered. I asked about the weighing-in procedures and was shown the batch weigher which was merrily thumping away as the incoming peas passed through it.

The initial response to my interest verged on the supercilious! I was loftily advised that the scale had been expertly prepared by their expert scale contractor and I needn't worry my pretty little head about it. I nonetheless cast my eye over the machine, as it totted up the hundredweights. This

cursory glance revealed that the poise was loitering complacently at the rear end of the compensating bar. Had it had any pretensions of actually doing any compensating it should have been located about half way along it. I asked that the weighing be paused at the next full hopper. This was done rather grudgingly as it also meant stopping the whole line lest a pea avalanche result. I approached the scale with its hundredweight of peas held in the hopper and lifted the compensating bar from the beam. The said beam, which should have gently swung level, remained solidly down on its front stop. Only when some 8lb had been added to the weight box did the beam swing level. The

hundredweight of peas actually weighed 120lb! This meant that the Lincolnshire 'legumieres' were being systematically robbed of 7% of their crop.

The mood changed somewhat as the note book came out and law courts loomed! Frantic phone calls were made to senior management and a hapless, (expert), scale engineer was



Avery automatic scale
Dating from the early 20c, it was a successful pattern that remained in use for many years. (other automatic scales were also available)

dragged in to correct the machine. I subsequently made a report to my Chief Inspector suggesting unjust scale proceedings might be in order. I discovered however, that any understanding, within my department, of the workings of the automatic scale was confined mainly to myself and the matter was quietly dropped as being too complicated. The factory management did however have to recalculate all the payments made to their suppliers, prior to my visit so my efforts were not entirely in vain. **John Knights**

Back-weighing both ways

The hamlet of Kiplingcotes in the East Riding of Yorkshire is the location of the allegedly oldest horse race in England. Run annually since Tudor times the Kiplingcotes Derby takes place in March. It is a race for amateurs over 4 miles and is run on farm tracks rather than a proper race

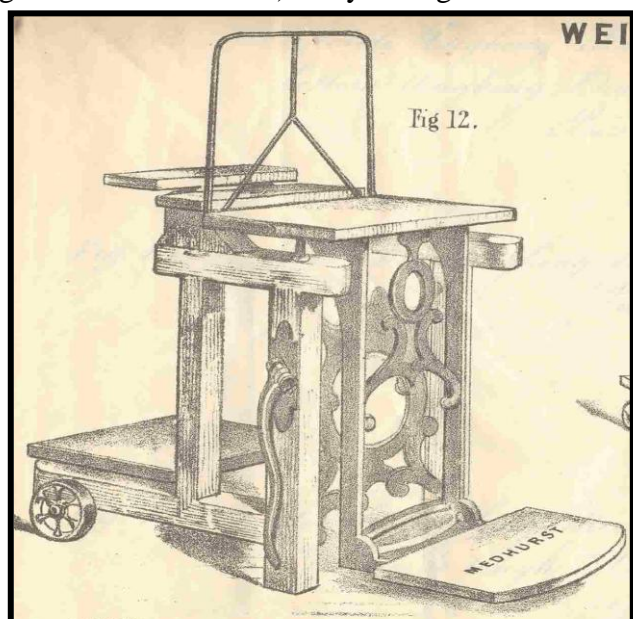


course.

All riders are required to weigh 10 stone (63.5kg) and, where necessary, are loaded up to meet this requirement. The photo (left) from the 1950s or 60s shows a rider being weighed on the 'traditional' coal scale, which is still used (presumably the only Tudor coal scale in the world). The rider is rather oddly standing on the weights plate with the 10 stone on the goods side. This would suggest the rider is being 'back-weighed', ie he is loaded up until the beam returns to the back stop. This gives an inaccurate result on an accelerating scale as the instability or power of the beam has to be overcome. It may only be a few ounces (depending on state of the scale) but you might as well do it properly as in the photo taken at the 2011 event (right).

More Medhurst

In the last edition mention was made of George Medhurst and his 'Double Scale'. This was a so called high pattern deadweight machine with a subsidiary foldable plate that could be deployed as required to allow weighing at ground level. The catalogue illustration was compared with an example recorded in 1970 and certain similarities noted. **Richard Herbert** has now supplied a picture from the Medhurst catalogue of about 1870 (right). This bears an even greater resemblance to the photograph and it is concluded that the pictured machine was quite likely a Medhurst (give or take a couple of spokes in the transport wheel).





Yet More Coal!

During the rainy Spring Bank Holiday in May, **David Apps** took himself off to Ely in the Cambridge Fens to look at the Streatam Pumping Engine (oh yes he did!). The steam powered engine required a copious supply of coal which was delivered through a tailor made hatch from the back of a cart. In the coal hole is a nice Avery platform machine to weigh the fuel upon delivery (fenfolk are a somewhat distrustful bunch).

The machine is a high capacity device equipped with a relieving gear. It looks like it ought to be a loose poise accelerator but is clearly a vibrating machine with a more modern travelling poise. It's a pity the scale does not appear to be receiving as much TLC as the pumping engine! We thank David for his diligence, which involved a bit of illicit probing behind closed doors (*we do like a bit of illicit probing!*), in recording this machine.

Ars Gratia Artis

Some years ago the Antiques Roadshow visited Ulverston in Cumbria, England (home of the Laurel and Hardy museum). During the course of the programme an expressionistic still- life picture by the contemporary artist **Mary Fedden** was featured. The picture included a nice little greengrocer's iron counter machine with a flat backed scoop (right). The style rendered the scoop unfeasibly vertical to the extent that the resident expert was unable to read its significance and declared it to be a paper bag (they know nothing!). These little accelerators can be picked up for peanuts these days, whilst the painting was valued at £40,000. Hmmm!



Dodgy scale corner

Oh! Oh! 7

In addition to being a scales bore (enthusiast surely!) I'm a bit of a film fan. I do like to spot the scale in the course of my viewing however especially where a nice metrological anachronism or other blooper is apparent (don't get me started on Miss Marple's mazak counter machine!). Clint Eastwood westerns are quite good for spotting the odd scale. The steely eyed vigilante is oft to be found belting the living daylights out of some ne'er-do-well in the vicinity of a Fairbanks platform. Speaking of 'The Living Daylights' (see what I did there?) I was recently watching the James Bond film of that name on the television. This film was inexplicably devoid of scales until they got to the bit where some bad guys were selling opium to some other bad guys in the desert. Payment was being rendered in the form of diamonds and these were being weighed, after a fashion. Clearly there isn't



the money there used to be in drugs as the 'scale' being used was some hopeless piece of shiny brass tourist tat usually to be found in a tacky gift shop (above right). They'd probably blown the budget on vodka martinis and jet packs so had had to economise on the really important props. **John Knights**



Typical 'decorative' brass beam often (regrettably) described as a 'diamond scale'

A Victorian Event

During our holiday on Guernsey, we popped into the National Trust property "The Victorian Shop". There were two happy ladies in mock-Victorian costumes studying the sweetie scales, a black roberval with a brass scoop, made by F.W. Thornton Ltd, that had to be all of five years old. Apart from a bent pointer, I could see no reason for their attention on it. They explained that the W&M inspector was coming the next day because she had seen them selling sweeties at Le Vieue Marché, the annual fair that attracts hoards of visitors eager to sample local food, activities and craft demonstrations. They said that they weren't worried that the scales did not exactly balance as they always gave extra, "Because you can't cut a Victorian-style sweet in half, and anyway, that scale passed last year".

So we wandered round the typical Victorian room-setting and listened to stories being read in Guernésaise, and returned to see one lady exchanging the scoop on the sweetie scale that had passed with the scoop from a scale that had not passed (another roberval, anonymous, c.1990). She gave it a tap or two, and watched the scoop settle well down. She lifted the scoop with a sigh, removed a silver sixpence and some Blu-Tac from the spider and tore off half the Blu-Tac. She firmly re-attached the sixpence with the remainder and popped the scoop back. She looked pleased as the beam now sat more-or-less horizontal. She placed the 4oz iron weight back in the weight pan, "As it lives there", and put the aluminium spoon for getting sweeties out of the big jars back onto the scoop. She turned to her friend and said, with a great air of innocent satisfaction, "Now the W&M lady will pass it".

Little did she know how Victorian she was being! And as a good ISASC member, I'd better not confess to the giggles that convulsed me! **Diana Crawford-Hitchins**

Editor's note F.W Thornton of Wolverhampton make the Viking brand scales which are now, as far as I know, for domestic use only. I suspect the Inspector would not have been too happy, even without the Blu-Tac. (*Blu-Tac is the trade name of a reusable adhesive putty in the UK. It may be called something else in other parts of the world, even other Anglophone countries. Our friends in the antipodes are wont, I believe, to refer to 'Sellotape' as 'Durex' and 'Flip-Flops' as 'Thongs'. Both of these words have significantly different meanings in the UK.*)

Obituary

Serge Camilleri

Serge Camilleri was a very early member of ISASC, and remained a valued member until his recent death, being for many years the ISASC European representative. He used to attend ISASC meetings in Britain when his health permitted, but I don't ever remember his passing on any complaints from the people he represented! Maybe he was just too tactful! He was a committed collector of folding gold balances, and had an excellent knowledge of their makers. He wrote some erudite pieces for EQM that improved our knowledge greatly. Born in Egypt and educated in Europe, he had a good command of languages, which immensely impressed us in Britain, but he is chiefly remembered for his gentle and courteous manner, his warmth as a friend and his delight in all new experiences. It was such fun to be in his company, he will be greatly missed.

We send our condolences to his widow Simone, who still lives in Switzerland, near their son Patrick. He also leaves his daughter Maria-Carla and three grandchildren.

Diana Crawford- Hitchins