

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

Look Alikes

It's been a while since we've had one of these but I recently happened upon a programme about the Volks Electric Railway that has run along the sea front at Brighton, on the south coast of England, since the 1880s. The electric railway was made possible by the work of Werner von Siemens who developed the electric motor as a means of powering transport. Siemens has since given his name to the SI unit of electrical conductance. This is probably well deserved but the name has unfortunately supplanted the much more amusing 'Mho' (Ohm, the unit of electrical resistance, spelled backwards).



We previously came across the VR logo used on regal underwear in edition 12 where it was compared to the markings on weights, measures etc. The VR also appears on the front of the Volks railcars (left) where it of course refers to Volks Railway rather than our erstwhile dear Queen. The addition of the number reinforces the similarity (right)



It's All There! (Oh no it's not)

The extremely high level of metrological knowledge among the TV antiques experts continues to impress! Not Bargain Hunt this time but some spin off called '**Antiques Road Trip**' or something similar. In this unlikely format the said experts drive considerable distances around the country buying antiques and collectables which are then sold at auction. Any 'profit' is donated to charity. They would probably be better off just donating the petrol money and not bothering with the buying and selling bit.

These programs must be of excessive annoyance to dealers and people in the trade as the impression is clearly given that ticket prices can not only be reduced but completely slaughtered by means of a bit of high pressure hectoring by an obnoxious buyer. I once recall overhearing a conversation at an antique fair where some smart arsed potential purchaser was trying to beat a dealer down by declaring that the item in question was clearly not worth the asking price. **“I didn’t say it was worth it but that’s what it costs!”** replied the dealer (collapse of stout party!).

In one Road Trip programme an expert lighted upon an Avery bench platform which was considered worthy of purchase. Upon sizing up the machine he commented upon its somewhat tatty condition but made the memorable observation that “it’s all there”. Like the scale mentioned in edition 16 it clearly was not all there as the poise hanger and loose proportional weights were all singularly absent (where do they all go?). The naked knife edge at the end of the steelyard (below) should perhaps have been a clue to even the non expert expert

It was, again, somewhat depressing to see the machine being bought, carted off to the auction house, catalogued and sold again without anyone actually mentioning its incomplete nature.



High Jinx in High Wycombe

Every year, during May in High Wycombe Buckinghamshire, England, an interesting bit of civic humiliation can be witnessed. The Mayor and other members of the district council are weighed in public to ensure they have not been living it up too much at the expense of the public purse. Should any elected official be found to have burgeoned

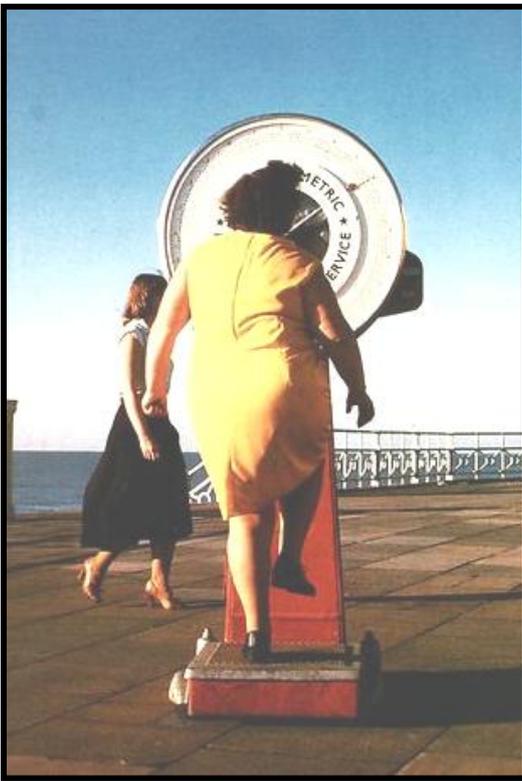
during their term of office, they are ritually humiliated by the macebearer who declares the increase to the assembled townsfolk. These days the guilty person is simply booed by the outraged taxpayers, whereas at one time they would have been pelted with rotten fruit. ***Someday all politicians will be treated like this.***



The scale now used for this ancient ritual, said to date back to the reign of Elizabeth I, is a handsome 19th century Salter brass faced spring balance denominated in both stones and pounds (right). There is, of course,



no metrication in High Wycombe!



Samoa the Merrier

In the ongoing quest to make air travel an ever more miserable experience for passengers, Samoan Airlines are considering weighing not only the luggage but also the travellers and charging them by the kilo.

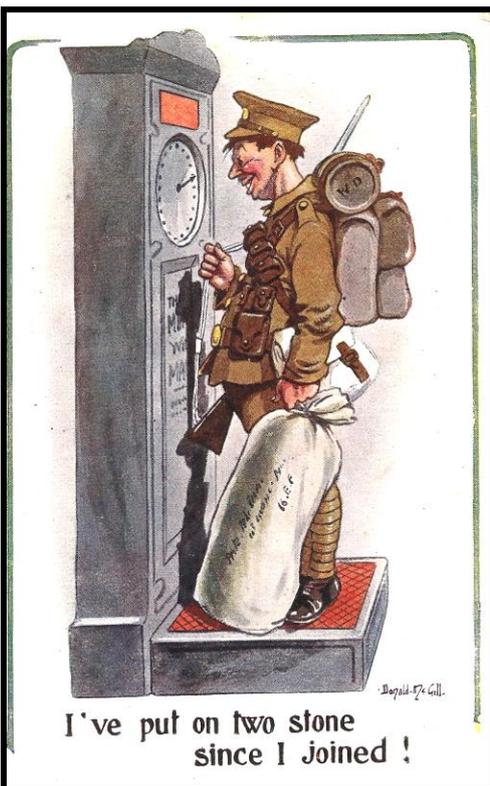
Admittedly some Samoans are a bit on the generous side, partly because of a predilection for **Spam** (the pink, allegedly meat based, preparation rather than the unwanted email) apparently, so perhaps the airline may have some justification. It can only, however, be a matter of time before the practice goes global if there's any money in it.

When this occurs scenes like that shown (left), will become commonplace in the boarding queue.

Unfortunately it doesn't work!

During the War

Back in edition 14 we featured grimly humorous postcards from WW1 of soldiers weighing themselves in their newly acquired military trappings and marvelling at their perceived increase. Interestingly the same joke was resurrected some 20 years later when there was yet another war (**you must have heard about it, it was in all the papers**) with a suitably updated person weigher.



The Gold Standard

In the last issue there was a piece about a child being weighed against bars of gold for no apparent reason. Weighing someone against gold, or other precious material is of course not new and there are several examples from history. The Aga Khan is apparently weighed against, variously, gold, diamonds or platinum, depending on the occasion. The

picture (below right) right shows such a ceremony in the 1940s in India. I'm not sure what kind of scale is being used, certainly not like anything I've ever seen.

A slightly less glamorous (cheapo) affair is illustrated (left) where a lady is being weighed, albeit somewhat indirectly, in pennies. Two Triner dial platform scales are being used, so this ceremony is presumably taking place in the USA.

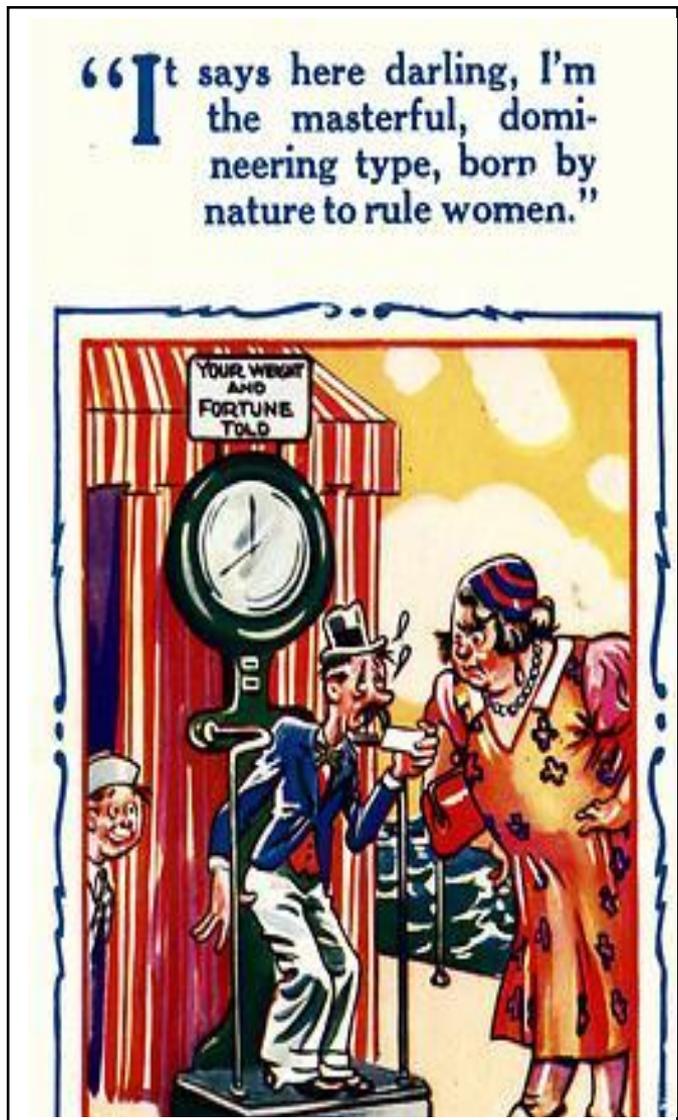
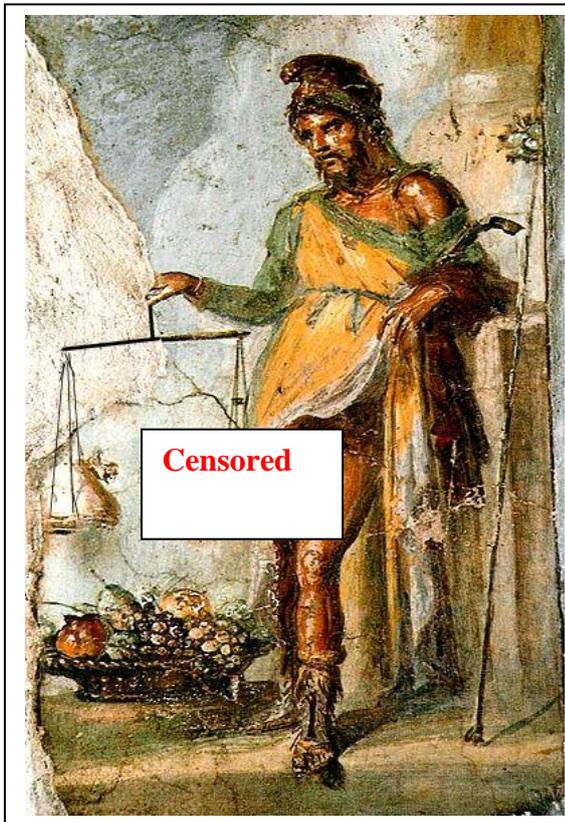
Autumn Meeting The AGM and general get together, with bourse etc, will take place on Sunday 6th October at the Warwick Hilton Hotel (Junction 15 of the M40). The theme will be 'Weighing Money' and anyone with experience in this field (or so much money that they have to weigh it) is invited to contribute. Cost £30 per person. Accommodation is available at £99 double/£89 single per night. Further details will be provided in due course.



Not Many To The Libra

On a similar theme there is a metrologically significant fresco, found in the ruins of Pompeii, showing the minor Roman god Priapus (Below). Priapus has of course long since gone adjectival because of his prodigious ‘attribute’. The picture (augmented for clarity and redacted for modesty) shows him weighing, not himself, but his most prominent asset, against a bag of gold.

Them Romans! What were they like?



Above, another nice scale-based British seaside postcard from the 1960s. The punch line to this cartoon should, of course be **‘It’s got my weight wrong too!’** In our usual spirit of generosity we should overlook the clear technical inaccuracies in the portrayal of the scale

More news from the Ferroequinologist front

Member **Gordon Maslin** has sent these interesting photographs, supplied to him in turn by fellow rail enthusiasts. As mentioned in edition 17, weighing on the railways was an important feature of the business and every station had scales for weighing parcels and freight. At Aysgarth in the Yorkshire Dales in England, at the disused station, which is now a heritage site, a heroic character called Tom Emerson has undertaken the renovation of a Pooley accelerating platform machine, rescued from a scrap yard. This project has apparently created a deal of interest amongst visitors. The 'Before' and 'After' pictures illustrate the amount of work put in by Tom, who is to be congratulated.



The Ten Commandments

Speaking of scrap yards, **David Apps**, former scrap man and scrap yard enthusiast (Steptologist perhaps?) has forwarded the following list of 'Commandments' for the scrap trade. Most are a little arcane, perhaps, but number 6 is particularly significant to ISASC members.

1. I never said that.
2. That's not my material.
3. I'm not making any money on this deal.
4. How should I know?
5. In the bottom of what barrel.
6. No two scales are the same.
7. I'll make it up to you.
8. Everybody else does it.
9. I have shipped this material for years and never had a rejection
10. Trust me!

Two's a crowd!

As a rule of thumb, I take the view that if you see two of anything, purporting to be genuine antiques, together I assume the worst. This clearly applied when auctioneers Gorrings catalogued two bronze shield shaped weights for a sale on 27th March 2013.

The two weights were not only similar but identical in respect of every mark and casting flaw. Clearly at least one of these, or probably both, had been cast from an original. In the event the auction house realised the situation and withdrew them from the sale.



Old Street Revisited Yet Again

John Knights suggested that Old Street was a hot-spot of scalemakers. Yes and no! From early days, Old Street had been a country lane north of the City running west to east through the fields like an early M25. Thomas Gable 1st (1726-1747) and John Jackson (1730-1736) enjoyed a rural life with easy access to the City, and St Paul's Cathedral being just over a mile to the south.

By the Regency period, Old Street was built-up with properties with extensive grounds, so not rural any more, just pleasant. Thomas Saunders lived at the west end (working 1790-1815), and Thomas Pallett worked at the east end from 1802-1808. At this time Old Street was bisected by City Road coming in from the north-west, and Old Street retained that name for the part to the west of City Road, and gained the new name of Old Street Road for the part to the east of City Road. Over the following years the Hiatts, Henry James and Sarah, lived at 80 and 83 Old Street Road from 1819-1828, and William Henry Miles took over no. 80 in 1827-1834.

By the Victorian period Old Street had been overtaken by burgeoning London, and was thoroughly urban. The road had given its name to the area, with scalemakers giving Old Road as their address even when they lived round the corner on a side-street. Charles Toombs seems to have started the fashion for scalemakers to live in Old Street (working 1839-42), followed by Edward Stillwell at 5, Canning Place (1849-1855) and at 214, Old Street (1860-75) then Edward Stillwell & Sons there (1875-1905) and at 2 James St from 1905. Samuel Lench II was at 85 Old Street (in 1855). Joseph Walter Morgan was at 146 (c.1855-1865), H Howell & Co at no. 180 (1889), Charles Trowbridge at 107 (1869-1875) and Chappell & Parry at no. 273 (1875). Walter Parry continued to live there (1895-1905)

After the Victorian period, and some disturbance at the eastern end with the railways slicing through properties, Rudduck & Co were at 107 Old Street. Not having studied the post-Victorian period, I can't say whether Old Road continued its tradition of being a place to go for scales, but the tendency of scalemakers to cluster is marked in London. Many other roads or distinct areas can be identified, for example, St Ann's Lane, Borough High Street, round the Bank of England, round West Smithfield and many other places that should be studied. **Diana Crawford-Hitchins**

Having, myself made some inept attempt to examine this topic in earlier editions it's nice to see a commentary on this interesting area of London by someone who actually knows what they're talking about. Editor

Spring Get together

There was no formal ISASC (Europe) meeting in spring this year. In order to prevent withdrawal symptoms by the more enthusiastic members, however, **John Wintour** and **Mark Haines** once again came to the rescue and threw open their, ever growing, collections for members to visit and view on 28th April. By all accounts the day at Alvington was greatly enjoyed by all who attended and the in-house catering was up to the magnificent standards expected.