
F V L C R U M



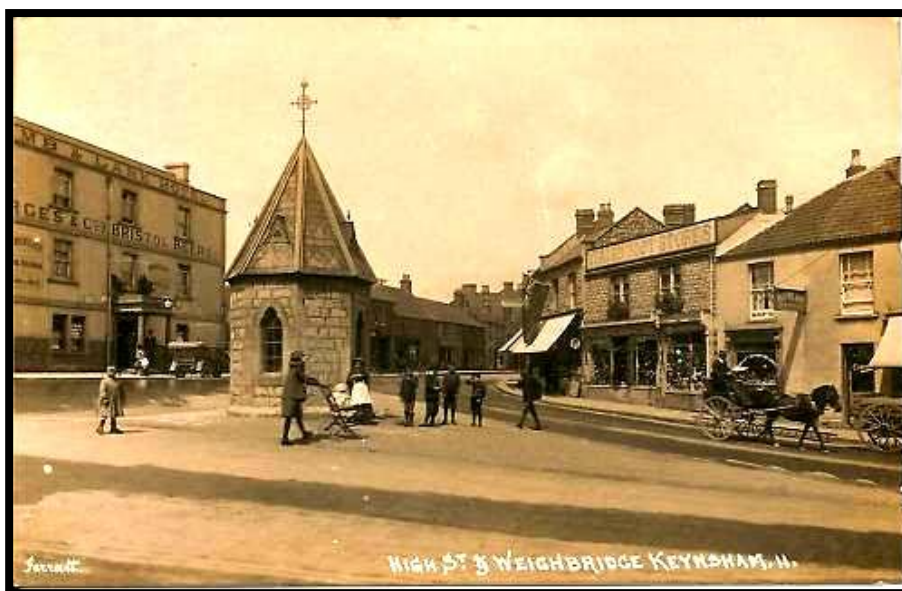
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FULCRUM is the newsletter of ISASC(E), the International Society of Antique Scale Collectors (Europe). It is published in February, May, August and November. Contributions should be sent to the Editor, John Knights.

Yet Another Old Weighbridge!

Here is an old post card, probably circa 1900, which features the weighbridge in Keynsham High Street. The cabin is an ornate octagonal, stone built, Gothic job complete with ecclesiastical effects. The weighbridge was apparently used by the Gas Company to weigh coke (makes a change from coal) and was replaced by public toilets in the 1930s. There must be a joke in there



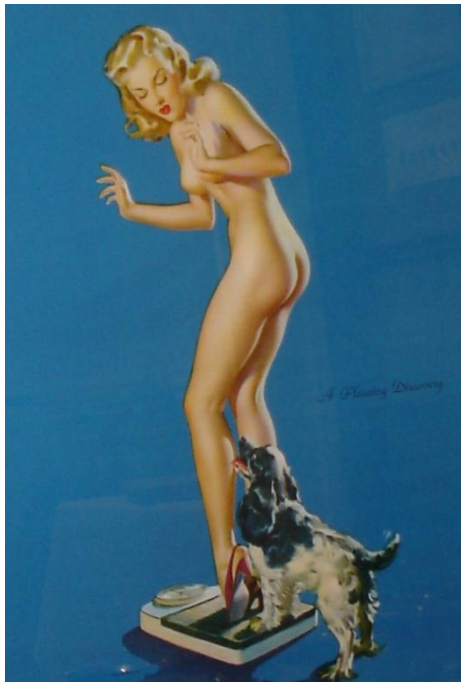
somewhere! Keynsham is near Bristol in the south west of England. Its claim to fame is that it was once the home of one Horace Batchelor who used to advertise his 'famous infra-draw' football pools forecasting method on Radio Luxembourg back in the 1950s. He always ended the advertisement by spelling out the town's name, letter by letter so that punters would correctly address their envelopes. Thus K- E- Y- N- S- H- A- M became something of a national catch phrase. We were easily pleased in the 1950s.

Just when you thought there wouldn't be any coal

Here we have some chaps, very much posing for the camera whilst weighing up solid fuel at the station yard in the Lincolnshire



village of Sibsey, during the inter war years. Sibsey stands on the rump of the East Coast line that runs from Skegness to Boston. The line once ran all the way from the Humber to Kings Cross London until it was butchered in the 1970s. Sibsey lost its station in the 1960s and the trains now rattle straight through without stopping. The coalmen are unusually using a lightweight, wooden agricultural scale (see edition 11). It must be hoped they were gentler with their scales than the average 'coalie'. The chap at the front looks as though he is keeping a watchful eye on proceedings and presumably, his scale!

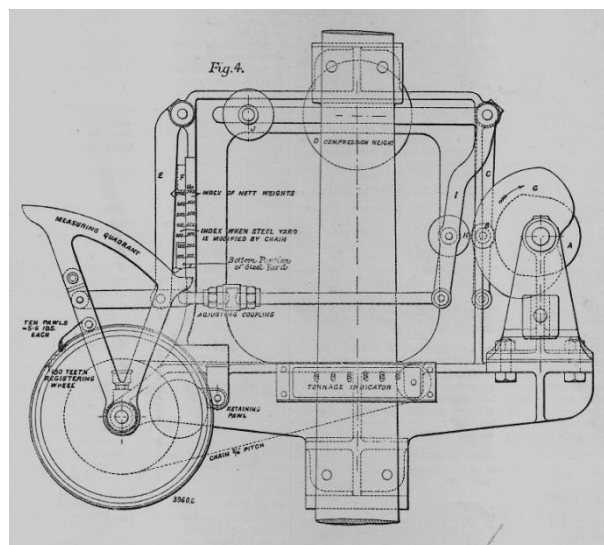
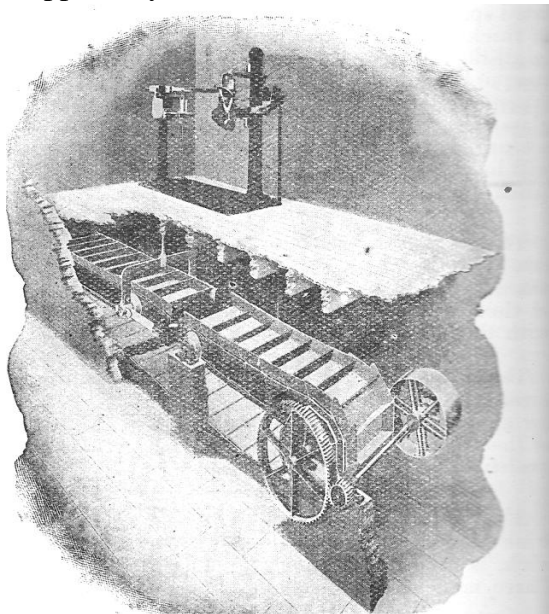


Look Alike

Two similar scenarios with contrasting moods!

The rather decorous lady is clearly greatly relieved to realise that the unwanted weight is being caused by the dog standing on the bathroom scale. Hence the caption 'A Pleasing Discovery' (I know we've featured this picture before but who's counting?) The little boy, on the other hand, appears to be delighted by the

perceived increase, apparently resulting from his seaside holiday. He will doubtless be disappointed when he realises the truth. The picture of the lithe lady, who clearly carries no excess poundage, or even kilogrammage, is part of the **Janet Scarratt** collection of 'metrologica'. The 1950s postcard was supplied by **John Wintour**. We thank both members for their contributions.



The wonderfully clanky **Blake-Denison** belt weigher, first introduced in 1902. The mechanism weighed the moving load by locking the steelyard in its inclined position, as caused by the pull of the load on the weigh table, and measuring the degree of inclination with a reciprocating cam. The weighing cycle had to be accurately timed to coincide with the filling and clearing of the weigh length of the belt. The degree of each cam rotation was converted to a reading on a digital display.

Eppur si muove

I was reading the October 1902 edition of the Monthly Review of the Incorporated Society of Inspectors of Weights and Measures (there's not much to do in these parts) and came across an article by A.H. Rutherford, Chief Inspector of Weights and Measures for the city of Leeds, concerning the new fangled Blake-Denison continuous weigher (above). As it was outside the Model Regulations that applied at that time, Mr Rutherford had been called upon to evaluate this wondrous machine, that weighed material passing along a moving belt and suggest appropriate test methods, error tolerances etc. In due course such machines did become prescribed and were known as 'belt weighers' or later on (inevitably I fear) as 'continuous totalising instruments'

Riveting (zzzz) as this piece was it brought back the somewhat disturbing memory that I had actually once tested one of these antique devices during the course of my own, for want of a better word, career. This did occur in the 1960s, and the machine was, admittedly, a slightly later model than the 1902 prototype. At this time I was but a humble (and youthful) bag carrier so I not so much tested the machine as stood around watching someone else test it. Nonetheless I still remember the Blake-Denison with a degree of affection. The machine's operation involved a host of cogs, cams, chains, levers etc which clicked, whirred and clattered as the passing load was miraculously totalised and displayed on an unimpressive row of little numbers. I subsequently did test a number of belt weighers, in my own right but they were of a somewhat more modern pattern than that appraised by Mr Rutherford.

The totalisation of moving loads by mechanical means was a fascinating process, whether achieved by arithmetical chunking as with the Blake-Denison or balletic calculus as in the elegant Merrick rotating disc system.

Unlike many machines the workings were on open display and could be seen as they performed the summation. Today of course the totalisation is performed electronically and there is nothing to see except a row of digits, as electrons fly around minute printed circuits. **John Knights**

Medieval Medicine



Even older than the aforementioned 'ancient' belt weigher is the above illustration which **Brian Brass** obtained from the British Library during one of his visits (I trust it didn't involve the mutilation of a priceless palimpsest). It shows a 14th century apothecary supervising the manufacture of medicines. Remedies of the day were made from 'natural ingredients' such as sweet herbs and vegetable matters, as shown on the round table in front of the seated chemist (clearly perspective was not a strong point of Mary Fedden in edition 12).

Medicines could also, unfortunately, involve divers dangly bits of animals so I don't really fancy the dog's chances. Clearly there was a certain amount of precision to the dispensing process as the



AN EXTRAORDINARY EXHIBIT.

An exhibit which excited no little curiosity, and a vast amount of amusement, at Sheffield, was a fearfully and wonderfully constructed machine—it would be an insult to conventional weighing instruments to call it a “scale”—which hailed from Cumberland, where our colleague, Mr. W. B. Barry, seized it in use in a greengrocer's shop on the 23rd September at Whitehaven. In the Police Court Mr. Barry demonstrated practically that it was possible to

illustration shows a traditional apothecary shop, complete with tin-glaze drug jars, gunmetal mortars and ornate beamscales. Who needs soaring Alpine vistas when there is a picture of a nice scale to look at?

apothecary is holding a substantial, albeit improbable, set of balances (the artist's mechanical comprehension apparently being on a par with that of perspective). Illness, including the ever popular Black Death was big in the 14th century so doubtless medicine was in great demand.

More Medicine

Alex Harrison found another picture (left), relating to early medicine, which he kindly forwarded. Whilst half way up a Swiss Alp

near Zermatt, Alex found an information board which described uses of the bearberry (arctostaphylos alpina); a plant local to the area. In addition to helping bears perform their legendary arboreal functions with regularity, the fruit has long been used in medicine for treating bladder and kidney complaints in humans. The



Ashford Weigh Tables, The latest news

Gordon Maslin has been in touch with an update on the project to re-locate and preserve the Ashford weigh tables.

There are still problems in refurbishing the bottomworks of this equipment and parts are required to rebuild all of the indicators. One of the quadrant

headworks, however, is now looking good at the new location. Some impression of the grandeur of

this indicator can now be appreciated (left). This is a heroic project and we wish all those involved well in their endeavours.

The Secret History of the Founders



The illustration (above) shows a one pound weight with marks relating to the Company of Founders and the City of London. It is now fairly well-known that the 'G crowned' mark at 9 o'clock indicates that the weight was made in the time of George II (1727-1760), rather than the later Georges (1760-1830), when this mark is at 3 o'clock. A few collectors know that some larger weights (like this one) were also stamped with a small mark that reveals the individual maker. On this one the initials EI on the rim are very clear. Fortunately the vendor on eBay did not draw attention to the relative scarcity of weights of the second George, or the revelatory mark on the rim, and I secured the item for a nominal sum. (Recently, a similar George II weight without initials made a lot more!)

It is fairly certain that EI is the mark of Emanuel and Elizabeth Jacombe, the letter I being the conventional representation of a J at that time. It is now possible to trace the story of the Jacombe family's involvement in weight-making in some detail. The Crawforth Index contains some relevant material, and there is more. The published works on the Founders Company are almost totally lacking in such details, and consequently they present a very misleading picture. Even in the Jacombes' time the Company's control of the weight-making trade was weakening, and it declined steadily throughout the next hundred years. Subsequently the Founders' main function was to raise funds for social activities.

I wrote a short article in the *British Numismatic Journal* in 2001, in which the marks and initials on the Founders' trade weights were mentioned. In the past few years many more interesting artefacts have come to light and I should be delighted to hear from members who have items of this kind. Any weight of four ounces and above, from the Commonwealth to George II, should be carefully examined! **Norman Biggs**

Autumn Meeting Report

Georgian scales and weights also featured highly at the autumn meeting held on October 23rd 2011 at Kegworth. I spent some time fruitlessly rummaging about for items emanating from the Tbilisi area, prior to the meeting but others, who were better informed, brought along many interesting pieces dating from the Hanoverian period (1714-1830). **Diana Crawforth-Hitchins**, in particular came up with a comprehensive display of items covering the 18th and early 19th century period. **Norman Biggs** gave us an all too brief run through of the development of regulatory controls on

metrology in that time. He covered the story, from the dominance of the London liveried companies at the beginning, through the later liberalisation and rise of provincial centres of production, to the state control that happened at the end of the period. He also gave a few useful tips about dating and identifying weights produced in the reigns of the various Georges (see also the above article). We also learned that George IV was a bit fat!

Frances and Howard Simmons gave some interesting facts about Scottish coin weights, which are remarkably rare (no mean Scotsman jokes please!). They also imparted new information about cased, lead-filled, coin weights which was only discovered when certain damaged items were recently examined. This could lead to a re-appraisal of a number of items in members' collections.



A few of Diana's scales from the Georgian dynasty which demonstrated that a number of ingenious items, often perceived as being Victorian, were actually products of the Hanoverian period.

The Georgian period is still a time when much remains unknown and this gives scope for individual research and discovery.

There were the usual Bourse tables and a number of those present took the opportunity to enhance their collections with interesting items.

At the formal meeting Frances Simmons and Mike Sharpe were appointed as the new Meetings Secretary and Treasurer respectively. We still need a volunteer to deal with membership as Michael Robinson has stood down. Membership is still in decline and anyone wishing to help should contact the committee. The other committee members were re-elected.

Management Committee Bulletin 2011-02

During the ISASC(E) Management Committee Meeting of 23.10.11 the following points were discussed.

On occasion of their standing down as Society's Officers, the management team expressed their thanks to Ken, Michael and Janet for their many years of outstanding service and commitment.

Although the finances of the society are still in good order, declining membership contributions and declining assets force the need to recommend a £5 increase in the subscription rate at the AGM.

Mike Sharpe confirmed that Paypal will be up and running in time for the 2012 subscription payments.

Although dubious items are still appearing on Ebay the name of ISASC is no longer being used by the individual responsible. Some items were withdrawn from sale on our request.

The position for the Membership Secretary will remain vacant until a volunteer can be found. Meanwhile, Mike will handle subscription payments and the membership database. For the new Membership Secretary the emphasis should be on the recruitment of new members.

Several Officers hold material/records which ought to be part of the ISASC archive, a significant amount of which is stored at Janet's. A volunteer is sought who would act as an archivist for the Society, sorting through the records and storing what is useful and appropriate.

The EQM index is available now and will be offered for sale. Contact David Apps if you wish to purchase a copy.