You Can't See The Wood...

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SCENE: A wood shop, not a hundred miles from Greenford.

DATE: Summer 1970, before decimalisation of money, but after the demise of the half-crown.

CUSTOMER: I should like a piece of that moulding please, 1 inch wide and 6 feet long.

SHOPKEEPER: We are just going metric and all our lengths have been metricated.

C: Well, I do need the moulding 1 inch wide. I'll take a piece 2½ cm wide and 2 metres long. Perhaps you would kindly saw it into two pieces 1 metre each so that it will fit more easily into my car?

S: Actually only the lengths have been metricated. We can certainly do you a bit 1 inch wide. How long did you say?

C: 2 metres altogether, in two halves.

S: We don't actually sell it by the metre. The nearest we can do is 0.9 of a metre.

C (*Astonished*): Well two bits, 0.9 of a metre each, will be fine, but why do you sell it in 0.9's of a metre and not whole metres?

S: It's all based on units. One unit is 30 cm, that's roughly equivalent to a foot, so 0.9 of a metre is 3 units.

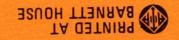C: I see. Well, give me two bits, 1 inch wide and 0.9 metre long please.

Shopkeeper goes to back of shop and presently returns with wood which appears to suit customer's requirements.

C: That looks fine. How much will that be please?

S (*Inscrutable*): Let me see. That'll be half-a-crown a foot ...

Customer turns pale, pays up and hurries out.

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