

The Yardstick

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National Curriculum

On 8 December 1970, in response to a Parliamentary question on the need for school education in imperial units, Secretary of State for Education and Science, Margaret Thatcher said: "In October 1969, the Department issued a memorandum suggesting that, although pupils should become increasingly familiar with metric units, they should retain an adequate knowledge of imperial measures for everyday needs".

From 1974, the metric system became the primary system. According to a government spokesman in late 1979: "The Department of Education and Science issued advice in 1974 that teaching should be conducted principally in metric terms while maintaining general familiarity with imperial units, and this still stands".

Since 1999, the position regarding imperial has been that pupils should know "... the rough metric equivalents of imperial units still in daily use", which implies pupils should think of imperial units *in terms of metric*, rather than as units in their own right.

Earlier this year, however, the government made *noises* that this imbalance may be adjusted, at least, to acknowledge that the mile and pint are still in use; correspondence inside.

British Weights and Measures Trust

Thank you to members who voted on our proposal to change the status of the Association. We can report that a majority, by a very wide margin, is in favour of the proposal.

Annual General Meeting & Conference

The AGM/Conference will be held on Saturday, 2 November 2013, from 2pm to 5pm. We are at a different venue this year, the New Cavendish Club (which veteran attendees will recall from AGMs in the late-1990s). The New Cavendish Club is at 44 Great Cumberland Place, on the corner of Great Cumberland Place and Upper Berkeley Street, about 200 yards north of Marble Arch tube station. We are delighted to be joined by **Neil Herron**, of the Metric Martyr Defence Fund and www.parkingappeals.co.uk.

John Gardner, Director

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

BWMA letter to Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Education, 7 July 2013

Dear Mr Gove

National Curriculum: metric and imperial measurements

In January 2013, the press reported proposed changes to the national curriculum regarding the teaching of imperial measurements in schools. For example, according to the *Daily Telegraph*:

“Ministers said that a new curriculum “goes further” than previous documents drawn up under Labour by requiring schools to place imperial units at the heart of maths lessons. Under new plans, a draft primary school syllabus requires pupils to understand and use the “basic equivalencies” between metric and common imperial systems. The document also makes greater reference to miles to make sure children are fully aware of the standard measurement of speed and distance on British roads, it was revealed”.

Our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial measurements, and would be grateful if you could please explain the new position on the teaching of imperial and metric measurements in schools, and how this differs from what went before?

In particular, are imperial units now regarded as ‘equal’ to metric units, or is metric still the standard system of measurement in the national curriculum?

Reply from the Department for Education, 30 July 2013

Thank you for your letter of 7 July, addressed to the Secretary of State for Education, about the teaching of imperial measurements in schools. I am sure you will appreciate that the Secretary of State receives a vast amount of correspondence and is unable to reply to each one personally. It is for this reason I have been asked to reply.

The requirement to know about imperial measures is included in the current national curriculum. For example, in the key stage 2 curriculum, it states that pupils need to know how to solve problems involving a range of measures, including being able to undertake basic equivalences between metric and common imperial units, set in a variety of contexts.

This requirement remains in the new draft curriculum in year 5, in that pupils are required to understand and use basic equivalences between metric and common imperial units. Miles and pints are still units of measure in use today and therefore it would seem sensible that pupils should be familiar with their use.

Once again thank you for writing.

Jane Myers, Ministerial and Public Communications Division

Here is the wording of the Minister’s statement, provided as an answer to a Parliamentary question on 7 January 2013:

Andrew Percy (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to improve and extend teaching of imperial measurements in schools to ensure an understanding of their use on roads and amongst the public.

Elizabeth Truss, Education Minister (Conservative): As part of the review of the National Curriculum, we propose to include imperial units within the new Programmes of Study for mathematics. We have undertaken an informal consultation on the draft primary mathematics curriculum which was published in June, alongside English and science. The draft goes further than the current National Curriculum in terms of what pupils are expected to learn in relation to imperial units, including explicit reference to miles. We are currently considering feedback on these proposals and the Government will publish a revised draft for full public consultation in early 2013. The consultation will also include proposed changes to the secondary curriculum.

Here is the relevant wording of the current national curriculum, as relating to imperial, published in 1999 and in place until early 2014:

Pupils should be taught to ... know the rough metric equivalents of imperial units still in daily use

The proposed wording of the new national curriculum:

(Year 5) Pupils should be taught to ... understand and use basic equivalencies between metric and common imperial units and express them in approximate terms

(Year 6) Pupils should be taught to ... convert between standard units ... including between miles and kilometres

The word “still” is removed, which otherwise infers imperial units are an aberration, and the need to know metric equivalents of imperial is replaced with a more even-handed “equivalencies between metric and common imperial units”. As before, however, imperial units are not taught as measurements in their own right; they are referred to only in terms of conversion. One needs to see the rest of the curriculum on measures to see how far imperial units are sidelined:

Draft curriculum, from 2014, as relating to measures, for primary schools

Year 1

- compare, measure and record the following using standard units for: lengths and heights (e.g. long/short, longer/shorter, tall/short, double/half); lengths and heights (**metres, centimetres**); mass (**grams, kilograms**); capacity and volume (**litres**); time (hours, minutes, seconds)
- compare, describe and solve practical problems for: lengths and heights (e.g. long/short, longer/shorter, tall/short, double/half); mass (e.g. heavy/light, heavier than, lighter than); capacity and volume (full/empty, more than, less than, quarter, three quarters full or empty); time (quicker, slower, earlier, later)
- recognise and use pounds (£) and pence (p) with different denominations of money, including coins and notes
- tell the time to the hour and half past the hour
- sequence events in chronological order using common terms such as: before and after, next, first, today, yesterday, tomorrow, morning, afternoon and evening
- recognise and use the language of dates, including days of the week, weeks, months and years.

Year 2

- choose and use appropriate standard units to estimate and measure length/height in any direction (**m/cm/mm**); mass (**kg/g**); temperature ($^{\circ}\text{C}$); volume and capacity (**litres/ml**) to the nearest appropriate unit using rulers, scales, thermometers and measuring vessels
- compare and order lengths, mass, volume/capacity and record the results using $>$, $<$ and $=$
- read relevant scales to the nearest numbered unit
- tell and write the time to 5 minutes including quarter past/to the hour and draw hands on a clock face to show these times
- recognise and use symbols for pounds (£) and pence (p); recognise coins
- and notes of different values; combine amounts to make a particular value and match different combinations of coins to equal the same amounts of money; add and subtract money of the same unit.

Year 3

- recognise and use full names and abbreviations for **metric** units of measure
- measure, compare, add and subtract: lengths (**m/cm/mm**); mass (**kg/g**); volume/capacity (**l/ml**); and time (hours/minutes/seconds)
- measure the perimeter of simple 2-D shapes
- tell and write the time from an analogue clock, including using Roman numerals from I to XII, and 12 hour and 24 hour digital clocks
- estimate and read time with increasing accuracy to the nearest minute; record and compare time in terms of seconds, minutes, hours and o'clock; use vocabulary such as am/pm, morning, afternoon, noon and midnight

- know the number of seconds in a minute and the number of days in each month, year and leap year
- compare durations of events, for example to calculate the time taken up by particular events or tasks
- add and subtract amounts of money to give change, using both £ and p.

Year 4

- convert between different units of measure, for example: **kilometre** to **metre**; **metre** to **centimetre**; **centimetre** to **millimetre**; **kilogram** to **gram**; **litre** to **millilitre**; hour to minute; minute to second; year to month; week to day
- measure and calculate the perimeter of a rectilinear figure, where each side is labelled in **centimetres** and **metres**
- find the area of squares and rectangles and related composite shapes
- read and convert time between analogue and digital 12- and 24- hour clocks
- estimate, compare and calculate different measures, including money in pounds and pence.

Year 5

- add, subtract, multiply and divide units of measure (e.g. length, mass, volume, money) using decimal notation
- understand and use basic equivalencies between **metric** and common **imperial** units and express them in approximate terms
- measure force in **Newtons (N)**
- calculate, estimate and compare the area of squares, rectangles and related composite shapes using standard units, including **centimetre squared (cm^2)** and **metre squared (m^2)**
- recognise volume in practical contexts, for example using sand and water, 1 **cm^3** blocks or interlocking cubes to build cubes and cuboids.

Year 6

- use, read, write and convert between standard units, converting measurements of length, mass, volume and time from a smaller unit of measure to a larger unit, and vice versa, including between **miles** and **kilometres**
- recognise that shapes with the same areas can have different perimeters and vice versa
- calculate the area of parallelograms and triangles
- recognise when it is necessary to use the formulae for area and volume of shapes
- Calculate, estimate and compare volume of cubes and cuboids using standard units, including **centimetre cubed (cm^3)** and **cubic metres (m^3)** and extending to other units, such as **mm^3** and **km^3**
- use decimal notation to three decimal places to solve problems involving calculation and conversion of measures.

To be continued ...

BWMA letter to Office for Nuclear Regulation, 19 April 2012

Dear Mr Watson

Thank you for your detailed and helpful letter of 26 January 2012 [see *Yardstick 51*]. There are three points that I would like clarification on.

In point 3, you refer to instances where metric and imperial components have been incorrectly mixed, leading to joint failure. Could you provide one or more examples, if in the public domain?

Regarding **point 7**, may I be clear that we are referring to the same matter. When I asked for the research underlying the ONR's belief that metrication was a necessary safety requirement, I did not mean research which showed that matching, say, a one-inch component to a 25mm component might be unsafe. Such components are not the same and safety implications are self-evident, in the same way as if one was to match a 25mm to a 24mm component. What I mean is: is there research to substantiate an expectation that companies would mix such components in the face of a regulatory requirement *that they must not*?

Regarding **point 2**, we have studied again paragraph 39. That it refers to documentation, as opposed to components, is indicated not only by its wording and the adjacent use of "*in English*", but by its being read in conjunction with paragraph 38 which, like paragraph 39, falls under the heading "*Documentation not specific to the UK*". The paragraphs state (our emphasis):

Use of documentation not specific to UK

38 HSE recognises that the Requesting Party may choose to use existing design and safety documents that were not written explicitly for the UK. While this may be efficient for the Requesting Party in providing documentation, it would not on its own be sufficient for assessment by the UK regulator. HSE would need to receive some additional UK-specific submissions that demonstrate how UK requirements have been met or will be met.

39 HSE requires that documents submitted are written in English and that SI units are used.

[Paragraphs 38 and 39 are therefore meant to mean that] parties using inch-pound components must convert the documentation to metric for it to be acceptable to the UK regulator [rather than components]. The Guidelines assume that inch-pound components exist.

Therefore, there are two issues:

- The *merits* of the UK regulator's intervention; can you address these in your response to my queries regarding points 3 and 7?
- The *process or procedure* by which that intervention or compulsion is reached. If you are persuaded that no such authority exists in paragraph 39 (indeed, quite the reverse) then, surely, it must take more than simply *stating* an expectation, as in GI-AP1000-ME-02?

We look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Reply from the Office for Nuclear Regulation, 28 May 2012

Dear Mr Gardner,

Thank you for your letter of 19 April 2012 in which you seek to continue discussing the issue of metrication of the AP1000. You seek clarification on three points:-

- You ask for information on instances where metric and imperial component mixing has led to joint failures. Examples of such failures are freely available on the internet, e.g. at <http://maritimeaccident.org/tags/metric/>

- You ask for information on 'research to substantiate an expectation that companies would mix such components in the face of a regulatory requirement that they must not'. As described in my letter of 26 January 2012, this is really about good engineering practice and reducing risks as low as reasonably practicable. Unfortunately, even despite good procedural and administrative controls, organisations and humans do make mistakes. The best way of avoiding such mistakes is to remove the potential for error through engineering design. This 'hierarchy of control' concept forms a key part of our Safety Assessment Principles. We therefore consider it is good practice to remove the possibility of mixing metric and imperial components by engineering the problem out at the design stage, where this is reasonably practicable.

- You again raise the question of our interpretation of para 39 of the GDA Guidance. As stated in my letter of 26 January 2012, we remain of the view that units of measurement used for documents and the plant itself are inextricably linked. The merits of our judgement are addressed in my letter of 26 January and in the paragraph above. The process or procedure used is really GDA, which is a voluntary process where the Requesting Party pays us for an assessment. We set out our expectations for relevant good practice and it is for the Requesting Party to propose how these are met. In this case Westinghouse proposed to amend the documentation and design to incorporate metric units, they could have pursued an alternative approach.

As stated in our last GDA quarterly report (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/newreactors/index.htm>) we have, at the request of Westinghouse, now stopped work

on the AP1000 while they seek a UK customer. Therefore there is at present no plan to undertake any further work on the topic of metrication.

Dave Watson, HM Superintending Inspector

To be continued ...

* * *

Metric supporter speaks out, 9 June 2013

One Daniel Jackson was not impressed with BWMA Press Officer Warwick Cairns, who appeared on Sky News on 5 June 2013 to debate the pros and cons of the European Union with a member of the European Youth Parliament. Daniel left the following comments on BWMA's Facebook page:

"Warwick Cairns came across in the video as a person obviously out of step with the youth movement and a fuddy-duddy getting in the way of progress. People like him may find allies among the older generation, but the elite younger generation want no part of his yesteryear thinking. Those youth who do follow Warwick's outdated thinking are the ones who are poorly educated, resist metrication and more often than not find themselves perpetually unemployed. There is no need in the modern world for a person who can or doesn't want to use the metric system. The EU wants a uniform system of weight and measures to assure compatibility in the markets that allow lower costs in production, a better use of raw materials and assured markets worldwide. In order for the population to be useful to business it has to be able to work in the metric system and this can only be achieved by using it in one's daily life. Constant exposure is a necessity. Those who resist metrication only assure their life of poverty and want".

Readers may decide for themselves by seeing Warwick on Sky News; go to www.youtube.com, and search for "Warwick Cairns What different generations think about Europe".

Scotia Gas Networks, 8 April 2013

Our colleague Rex Poulton received this reply from Scotia Gas Networks (formerly Southern Gas) which supplies 5.8 million gas customers:

Looking at the history of our industry, there was no single approach to the metrication of the engineering industry. In some areas soft metrication was applied and in others hard metrication. Under the Gas (Metrication) Regulations 1992, measurements used for economic, health, safety or administrative purposes were changed from imperial to metric. This was done mainly for fittings, length of pipe and it is widely accepted this was done and indeed was essential to ensure a continuing and consistent approach to public safety issues.

I have also taken the trouble to ask our lawyers about the issues you raise. They confirm by publicising the measurements in the way we currently do, we are not breaking any British legislation. We are advised the use in our publications of metric measures is not bound by any law. Like all the other energy and utility companies in the UK, we have simply mirrored the measurements our industry regulator uses to target and measure our performance, which are the measurements we are required to report back to it on. I'm afraid that remains our considered position.

Denis Kerby, Director of Corporate Communications

Metric fingerpost sign removed

Our associate William W Scott successfully pursued East Lothian Council over unlawful metric pedestrian signs, but reported on 17 March 2013: "I believed all signs had been removed but realised that was not the case when I discovered one at the junction of Shore Road and Back Road in Dunbar. I informed the Council and received the letter attached. East Lothian Council's letter reads: "By the time you receive this letter, the metric distances will have been removed from the fingerpost sign at the junction of Shore Road and Back Road in Dunbar. I trust this is of assistance to you". Mr Scott's update: "They were true to their word and the sign was removed immediately".

Decimal Watch: "Morphine dosage error kills elderly patient", Seattle, U.S.A., 19 November 2012 (from www.kirotv.com)

A doctor prescribed 92-year-old Phyllis Conant the equivalent of 0.5 mL of morphine for daily pain relief, but a nurse at the Madison House living facility made a transcription error, omitting the zero and the decimal point. Before anyone noticed the mistake, the unlicensed aide gave Conant the fatal 5 mL dose of morphine ... Dr. Yanling Yu of the Washington Advocates for Patient Safety said, "sadly, I'm not surprised" with the Madison House mistake. She said Conant is just one of the 225,000 patients who die each year from preventable medical errors. And about half of those fatalities stem from drug dosage mistakes.

Continental Clegg

A member sent us this newspaper snippet: Mr Clegg spoke this week about the Press wasting 'litres of ink' on seeking splits in the Coalition. Litres? Would it not have been more natural to say 'gallons' or 'pints' of ink? The impeccably Continental Clegg.

The Metric Games, by John Strange

The Olympic Games of 2012 were a resounding success and the organisers and athletes deserve our thanks. Of course, everything is metric nowadays; for example, the running track has been shortened by nearly eight feet from a quarter of a mile to 400 metres.

However, some of the metric measures look a little odd and betray their imperial origins. On the track, the lane widths are 1.22 metres (four feet) and the hurdles are set 9.14 metres apart (10 yards). Hurdle heights are 1.067 metres (42 inches) and 0.914 metres (36 inches) for men; and 0.838 m (33 inches) and 0.762 metres (30 inches) for women.

As for the field events, the width of the shot is 7.26 kilograms (16 lbs) and the diameter of the circle from which the athlete puts the shot is 2.135 metres (7 feet).

For a real feast of bizarre metric measurements, we turn to lawn tennis. The size of the doubles court is 23.77 metres by 10.97 metres (26 yards by 12 yards). The diameter of the tennis ball is between 6.35 and 6.67 centimetres (2½" and 2"), and its weight between 56.7 and 58.5 grams (2 ounces and 2 ounces 1 dram). When dropped onto concrete from a height of 2.54 metres (100 inches), the height of the bounce must be between 1.346 and 1.473 metres (53 and 58 inches).

Elmlea cream displays ounces

A letter from Elmlea to our colleague, Stuart Delvin: Thank you for your recent letter, thanking us for displaying the number of ounces on our pots of Elmlea. We aim to produce products of the highest quality and so we are always delighted to receive positive feedback about them. I will pass your comments on to our Marketing team. We hope that you will continue to enjoy using Elmlea and thank you once again for contacting us.

Martyn Williams-Ellis, Careline Advisor

Metric Milk

Our friend Robin Willow writes, 24 January 2012: I have noticed that milk suppliers are increasingly selling milk not in one pint or 2-pint or 4-pint containers, but in metric containers [1/2 L, 1 L or 2 L]. In motorway service stations milk is now only sold in metric quantities, not at all by the pint. Local suppliers, such as Yarty in Devon near Axminster, now sell milk in metric quantities. In supermarkets, a lot of milk is still sold in pints, but specialist suppliers sell in metric quantities. These include Rachel's milk, Yeo Valley and Cloverdale, I wrote to Yeo Valley asking about this, but they did not reply.

Imperial Bells

Our colleague PJ Chubb writes, 20 March 2012: I am not sure whether the subject of Church Bells has been mentioned in *The Yardstick* previously but if not you will be interested to know that Church Bells have always been measured imperially and (although they may well sometimes be hung using bearings defined by metric measurement) the weight of the bells themselves is stated in (tons), cwt., ¼s, 1lbs. The diameters are stated in feet and inches and I buy bellropes in 50 feet lengths. I believe for

export purposes these values are probably converted to metric, but as our bells date back as far as 1659, bells cast today will be carrying Imperial weights into the 25th century.

Enoch at 101

16 June 2012 was the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Enoch Powell, and many newspapers featured articles on his life and career. We had intended to use the occasion to publish a short letter that Enoch Powell sent BWMA in 1995, but the matter was overlooked. We rectify this now:

“Thank you for letting me see the first issue of The Yardstick. You may attribute to me the belief that the fixing of weights and measures is a not unimportant aspect of parliamentary sovereignty”.

Robert Carnaghan recalls, “A while before BWMA started, at an AGM of the Campaign for an Independent Britain, I suggested that there would be useful mileage for the CIB in opposing unpopular metrication. Enoch Powell was in the audience and I noticed he was among the many who clapped my proposal”.

In the House of Lords

30 Apr 2012

Lord True (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have any plans to adopt the kilometre in place of the mile as the prime measure of distances by road in the UK.

Earl Attlee (Whip; Conservative): This Government have no plans whatsoever to adopt the kilometre as the unit of distance on roads in the United Kingdom. To do so would require the metrication of all traffic signs indicating speed as well as distance, for which diverting funding from high priority areas is not considered justifiable, or indeed desirable.

25 Jul 2012

Lord Stoddart of Swindon (Independent Labour): To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Taylor of Holbeach on 12 July (WA 279) concerning Thames Water leakages, why they used metric rather than imperial measures, and whether, in future, they will use only imperial measures or quote both measures.

Baroness Wilcox (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Business, Innovation and Skills; Conservative): Metric units of measurement were adopted as the primary system of measurement by the public sector and for the majority of trade uses on 1 October 1995. Failure to adopt the metric system would have had a negative effect on the UK's international competitiveness. However, imperial units can continue to be used as supplementary indications alongside metric units for as long as businesses or the public find them useful. Whether to use imperial units alongside metric ones is a decision for the public sector organisation or business concerned, taking into account the needs of the audience and the business case. I understand that there are no plans to report leakage in imperial measures.

From the Archives: "Cotton Manufacturers' point of view", from BWMA's annual report, July 1905

English textile manufacturers are against the adoption of the metre and its derivatives into their work for the simple reason that they have everything to lose and nothing to gain by such adoption. One of the strongest reasons which the metricites advance in favour of weights and measures reform generally is the plea of uniformity, but in the textile trade we have already a worldwide uniformity, based on the English yard and the English pound. What the Lancashire cotton manufacturer understands by, say, "32's" is similarly understood by all textile manufacturers in all parts of the world, whether in so-called metric countries or otherwise, and in all stages of manufacture in those countries, from the opening of the bale of cotton to the final process of weaving it into cloth.

As regards our calculations, theorists imagine we have difficulties which the practical manufacturer knows do not exist. The English spinner very rarely uses any weight ratios other than the pound and the grain. The count of 840 yards length, and the 7,000 grain pound, both readily lend themselves to the septem system, and this system gives us every advantage which decimalising can give. We claim that we can calculate with less figures, in a shorter time, and with less risk of error, with our present method than the Continental manufacturer can with his conglomeration of varying measures. The introduction of the metre to us would be to introduce confusion where we now have uniformity. This has been practically the result to our European confreres of their having to conform, so far as they can, to the metric system. They are denied the simplicity of calculation which we enjoy, nor can they simplify their present method inasmuch as the laws of their respective countries demand conformity to the metric system, whilst practical experience compels them to adopt, in addition to the metre measures, a standard either exactly, or approximately, of the English inch. The great difficulty lies in the metric derivatives being incommensurable with our inch and its multiples. It is beyond question that a standard approximating to the English inch is a necessity for textile manufacturing. The French had that standard in their old inch, though even here the difficulty of being incommensurable with the metric ratios arises, and to obviate this, whilst retaining practi-

cally the same length as of old, they divide the metre into 37 parts, and this one-thirty-seventh metre they term the "Paris inch." Therein lies the root of much of the trouble and confusion in their calculations.

But in addition to the foregoing particular difficulties of the textile trade, there are other difficulties to be seen from a more general view of the subject. For instance, all our machinery is based on the inch measurement. Entering into the construction of these machines are parts constructed to the finest fraction of an inch for the purpose of measuring the material as it progresses in manufacture. All these parts would become useless. It would be impossible to alter them gradually by replacing the worn-out parts with new ones based on the metric measurements, for some of these parts will last 30, or 40, or even more years, and no manufacturer can be troubled with a portion of his machines measuring to one system and others to another for a couple of generations of time. If the alteration had to be made there would be nothing for it but altering all at once, and he would be a bold Chancellor of the Exchequer who would recommend the country to pay for the expense of such alteration, for it is clear neither the individual manufacturer, nor the trade, can be expected to pay for something which was presumably a national benefit, but which, in our particular trade, could very easily be shown to place us in a worse position than we are now, and on those grounds our trade would be entitled to claim permanent compensation.

With the adoption of the metric system our present price lists would be useless, and the gravest consequences would ensue owing to the suspicion and bad feeling which would be created between employers and employed in building up a new list on measurements and weights which neither parties were familiar with. Again, our textbooks, our literature, and all our private records would be useless. We should be worse than a new nation starting manufacturing, for we should be grievously handicapped by the great trouble of having to forget what is now part of our nature, and this trouble of forgetting is very much greater than learning something new.

If the metric system was made compulsory in this country tomorrow, it would mean the introduction of confusion and loss in the textile trade to the present and the succeeding generation, whilst the generation to follow, which would grow up under the new conditions, would be taught a system inferior to that taken from their forefathers.

THOMAS ROBERTS

Darwen, Lancashire

MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held Saturday 26 May 2012, The Victory Services Club, London W2

1 The Meeting was opened at 2.0pm by the Chairman, Michael Plumbe, who delivered an introductory address.

2 Apologies for Absence had been received from A Liddle, R McKee, S Kirby & J Cully.

3 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2011 were read and approved on a motion proposed by Michael Faith and seconded by Jose O'Ware.

4 The Director's Report was presented by John Gardner, principally comprising as follows.

- Four issues of *The Yardstick* were published, nos. 46-49, plus the President's pamphlet on *The Myth of 1965*.

- Five Committee Meetings were held: in 2011 on 12 July, 20 September and 6 December; in 2012 on 21 February and 8 May.

- Warwick Cairns had set up a Facebook page which was already proving popular.

- Four new Hon. Members were elected: Bernard Cornwell, Hugh Johnson, Neil Hamilton, and Roger Scruton. The 'In Memoriam' panel of deceased Patrons and Hon. Members, lamentably, also continues to lengthen; most notably this year by the passing of the Lord Monson, who was our founding Patron in 1995.

- An especially welcome new Member was Kate Hoey, MP.

- A generous donation had been received from Lord Vinson.

- A submission had been made to the Government's "Red Tape Challenge Team". As yet no response received.

- BWMA participated in the Government's "Your Freedom" campaign.

- Protested against the practice of government departments, concealing the identity of responsible officials by using fake signatures (e.g. "Mrs S Silver"); instrumental in forcing an undertaking to cease the practice altogether.

- The Government has secured exemption for the pint in EC food regulations.

- The Department of Transport proposes to permit, but not to compel, road dual height restriction signs. Government research shows that foreign drivers' understanding of imperial road signs is the same as that of UK drivers.

- A much-publicized AA 'survey' which showed that one in three of 21,000 members wanted to ditch miles per gallon was careful not to disclose what the other two-thirds wanted, but concluded that mpg is "outmoded, confusing and irrelevant", without any supporting evidence.

- Metric road signs have been corrected in Salisbury, Edinburgh, Belfast, Richmond, Warwickshire and Eastleigh.

- More instances were quoted of downsizing in foods and confectionery: e.g. Roses and Foxes sweets, often compounding the offence by shrinking the basic product and then promoting the balance as "extra free"; milk that 'evaporates' when sold in ml instead of pints; and 'half-pounders' containing much less than the equivalent in grams.

- Correspondence with the Office of Nuclear Regulation.

- Renewal of contact with Americans for Customary Weight and Measure which shows signs of revival.

- A survey by Consumer World shows that Americans are confused by weighing in grams.

A warm vote of thanks was accorded to John Gardner for his sterling work throughout the year. Derek Norman was also applauded for his vital contribution.

5 Warwick Cairns presented the Press Officer's Report, detailing BWMA's well-publicized response to Lord (Geoffrey) Howe's complaint in the House of Lords' debate on the Queen's Speech, that the new parliamentary session's legislative programme had failed to undertake the abolition of all remaining imperial weights and measures. The House had duly ignored Lord Howe's complaint.

6. The Annual Accounts having been circulated, Michael Plumbe as Acting Treasurer presented the Treasurer's Report, adopted on a motion proposed by Mike Davies and seconded by Peter Kirby.

7 Elections: Michael Plumbe was re-elected as Chairman and as Acting Treasurer. John Gardner re-elected as Director, *nemo contra* and *cum laude*.

Nominations for the Committee having been received for Warwick Cairns, Derek Norman, Bill Peters, Peter Rogers, Jose O'Ware, Robert Stevens and John Strange, they were re-elected *en bloc*. A vote of thanks was carried to Sheila Eustace, who recently retired as minutes secretary to the Committee. William Featherstone was re-appointed as Auditor on a motion proposed from the Chair and seconded by Derek Norman. Jose O'Ware was thanked for producing the Agenda and Conference programme.

8 A general discussion followed on the current state of metrication and possible BWMA initiatives. Among John Strange's delightful illustrations of metric absurdity, the prescribed weight of the ball used for the shot-put in the Olympic Games is 7.26 grams, which happens to represent 16 pounds.

There being no further competent business, the AGM closed at 2.55pm with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

*BWMA gratefully records the Patronage of the late
The Hon. Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Lord Shore,
Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, KBE, CB, Lord
Monson and Sir Patrick Moore, CBE
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
Spiegel, F S Trueman, OBE, Sir Rowland Whitehead,
Bt, George MacDonald Fraser, OBE, Beryl Cook,
OBE, John Michell, David Shepherd, MBE, Keith
Waterhouse, CBE, Dick Francis, CBE, Prof. Antony
Flew, Trevor Bailey, CBE, Prof. Richard Holmes,
Michael Barry, OBE, CBE, Max Bygraves, OBE,
Christopher Martin-Jenkins MBE*

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