

Proposal of 'L.W.' for decimalising the coinage by dividing sixpence into 25 farthings [effectively, what did eventually happen at decimalisation, as this makes ten farthings equal to one modern penny].

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<390r>

< insertion from the left margin > 31 May 1714
To Sir Is. Newton < text from f 390r resumes >

May it please your Lordship

It is a generall complaint that Farthigns and halfe pence are wanted and it is discoursed that a Pattent is granted to make some I believe it a concerne worthy the notice of all true Brittish patriotts to consider whether the makeing a small alteration in that sort of coin will not be a very great advantage to the Kingdom

The coin used for all small payments under six pence is Copper farthings and halfe pence and if a six pence be paid in all those single farthings they must certainly be 24 in num{ber} and I believe generally weigh about 4 ounces h{alf} in the whole six pence Lett the same quantity of copper then be made into 25 Equall parts which now goe (or is Currant) at six pence (and is divided into 24 farthings) And then a pound sterling with all its lesser denominations of shillings and farthings may be Expressed (joyntly with those lesser parts) by naturall numbers without useing those different denominations abovementioned and so Expressed in naturall numbers may be used without any Reduction in all the rules of arithmetick wherein it shall be any ways concerned with very great Ease and certanty

I presume almost all Europe make use of the same Carrecters to Express number which are used here in Brittain and I think there is noe materiall difference abroad from the rules here given for to learne the four

first rules of Vulgar arithmetick & therefore a sett of naturall numbers not denominated to signifie any thing but what those numbers naturally express will be added or subtracted &c by a Brittain or a Forreigner with Equall ease and Certanty and such naturall numbers will our Brittish pound and its parts be best Expressed by if the six pence as above be divided into 25 Equall parts from whence its plain that a Brittish account sent into any Forreign part soe Expressed will be there as easie <390v> to be understood as here at home and therefore our Brittish Coin may nay undoubtedly will become the Standard of all European Coins and Comerse That small disturbance which a this alteration would at first give your little retail Tradesmen is not worth the notice for how soon will they find ways to divide sixpenny worth of their wares into 25 parts correspondent to the abovementioned parts which shall be made

I suppose noe one will deny that the number here mentioned in the marque is the naturall number by whither to Express sixpence as part of a pound sterling	} 025
and that a shilling soe Expressed must be by	– ,050
and that a two shillings soe Expressed must be by	– ,100
And that a pound sterling with respect to its lesser denominations soe Expressed must be by	} 1,000

for they are not to be Expressed by any other naturall numbers that I know of and therefore look upon it needless to demonstrate the truth of these numbers it haveing been soe often done in print Since then (25) does naturally represent sixpence its a great deal of pittie that six pence should not be actually divided into (25) when at this time it may be soe Easily done, I must confess I am too inconsiderable a person to appear in any thing of this nature with hopes of finding any manner of countenance or reaping any manner of benefitt from the same therefore the only thing that induced me to putt this in your Lordships hands is the desire of the good of my native Country

L:W

Munday morning
