

# THE GEOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY

## OF

### WEIGHTS AND SCALES

#### A Brief Introduction

The Directory is intended to cover the period from the introduction of the Imperial Standards in 1825/6 to the major reorganisation of local government in 1974. Events that occurred before and after these dates are mentioned when they help to complete the picture.

The material is arranged according to the pre-1974 counties. These geographical areas were largely unchanged throughout this period, apart from the changes to the 'home counties' that followed the establishment of the London County Council in 1889. Within in each county there are three sections.

**Section A** covers the inspection of weights and measures by the county authorities. Typically this involves the appointment of county inspectors in 1834/5, the transfer of duties to the police force at some point in the period 1840-1858, and the inauguration of a qualified inspectorate from 1890 onwards. The details varied considerably from one county to another, and that is reflected in the verification marks.

**Section B** covers those local authorities within the geographical area of the county that had separate jurisdiction over weights and measures. That included some of the larger towns (officially known as counties corporate), as well as anomalous jurisdictions such as manors and liberties. After the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, many boroughs appointed an inspector of weights and measures.

**Section C** covers the trade in scales, weights, and measures within the county. In a few of the larger urban areas there was a tradition of scale-making going back to the 18th century and before. But in most places the need for that kind of expertise arose only as a result of the many pieces of legislation enacted in the 19th century. The earliest specialists were often ironmongers, who began by supplying scales, weights, and measures to the local tradesmen. Often they worked in conjunction with the local inspector, because when the inspector refused to verify weights that required adjustment, the adjustment had to be done by someone else. But in the early years there were several cases where the inspector and the adjuster were the same person.

The information collected here comes from two primary sources. The artefactual evidence is based mainly on the weights that display local verification marks and, occasionally, the names of 'makers'. This evidence can be collated with the documentary record provided by published sources, such as directories, but frequently it is necessary to consult unpublished records such as the minutes of the county quarter sessions. The combination of these two sources is an ongoing task.

It will be clear that the Directory is a Work in Progress. Material for all the English and Welsh counties has been collected, and is now in skeleton form. It seems that the time is ripe to begin circulating the results for a few counties, in order to get feedback from other experts and collectors. It is envisaged that more counties will be added regularly, and that in due course the information will be made available more generally, both in printed form and in electronic form.

Contributions from any source are earnestly sought. All information is helpful, whether it be an isolated fact or an account of the events in a particular locality. Volunteers who could take on the consolidation of the material for an entire county would be very much appreciated.

The background to the Directory can be found in two books.

Norman Biggs: *Verification Marks on Weights*, 1996.

Carl Ricketts with John Douglas: *Marks and Marking of Weights and Measures of the British Isles*, 1995.