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Brexit Blues

The Brexit date of 29 March 2019 has been muddied by a 21-month “transition period” which can extend EU regulations to 31 December 2020. But even if Britain leaves on 29 March with “no deal”, the government has recently said (12 October 2018) that it is “... taking steps to ensure that after exit UK consumers will retain the protections they currently have when buying from UK businesses ... UK consumers should not see any immediate differences in protection between UK law and that of EU Member States as UK and EU law is highly aligned”.

In other words, come what may, the government intends to maintain the regulatory *status quo*, and this means metric regulations.

Individual Imperial Initiatives

Michael Walker writes from Germany, 13 August 2018: “It would be interesting to see reports on individual initiatives combating metrication. For example, when I receive work to translate from German into English, my translation always shows imperial measurements ‘translated’ with the original metric in parenthesis. I’ve had no complaints”.

Do other members undertake action at a personal level to promote imperial units, which they can share with Yardstick readers?

Sir Patrick Moore

This *Yardstick* features a surprise discovery regarding BWMA’s late Patron Patrick Moore, so we salute Sir Patrick further by reproducing his letter to the *Daily Telegraph*, 26 October 2008:

“My collaborator Roger Prout and I have come up with a solution to enforced metrication. Traders would have their archaic weights engraved with a metric measure. If you went into a shop to buy 4lb of potatoes, a large notice above the counter would inform you that 4lb is 1.816 kilograms. You can’t order 4lb – naughty, naughty – so you would order 1.816 kg, and the vendor would use his 1.816 kg weight. That this is exactly the same as 4lb is mere coincidence. The prosecuting officials would be helpless. We would not have made them look fools (nature has done that already) but we would have rendered them harmless”.

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

Carriage Shed arch, Chester

Near to Chester Railway Station is an arch, leading to Queen Hotel, and to where there were once carriage sheds.



Until 2016, the Carriage Shed arch had its height indicated in imperial units:



In early 2016, however, Cheshire West and Chester Council revamped the signage and changed the 10ft 8in height indication to 3.3m.



Roger Croston sent the following email to the Council on 29 March 2016: The Carriage Shed looks really good. However, just one problem, the 3.3 metres headroom is illegal because heights by law must be displayed in imperial units which may be accompanied by metric. Do

you know who is responsible to get this corrected? I have informed the Queen Hotel.

Christopher Capes, Programme Manager, Chester Growth Partnership, Growth and Prosperity, 25 April 2016, replied: See links below, clearly there is much variation in the regulations so we feel they are compliant with legislation. I hope that clarifies.

<http://www.ukma.org.uk/restriction-signs-mess>

<http://www.metric.org.uk/metric-road-signs>

Regards, Chris Capes

Roger Croston, 25 April 2016: Many thanks, but this is not the government's regulations but it is the UK Metric Association, and the sign is indeed illegal and must be rectified.

Christopher Capes, 25 April 2016: Let me confer with a few colleagues and come back to you on this. Thanks.

Again from Christopher Capes, 16 May 2016: Just to update you we are going down onto site this week to look at the best solution for the signage. We have had differing advice on this, as the site was in private ownership there was a view that the sign didn't need to comply with highways regulations; but we have now been advised that we do. It is also complicated by the fact that it is a listed building, so the solution is not straightforward. I will update you.

Again from Christopher Capes, 19 August 2016: The signs are in hand, we are working with Highways to get them fitted and have agreed the how and where that will happen; it will just take a bit of time.

[four months later]

Roger Croston, 16 December 2016: Is this making any progress at all, please? This has been dragging on since April - eight months. In the commercial business world this would simply not be acceptable ... Trusting that you can use your very good influence to expedite the matter.

Christopher Capes, 16 December 2016: As you know we are working on this but, as the solution required is to change the whole bespoke lighting column, it is taking longer than we would like. Be assured we are working to resolve this.

[eight months later, after further emails]

Christopher Capes, 25 August 2017: I hope you're well, just wanted to send you a photo to show you that the sign is now in place at the carriage sheds.



BWMA analysis: evidently “bespoke lighting column” means “sign post”. It is also telling that Chester Council should take initial legal guidance from the UK Metric Association.

Notice anything else that’s odd? The council’s new triangular sign gives measurements that differ both from the metric on the arch, and from the previous imperial: 3.2m rather than 3.3m; 10ft 6in instead of 10ft 8in.

The discrepancy arises from the fact that 10ft 8in converts not to 3.2m or 3.3m, but 3.25m, suggesting that the first metric measurement was rounded *upwards* to 3.3m. When installing the dual sign, the carriage arch was re-measured, but this time rounded *downwards* to 3.2m. So far, understandable.

But rather than retain the original 10ft 8in indication, the accuracy of which there is no reason to doubt, the imperial height has been altered by two inches to make it *match the new 3.2m measurement*.

Although the rounded metric measurement remains accurate within the chosen metric range of resolution (0.1 of a metre), adjusting 10ft 8in to 10ft 6in is outside the imperial range of resolution (to one inch) and is *incorrect*.

Thus, a surveyor, trained in the hard sciences of geometry, physics and engineering, has *falsified a measurement* to make it conform to one made in politically approved units. The surveyor deemed inaccuracy preferable to presenting height in feet and inches as its own, independent truth.

* * *

National Trust, Stourhead, near Warminster, 25 May 2017

Robert Goodhand wrote the following letter to the National Trust:* My family had a most enjoyable day out the other day and our thanks again to the numerous volunteers who helped, guided and advised. I write though on what might be a light hearted topic but actually quite serious.

On the walk around the lake there are “new” signs. Concerning the Douglas fir I’m told they can grow in Britain over 61 metres tall. Why such a strange number? “Over 60 metres tall” I could understand but not 61. Of course the explanation is simple. Someone took rounded figures of 200 feet and converted to an exact metric.

Do you truly believe that giving the height in metric is more readily understood by the population at large? I would challenge that. So here’s the offer. Ask the first 100 visitors on any day their height and if more than 50% give you an answer in metres I’ll send you a £100 donation, gift aided. Even if I’m down on that offer (which I won’t be) do you not think an organisation dedicated to preserving our heritage might not be less cavalier with a traditional system of units that we have had in place for maybe 1,000 years?

National Trust reply, 13 June 2017

Thank you very much for your letter of 25 May 2017 which has been passed to me for a response. I am very pleased to hear that your family had a most enjoyable visit to Stourhead ... I am disappointed to learn a metric height on the Douglas fir tree sign was frustrating for you. It was certainly not our intention. Stourhead welcomes visitors from around the world and we do our best to communicate information in ways that make sense for as many as possible. Sometimes we fall short of expectations and I am sorry if this was the case here. I hope you found the rest of the information informative and trust you will continue to visit Stourhead.

Martin Clements, Visitor Experience Officer

* In 2017, BWMA reproduced materials from the Anti-Metric Society, from the early 1990s; we are grateful to Robert for supplying copies of newsletters that he had retained from that period.

Bring back the pint of champagne!

The Spectator, 7 December 2013

When I'm gathered, as my granny used to say, I'd like to be remembered as the man who reintroduced the imperial pint of champagne. I'm not an ambitious creature, by and large. But we all want to leave our mark upon this world somehow, and that's where I've set my sights.

I've been trying for over 30 years, and sadly I'm no closer to winning this particular battle. But, as my old granny also said, pointing to a picture of Robert the Bruce and the spider, 'If at first you don't succeed...'

The imperial pint makes for a perfect-sized bottle. You get four proper-sized glasses from it — as opposed to six from a bottle, or three from a half-bottle. Champagne is designed to be shared, preferably with one other person. Six glasses between two are — if you're carrying on to another bottle with dinner — too much. However, three glasses are certainly too little to share between two people: one for me, one for you, and a dribble for us both to finish? That's just mean, and the one thing you should never associate with champagne is meanness.

The imperial pint was Churchill's favourite way of drinking his beloved Pol Roger — there's even one proudly displayed in the Cabinet War Rooms (which we supplied from the Berry Bros & Rudd private reserves). I also associate the pint with Duff Cooper. In 1953, in his memoir *Old Men Forget*, he writes: 'I ordered an imperial pint of champagne, that admirable measure which like so many good things has disappeared from the world.' He is remembering a bleak Sunday night in the early stages of the First World War, when he was dining alone at his club, due to return to his army training camp and overcome by 'a great cloud of depression'. But the pint bottle and a copy of *Through the Looking-Glass* accompanied him through his dinner, and 'as by enchantment my melancholy left me and I knew that I should not be unhappy again'.

One of my first jobs in the wine trade, back in the dim and distant past we call the 1970s, was working for Moët & Chandon in Epernay. I told them then that the imperial pint was the way ahead. It was the first time I ever witnessed the Gallic shrug in person.

The Champenoise, I discovered, don't think much of the imperial pint. They claim that its reintroduction would threaten sales of the 75cl bottle —

but this is nonsense. People would buy it instead of the mean half-bottle, and so sales would increase. One producer even told me that the French would never favour a format that was named after the British Empire. It had never occurred to me that we had the exclusive rights to matters imperial. Name it after the Napoleonic Empire, the Third Empire, the Empire Leicester Square for all I care. Just let us have the bottle.

Unfortunately, the bottle is part of the manufacturing process of champagne. If the young wine wasn't put into a bottle a few weeks after the grapes were picked, halfway through the fermentation process, then champagne wouldn't be fizzy. You then have to wait for a while — in practice, at least three years — before the champagne is ready to drink and can hit the shelves. You can't change your mind once the clock has started ticking. And these bottles are not just any bottles, but strong enough to stand the pressure that builds up inside: the same as the tyre of a London bus, as we told the punters we showed around the cellars at Moët & Chandon.

When I started work at Berry Bros, one of my colleagues in the St James's Street shop was Rupert Clevely. We fantasised about the return of the pint. Fast forward 15 years, and Rupert became the worldwide marketing director for Veuve Clicquot. He called me one day, with the great news that Clicquot had come up with a new bottle size — not the imperial pint, exactly, but the half litre: 2 centilitres larger, but the closest thing this rule-obsessed world of ours allows to it.

From that decision, to the procurement of a bottle that will work, to the filling, to the launch, took almost five years. By then, our lords and masters in Brussels had outlawed the sale of the bottle within the European Union. It could go on sale in Norway, or in Switzerland, or in Hong Kong, but if I put it on the Berry Bros price list or on our website, I would be breaking the law, and we ran the risk of having our licence taken away from us. Somehow, the bureaucrats had won and we were once again denied the chance to drink our champagne from God's own bottle size.

I keep on hoping. Perhaps I'll persuade my friends in the rapidly improving English sparkling wine world that it could be their point of difference — we can reclaim the Empire.

Simon Berry is the chairman of the wine merchants Berry Bros. & Rudd.

Victory for the entente cordiale!

Christopher Hope, Chief Political Correspondent, *Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 2016

One of the world's oldest champagne makers is preparing to sell the fizzy drink in pint bottles – Winston Churchill's favourite measure – after Britain leaves the European Union, the *Telegraph* can disclose. Pol Roger wants to sell champagne in imperial measures for the first time since 1973, when Britain's decision to join the European Economic Community meant only metric measurements were allowed. The French company's board approved the move in the summer and is now discussing a new bottle size in imperial measurements with its suppliers.

Pol Roger said champagne could be laid down from the 2016 vintage in pint bottles early next year and with the first non-vintage champagne available in shops from 2021. This would mean that champagne in pint bottles could be ready for sale around the time that the UK is expected to leave the European Union. James Simpson, the managing director of Pol Roger UK, said: "It seems that one advantage of escaping Europe is that we can do what we like with bottle sizes."

Pol Roger, one of the few family-owned champagne makers, produces 1.5million bottles of champagne a year from its vineyards around Epernay, northern France, most in standard 0.75 litre bottles. Mr Simpson said it was likely that Pol Roger would produce several thousand in pint bottles to test demand for the smaller bottles.

The news was hailed by Simon Berry, chairman of London wine merchant Berry Bros & Rudd, one of Britain's oldest wine merchants. Mr Berry said he had tried for decades to persuade French champagne makers to sell their wine in pint measures – yet was told he was breaking the law by the EU.

Mr Berry said he had "fantasised about the return of the pint" of champagne for decades. He added that "now we are no longer beholden to Brussels" and could "drink our champagne from God's own bottle size". A pint of champagne was "such a perfect sized bottle," he said. "You get four proper sized glasses from it – as opposed to six from a bottle, or three from a half-bottle. Champagne is designed to be shared, preferably with one other person. Six glasses between two is – if you're carrying on to another bottle with dinner – too much. However three glasses are certainly too little to share between two people – one for me, one for you, and a dribble for us both to finish

with? That's just mean, and the one thing you should never associate with Champagne is meanness."

Writing on the Reaction website, he said he looked forward to marking Brexit "with an Imperial Pint or two" sold by Berry Bros. He added: "I'd like to be remembered as the man who re-introduced the Imperial Pint of champagne. I'm not an ambitious creature, by and large. But we all want to leave our mark upon this world somehow, and that's where I've set my sights. Now, after trying for almost 40 years, I might be a step closer to success. And it's all thanks to Brexit."

Earlier this week *The Telegraph* disclosed that ministers were under pressure to allow retailers to sell meat, fruit and vegetables in imperial measures. Warwick Cairns, a spokesman for the British Weights and Measures Association said: "We see this as a double victory: a victory for common sense, and a victory for international cooperation as it ought to be. Drinkers and restaurateurs have long considered the pint bottle to be the perfect size for champagne, but for decades it's been forbidden under EU legislation. So we're incredibly excited by the fact even though that legislation is still in place, Britain's oldest wine merchant and one of France's most respected champagne producers are finally pushing ahead and producing it anyway. We'll raise a glass to entente cordiale."

Winston Churchill was a famous enthusiast for a regular pint bottles of Pol Roger because it was "enough for two at lunch and one at dinner". Pol Roger first bottled the 1874 Vintage in Pint Bottles. All subsequent continued to be bottled in halves, pints, bottles and magnums. Churchill submitted his first invoice for Pol Roger in 1908 and continued to enjoy the drink until his death in 1965. Much of Churchill's Pol Roger was drunk with food, from a silver pint tankard – and indeed is still served in many of the London Clubs from silver tankards. When Churchill died in 1965, Odette Pol Roger - who Churchill had, famously, met at a lunch at the British Embassy in Paris in 1944 - declared that Pol Roger was "in mourning" for their greatest friend and supporter. The company put a black band on the label of the Non Vintage White Foil - which stayed until 2002 – and in 1975 Pol Roger produced the first Cuvee Sir Winston Churchill vintage, produced only in magnums. The final Vintage to be bottled in Pints was 1973 for shipment in to the UK after the UK joined the EEC in 1973.

**Internal note by the Federation of
British Industries, addressed to its
Grand Council, February 1965.
Marked “confidential”**

In *Yardstick 67*, we reproduced the July 1970 statement to Parliament by David Price, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Technology, that: “*In 1965, the President of the Federation of British Industries informed the Government of the day that the majority of the members of the FBI favoured the adoption of the metric system as the primary, and ultimately the only, method of measurement to be used in Britain*”.

Here, we reproduce the FBI’s internal and confidential memo of February 1965, obtained by Christopher Booker during his investigations in 1995, with our added emphasis.

In October 1963, the British Standards Institution [BSI] published a statement which concluded that there was a substantial majority view in industry that the introduction of the metric system as the primary system weights and measures in the U.K. should be effected within the shortest practicable period, although the timing of the change must clearly vary from industry to industry.

This statement was considered at a meeting of interested Trade Associations convened by the FBI in January 1964 when it was generally agreed that the sense of urgency expressed by the BSI was correct for manufacturers of goods sold to trade customers. It was recognised, however, that for some industries a change would present formidable difficulties and these required further investigation. The meeting also agreed that a change to metric cannot be made in isolation although some industries which can move independently were already taking steps in this direction. There was a general feeling that there was no need for the U.K. to wait for the U.S.A. and the Commonwealth before taking action.

These findings were reported to the Technical Legislation Committee who decided that further enquiries were necessary in certain sections of industry, and also with the BSI and the Board of Trade. These enquiries took place during the year [1964] and finally Trade Associations were asked to confirm their views. It was now clear that the nearly unanimous feelings expressed at the January meeting had become modified in some cases.

Some industries showed themselves definitely opposed to any early change - in particular, industries who were closely associated with the U.S.A. were reluctant to change over until the U.S.A. moved. On the other hand it was generally agreed that certain standards of measurement of purely domestic application in the U.K. could, and should, be abandoned. The majority view still favoured the idea of chang-

ing to metric but there was some divergence of opinion as to the urgency of such a change.

A Working Party was therefore convened in December 1964 to review the situation and recommend the best means of achieving progress. The Working Party came to the conclusion that not much progress could be made unless it was piecemeal and gradual and steps were taken to promote co-operation; there could be no question of a simultaneous moment of change. It was clear that in some spheres progress could be made by agreement, while at the other end of the scale there was resistance. In between there were areas where some progress would be possible if the FBI and BSI could bring the interests together for mutual discussion of practical problems arising. It had become clear that the present state of uncertainty was against the best interests of trade and particularly export trade, and that therefore a declaration of intent was needed from the government.

These conclusions were discussed subsequently with the BSI and were broadly agreed.

The Technical Legislation Committee met again on 18th January [1965] and decided that the Grand Council should be asked to agree that a statement on the following lines should be put to the Government:

“Industry is showing interest in changing over to the metric system and thinks this must come in time to the United Kingdom. Whilst it is recognised that the complete adoption of the metric system would have to be preceded by extensive measures of education of the public as well as adjustments on the part of industry, it is suggested that the Government could help to this end by a general declaration of intent. This declaration should then be followed by particular instructions to Government Departments, especially those concerned with the placing of contracts with industry”.

At the same time the Working Party considers it should continue, in conjunction with the BSI, to study the problem with a view to identifying areas in industry where action is needed and encouraging co-operation and progress. The Grand Council is asked to agree that this should be done.

BWMA note: see how the words “complete adoption” appear in the Technical Legislation Committee’s draft statement of 18 January 1965, when there is nothing in the FBI’s note to show that industry wanted or expected this. The admission that a “declaration of intent was needed from the government” is significant, for it suggests that help was needed to cajole or motivate a range of industries *which would not have otherwise converted*. On the page opposite we reproduce the FBI’s ensuing letter to the government.

Letter from Peter Runge, President of the FBI, to the Rt Hon. Douglas Jay MP, President of the Board of Trade, 17 February 1965

Located in the National Archives by Stuart Delvin.

As you may know, the FBI with other bodies has been keeping under review the attitudes and requirements of industry in relation to the adoption of the metric system as the primary, and ultimately the only, method of mensuration to be used in this country. During the last two years we have observed a significant change in outlook and an increase in the desire both for a decision of broad future principle and for an acceleration of progress by agreement in appropriate parts of British industry. We think the situation can be summarised as follows:

1) A majority, both in numbers and total size, of British industry now favours the adoption of the metric system as the primary system of mensuration for British industry, as soon as that can be brought about by general agreement. This majority includes the chemical industry and the major part, though not the whole, of the engineering industry.

2) There are some important exceptions, for the most part these are industries which can, for the time being at any rate, continue more or less in isolation. Examples are: the oil industry, which must keep in step with American practice; the brewing industry, which is subject to special consideration; and the motor car industry, which was requested by the government to fall in with American practice.

3) Whilst some industries find little difficulty in packing in different containers for the export and for the home market, others would be able to effect substantial economies if they were called up on to manufacture to only one set of standards.

4) Considerable unobtrusive progress has already been made in some industries where the adoption of metric standards is a matter for agreement between a limited number of manufacturers and customers. This is particularly the case in industries supplying goods and equipment to manufacturing customers, rather than to the general public.

5) There is also a substantial area where the complexity of the problem and the number of interests involved has so far inhibited progress in the absence of any strong impetus. We think there is scope in this field for us to promote agreement by bringing the parties together and by discussion and study of mutual problems. Whilst it is essential to eliminate any suggestion of compulsion, we feel that a general declaration of support on the part of Her Majesty's Government may provide the necessary impetus and

we think that once started such a movement towards agreement will generate its own momentum.

6) It is not necessary for all industries to move forward in step. We are of opinion that much more progress is likely to be made on a piecemeal and empirical basis.

7) The ultimate adoption of the metric system as the primary system of measurement for all purposes in this country must of course be preceded by a period of education of the general public. We feel that a start could be made in the schools, at once.

Taking all these factors into account we suggest that the time is now appropriate for a general statement of policy on the part of Her Majesty's Government, expressing support for the principle and giving some indication of the timing envisaged.

We also suggest that Government Departments, in placing contracts, might do much to promote the adoption of the metric system in appropriate sectors of industry, provided this is only done after consultation with the suppliers concerned. As I have said, we feel that early and rapid progress can be made in a number of areas by agreement and that this could be prejudiced by any appearance of dictation.

We should be pleased to discuss this whole matter with you at your convenience. I have written in similar terms to the First Minister of State [Harold Wilson] and the Minister of Technology [Frank Cousins].

Yours sincerely, etc.

*BWMA note: point 5 opposes compulsion, so there is no truth in the claim that British industry endorsed the compulsory measures that would later follow. But the tactical benefit of avoiding compulsory legislation was that it meant that the government could lend support to metrication *without a debate in Parliament*.*

Note that the phrase "for all purposes" finds its way into point 7. The inclusion of these three words form metrication's founding myth; that British industry sought Britain's total metrication. Thus, when John Page MP asked the government's position in 1970, the Minister replied: "*In 1965 the President of the Federation of British Industries informed the Government of the day that the majority of the members of the FBI favoured the adoption of the metric system as the primary and ultimately the only method of measurement to be used in Britain*".

This founding myth would later be used to shore up government support for the EC metrication directive in 1995, and again in 2000.

Metrication: the hidden persuaders by John Michell

The following article is from the Autumn 1979 edition of *Just Measure* (issue no. 5), the newsletter of the Anti-Metrication Board.

At a recent exhibition we spoke to a group dedicated to exposing the evils of fluoridization - the policy of doctoring public water supplies with a chemical poison. After seeing their display and some of their literature, we asked them, "Since there appear to be no good arguments for this use of fluoride and many good ones against it, who then is actively supporting it?"

"That is the mystery" they replied. "If we could identify the opposition we could be much more effective."

That is precisely our problem. Where is our opposition? Who initiated the attempt to metricate Britain? Who, or what interests, decided in the early 1960s to launch the carefully orchestrated campaign of metrication on the entire non-metric world?

Strangely enough, none of these questions can be answered, and the last one plunges us into very deep water indeed. The world is governed by very different people from what is commonly supposed, wrote Disraeli, thus providing a valuable text for conspiratologists.

Being warned by the example of Adolf Hitler, we avoid playing the game of identifying 'international conspirators'; yet, here we are, confronted with the evident fact that powerful though undeclared interests have been able to promote simultaneous metrication programs in many countries throughout the world.

With apologies to readers who do not understand that paranoia is given us by the gods to help us glimpse concealed truths, here are some wide-minded observations on the nature of metrication and the ideas behind it.

Metrication was invented and adapted for the purposes of atheistic revolution. It was born in France of the same system that mocked religion by having a prostitute, playing the Goddess of Reason, enthroned in Notre Dame;

it was forced on their peoples by revolutionary regimes in Russia, China and Latin America, and elsewhere it has been imposed by revolutionary armies. In not one instance has the metric system been adopted voluntarily by any people. Every dictator babbles in metrics. Hitler would have forced it on Britain. He failed but his work continues. More subtle Hitlers and unidentified closet-Stalins are sighting their ultimate target, that consummation of tyranny, one world government on 'scientific' principles and the crushing of human culture. One of the means by which that purpose is being achieved is the universal promotion of the metric system.

Still speaking wide-mindedly, the fatal flaw of the metre from the human point of view, and its great attraction for tyrants, lies in its essential inhumanity. It is entirely abstract, being derived from an arbitrary notion of an inaccurately measured quadrant of the earth's circumference drawn through Paris, and now defined at 1,650,763.73 wave-lengths of orange-red Krypton light. It was *deliberately* related to no human function, nor to the human body. It serves therefore to promote the values of materialism and abstract scientism against human values. In this it accords with the plan for one world tyranny, which is not designed for the benefit of people as individuals but for the administrative convenience of an international control group.

Let us see what happens when we try to discover who is behind the worldwide metric campaign. Starting with Britain, we would naturally expect to find some government ministry, or agency, or group of MPs or act of Parliament at the root of this revolutionary attack on native culture and customs. In fact it is not so. In 1965 (recorded in Hansard, 24 May) Mr Jay, President of the Board of Trade, stated that the need for metrication arose from the wishes of 'representatives of industry'. These representatives were not named, neither have they since identified themselves; nor are we told why the wishes of these anonymous folk should override those of the majority of MPs and the people they represent.

In any event, the proposal to implement compulsory metrication has never achieved a majority in the House of Commons, and it was mightily rebuffed in March 1978, when overwhelming opposition in the press and in Parliament forced the Government to withdraw it.¹ On that occasion, the interesting fact emerged that not only was compulsory metrication bitterly resented by small businessmen, trade unionists and the great majority of the public, but it had no active lobby in Parliament. The driving force behind metrication is located neither in the British people nor in their government. Even the professional metric propagandist, D. Neville Wood, in his book *Metric Measures for Britain*, admits; "The pressure (for metrication) has come from outside Parliament."

Who and where are the real metricators? An obvious answer was given by member unions of AFL-CIO, the American association of Trade Unions, when in 1974 they sent a letter to every member of Congress, protesting that "Metrication would chiefly benefit big business and multinational companies." Perhaps these multinational companies are the very same 'representatives of industry' to which Mr Jay referred to as demanding the metrication of Britain. And perhaps their demands are framed with their own interests rather than anyone else's in mind.

Yet, surely the multinationals can adopt for their own use whatever system of measures they please without the need to interfere with other people's domestic arrangements. It can be of little profit to any businessman, however multinational, to compel English farmers to measure land in hectares and return milk yields in litres (to be retailed in pints) or to have babies weighed in kilos and children's heights recorded in centimetres. It is hard to see any straightforward commercial reasons for these changes or to identify any commercial interests that are benefitted by them. In America alone the cost of metric conversion was estimated by the AFL-CIO

¹ See *Yardstick 65* for newspaper reports of this showdown.

Unions at between 45 and 100 *billion* dollars, much of which would be borne by the nation's businessmen and their companies. Later estimates put it at over 200 billion dollars.

And this huge sum does not include the far greater cost of metrication in terms of disruption, human misery, accidents and misunderstandings which must inevitably attend the process of conversion for generations to come. At the end of the day America will have lost one of its greatest assets, its traditional system of measures which unites every state in the Union and all the different races that populate them.

We are witnessing a world-wide assault on human culture and values. We cannot identify the assailants nor can we find any conventional explanation for their actions. Their patronage of the metric system, symbol of revolution, atheism and bureaucratic domination, gives some indication of their aims and philosophy, but the true reasons behind their fanaticism has never been revealed. It is a curious fact that in Britain the Metrication Board has consistently refused to debate the merits of metrication or to state publicly why it should be considered necessary.

We have good cause to be suspicious of proposed revolutionary change where the principals behind it and the motives that guide them are both equally unidentified. We are offered no benefits from metrication but a great deal of trouble and expense - for no clear reason.

Whatever the pressures, whatever the propaganda directed at us by the secret forces behind metrication, instinct and common sense urge us to resist them and to insist on retaining the traditional, practical measures as used or understood in Britain, America and throughout the commercial world.

The Anti-Metrication Board produced at least five *Just Measure* newsletters; we have three of them: No 2 (June 1976), No 4 (Spring 1978), and No 5 (Autumn 1979). If any readers have issues 1 and 3, or any other Anti-Metrication Board materials, please get in touch.

The Tonne

by John Strange

The French word 'tonne' is sometimes used to mean 1,000 kilograms. The tonne is about 2,204 lbs whereas the British ton is 2,240 lbs.

A warship's tonnage is her 'full-load displacement tonnage' or simply her mass in tons. So, as applied to warships, the two words 'ton' and 'tonne' are more or less interchangeable. However, this is definitely not the case with merchant vessels where 'tonnage' means something entirely different.

Historically, a merchant vessel's tonnage was the number of tuns or barrels she could carry. This was later (19th century) standardised, and in this context 'ton' now universally means a volume of 100 cubic feet. A merchant vessel's tonnage is thus her internal space measured in units of 100 cubic feet. The appropriate French word in this context is not 'tonne' but 'tonneau'. Foreign seamen who are unfamiliar with British weights and measures have to be told that the ton or tonneau is a volume of nearly 2.8317 cubic metres.

Decimal Watch: excerpt from article "To Err Is Human", *American Veterinarian*, 19 January 2018, by Linda Fineman, DVM, DACVIM (Oncology), referring to an incident in 1986: As I slowly injected 5 mL of an antibiotic I'd never heard of into a favourite patient, I couldn't shake a nagging feeling of unease. I finished the treatment and continued with the rest of my duties in the primary care practice where I worked each evening. The next day, Dr Jones called me into his office and told me that the patient I'd treated the night before had received a 10-fold overdose of a nephrotoxic drug. I had misread a poorly placed decimal point. I barely held it together through the remainder of my shift, then went home and spent the next 48 hours in the fetal position, in tears.

Metric signage replaced in Greenhithe, Kent

Email from Sam Malin, 25 January 2018 to civil engineering firm Jackson: I have noticed that you have road signage on St Clements Way near Greenhithe in Kent that states "50m to Site Entrance". This is not compliant with regulations. Indeed, the 2016 Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions require that

distances on signs for motorists be described in yards and miles only. Metric units are not permitted. Please replace your existing the signage with legal signage. *Sam received the following reply from Tram Nguyen, 26 January 2018:* Thank you for your below message. I have forwarded it onto site to follow up; *further reply 12 February 2018:* "... the 'm' on the offending sign has recently been covered by the contractor with 'yds'".

Stuart Delvin has forwarded a 2018 newspaper with advertisements for property in Sri Lanka: "19 perches" in Nugegoda, "7 perches" in Colombo, "40 perches" in Pillyandala.

Dalbor Sudwell writes, 14 May 2018: in one of *The Yardsticks* you asked to be informed of examples of pint size packing. Well, on occasion I buy Kvass, a low alcoholic drink from Eastern Europe, which is a good alternative to dark beer and much more acceptable when driving. I particularly enjoy drinking Kvass imported from Latvia and Lithuania because both countries produce cans holding a full pint. What a pleasure to get that little bit more over the boring half-litre.

Terence Jones emailed the BBC, 24 March 2018: If you want to see the absolute idiocy of your obsession with inaccurate metric measure, just watch your recording of Naga Munchetty's attempts to describe the annual movement of Mount Etna in millimetres, oops, centimetres, not knowing the difference between the two; and that is without BBC Weather barring all emails from my address on the subject.

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (not necessarily in that order)

David Davis MP, 9 January 1998: As a minister, I fought a hard case to retain Imperial measurement wherever possible. I will continue to support that case.

Ken Livingstone MP, February 1999: I am afraid that we do not agree on metrication. I strongly support metrication, and only wish it had happened before I was born.

Gerry Adams MP, 20 July 2000, regarding a Parliamentary Motion opposing compulsory metrication: a Chara, as I do not attend the House of Commons, parliamentary procedure does not permit me to support Bills or sign Early Day Motions. Is mise le meas.

Anti-Centigrade Society

The article “Centigrade, Celsius or Fahrenheit”, reproduced in *Yardstick 66*, referred to an “Anti-Centigrade Society” that wrote to Member of Parliament Frank Bowles in or around February 1963, regarding the possible elimination of Fahrenheit in May of that year.

Research on the internet has revealed a number of clues on this little-known organisation.

First, an article by one A. Bandon was written on behalf of the Anti-Centigrade Society and published in the newsletter of the Duodecimal Society of Great Britain in December 1963. A scan of this newsletter is available at www.dozenalsociety.org.uk (follow links to “DSGB Magazine archives and leaflets”, and select Newscast 53). We reproduce A. Bandon’s article on the back page of this *Yardstick*.

Further research reveals that the Anti-Centigrade Society was formed by none other than astronomer and late BWMA patron Sir Patrick Moore. According to the biography, *It came from Outer Space Wearing an RAF Blazer: A Fan’s Biography of Sir Patrick Moore*, published in 2013:

In the late 1960s, Patrick formed his own little “inner sanctum” within the British Astronomical Association (BAA). This was a circle of like-minded non-serpentine friends whose role was to attend licensed premises now and again (not unlike his Halley’s Comet Society of the mid 1980s) and try to furtively steer the BAA Council members his way. Patrick called this little clique “The Polaris Club” and he and Colin Ronan (BAA Journal Editor) were the informal organisers. If you were considered to be of ‘damn fine English stock’, a BAA stalwart, a TLP believer (Transient Lunar Phenomena), a cricket enthusiast, and had similar views to Patrick, he would write you a letter inviting you to join the club. The Polaris Club met after BAA Council and main meetings in the Royal Astronomical Society library at Burlington House, in London’s Piccadilly (where the BAA Office is located) ... The Polaris Club was one of many short-duration little societies Patrick formed during his life. The aforementioned Halley’s Comet Society

was another, as was the Anti-Centigrade Society whose headed notepaper bore the banner ‘Forever Fahrenheit’.

John Gardner wrote to the biography’s author, Martin Mobberley, to ask whether he had any more information on the Anti-Centigrade Society; Martin replied:

I wish I had more information, but the passage in the book is all that I have. Sir Patrick formed many short-lived societies with a tiny membership during his life. Quite often, membership was free or just the cost of an SAE for getting a circular. He invited his best mates in astronomy to join his Polaris Club in the 1960s. All were welcome if they were anti-fox hunting, believers in Transient Lunar Phenomena, and that lunar craters were volcanoes! The Halley’s Comet Society was another and, when asked, Patrick said its sole purpose was to meet on licensed premises.

As well as creating tiny societies made up of his best friends, Patrick often wrote crazy letters under a variety of hilarious pseudonyms, such as R.T. Fishall (he wrote two books under that name), R. Hugh Alwright, L.E. Fantine and Dr N. Ormus.

He also formed the United Country Party with various right wing pals, including local Selsey cricket club man Lt-Colonel Edmund Iremonger. One of their policies was that Selsey would become independent from the UK and have a 200-mile fishing limit so that they could fish in the Seine in Paris. Clearly there was much humour in many of these societies.

With this new information, we may speculate on two intriguing possibilities:

The letter, referred to in *Yardstick 66* and sent in early 1963 to Frank Bowles MP, was from Patrick Moore himself.

And that A. Bandon – *abandon* – is again Sir Patrick.

Martin Mobberley’s biography, “It came from Outer Space Wearing an RAF Blazer: A Fan’s Biography of Sir Patrick Moore” and its sequel “Return to the Far Side of Planet Moore!”, published in 2015, are available from Amazon and all good book shops.

A Change to Centigrade?

by A. Bandon, Anti-Centigrade Society

*(originally published in December 1963, in the newsletter of
the Duodecimal Society of Great Britain)*

It is often said that Fahrenheit is awkward, because freezing point is 32 degrees and boiling point 212 degrees. Yet, this is an actual advantage, since it means that temperatures somewhat below freezing, often encountered in Britain, may be recorded without recourse to confusing minus signs. Secondly, the Fahrenheit degree is smaller than the Centigrade, so that the Centigrade system is clearly less accurate in everyday use. Imagine a weather forecaster on the B.B.C. having to say that “the night temperature will drop to minus 2.6 degrees”!

The Fahrenheit system is well established, and all our instruments are calibrated according to it (and also on the basis of the British Thermal Unit, which is non-metric). To change over would involve scrapping all clinical thermometers, oven thermometers and heat measurements systems, with a colossal and useless expenditure of money which cannot be afforded even if the changes were desirable. One can well imagine the chaos during and after the change-over period. The benefits accruing from all this would be precisely nil.

Another hazard is in education. Many schoolchildren find mathematics difficult under any conditions (I refer, of course, to these who are not mathematically minded), and why produce an extra complication for no reason whatsoever?

There is also the ethical aspect. Our attempts to invade the Common Market have shown us what Europe in general thinks about us, and it is surely deplorable for us to abandon our “differences” which have always done so much to make Britain great. Adoption of Centigrade is only the prelude to the 24-hour clock (already tried by the B.B.C. and abandoned in the face of public opposition), decimal coinage with a waste of fifty million pounds, and other European innovations such as right-hand driving. The whole situation has been described, aptly, as the thin end of many wedges.

It is to fight this tendency that the Anti-Centigrade Society has been founded. The crisis is not yet upon us but the B.B.C., which plays so major a role, has threatened to drop Fahrenheit altogether in the foreseeable future, which will usher in the period of chaos. All of us hope that this will not happen; but we must be on our guard.

*BWMA gratefully records the Patronage of the late The Hon.
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Lord Shore, Vice-Admiral Sir
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