



UKMA news

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

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Editor of UKMA News

In the absence of a regular editor, it was not possible to produce an edition of UKMA News in November 2019.

The Committee is looking for a volunteer to take on the role of editor and if you think this might interest you, please contact the Secretary, secretary@metric.org.uk

Rudimentary desktop publishing skills and a few spare hours every three months are all that you will need.

Brexit

Brexit may be “done”, but discussion of its consequences will doubtless continue for many years. In particular, the debate is just beginning on whether the UK should look inwards and backwards to an illustrious past or outwards and onwards to an uncertain future.

This debate is likely to influence the speed at which the metric changeover - began in earnest 55 years ago - makes progress towards completion. UKMA looks forward to participating.

As politics returns to “normal”, there are signs that interest in the UK’s measurement muddle is reviving, and we draw attention to several in this newsletter.

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Association News

Chair(man) for 2019-2020

The post of Chair(man) of UKMA remains vacant, there being no nomination last year. If you might consider standing this year and would like to know what is involved, please contact the Secretary or any member of the Committee.

Subscription rates for 2019-2020

The rates, as determined at the AGM, are unchanged from 2018-2019. They are:

Member annual	£15.00
Member annual by standing order	£10.00
Member (concession) annual	£5.00
Member life	£150.00

The subscription year runs from July until the following June. For a member joining after the end of February, the subscription runs until June of the following year.

General Data Protection and Regulation (GDPR)

Members of UKMA and former members receive this newsletter automatically. Supporters who have not been members will now need to opt-in to receive UKMA News.

If you are resident in the UK and are not or have not been a member of UKMA and you would like to continue to receive UKMA News, please e-mail the Secretary: secretary@metric.org.uk . Failure to do by 29 February 2020 will result in removal from the mailing list. If you have already responded, thank you. There is no need to do so again.

Annual Conference

A report of the Annual Conference, held on 5 October 2019, is available on request. Please e-mail the Secretary.

Press Officer

Andy McDowell has volunteered to take on the role of Press Officer for UKMA. His contact details will appear on our main web site, www.ukma.org.uk, in due course.

Dr Metric web site

The late Alan Young, aka Dr Metric, ran an excellent web site relating to educational issues, an area in which UKMA has lacked specialist expertise. This web site can now be found at: <https://drmetric.wordpress.com/>

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Recent articles posted on Metric Views

Here is a summary of the articles posted on Metric Views, www.metricviews.org.uk, since the last newsletter:

“M-days in Australia.” Posted on 25 September 2019. 17 comments.

“Muddled measures in car brochures.” Posted on 5 November 2019. 3 comments.

“Our common measurement language.” Posted on 15 November 2019. 11 comments.

“Email correspondence from the archives.” Posted on 29 November 2019. 10 comments.

“Not a blunder.” Posted on 9 February 2020. 3 comments.

Draft articles for Metric Views are welcome and should be e-mailed to: secretary@metric.org.uk

Building Metrication News

The metric changeover in the UK construction industry took place during the decade from 1967 to 1976. To assist the changeover, the magazine *Building* included a monthly supplement entitled “Building Metrication News”. This gave news and information on metrication and provided a forum in which the ramifications of the change to metric could be freely discussed. It was published in association with the Modular Society – the metric changeover provided opportunities to increase the scope of modular co-ordination in construction.

There were 28 editions of Building Metrication News, published between 22 September 1967 and 27 June 1969. Martin Ward, a member of the UKMA Committee, has obtained copies of the whole series. It is hoped, subject to the requirements of copyright, to provide access to these via one of the UKMA’s web sites. In the mean time, any reader who is interested in consulting BMN may wish to contact the Secretary.

Our web sites overhauled

Over the past year, our main web site www.ukma.org.uk and the factual web site www.thinkmetric.org.uk have received a thorough overhaul and been moved to more user-friendly software. On the surface, the sites may appear to differ little from before, but the changes that have been made required a great deal of skill, time and effort. The Committee would like to place on record its thanks to Martin Ward, who was responsible.

About this newsletter

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.

Your feedback and comments on UKMA News or on the UK’s stalled metric upgrade are welcome. To submit, or if you no longer wish to receive UKMA News, please e-mail secretary@metric.org.uk

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Letters to the Press

A few “letters to The Editor” that have been published recently in national newspapers may indicate reviving interest in the UK’s measurement muddle and related issues.

These three letters appeared in the Daily Telegraph on 20 January 2020 under the heading “Metric muddle”:

Patrick Barwise wrote:

“John England (Letters, January 18) is right to highlight the absurdity of buying petrol in litres and having signposts in miles, but wrong to blame the EU. Britain’s ‘semi-metrication’ is an entirely home-made muddle. Proposals to metricate go back to the 1860s and were finally adopted in 1965, but only half implemented – hence the current mess”

Mr Barwise is Emeritus Professor of Management and Marketing at the London Business School, and former Chair of The Consumers’ Association, publisher of Which?

Mr Derrig of Twyford, Berkshire, wrote:

“The call to return to imperial measures should be resisted. Which is more sensible: 10 millimetres in a centimetre. 100 centimetres in a metre and 1,000 metres in a kilometre, or 12 inches in a foot, three feet in a yard and 1,760 yards in a mile? I could go on to talk about furlongs, links, rods and chains, but trust I have already made my point.”

Mr Lodge of Plymouth, Devon, wrote:

“My children (both in their 20s) have no concept of gallons, feet and inches, stones, Fahrenheit or any of the other imperial measures. They were taught in the metric system, as millions of others have over the past 40 years. Things have gone too far to change now. Everyone else has learnt how to use the system – why not Mr England, too?”

And this letter from Mr Brayton of Witney, Oxfordshire, appeared in the i on 31 January 2020:

“Maths tables don’t add up

.... as a long-retired maths teacher, I seek an answer to my question. Years ago we had 12 pennies in a shilling and 12 inches in a foot. Decimal day on 25 February 1971 announced 100 pence to the pound. Why does the National Curriculum still insist that my seven-year-old grandson still has to learn tables up to 12 times 12, rather than 10 times 10?”

General election, December 2019

Among the MPs who did not retain their seats in parliament at the general election were Kate Hoey, a Patron of the British Weights and Measures Association (BWMA) and MP for Vauxhall in South London from 1989, and The Rt. Hon. Frank Field, an Honorary Member of BWMA and MP for Birkenhead from 1979.

Kate Hoey enjoyed an eventful political career, being Minister for Sport from 1999 to 2001. She was an ardent Brexiteer and announced in July 2019 her decision to retire at the next general election.

Frank Field was one of the most experienced members of the last parliament, having been a minister in several departments during his 40-year-long political career. He too was an ardent Brexiteer and resigned from his party in August 2018 to become an Independent.

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Can you help?

The Committee is looking for volunteers who may be able to help in the following areas:

- Responding to technical consultations by ISO and BSI.
- Preparing web-friendly versions of UKMA News for PCs, i-pads, i-phones and android devices such as tablets and mobile phones.
- Reviewing printed media for stories to link to our Twitter and Facebook pages.
- Assisting with the production of material for uploading to YouTube.
- Editing this newsletter.

If you think you may be able to help, please contact secretary@metric.org.uk

Where to find UKMA on the internet

UKMA began as an internet forum, and the internet is our principal vehicle for carrying our message to the public. We now have:

The main UKMA web site, www.ukma.org.uk

A factual web site, www.thinkmetric.org.uk

A blog, www.metricviews.org.uk

A Twitter page, <http://twitter.com/UKMetric>

A YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/user/UKMetric

These are available to all, not just members.

There is also a Facebook page and a Facebook group.

Membership of UKMA – a note for readers who are not members

An application form for membership of UKMA appears on the final page of this edition of UKMA News. The Annual subscription is currently £15 or £10 paid by standing order, concessions £5.

Benefits of membership include:

- Participation in a Google Group, open only to members.
- Participation in the annual election of the Committee.
- Participation in the AGM and annual Conference.
- Eligibility for election to the Committee.

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UKMA membership application form

Thank you for your interest in joining the UK Metric Association (UKMA).

Please fill in your details below:

Name	
Home postal address	
Town	
County/Country	
Postcode	
Daytime telephone	
Evening telephone	
Mobile telephone	
e-mail address	

(Please delete below as applicable.)

I wish to support the UK Metric Association through membership.

I understand the objectives of the UK Metric Association (UKMA) and agree with them. I have received the Constitution of UKMA.

I agree that my participation in UKMA activities will be legal, ethical and consistent with its objectives.

I am willing to be contacted by e-mail at the e-mail address above

I enclose a cheque (payable to 'UK Metric Association') to cover:

Individual subscription of £15 (annual)

Concessionary subscription of £5 (annual)

I enclose a completed standing order form in favour of UKMA for £10.00 per year.

I have made a payment through Paypal using the UKMA web site, www.ukma.org.uk

Signed

Date

Please return to Secretary, UKMA, 34 Wroxham Gardens, London, N11 2BA, or to secretary@metric.org.uk, from whom a standing order form may be obtained.