



UKMA news

The newsletter of the UK Metric Association
For a **single** *rational* system of measurement

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Happy New Year to all our readers.

This New Year edition of the UKMA newsletter there has information about the 2017 Annual General Meeting and Conference.

It also includes items from Metric Today, the newsletter of the US Metric Association, notes about a new report on the subject of education with an introduction by its author, a report from our 2016 Conference, and some information about the newsletter itself.

AGM and Conference 2017

The AGM of UKMA will take place on Saturday 1st July 2017 at 10:00 at Canada Water Library, 21 Surrey Quays Road, London, SE16 7AR.

The library is beside Canada Water Station on the Jubilee line, normally just 5 minutes from London Bridge Station.

The Annual Conference will begin immediately after the AGM. The agenda for the AGM and the programme for the Conference will be available in June. The Conference will conclude around 16:00.



London
Overground and
Jubilee line
stations

Canada Water
Library entrance is
right next to
station exit

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Your Newsletter

Apology

The Committee would like to apologise to our readers for the absence of an edition of UKMA News in the Autumn of 2016. Martin Clutterbuck, the newsletter editor, passed away suddenly in May 2016, and it has not yet been possible to appoint a successor. An obituary for Martin appears below.

Newsletter editor required

The role of Editor of UKMA News involves collecting newsworthy items over a three month period, then editing them to a form that is likely to be of interest to the readers. Hitherto, composition has been done using Ms Word, but it was suggested at the Conference in 2016 that an on-line version should be trialled, initially suitable for pc and Mac (see below). If you would like to try your hand at editing UKMA News, please contact the secretary, secretary@metric.org.uk. Journalistic or literary skills are not essential – this newsletter, like the last, has been edited by a former engineer.

UKMA News on-line

At the Conference, it was suggested that the newsletter could change to e-mail format with links to articles. There could be an outline comprising a headline, a summary, then 'read more'. Such a format would permit public and member-only sections. Initially, it was suggested that a version suitable for a pc or Mac should be prepared, but if this proved to be a success, then a version for tablet or smartphone could also be considered. It is hoped to trial the pc format for the next edition alongside the normal pdf.

The Committee welcomes feedback from readers on this proposal, both before and after the trial. Please pass your thoughts to secretary@metric.org.uk.

Martin Clutterbuck, 1944 - 2016

Martin came from an electrical engineering background. He joined UKMA in 2004 and became the longest-serving editor of UKMA News since its first edition in 2003. He took over the editorship in the summer of 2007 and continued until his death in May 2016, bringing a new style to the newsletter, a mix of news items and longer articles.

He also served on the UKMA Committee for several years, and represented UKMA on the body that organised the events commemorating Magna Carta 1216.

Thank you, Martin, for your contributions towards the goal of a single, simple and logical measurement system for the UK.

Conference 2016

Topics considered at the Conference included Brexit, the need for a new Patrons following the death of Lord Howe, road traffic signs, communications both within UKMA and with the wider world, and our work programme. In this newsletter, the conclusions of the discussions on Brexit and road traffic signs are summarised. An extended report on the Conference, which has been circulated to members, may be obtained on request from the secretary.

Brexit

There was a lengthy discussion, introduced by Committee member Raphael Sofair. At the end, an assessment was made of opportunities and threats:

Opportunities

1. The UK must take a world wide view, and
2. Expand trade with the wider world, and
3. Give the world the impression that we are looking outwards – imperial road signs do the opposite.
4. Measurement issues can no longer be blamed on the EU – politicians will have to accept responsibility. London not Brussels will be seen to be in charge.
5. The UK veto on EU law is lost (so proposals for metric advancement can not be blocked), but we may be subject to EU law and regulation if we wish to trade

Threats

1. Anti-metric campaigners will become bolder/more confident.
2. Newspapers will continue to spread misinformation.
3. The need for a US trade deal may result in compromises on measurements.
4. Changes to UK legislation: freedom to choose, nostalgia.
5. Backsliding, particularly where gains have been “flaky”.

Raphael then summarised the conclusions:

- We should not to take sides between leave and remain (our current policy).
- Several of the options involve little change on measurement issues.
- Our campaign focus does not need to change at present.
- We should keep a low profile until the turmoil surrounding the Brexit vote subsides.

Road traffic signs

There was a Powerpoint presentation on the TSRGD 2016 which concluded by indicating actions that members might wish to take to build on the success achieved through the new road traffic sign regulations regulations, namely:

1. Look for opportunities to raise the existence of old signage with Highway Authorities.
2. Identify life-expired signs, and contact the Highway Authority to suggest that they be brought up to modern standards.

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UK News Stories

Media storm

The UK's measurement muddle has been out of the news for several years. However, following the EU referendum, media interest was rekindled and there were phone-ins on BBC Radio Wales and BBC Radio Lincolnshire on 30 August 2016. There was also a discussion on the Jeremy Vine Show on BBC Radio 2 on 7 September.

However, a media storm blew up, curiously, in late November around the activities of an elderly gent in Huntingdon who had been vandalising road traffic signs for at least ten years. There was a short item about him on Radio 5 Live on 25 November and a longer discussion on the Mark Forest Show on BBC Local Radio that evening. There was also a film shown on the BBC One Show on 29 November.

UKMA will be uploading recordings of these onto its YouTube Channel within the next few weeks. Links will appear in the next edition of UKMA News.

Darren Johnson

Mr Johnson is a member of the Greater London Assembly, representing the Green Party. We are pleased to repeat this quote that is attributed to him and which first appeared in *The Yardstick*, the newsletter of the so-called British Weights and Measures Association:

"I am afraid I can not support the Metric Martyr's campaign as I feel it is vital this country abandons the outdated and incomprehensible imperial measurement system once and for all, just as we did with our currency in 1971."

Well said Darren. We could not have put it better ourselves.

Gas meters mistake

The BBC reported: "Energy firms told to refund customers after gas meters mistake

Some householders have been paying three times as much for their gas, after at least one energy supplier got its maths wrong. The error - caused by mixing up measurements from older imperial meters with modern metric ones – it is thought to have affected thousands of people.... Those that have been overcharged are people who have imperial meters – which measure gas use in hundreds of cubic feet. They have been charged as if they had used cubic metres instead. Some people in the reverse situation have been undercharged, but they will not have to pay any extra... They should have paid more than 65% more than they did."

The full story can be found at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-37079287>.

Planet Earth II

The BBC's blockbuster wildlife series, broadcast during October and November, was a disappointment in that it used US Customary units (USC). Robin Paice comments: "I can forgive the occasional mile or mph since that is what still appears on road signs in the UK, but last night's 'Deserts' episode had feet, ounce, inch and - incredibly - 160 degrees Fahrenheit. How hot is that?" Perhaps Attenborough, popular in the USA, was only able to do one voiceover for the series, and he who paid the piper (the Americans) called the tune. Fortunately, this appears to have been an aberration for BBC documentaries. 'Thailand: Earth's tropical paradise', currently screening on BBC2, is 100% metric.

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News from across the Pond

UKMA receives a complimentary copy of *Metric Today*, which is the newsletter of the US Metric Association, a sister organisation to UKMA and founded in 1916. *Metric Today* appears six times a year. Here we reprint some of the items that appeared in 2016.

Panda coins (from the Jan/Feb edition)

"2016 begins a new era for Panda coins. The old weight system of troy ounces will be replaced by the metric system of grams, the standard system of measures used in the People's Republic of China. For the first time, the full range of Mint State gold and silver coins will be issued in metric weights. The 2016 10 yuan silver Panda and the 500 yuan gold Panda will weigh 30 grams, the ½ oz. gold Panda will tip the scales at 15 grams, the ¼ oz. gold panda will contain 8 grams, the 1/10 oz. will be 3 grams and the 1/20 oz. will shrink down to 1 gram."

Readers may not be aware that the troy ounce is legal in the UK for transaction in precious metals, unlike the avoirdupois ounce which has no legal application here. The troy ounce is 31.1 g.

Oil barrels (from the Mar/Apr edition)

"The measure of an oil barrel is defined as 42 US gallons, which is roughly equivalent to 159 litres. It has become an international standard since 1872 and is based on King Richard III's English wine tierce. However, most modern oil drums have a capacity of 55 US gallons, although the UK uses a drum of 44 imperial gallons and countries affiliated with the metric system use 200 litre drums... everybody trades oil using barrels as a measurement standard."

50 years ago: Japan goes metric (from the May/June edition)

Metric Today reprinted this story from the Japanese Times of 1 April 1966:

"Metric system goes into effect nationwide. Today the metric system will be enforced in all aspects of Japanese life. The metric system was put into effect on 1 January 1959, but a period of grace was provided for its enforcement in the areas of real estate and house building up to 31 March this year. From 1959 on, the Japanese have been using the metric system for almost all things. A housewife buys rice by the kilogram and soy sauce by the litre."

USMA Vice President Paul Trusten reported on a reaction in the UK following the referendum result (from the Sep/Oct edition)

"My English friends, a couple from Basildon, are adamant about being English not European, and measurement units are part of that cachet. When they heard of my support for US metrication, they exploded with, 'How can you give up your identity?' I turned to them to explain that SI happens to be part of my identity as a human being, and that it is my wish it be so among all people, wheresoever dispersed, and without regard to borders, culture, or politics, because all people measure. The SI should not be considered any more culture-bound than mathematics. Such is the goal of having one standard of measurement."

The Metric Maven

Readers may also be interested in a US blog by Randy Bancroft aka Metric Maven. Mr Bancroft has a background in manufacturing industry, and his posts have particular relevance to the USA but often refer to issues that may be of interest to a wider audience. The blog may be found here:

<http://thetricmaven.com/>

Metrication in Education

The benefit for education is an important but often ignored reason for completing the UK's metric changeover. A new report has recently appeared on the subject, entitled "Metrication in education".

The author, Alan Young also known as Dr Metric, has provided this introduction to his report.

"As many of you know, I strongly believe now more than ever that we must make MPs aware of the situation because they are the only ones who can change the road signs and legislate for the retail sector. Complaining to each other will stimulate us to continue the fight, but unless we can target the decision makers big time, we will continue to get nowhere.

This is why I have written my latest document, 'Metrication and Education'. You can download it by going to <http://www.drmetric.com/education/> and clicking on the link to the pdf document. If everyone who is interested in this topic printed out a copy and sent it to their MP, that would be quite a lot of MPs made aware of the situation.

In this document, I have tried to cover all the aspects of the effect of the continued use of medieval units on our children's education and answer most of the common objections to metrication, thus (I hope) giving you much ammunition. It is 106 pages long, but is presented in the form of a report and has a good many illustrations and photographs.

Please let me know how you get on. I hope this helps.

Alan Young
DrMetric.com"

New TED-Ed talk

A new TED-Ed talk about the metric system by Matthew Anticole can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7bUVjJWA6Vw>

The talk, which is five minutes long, explains the origin of the metric system and how it spread around the world, becoming the international standard. Matthew comments:

"I hope you feel the talk gives a nice overview of the history and value of the metric system. The comment thread is a very interesting display of all sides of the issue."

The talk received over a thousand comments on its first day of publication.

Contacting UKMA News

UKMA News is published by the UK Metric Association, the object of which is to promote the full adoption of the International System of Units (SI), commonly known as 'the metric system', as the legal and default system of weights and measures throughout society in the United Kingdom.

To contact UKMA or to unsubscribe to UKMA News, please e-mail secretary@metric.org.uk