

DUODECIMAL NEWSCAST

Duodecimal Society of Great Britain
106, Leigham Court Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

Year 1, No. 3.

October *1173

SOCIETY NEWS

Our membership is too scattered and a mutually suitable time too difficult to find to hold a general meeting just yet. It is essential we do so as soon as possible when an opportunity is more favourable. Meanwhile, I shall continue to act as Secretary as far as my time permits.

My next task is to write immediately to the Beaver Committee. This study group under the chairmanship of Sir Hugh Beaver, set up by the British Association for the Advancement of Science, has as its terms of reference: "To report on the practicability, implications, consequences, both international and domestic, and the cost of a change-over to the metric [i.e. decimal metric] system or the decimalization of weights, measures, and coinage by the United Kingdom". I intend to point out the advantages of base twelve and its practical applications to a metric system without advocating any particular system. If anyone wishes to give me any advice on this (or anything else, of course, for that matter) I shall weigh it carefully.

The organization, activities and publicity of the Society will continue as at present. Much will need to be done individually, in particular as far as research, publicity and recruitment are concerned. I have had several suggestions for number symbols and for metric systems which I am collating in preparation for our research and standards committee when formed. Some have expressed willingness to write to newspapers and magazines. (I reproduced in the last 'Duodecimal Newscast' my contribution to 'The Times'. See also under the heading in this 'Newscast' "WHAT OTHERS SAY", 'The Economist'.) I ask all members to see what they can do or continue to do on these lines.

We need a gimmick. Can anyone suggest a simple decimal-duodecimal converter? Has anyone won a fortune on the football pools with a permutation duodecimally calculated? Will some expert on the digital computer explain to us the intricacies of how duodecimal numbers are easier than decimal to convert to the binary scale? Will some printer say whether book pagination would be easier duodecimally? What about a Society symbol?

It is necessary to have a reprint of the leaflet we are using. Instead of being merely copied, it has one or two little alterations. Three copies are enclosed with this 'Newscast' for members' use. There are more if wanted.

Our forum will still be this 'Duodecimal Newscast' published as occasion and material permit. We can all use it to discuss ideas and keep up-to-date. There is no need to say how much letters or articles are needed.

CORRESPONDENCE

DUODECIMALS START AT SCHOOL

Sir, --During the first world war, I spent most of my school days at a Prep. School in Exeter. Norwood School, the Reverend R. N. Bird. I remember him, or one of his assistant masters explaining the wherefore of the decimal system because originally numbers were counted on the fingers. He then said it was his one quarrel with the Creator that he had not made us with six fingers on each hand, and explaining the advantages of the duodecimal system. He assured us that in due course a duodecimal system would be used. Possibly one of your other members had a similar experience.

The Master so impressed this system on me that it has always been at the back of my mind. This was revived by a broadcast some time in the late thirties, and at last came to fruition by your letter to 'The Times', and the formation of what I am sure will be our great Society.

G. L. ADNEY.

185, Piccadilly, W.1., *E August 1173

[Editor's comment: The Creator did quite right in giving us four fingers and an opposable thumb: so that we can count a dozen on each hand by touching with the thumb in turn the tips, middles and bases of each finger. Although our North Indo-European forefathers knew this, it is man's fault when he misuses God's gift and counts only five.]

When passing through Paris in August, I telephoned M. Jean Essig, author of 'Douze notre dix futur' and had an interesting talk with him. He is giving very careful thought to the formation of a French duodecimal society.

The Duodecimal Society of America had a successful Meeting of the Board and Annual Meeting on *24 May 1173 in the Carnegie Endowment International Center, New York, appropriately opposite the United Nations Headquarters. I should like to mention a few things from the report in the latest 'Duodecimal Bulletin'. The last year has been "a year of continued progress", notably in schools. "We extend heartiest welcome and good wishes to our companion society. It already has our eager co-operation". Their officers have aroused duodecimal interest abroad during extensive travels in Australia, New Zealand, China, Japan, the Pacific islands and the Western states and by means of Esperanto. One can buy duodecimal slide rules from them, produced by Tom Linton, for \$ 5. Owing to the absence of Mr. H. C. Churchman, Mr. Beard read a summary of his paper and the meeting ended in friendly informality.

Mr. Ralph H. Beard, the Secretary of the Duodecimal Society of America has joined our Society, with a very generous contribution for which we are most grateful indeed.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

'The Duodecimal Bulletin', August *1173, of the Duodecimal Society of America, page *E. I think the comment of our American colleagues deserves verbatim repetition:

"The Duodecimal Society of Great Britain

The new banner above was unfurled to the British skies as the letterhead of our new British companion in the work of educating the world in the use of dozenals in April 1959. [This was the first time I had used letterheaded paper when writing to America, as I had used the G.P.O. air letter before. I first used the title on *25 October 1172].

In many ways, England, "the mother of parliaments," is also the mother of duodecimals. Many British names illumine the long roll of those who have recognized the superiority of the dozen, -- and Britain has been the outstanding opponent of decimalization for many generations.

Both England and America suffer from inadequate integration of their standards of measure. Only two practical remedies are available for them:

- (P) The weak adoption of the French metric system, with the inescapable confinement into only partial systematization, and to a stultifying system of numbers; -- or
- (Q) The stimulating choice of re-basing their numbers upon the ideal dozen, and, -- by modifying their fine, naturally-evolved standards of measure only slightly, -- establish the consummate dozenal metric system, with its relaxing flexibility and complete applicability to all measurement.

There is a creeping contagion in the world for conforming to the decimal base in currency and measures. Only energetic initiative and purposed organization can halt it. Lazy minds and limited visions must be awakened to the new freedom and expanded horizons of the dozen system.

This is a difficult undertaking. But an undaunted group of our British cousins have taken it on. They have now "put their foot in the road" that leads to a brighter tomorrow for all men.

Blow the Whistles! Ring the Bells! Dance in the Street! We hail their coming into the fine comradeship of the pugnacious pioneers who fight for the new freedom of mind and method."

'The Economist', 5 September, *1173, page *723, price *1;6s

There is an extract headed 'NO DECIMAL COINAGE' with the essentials of an article in 'The Economist' a hundred years before (3 September *10XE). It is well worth-while reading this forthright defence of the twelve-pence shilling with a lucid explanation of the indisputable mathematical reason. My comment on the article is in 'The Economist' 2 October *1173.

'Newsletter', August *1173, issued by the Phonetic Alphabet Association (*86, Dalmain Road, S.E.*23). I quote an article in its entirety. It has lead to enquiries or to membership. Mr. G. W. Shipway, 29, Cockington Lane, Paignton, Devon, has an interesting prototype duodecimal standards system.

"DUODECIMALS [I].... though Basic English needs an English alphabet as urgently as any other sort of English the two reforms had better be kept separate'. -- Shaw/ That advice applies, perhaps, even more so to the reforms of letters and of numbers. However, one of our members, Mr. B. R. Bishop, who has recently founded the Duodecimal Society of Great Britain, points out that there is some scope for co-operation between our two movements. One sphere of activity in which, he suggests

alphabet designers and arithmetic reformers might well combine is in the designing of new number symbols, since our present ones are as illogical as our alphabetic characters. It had not struck me before that there was any disadvantage in having completely arbitrary numerals, but if a duodecimal notation is to be launched in competition with the present decimal notation, then it would certainly be less confusing to have an entirely new set of symbols, in which case some logic in their design, if this can be achieved whilst keeping the symbols both simple and distinctive, would be all to the good. Our irregular systems of currency and measures in this country are often attacked by people who advocate the metric system to bring us in line with most other countries, but the number 12 has twice as many divisors as 10, so that proposals to put our 12 pence and 12 inches into decimal straitjackets have always met with rational opposition. At the same time, a place value system of fractions is far simpler than vulgar fractions. By changing over to a duodecimal system of numbers we should have the best of both worlds. Shaw described duodecimals as "a coming reform", and supported the cause with almost as much fervour as he did that of a phonetic alphabet. If you would like to have further particulars, write direct to &c."

'The Calendar for the Modern Age' by Miss Elisabeth Achelis, published *1173 by Nelson, price \$4. This illuminating book discusses the story of the present calendar and the World Calendar Association's Recommendations for a rational year of four *77-day fixed quarters.

It has one reference of particular interest to duodecimalists on page +39: "... in 1937 the League [of Nations]... achieved one highly important result, it eliminated the 13-month plan. The 13-month calendar was abandoned, because of the many drastic changes involved. The indivisibility of the number 13 was another factor as well as the conviction that 'the number 12 is better adapted to human habits and needs' (Footnote to the quotation Camille Flammarion, founder and president of the French Astronomical Society)".

'Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language', *105E by Samuel Johnson LL.D. "DUODECUPLE adj (du and decuplus Latin) Con/i/ting of twelves Gri/e/ius, a learned Polander, endeavours to e/tablish the duodecuple proportion among the Jews, by comparing /ome pa//ages of /cripture together -- Arbuthnot" "DOZEN n./ (douzaine, French) the number twelve. It is /eldom u/ed but on light occa/sions.

We cannot lodge and board a dozen or fourteen gentlewomen, but we keep a bawdyhou/e /traight -- Shak/peare
That the Indian figs bear /uch huge leaves, or delicate fruit, I could never find; yet I have travelled a dozen miles together under them. -- Raleigh
By putting twelve units together, we have the complex idea of a dozen -- Locke
The number of di//enters was /omething under a dozen with them -- Swift"

"DODECATEMONION n./ (δωδεκα μεμονιον) The twelfth part
'Tis dodecatemonion thus de/crib'd: -- Thrice ten degrees, which every /ign contains, -- Let twelve exhau/t, that not one part remains; -- It follows /treight, that every twelfth confines -- Two whole and one half portion of the /igns" -- Greech

D U O D E C I M A L L I B R A R Y

A library of works referring to the principle of base twelve is an essential to a Society professing those principles. I therefore ask members to let me have any copies of such books, periodicals or leaflets to start a library here. If you see a publication for sale, second-hand for example, you may care to buy it for our library. Some members who have published things may be able to let us have a copy.

Doubtless some people are reluctant to surrender books indefinitely, but are willing to loan them to other members. Also some may know of a particular work in a public library. Please let me know and I can advise others through the 'Newscast'.

Whilst on the subject of books, may I remind you that publications, including those listed in our leaflet or mentioned in 'Newscasts', can be ordered through the Society.

F I N A N C E

In this general assessment of our Society's position after a year, it is as well to mention our financial resources. We now have a healthy credit of *345;96 shillings. (In the statement I use the shilling for convenience as the fundamental

coinage unit, pence becoming represented as a fractional, so that *0;8 shilling is 8d. and *0;06 shilling a halfpenny. Expressed in non-duodecimal figures our credit is £24 : 5s. : 9¹/₂d.) This statement does not take into account the cost of this 'Duodecimal Newscast'.

Although this credit is healthy, we need it even more so before we attempt anything too ambitious. Leaflets and 'Newscasts' will probably continue to be duplicated instead of being printed (unless anyone can offer us printing facilities). Advertising must still be through personal contacts and letters, which is in any case more effective than formal advertisements.

| | | <u>shillings</u> | <u>shillings</u> |
|---|--------|------------------|------------------|
| Subscriptions | CREDIT | | |
| Ordinary members | ..... | 130 | |
| Young members | ..... | 16 | |
| Subscribing supporters | ..... | 23 | 169 |
| Donations | ..... | 240;4 | 240;4 |
| TOTAL | ..... |  | <u>3X9;4</u> |
| | DEBIT | | |
| Postage | ..... | 1X;76 | 1X;76 |
| Reproduction | | | |
| Headed paper (106 printed + 42 plain) | ..... | D;6 | |
| Membership forms (42) | ..... | 3;6 | |
| Leaflet (86) | ..... | X;0 | |
| 'Duodecimal Newscasts' (55) | ..... | <u>19;1</u> | 3X;1 |
| Stationery - Envelopes (186 small, 106 large) | ..... | 6;X | 6;X |
| TOTAL | ..... |  | <u>63;66</u> |
| BALANCE - Credit | ..... |  | <u>345;96</u> |

MEMBERSHIP

To end this edition of the 'Duodecimal Newscast' as promised in the last one, I am taking the first step in introducing members to each other by listing names and addresses. It is up to you to further the acquaintanceship. I have found it convenient to have three grades of membership -- Ordinary Members, Younger Members (under *19 years or at school or college) and Subscribing Supporters (those who for any reason support the work of our Society but who wish to remain anonymous or do not wish formally to become a member: they receive the same benefits as other members)

Ordinary Members -- total *13

| | |
|---|--|
| Mr. G. L. Adeney, | 185, Piccadilly, W.1. |
| Prof. A. C. Aitken, MA, DSc, FRS, &c., | 74, Trinity Road, Edinburgh, 5. |
| Mr. R. H. Beard, | 20, Carlton Place, Staten Island, 4, New York, U.S.A. |
| Mr. J. R. Biggs, BAI(TCD), | Groves, Peasmarsh, Sussex. |
| Mr. B. R. Bishop, IM, | 106, Leigham Court Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. |
| Mr. C. T. A. Bishop, | 106, Leigham Court Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. |
| Mr. A. W. S. Brown, MA, | St. George's School, Windsor Castle, Berkshire. |
| Mr. A. Chilton, | Riverdale, Ashford Road, Bakewell, Derbyshire. |
| Mr. B. C. Haggett, BSc, | Thorpe Bay Hotel, Thorpe Bay, Essex. |
| Mr. C. N. Jeffries, IDS, | 35, Greenhill Road, Mosely, Birmingham, 13. |
| Mr. J. H. Johnston, JP, BSc (Eng), MICE (retd), | Orphir House, Orphir House, Orphir, Orkney. |
| Mr. L. A. Foulden, FIAS, FRS, MIM, | 18, Melrose Avenue, Yate, Bristol. |
| Sir Lennox Russell, | Crooksbury Hurst, The Sands, Farnham, Surrey. |
| Mr. P. Ruston, | 10, Glenmore Road, N.W.3. |
| Mr. O. R. Tucker, | The Cottage, High Street, Braunston, Near Rugby, Warwickshire. |

Young Members -- total 3

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Mr. R. B. Carnaghan | 21, Harford Drive, Watford, Herts. |
| Mr. J. Evershed | Castlandhill House, Rosyth, Fife. |
| Mr. C. J. McMullen | St. Vincent Division, Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, Devon. |

Subscribing Supporters -- total 3