



UKMA news

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

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Reminder - 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 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.

A note from the Editor

Events have conspired to delay the publication of the April edition of UKMA News, for which the Editor apologises.

This edition includes several UK news stories including a spoof that appeared on 1 April, a reprint of an article from *Metric Today* (the newsletter of the US Metric Association), information about the Australian web site '*Metrication matters*', a reminder of some of the articles that have appeared recently on UKMA's blog, *Metric View*, and, on the back page, information about UKMA.

We also mark the retirement of UKMA's longest-serving Committee member, and report, below, on this year's Committee election.

UKMA Committee 2017-18

In the election of the Committee for the coming year, the number of nominations in each case was less than or equal to the number of vacancies. No election is therefore necessary.

There was no nomination for Chairman, and this post remains vacant.

Membership of the new Committee is:

Treasurer	Tony Wilson
Secretary	Derek Pollard
Members	Ronnie Cohen, John Frewen-Lord, Raphael Sofair.

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Great British chefs clearly have a sense of humour

This story appeared on the web site of Great British Chefs, menu@greatbritishchefs.net, on 1 April 2017:

**** PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT ****

As Brexit negotiations continue to make the UK great again, we're thrilled to announce the latest national campaign to create a stronger, more unified Britain. From today (1 April), the Government has decreed that all kilograms, grams, litres and millilitres are to be abolished from British cookery books, recipe websites and food TV programmes. Instead, the imperial system – developed in this great country in 1824 – is being reintroduced, and we couldn't be happier. The metric system (dreamt up by the French in the eighteenth century) has had its time – now fluid ounces, pounds and stone are back for good.

Drinking pints of bitter, measuring our waist size in inches and driving our (British-made) cars at seventy miles an hour down the left hand side of the motorway – three British pastimes that not only make this country great, but prove that the imperial measurement system is something still close to our hearts. However, if you've been sucked in by the European propaganda machine and are worried about losing your continental metric litres and grams, never fear; we're here to help.

First of all, don't worry about having to throw out all your old recipe books, measuring jugs and scales – all you need to do is memorise a few handy numbers and you'll be able to convert them at will. One fluid ounce is a twentieth of an imperial pint, or 28.4130625 millilitres, while a pound equates to 453.59237 grams. A kilogram is now 0.157473 stone, and a gallon equals 160 imperial ounces and takes up 277.42 inches. Easy, right?

It also means we can welcome back some incredibly useful measurement units that – for reasons unbeknownst to us – have fallen out of favour. A grain is the same as 0.06479891 grams, and was originally used to weigh things like gunpowder, single grains of wheat and diamonds. With foreign imports likely to rise in price, we look forward to grains and drachms (1.7718451953125 grams in case you've forgotten) coming back into fashion and helping us keep a tight eye on soon-to-be-rare ingredients like citrus fruits, French cheese and olive oil.

Cooking for a crowd? Say hello to the hundredweight – or 50.80234544 kilograms if you've still got an outdated metric mind set. And if you're making a big batch of soup, there's no longer the need to painstakingly pour out litre after litre of stock; just start thinking in gallons (or 4.54609 litres). At the other end of the spectrum, try using fluid scruples (1.18387760416 recurring millilitres) to get just the right amount of liquid in your recipe.

As you can see, imperial measurements aren't only quintessentially British; they just make sense. And as one of the first websites to be implementing these changes, we're thrilled to be part of this revolutionary movement to get Britain cooking British recipes with British ingredients using historic British measurements. Say no to overrated European cuisine and embrace the pies, stews and casseroles of our past!

Don't worry!

Our recipes will continue to be listed in metric and imperial – happy April Fools' Day!

UK News Stories

Progress with road traffic signs

While we seem to be some way off achieving our aim of fully metric road signs, there have been some successes in recent years.

In 2011, the Department for Transport (DfT) addressed a bugbear of UKMA's following our lobbying, and replaced the upper case "T" with lower case "t" for tonne. Ironically in this case the UK was actually following the international standard for traffic signs which uses the upper case letter, but we're pleased with the now correct use of "t" for tonne today, and these signs are becoming more common on our roads.

More recently in 2016, UKMA succeeded in persuading the DfT that the imperial-only height, width and length restriction signs should be withdrawn, with metres included on all such signs, either alongside or on a dual unit sign. While clearly our preference is for metric-only signs, this is a positive step in the right direction.

We are now seeing more and more dimension signs around the country including metres.



It is not compulsory for metres to be added to such signs immediately, but new signs should include the metric unit. So if you think your local council should be doing more - if they still erecting height, width or length signs without metres, or they have some really old dimension signs which are due for replacement - you can write to them and ask them to include metres as required under the current regulations, or contact the Committee: secretary@metric.org.uk

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The Sunday Telegraph runs true to form

In the Sunday Telegraph on 2nd April (although appropriately enough, appearing online from the 1st April) a column by Simon Heffer made a call for a return to imperial units in an column blaming the EU for forcing metric units onto the British public.

This resulted in a lot of comments on the Telegraph website, a large number of which disagreed with Mr Heffer's views, including many who were able to distinguish between the EU and the UK's own decision to go metric long before we joined, and who supported leaving the EU but not rowing back on units of measurement.

The reaction on social media included "Why stop at imperial units? Let's campaign for the return of slavery, rickets and the workhouse" and comparisons with returning to the pre-decimal currency system.

UKMA will be keeping a close watch on any developments.

Disposable cups and their packaging not in agreement

One of our readers has reported that on the packaging of a certain brand of plastic cups the volume of each cup is described as "10 fl oz / 295 ml". Yet look at the embossed text on the inner surface near the top of each cup and you only find the volume expressed in litres. Our reader has been unable to work out whether the embossed text on the cups says 0.26 L, 0.28 L or 0.29 L. It certainly does not say 0.295 L. It is clear that the quantity in litres is given to two decimal places but the plastic packaging shows the cup size to 3 decimal places. There is certainly a lack of consistency between the number of litres on the packaging and on the cups. Fluid ounces are not shown in embossed text on the cups, only on the packaging. We suspect the cups are manufactured to a rational metric size but labelled in fluid ounces to allow sale in the US.

Historical view from abroad on how the Great British Measurement Muddle began

Peter Goodyear, an Australian, has provided some information about a 1977 report from the now defunct American National Metric Council. Peter writes:

"In October 1976, the American National Metric Council sent a delegation to Europe to discuss metrication with various parties. NASA's member of the group wrote a report after a meeting with representatives of the British Standards Institution and the UK Metrication Board and representatives of the British and German aerospace industries. His report is clear and concise at nine pages: <http://ntrs.nasa.gov/archive/nasa/casi.ntrs.nasa.gov/19770008274.pdf>

The report, section II, includes the following key points for its intended US readership:

- Metrication must begin with an announcement at the topmost level e.g. government, corporation, industry, company, of the policy to convert to the metric system.
- Metrication touches everyone. It is an across-the-board issue. It is also an opportunity to discard the unneeded and improve the ongoing.
- The British felt that their failure to enact legislation that would make the use of the metric system mandatory, and to establish a series of "M" (metrication) days was a serious error. This has been costly in resources and effort and has protracted the completion of their metrication program."

So it is clear now that the seeds of our current muddle were sown over forty years ago.

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Metrication matters

If you were able to attend the UKMA AGM and Conference in 2007, you will remember the talk by Pat Naughtin, “Metrication in Australia – what we did right”.

Pat passed away in 2012, but his work remains available for reference on his web site, now funded by his partner, Wendy Pomroy. You can find it at: metricationmatters.com.

Pat surprised us all when he revealed, just before the Conference, that the principles upon which the metric system is based were first set out by an English Bishop, John Wilkins, in 1668.

Ginsen ahead of the pack

Weight loss programme advert uses kilograms

Ginsen London advertises a weight loss programme expressing potential weight loss in kilograms using a traditional Chinese method. It is refreshing to find a weight loss programme that does not use stones and pounds (although we have to wince a little at the ‘Kilos’ where ‘kg’ should be!).

Slimming Fast

Infertility
Male and female

Failed with IVF or any other treatment for infertility? We have had many successful cases.
References available.

Lose weight quickly, concentrating on the tummy and bottom, Ginsen experts can help, using a traditional Chinese method, lose up to 3-5 Kilos in one week.

GinSen
Members of BACC - ASCM

King's Rd, SW3 020 7751 5606
Swiss Cottage NW3 020 7586 7348
Bloomsbury WC1 020 7580 1795
www.ginsen-london.com
Email: info@ginsen-london.com

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UKMA's facebook page

This can be found at: https://www.facebook.com/UKMetric/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

The number of 'likes' has grown rapidly:

May 2015 – 228 'likes'. May 2016 – 385 'likes'. May 2017 – 701 'likes'.

DfT's inconsistent conversions across publications

In the *Know Your Traffic Signs* publication, there is only one conversion of metres to imperial units. This can be found on page 92 and relates to emergency refuge areas located at intervals of 500 metres. A conversion in yards is given in brackets.

Compare that to the official *Highway Code* where imperial conversions of metres are always expressed either in feet only or in feet and inches.

In both publications, there are a few places where metres are given without any conversions.

Does number represent mph or km/h speed limit?

An e.on van has a roundel with the text "This vehicle is limited to 70". Large vehicles have speed limiters based on km/h while speed limits on British roads are based on mph. It is not clear whether the number 70 represents 70 mph or 70 km/h; this is the kind of ambiguity that arises from using two competing and incompatible systems of measurement. As this is a safety notice, we might expect the units to be metric.



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You may have missed

Here is a summary of the five most commented articles posted on Metric Views, metricviews.org.uk, since the last edition of UKMA News:

“Supplementary Indications revisited.” Posted on 2 February. 28 comments.

“Global Britain or Imperial isolation.” Posted on 2 April. 19 comments.

“No flight information please – we’re British.” Posted on 23 February. 18 comments.

“Is the EU-US trade agreement doomed?” Posted on 21 January. 12 comments.

“Odd and inconsistent product descriptions.” Posted on 10 April. 10 comments.

Thank you, Phil

Phil Hall has announced his intention to retire from the UKMA Committee this year due to ill health.

Phil was a founder member of UKMA and has served on the Committee since it first met in 2003. His knowledge of IT enabled a web site to be quickly established, and he has maintained it ever since, arranging a seminar for Committee members to assist them in updating content. He could also be relied on to provide the IT hardware needed for presentations at the Annual Conference when facilities at the venue were lacking. He seldom missed a Committee meeting, always being on hand to provide advice on IT matters.

Phil, thank you so much. Your presence on the Committee will be greatly missed. We hope you will long remain an active member of UKMA.

Maintaining and updating our presence on the web will be a topic for discussion at this year’s Annual Conference.



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Can you help?

Gone are the days when a campaigning organisation needed only a newsletter to get its message across.

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

- Responding to calls to appear on broadcast media, for example local radio.
- Assisting with the production of material for uploading to YouTube.
- Editing UKMA News.
- Preparing web-friendly versions of UKMA News for pcs and android devices such as tablets.

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

About 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

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, open anyone who can log onto Facebook.

And finally

There is hardly a mention of Brexit in this edition of UKMA News. It has always been the view of UKMA that UK's conversion from the primary use of imperial units to metric, which began in 1965, and EU membership are unrelated. Indeed it is possible, as the UK leaves the EU, that clarity on this issue will enable the UK to substantially complete its metric changeover, as has happened over the past two centuries in almost every country around the world.