



Brian and Jean Bishop toast you from their sunny home. Cheers from the DSGB!

Reflections on the DSGB

compiled by
Gene Zirkel

Editor's Note: We continue Professor Zirkel's review of the history of the Dozenal Societies of America and Great Britain. The following material was included in an appendix to the article "A History of the DSA" which appeared in the last issue.

↪ See our *Bulletin* WN97; VOL. 49; № 2.

Presenting some thoughts compiled from notes from Brian Bishop, Shaun Ferguson, and Robert Carnaghan.



Shaun Ferguson, at the helm of the DSGB's website

A few early members of the DOZENAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN:

Brian Bishop was DSGB's first Secretary and Editor. He was followed by **Shaun Ferguson** who handed the reins over to **Don Hammond**. Hammond improved the style of the magazine and had plenty of useful ideas; he died of an asthma attack.

Since Hammond passed away the DSGB's growth has slowed. Under the direction of Shaun Ferguson and with the coming of the Internet, the DSGB managed to take on a new lease on life. They seem to be attracting more people, especially with the new website Shaun Ferguson set up at www.Dozenalsociety.org.uk.

For example, **Brian Parry** is a student and very keen; lots of ideas and energy. He has set up the Dozenal Forum at <http://z13.invisionfree.com/DozensOnline>, which seems to be attracting some attention. Long may it continue!

Lou Loynes, a little chap, very cheerful, was an artist and devised and published a system for distinguishing colours based on duodecimals. I believe some DSGB meetings were held in his office.

Arthur Whillock worked at the government building research establishment near Wallingford. He devised systems of measurement and time based on duodecimals, which he explained on his visit to the DSA.

Fred Ruston, a friend of Brian's, was one of the early members of DSGB. He lives with his wife Elizabeth in a hamlet in Stambidge.

On one occasion Brian met **Professor A. C. Aitken**, from New Zealand, of Edinburgh University. He recalled, "I think Robert Carnaghan enrolled him for us. He asked for my telephone number. I looked for a piece of paper to write it on. What an insult. He at once recited its cube root. He produced a pamphlet against metrication."

Robert Carnaghan comments that it was the kindly Professor Aitken who mentioned the DSGB to me when I was a student and not the other way around. I took the liberty of speaking to him (on something quite different, but he evidently recognised an idealist) at the end of one of his lectures to first-year students.

Carnaghan remembered attending some of DSGB's annual meetings in London, probably in the late 1960s or possibly the early 1970s. "At one, **Sir Iain Moncreiffe** of that ilk and his wife came, and I met them. As with Aitken, only years later did I learn from occasional articles or obituaries what a knowledgeable man Sir Iain was, and how much he had done in his life, particularly in the study of genealogy and history."

Shaun Ferguson was another keen member of DSGB in its early days, and is now one of the few active members left.

Bruce Moon came from New Zealand several decades ago and spent a year in the department of computing of University College, London. He wrote for DSGB a good basic introduction to duodecimal arithmetic for British readers called "Dozens Arithmetic for Everyman". (It's now out of date because it refers to the shillings of twelve pence which were then part of Britain's currency.) Like the DSGB's magazine in those days, it was typed onto wax stencils and reproduced on a duplicator.



Brian Parry, founder of the DozensOnline forum



Arthur Whillock in the States, attending an Annual Meeting of the DSA

A Merger

A strand in the history of DSGB was the founding some years but not many years later, quite independently, of a DUODECIMAL ASSOCIATION. That association had not been in existence for long when the two societies discovered each other and agreed to merge.

Carnaghan also recalled, “I don’t remember attending any DSGB meetings at **Louis Loynes’** office in Monmouth Street in central London, but I remember Brian introduced me to him there, and I met him several times”. He favoured base eight or one dozen four, but said that when he devised his system for numbering colours (he wrote a book about colour theory and produced it himself), he found that for that specific purpose the duodecimal system was best because of there being three primary colours. He called his colour notation the BYRAZ system, these letters representing blue, yellow, red, white and black.

On one occasion, probably at Loynes’ office, I was introduced to another supporter of base eight or one dozen four, **Douglas Blacklock**, who on the first meeting seemed very clever. As Brian and I both worked in central London at the time, we met him for lunch on a number of occasions when Blacklock (who must have been retired) was in London, and we got to know him fairly well.

Blacklock saw himself as an inventor, and he did seem to have an imaginative mind. He was a pleasant enthusiast if you had some time to spare!

Apparently he had once written a book on accounting for management (he was then an accountant) before the war. In discussion he would jump around disconcertingly from one idea or subject to another; it was reasonably interesting or entertaining once one had got used to it.

Blacklock in turn introduced Brian and me to a man called, I think, **Carr-Carme**, who had a small office in Shaftesbury Avenue in central London, and who had devised a means of making music easier to read music by use of colour. I don’t know whether anyone took up his idea. Doubtless he could have implemented and demonstrated it much more easily if cheap ink-jet printers had then been available. But here I’m wandering way off course.

Arthur Whillock worked as a professional engineer at the (then government-owned) well-known hydrological research establishment at Wallingford. He used to write good articles about the virtues of duodecimals and about the failings of the metric system. He became Information Secretary of DSGB. After Don Hammond’s untimely death he became Secretary as well, in the absence of any other volunteer. Arthur was also the editor of the *Dozenal Review-cum-Dozenal Journal*.

I spoke to Don Hammond once by telephone but never met him. Unfortunately, by the time he became active, as Secretary and Editor, DSGB had altogether ceased its annual meetings. There was some justification for this, inasmuch as members lived far apart (in British terms). However, it would have been possible

to compromise and have a meeting every few years, so as to give members a chance to meet one another and develop a social side that does so much to bring into the fold those who have a passing interest but who often move on in the absence of social contact.

Several societies I've been a member of have single-mindedly concentrated on higher thoughts and neglected the social side, with the result that they have also withered. To some extent the Internet now provides an alternative through the use of forums. A forum could allow anyone interested to put forward ideas, proposals, questions and so on, and with luck to get reactions.

One simple thing I learned years ago was how to count up to a dozen on one hand, using the thumb as a pointer and the joints of the four fingers as positions, and then to count dozens similarly on the other hand. Occasionally, when the chance arises and I remember, I show someone, usually a child, how to do this, in the hope of sparking an interest at this level, and sometimes there is interest. One way of making it more "concrete" is to refer to months and years. It's not much, but it's a way of trying to pass on something few have come across.

There's not much more I can do now, with so much else left to do, but neither can I completely let go after all these years. In particular, I must find a good home sooner or later for the books and magazines that I have or have been entrusted with. I believe that Arthur Whillock would also like to find a home for his collection; he would like them to be kept together.

So there are some reminiscences and thoughts, for what they are worth. ❖❖❖

— → **Our British Associates** ← —

THE DOZENAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

www.dozenalsociety.org.uk

❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖ ❖

ONE HAND IS BETTER THAN TWO...

It has been claimed that the only reason we still count by tens instead of dozens which are easier to learn, easier to use, and more compact, is the fact that we have ten fingers.

However, it takes two hands to count to ten on your fingers while you can easily count to a dozen on only one hand using your thumb to point to the twelve phalanges (or bones) in your four fingers.