

NUMBER 44

AUGUST 2019

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.

Jenemann Archive Now Online

The following has been received from Thomas Allgeier

Those with an interest in precision and laboratory balances may be aware that several ISASC members are involved in the digitising and archiving of the late Hans Jenemann's collection of photographs and related literature. We can now report that the work has reached a stage where the archive has been made available online. Previously a website had been launched describing our efforts and the project background at www.jenemann.org. Now a new section has been added called "Image Archive" where a link has been posted. This directs you to the server on which the database is held.

This link leads to a login page where you can access the material through a Filemaker user interface. No user name or password is needed; just click "Guest Account". Five sections are searchable: Articles and books by Jenemann, Articles about Jenemann, Pictures, Presentations and Exhibitions to which he contributed.

Use of the database requires a little practice for those who are unfamiliar with Filemaker but it is pretty straightforward. The database can be displayed as list, as a sequence of pictures, or one image at a time. It is searchable and contains all the info we were able to extract in connection with each particular entry. There is a "Help" button in the top right corner.

The pictures are displayed in low resolution to allow quick access and save server space. They can be saved to your computer by right-clicking and selecting "Save As". If any particular image is required in high-resolution please contact us through the "Contact" page on www.jenemann.org.

The literature is displayed as title and cover page, with bibliographical data. Once again we are willing to share the full scans on request if required for research purposes. Enjoy!

Yess Sirr

I have always been a fan of Victorian and Edwardian fiction, particularly the works of H.G Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, H. H. Munroe, Edgar Allan Poe, O'Henry etc. Admittedly you do have to grit your teeth a bit when confronted with some of the cultural, gender, class and racial references pumped out in some of these tomes but then the same can be said for stuff produced in the 1970s. I particularly like the Victorian science fiction stories that became the inspiration for the Steam Punk movement.

A master of this genre was the French author Jules Verne who imagined unattained scientific advances which he cleverly intertwined with existing technology and inventions thus giving credibility to the fantastic.

He did get a bit formulaic and repetitive later in his career but his earlier works were highly ingenious and imaginative. In 1870 he published '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea' (or 'Seas' in the original French) which, as I'm sure you know, involves 19th century people swanning around beneath the oceans in a fantastic submarine. Verne apparently got the idea when he learned of 'Le Plongeur', a submersible vessel built for the French navy in 1859. I had always thought 'Le Plongeur' referred to the guy who does the washing up in a Parisian Bistro which might explain why that vessel was of limited success as an instrument of war. After some years of underachievement as a naval vessel it sadly ended its career as a water tank! Verne's 'Nautilus' by contrast is a cross between an invincible death dealing machine and a submersible gin palace filled with futuristic wonders of science, grand salons, magnificent works of art and an organ.

After a bit of initial excitement at the beginning when a French professor and his two companions are pulled from the sea by the crew of the Nautilus, the story settles into something of a travelogue as the vessel sails on and beneath the various oceans of the world. Much of the text is taken up with detailed 'Linnaean' descriptions of the various forms of exotic sea life that they encounter on their journey, most of which they joyfully kill and eat. Fact and fiction are intermingled as genuinely existing technologies are incorporated into the story often however, with somewhat exaggerated technical abilities. The newly opened Suez Canal features alongside a fictional (I think) undersea tunnel running beneath the Sinai linking the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. This device conveniently spares the secretive and misanthropic Captain Nemo, builder and commander of the Nautilus, from having to reveal his ship to the world and pay the canal toll.

The metrology employed in the narrative is interesting. By 1870, France was well into the use of the metric system (having invented the damn thing they thought they had better set a good example) so metres, kilometres, kilograms etc do feature when depths, distances weights etc are described. Also occurring, however, are feet, fathoms, miles and of course leagues. The league was traditionally the distance that could be walked in an hour which in 'imperial' cultures was crystallised as 3 statute miles. In metric

cultures it was 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) which is probably the value referred to in the Verne story.

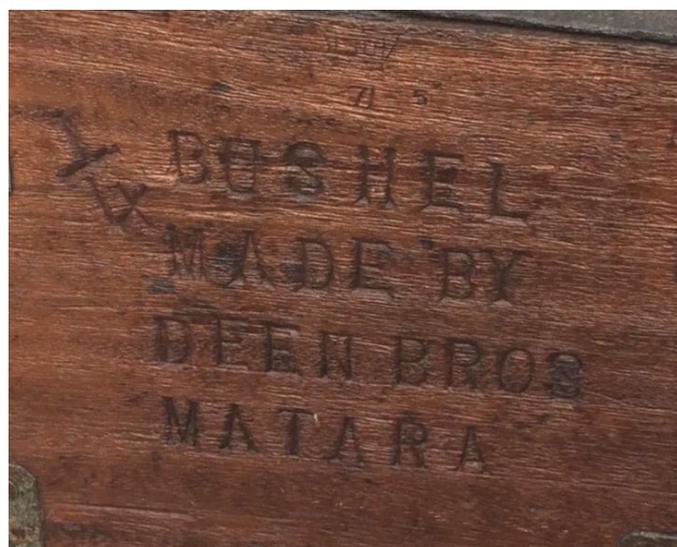
At one stage of the narrative the vessel turns up off the coast of Ceylon, or Sri Lanka as it is now known. Here they encounter pearl divers who are seen as poor, desperate people pursuing a ludicrously hazardous calling in which there was little need for a pension plan. Reference is made to a book of 1850 called 'Ceylon and the Cingalese' written by one Henry Charles Sirr, a real life British diplomat and barrister, in which aspects of life in that country are described.

Sirr talks of the pearl trade, the various grades of pearl that were collected and the manner in which they were traded. Pearls that grew wholly within the flesh of the oyster were perfectly round and of the highest quality. These were individually valued and sold into the jewellery trade for use in premium pieces. Pearls that grew in contact with the oyster shell and which were therefore somewhat misshapen were put together in parcels which were sold by weight. The smallest and least significant items, known as 'seed pearls', were sold, in bulk, by volume.

Verne does not state what units were employed in 1850.



Ceylon had its own rich panoply of metrology units dating back to ancient times. The Badulla Pillar (above) is a large monolith dating back to the tenth century with inscriptions relating to the rules that applied to weights and measures. By the 1850s however it is probable that only imperial



units, courtesy of the colonial British, were in use on the island

Above right is an example of a volume measure from those colonial days. It is a 1/4 bushel made in the town of Matara in the south of Sri Lanka, albeit by a business with the somewhat occidental name of Deen Bros.



All A-Borda

The French love naming things after people, mostly French people of course! There can scarcely be a school, college, municipal building or major thoroughfare that does not carry the name of a notable poet, novelist, philosopher or even scientist. When I was recently in the town of Les Sables d'Olonne, in the Vendée,



I noticed a French naval vessel chugging into the harbour (at the regulation speed of 4 noeuds or 'knots') bearing the name 'Borda' (left). The name immediately made me think of Jean-Charles de Borda, one of the great figures of French science whose name appears among those 72 notables listed on the Eiffel Tower.

I know of him because his name is given to the counterpoise method of weighing which allows accurate results to be obtained even though there may be inaccuracies in the balance. He is also

notable for his contributions to the creation of the metric system. He chaired the Commission, established to devise a new 'decimal' system of weights and measures at the end of the 18th century. In addition, his 'Repeating Circle' (technically devised by Etienne Lenoir but developed (*stolen?*) by Borda) was one of the instruments carried by Delambre and Mèchain that permitted a (reasonably) accurate measurement to be made of the meridian arc between Dunkirk and Barcelona.

I did wonder what his name was doing on a naval vessel but I subsequently found out he had also been a serving naval officer and administrator during his illustrious career.

Jean-Charles de Borda, dressed in naval uniform. He is holding a 'Reflecting Circle'. This was a naval instrument used in the same way as a sextant in the British service. This device was developed into the surveyor's 'Repeating Circle'



San Francisco Revisited

In the last edition I got to wonder how a simple scale made in the North-West of England found its way from Lancashire to the distant streets of San Francisco.

Our good friend and doer of multifarious sterling works on behalf of the Society, Mike Sharpe, himself a native Liverpudlian, has been in touch with the following observations on the matter.

Regarding the San Francisco deadweight story, my guess is that ships running out of Liverpool via Cape Horn would have carried manufactured goods to California in the 19th century. San Francisco was the Wild West up until fairly recently (some say it still is...). The clue to whether the Ormskirk scale was made by Avery at Soho Foundry or copied in a North-West ironworks is probably in the exact size of the parts - as you know, you can make a sand casting directly from an oversize wooden pattern and allow for shrinkage, or cast from a metal original and end up with a visual reproduction slightly thinner and lighter.

Down on the Farm 21-07-2019

Our good friend John Wintour once again hosted a gathering of members at his farm/museum in Gloucestershire. He has redeveloped the accommodation for his vast collection and about 20 members turned up to have a look at the new set up and spend the day chatting and reminiscing.

Our publications officer, David Apps was among that number and provided a brief report of the proceedings.

'Determined not to drive there and back in a day as I have in the past, I eventually found a room at 'The Station Hotel' in Gloucester which left only 23 miles on Sunday morning. The hotel left a lot to be desired, but the beer, a 'real ale' from Cornwall was excellent. The 'Full English', something I allow myself about twice a year, was also good but unfortunately spoilt my appetite for the excellent lunch provided later at the meeting.

I arrived at John's just before 10.30 and the first person I spotted was Diana who I have not seen for a while. I saw a number of other familiar faces but I learned that Mike and Tricia were unfortunately unable to attend because of illness.

In addition to the UK members, it was uplifting to see that Jaap and Ronnie Visser from the Netherlands and Clause Borgelt from Germany had also made the long journey to the Forest of Dean.

John has not added very much to the collection recently but has altered the accommodation as part of the extensive building works he has undertaken on the farm. The displays are still vast of course featuring numerous scales, both large and small, very rare weights and even some measures. The collection also features other items such as clocks and cash registers all of which hold interest for people interested in ingenious

mechanical devices. It was really good to meet Ann Myers at the gathering who is keeping up her membership and interest in the Society.

Claus Borgelt brought some interesting weights with him which caused great interest and engendered much discussion of the technicalities amongst the 'weight brigade' (see below).

The date for next year's meeting has already been announced, Wednesday 15th July (St Swithin's Day) 2020 (so let's hope it doesn't rain).



An English Bronze Bell Weight. It was bought by Claus in Belgium and bears a date of 1781. It carries the usual panoply of marks that trace its history and use. Missing (apparently) a Founders Mark!



David also provided this picture without explanation. The item looks (to your totally uninformed Editor) like an Aztec lead handbag. It was another of the pieces brought by Claus to the July gathering. If anyone can offer some enlightenment I would be most grateful!

J Knights