



NUMBER 41

NOVEMBER 2018

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.

Railway Heyday Relics at Swindon

On our way to John Wintour's meeting in July, my wife Tricia and I stopped off at Swindon. As you may know, the historic Railway Works – built at the direction of Isambard Kingdom Brunel for the Great Western Railway (GWR) – have been superseded and turned to other uses.

The main attraction was 'Steam', a curiously-named Railway Museum housed in part of the Works and concentrating on the GWR and the lives of the locomotive, wagon and carriage constructors over the century-and-a half it was in operation.

Railways usually abound with weighing machine paraphernalia, and we found a reconstructed 'platform' area with the well-known Person Weighing Machine for those idle moments waiting for the 15.43 to Evercreech Junction.

(Photo 1 Tricia resisting the temptation to buy a chocolate bar while being weighed)

This was a photogenic and unusual item - more decorative than functional - but it was nice to see how the well-restored machine was used to capture a nostalgia for earlier and simpler times. Bizarrely, this coin-release scale was also designed to dispense Nestlé chocolate bars for an additional payment.

(Photo 2 Close-up of the dial with reflections of photographer and his full-time carer)

The manufacturer appeared to be Salter, and the capacity 20 stone by 1 pound divisions, with '7' at the half-stone divisions and every 10lb interval marked on the outer rim of the chart. '280' is thus marked opposite the maximum of 20 stone, since each stone in those days consisted of 14 lb. Oh, it still does.

The larger part of the old Works has been sympathetically transformed into a McArthur Glen Designer Outlet, rather better than the one we have in Ashford, coincidentally(?) on the site of the old Southern Railway Works. It was therefore heartening to see that the headwork of an old Pooley platform machine stands there almost ignored by the shopping public.

(Photo 3 Mike trying to look cool while manipulating/twiddling with the major tare poise)

The suspicion is that it was preserved as a landscape feature, rather than left *in situ*. There is no weighing plate nearby, so it appears the bottomworks were ripped out. Such is the durability of Pooley green paint (as applied by Avery's to hide the earlier merger of the two firms) that no cosmetic restoration appeared to have been done.

(Photo 4 The chart showing the little windows required for the chart-change



indication) Weighing up to 3000lb in 2lb divisions, this could have functioned inside the works or in a parcels depot, so long as the public were kept aloof from the confusion of tare bar weighing. It has the lead plug of the Government Stamp, alas not very clear.

(Photo 5 Tare bar and brass identity badge – the cunning little knob on the left operated the chart-change mechanism so that the weighing range could be increased in two further steps)

A little too large to be collectable (unless your name's Claus B from Germany), it's nice to see these artefacts still appearing, in whatever setting, to preserve some of the values and ethos of British engineering heritage. *Mike Sharpe*







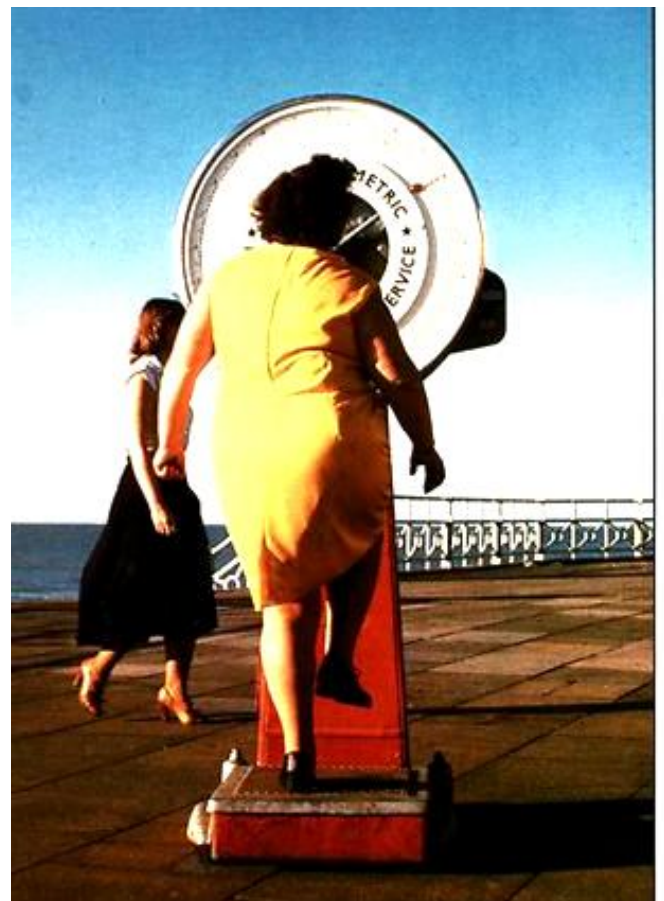
Weighing up the 1950's

In the last 2 editions we have featured a bit of a person weighing theme and Mike has kept that theme going with his piece about the Swindon Rail Museum. A combined scale and chocolate dispenser is a new one on me but you have to admire the irony. At the Newark Antique Fair I saw another person weigher, probably from the Leicester Scale Co. which was

unusual in that it still possessed its original one (old) penny coin slot from the 1950's or thereabouts. The seller had a tin of pennies so people could weigh themselves if they wanted. The machine also featured a chart showing the customer what was considered an appropriate weight for their height. The values featured smacked of the lean and hungry wartime years when any hint of obesity was considered a bit suspect if not downright unpatriotic. I was brought up just after that time when a bit of excess bodyweight was looked upon more kindly, as previously rationed luxuries became more freely available. I weighed about 12 stone when I was 12 years old and was admittedly a bit of a fat kid. This was largely due to an unsuitable post war diet consisting of copious quantities of bread and dripping and all the empty calories that an English seaside town was heir to. It's a wonder that we ever made it out of childhood. Although podginess did not attract the same opprobrium as today it did tend to attract the attention of the good old fashioned school bullies who considered the fat boy an ideal candidate for their attentions. Unfortunately for the ones at my school, excess body mass and the ability to punch people in the face were not mutually exclusive. After a few days of re-education therefore, I didn't have too much trouble in that department. *John Knights*

La Balance Automatique

There really is no escape from the person weighing theme in this edition!



We've all come across the situation shown above where people exhibit quaint attitudes to body mass and a general ignorance of the laws of physics. I recently acquired an interesting



postcard, shown above which features the words and music of a French song called 'La Balance Automatique'. This is a song from the repertoire of 'comique troupier' Polin (me neither!) who performed back in the 1900's and 10's in the French Music Hall. It's a whacky Gallic tale of a soldier who decides to weigh himself on a 'Balance Automatique' at a fun fair (you'll gather it's not quite Götterdämmerung)

He gets on the scale, puts the two sous in the slot and is disturbed to find he weighs ninety four kg (I wish). His friend suggests that it is his 'shako' that is making him appear heavy. He therefore removes his soldier's hat from his head and tucks it under his arm. He gets back on the scale and is disturbed to find he still weighs ninety four kg. *I think you can see where this is going!* He keeps removing various items of clothing, including of course his trousers (truly the most humorous item of all the clothes in any language), all of which of course, he retains about his person. He thus predictably, gets the same result each time he climbs back on the scale. He is eventually berated, in colourful French, by his Captain for being improperly dressed in public and gets locked up in the 'glass house'. *How we laughed!* If you

search the internet you can listen to the original recording but I wouldn't recommend it.

Poverty

Yet another post has been received from one of my ever expanding coterie of perambulating correspondents.

This scale was seen at a Garden Centre near Lincoln where it was actually being offered for sale (above). It clearly has an impressive set of wheels and looks as though it's designed for racing rather than weighing. It also exhibits an interesting colour palette which speaks of the complex history of the British scale trade.

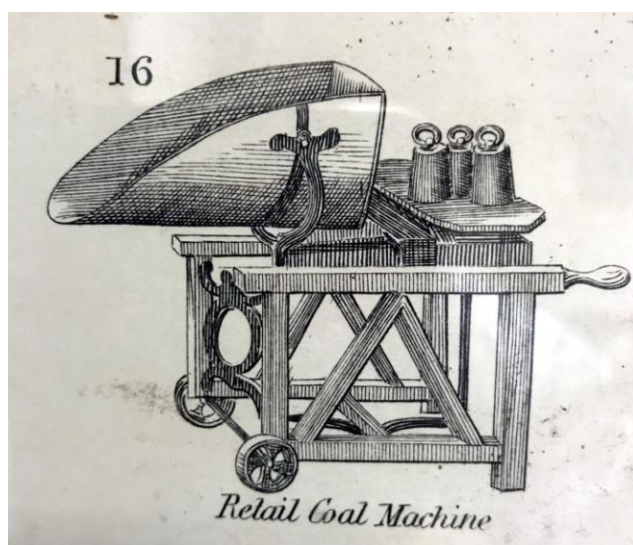
As mentioned by Mike in his article, the business of Henry Pooley, once a great supplier of mainly, heavy industrial weighing stuff, was subsumed into the ravenous maw of W & T Avery in 1913. The Pooley name was retained, to try and pretend that a degree of choice still existed. To differentiate the brands, Pooleys were painted in their traditional railway green whilst the otherwise identical Avery models were coloured 'averycious' red.

The wheeled wonder parked up in the Garden Centre was originally badged as a Pooley and given the green overcoat. Time and weather have however bestowed a patina (as beloved by TV antiques folk who are usually referring to what we common people call rust) and the underlying red has increasingly become visible.

The colouration is aesthetically appealing but is an interesting metaphor for the great deceit. *John Knights*

Other Makes Are Available

Back in Edition 38 I was banging on about the Avery 3708BFN Scoop Scale used in the coal trade (*I incorrectly stated that the machine had a 7lb chart when any fool knows it was 5lb*). Richard Herbert got in touch pointing out that the Herbert Company also made a coal scoop scale and sent a picture from one of their catalogues, shown above. I don't think it features in their current marketing material! To be fair there was quite a lot about the Herbert Company in Editions 36 and 37 when the iconic Herbert Lion Scale was heavily featured.



A Date for your Diary

Our good friend John Wintour has already announced the date of his next gathering at his premises in the Forest of Dean. This will be held on Sunday 21st July 2019.