

FULCRUM

The News Letter of the European Chapter, 9th Edition, November 2010

(A special 6 page edition to allow for the inclusion of a tribute to Jack White)

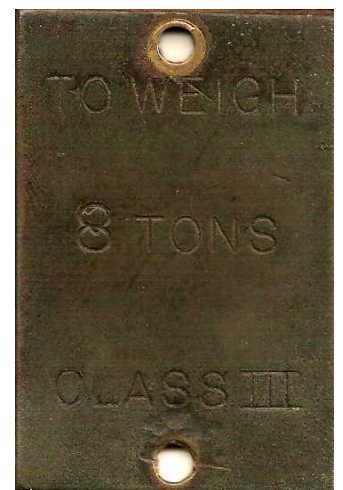
Old Weighbridge

Way back in Issue 1 we had a picture, courtesy of **Norman Biggs**, of an early weighbridge and he



asked if there were any other examples. This little, derelict weighbridge, in a disused railway yard at Gorleston in the east of England, was photographed shortly after the line closed in 1970. It may be a little more prosaic than Norman's octagonal kiosk but it's still quite interesting. The machine was made by Samuel Denison & Son of Leeds and was from about 1900, judging by the capacity plate,

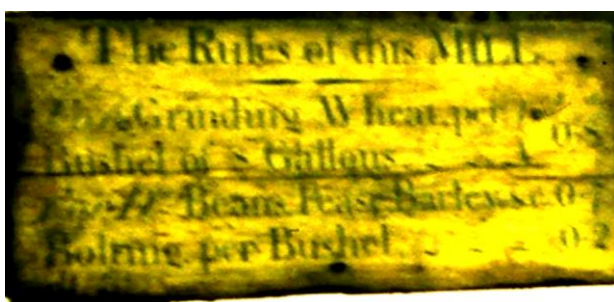
(which spontaneously leapt into my hand as I studied the ancient mechanism). The site is now buried under the A12 dual carriageway which was subsequently built on the rail route. **John Knights**



Loose poise accelerating steelyard

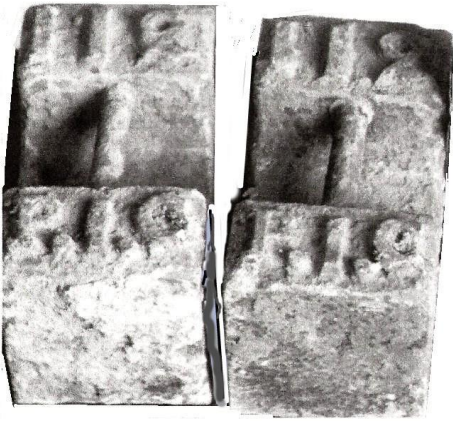
The Miller's Thumb

In edition 7 we had a piece about the joy of watermills and windmills. This mill tariff board is displayed in the Gloucester Folk Museum. It probably dates from 19th C. It shows the milling rates to be by the bushel of 8 gallons. Millers were a key member



of the community and were sometimes described as 'jolly' (see also Green Giants and Hockey Sticks) as in the several pubs of that ilk (right). Symkyn the Miller, in the Reeve's Tale, however, had a 'Thombe of Gold'. This was presumably a reference to his dishonesty perpetrated by use of his thumb (a legendarily substantial digit, developed by the continual testing of flour samples*) which, he 'allegedly' (lest Chaucerian characters happen to be particularly litigious) stuck in the measure when selling flour.

* A similar 'work' related enlargement known as 'texter's or 'gamer's' pollex is now afflicting the 'youth of today'



Weird (Weighty) Weights These rusty old 112 lb weights were seen in a rural museum somewhere in the far west of Wales about 35 years ago (I wonder if they are still there). I seriously doubt whether any member would actually take one of these home, even if the opportunity presented itself, but I stand to be corrected. Has anybody ever seen a cwt weight in the wild?

‘More an Antique Roman than a Dane’

You have to admire the Scandinavians.

Of all the peoples of the world they seem to have cracked the secret of enjoying a nice life. They even manage to smile at the eye watering tax levels that they have to pay to fund the utopia. In Denmark there is a word ‘hygge’ which refers to the sense of well being to which all Danes aspire. To those with an interest in historical metrology these northern climes are fascinating. You see soft fruit and potatoes sold by volume and the bismar is either only recently consigned to the museum and antique shop, or in some cases, still in use on the market. Along the wall in the chamber of the Danish Parliament or **Folketing** there are four sculptures, by one Just Nielsen Sondrup, representing **Fishing, Commerce, Agriculture and Craftsmanship**. **Commerce** is portrayed as a standing male figure with a bag of something, hooked onto his scale, which he is apparently about to weigh (see right). Interestingly the scale is neither symbolic Beamscale nor Nordic Bismar but a rather more mundane Roman Steelyard. The much-vaunted importance of metrology is incorporated into the seat of democracy in this fascinating country.

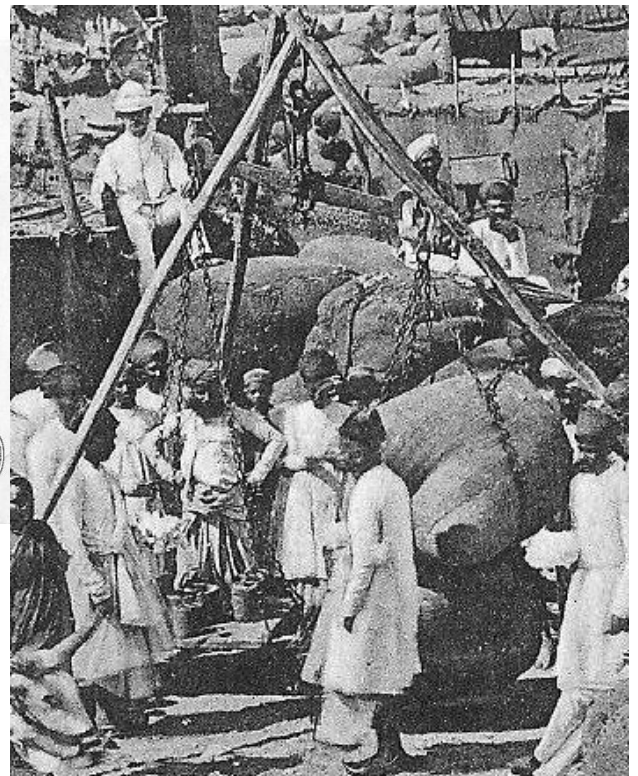


Weighing round the world

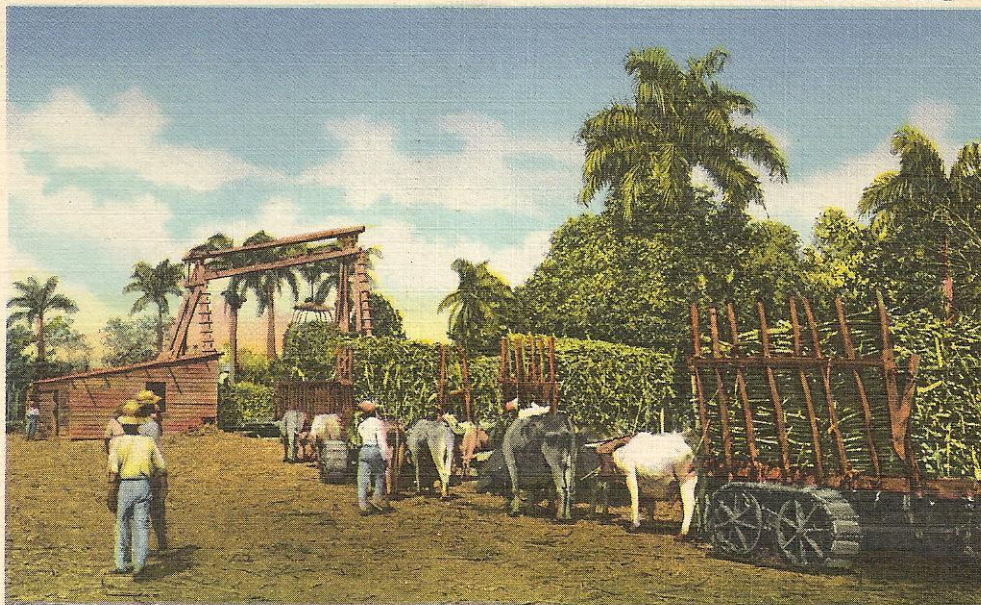
Some more postcards showing stuff being weighed! The first features cotton, in Bombay (or Mumbai as the residents now prefer),



Bombay, Cotton dealings



sometime around 1900, judging by the ‘Big White Carstairs’ types sitting round watching other people doing all the work. The bales are being weighed on a large iron beamscale, with Swan Neck ends, suspended from a rather precarious looking tripod. There is much interest being shown, presumably by the growers, in the value of the weights on the plate. The second (below) shows loads of sugar cane being weighed in Cuba, on what appears to be, some kind of overhead weigher. It looks like a more up to date version of the 18th century cart steelyards as recorded at Soham, Woodbridge and Kings Lynn in England. This machine appears to be a multi lever overhead weigher from which the waggon loaded with sugar cane is suspended. It would be nice to know more about this interesting looking device.



Weighing Sugar Cane

9B H223

More Family Matters

ISASC(E) has once again come to the aid of a seeker after ancestry truth. A lady in Shepperton, England whose father was one Albert Sommers (owner of a scalemaking business called A.E. Sommers & Co Ltd) requested a copy of

Diana's 1990 EQM article, concerning the Sommers family's scalemaking activities in the 18th century. This was duly supplied and we are told 'it will tie up a few loose ends'. Happy to help!

Printed Tickets from Personal Weighing Machines

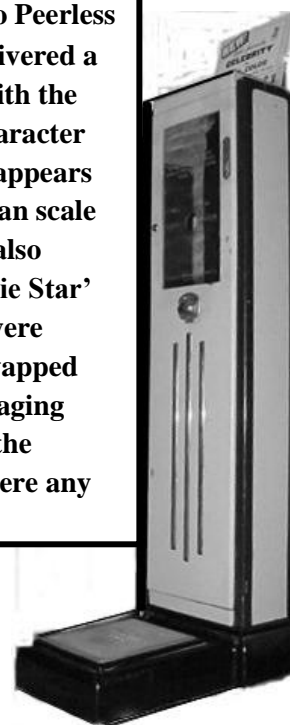


Can anyone tell me when it first became common for coin freed weighing machines to deliver printed tickets? Nowadays the cards are collectable and are regularly offered for sale. They are quite common with dates in the 1930s, and I have seen one dated 1928 (left). It is rather surprising not to find earlier ones, since **Everitt's** patent of 1884 for

operated personal weighers clearly mentions the delivery of printed tickets. The technology for producing the cards

coin-

(Right) Art Deco Peerless Scale, which delivered a ticket printed with the weight and a character appraisal. This appears to be an American scale where the card also featured a 'Movie Star' picture. These were collected and swapped etc, thus encouraging frequent use of the machine. Are there any earlier ones?



certainly existed at that time, following **Chameroy's** patent of 1875. **Norman Biggs**

The Bob Holdaway Collection Members may be interested to know that Richard Holdaway is in the process of disposing of items from the collection of his father, the late Bob Holdaway. Those familiar with Bob's interest in the history of legal metrology will know that the collection consists largely of weights and scales associated with weighing for trade. There is also an extensive collection of books and other documents dealing with various aspects of the history of weights and measures law and technology. Anyone wishing to know more about the collection or who may be interested in purchasing any items is invited to contact Richard, whose details are shown in the membership list.

The Pooley Weigh Tables, the next instalment

In the last newsletter we featured a piece concerning the Railway Weigh Table set formerly situated at Ashford in Kent. Gordon Maslin, who submitted the piece (and who is now a welcome new ISASC member) tells us that a home for this equipment has now been found. It is now earmarked for reinstallation at the Fawley Rail Museum near Henley upon Thames. The device is something of a jigsaw puzzle and re-construction will not be easy. The curator of the Avery Museum has however come up trumps and found useful documentation which should assist in the complex process. Please see below if (like me) you don't know what I'm talking about!



The Pooley Weightable 'Ikea' kit as it currently stands. Hopefully it will be re-assembled

October Meeting

The Autumn meeting and Society AGM was held on 10th October at the Yew Lodge Hotel at Kegworth. Owing to certain regulars being indisposed or otherwise engaged attendance was a little depleted. This was unfortunate as we were lucky enough to have **Andrew Lound**, the new Curator of the Avery (now Avery Weigh-Tronix) museum in attendance. Andrew took the theme of **Victorian Scales and Weights** to heart and came dressed in full 19th century costume. He gave a highly professional illustrated lecture on the history of the Avery scale business from its small beginnings through to



A selection of Janet's decorative postal scales plus a picture of a naked lady standing on a scale (which cheered me up)

its domination of the scale trade at the end of the Victorian era. In the mid 19th century the business was overshadowed by other weighing machine makers in the West Midlands and the North West of England, such that it did not even show its wares at the Great Exhibition, unlike those competitors. Through diligent management and some commercial



Andrew Lound, apparently about to tie a young lady to a railway line

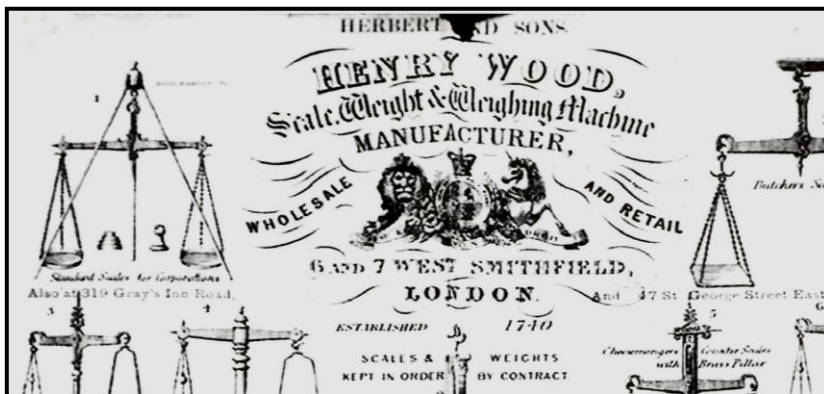
ruthlessness; first by generations of the Avery family and later by the somewhat scary sounding William Hipkins; the business eventually came to

dominate British and even world markets. Andrew indicated that the museum is being well supported by the current management and that it is destined to continue as a valuable repository of important artifacts and documents. **Janet Scarratt** gave a very personal account of how she and her late husband **Noel** got into scale collecting, almost by accident. This impulse purchase grew into the fine collection that they put together over more than 30 years. All of us who have been privileged to see the Scarratt collection, of which Noel was so proud, thank them for that happy serendipity all those years ago. We also heard from **David Fuller** who showed us some of the nice pieces of Victoriana that he has acquired over the years. These ranged from a fine box-end standards beam from Denbighshire to little cast iron counter machines. These were produced by the thousand in the 19th century and were important tools in the retail trades of the Victorian era. Whilst there was a clear contrast between the beautiful 'pietra dura' postal items from the Scarratt collection and these more humble trade pieces, it was an illustration of the scope and possibilities of scale collecting

which makes it such a fascinating hobby. The facilities and catering were excellent and those attending enjoyed a most convivial occasion.

European Societies **German Society** meeting 13 – 15 November 2010, **Dutch Society** meeting 11 December 2010. Details from **Jaap Visser** our European Representative

Herbert's 250 Year Celebrations Last July, **Jenny Hutchinson** and I were invited to



Part of a large sheet showing how Herbert & Sons adapted Henry Wood's card, adding "Successors to" and "319 Grey's Inn Road" and "47 George Street East"

Richard Herbert's smart dinner held near Haverhill in a delightful hotel and barn. There was a superlative exhibition of Herbert scales, weights, catalogues and advertisement that had Jenny and me quivering with excitement. The exhibits ranged from early coin scales by the Woods, went on to early Herbert's boxes, progressed

through lots of Herberts' 19th century counter scales, right through to digital read-outs in the 21st century. He even put out

early catalogues and scrap books, trusting his guests to look without destroying them. There were some unexpected oddities, like a Standard Yard made by Herberts, two lovely dumpy iron weights and a large poster sized single sheet catalogue originally cut for Henry Wood, but altered for Herbert & Sons, adding their name and their various addresses (above). Richard put out a handsome inverted roberval with vivid enamelling. It was a truly excellent example of a scale that the user would put in pride of place on his shop counter, implying thereby that his goods were of the best quality. Some of the material is now on the Herbert's website herberthistory.co.uk, which is a model of how a website can hold fascinating photographs and documents. Do have a browse through it! **Diana Crawforth-Hitchins**

Management Committee Bulletin 2010-03

During the ISASC(E) Management Committee Meeting of 10.10.10 the following points were discussed.

Due to some officers wishing to stand down at the next elections in Autumn 2011, the finding of volunteers to replace them becomes paramount. Any member who can help in this respect should contact Norman Biggs or Thomas Allgeier.

The success of the **Crawforth Index** prompts the Committee to attempt producing digital copies of publications that now only exist in paper format - **watch this space!**

The **pot plates project** is moving forward and progress has been made. It will contain pictures with a little text.

Diana informs us that further copies of the **sovereign rockers booklet** have been produced for sale.

We are looking into the possibility of setting up of a "Paypal" system for online subscription payments. The U.S. chapter already uses this system. But for the forthcoming subscriptions please use the existing system **and remember that paying before 01.01.2011 qualifies for a £5 discount.**

A new publicity leaflet has been produced and copies will be given to members for distribution.

Further copies will be printed when comments from members have been considered.

The Committee agreed that the standard price for the **Crawforth Index should be £25 including p&p for single copies, and £20 per copy for additional copies.**

Andrew Lound (the new curator of the Avery Museum) will be consulted on various subjects where co-operation between the museum and ISASC may be possible.

Thomas Allgeier

Jack White (1930 – 2010)

Those of us fortunate enough to have known Jack are now feeling a deep sense of loss. A cheerful, modest, approachable man of great ability, he would willingly offer practical help and advice to anyone struggling with a scale which was not functioning as it should, and many members of ISASC have benefited from his knowledge and assistance.

Blessed with a dry sense of humour, Jack was a wonderfully entertaining speaker, as we who heard him at Society meetings will testify. He could be relied on to produce at least one entertaining anecdote in every talk he gave, and it was this ability to see the humorous side of life, combined with a deep and genuine interest in people and things, which made him such a rare person, and one who will be greatly missed. To quote the words of his favourite song, 'unforgettable'.

From the age of 14, Jack's working life was

spent at W & T Avery Limited, for whom he was a Service Engineer, and he rose to be foreman of their West Yorkshire branches in Wakefield, Batley and Halifax. He was full of tales about his days there, the fun that he and his workmates had, and the escapades they were involved in. One especially memorable tale involved keeping a mouse in the basement of the branch. There is little doubt that some of these activities would not have met with managerial approval! One aspect of Jack's work was however met with very great approval and appreciation. This was the installation of the first system for weighing coal trucks in motion. This work was undertaken at a local power station, and took six months to complete. Jack was justifiably proud of this ground-breaking achievement.

As members of ISASC, we naturally knew Jack as a scale enthusiast, but scales and weights were by no means his only interest. He enjoyed sport, and was no mean sportsman. In his youth he played table tennis to a high standard, and in company with Les D'Arcy, attended the World Championships in Sweden. He was a notable Rifle Club champion as well as a golfer and rugby player.

He was fascinated by, and knowledgeable about, the Ancient Egyptian civilisation and the Pyramids. He always described his visit there as a highlight of his life. In collaboration with a friend, he restored an MGB car, to which he was very attached. He loved the music of Al Jolson, Glenn Miller and the Big Bands, and was a great fan of comic verse and monologues. In addition, if he could find a new puzzle or conundrum with which to bemuse and baffle a friend, his day was made.

Jack was a true collector and he certainly collected! Not just scales and weights but items which at various times ranged from antique jewellery to a Pianola complete with music rolls; taking in (amongst other things too numerous to mention) crested china and LPs on the way. Jack had collected them all, and enjoyed finding out about the items in his collection. He was always delighted when he could intrigue a fellow collector with his latest acquisition, usually prefaced by "Now then, you'll not have seen one of these before . . ."

We are told that when the Great Day of Judgement comes, we will be weighed in the balance. If this is indeed so, we can be absolutely certain of one thing. If Jack has had anything to do with it, as he surely will, St Michael's scales will definitely be accurate!

Jenny Hutchinson



Jack White as we remember him; being both passionate and highly amusing about a beautiful 'Harp-Top' brass beam scale