

FULCRUM

The Newsletter for the European Chapter: Issue 2 February 2009

Welcome to the second issue of **Fulcrum**. A number of members have been in touch with helpful suggestions and ideas for future editions. We hope all will see this little publication as a means of communicating within the Society. We have received some contributions for this and future editions and it's nice to see people taking an interest. Please feel free to continue the flow of material!

Contributions can be emailed to johnsknights@btinternet.com or sent by post (see Membership List)

Members' Contributions

Sovereign Rockers: information requested!

A Canadian collector, **Mike Foster**, is making a detailed study of sovereign rockers. He is particularly interested in the details of the crowns stamped on them, and has been able to identify many distinctive types in this way. If you would like to help Mike by providing information about the rockers in your collection, please contact him directly by email: MFoster[AT]mbridgetech[DOT]com.

A Geographical Directory of Weights and Scales

For many years I have been collecting information about the verification marks stamped on weights. In order to discover when, and by whom, the marks were stamped, it is necessary to begin by studying published sources, such as local directories. Additionally, Christine and I have spent many hours in County Record Offices trawling the unpublished records. This has enabled us to build up a fascinating picture of the inspection of weights and measures since the introduction of the Imperial Standards in 1826. It also became clear that the picture would be incomplete without information about makers and sellers of scales and weights in the various localities.

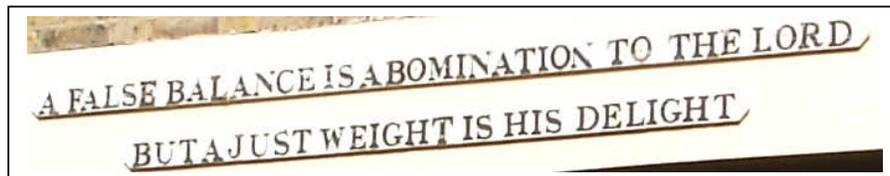
This is an ongoing project, which can be never be 'complete', but I feel that the time has come to make our information available more widely. It has been collected on a geographical basis, using the traditional counties. At the start of 2009 five counties (Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, and Oxfordshire) are in a state that is just about presentable, and the material is now available on my personal website:

<http://www.maths.lse.ac.uk/Personal/norman/>

Other counties, and more explanatory material, will be added regularly. Please let me have your comments and suggestions.

Norman Biggs

'Weighty' things that you're liable to read in the Bible



This Biblical quotation is emblazoned above the entrance of Greenwich Market in East London. It comes from Proverbs Ch11 v1.

In a similar vein we see

'Divers weights and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord' (Proverbs Ch20 v10)

'Divers weights are abomination unto the Lord and a false balance is not good' (Proverbs Ch20 v23)

'Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances and the bag of deceitful weights?' (Micah Ch.6 v11)

'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great and falsifying the balances by deceit' (Amos Ch8 v5)

'Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have' (Deuteronomy Ch 25 v13, 14 & 15)

'Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgement, in meteyard, in weight, or in measure.

Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have' (Leviticus Ch19 v35, 36)

'And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand' (Revelation Ch 6 v5)

The Book of Revelation describes a vision of the Apocalypse by St John the Divine featuring the terrible Four Horsemen, who have appeared, over the years, in art, not to mention, at least, one really bad film. The rider of the black horse is said to represent the exploitation of the poor by corrupt trading, which reduces them to famine.



The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse by Albrecht Durer 1471 – 1528. The balance appears to be a box end device but, as often in art, the technical detail is a little indistinct!



Apocalypse Later

A later version of the Four Horsemen was painted by the Russian Victor Vasnetsov (1848 – 1926)

In this version, the rider on the black horse carries a simple steelyard. This presumably comes from the Slavic tradition where the bismar and similar low-tech devices were more common than the two-pan balance. The crudeness of the device fits in very well with the

bleakness of the subject matter.



The Apocalyptic Steelyard

‘And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine’

A little odd, perhaps, to be so concerned with the niceties of consumer protection as the world slides into the abyss.

John Knights

And now for something completely different!

The comic postcard has been a feature of the British Seaside holiday for the past century or so. Large ladies were a stock subject of the genre and comments upon their weight were naturally, often featured. This example was sent from Skegness in Lincolnshire in 1920

and gives a whimsical and somewhat surreal take on how much the

lady actually weighs and how this is to be ascertained.

The **Jockey Scale** was to be found on many British seaside promenades and



A real Jockey Scale (complete with famous jockey who appears to weigh 11st 3lb)

people seemed quite happy to have their weight ascertained and declaimed in public. We are indebted to **Kath Malcolm** for supplying this example of seaside memorabilia.



Weigh Ticket from Holbrook's Weighing Machine

Weigh ticket controversy shock horror!

Although FULCRUM was intended as a newsletter for the European Chapter we are delighted to have received both support and contributions from our American friends.

Issue 1 featured a piece from Norman Biggs about early Public Weighbridges. He produced the illustrated weigh ticket from a machine in Nottingham operated by Thos. Holbrook and quoted the issue date as 1861, this number being shown in the top right hand corner.

American member Alan Rodin took the time to write as follows,

My name is Allan Rodin. I am a member of ISASC in the United States. I

would like to congratulate you on the inaugural issue of the "Fulcrum". I enjoyed it very much. Keep up the good work.

I have a question for you on the article about the public weighing machines, particularly about the weigh ticket in Figure 2. I am certainly not an expert on these things, but I am in the printing business. Without seeing the original, it is hard to determine, but it appears that the number '1861' was not printed at the same time as the rest of the ticket. It appears to have been added after the printing with a numbering machine. You will notice that the vertical position of the individual numbers varies, as does the density of the print. This is characteristic of hand held numbering machines. Is it possible that the individual numbers varies, as does the density of the print. This is characteristic of hand held numbering machines. Is it possible that the '1861' is not the year of issue but rather a sequence number used to track the tickets and possibly correspond to log book entry?

I look forward to future issues of the "Fulcrum"

The redoubtable Biggs however, came back as follows,

John Knights forwarded to me your enquiry about the weighing machine ticket. It certainly looks as if the number 1861 was printed separately, as you suggest. However, I am convinced that it does denote the year. This is confirmed by documentary evidence from directories. Thomas Holbrook is listed as the owner of the machine in Wright's Nottingham Directory for 1858, and the machine (now under the name of John Holbrook) is in the Post Office Directory of Nottinghamshire for 1876.

Many thanks for your interest - maybe you can unearth some similar tickets from the US!

Editor's note. As one who has looked at many a weighbridge ticket in his time (of somewhat later vintage than the one in question) I too would have thought that the 1861 might well be a consecutive issue number rather than a date. The ticket does have a space for a number to be inserted, but this left blank, so maybe the number was stamped in the top corner instead. I would normally expect a date on such a document to be a full calendar date with day month and year. Oddly there is no space for this vital piece of information but this too would be either written or stamped on in the same way. Norman however makes a good case for the operation of the machine in the year in question, so who knows?

Forthcoming Events

The date for the Spring Meeting of the German club "Masz und Gewicht" is planned on 15th and 16th of May 2009.

The place: Kühlungsborn. A village on the Ostsee-coast - North Germany.

The Germans meet twice a year. Spring and Autumn. Different places. Usual four days. Come together on the Thursday. Official program on Friday and Saturday. There is always a (free) program on the Sunday (sightseeing - museum - leisure). On Saturday-morning is the bourse with selling tables. In the afternoon there are lectures and the official meeting. For the ladies is there a special program on Saturday afternoon.

Thanks to Jaap Visser for this item of European news.