

Third-Generation Weights & Measures Chief Tells How it All Adds Up

Robert (Bob) Holdaway explains how one dingy box of castaway equipment turned out to contain the treasures of several lifetimes. Joe Totten presents the story of this weights-and-measures pioneer who was one of the co-founders of UK's Association for Petroleum & Explosives Administration.

All in the family:

Robert P. (Bob) Holdaway, his father, his father's brother and his father's father all served as chiefs of weights-and-measures departments in different localities in the United Kingdom. Bob's corollary involvement as a founding member of the Association for Petroleum and Explosives Administration (APEA) and first editor of APEA's The Bulletin is covered in the article co-authored by him and Jamie Thompson ("Diverse Members Carve Out Common Ground") on page 27. In assembling information for that article and for Bob's biography, we found lots of things about Bob that we want to share in this more detailed version of his biography.



Bob Holdaway receives APEA award, 1998

Robert P. Holdaway was born on January 19, 1915. Now, at the age of 84, he likes to spend time browsing in antique shops and centers, gardening or just walking. He still enjoys meeting interesting people and making new friends. And, he can look back on a career with much satisfaction derived from his involvement in landmark activities that affected weights-and-measures enforcement and led to the formation and operation of UK's APEA. His APEA involvement is discussed elsewhere in this issue of PE&T. So let's look into some of the other interesting aspects of his career and life.

Jamie Thompson and Kally Fraser congratulate Bob Holdaway on his APEA award at the Association's annual dinner, 1998



The family tradition

Bob's father, uncle and grandfather all served as chiefs of weights-and-measures departments (at Stoke on Trent in the City of Crewe; Winchester in the City of Southampton; and Winchester in Devon County, respectively).

Bob carried on the tradition by attending Crewe Technical College, where he received a national certificate in mechanical engineering. To further illustrate that "the acorn doesn't fall too far from the tree," he joined the weights-and-measures department in Crewe as a junior assistant in 1933 (at the

tender age of 18). Six years later, he was appointed Chief Inspector, Weights and Measures and Petroleum, in the town of Berwick Upon Tweed, a city on the northeast coast of England and Scotland (half the town is in England, half in Scotland).

From 1941 to 1946, Bob served in the Royal Air Force's Air Ministry, working on UK's camouflage and decoy sites. That work done, he served as District Inspector for Kent County and Shropshire County Council during the ensuing four years. For the next 25 years, he served as Chief Inspector, Weights and Measures, Petroleum and Explosives, Shrewsbury.

Bob and Vera, his wife of 58 years, have two sons, Richard and Alex; however, neither son nor grandchild has continued the family tradition in weights and measures. Son Richard works in retail trade management and Alex, in motor vehicles sales. Bob and Vera also have two grandchildren, Scott and Heidi. While Scott resides in the UK, Heidi and her husband, Jim Cockrell, live in Medina, Ohio. They have three children, Hadleigh, Emily and Sophie.

The family "jewels"

Rather than diamonds and gold, the jewels most valued by Bob Holdaway today are the relics, collected during the family's 100-year involvement in weights-and-measures enforcement as government officials, that symbolize hundreds of years of weights-and-measures history. Bob's grandfather, A. E. Holdaway, was appointed Inspector of Weights and Measures for the ancient City of Winchester in 1893. (One thousand years ago, this was the original capital of England.) He later moved to the county of Devon, where he served in that role until he retired in 1925. Bob has a framed copy of his grandfather's 1893 appointment.



A.E. Holdaway's 1893 appointment. The wording of the document is: "City of Winchester—At a meeting of the town council held at the Guild hall, on the 9th November 1893 it was resolved that Mr. Alfred Edwin Holdaway be appointed Inspector of Weights and Measures for the City of Winchester and of Petroleum. [Signed] Walter Bailey, Town Clerk."



A. E. Holdaway, like many Victorians, became an avid collector of foreign stamps, picture postcards, butterflies and moths and (of course) weights, measures and scales. Bob Holdaway's first exposure to his grandfather's accumulation of weights-and-measures relics left him unimpressed, if not indeed disappointed. Many years later, however, the collection became a treasure in his eyes. The story of how this happened was ably told by Bob himself, in a short article that appeared in ISASC's magazine, *Equilibrium*, circa 1990. For your enjoyment, the entire content of the article is reprinted at right.

Bob Holdaway's collection of old scales ranges from 50 to 120 years old. Most were used by store owners to determine the weights and, therefore, prices of the commodities sold. The large gold scale on the right (ASCO) in Photo 2, was used as a tobacco scale for selling loose tobacco. Beginning in the 1950s, most commodities were prepacked and, therefore, scales are rarely used in shops today.

In Photo 1, the heavy scale with a marble top was used by butchers for selling meat 70 to 80 years

ago. The goods were put on the glass, and the weight was placed on the brass. On October 5, 1998, at its annual conference dinner, APEA surprised Bob Holdaway with a Special Award of Appreciation for his contribution to the success of the APEA (see photos on page 30). Bob's contributions include co-founding APEA in 1958, working as the organization's editor of The Bulletin for the first ten years and serving as APEA chairman in 1973.

Joe E. Totten was Director of the Office of Internal Evaluation for the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) from 1990 through 1994. In this capacity, he directed and managed internal audits of GAO operations. Joe now works as editor/quality control manager for Petroleum Equipment & Technology.