

The Plugborough Press

News and views from the heart of England – Issue 3

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Decimalisation of British currency

On Monday 15 February, 1971, The United Kingdom converted to a decimal system of currency. The old system, with three essential components, was known as pounds, shillings, and pence, or £sd, and comprised the pound (£, originally from the Latin *libra*), shilling (originally from the Latin *solidus*), and the penny (originally from the Latin *denarius*). The new currency became £p. The £ sign and name was retained. The penny initially became New Pence, but later became pence , or just pee. Under the new system, there were 100 pence to the pound. The shilling dropped out of use.

Some old coins, like the halfpenny and the half crown were withdrawn well before Decimalisation Day. Some of the new coins retained the shape and size of their old currency counterparts, and were actually introduced into circulation two or three years before Decimalisation Day. This act of preparation reduced the number of new coins that had to be introduced on Decimalisation Day itself, and allowed the public to become familiar with them. A fifty pence coin was introduced in October 1969, and the old ten shilling note was withdrawn a year later. Great publicity was given in advance of Decimalisation Day, with TV and music stars enlisted to perform in public service films and TV programmes to ease the introduction of the new coins and currency.

Banks were allocated stocks of the new coins in advance, and they were issued to shops and businesses to allow change to be given immediately after the changeover. Banks closed on the Wednesday before Decimalisation Day to allow all outstanding cheques and transactions to be completed in the old money, and customer accounts to be converted – manually, there were no computers then – into the new currency. They remained closed until Decimalisation Day morning.

Decimalisation Day itself went remarkably smoothly. I was at Art College at that time, and I clearly remember going to get my morning coffee in the canteen, handing over my cash, and receiving this strange change in return. Everybody was very self-conscious, and stood around making silly, embarrassed jokes about new pee. There were inevitably criticisms around the country. Many traders were suspected of profiteering by instantly raising prices to round numbers in the new currency. Vending machines got jammed when people tried to use new pennies instead of old sixpences. Older people were very confused by the whole business, and of course, with the arrogance of youth, we were all very scathing about their difficulties with such a simple conversion between old and new.

The new system very quickly became familiar, and everybody soon realised how much easier it was to handle the new currency compared with the old system. Here's what we had to contend with in the years before decimalisation:

½ penny

written as ½d. Usually called a ha'penny

1 penny	1d, often called a copper
3 pennies coin	A thrupenny bit, 3d. Issued in the form of a thick, yellowish, 12 sided coin
6 pennies	6d, sixpence, often called a tanner
12 pennies	1 shilling, known as a bob
2 shillings	24 pennies, written as 2/-, and called a florin, or a two bob bit
2½ shillings	30 pennies, called half a crown, written as 2/6d
10 shillings	120 pennies, often called ten bob, written as 10/-, issued as a note
1 pound	240 pennies, 20 shillings, written as £1, and often called a quid, nicker, or oncer
1 pound 10 shillings	Not a denomination as such, but a common amount, referred to as thirty bob

In writing, compound prices were written using all three units, so that you might buy a new coat for five pounds, seven shillings and fourpence, written as £5-7s-4d. The shop assistant would say, "Thank you, sir, [that's how they spoke in those days] that will be five pounds, seven and four."

As you can imagine, working out change from £6 would require a PhD in mathematics. There were no electronic calculators or cash tills then. As a matter of interest, the value of £1 in 1971 is equivalent to £13-30 in 2017. Prices are 1229.5% higher now.

Social media

There are, believe it or not, some people who never use social media, and who are very uneasy, not to say contemptuous, about the prevalence of smart phones and the addictive use of them by masses of the population. Sir Hugo Ludd, a Plugshire farmer, is one. "I do have a smart phone, because it is very useful for my wife and me to share locations when I am out and about on the farm, but if I want to speak to her, then I just wait until I'm back at home and I can talk to her face to face. I'm fed up with walking through our villages and towns and bumping into people with their heads down, not looking where they are going, more concerned with texting their friends than taking in the beauty and diversity of their surroundings. They'd rather look at a picture of the English countryside on their smart phone than look at the real thing in front of their noses."

As for abuse of personal data, Sir Hugo went on, "It's one thing, accepting that we all live in an online world, to understand that personal data inevitably gets into the hands of the major corporations. We can do our best to protect and preserve our privacy, but how can it be completely avoided? But it is quite another thing to deliberately and willingly post private information on social media for the whole world to see. Why would anyone want to do that?"

Foreign news

Fallax albion!

Is alias nomen id du modis co. Im jactantur consuetae ad summopere. Bono via iis rei prae unde quid haud alia. Cap non quid volo nudi. Egisse matura sua duo unitas somnio pulses sed

deponi. Mo conformes ob consuetae ut opiniones ne. Habuimus curantes ut rerumque rationes to.

Mentemque persuadet ei opportune de aggredior proponere. Imaginabar objectioni indefinite ne ab propositio. Ex vera iste quam mo mihi fere post. Rogo meae imo bono aër vidi non sint. In refutant ea utrimque extensio re tractare ex rationem. Dear Mum, I'm here in Gaul with my mates in the Sixth Legion. Dixi omni quas re se poni is eram. Una mundo tangi sub tam capax porro vel talia sonum. Dulcedinem praecipuum vox desiderant hic hauriantur sed tractandae.

Summam pudeat capram quo sim nullos vestra exigat. Denegassem at varietates et ii durationis si. Membrorum cogitatio mox ima mea rea concilium. Fal utilius confuse mea aliquot quidnam totaque capacem. We're having a really great time, killing Gauls and looting villages. Alterum quiddam ejusdem ex ne vi exigere ii referam. Productus fortassis sim perspicue via abducerem. Evadit perire docere quanta angeli id certam si. Ab negari at me quarum oculis ipsius ii revera. Nudi quod erat dem age. Nota mali esse mea ecce suo omni.

Im ad aequare diverso mirabar dignati alienum praemia in. Inscitiae veritatis mentemque judicabam declarare co ei. Hic creatione vis cui praestari scientiis quocunque nonnullae nec. Ex ad re simplicia vi animalium existeret affirmare reliquiae immittant. Some Gauls are strong fighters, but they are hungry and not as well equipped as we are. Admi in ante olim me. Fas existenti generales credibile rea. Et in ii certas to tantum volunt primas tantas vixque.

Dixi sunt apud regi seu uno jam casu. Obnoxius me vi revocari tenebras si. Numerum effectum ad is fallere necesse alteram. I'm told that Caesar wants to attack Britannia next, but we'd have to cross the Oceanus Britannicus first, and that might be tricky. Rom possit numeri sic demens sui. Data gi haud agam olim ex esse. Ea quidni fallit gi scient ut. Necessitas offerendum is ea blandisque ut extensarum ab notionibus. Una reliqua cum allatis ponamus ejusque.

Tempusque probandam contentae magnitudo in ha. Is circulum id se tractatu tractare. Animae gi maxima exigui is figere id si. There's been a rumour in the Legion that some Carthaginian general has crossed the Alps with some elephants, and that he's heading for Rome. Studebunt corporeis geometras im tentassem ne acquirere. At occasio dispari alicubi humanae usitata re. Luce hic eae ideo novi hoc dico sit erit. Incertas im connivet to totumque imperiti memoriae. An ei voce ut quod nunc fere tale veat.

Tactio sequor audita primae mentis sex cap. At rerumque credamus ex ostendam et timerent exsurgit ac. Manifestum perficitur perspicuum ac continetur ut to si objectioni. Audita fuerit du videam quodam ab de figere vi. We might have to march back sharpish to head him off at the Via Appia. Nocturna superque at exemplum im cogitans de. Ut an credidique diversorum appellatur si. Sum res agam cito est fide.

Res dem agam more ima jure rea. An ab rantem ut et potius gaudet. Ei scientiis videretur ea objective nitebatur in me. Tantumque mo ac proponere eminenter. It's a good job all roads lead to Rome, eh? Cum hos putandum concedam hic supponit commoveo. Love and best wishes to you and Dad, your son Circus Maximus. Praestari an similibus credendas priusquam perspicue improviso re ac. Agi praesertim aliquoties negationem sap commendare repugnemus frequenter est. Imaginabar parentibus imaginaria expectanti ii et confirmari.

I am serious; but my name's not Shirley

“It’s not ‘is fault. ‘e could of been a judge or anything, but no teacher never learned ‘im nuffin’ at that school wot ‘e went to. Instead, them judges ‘ave put ‘im in prisons all ‘is life, when all ‘e was doing was trying to bring up ‘is three lovely lads to join him in his family business. I’m going to sue that old codger wot ‘it ‘im. You can’t go round smashing people with no frying pans when all they’re doing is trying to earn an honest living by stealing other peoples’ stuff. My brother Benny just got in wiv a bad crowd. ‘E’s the victim ‘ere.”

The BBC was talking to Brenda Thug, the younger sister of Benny Thug, currently in Plugborough Hospital, after a blow to the head with a frying pan. Thug, 32, of 15 Gas House Road, Plugborough, was confronted by the owner of the house, 79 year old pensioner Mr Hugh Blameless-Mann, after Thug had broken in. Police say the front door of the house at 23 Acacia Lane, Plugborough, had been levered open by Thug and an unknown accomplice, each wielding a length of iron drainpipe. On being confronted by the owner, whose sick wife was sleeping upstairs, Thug started to threaten Mr Blameless-Mann with a screwdriver. While the accomplice ran upstairs to look for valuables, Mr Blameless-Mann backed into the kitchen, and is alleged to have grabbed a heavy frying pan from the stove, and swung it at Thug’s head, rendering him semi-conscious. The pan is now known to have contained 3 sausages, an egg, and a piece of black pudding. The pan and its contents are being examined by forensic officers. The accomplice escaped, and is now being sought by Plugborough Police. Thug is recovering after minor head surgery, 36 stitches, burns, and severe concussion.

“It’s not his fault,” said a neighbour. “All he was doing was trying to protect his own house and look after his sick wife, who has been ill with a dicky gall bladder for the past month. This man broke in, threatened Hugh with a screwdriver, frightening him badly, in his own home. Who did the police arrest when they turned up? Not the burglar for breaking and entering and threatening behaviour, that’s for sure. No, they arrested Hugh. It’s not right, and I’m going to take this matter up with my local MP”

Police were called to the scene after a concerned neighbour called 999, and promptly arrested Mr Blameless-Mann for grievous bodily harm, while apologising to Mr Thug for Mr Blameless-Mann’s thoughtless and anti-social behaviour.

“We are not at fault in this case,” the Chief Commissioner of Plugborough Police Service stated at the press conference. He went on to say that his staff were obliged to consider all sides of the situation, before arresting violent homeowners rather than potentially harmless perpetrators of minor, trivial intrusion and mildly threatening behaviour, especially if they are possessed of clean and unblemished records.

It now transpires that Benny Thug has lived a life of crime. He has never held down a regular job. He left school at the age of 13, after a string of suspensions and removals for bad behaviour and violence in class, to work in his father’s scrap metal firm, along with his five uncles. He has spent many years in prison. The sister’s lament that Benny got in with a bad crowd is certainly true, but the police have long had their eyes on the Thug family for a string of robberies as well as scams against very vulnerable elderly men and women in the area.

“It’s not young Benny’s fault, “ claimed Jack Classwar, the Labour MP. “We are all trying to create a fair and just society which finds a safe space for people of all classes and colours, as long as they are not rich Tory scum or belonging to some outlandish religious group. The very fact that Benny was forced into a life of crime just goes to show how these heartless right-wing government cuts are affecting the very poorest and most vulnerable in our society. When Labour form the next government we will make sure that victims like the Benny Thugs of this world are treated as equal citizens, and given every opportunity to live a full and sharing life, and we will do this by squeezing every last penny out of the rich in the form of carefully and fairly targeted taxation and massive amounts of government borrowing, paid for by future generations of those same rich Tory scum and dishonest bankers living off the backs of honest citizens like Benny Thug...” “...What’s that – what about poor Mr Blameless-Mann? Whose home was broken into and his sick wife frightened out of her wits? Well, the future Labour government, in true Socialist tradition, doesn’t believe in the concept of private property, but believes everybody should live in identical drab concrete tower blocks owned by the government and paid for out of the proceeds of monopolistic, uncompetitive nationalised industries!! So come the revolution, in a perfect, equal, just, and fair society, Mr Blameless-Mann wouldn’t have a house of his own, so nobody would have broken into it and burgled him, would they? A cruel and heartless crime certainly has been committed here, and poor Benny Thug is the victim of it. Mr Blameless-Mann is a Tory party member, so it serves him right. We will eliminate these cruel injustices! The Labour Party, under our glorious leader’s divine guidance, is going to make a society for the Benny, not the Hugh!”

(Surely you can’t be serious! You can’t use such an outrageous pun. It’s criminal! This article will NOT be included in this issue. Ed.)

Potholes

You may remember the last issue of Plugborough Press, where we reported on the revolutionary diet scheme introduced by Dr V Thin at Plugborough Hospital. Fat people were being recommended to lie in bed longer in the morning, watching golf on television. This would result in severe boredom, more sleep, and, as a result, they would have less time to eat sugary and fatty foods, and would lose weight.

In the fast moving, not to say trendy, world of diet and weight loss, things are progressing. In the UK reports have been put out that the National Association for Social Temperance and Youthfulness is recommending that, in order for people to lose weight, potholes in roads and pavements should be filled in. This is of particular relevance in the UK this spring. The long, cold winter has resulted in huge numbers of potholes in the nation’s roads and pathways. Apparently, people are put off exercise because roads and pathways are too rough and unpleasant to walk on, let alone run or cycle on. NASTY claim that if the potholes were filled in, people would - suddenly, miraculously - have the urge to exercise more, and lose weight. It’s true! Perhaps smooth and unbroken roads and pavements are all the inner, thin self is crying out for! At last! Now, with smooth and unblemished surfaces, I can get the healthy exercise I have been denying myself for all these years without all the effort of avoiding those nasty holes in the road.

Professor Gethin-Quickly, consultant nutritionist at Plugborough Hospital – and a colleague of the aforementioned Dr Thin – disagrees with this assessment. “If people want to lose weight they’d be better advised to get off their backsides, get out there with a pick and

shovel, and fill the damned potholes in themselves. At least they'd be getting some exercise, rather than just sitting watching golf. By the way, I watched this year's Masters from start to finish. Didn't Bunker-Green play well?"

The Plugborough Press Guide to Cricket – part 1

Cricket is a summer game played between two teams, or sides, of 11 players. It is normally played outdoors in daylight, on grass surfaces. A game of cricket is often referred to as a match. A cricket match consists of a minimum of two innings. In each innings one side bats, while the other side fields. The batting side attempts to score as many runs as possible while restricting the number of wickets that are taken, while the fielding side attempts to take as many wickets as they can while restricting the runs scored by the batting side.

A coin is tossed to determine which captain has the choice of batting or fielding first. For the duration of their innings, the batting side must always have two batsmen in play, or 'in' at the same time, so an innings is completed when 10 batsman are out. The batting side are then 'all out'. An innings can also be completed if the batting side's captain decides the team has enough runs, and declares the team's innings closed.

At the end of the innings, a new one is started. The former batting side now becomes the fielding side, and the former fielding side becomes the batting side. The side batting second attempts to pass the run score of the side batting first to win the game.

Because each side takes its turn at batting and fielding, there is no point in cricket where one side or the other can be said to be winning or losing. The actual result is only achieved at the final point in the game. The winner of a cricket match is the side that scores most runs. If the side batting second scores more runs than the side batting first, then they win the game. If the side fielding second takes all 10 wickets before the side batting second passes their run total, then they win the game.

The duration of a game of cricket varies. Some formats are played within an overall time limit, with no restrictions placed on the length of each side's innings. Other formats allow each side an innings of a fixed length, by determining the maximum number of overs that each side can bowl. In each case, the result of the game is determined at the end of the time period, or when all innings have been completed, unless a result has already been obtained by one side or the other.

Cricket matches are not always won or lost. In cricket, a draw occurs when neither side can force victory. If the side batting second are unable to pass the score of the side batting first without losing all 10 wickets, the match is a draw. A tie occurs if the two sides have the same number of runs at the end of the game, but this is quite rare.

Umpires officiate at each match, making sure the spirit and laws of the game are adhered to. They also adjudicate decisions as and when they are required.

Look for the next informative instalment in the next issue of Plugborough Press.

Am I hearing right?

As a result of Meniere's Disease, I have suffered quite severe deafness over the years. It is not 'simple' deafness either, if, indeed there is any such thing. Rather than general loss of high or low frequencies, which, I imagine, are fairly easily remedied with digital hearing aids, MD causes random destruction of the hair cells that pick up air vibration, via the bones of the middle ear, that the brain turns into usable sounds. The result for me – and the same probably applies to most MD deafness – is large amounts of distortion and fragmentation. Sounds are never clear. There are always little shrieks and whistles attached to any sound, often great degrees of muffling. It often sounds like the old days when we used to have to listen to Radio Luxembourg using a poorly tuned valve radio, where the signal would fade in and out, with frequent whoops and shrieks as if the tuner knob could never stick on the right setting. And listening via a poor telephone connection at that. Despite the best service from either NHS or private audiologists, and the most delicate and sensitive digital hearing aids, we all have to accept that our hearing is irreversibly damaged. We'll never again hear our children or spouses speak clearly to us. It is a life of constant effort and concentration.

For me, one of the biggest and saddest losses was the ability to hear music clearly. I can still hear most of the sounds through my hearing aid, but it is out of tune, discordant, and usually plain unpleasant. A cacophony of sound, and it is normally better to accept this and not make the effort. A sad loss indeed.

I have seen recent reports of a deaf woman attempting to sue the promoter of a concert because she couldn't hear the lyrics clearly, and an interpreter wasn't provided. What on earth did she expect? Sometimes you just have to accept that there are some things you can no longer do, rather than expect everything to be provided for you. If she is deaf, why on earth did she waste money on buying tickets for something she should have known would be less than successful for her? We all have to learn to deal with disappointment or our own limitations. If we are deaf, we don't simply have the 'right' to expect perfect performances.

British Rail – an old joke

There is an old joke about railways and tickets. It was something Phil Customer saw when he was a boy. It was actually a little cartoon, in Punch magazine, which Phil saw while waiting his turn in the dentist's chair. A man is climbing into the railway carriage, with a huge smile of triumphant glee on his face. He is turned towards the reader, saying: "At last - I've cheated British Rail! I've bought a return ticket – and I'm not coming back!"

These days, Phil doesn't do much travelling by train, but he does remember cheating the railways when he was a schoolboy. He lived in Rochester, and had schoolfriends who lived in Longfield, three stations – Stone Street, Meopham, and Longfield - down the line from Rochester Station. Phil used to enjoy going to Longfield Youth Club on a Friday night with his friends, and the easiest way to get there was by train. He very quickly discovered that neither Longfield nor Stone Street stations were manned in the evenings, so what Phil did was to buy a return ticket to Stone Street from Rochester, and simply stay on the train until he arrived at Longfield. He got out there but nobody checked his ticket. Phil enjoyed his evening of table tennis and chatting to the Longfield girls, and then, later, returned to Longfield station to travel home. Getting off back at Rochester, he would pass his Rochester / Stone Street return ticket to the ticket officer at the gate, and walk home having saved a shilling or

two on the fare. At the time, British Rail was nationalised, a dinosaur industry, hopelessly inefficient, terminally monolithic and monopolistic, but Phil still suspects his weekly subterfuge was a large factor in its demise.

A killer vocabulary

It's just possible you may never have heard of Wikie. This would not be a big surprise, because Wikie is a whale. Actually, a killer whale. He is 14 years old, and lives in Marineland at Antibes, in France. He is quite famous, though, because he can talk. Admittedly, Wikie doesn't have a large vocabulary, although, in the wild, killer whales are known to have extensive ranges of sounds, with differing accents and cultures unique to their own 'pods'.

Wikie was trained to recognise and repeat eleven sounds made by his trainer, and six independent judges were on hand to assess the success of the experiment. The judges said 'The subject's ... accuracy is ... remarkable as he was able to accomplish it in response to sounds presented in-air and not in-water, the species' usual medium for acoustic communication.'

So pleased were Marineworld with his progress, that Wikie was booked to appear as a guest on a quiz show on Radio Antibes, set against 14 year old humans. It was no contest. The teenagers were woefully inarticulate, and their brief grunts simply could not compete with the range of vocabulary exhibited by Wikie.

Plugborough Press understand that Wikie has been given her own prime-time talk show on French TV, although producers are concerned that such a show might be too 'high-brow' for the general public.

...and talking of Wales

There are as yet unconfirmed reports that the Welsh government is going to introduce a major policy change for very young children. The UK government is currently looking into how the voting process can be updated and brought into the 21st century. Alongside this initiative, the Boundary Commission is finalising details of a proposal to redraw the constituency boundaries to make all constituencies more equal in terms of population, in order to reduce the bias that is known to exist because of a large number of smaller city constituencies.

Many options are being considered on both of these important developments, but the Welsh government, in line with their recent proposal to allow children as young as seven to have a say on the Brexit process, is rumoured to be considering allowing pre-nursery children to vote on the electoral and boundary changes in Wales. A local councillor said that it was important to get toddlers involved in current affairs. "It is all about their future", she said, "when they eventually reach it."