

The Yardstick

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BWMA gratefully records the Patronage of the late Lord Shore and the Honorary Membership of the late John Aspinall, Nirad C Chaudhuri CBE, Jennifer Paterson, CBE, Leo McKern AO, Norris McWhirter CBE, Fred Dibnah MBE, Sir Julian Hodge, KStG, KStJ, Bernard Levin, CBE, Dr Charles H Sisson, CH, DLitt, Fritz Spiegl, David Shepherd, MBE

U.S. metric proposal hits the rocks

Efforts by the U.S. government's National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to introduce compulsory metric conversion for packaged food and consumable goods (euphemistically described as "voluntary metric-only labelling") have been derailed. It was intended that a metric bill would be put before Congress this year but NIST has accepted that this will not happen this year or in the foreseeable future.

NIST's failure is due in no small part to opposition by the Food Marketing Institute, representing 26,000 food retail stores with annual sales of over \$340 billion, three-quarters of the U.S. food retail market. The FMI pointed out that metric conversion would entail huge costs for the food retail industry, affecting value-comparisons, packaging, label inventories, shipping cases and much more.

FMI was assisted in its opposition by BWMA which supplied data on the effects of metric conversion on retailers and consumers in the UK. Although the NIST proposal has been seen off for now, FMI's federal lobbyists will continue to monitor the issue, and have undertaken to keep in touch with us.

Happy Anniversary, BWMA

The above news is especially welcome on the 10th anniversary of BWMA's relaunch in September 1995. On the back page, our founder and Hon President Vivian Linacre recalls BWMA's new beginning and describes our future challenges. This year also marks the 100th anniversary of the first annual report of the original BWMA, and we are pleased to reproduce an extract.

John Gardner, Director

BWMA is a non-profit body that exists to promote parity in law between British and metric units. It enjoys support from across Britain's political spectrum, from all manner of businesses and the general public. BWMA is financed by member subscriptions and donations. Membership is £12 per year. Cheques or postal orders payable to "BWMA", 11 Greensleeves Avenue, Broadstone, Dorset BH18 8BJ

BWMA CORRESPONDENCE WITH DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

BWMA is chasing the DTI on two issues. Firstly the **Divisional Court ruling**. On 10 May 2005, BWMA wrote to Mr Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Minister for Consumers, enclosing a copy of the Parliament & Constitution Centre Filenote that described Lord Justice Laws' identification of constitutional Acts as "opinion" that is "...not universally accepted amongst judges or legislators" (see Yardstick 24). The Filenote said that the Divisional Court ruling is unlikely to have practical effect in respect of the Road Traffic Act 1991.

BWMA wrote to the minister that, "If the Divisional Court ruling has no effect on the Road Traffic Act 1991, then it can have no effect on the Weights and Measures Act 1985. Either constitutional Acts exist or they do not".

Paul Cole replied for the minister on 2 June: "In *Thoburn v Sunderland City Council*, the Divisional Court upheld the validity of the metric system in UK law, not because of what Lord Justice Laws said about constitutional status of certain Acts, but on the basis of the facts in that case".

BWMA replied direct to the minister on 2 July to correct Mr Cole: "...the facts of the case were not in dispute during the court proceedings. According to District Judge Morgan in his written judgement delivered at Sunderland Magistrates Court on 9 April 2001: *Due to the most helpful co-operation of the defence, the facts are not in dispute. In fact, no evidence has been called by either side.* Similarly, according to Lord Justice Laws in his written judgement delivered at the Divisional Court on 18 February 2002: *...There was no dispute about the facts. The case for the defence effectively consisted in the submissions which Mr Shrimpton has addressed to us on these appeals*".

BWMA awaits Mr Sutcliffe's response. BWMA also awaits a reply from Mr Sutcliffe on the matter of **supplementary indications**. On 3 November 2004, Mr Sutcliffe stated in a letter to BWMA: "...as [BWMA] will know, Directive 80/181, which *originally authorised* supplementary indications..." [our emphasis].

BWMA replied saying that Mr Sutcliffe's statement assumes that supplementary indications of quantity were illegal in 1979, the year the Directive was passed, hence the need for Directive 80/181 to authorise them. BWMA has therefore asked Mr Sutcliffe two questions:

- Were supplementary indications illegal prior to 1979; and
- Does Directive 80/181 itself contain a prohibition on supplementary indications?

Obviously, the answer to both questions is no. As and when Mr Sutcliffe answers truthfully, the 'deadline' for the termination of supplementary indications will be exposed for the fraud it is.

BWMA CORRESPONDENCE WITH EUROPEAN COMMISSION

We are pursuing similar correspondence with the EC's Director of the Single Market, Mr M Ayrat. The question posed is: "Please identify the text from EC Directive 80/181 that says supplementary expression of information is illegal". This question has been asked in letters dated 5 July 2004, 22 October 2004, 13 December 2004, 28 February 2005, 8 June 2005, 2 July 2005 and 3 September 2005 – but no text has been forthcoming. Instead, Mr Ayrat replies as though the question has not been asked. We will continue to ask the question until Mr M Ayrat either produces some text or acknowledges that no such text exists.

EC APPROACHES DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT OVER DATE FOR METRIC SIGNS

On 28 June 2005, BWMA wrote to the DfT: "We understand that the European Commission has recently been in touch with the government regarding EC Directive 80/181 and its implications for miles, yards, feet and inches on British road signs ... We understand that the nature of the EC's interest was to ask the government why it has not set a date [for metric conversion of signs]. We would be very grateful if you could please provide a clarification of this matter. Is the government under pressure by the EC to fix a date for road sign metrication? What is the government's intention?"

Replying for the DfT on 11 July, Julie Kieswich wrote: "The EC has received representations from supporters of metrication that the UK Government should fix a date or dates for replacing imperial units on traffic signs with metric ones. The Government is in contact with the Commission about the matter. No decisions have been made which would result in change in the present arrangements. In any event, there would be no change without widespread public debate".

NOT FOR COLCHESTER COUNCIL TO “ACCEPT OR REJECT” HIERARCHY OF ACTS

The “no fines before conviction” campaign is proceeding and objections to parking fines have been made in 40 council areas. No council has come up with a satisfactory response as to why it is not applying the ruling of Lord Justice Laws (LJL).

The LJL ruling, which convicted Steven Thoburn of a criminal offence for using pounds and ounces, says that there exist “constitutional” Acts which override other Acts (termed “ordinary”) unless the latter amend the former *expressly*. In the Thoburn ruling, this meant the constitutional 1972 European Communities Act requiring the use of metric units took precedence over the later Weights and Measures Act 1985 that allows pounds and ounces. It must therefore follow that the Bill of Rights 1689, forbidding fines and forfeitures “before conviction” and identified by LJL as a “constitutional” Act, overrides the (ordinary) Road Traffic Acts of 1991 and 1994 that seek to remove the courts from the parking fine appeal system.

A summary of Councils’ replies will be produced in due course. In the meantime, members will be intrigued by the response by Colchester Borough Council to our friend George Curtis. According to the Council’s Legal and Democratic Services Manager Mr Weaver, **“I am fully aware of the Judge’s comments regarding constitutional statutes and, in particular, the Bill of Rights 1689. However, it is not for the Council either to accept or reject the Judge’s comments”**. Mr Weaver also says: “It is not for the Borough Council to challenge the legitimacy of Parliament in passing the Road Traffic Act 1991”.

PARLIAMENT & CONSTITUTIONAL CENTRE

We have received more from the Parliamentary and Constitutional Centre which issued the Filenote reproduced in Yardstick 24. According to its representative Richard Kelly on 27 July 2005: “There has been a lively debate among politicians and the judiciary about the existence of a set of constitutional acts but **the weight of legal opinion would suggest that the existence of such a set is not universally accepted**”.

METRIC RESISTANCE UPDATE

No new reports of enforcement by Trading Standards Officers have been received but we again urge members to keep an eye out for traders using imperial machines and to put us in touch, particularly market traders.

FOX’S GLACIER MINTS

On 4 July 2005, BWMA received the following message from the Senior Brand Manager at Fox’s Confectionery in relation to a feature on BWMA’s website: “I’m writing from Fox’s Confectionery in regard to the Glacier Mints logo and text that you use on your site. Could you please remove all reference to Fox’s Confectionery from your site and also the Glacier Mints logo. Fox’s Confectionery is now owned by Big Bear Ltd and not Northern Foods and I would request all references removed. If you have any queries etc then please give me a call; otherwise could you please advise when the changes will be made”

BWMA replied as follows: “Thank you for your email of 4 July 2005. I am afraid we are unlikely to meet your request, at least not entirely. As an organisation campaigning against metrication, we publish information of a factual nature which we believe supports our case. For instance, it is a fact that in October 2002 the Fox’s product was decreased from 227g (the former 8 ounce size) to 200g. It is also a fact (as admitted by the owners at the time) that the price was not decreased. As such, we feel entitled to convey this information to consumers. The Fox’s packaging itself is in the public domain. The packets photographed for the website were purchased by one of our members, and we do not regard this as an infringement of copyright. Further, what we do is little more than the Consumers Association in “Which?” magazine each month.

“Obviously, it is important to our Association that any information we convey is accurate and does not mislead. It would be inappropriate, as well as incorrect, to say that Fox’s is owned by Northern Foods when this is no longer the case. We have therefore added the following passage, supplemented by a link to your new website, and emphasised by a box: *BWMA wishes to point out that, in September 2003, Fox’s Confectionery was acquired by a new owner, Big Bear Ltd. Fox’s is no longer owned by Northern Foods. Visit the new Fox’s Confectionery website.*

“I appreciate this does not fully meet your request, but feel it is a reasonable clarification that the information we convey is historical”.

UK METRIC ASSOCIATION DECEPTION

On 28 and 29 August, the UK press reported that the EC was placing pressure on the government to set an end date for the mile (BWMA was aware of

this in June; see page 2 for correspondence). Several papers referred to “unnamed parties” within the UK who had been lobbying the EC.

The UK Metric Association went on public record to deny that they had contacted the EC on this issue. In a press release of 31 August, it stated, “The UKMA has had no contact with the European Commission in the last 12 months ... The EC has no power to require the UK to name an early date for phasing out pints of beer or miles on road signs ... UKMA has therefore not lobbied the Commission on this point”. A similar statement was made by the UKMA’s Chairman Robin Paice in a letter published in the Financial Times.

However, the Department for Transport website has made available its reply to a private enquiry regarding the UK’s policy on the mile. Normally, such replies have personal details removed before being placed in the public domain. On this occasion, however, the DfT slipped up. Here is the DfT’s letter, dated 17 June 2005:

“The Department has now completed its search for the information you requested in your 20 April letter ...

“[Request 9] Any background papers leading to the decision [by the UK government] to request the EC and Council of Ministers to agree to a derogation permitting the UK to postpone metrication of road signage “until a date to be fixed by the Member State”.

“[Answer] This information would be extremely difficult and very time consuming to try to collate. The Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with the request would exceed the appropriate limit ... I must, therefore, refuse your request...

“[Request 11] Any legal advice received on whether (a) it is legal (within the terms of Direction 80/181/EEC) to postpone indefinitely the fixing of this date, and (b) what considerations are properly relevant to deciding when to fix this date (ie NOT what the date should be but when it should be fixed).

“[Answer] **As the complaint by the UKMA Director to the EU Commission relates to the implementation of EU legislation, and could lead to formal legal proceedings, it would not be in the public interest to disclose the legal advice we have**

received on the merits of the complaint. I am therefore refusing your request, under section 42 of the Act, relating to legal professional privilege and the provision of legal advice”.

Thus, the UKMA *did* lobby the EC regarding an end date for the mile, so their assertions to the contrary are false. Furthermore, when printed out, the DfT letter includes its own filename: “**050617PAICEUKMA3.DOC**”. The first six digits refer to the date, and “Paice” would appear to be Robin Paice, whose letter appeared in the Financial Times. This suggests that the DfT’s letter was written to him, thereby indicating that he knew of UKMA’s involvement in Brussels [Editor’s note: copies of the Customary Measures Society’s rebuttal of UKMA’s January report are available; see back page].

TORBAY COUNCIL AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

On 10 August, BWMA submitted a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman regarding maladministration at Torbay Council. Much to BWMA’s astonishment, LGO investigator Janet Blundell has refused to investigate on the grounds that damage to private property (Mr Webb’s imperial scales) is a matter for the courts and not the Ombudsman.

However, BWMA had not submitted a complaint regarding the physical damage; the complaint regarded, among other things, Torbay Council’s refusal to supply its statutory authority for its actions at Mr Webb’s shop, to explain its actions, and to apply its own enforcement and complaints procedures. Ms Blundell justifies her obstruction by saying, “There would have been no complaints ... had it not been for ...” the damage to the scales.

On 14 August, BWMA’s Director attended the first annual conference of Ombudsman Watch (www.OmbudsmanWatch.org), a body set up to tackle LGO pro-council bias. Given the experiences related by some of the attendees, it appears that obstruction of complaints by the LGO is perfectly normal, and Ombudsman Watch was invited earlier this year to give evidence at a Parliamentary Select Committee into the LGO’s effectiveness. To be continued...

BWMA ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1905 (EXTRACT)

“Looking back over the period that has elapsed since the British Weights and Measures Association was formed, it is obvious that further delay in organising opposition to the introduction of the metre into this country would have been well nigh fatal. Twelve months ago the supporters of the metric system were exceedingly active, and their activity had been further stimulated by the Bill, which they had had prepared, passing through the House of Lords on May 17th. The object of this Bill was to compel the people of this country to use the metric system whether they liked it or not, and to make illegal those weights and measures on which the commercial supremacy of the British Empire has been built. Fortunately the House of Commons displayed no hurry in dealing with the Bill sent down to them by the Upper House, and the Bill, having got no further than its first reading when Parliament was prorogued, became a dead measure. Early in March of this year a movement was made in the direction of re-introducing the Bill, but the Government's decision was against it, as will be seen from the following verbatim report:—

Q. SIR THOMAS DEWAR : To ask the President of the Board of Trade, having regard to the fact that the Foreign Trade of Great Britain is conducted mainly with countries where the metric system is in force, will he consider the advisability of taking steps to secure the universal adoption of that system in the United Kingdom?

A. MR. GERALD BALFOUR: I do not think my honourable friend correctly states the facts. Of the total value of the overseas trade of this country in 1903, 42 per cent, or less than one-half, was conducted with countries in which the metric system is in force. I do not see my way at present to propose a measure for the compulsory adoption of the metric system in this country, but I may remind my honourable friend that the use of the metric system was legalised for all purposes some years ago, and that it is therefore open to any person trading with Foreign countries to make use of it.

Whilst, however, this reply may deter further immediate action of the metric advocates, those gentlemen are no less active in other directions than they were, and will doubtless seize every opportunity of re-introducing the Bill and enforcing their views on the country. To that end they are sparing neither trouble nor money.

We would like to emphasise the fact that amongst none of the English-speaking peoples of the world is the metric system acceptable. It has been legal for all purposes in the United States of America since 1866, and in this country since 1897, and still it is not used for manufacturing or commercial purposes. In making the system legal, and putting it on an equal footing with the Imperial weights and measures, the metricites do not recognise that all has been done that can be done

in a country governed by the will of the people. The only further step that can possibly be taken is the thoroughly un-English method of compulsion, and the Anglo-Saxon race does not favour compulsion, more particularly when the system to be imposed upon them is not so suitable for their business purposes as that sought to be taken from them...

The investigations which we have been able to make during the past year have made clear to us that the British public has also been misled ... In a return which has been handed in to the House of Lords Committee by the supporters of the metric system, there is a list of 36 countries which are said to have adopted the metric system. This statement lacks clearness as to what the actual facts are. As it stands, it gives readers the impression that in these 36 countries the metric system is universally in use, whereas it should state that in these 36 countries governments have passed laws with the object of making the metric system the only system legally recognised, but in many cases the Act is a dead letter so far as the people are concerned. In many of those countries the passing of the law, and its enforcement or partial enforcement by government, entails a distinct disability on the people. There are several of the countries not using the system at all, but for importing and exporting purposes, and when goods of necessity pass through the Customs Office the governments enforce its employment. The result in many cases is ludicrous. Importing, say, from England, where the yard and pound is used, the English merchant is put to the trouble of converting his weights and measures to the metric system solely for the convenience of the Customs offices of the importing country. Immediately the goods arrive in that country the importer then has the trouble of re-converting the metric weights and measures to yards and pounds, probably, for commercial purposes. That list, too, of “36 countries” is made up of small States, which in some cases have not the population of many an English city, and in many cases can hardly be said to have settled forms of government. Against these are counted the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and the United States of America, as three countries against 36, the inference being - and, in fact, it is often stated - that “the whole of the civilised world, with one or two exceptions”, has adopted the metric system. It is not pointed out that the British Empire alone has a larger population than all the metric-using countries added together, nor is the further important fact pointed out that throughout the English-speaking race there is only one yard and one pound, and that the measures of the Russian Empire are based on the English inch”.

SIGNPOSTING OUR HERITAGE

BY STEPHEN DIXON

We rarely see evidence of the authorities standing by our customary weights and measures. One such exception of several years standing is the letter from Mike Talbot, Head of the Traffic Management Division at the Department for Transport (DfT), to chief executives of local authorities reminding them that traffic signs must be in Imperial, written in 2002 and still binding.

Mr. Talbot's letter followed the much publicised and successful efforts of Tony Bennett and other members of Active Resistance to Metrication (ARM) to rid our roads of illegal metric signs, culminating in the acquittal of Tony Bennett of allegations regarding the defacing and removing illegal traffic signs, based on a rarely used clause in the Highways Act. There have been no further prosecutions of ARM members and there is evidence that highway authorities have learned their lesson, though ARM has still quite a backlog of signs to convert.

Now there is further good news from the same battle front. The DfT in collaboration with English Heritage and the Campaign to Protect Rural England has issued Traffic Advisory Leaflet 6/05 (available online). This leaflet, entitled "Traditional Direction Signs", advises on the identification, preservation, restoring or replacement (in situ) of thousands of traditional local types and styles of finger posts around the country.

This development, stemming from the government Rural White Paper, has an interesting and potentially significant bearing on the Imperial versus metric battle. At this stage, however, it is hard for us Imperialists to know how to interpret it; quite frankly, it seems too good to be true.

Put simply, is the government signalling an exclusive and permanent usage of Imperial directional and distance signs? What if they decide to use dual Imperial and metric signs? Surely that wouldn't be safe.

Your contributor is in correspondence with the DfT to establish how the new policy initiative fits in with rumours of negotiations between DfT and the European Commission on complete metrication and with English Heritage on their anomalous policy of metricating their leaflets and site welcome notices. We will keep you posted.

The following report is taken from the York Evening News, 19 August 2005. Well done to all involved.

30 METRIC SIGNS MODIFIED IN YORK

A leading York councillor today labelled City of York Council's embarrassing mistake in putting up 30 wrong rights of way signs as the "kilometre cock-up".

Labour councillor Brian Watson warned council chiefs to be more careful in future after the signs were put up with distances in kilometres instead of miles. "I always work in miles because of the speedometer on my car," Councillor Watson said. "I can't believe they got it wrong. They should take more care in future."

Anti-metric campaigners argue it is illegal to put up any highway signs with metric measurements, including those on public rights of way ... Peter Rogers, a supporter of Active Resistance to Metrication (ARM), welcomed the council's decision to replace the signage. "Each time we are successful, it is a small but significant step towards eradicating them from our country," he said. "The imperial weights and measures of this country are part of our traditions and part of our culture. The attempts to impose metric signs is one of stealth and deception and has been going on for many years."

Council chiefs admitted they got it wrong. A spokeswoman said: "We can confirm that 30 new signs were erected with distances given in metric measures. "This was a genuine error and, as soon as it was brought to our attention, we took measures to amend it. Giving information on a footpath sign such as the distance and destination is discretionary and we thought the public would appreciate this extra detail. The Ordnance Survey maps that we use to measure the footpaths are metric and the walk packs that we sell describe walks in kilometres, so it made sense to the officer who ordered the signs to give corresponding information."

The council said it would not replace all the signs, but has ordered plastic discs displaying the imperial distances and these would be placed over the metric numbers over the next few weeks at a cost of £229.

**MINUTES OF THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON SATURDAY 23 APRIL 2005 AT THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER
ARCHIVES CENTRE, 10 ST ANN'S STREET, LONDON SW1 AT 11.00AM**

Present: Michael Plumbe (in the chair) and 25 members.

CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. It was with regret that for the second year he had to report a death of a good friend. Last year it was Steve Thoburn and now it was Essex butcher Dave Stephens who had been the first metric rebel.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from twelve members that included Lord Monson who had also enclosed an extract from Hansard where BWMA had been recorded.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2004 having been previously circulated were taken as read and approved *nem con*. Proposed by Mr F Olins, seconded by Mr R Stevens.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

John Gardner gave a full and detailed report on recent campaigns: a mailshot had been sent to one hundred traders of which forty were under BWMA protection; action had been undertaken on behalf of several traders, the main one being a Torquay fruiterer where compensation was being claimed for wrecked scales; the exploitation of the contradictions in Lord Justice Laws judgement which now involved the parking ticket campaign and a House of Commons Filenote, It was noted that a report of the House of Commons Parliament and Constitution Office had stated that "Lord Justice Laws opinion was not universally accepted". BWMA publications: it was planned that in future there would be a single publication *The Yardstick* which would be reduced in size and published more frequently. Following objections from a member it was agreed that *The Footrule* could be used on an ad hoc basis for single/two page messages. The *BWMA Guide to Metrication Concordat* had been sent to all members and two hundred Trading Standards Officers. Financial support had been given to the Customary Measures Society for their report rebutting the UK Metric Association report. A number of press releases had been issued. BWMA had also pursued campaigns on Irish road metrication, the USA Metric Bill which had not yet been presented to Congress, and the European Union ban on supplementary indications with support from Tom Wise MEP.

HON TREASURER'S REPORT

An audited report on the accounts and balance sheet was circulated showing the Association was in credit in the amount of £10,983.48 (copies circulated). The bank account had been transferred to Barclays Bank and payments now required two signatures. Current membership was 430 with another 100-150 possible renewals in the pipeline. Mr E Worcester proposed second by Mrs V Gardner that the annual subscription for regular membership be increased to £12pa and £10pa retained for those unwaged/limited income. This was approved *nem con*. On the proposition of Mr A Liddle seconded by Mr E Worcester the accounts were adopted *nem con*. Thanks were extended to Lee Consterdine for all his hard work.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS & COMMITTEE

Chairman: Michael Plumbe, proposed by Mr J Gardner and seconded by Mr R Willow. Election of Officers John Gardner Director, Lee Consterdine Hon Treasurer and Committee members Graham Bostock, Robert Carnaghan, David Delaney, Stephen Dixon, Sheila Eustace, Anthony Flew, Pamela Shaw-Hesketh, Simon Hooton, Derek Norman, William Peters, Philip Pitt, Bruce Robertson, Frederick Rodriguez and Robert Stevens were duly elected on the proposition of Mr D Turner seconded by Mrs V Gardner and agreed *nem con*. There were no nominations from the floor.

APPOINTMENT OF HON AUDITOR On the proposition of Hon Treasurer seconded by Mr A Liddle, Mr W Featherstone was re-appointed Hon Auditor.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS Items raised by members and discussed were market traders selling fruit and vegetables by the bowlful with no declaration of weight; the need to address longer-term issues such as the age of the current membership as it was essential to attract younger members; and for BWMA to be more pro-active in addition to fire-fighting. It was also suggested that a tribute should be paid to Dave Stephens and that BWMA be registered as a charitable organisation. The chairman said the Committee would discuss and investigate all these issues. Mr R Carnaghan protested that he was not receiving copies of *The Yardstick* and sought a clear undertaking this omission would be rectified. It was noted that Vivian Linacre's updated *Guide to Customary Weights and Measures* was ready for printing.

Meeting closed at 12.33pm

TEN YEARS ON by VIVIAN LINACRE

Yes, twelve is a far more significant number than ten, but we can't avoid our accidental inheritance of Arabic numbering, even though the calendar and the clock are very largely duo-decimal. So we are bound to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the launch of the reconstituted British Weights and Measures Association in September 1995.

You may recall that EU Directive 80/181, as amended in November 1989 by 89/617, came into force on 31 December 1994, whereby the use of most customary weights and measures became illegal after 1 October 1995.

From Edinburgh, I had already initiated the Imperial Measurements Preservation Society [IMPS] in 1994, mainly to resist the attempt by the governing bodies of my own surveying profession to enforce metrication - which, of course, proved an utter failure, as the great majority of estate agents and valuers still continue to work in feet and acres. Meanwhile, many friends in London had been in touch, urging that the campaign should 'go national'. Through some of them I met Mike Plumbe and Robert Carnaghan and, on 13 September I lunched with Christopher Booker, who undertook to whip up press interest. The outcome was a packed public meeting in the New Cavendish Club on Friday 29 September, the eve of the weekend deadline, and massive media coverage. The rest, as they say, is history.

But whatever we may have achieved since then, we have yet to face our crucial task. For only four years from now, as you must know, we are confronted with prohibition, as from 1 January 2010, of the use of pounds and ounces - and all other customary measures - even as 'supplementary indicators' alongside the primary metric markings. To the European Commissars, it is not enough that everything must be measured and priced in metric measures; no mention at all of traditional measures can be permitted, not even to provide additional information to assist the customer. If the customer doesn't understand '150ml' or '950mm', then tough! That's 'make or break'. This is the battle for which we have been preparing for the last ten years.

HERITAGE TODAY

Our colleague Harold Parkin recently wrote to *Heritage Today* to express dissatisfaction with their inconsistent use of miles and metres. He received the following reply from the Editor Francine Lawrence: "I am very sorry that you found this annoying and we shall, in future issues of the magazine, use imperial measurements followed by the metric equivalents in brackets".

CUSTOMARY MEASURES SOCIETY

In January 2005, the CMS launched its report "*Weights and Measures: Britain's Way Ahead*", as a response and rebuttal of a report by the UK Metric Association calling for Britain's complete metric conversion. Copies of "*Weights and Measures: Britain's Way Ahead*" (55 pages) are available for £4 (cheques payable to Tony Bennett) from Tony

Bennett, 66 Chippingfield, Harlow, Essex
CM17 0DJ. Price includes postage.

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(this replaces the PO Box)**

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