

The Yardstick

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The Office of Nuclear Metrication

BWMA has discovered that the Office of Nuclear Regulation, an agency of the government's Health and Safety Executive, is issuing instructions to the civil nuclear industry to cease using imperial parts and components. We are in pursuit, and will be publishing our correspondence with the Office of Nuclear Regulation in the next *Yardstick*.

Confusing millilitres and milligrams

BWMA continues to hear of medical problems arising from confusion between millilitres and milligrams. In February 2012, researchers at the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center, Denver Colorado, published a report warning American pediatricians of the potential for intravenous acetaminophen dosing errors: "*Experience from Europe indicates that serious dosing errors are likely to occur ... Most events have involved a 10-fold dosing error in small children caused by calculating the dosage in milligrams, but then administering the solution in millilitres ... This type of error is unfortunately common in medicine, and affects many drugs*".

Meanwhile, in New Zealand, the *Otago Daily Times* reports, 21 February 2012: "... a patient was given five times their usual opioid dose. The mishap arose from confusion between millilitres and milligrams, and led to the patient being treated in the high dependency unit".

Postage price rise

The *Daily Telegraph* described the 30 April 2012 price increase in postage stamps as "record price rises"; first-class stamps increased by 30% (from 46p to 60p) and second-class stamps by 39% (36p to 50p). In fact, the record in price rises occurred on Decimalisation Day, 15 February 1971, when first class postage stamps rose from 5d to 3p, an increase of 44%, and second class increased from 4d to 2½p, an increase of 50%.

Annual General Meeting & Conference

Saturday 26 May 2012, at the Victory Services Club, 63 Seymour Street, London W2 2HF, near Marble Arch. We are continuing last year's format: AGM at 2.0pm and conference at 3.0pm.

Our Guest Speaker is former TV reporter **Jonathan Boyd Hunt**, author of *Trial by Conspiracy* (referred to in *Yardstick* 47) - Jonathan's story of his investigation of a major political scandal; his unearthing of evidence clearing a beleaguered former MP and implicating his accusers; and how the British media closed ranks to prevent the truth from being aired. To the question: "Can we trust the media?", Jonathan will argue that we do so at our peril.

John Gardner, Director

Please note the new address, below

BWMA is a non-profit body that exists to promote parity in law between British and metric units. It enjoys support from across Britain's political spectrum, from all manner of businesses and the general public. BWMA is financed by member subscriptions and donations.

Membership is £12 per year. Cheques or postal orders payable to "BWMA", 98 Eastney Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 3TE

USA: Metric Measurements on Nutrition Labels Mislead Many (reproduced from "Consumer World", 5 March 2012)

A new survey released today by ConsumerWorld.org found that many consumers cannot properly evaluate the nutritional value of the foods they eat because they do not understand the metric measurements used on nutrition labels for key ingredients, nor how to convert them to more commonly understood amounts. As a result, the long-established consumer education website concludes that the nearly 20-year old FDA requirement to use only grams and milligrams on nutrition labels to express the sugar, fat, and salt content of products needs to be scrapped.

According to Consumer World, when testers were exposed to nutrition facts information where the amount of sugar in a product was expressed in grams rather than in common household measurements, up to 80% of them could not accurately say how much sugar that equated to, many significantly underestimated the actual amount of sugar in the product, and some overestimated how healthy the product was to consume. For example, when asked whether 25 grams of sugar in a serving of yogurt was a lot or a little, less than 25% deemed the product "extremely sugary." However, when the same product was labeled as containing six teaspoons of sugar (the mathematical equivalent), twice as many - nearly half - characterized it as "extremely sugary."

In fact, when the two labels were shown side-by-side, about a third of respondents thought that the product labeled with 25 grams of sugar was healthier, and 40% thought it was less sugary than the one labeled with six teaspoons of sugar, despite the fact that they are actually identical. Less than half of those surveyed recognized this equivalence. And significantly more men than women could not accurately evaluate the metric measurements found on nutrition labels.

"Is it any wonder that so many people are overweight in this country, when nutritional labels that are supposed to alert the public to overly sugary or fatty foods fail to communicate that message effectively because they use metric measurements that most people can't equate to common household amounts," commented Consumer World founder Edgar Dworsky. "Using metric measurements on food labels is like putting a safety warning on a hazardous product but only in a foreign language."

Another survey question asked consumers to estimate how many teaspoons of sugar was in an unnamed 12-ounce beverage labeled as containing 39 grams of sweeteners. Their guesses were all over the map, with only one-in-five answering correctly. And nearly two-thirds underestimated the actual amount of sugar, often by more than half. The unidentified beverage, not coincidentally, matched the nutritional specifications of regular Coca Cola, whose 39 grams of high fructose corn syrup is equal to about 9.2 teaspoons of granulated sugar per can. A teaspoon of sugar weighs about 4.2 grams.

Summing up their attitudes, nearly four out of five respondents thought that a nutrition label that used common household measurements like teaspoons was

a more meaningful way to express nutrient content than one expressed in grams.

"Everybody has an idea how much six teaspoons of fat or sugar is, but tell someone the same serving has 25 grams of those ingredients, and their eyes glaze over," explained Dworsky. "People can't make smart food choices if they don't know what they're eating."

Consumer World has sent the survey results to the Food and Drug Administration, suggesting that the agency consider revamping its nearly 20-year-old nutrition labeling rules to require the use of commonly understood household measurements instead of, or in addition to, metric system measurements on food labels.

<http://www.consumerworld.org/pages/nutritionlabelprs.htm>

Metric fingerpost signs: the Battle of Salisbury

For over a year, BWMA member Rex Poulton has pursued Salisbury City Council over its breach of the 2002 Traffic Regulations and General Directions by installing signs displaying distances in kilometres: to Salisbury, North Carolina 6,276km; Salisbury, Maryland 5,750km; Saintes in France 1,061km; and Xanten in Germany 713km. The Council has claimed that the signs are "monuments" and lawful under the section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890.

On 11 December, Rex Poulton requested documentation such as the planning application that identified section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 as the legal authority for the signs. Despite being obliged to reply under the Freedom of Information Act, Wiltshire Council did not respond, so Rex sent reminders on 13 January and 20 February 2012. Eventually:

29 February 2012: reply from Frank Cain, Barrister, Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Dear Mr Poulton

Council's position in regard to the creation of these signs and the legality has been addressed in correspondence on a number of occasions. I would refer you to Mr Boden's letter to the local MP dated 31 August 2010 (a copy of which Mr Glen forwarded to you on 16 September 2010), Mr Boden's email to you of 13 September 2011, my emails to you of 26 September 2011 and 16 November 2011.

I note that in that correspondence it has been confirmed the signs were erected a number of years ago by Salisbury District Council to commemorate links of Salisbury city with its twin towns. It has also been confirmed in that correspondence that Salisbury District Council would have been entitled to erect such a sign under section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890. In respect of your specific FOI requests I respond as follows: -

1. *The planning application and notice of proposal* – We hold no documentation on this matter.
2. *Committee decisions* – We hold no documentation on this matter.

3. *Officers' reports* – We hold no documentation on this matter.

4. *Correspondence, including email, relating to the fingerposts (prior to their erection)* – This transaction was entered into prior to Local Government Re-organisation. Therefore, while there was likely to be correspondence relating to this matter, our searches have been unable to locate this correspondence and therefore we hold no information in respect of this request.

5. *Quotations for the work, invoices, instructions to the supplier* – An FoI request from you in this regard was received by the Council in July 2011 requesting information regarding the cost of the signs. I understand that this request has been responded to as we hold no information.

Whilst you have not asked it may assist you to be aware that, as Section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 gives an authority the power from time to time to “authorise” and “to maintain” monuments on any public land within its District and that such a structure is likely to fit within the “permitted development” provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995, this would be consistent with us not holding any documents in respect of your questions 1 to 3 above.

As this is the fourth time we have addressed the issue of legality of these fingerpost signs I must again reiterate that Council has an obligation to its ratepayers to ensure that it does not unnecessarily incur public expenditure, and therefore it does not propose to enter into further correspondence in respect of this matter except if you identify a new issue that has not previously been raised that needs consideration. It was for this reason I did not respond to your emails of 11 December 2011 and 13 January 2012.

Rex replied on 24 March 2012

Dear Mr Cain

Thank you for your letter. I make the following concluding observations:

At no point in your first letter (26 September 2011) did you state that the signs were erected under section 42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890. Instead, you continued the argument of earlier correspondents that the signs are not *traffic* signs and therefore do not fall within the Traffic Sign Regulations and General Directions (TSRGD). Indeed, you went to the lengths of finding your own reasons why they do not fall within the Traffic Regulations. You did not seek to prove their legality by simply identifying the relevant Act.

Only in your second letter (16 November 2011) did you mention the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 which strongly suggests that this most unlikely Act was seized upon in hindsight to cover up the lack of legal authority for a non-imperial sign. Up until that point, for almost a year, council staff referred to the construction only as “*a sign*”, “*signs*” or part of the town’s “*signage*”. Nobody knew to call them a “monument” because that was not how they were regarded - much less how they appear visually.

I wonder how you or the other correspondents could actually *know* the Public Health Amendment Act 1890 was used, given that none of you claim to have been personally involved in the matter in 2008, and that my FOI request reveals that no documents exist to inform you. I think your choice of language is very telling in this regard. You state, “*It has also been confirmed in that correspondence that Salisbury District Council would have been entitled to erect such a sign under s42 of the Public Health Amendment Act 1890*”.

“Would have been”? In other words, it *wasn't*. The Public Health Amendment Act 1890 never crossed the Council’s mind. Why would it? The signs could only have been erected under the obvious default legislation of the TSRGD with no regard to the use of unauthorised units on the sign. Only when the unlawfulness of the sign under TSRGD becomes apparent do Salisbury City and Wiltshire Councils dig all the way back to the nineteenth century to find an Act that can only vaguely be presented as authorising the expenditure - by calling a signpost a “*monument*”.

It is my conclusion from my FoI request, revealing that no supporting documents can be found, that the signs were merely “put up” irrespective of any legal authority necessary and at taxpayers’ cost in an attempt, no doubt, to appear progressive and inclusive with no respect to the lawful and traditional measures of this country.

I shall be watching with interest whether the signs are amended.

Rex Poulton

* * *

October 2011: Jose O'Ware reports that that the *Daily Mail* contained a gift catalogue by the **Original Gift Company**, at Stow-on-the-Wold, featuring *only* imperial descriptions. The following week, Jose received the **Museum Collection** catalogue, again with *no* metric sizes shown. Jose notes, “It almost seems to imply an, albeit small, rebellion”.

Annual General Meeting & Conference Saturday, 26 May 2012

Victory Services Club, 63 Seymour Street, London W2
2HF, Tel: 020 7616 8305 (off Edgware Road, just north of
Marble Arch; nearest tube stop Marble Arch)

AGM 2.0pm - free to members

The following have been nominated: Chairman Michael Plumbe, Director John Gardner. Committee Members: Warwick Cairns, Derek Norman, José O'Ware, William Peters, Peter Rogers, Robert Stevens, John Strange.

Conference 3.0pm

(£5 admission on door)

Guest speaker: Jonathan Boyd Hunt
“*Can we trust the Media?*”

Minutes of the sixteenth Annual General Meeting, 28 May 2011, Victory Services Club, 63 Seymour Street, London; 2.0pm

Present: Michael Plumbe (in the chair) and 33 members.

1. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS:

Michael Plumbe welcomed members to the meeting and said its starting had been delayed awaiting Vivian Linacre. Several people had died in the past year, including Lord Monson, who had been an invaluable member; there was to be a memorial service for him, soon. It had been a strange year in a way; the campaign had seemed to stand still but it had not gone backwards, so nothing lost.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Mr M Faith, Mr A Little, Mr P Kirby and Mr Philip Pitt.

3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 29 MAY 2010 having been previously circulated were taken as read. Proposed by Mr R Williams, seconded by Mrs V Gardner and agreed nem. con.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

Lee Consterdine had resigned from the Committee a few months ago. The Chairman thanked him for his hard work. The Chairman had taken over the accounts until a new Treasurer was found. He submitted the accounts for year ending 28 February 2011 which showed a total cash balance of £23,438. These accounts have yet to be examined. Mr R Willow proposed that the Director's honorarium be increased by £250pa, members agreed nem. con. He also suggested that a donation be made to ARM; the Chairman said this would be discussed by Committee. Mr R Carnaghan said the ARM website had material on their website that should not be identified with BWMA. Mr Gardner said he would get a print-out and bring to the Committee for discussion. The accounts were adopted, proposed by Mr W Cairns, seconded by Mr D Turner and agreed nem. con.

5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

John Gardner gave a full and detailed report on campaign developments. He reported the Government's U-turn on its commitment to repeal metric regulations, and that it did so without meeting BWMA. Moreover, Mr David Willetts MP insisted that the EC Directive applies to domestic trade when its text indicates it does not; David Cameron shared BWMA's view in a letter in 2002. Mr Willetts also admitted that no research had been conducted to justify the government's claim of "potential market failure", were there to be a choice between metric and imperial units. In response to Members' letters to Nick Clegg's 'Your Freedom' campaign, the government said it did not believe that allowing imperial units would result in deregulatory savings or cut red tape. The government's letter had been

signed by "Mrs S Silver" who was thought not to be a real person; Mr Gardner was pursuing. The Department of Health was bringing pressure on hospitals to remove dual weighing machines, prompting BWMA to research decimal and metric unit errors; however, the Department of Health refused to issue safety alert, saying it was not their role to intervene at local level. The Department of Transport had scrapped proposals for mandatory dual width signs following a BWMA letter. Hampshire Trading Standards had threatened trader Leon Perry with prosecution but backed down in November 2010. BWMA submitted a response to the Red Tape Challenge in May 2011.

Nominet: BWMA submitted its views relating to web hosting policy, and procedures dealing with criminal activity.

Downsizing: examples relating to strawberries and beers were pursued, the strawberry story having been published in the press. Mr Gardner thanked Mr S Delvin for his help in identifying downsizing. Mr R Willows asked about short measure and said BMI charts show both traditional and metric units. Mr D Norman asked for copies of the charts. Mr J Strange said some Paris bars referred to pints and half-pints.

There had been five Committee Meetings throughout the year and four issues of *The Yardstick*. The Director's report was adopted proposed by Miss P Shaw-Hesketh, seconded by Mr R Willows and agreed nem. con. The Chairman thanked Mr Gardner for continuing to do such excellent work.

6. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Mrs S Eustace took the chair for the first item. Chairman: Michael Plumbe proposed by Mrs J O'Ware, seconded by Mr S Delvin, agreed nem. con. The Chairman resumed. The Committee: John Gardner, Derek Norman, William Peters, Peter Rogers, Robert Stevens and John Strange proposed by Mr M Davies, seconded by Mr R Tubb, agreed nem. con. There were no nominations for Hon Treasurer.

7. APPOINTMENT OF HON AUDITOR

Proposed by Mrs S Eustace, seconded by Mr W Cairns it was agreed nem. con that Mr W Featherstone be re-appointed.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

BWMA website: Mr D Wilkinson said this had not been updated. Mr Gardner said the news section had been replaced with a link to *The Yardstick*.

Mr R Carnaghan said he had not received *The Yardstick*. He also asked if BWMA wanted the web domain bwma.org.uk which he had paid for over several years. Mr Gardner said yes and it would be discussed at the next Committee meeting.

Mr P Buckland asked if there was a telephone number for BWMA. The Chairman said this was under review.

Meeting closed at 2.55pm

*BWMA gratefully records the Patronage of the late
The Hon. Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Lord Shore,
Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, KBE, CB,
and Lord Monson*

And the Honorary Membership of the late John Aspinall, Nirad C Chaudhuri CBE, Jennifer Paterson, CBE, Leo McKern AO, Norris McWhirter CBE, Fred Dibnah MBE, Sir Julian Hodge, KStG, KStJ, Bernard Levin, CBE, Dr Charles H Sisson, CH, DLitt, Fritz Spiegl, F S Trueman, OBE, Sir Rowland Whitehead, Bt, George MacDonald Fraser, OBE, Beryl Cook, OBE, John Mitchell, David Shepherd, MBE, Keith Waterhouse, CBE, Dick Francis, CBE, Prof. Antony Flew, Trevor Bailey, CBE, Prof. Richard Holmes, CBE

BWMA

Website: www.bwmaOnline.com

BWMA is on *Facebook*

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