

# The Yardstick

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## Bridge strikes

In April 2012, Network Rail produced a report, *Prevention of bridge strikes; a good practice guide for transport managers*, which said, “To prevent bridge strikes, it is important that your drivers know the height of their vehicle and understand and obey traffic signs. To assist them, the Department for Transport has amended the Traffic Signs Regulations to allow local councils to use new signs that show, for example, the maximum headroom in imperial and metric units.”

BWMA said at the time that dual signs would not prevent bridge strikes. Six years later, and after dual imperial-metric units had been made compulsory for new signs, Network Rail declared on its website, “Irresponsible bridge-bash stupidity has got to stop”. Chief operating officer Mark Killick said in February 2018: “There’s no excuse for this. Lorry drivers should know their vehicle’s height and width – not guess and hope for the best. Despite being very clearly marked, these bridges were driven into by irresponsible drivers causing unnecessary disruption to railway and road-users.”

If only the authorities had listened to BWMA; the solution to bridge strikes is a sign indicating the height; in the UK, feet and inches. If drivers continue to strike bridges after the solution has been provided, *there must be some other problem at play*. Network Rail and the Department for Transport failed to correctly analyse the problem; consequently, they produced the wrong solution: adding metric indications.

## Warwick Cairns podcast interview

On 19 January 2018, Warwick Cairns was interviewed by the *Sunday Telegraph’s* Christopher Hope on Choppers Podcast (episode 35), a 45-minute current affairs programme. Referring to the use of legal compulsion in enforcing metric conversion, Warwick said no-one has to be forced to adopt things that work; “*When old cathode ray TVs were replaced by flat screens, no-one passed a law saying people had to have flat screens. If metric was better for everything, people would go for it, but they don’t*”. The interview is available to listen to on the *Telegraph’s* website (or google search: choppers podcast 35); Warwick’s segment commences at the 37m 30s mark.

## Anti-Metric Society

Accompanying this *Yardstick* for supporters is a 16-page booklet reproducing materials from the Anti-Metric Society, which existed during the early 1990s. The Society produced three issues of its newsletter, *Imperial Resistance*, before being wound up, enabling BWMA to take over the anti-compulsory metrication campaign in 1995. Its slogan was: “Don’t give an inch”.

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 subscriptions and donations. Membership is £12 per year. Cheques or postal orders payable to “BWMA”, 29 Chart House Road, Ash Vale, Surrey GU12 5LS

## Christmas puddings

### **BWMA letter to Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, 26 November 2017**

Our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial weights and measures, and notes that Sainsbury's Christmas puddings are 450 grams. This replaces 454 grams i.e. 1 lb. This reduction is very slight and will not be noticeable to consumers. It does, however, break the link to the traditional Christmas pudding size. Please explain why Sainsbury's made this change from 454 grams to 450 grams. For next year, will Sainsbury's consider the alternative option, which is to restore the 454 gram weight and add "1 lb" alongside? This is lawful as a supplementary indication, and will be a popular move by drawing consumers' attention to the traditional quantity.

#### **Reply from Sainsbury's, 7 December 2017**

Thanks for your letter to Mike Coupe, regarding the change in weight of our Christmas pudding. I've been asked to respond on his behalf. We want our customers to enjoy everything they buy from us and expect our suppliers to meet our very high standards. Our buyers and suppliers regularly review our products and rely on customer feedback to help improve the products we sell.

It's disappointing your Association is unhappy with the changes we've made. We appreciate that the traditional size for a Christmas pudding is 454g. The pudding weight was changed six years ago to 450g and I would like to assure you this decision wasn't taken lightly. We monitored customer feedback on our Christmas pudding line and with the opinions we received from our customers, we decided to change this. We've not had any other communication from our customers regarding the weight. However, we've made our buyers aware of your comments and we'll monitor all feedback closely, taking this into account when the product is next reviewed.

Unfortunately, changing the weight back to 454g for next year isn't possible as they've already been wrapped and are maturing. I know this isn't the answer you're looking for and I apologise for the upset this will cause. Thanks again for taking the time to get in contact and giving me the opportunity to address your comments. Claire Black, Executive Office

#### **BWMA also wrote to Tesco, Waitrose, Asda and Iceland, which still sell Christmas Puddings in 454g quantities**

Our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial weights and measures, and notes that Tesco Christmas puddings are sold in 454 and 907 gram quantities. This is, of course, the metric equivalent of the traditional 1lb and 2lb sizes. We are delighted that Tesco retains the 454 and 907 gram weights, but why is the weight in pounds not displayed alongside? This is lawful as a 'supplementary indication'. We urge that, from Christmas 2018, Tesco restores imperial equivalents to the label; this will be a popular move among consumers and will draw attention to the traditional quantity.

*Reply from Tesco:* Thank you for your letter addressed to our Chief Executive, to which I've been asked to respond. I can confirm that I have shared a copy of your letter with our Buyer, and he asked that I thank you for your feed-

back. As you probably are aware, we do have to plan ahead well in advance for the next festive season, so your comments have been noted and will be discussed during the review meetings. Thank again for taking the time and trouble to write. Gail Harris, Customer Service executive to the Board, Customer Engagement Centre

*Reply from Waitrose:* Thanks for your letter to our CEO, Charlie Mayfield. He's asked me to respond on his behalf. I've passed on your feedback to our Christmas pudding buyer and they'll review your request for our 2018 offering. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us. Theresa Barlas, Case Manager, Executive Office

*Reply from Asda:* Thank you for letting us know what you think. We always appreciate customer feedback and our Buying Team always listen to what our customer's think about our products. I've sent over your recommendations and these will be used the next time we come to review our products. Lynden Lewis, ASDA Service Team

*Reply from Iceland:* I'm sorry to hear that you were disappointed with the packaging of the Christmas Pudding that you recently bought. Thank you for bringing this to our attention, as your feedback is really important to us. Our reputation and our success over more than 40 years have been built on delivering customer satisfaction and we are truly sorry that you have been disappointed on this occasion. We have very strict control agreements with all our suppliers to ensure that our packaging quality is maintained to the highest standard. Based on your feedback I was able to report this matter directly to our Buying Team and our Supplier, who will certainly be grateful for this feedback. We really hope that you will give us another chance to prove that Iceland is a great place to shop. Sophie, Online Help Team

*Alongside supermarket 454g and 907g Christmas puddings are 100g puddings which do not fit the imperial scale; what is the history of these? According to the Daily Mail, 4 September 1995:*

"... last Christmas, David Patterson of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire noticed his local Sainsbury's was selling packs of 4 x 100 gram Christmas puddings under a notice reading "All Christmas puddings at same price or cheaper than last year". But Mr Patterson still had a label from Christmas 1993 when the pack had read 4 x 4oz (113g) also at £2.59. The ingredients on the two packs were identical. Mr Patterson wrote to Sainsbury's for an explanation. Paul Hope of the customer service department replied, "I have spoken to the buyer of the Four Individual Rich Puddings and he has informed me that the ingredients of the recipe have changed to a higher quality, which explains the corresponding rise in price. Mr Patterson was not impressed, since the ingredients given on the label were identical. So he wrote to Buckinghamshire trading standards department. Although the officials responded by telephone, they put nothing in writing and no action was taken".

*So, the 100 gram Christmas pudding is downsized from 4 ounces. One wonders why the same trick has not been extended to the 454g/907g packs. Yet.*

## Metric pedestrian signs in Bournemouth

Stuart Delvin received the following reply from Bournemouth Borough Council regarding signs along Bournemouth sea front, 2 June 2017:

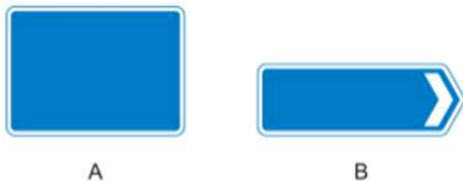
Further to your recent letters regarding your recent visit to Bournemouth and more specifically the ... pedestrian signage around Bournemouth town centre. I can assure you that our use of metric measurements on these signs are not in any way illegal. These signs are regulated under the Town & County Planning (Control of Advertisement) Regulations Act 2007, and in line with an increasing use of the metric system (coins in 1971, use of the system in school since the mid 1970s) we feel this is the appropriate way to provide distance information for pedestrians visiting our resort. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me again. Andrew Brown, Seafront Operations Manager.

### BWMA letter to Bournemouth Borough Council, 27 July 2017

I have been forwarded by Stuart Delvin correspondence of 2 June 2017 concerning metric indications of distance on Bournemouth seafront signs. By way of background, our Association campaigns for the retention of imperial weights and measures, such as the pint, yard and mile.

The seafront signs are direction/distance signs along a public highway, and are regulated by the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016. Part 2 of Schedule 12 of TSRGD 2016 relates to "Sign background for directional signs for motorways, primary routes, non-primary routes, cyclists and pedestrians". The [blue] seafront signs are of the following type:

1. An x-height that is not less than 25 mm and not more than 60 mm
2. The background, border and any chevron, legend, symbol or logo may be in any contrasting colours
3. The border, chevron or both may be omitted
4. The shape of the pointed end of diagram B may be varied



Schedule 18 of TSRGD 2016 relates to "Permitted Expressions of Time, Distance and Parking Restrictions"; Part 3 concerns "Permitted expressions of distance":

1. Paragraphs 2 to 6 are subject to paragraph 7.
2. Where "10" is used as an example numeral, a distance in miles must be expressed as—

- (a) "10 miles" (or, where 1 is the numeral, "1 mile");
  - (b) "10 m"; or
  - (c) "10".
3. Yards must be expressed as the numeral followed by "yards" or "yds".
4. A distance of 3 miles or more must be expressed in miles to the nearest mile.
5. A distance of ½ mile or more but less than 3 miles must be expressed to the nearest ¼ mile with the fractions ¾, ½ and ¼ being used.
6. A distance of less than ½ mile must be expressed—
- (a) to the nearest ¼ mile with the fractions ½ and ¼ being used; or
  - (b) in yards, to the nearest 10 yards
7. Where—
- (a) a sign provided for in Schedule 12 includes a distance to a junction; or
  - (b) is a diagram A sign provided for in Part 22 of that Schedule (services) and includes a distance,
- that distance must be expressed in miles denoted by the letter "m" and must be one of the following: "2 m", "1¾ m", "1½ m", "1½ m", "1¼ m", "1 m", "¾ m", "¾ m", "½ m" or "½ m".

Yards and miles are the permitted units of distance. Metric indications are not provided for. Consequently, the Bournemouth seafront signs are unlawful.

You will be aware that Bournemouth Borough Council trading standards officers enforce the use of metric units by local shops and stores; therefore, our Association ensures the use of imperial units on the public highway, as required by law. It is government policy *not* to have metric for distance and direction signs on public highways, and there is no prospect of that changing in the foreseeable future. Please indicate when Bournemouth Borough Council will replace or remove the signs.

### Reply from Bournemouth Borough Council, 12 October 2017

Further to your recent letter ... Whilst we acknowledge your comments with regards to the signage we have installed, part of the town's Wayfinding scheme from 2012, we are confident that the project has been completed in accordance with the relevant regulations with regard to signage on public open space, as the seafront is. Whilst we take on board your comments with regard to Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 regulations, the seafront areas where our signage is placed are not areas of public highway, therefore we are not going to make alterations to the signage on our seafront. Andrew Brown, Seafront Operations Manager.

*BWMA note: we are not convinced by Mr Brown; signs intended for the public must, by definition, be on a public highway.*

## **Another Rant against the Metric System, by Sean Gabb**

*Originally published in Free Life Commentary,  
Issue Number 6, 10 December 1997*

One morning in March 1967, I turned up at junior school with my 9d dinner money and had the first great political shock of my life. I now suppose that some Minister in the Wilson Government had just announced The Day: at the time, I was taken by surprise when my teacher explained to the class that in future there would be no more of these big ugly coins that made our little hands taste so funny. Instead, there would be 100 pennies to the pound, and all the coins would be new and small, and there would be no more arithmetic questions that involved dividing 14/-7d into half a crown. Later that morning, she introduced us to the metre and the kilogramme. As I recall, she was insistently enthusiastic about the simplicity of the new system that we were soon to have.

I spent the whole day wanting to cry. I kept pulling out all the change in my pocket and looking at the coins. I had pennies from the reign of Queen Victoria - one of them nearly a hundred years old, showing the Queen as she had looked in her younger days - and a sixpence that described George VI as *Indiae Imperator*. I had no words then to describe how I felt. But looking at those coins that were temporarily mine gave me a firm sense of being English. They were one with the oath I swore to the Queen every Tuesday evening at Cub Scouts, and with the stories of my relatives who had died in the War, and with the history books I was beginning voraciously to devour. They were perhaps more than that. They were things I could touch. I could imagine the clothes worn by the people who so long before had also touched those coins, and the thoughts in their heads as they had spent them. They placed me within a living tradition that reached back into the mists of time, to King Offa who had first minted pennies a thousand years before - a tradition that I wanted to continue a thousand years after I was dead. As said, I had no words then to express the horror that I felt at the coming violation. But those are the words I would have used.

Though I had several years - at the time, it seemed an age - to prepare myself for the change, I still hated "Decimal Day" as I had hated nothing else. Never once did I believe the claims that this would be an improvement. I despised the new coins, with their crude symbolism. I mourned the passing of a coinage that combined elegance with

solidity, and that gave everyone a history lesson in his loose change. I saved all the old coins that came to me before they were withdrawn; and I still occasionally take them from the jar where I keep them, and brood about the collapse of civilisation.

I have seldom wanted to cry since then, but I have loathed every other advance of metrication. Since the present big push began about a decade ago, I have looked on helpless as one ancient measurement after another has been replaced by the new ones. I now live in a country where it is a criminal offence to sell petrol by the gallon and wrapped cheese by the pound, where road signs are appearing to say how many metres I can drive before the road narrows to one lane, and how many tonnes a bridge can support.

The latest imposition - and the excuse for this article - is the change in the width restrictors on the roads in my part of London. To be correct, the restrictors have not changed, but their measurement has. The signs always used to warn me that vehicles more than 7 foot wide had better go no further. They now refer to vehicles over 2.13 metres.

There are people who wonder at my prejudice against the metric system. I cannot deny its utility as a system of measurement. I am even moved by the harmony of its parts, so lacking in our own. Nor have I found the least inconvenience in adapting to its use in my visits abroad. I lived nearly two years in Czechoslovakia, and drive every summer to spend time with my wife's family in the Slovak Republic. Never once have I been confused by the metric weights and measures. Even so, my prejudice against it in my own country is insuperable, and it can be justified on two very strong grounds.

First, for all its logical confusion, the imperial system is part of our national identity. It evolved during a thousand years of English history. When I read a book written in - say - the eighteenth century, I find myself in a world very different from my own. For all this, it is a world with which my own is plainly continuous. Anyone who needs a footnote or a glossary to know the meaning of two shillings or seven inches has been deprived of part of that continuity. A further barrier has been erected to that easy communion with past ages that has been known and valued in every great nation. To be cut adrift from the past is always a bad thing. And to be cut adrift from the English past is particularly bad. Metrication is not quite so impassable a barrier as reformed spelling or

changed place names have been elsewhere. But it is a barrier that will greatly advance the present decline of limited government and the rule of law.

Certainly, shillings and inches are logically separable from Habeas Corpus and freedom of the press. But in practice, I do not think they are. For every person who can put an abstract case for liberty, there are eleven who regard it as an inheritance from the past. Bring a sudden end to any part of that past, and the other parts will insensibly become less secure. Already, few Englishmen have any historical awareness that goes beyond 1940. I was shocked at the public indifference that attended the third centenary of the Glorious Revolution and the fourth of the Spanish Armada. Last year, I gave some home lessons in English and arithmetic to a couple of schoolboys who had never learned the order of the Tudor Monarchs or the causes of the English Reformation. Metrication can only do more to make the past into a foreign country, inaccessible to any traveller without a mass of explanations of which my own generation had no need.

Second, metrication is unnecessary for any valuable purpose. I accept the need for progress. Much of it, I welcome. The conquest of smallpox and typhus - the fact that few of us now experience the loss of close relatives until middle age - these are blessings. I am writing this article on a personal computer and releasing onto the Internet - these also are immense improvements that already are liberating millions from the lies of our controlled media. At the same time, of course, they are barriers to that easy communion with the past that I so value. But they are barriers that are justified by positive benefits. There are no such benefits to be had from metrication.

Leaving aside the madness of getting into them, did we suffer in the two world wars because our weapons were calibrated in inches? Did the Americans fall behind the Russians in the space race because they measured their rocket fuel in gallons? What disaster has attended the computer industry because of the three and a half inch floppy disk?

For the past few centuries, the English-speaking world has had a reasonably free economy. In a free economy, improvements are adopted because they reduce costs or increase sales. Since the 1870s, it has been legal in Britain and the United States to use the metric system for private transactions. At no time has there been any spontaneous move towards its general use. In every case, metrication has been imposed by authority. Even in France, it was only fully established in the 1830s - forty years after the revolutionaries had commissioned its development - when the Government compelled its use for all purposes. In my own country, unless prohibited by law,

the old weights and measures continue in use. There is no requirement to sell unwrapped cheese by the gramme: it is still sold by the ounce. Regulated pharmacists are forced by law to dispense aspirin by the milligramme. My students assure me that free market pharmacists continue to dispense cannabis by the eighth and quarter ounce.

The fact is that most of us still think in the old measurements, and would derive solid benefits if we were left alone to use them in our daily lives. Certainly, since the change from 7 foot to 2.13 metres in the restrictors that limit access to Blackheath Village, I have seen two vans wedged where none had ever stuck before.

As for the greater simplicity of calculating in the metric system, this advantage - such as it is - has been made wholly unnecessary by the development of electronic calculators and computers. I keep my accounts using a program called Quicken. It would work just as accurately in pounds, shillings and pence as it does in pounds and pence.

The metric system, then, is not something that makes life easier for us. It is instead an imposition by rulers who love nothing more than stamping their rationalistic prejudices on everyone else. It appeals to their sense of order. If it ever becomes feasible, they will probably commission studies into revising the Earth's orbit to something more decimal than 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes and five seconds. They certainly regard the old measurements as yet another local peculiarity to be smoothed away by their project of global harmonisation. They really do look forward to the day when each person in the world is indistinguishable from every other. They have nearly finished with the weights and measures. They have made progress with laws and other regulations. Sooner or later, they will proceed to language. That their chosen language will be mine gives me no comfort whatever. Better that every county in England had its own impenetrable dialect than that all humanity should worship its masters in the same clipped, homogenised English.

Time and inflation have made it impracticable to suggest a return to the old currency in England. But the battle over other measurements has not been lost. We cannot all take up guns and drill to defend ourselves against the New World Order. We cannot all be outspoken against it. But a boycott of the metric system is also resistance. So long as there are still people to demand translations "into English" at the cheese counters and in fabric shops, the enemy has not triumphed. There will remain one corner of the public mind that is forever England.

## Centigrade, Celsius or Fahrenheit by Malcolm Walker

*This piece originally appeared in Malcolm Walker's 2011 book "History of the Meteorological Office", and was re-published as an article in the 2012 newsletter of the Royal Meteorological Society's History of Meteorology and Physical Oceanography Special Interest Group.*

By the early 1960s, the Meteorological Office had become respected around the world for its scientific and technological capabilities and the progress it had made towards realizing Richardson's dream of forecasting the weather by mathematical methodology. It had also long been a leading member of the international meteorological community. And yet, an international issue remained unresolved. The universal use of the metric system in meteorology had been opposed by the Office's Director at Leipzig in 1872 and the matter had continued to simmer. A partial introduction of the system in the Office had come just before the Great War, when there had been a change from inches to millimetres for measuring rainfall and inches to millibars for recording barometric pressure, but the Office and the British public had continued to use the Fahrenheit scale of temperature.

A move to clear up the matter came in 1953, when the Executive Committee of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) decided that degrees Celsius should be used for coding temperatures in all upper-air reports; and another move came in 1955, when the Second WMO Congress passed a resolution that, in principle, the metric system be adopted for all international exchanges of meteorological information. The Third WMO Congress, in 1959, resolved that meteorological services which had still not adopted the metric system fully should do so, at least in coded messages for international exchanges, at some time in the period 1959 to 1963.

The Meteorological Office acted on the 1953 decision in 1956, thereafter using degrees Celsius in all communications to aircraft, but the 1955 resolution was disregarded. The 1959 resolution was, however, implemented. The Office adopted Celsius for almost all internal and international purposes, thus coming into line with the great majority of other countries and with most scientific bodies in the UK. The change took effect on 1 January 1961, but still not for the public, for whom the Office continued to use degrees Fahrenheit.

The desirability of using Celsius in weather information for the public was, however, considered by the Office, but before making any change they decided to seek the views of industry, public utilities and the leading technical and scientific bodies, as well as the views of the principal makers of thermometers. They put to them a proposal that Celsius and Fahrenheit be used concurrently, except that they proposed that the term 'centigrade' be used, rather than 'Celsius', on the grounds that most people in Britain were not familiar with Celsius. When no objection was raised to the proposal, the Air Ministry authorized the use of both scales, and Sir Graham Sutton (the Office's Director-General) announced at a press conference on 5 December 1961 that centigrade would be introduced early in the new year. As a first step, both centigrade and

Fahrenheit would be used, with Fahrenheit values given first. He hoped the order would be reversed in time and the use of Fahrenheit dropped eventually.

The use of centigrade in weather information for the public began on 15 January 1962, with Fahrenheit values given first. Nine months later, the order was reversed, with centigrade given first. No decision was taken, though, on the omission of Fahrenheit values altogether.

A possible connection of Common Market negotiations with the switch to metric units was raised in the House of Commons on 27 February 1963 by Frank Bowles MP. In reply, Hugh Fraser, the Secretary of State for Air, denied any such connection, which gained him a riposte from Mr Bowles that he did not always accept what government spokesmen said about the Common Market! Bowles went on to ask if there was any truth in the letter he had seen that morning, written by the Anti-Centigrade Society, which claimed that Fahrenheit would be dropped altogether in May 1963? Could the Secretary of State assure him that Fahrenheit would never be dropped completely? Fraser's reply was that the use of Fahrenheit would cease only when acceptable to the public. In fact, it has never ceased, even though the UK has been metric officially since the 1970s. Weather presenters on radio and TV still occasionally give temperatures in degrees Fahrenheit.

*BWMA note: here is the 27 February 1963 House of Commons exchange, from Hansard.*

Mr Bowles asked the Secretary of State for Air whether he will give instructions, now that the Brussels talks have broken down, that meteorological temperatures given by the Meteorological Office should be given only in Fahrenheit.

*Mr H Fraser:* No, Sir. The introduction of centigrade in weather forecasts had no connection with the Common Market negotiations.

*Mr Bowles:* I do not always accept what Government spokesmen say about the Common Market. Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, apart from one letter, I have had a great number of letters and communications from people who ask me to state on behalf of the public as a whole their disgust and unhappiness at and inability to follow the temperatures given by the Air Ministry in centesimal? Does the right hon. Gentleman know what the correct Fahrenheit reading is for 39 degrees centesimal?

*Mr H Fraser:* I will have to ask my Department. In point of fact, they are given in both scales. The decision was the result of a recommendation by the Meteorological Committee. There was wide consultation with industry, public utilities, and industrial and research organisations. I think that on the whole this is satisfactory, certainly for young people, rather than for the hon. Gentleman and myself. Young people are being instructed in centigrade/Fahrenheit conversion and I am sure that this is the best method to pursue.

*Mr Bowles:* May I have an assurance that Fahrenheit will never be completely dropped?

*Mr H Fraser:* That is a wider question. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that will be done only when it is acceptable to the general public.

*Mr Bowles:* In view of the public interest in this matter, I should like some time to raise this matter on the Adjournment?

*Mr Speaker:* I wish we could adhere to the usual formula.

## A driller's tale (with depths in feet against a metric landscape!)

By Nigel Linacre

Our drilling team sent us reports on another batch of Kenyan schools that lack clean water. Instead, children must walk to a local stream or even further to Lake Victoria.

The school reports describe the depth in feet at which clean water is likely to be found. Thankfully, plenty of water falls in the twice yearly rainy seasons. In Kisumu County, a 150 feet borehole usually provides enough water for a school of 500 children and their families. Well, Britain exported the Imperial system to Kenya.

Vitally, wells reduce sickness in schools, boosting attendance and enrolment, improving school results, all from a simple hand-powered pump. The same reports describe the radius of the land the well will serve, typically written as 400 or 500 metres - Kenya followed Britain into dual marking.

The measurements in the school reports could be left like that, but they are going to a Rotary Club. The first Rotary Club was formed when a businessman called together three acquaintances in downtown Chicago, in 1905. They rotated their meetings around their members' premises, hence the name Rotary. Rotary International, to whom the reports must go, remains a US-centred organisation, and one that does much good in very many countries, and which thinks in traditional measures. So feet it must be!

WellBoring, a charity I co-founded in 2011, has now provided water wells for 40 communities, and with the help of Rotary and other donors will get to our target of 100 wells in 2020, at which point we will have successfully addressed about 1% of Kenya's water problem. So, there is still a vast amount of work to do, but where there's a will there's a well.

Nigel Linacre, Chair, WellBoring

*Readers can learn about the work of WellBoring and if they wish join at [www.wellboring.org](http://www.wellboring.org)*

### **BBC News, 3 January 2018: "Pint beer name 'should be reconsidered' "**

A brewery has been told to "reconsider" the name of its beer 'Pint' because the cans it sells are too small. Marble Beers in Manchester received a letter from Trading Standards after it began selling the beer in 500ml cans - 68ml less than a full pint. Nigel Murphy, a city councillor, said that while the naming issue might appear "trivial", it could lead to a "small misunderstanding". Marble said it would change the name to "satisfy the bureaucratic needs". The brewery has been making Pint for a number of years but first put it into cans in early 2017. Its owner Jan Rogers said: "We're a small company that doesn't have the time or resources to get involved in a legal battle about this matter." Trading Standards said the name could be deemed "misleading" under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 and the Weights and Measures Act 1985.

### **Decimal Watch: Man died after nurse gave 10 times the correct level of blood-pressure medication, *New Zealand Herald*, 17 July 2017**

A distracted nurse who was unfamiliar with an elderly patient's medication gave him 10 times the prescribed amount just hours before his death. The 73-year-old patient with a complex medical history was admitted to a hospital emergency department with shortness of breath, leg swelling, diarrhoea, vomiting and low blood pressure ... [the nurse] was unfamiliar with the patient's dosage of metoprolol, a heart medication, and after reviewing the patient's medical chart believed the doctor must have put the decimal point in the wrong place. The nurse noted the prescribed medication of 11.875mg daily but believed the doctor meant to write 118.75mg. She said she had meant to check the dosage with a colleague but became distracted and returned to give the higher and incorrect amount.

*BWMA comment: the above incident was not a decimal error in the usual sense, because the nurse chose to misapply the prescribed medication; but she did so because she assumed the doctor had made his own decimal error - which makes one wonder: just how common are these mistakes?*

### **Blue passports and light bulbs**

*Terry Jones writes (December 2017):* The Home Office has announced that our classic blue passports are to be returned to us after Brexit, that is great news; now, when will we be able to buy proper light bulbs to see them by, and when will the BBC and the Met Office be ordered to use and speak classical English and use classical and accurate British Imperial weights and measures, thus avoiding the constant subliminal stripping off of a gram or millilitre or two from products without reducing prices.

### **Metrication and Communism**

*Stephan A. Schwartz, California:* The metric system, like communism, was created by intellectuals who sat around talking about the problem, while carefully avoiding any of the work that would test their ideas in the real world. No one who actually had to work all day with a sledge hammer would choose to put one up as a national symbol.

### **Aristotle and Decimals**

"As Aristotle had noted long ago, the widespread use today of the decimal system is but the result of the anatomical accident that most of us are born with ten fingers and ten toes. From the mathematical point of view it is somewhat inconvenient that Cro-Magnon man and his descendants did not have either four or six fingers on a hand". *Boyer, Wiley: A History of Mathematics USA 1968.*

### **A Guide to Customary Weights and Measures**

In 2001, Vivian Linacre produced the original "Guide to Customary Weights and Measures" at his own expense on BWMA's behalf. As Vivian is downsizing house this summer, he wants to make the remaining copies available to *Yardstick* readers. The Guide provides articles, tables and notes to define and comment upon the modern uses and relationships of imperial units. Price per copy of this attractive 75-page book is £5 which includes postage and packaging. Send a cheque or postal order payable to Vivian Linacre, to 21 Marshall Place, Perth PH2 8AG; or email Vivian on [vtlinacre@gmail.com](mailto:vtlinacre@gmail.com) for alternative means of payment. Additional copies may be purchased at reduced rates: £12 for 3; £18 for 6; or £24 for 12 copies.

**Letter from the Association des Industries de la Chocolaterie, Biscuiterie et  
Confiserie de l'Union Européenne, 26 February 2007, to the European  
Commission regarding the Commission's proposal (subsequently abandoned) to  
ban non-metric supplementary indications from 1 January 2010**

I am writing to inform you of CAOBISCO position on the use of supplementary indications.

We understand the EU Commission's efforts to harmonize units of measurements at EU and International level, with the adoption of the metric only system by all EU's trading partners. However, for the reasons which we will explain hereafter, the exclusive use of system metric only cannot be envisaged at present and CAOBISCO would like to ask a permanent derogation to this Directive 80/181 for food labelling purposes.

For many companies on the UK and Irish market, both metric and imperial quantities of mass and volume are given, and when it is done, the metric quantity appears first, and the imperial quantity is not greater in size or prominence to the metric quantity. On these markets, imperial quantities are being progressively removed as packaging has been revised.

The exclusive use of the metric only system would compel operators to provide different labels for the same products depending on the destination of the products. For our EU Manufacturers, the USA is where they send a large amount of their exports to, and as you may know, USA has not yet adopted a metric only system. This would result in considerable extra costs, or even an interruption in exports. At present, in respect of numerous products, the same labels may be used for the Community market and for many third countries, including the USA.

Many examples can be given, such as temperatures for cooking instructions in bakery or cake mixes, which may give information in both degrees Fahrenheit and Celsius. We are concerned that any cooking instructions we might provide would be affected. This is also true for small packages, as there is an exemption in US legislation for small packages which results in the fact that many confectionery products can carry the same label in the EU and the USA.

Furthermore and more importantly, as you may know, the EU Food Industry has committed itself through the EU Diet, Nutrition and Physical Activity Platform, to provide information to consumers on energy content of food products in Calories (kcal) on a voluntary basis. Introducing a metric only system could strongly affect implementation of this commitment and would result in disallowing our manufacturers to provide the calorie information on the packaging of their products, which could be detrimental to consumers who want to manage their diet.

Consumer research has demonstrated that EU consumers 'poorly understood' products energy value given in SI units and kilojoules and 'had most difficulty understanding' kilojoules, or 'preferred' calories to joules as a measure of energy. On the other hand, consumers said that they 'fully understood and were influenced by' kilocalories. Moreover, Council Directive 90/496/EEC on nutrition labelling for foodstuffs prescribes in article 6 that the unit to be used for the declaration of the energy value is both kJ and Kcal.

We would, therefore, support a permanent derogation for food labelling that European Union Member States permit the use of non-SI units in addition to SI units. Thank you in advance for your attention to this letter. We hope that a conclusion will be found for this dossier which will satisfy all interested parties.

Pénélope Alexandre, Director Regulatory and Scientific Affairs, CAOBISCO, Brussels

*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*

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