

A Record of Old Weights and Measures in Norfolk.

COMMUNICATED BY

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Two years ago the writer of this article, with little premeditation, decided to stage, for private view of persons likely to be interested, an exhibition of ancient weights and measures he had noted in the county of Norfolk. The Castle Museum Committee graciously loaned their very fine Tudor standards, and, without exception, private owners readily gave consent for their specimens to be removed to the Tombland Weights and Measures Office, where the exhibition was held by kind consent of the county authorities.

The cumulative value of these assembled bronze weights and measures was undeniably impressive; their antiquity and genuineness were documented beyond all question in practically every instance by actual date-marks or Royal ciphers, as well as by their form and patina. Before the close it had been arranged for the collection to be removed *en bloc* to the Castle Museum, where they were displayed in the fitting environment of the Elizabethan Room; and it was suggested that a record should be made of them in *Norfolk Archaeology*.

Page 206, line 13, should read: "the hoard is dated to 50-55 A.D. by the brooches of Claudian type which it contained." The coins referred to were actually found with the Santon Downham hoard of Icenian coins, and were minted about 41 A.D.

The bulk of the exhibition fortunately was able to be permanently retained at the Castle, and with recent additions by donation and through the agency of the Friends of the Museum Fund, is rapidly becoming comparable with the famous City of Winchester collection, the traditional home of English weights and measures. Indeed, it can confidently be stated that if the three or four notable objects in private hands could be included for permanent preservation—as is devoutly to be wished they speedily may be—the City of Norwich collection would be unsurpassed in numbers, variety, or interest.

A survey of legislation relating to the provision and custody of standards, and the verification and inspection of weights and measures, shows these matters to have been under control from Saxon times, when King Edgar decreed “that the measure of Winchester should be the standard.” This was followed by William the Conqueror, who ordained “that the measures and weights should be true and stamped in all parts of the kingdom as had been before established by law,” while Magna Charta provided “there shall be but one measure of wine throughout the realm, one measure of ale and one measure of corn, and one breadth of dyed cloth, russets and haberjacks. And it shall be of weights as of measures.” A call for uniformity was the usual preamble to enactments that littered the Statute books down to the 19th century, while the grievous hurt to the nation arising out of the failure to enforce the use of just weights and measures was as frequently insisted upon. But the Statutes themselves were responsible for increasing confusion, as time went on, by the multiplicity of authorities empowered to administer the ordinances, and they bear evidence of a lack of comprehension of the subject. Yet as early as 1340 Edward III. made a Statute capable of revolutionising weights and measures administration by appointing “two good and sufficient persons in every

county" to control weights and measures, but the following provision was included and proved its undoing:—"It is not the King's mind but that the Clerk of the Markets shall do his office where he will according as he was wont in times past: nor the lords of franchises shall not be ousted of their franchises by the occasion of this ordinance," and within four years these commissions were annulled. It was not until 538 years later that the attainment of uniformity was made possible by the Act of 1878.

Two of the Tudor monarchs stand out for their attempts to reform and establish national standards of weight and measure. Henry VII., after ordering all existing standards to be "damned defaced and destroyed," which order was only too thoroughly carried out, failed in his first attempt to make Exchequer standards of weight and measure, but succeeded in 1492, when copies were supplied to 42 cities (including Norwich) and towns in the kingdom. Unfortunately the weights were found to be inaccurate in Elizabeth's reign; the Norwich 56-lb. weight, for instance, was faulty to the amount of 2679 grains (about 6 ozs.). A committee of merchants and goldsmiths was appointed, but proved unable to determine new standards; in 1588, however, a second committee overcame the difficulties, when the number of copies made for distribution was increased to 57, Norwich again receiving a set.

During the period 1588 to 1824 there were no variations from the Tudor standards, with the exception of two for specified objects, a wine gallon established in 1707, which is still the unit for liquid measure in the United States, and a coal bushel of date 1730, though occasional Acts directed the provision of duplicate standards for special purposes.

Local historical records provide evidence from time to time of activities in relation to the administration of the law, the provision and custody of standards, the regulation of their use, the punishment of offenders, etc.

The *Norwich Book of Customs* (circa 1306) contains detailed instructions for keeping the Assize of Bread, Wine and Ale, the sealing of measures, for the testing and stamping of ells and weights, and the keeping of a beam and balances and avoirdupois weights by the standard of the King (c. 33, 34, 35). The City Leet Rolls contain numerous items of offences and punishments:—

1288. Cunisford. Agnes Gossip living in Pottergate buys by the greater and sells by the less.

1289. Cunisford. William Popay for false weights and because he buys by the greater and sells by the less, and 138 entries of breaches of the Assize of Bread and Ale.

1293. Conesford. Robert de Wymondham because he refuses the lord King's measure when straked and will not take it unless heaped up.

1391. Mancroft. All the bakers have broken the Assize of Bread.

1551. Berstret. List of persons amerced for selling ale and beer with unlawful measures.

The City Assembly Rolls contain the following:—

21st June 1559. Aldermans Court. This day M^r ——— Clarke of the Market of the Queens most honourable household and throughout the realm according to a precept that he sent M^r Mayor came into the Gildehall to serche weights and measures. And ther and then was declared and shewed unto hym the words of the charter how that for the tyme being the Mayor is clarke of the market within the City and the liberties of the same. Whereupon he tried the brasen bushell and other weights and measures remaining within the Gyldehall and further he meddled not.

4 March 1564. The inquest of the Clerk of the Market. 1st they find that the City hath neither common beam balances nor weights. Also they find

(numerous names) do sell their bottells of hay not containing weight. Also they find do sell ale and beer with potts unsised and sealed, also they do not sell a quart of the best ale or beer for $\frac{1}{2}^d$.

On the occasion of the important find in 1927 of the Norwich Elizabethan 56-lb. bronze standard weight on a farm at Aylsham, after being lost for over 100 years, the late Mr. Frederic Johnson very kindly made the following extract from the City of Norwich Records under the Chamberlain Accounts, 1587-88, relating to the provision and carriage to Norfolk of the identical set of standards of which this weight was the head:—

	li	s.	d.
Payed to the Barons and other officers of the xchequier for a Pyle of Brasen wayts for this Citie appoynted by proclamation to bee hadd thear	IX	VIII	XI
Item to Mr. Pearsse Keeper of the xchequier for his fee		II	
„ to Mr. Fanshow for his fee	III	IIII	
„ for thindentures to receyve them by			XII
„ to the Porters and watermen for goyng and stayeing to and at the xchequier dyverse tymes for the same wayts to carry them to the water syde	II	VI	
„ to carryng them to Quenchithe to be carried by a Carre into Cheapsyde			VI
„ for haye, a hamper and lyne to pack with			XXII
„ to a Carre to carry them to the Carts			IIII
„ to Fond for bryngyng them from London wayeng CC wayghts	VIII		

It may be mentioned here that in 1932 two more bronze weights of the same (1588) set—14 lbs. and 7 lbs.—were catalogued at an auction sale in Sheringham and were purchased for the Museum collection. It may

perhaps have been a coincidence that the vendor had lived at Aylsham many years before removing to Sheringham, but it does suggest the possibility of the whole "pile of brassen weights" having been taken there for some remote reason from Norwich during the first quarter of the 19th century, and that the remaining four weights (28, 4, 2, and 1 lbs.) to complete the set may still be in existence. Their discovery and deposition in the Museum would immediately make the Norwich collection unique.

References to weights and measures similarly occur in various County Records, which in conjunction with the remarkable discoveries of standards associated with parishes, hundreds, and burghs, are clear evidence of the large numbers of them that must have been provided at one time or another by responsible authorities. The following may be cited:—

Hundred Rolls of Lynn 1275. Robert de Tateshall and Robert de M——— had the monopoly of measuring corn in the harbour with a measure called a "cumb" namely $\frac{1}{2}$ Quarter: which measure they farmed out and the farmers ought to hire out these measures by the day to any merchant coming down the river for $\frac{1}{2}^d$ a day, and to merchants from overseas for 1^d a day, but they actually charged 2/- or more and some measures contained more and some less whereas they all ought to be equal.

1298. Edward ordered the Chamberlain of London a trone for weighing wool in the town of Lynn to be made, tested at the Guildhall and sent to the Exchequer. The Mayor called together a Committee of six wool merchants and an "autermakere" (auncel maker) who tested the trone, which included 4 weys and 4 cloves and stamped it with the sign of the City.

Watts-Dunton states that in 1551 the "Bailiffs of Yarmouth stripped the Church of St. Nicholas and its 16

Chapels of lead and brass, the lead was cast into bullets, and the brass into weights and measures." Inquiries at Yarmouth unfortunately have not produced a single weight or measure of interest.

The first volume of the Norfolk Record Society gives this entry under date 1571:—Clerk of Markets of the Queen held a Court of Supervision at Holt and punished the inhabitants for not having a pillory and standard weights and measures. Several fined for selling in earthen and glass measures unsealed, the bakers for lack of weight, the millers for taking excessive toll (a pottle per bushel instead of a quart).

An Inventory of Stiffkey Hall for 1636 contains:—In the bakehouse: Two payre of skeles, sax stoone and eleaven pounds in leaden weights and tenne pounds of brasen weights. (*Norfolk Archæology*, vol. xxiii., p. 330.)

In recording the discoveries of ancient weights and measures in Norfolk it is desired to make special comment on certain of them.

1. The magnificent Tudor Exchequer Standards already alluded to are of the first importance.

2. Charles II. bushels. In 1670 an Act was passed directing all owners of Market Tolls in any City Corporation or Market Town to provide one bushel measure chained in the Public Market Place—under a penalty of £5. Norwich Court Records (1666-88) contain the following minutes:—

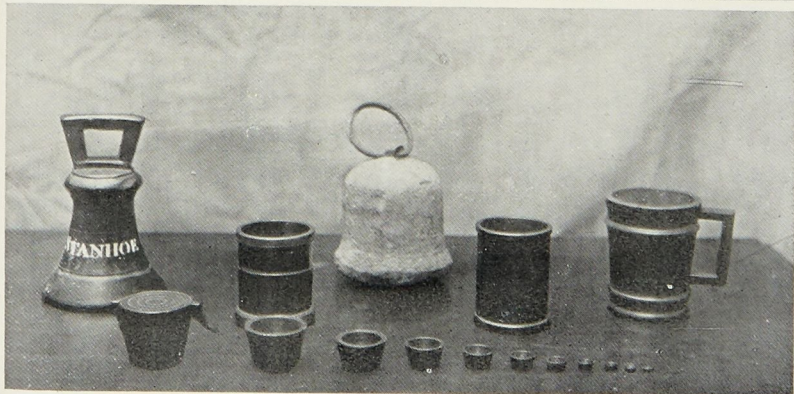
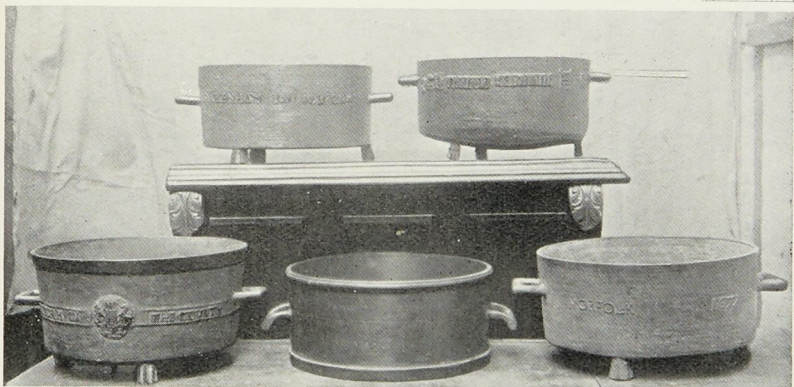
24 February 1671. Deputy Clerk of the Market to cause the common bushel at the Cross for buying and selling grain to be made agreeable to the standard of 8 gallons according to the late Act for regulating measures.

19 April 1672. New brass or copper bushel to be ordered of John Fisher and other measures with the arms of the City on them.

Norwich, therefore, promptly carried out the Royal Command, and the number provided throughout the country must have been legion. Yet up to six years ago one only was publicly known to exist—in Appleby Castle—with part of the chain still attached. *The Antiquary* for 1904 reports: A “metal tub” catalogued at a Wiltshire farm sale and sold for 12/- and subsequently purchased by an American may have been one of these Carolean bushels, and there is an unconfirmed rumour that one is privately owned in Northamptonshire. In the county of Norfolk since 1927 three splendid specimens have been noted—one marked “Parish of Hingham 1672” was found in a small storeroom over the vestry in the church, but is now honourably mounted in the chancel; another of similar design, “Parish of Foulsham 1672,” is in possession of a descendant of a Foulsham churchwarden; while the third, bearing the arms of Wyndham, with the lettering “For New Buckenham in Norfolk 1677,” is still in the custody of the lord of that manor.

3. So far as it has been possible to ascertain, there exist in no collection in the whole country specimens of what may be called Parish Standards, a new classification required by the recent finding of the Outwell and Watlington weights and measures. The fact of the weights being troy standards, and not avoirdupois as might have been expected, has influenced the writer to suggest here they were for carrying out the Assize of Bread and Ale, a function continuously in being from Henry III. to William IV., during which period bread shared with precious metals the distinction of being sold by troy weight. Here again, the numbers of such weights and measures must have been very great, yet these Norfolk survivors with their delightful lettering appear to be unique.

4. The county is notable in having in existence three complete sets of George IV. standards rendered necessary

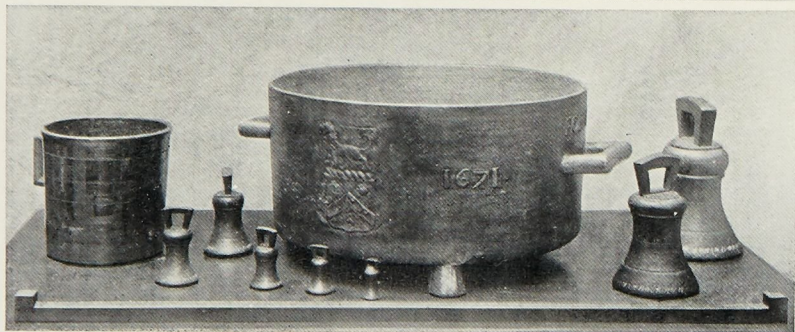


The Outwell Weights and Measures, 1746.

The Ancient Bronze Bushels of Norfolk.

Standard 28 lbs.; Two Watlington Pints, 1712 and 1828; Lead 56 lbs.;

Lynn Wine Quart, Henry VII.; North Walsham Cup Weights.



Norwich Tudor Standards.

Norwich Elizabethan Standard Weights, 1588.

Manorial Standards of New Buckenham.

by the 1824 Act. The Thetford set, discovered in 1929 packed in cases under the Town Hall roof probably forty years before and now admirably displayed in the Burgh Museum; the Manorial set for New Buckenham, disposed of as many years ago and still intact, in the possession of the purchaser at Banham; the third set, found at North Walsham, is partly in the Castle Museum, and ultimately will be wholly deposited there by gift of the present owner.

5. The earliest known measure in the county, outside Norwich, was turned out of a cupboard in the Lynn Museum at the instigation of the writer, and proved to be an unusual bronze wine quart of Henry VII. *temp.*

In conclusion the writer desires that information or possible clues of other old weights and measures may be sent to him at 25, Tombland, Norwich.

The list below is chronological as far as possible. Names in brackets indicate the places where the objects were first noted.

HENRY VII.

Standard Bushel: bronze; two handles; embossed in Lombardic lettering, "Henricus Septimus dei Gracia Hanglie et Francie." Marked with Exchequer stamp (portcullis), Tudor rose, greyhound on leash. Roughly engraved, NORWICH on each handle. (Norwich Castle.)

Standard Gallon: bronze; handle Welsh dragon; embossed lettering, "Henricus Septimus"; Tudor rose and greyhound on leash. Roughly engraved, NORWICH. (Norwich Castle.)

Wine Quart: bronze; plain handle; engraved, "wine quart"; stamped four times on rim, crown over H R. (Lynn.)

ELIZABETH.

Standard 56 lbs.: bronze, bell shaped; engraved, AN° crown DO, EL, A° REG XXX°; scattered fleur-de-lys and Tudor roses; stamped on shoulder, LVI and 56 lbs. (Aylsham.)

Standard 14 lbs. and 7 lbs.: bronze bell shaped; engraved, AN°, crown, DO, EL, A° REG XXX° 1588; scattered fleur-de-lys and Tudor roses; stamped on shoulders, crown over ER. (Sheringham.)

Standard Troy 256 ozs.: cup shaped; engraved, AN°, crown, DO, EL, A° REG XXX° 1588; scattered fleur-de-lys and Tudor roses; stamped on edge, CCLVI TR (troy); castle over lion. (Norwich Castle.)

Standard Troy 128 ozs.: ditto ditto. (Drayton.)

Standard Quart: bronze; handle; embossed crown over ER 1601; stamped twice on rim, crown over ER. (Norwich Castle.)

Standard Pint: bronze; handle; embossed crown over ER 1601; stamped twice on rim, crown over ER. (Norwich Castle.)

JAMES I.

Bronze 8 ozs. and 4 ozs.: flat circular; stamped, crown over I; Guildhall dagger; ewer. (Blofield.)

CHARLES II.

Standard Bushel: bronze; two handled; embossed arms of Wyndham, 1671, "For New Buckenham in Norfolk"; stamped twice on rim, crown over CR and Exchequer portcullis. (New Buckenham.)

Standard Bushel: bronze; two handled; embossed Royal Arms and "Folesham in the County of Norfolk 1677"; stamped twice on rim, crown over CR and portcullis. (Aylsham.)

Standard Bushel: bronze; two handled; embossed "Hingham in Norfolk 1677"; stamped twice on rim, crown over CR and portcullis. (Hingham.)

Standard Gallon: bronze; one handle; engraved, arms of Peck, "For the Hundred of Shropham 1672"; stamped on rim, crown over CR and portcullis. (New Buckenham.)

WILLIAM III.

Bronze Quart: one handle; stamped on rim, crown over WR and portcullis. (Toft Monks.)

Bronze Pint: stamped on rim, crown over WR and portcullis. (Toft Monks.)

Bronze Beer Quart and Beer Pint: stamped on rim, crown over WR and portcullis. (Lynn.)

ANNE.

Bronze Quart and Pint: engraved, "The Town of Watlington; Thomas Newman, Constable; John Vintner, John Cock, Ale Tasters, 1712"; stamped twice on rim, crown over A. (Quart, Lancashire; Pint, Norwich.)

Bronze 7 lbs.: bell shaped; stamped on shoulders, crown over A; Founders Co. mark, the ewer; London Guildhall mark, dagger; Crown over W IV. (Wymondham.)

GEORGE I.

Bronze 28 lbs.: bell shaped; engraved, STANHOE; stamped on shoulder, crown over G; Guildhall dagger; ewer and Norfolk Castle. (North Walsham.)

Bronze 3½ lbs.: bell shaped; illegal denomination; no marks. (Banham.)

GEORGE II.

Set Standard 28, 14, 4, 2, 1 lb. 8, 4 ozs.: bronze; bell shaped; each engraved, "New Buckingham (*sic*) Borrough"; stamped on each shoulder and handle, crown over G II and portcullis. (New Buckenham.)

OUTWELL SET.

Bronze Quart and Pint: engraved, "John Ide, William Chantree," anchor with rope entwined, "Outwell 1746 Norfolk"; stamped twice on rim, crown over G, Guildhall dagger; on side, crown over W IV N.

Heavy Bronze Case with hinged lid: marked, AB, CXXVIII R̄, crown over W IV N; engraved, "John Ide, William Chantree," anchor with rope entwined, "Outwell

1746 Norfolk," enclosing six bronze cup weights marked AB, anchor, crown over W IV N, LXIII, XXXII, XVI, VIII, III, and II. (Denver.)

GEORGE III.

Standard 28, 14, 7, 4, 2 lbs.: bronze; bell shaped; 1 lb., 8, 4 ozs.: bronze flat circular; engraved, Lynn Regis; stamped crown over G III and portcullis. (Lynn.)

Standard Peck: bronze; engraved, "Winchester Peck, 1811"; stamped, crown over G III and portcullis. (Lynn.)

GEORGE IV.

Set of ten Imperial Standard brass measures; set of fifteen Imperial Standard avoirdupois weights; an Imperial Standard yard measure; heavily engraved, "Borough of Thetford, County of Norfolk 1826. In the Mayoralty of John Burrell Faux Esq.;" stamped crown over G IV R, portcullis, and crown over V R. (Thetford.)

Another similar set: engraved, "Parish of North Walsham, Hundred of Tunstead, County of Norfolk, 1826." Identical stamps. (North Walsham.)

Another similar set: engraved, "Borough of New Buckenham, County of Norfolk, 1826. Identical stamps. (Banham.)

Set of seven brass Imperial Standard 56 lbs. to 1 lb.; bell shaped; engraved, "County of Norfolk 1825"; line engraving of castle in shield (no lion); numerous Royal monograms and portcullis stamps dating from 1882 onwards. (County Council.)

Set of six bronze bell shaped 28 lbs. to 1 lb.: stamped crown over G IV, crown over W IV N, and ewer. (Harleston.)

Bronze Pint: engraved, "The Parish of Watlington. John Perry Constable 1828"; stamped thrice on rim, crown over G IV. (Norwich.)

VARIOUS.

Set of bronze avoir cup weights complete in bronze case; marked XXX (ozs.); no date or verification marks. 18th century (?). (North Walsham.)

Set of bronze avoir cup proportional weights (three missing) in bronze case; marked 32 ozs. balance 16 stone 224 pounds. (Norwich.)

Set of bronze troy cup weights in bronze case; 2 ozs. (Norwich.)

Bronze 4-lb. flat circular weight: stamped crown over G (I), ewer, and dagger marks, and H D (Hundred of Diss). (Banham.)

Bronze 2-lb. flat circular weight: stamped crown over G 3 R, H D. (Norwich.)

*Bronze 2-lb. flat circular weight: stamped crown over W
M (William and Mary), crown over W IV. and H D. (Fersfield.)*

Lead 56-lb. weight: bell shaped; iron ring and staple; no decipherable marks. 16th or 17th century. (Sherford.)

Lead 7-lb. weight: domed; no marks.

Lead 4-lb. weight: domed; marked IIII; date unknown. (Norwich.)

Lead 4-lb. flat circular weight with rim; no marks. Similar to weight found in British excavations of Roman period. (Dug up at Raveningham.)

Iron 2-lb. bar weight: castle over lion cast on one end. Early Victorian. (Norwich.)