



FULCRUM

The Newsletter for the European Chapter; Issue 5 November 2009

Welcome to the 5th edition of Fulcrum. We are still receiving a regular flow of material, but always welcome interesting bits and pieces from members. Please email to johnsknights@btinternet.com or send by post to the address in the Membership List.

Meeting Report

The Autumn Meeting was held again at the Yew Lodge Hotel, Kegworth on Sunday 11th October 2009 and a good contingent of devotees rolled up for the occasion. The bourse tables were well stocked with interesting items and the accommodation and catering were excellent.

There were presentations, from **Jenny Hutchinson**, **Diana Crawford-Hitchins** and **Barry Oliver** all addressing the meeting theme of **London Scale Makers**. Jenny spoke about Thomas Williams, a man from Chirk in Wales who became a successful maker of scales in Cannon Street, London in the 18th century. He also achieved civic office, becoming a Deputy Alderman of his City ward of Walbrook. Jenny illustrated her talk with some nice illustrations, including an excellent 1809 cartoon by Isaac Cruikshank, featuring the man himself holding one of his beams in the Mansion House. The scale was apparently being 'fiddled' by Mr Williams and this deception was used as a metaphor for the civic corruption that was taking place in the ward meeting. Diana brought in an impressive array of money scales, representing the spectrum of equipment made during the 18th and 19th centuries and described the identifying features from each period. After lunch Barry presented brief histories of De Grave, Oertling and W A Webb, well illustrated with powerpoint and examples of the wares of these companies. All three companies produced interesting instruments and went through various transformations during their time, before all were eventually (and perhaps inevitably) swallowed up in the great maw of the Avery organisation.



Part of the impressive display of coin scales, used by Diana to illustrate the development and identification of this class of instrument



Jenny Hutchinson 'sings the praises' of Thomas Williams



Barry performing an Oertling Aria with Thomas at the 'keyboard'

The meeting was a great success with all those attending enjoying the day and the opportunity to meet up again with friends and fellow enthusiasts.



**Miscellaneous
Scale Stuff**

Pub with a Scale in it (for no apparent reason) The Water Poet, Spittlefields, London

There is a **Balance Hill** in Uttoxeter, Staffordshire. Do we know why?



Weighbridge hut converted into a Tandoori Takeaway (thus combining two of my favourite things) in Droitwich, Worcestershire.

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Confectionery Conundrums

David Apps found the 1oz brass weight illustrated in **Fig.1**. It bears the name of the firm of Berry & Warmington, as well as the logo *Cadbury*, the name of the famous chocolatiers. The date of verification, 1936, is marked on the reverse. At that time chocolates and sweets were usually weighed out in the shop, rather than being sold in pre-packed bags, and it appears that Cadbury's supplied this weight in order to advertise their products. Avery's also made weights with the *Cadbury* logo (**Fig. 2**), but theirs were made of steel, presumably for hygienic reasons, and the ones that I have seen date from the 1950's. There was a murky relationship between Avery's and Berry & Warmington, which might well occupy a few pages of EQM at some future date.

Another weight bearing the name of a confectioner is shown in **Fig. 3**. Barratt & Co. were founded in Islington around 1845 and in 1880 they moved to a factory in Wood Green in Middlesex, where they made all kinds of confectionery. This weight bears a Victorian verification mark for Middlesex (District 1). The number 28 was issued in 1879 and it was transferred to the newly formed London County Council in 1889. So we have a fairly precise dating for this weight. Has anyone seen other weights of this kind? **Norman Biggs**



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

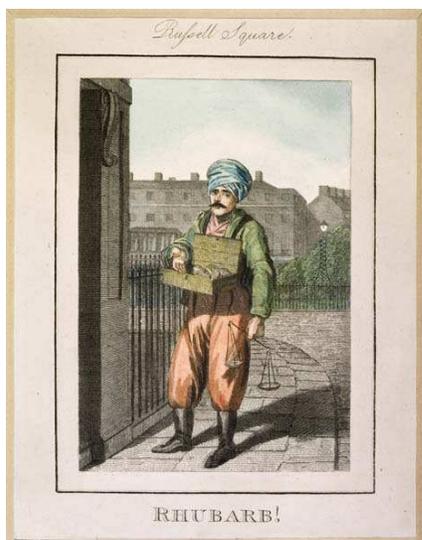


Fig. 3



Sherbet Fountain; this was one of the products of the erstwhile Barratt Company. It is now marketed by Messrs Tangerine Confectionery. Concern has been raised in the National (sic) Press about plans to replace the traditional cardboard tube and liquorice straw with 'hygienic' plastic (*'killjoys take the fun out of the Sherbet Fountain' etc*). Editor's note; Perhaps the National Press should get out more!

Rhubarb



I was inclined to put this, slightly enigmatic, picture in without further comment but upon consideration, decided some explanation might be appropriate.

It is clearly an 18th/19th Century print showing an exotically attired (the Turkish look was quite popular at one time) itinerant seller of rhubarb extract in the Russell Square area of London. He is equipped with a hand beam scale to weigh out the material. In an age where the diet of the opulent was 'Über Atkins' or 'Elvis' in nature, consisting almost entirely of dead animals and alcohol, frequent recourse to laxatives or the 'opening draught' was an essential part of life.

Rhubarb is both mysterious and mildly comical (a bit like Scunthorpe) but despite its distant origins on the banks of the Volga River it is essentially British. There is an area called the 'rhubarb triangle' near Leeds where ships and aeroplanes

have been known to mysteriously disappear. I once visited a pharmaceutical packer, in the course of my duties, and the manager proudly told me that 90% of everything they produced was to either, cure diarrhoea or act as a laxative (apparently known as 'stoppers' and 'starters' in the trade). *Plus ça change etc.*

(ps. I lied about the ships and aeroplanes).

Bread of Evans

For those, too poor to be numbered among the above-mentioned ultra carnivores, the staple of life was bread. Bread, along with ale, was the most closely prescribed foodstuff with the price and/or the weight being set down in statutes from Medieval times and beyond. In these more affluent times it has perhaps lost its status and people now think more about the olive oil content of the loaf they buy than its weight.

A hundred years ago, in Britain, matters were different. Not only was the weight of a loaf of bread prescribed, the seller was obliged to weigh the loaf at the time of sale to prove its adequacy. This requirement gave rise to various kinds of equipment, specifically designed for the purpose of bread weighing, which, many of us are now pleased to collect. The tall chap on the right may look as though he might be a member of an Am-Dram company dressed for a part, but is in fact a Welsh police officer who, like the rhubarb man, is in 'fancy dress'.

In the period just before the First World War, it is recorded* that the Constable toured the area around Barmouth in Merioneth, on foot, dressed as a tramp, having the expressed task of buying loaves of bread from bakers' shops. It was generally considered that the bread laws were being disregarded and customers were being routinely defrauded. The Constable had to observe whether the bread was being weighed upon sale and he also carried scales, in his sack to weigh the loaves. This 'undercover' operation revealed a number of offences with loaves going un-weighed and being seriously deficient of the required 2lb and 4lb. Several of these matters ended up in court and the magistrates, of those days, took the sale of short weight bread very seriously. Now that times are getting (comparatively) hard, perhaps the focaccia nibbling classes may once again take the weight of their loaf a little more seriously.

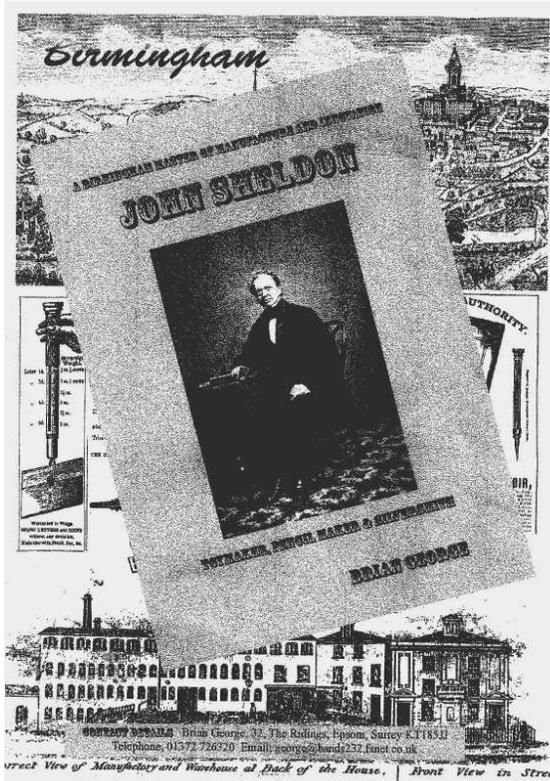
*The bread buying meanderings of the Constable were fictionalised in a book called 'The Village Policeman' by Ian Niall (a pseudonym of John McNeille) published in 1972. The real events are recorded in Court reports of hearings at Barmouth and Penrhyndeudraeth in 1914. **John Knights**



The Long Drop

Following on from the piece in Issue 4 about the Herbert Imperial Scale and its claimed 'Long Drop' The following was received.

When I was selling retail scales for Avery, I would from time to time meet up with colleagues from London. They claimed that it was difficult to meet targets set for the sales of the standard Avery Counter Scale as the London Market Stall Holders all preferred the local 'long drop' Roberval machines (presumably made by Herbert). The market-going public apparently felt they were getting more for their money when the goods pan fell a long way.



Bob Myers

Editor's note; It is interesting to note the public demand for a long drop. I had always assumed this was the reasoning behind the one-time popularity of the accelerating counter machine in the UK, as this type of scale has an even longer drop than the average vibrating machine.

Commerce Corner Selling

A nice little book has become available which may well prove of interest to our members, especially those of with an inclination towards the postal class of scale.

It is about the Birmingham Toymaker, Pencilmaker and Silversmith **John Sheldon**.

He manufactured all manner of Escritorial wares including Pocket Postal Scales.

The book is by **Brian George** and is available from the author at

32 The Ridings, Epsom, Surrey KT185JJ

Tel. 01372 726320

Email george@bans232.fsnet.co.uk

The book costs **£10.00** plus **£0.90** pp (UK), **£2.70**pp (USA)

Buying

Thomas Allgeier is on the look out for a set of 'Weighing Machines by T. J Metcalfe'. Published in 1969 this, 3 volume, book was once considered the 'modern' successor to Owen's Treatise, but is now of course equally archaic.

Thomas is actually only looking for vol. 1 and vol. 3 as he already has the middle one. **(I suspect he may have to take the full set if any are available).**

If anyone has a set for sale, please contact Thomas at

thomas.allgeier@btinternet.com

Whose Baby (Weigher) Are You?

I have a small midwife's spring balance, 4in long with a holding ring at the top and a hook to carry the load. It is calibrated from 0 – 16 lb. The trademark is a **mother holding a child and there is a letter S at the base of the mother's dress**. It is stamped '**London**' and **Reg.No. 476976**.

On the opposite side of the barrel is a table of ideal weights for infants at various ages in months, ie Boys 7lb at birth up to 16lb at 6 months, Girls ¼ to ½ lb less.

It's a bit worn with regular polishing, which shows, perhaps, it was a valued tool of the trade. Does anyone know the maker and date of this item? **Leslie Munn**

Editor's note; a friend, who used to be a Health Visitor, recalls that whilst these little scales were supposed to be used with a sling to safely contain the baby it was quite common, in practice, to simply hook through the nappy (pre Pampers of course) and somewhat precariously suspend the infant during the weighing. These days Class III scales with comfy pans have to be used, as high accuracy is considered essential and child dangling is frowned on. Reg no 476976 suggests a date of 1906 or shortly after; can any one help Leslie with the maker?

