

DUODECIMAL NEWSCAST

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

July 1973

I should like members to make use of the 'Duodecimal Newscast', which will be issued as circumstances require until we have a regular journal, to let others know of their ideas, embryonic or gigantic. I shall use it to keep members informed of activities inside and outside of the Society. I shall also make referenda through it, as in this edition. Please forgive me if I do not reply individually to each answer to such referenda, although I shall try to if time allows me.

General Meeting

I have already mentioned to some members and supporters that I am trying to arrange a meeting of us all. Things are made difficult by the fact that we live in all parts of the country.

London seems to be the most suitable place; one evening in late August or early September, the most convenient time. Will anyone who could be in London about that time to attend the meeting let me know what dates they can best arrange and I shall choose the one that fits in best with the most. Can anyone recommend, or even put at our disposal a meeting place, please? I hope that with friends we should number about a dozen.

This is the programme that comes tentatively to my mind and I should like suggestions for how to fill it out:

1. Organization of the Society
election of President and Committees
grades of membership
2. Activities of the Society
papers to learned bodies
standards and research
3. Publicity
explanatory leaflet and other publications
journal

When the details are fixed, I shall issue another 'Newscast' telling when, where and what. I shall also ask those members unable to attend to write their opinions so that they can be read out.

Publicity

As a result of my letter to 'The Times' on St. George's Day I have had eleven people write to me direct, none of them with any adverse comment, and five more people have joined.

For those who did not see this letter I reproduce it as it appeared. The article to which I refer, entitled 'Inch and Penny under Fire', makes interesting reading.

" FLEXIBLE DOZEN

To the Editor of The Times

Sir, - Let us rationalize and regularize our inch and lb. system - by exploiting its natural duodecimal basis, not by putting it into a decimal straitjacket. This duodecimal basis is seen in most of the units mentioned in your expansive article on April 20, for instance our lengths have 12 inches in a foot; our currency has 12 pence in a shilling; the year has 12 months, the day two dozen hours. Indeed, there is much to be inferred from your comment: "Considerably more than half the world's engineering production is, in fact, in inch sizes."

The great majority of mathematicians are agreed that the most practical base for a system of counting and units is the number 12 with twice as many divisors as 10. Some few differ as to whether we could generally adopt such a system in face of the old, in much the same way as just over 400 years ago some hesitated to use Arabic instead of Roman numerals.

Being more rational, arithmetic in schools would be easier, not merely on account of the systemized tables of weights and measures, but also on account of the easier calculations. Divisibility by 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and even 11 is easier to recognize. The most commonly used fractions are easier (e.g. two-thirds of a foot is eight inches; two-thirds of a metre 6,666 ... decimetres). Even the duodecimal multiplication table is more easily memorable than the decimal (which at present illogically reaches to 12 x 12). These are but a few elementary examples; mathematicians and technicians find similar advantages in higher fields.

Regularizing our units would make easier any conversion, mental or more especially mechanical, to other regular systems, such as the decimal metric for commercial or technical purposes. By extending the fundamentally duodecimal basis of our units of measurements the change will not be quite so drastic as a supplantation to the decimal system: yet we shall be adopting a system more efficient than the decimal. We shall be perfecting the unconscious wisdom of our tradition.

Yours faithfully,

B.R. BISHOP, The Duodecimal
Society of Great Britain,
106, Leigham Court Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex."

Book Review

'The Duodecimal Book with Tables' - L.A. Poulden, F.I.A.S. Cleaver-Hume Press Ltd., London. Second Edition
128 pp. Price 13 shillings.

Despite the title this book is not about base-twelve arithmetic, but about "calculations in feet and inches without having to reduce them to vulgar fractions or decimals" and includes what used to be called 'cross-multiplication'. Two dozen pages are devoted to an explanatory introduction which is quite lucid, and ~~see~~ to the tables. Not an architect myself, I cannot pretend to vouch for the extent of its professional value. I am nonetheless sure that it will save precious time for anyone with constant cause to apply the four rules to feet and inches. It also draws attention to some useful tips such as 'coupling' in addition and short cuts in multiplication.

Whilst we are still in a state of having a duodecimal system of measurements and a decimal system of numbering at the same time in this country, this book makes an admirable compromise and practical bridge between the two. Mr. Poulden has met as far as possible the difficulties inherent in this confusing dichotomy. But these difficulties are overcome with less complications when the system of numbering conforms to the system of measurements.

I am sure that Mr. Poulden will not mind my telling other members that he has just joined our Society.

News

Some will already know that the Duodecimal Society of America held their Annual Meeting on 24 May in the Carnegie Endowment International Center, New York, at which Mr. Henry C. Churchman was to speak on 'Doremic Dimensions', 'doremic' being the name of his application of duodecimals to all measurements. We all hope the meeting was a success. If I hear from the Secretary in time for our next 'Newscast', I may be able to write a couple of lines on this meeting.

An international standard has been fixed for those two important units, the pound and the inch, fixing their exactitude for scientific and technical purposes. This may make a useful basis for a duodecimal scheme of units. After 1 July all non-metric calibrations in the standards laboratories of Great Britain, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and the United States will be made in the new definitions. The international pound is 0.453 592 37 of a kilogram and the international inch is 0.025 400 000 of a metre.

I hope the next 'Duodecimal Newscast' will be an invitation to the General Meeting and contain the programme. Can I please have articles to include as well? I should like to give a list of the names and addresses of full members as a sort of introduction to each other, unless anyone would prefer not.

The Duodecimal Society
of Great Britain
106, Leigham Ct. Dr., Leigh-on-Sea, Essex.

GENERAL MEETING

The first General Meeting of
the Duodecimal Society of Great Britain

will be held at

The Bryan Colleur Paroau,

6, Murren's Green,

London, W. 8.

at half past six p.m. on

the TWENTH DAY OF JANUARY, *1174

Subjects for discussion

1. Progress since start.
2. Organisation of Society (grades of membership, committees, etc.)
3. Activities of Society (standards, research, advertisement, publications)
4. Other business.

Light Refreshments

All members, friends and wellwishers are heartily invited to attend. Those unable to attend are asked to make known at once to the Hon. Secretary any views they would like to have read out to the Meeting. It will help in the arrangements if those who expect to attend can let the Hon. Secretary know as soon as possible.

The Hon. Secretary takes this opportunity to wish all
Duodecimalists

happier days for Christmas and
immeasurable prosperity in the New Year.