

# FULCRUM

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**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.**

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Fig. 1



## Heavy Man!

Earlier this year I was wandering around the streets of Reykjavik and was impressed by the frequency with which I encountered pieces of public art.

The capital of Iceland still has the air of being on the frontier of the familiar world but nonetheless is rich in the sort of sculptures and installations you would expect to find in more glamorous European cities.

The works are often abstract in form but one that caught my eye was a figurative sculpture by

the Icelandic artist Asmundur Sveinsson. The sculpture, called 'Vatnsberinn' (The Water Carrier) (Fig. 1) represents a person carrying heavy containers of water. This was once a common feature of life in the town when infrastructures, even in the urban areas were rudimentary. I learned that the work had only recently been brought into the centre of town, having previously been on display at a Sculpture Museum and Park. Since its creation in the 1930s the work had been considered to be too ugly to be shown anywhere other than somewhere 'arty'. Its true merit was finally recognised a few years ago and now it stands on a prominent corner. It is an impressive piece and catches beautifully the effort and strain involved in carrying the heavy buckets.

My mind immediately went back to the days when carrying, pushing and pulling very heavy stuff was a routine part of life in the weights and measures business. The figure's weary, plodding, gait and the sagging shoulders are redolent of one who has just carried large numbers of 56lb weights up several flights of stairs.

Today of course things are different. It is forbidden for anyone at work to lift, let alone carry, anything heavier than a roll of sellotape and thirsty Reykvingurs just turn on the tap or, more likely flip open a bottle of Evian.

## The Lion and the Unicorn



Fig. 2

Ever since 1603 when England finally ran out of Tudors and had to adopt a king of Scotland as its ruler, the symbols of both nations have featured on the united country's coat of arms (Fig 2).

The emblem of Scotland is the Unicorn and some people are ungracious enough to suggest that it is inappropriate for a country to have a mythical creature as its national animal.

The creature that defines England is of course the Lion which is much more sensible. Lions are real and are to be seen in great profusion wandering the savannas of the Home Counties.

These two creatures are therefore inextricably entwined with the national identity and

manufacturers have often tried to incorporate them into their products to appeal to the patriotic buyer.

A famous example in the scale industry was the Lion Scale range produced by Herbert & Son (Fig. 3). It was produced in various sizes and finishes and remained in production throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The scale was a traditional 'Imperial' machine which should have had no place in a world of lazy self indication. It was clearly intended for the grocer's shop where it would be used to weigh high value food such as cooked meats, cheese and charcuterie. You would not find a Lion 'Quick Action Scale' weighing potatoes.

To continue to be viable in the age of self-indication it must have sold on its image as a quality machine. It was beautiful to look at and was to be found on the counters of high class establishments where produce was weighed up by a deferential assistant, in a white apron. The purchaser would be a well heeled customer who would then asked for the package to be delivered to a nearby stately pile.

Its defining visual feature was the rampant lion crest, which directly mirrored the supporter of the UK coat of arms.

A friend of mine was recently touring in the area around Cambridge and happened upon Wimpole Hall, an impressive country house owned by the National Trust. In the Dry Store he saw a scale, and knowing of my interest sent me a photograph (fig. 4).

This was an Avery scale which I had never seen before. Furthermore it looked remarkably similar to the Herbert Lion Quick Action model.

The scale is painted white which, given where it is, I would take to be the original finish. Instead of a rampant lion crest there is however an equally rampant unicorn.

The similarity goes further in that both creatures are rearing against an oval shield.

The rampant lion and shield crest was a registered trade mark of Herbert and Son



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

(Fig.5), which included the legend 'JUSTICE AND STRENGTH'. It would appear that Avery was copying the Lion Scale as closely as it could without presumably, infringing that Trade Mark. They even opted for a similarly worthy legend, with which to adorn the shield. It took a little deciphering from the photograph but it finally revealed itself as 'JUSTICE I SERVE' (Fig. 6). The unicorn, has unfortunately suffered a little accident in that part of the horn appears to have been lost at some time. This is a fate common in artefacts with what are technically known as 'sticky out bits'.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

The Lion Scale was made and marketed for 50 years despite it becoming something of an anachronism. It was clearly therefore, still a popular alternative to the more technologically advanced devices that were being made by all manufacturers, including of course Herbert and Son. The advertising emphasised that the scale combined sensitivity with speed of operation which was true if you ignored the need to fiddle

about with loose weights. One aspect mentioned in the publicity was that ‘the purchaser likes see THE PLATE GO DOWN’ (Fig. 7) which may have played upon some distrust of self-indicating equipment among the more traditional customer.

**THE "LION" QUICK ACTION SCALE**

A perfect fast working Weighing Machine which has stood the strain and stress of over half a century's use and still leads the field.

The Purchaser likes to see  
**THE PLATE GO DOWN.**

Sizes to weigh  
20lb., 30lb., 40lb.

**MORE SENSITIVE**  
therefore more accurate  
than any automatic scale.

Notice the New Weight Platform

157 NK.—Fitted with square china plate, solid metal weight pan, aluminium front rail, all working parts constructed of special steel, the excellent workmanship of which is the secret of our success.

REG. N° 548376

The action of "Lion" Scales is remarkably rapid

158 G.P.—Fitted with square glass plate, solid metal weight pan, aluminium front rail, all working parts constructed of special steel, the excellent workmanship of which is the secret of our success.

**Fig.7**

The machines were found in retail use long after they ceased to be manufactured. In the late 1960s I worked for the Royal County of Berkshire, which at that time gloriously stretched from Windsor and Maidenhead in the East to the borders of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire in the West and to the outskirts of Oxford in the North. One of the many pleasant places we went to was the little town of Hungerford which was full of old world charm and rich people.

The shops reflected the population and there was a marked absence of Tesco's and the like in the High Street. One of the classy grocers that served town was T Alexander and Son. This shop was situated in a timber framed property dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The photograph of the premises (Fig. 8) was probably taken in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but the window display and garb of the staff was pretty much the same at the end of the 1960s.

Much of the produce was served from bulk, cut to order and in particular, weighed out on the shiny Herbert Lion Scales which arrayed the old fashioned wooden counters.

I left the Royal County in 1972 and was thus spared the sight of Alexander's, along with nearly every other premise in the High Street being converted into some kind of antique emporium.



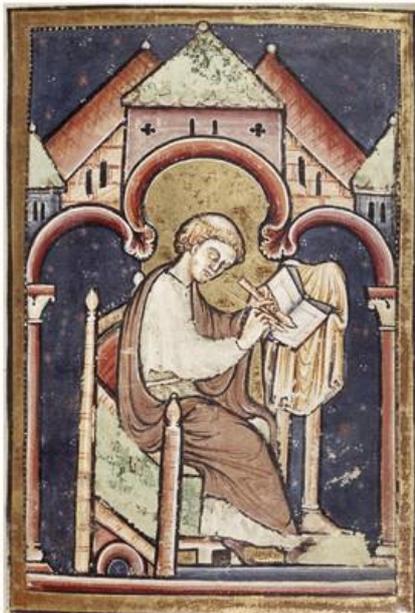
## EQUILIBRIUM

The legacy of our societies will be Equilibrium, a wonderful publication that our comparatively small membership has managed to fill with ingenious and knowledgeable articles for 40 years. Putting an article together is not an easy task as it involves

research and photography as well as the hard work of constructing the piece which can take a lot of time to achieve. It is remarkable that so many of us have managed to step up to the task over the years and create such a memorable archive.

The job is not however finished. Our worthy editor still struggles to produce four copies a year, being hampered by the lack of contributions. She gets there in the end but you will be aware that the timetable for production does slip a bit because of the production difficulties. This is unfortunate and causes irritation to some members.

Like the Israelites in Egypt she cannot make bricks without straw and it is up to us to provide her with the straw. I would therefore urge members to continue the good work and submit the distilled fruits of your great knowledge to the editor so that she can carry out her task on our behalf.



## Meetings

### Summer Gathering

Despite having other things to do, such as building his house, our good friend John Wintour hosted yet another gathering for ISASC members in July.

A number of members turned up in Gloucestershire to view John's vast collection, see what he had acquired recently and spend the day chatting and comparing notes (left).

One stalwart enthusiast even travelled from Germany to attend.

As usual, catering was provided and everyone had a great time.



### Autumn Meeting

As previously announced, the Society's annual meeting will be held at the Yew Lodge Hotel at Kegworth on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October.

*We are still open to suggestions for a theme for displays and presentations. If anyone has any ideas or requests, please contact a member of the Committee.*

