



ORMSKIRK & WEST LANCASHIRE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

# 'LOCKDOWN' NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NUMBER 1. MAY/JUNE, 2020

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*Feedback and any ideas and/or contributions by members to future issues of this newsletter would be most welcome*

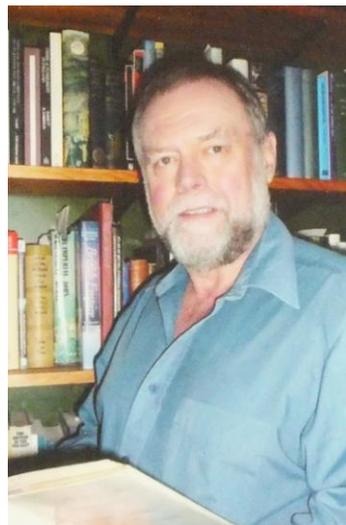
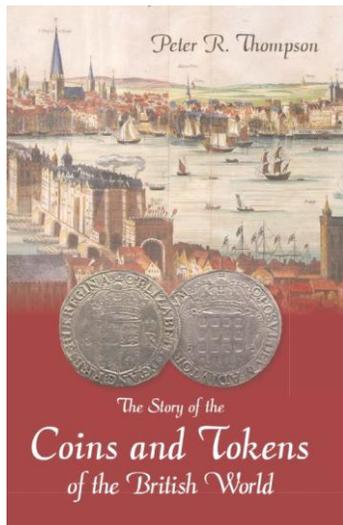
WITH the current restrictions imposed on all clubs and societies, as well as venues, regular meetings have had to be temporarily abandoned. This of course means that the planned programme for the year will also need to be re-thought for when some sort of normality finally returns.

To keep everyone's interest in numismatics alive, especially with news and gossip from our own membership, this newsletter is aimed to be a temporary alternative to the usual monthly meetings at the Eagle & Child. The idea of a regular newsletter came from our newest and enthusiastic member, Lee Brown, and his contributions to this issue are most welcome.

Let us hope this will be a short-lived departure from our usual meetings and look forward to a future for the Society, which will prove, be as rich and varied as its last fifty years.

## A NEW STANDARD REFERENCE WORK

Peter Thompson's long awaited book on the story of *The Coins and Tokens of the British World* is now in print and available from the publishers, Token Publishing. This is the second book Peter has written, the first being a numismatic history of the East India Company (2010).



At 380 pages, this latest hard cover book certainly promises to be a good read. Printed in full colour throughout, the well-illustrated volume takes a close look at the coins and tokens used across the British world. The story starts with the earliest trade routes of the 15th century, through the heady days of the British Empire and beyond. Token Publishing are currently offering the book at £39.95 (post free for a limited period). Peter is to be congratulated on producing this monumental numismatic study on a subject of interest to many collectors.

## A WELCOME BOOST TO SOCIETY'S FUNDS

Most of our members are already aware that, through the untiring efforts of our Treasurer, Norman Mercer, the Society's coffers have received an enormous boost. We now hold an account with the Yorkshire Bank and various grants, made possible by a switch from Nat West, boosted the Society's funds up to a current balance of £3474.74p! This puts us in a good financial position to cope with any unexpected future expenses and means that guest speakers from afar can be booked for talks. Norman's efforts on our behalf were certainly deserving of his now honorary membership status.



*Lee Brown's two daughters identifying some of his Roman coins. Lockdown must have been really getting them down!*

## A TWO-FACED EMPEROR ...

Irregularities and obvious mistakes in legends are quite common in ancient and medieval coins. Unlike modern machine-made pieces, when even the tiniest error assumes enormous significance, blunders in Roman coins often go without comment. However, this bronze follis of the emperor Maximilian (AD.286-305) appears to be rather 'two-faced'. The coin was spotted and subsequently acquired by Lee Brown, as it appealed to his curiosity. This coin has obviously received a double strike – resulting in the emperor's face appearing twice. If this was a milled or modern coin it would be dearly sought, but being ancient it remains a curiosity, yet nevertheless a good example of the problems encountered when producing coins by hand.



L. Brown Collection

## ... and an ELIZABETHAN COIN FRAUD!

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the smallest coin denomination was a halfpenny. This meant that no purchase could be made for a farthing – as change could not be given. Cleverly, the mint produced a silver coin with the face value of threefarthings. This enabled farthing purchases to be made by tendering a penny and receiving a threefarthing piece as change. With a staggering eleven different silver denominations in circulation, the only way to distinguish the smaller coins, one from another, was the alternate use of a rose behind the monarch's head and a date on the reverse. Fraudsters seldom miss such an opportunity to make money – even if only a farthing! The rose and date on the tiny threefarthing piece was sometimes scratched or pressed out and the date on the reverse removed – making the coin look very similar to a penny. William Shakespeare even noted this phenomenon when he wrote:

*'...he had a bastard, his own issue toward, whipped and then cropped, for washing out roses in threefarthings to make them pence' Nothing ever changes – where there's money someone will always be profiteering!*



A. Dawson Collection

## TWO USEFUL INTERNET LINKS

The first of these links is to a site really aimed at archaeologists. It is a simple and very clear introduction to identifying and understanding hammered coins. Hammered coins can be quite a confusing subject to collectors who are used to milled coins, but this site literally ‘hammers out’ any confusion with easy to understand text, photographs and diagrams. It is a complicated address but still well worth a visit. [http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/37.%20Identification/37Coins\\_1pdf](http://www.bajr.org/BAJRGuides/37.%20Identification/37Coins_1pdf) Purchasing coins through on-line sites such as eBay can be a minefield for the unwary. With this in mind FORUM COINS, which is a well established and trusted dealership, has a long on-line list of eBay call-sign names used by rogue traders who have been caught selling fakes. The ‘Forum List’ is a really useful tool to have at hand before placing a bid. The old saying ‘*If it looks too good to be true – it usually is*’ certainly applies to many of the coins offered on eBay. Check this list and you might be surprised who is included.

[www.forumancientcoins.com](http://www.forumancientcoins.com)

## WHERE ARE THE ‘ALPHABET’ 10p COINS?

In 2018 the Royal Mint announced a new, but limited mintage, series of ten pence pieces aimed at ‘change-checker’ collectors. The coins each displayed a letter of the alphabet, illustrated by (what the RM decided) was a truly ‘British’ icon. Children throughout the country eagerly scoured their pocket money and asked parents to check their change – but without much success. When it was announced it sounded like a young collector’s dream; 26 different designs in one issue! But, like most dreams, you wake up to a harsh reality. Few if any such coins turned up in change and the would-be young collectors are still waiting. Unfortunately, the Royal Mint seems to have its sights firmly fixed on a young collectors market, with both the Beatrix Potter series of 50p pieces and now these so-called ‘iconic’ yet elusive 10p pieces.



To most serious coin collectors these new issues are regarded as perfect examples of exactly how *not* to design a coin. Apart from little consideration being given to the balance of the design, it would appear the very concept of the series proved difficult to fulfill. Matching a suitable ‘iconic’ image to an alphabet letter seems to have stretched the design brief to its limits! Judging by the examples shown in the publicity material the designer(s) must have really struggled to find a full 26 icons. Apparently, one of the scarcest designs is for the letter ‘L’ that was paired, appropriately, with the Loch Ness Monster. Maybe these have been recalled from the banks to be replaced by ‘L’ for Lockdown – which might eventually prove to be far more fitting.

## SMALL IS GREAT

Ancient Greek coins come in a really bewildering array of denominations and sizes. Ranging from the mighty decadrachms down to the impossibly small coin, known today as a hemitartemorion. The specimen illustrated here is a tiny *trihemitartemorion* of Olynthus in Macedonia (c.482-420 BC). The image is actually four times actual size, as the coin is just 6mm diameter and weighs in at 0.26g. The obverse shows a laureate head of Apollo and the reverse has a Greek legend around the sides of a tripod, all within an incuse square.



A. Dawson Coll.

## WHAT A PRICE FOR A MISSING LEG!

Stack’s Bowers Galleries in New York recently sold the famous ‘three-legged’ variety of a 1937D USA Buffalo nickel. It made a staggering \$18,000. The missing leg was a result of trying to remedy die clashes, which caused the leg being filed off a die. An ordinary specimen, even in high grade could still be acquired for as little as \$20. It’s an awful lot of money to pay for a missing leg of beef. Incidentally,



the buffalo depicted on the nickel was an animal called *Black Diamond*, which resided in the Bronx Zoo. Despite a public outcry, the famous buffalo was later sold to a meat market. However, the head was mounted as a gruesome souvenir.

## TEST YOUR MEMORY OF THE OLD £.s.d.

This item might be a little light relief from watching endless boring television or gardening, painting the house and other such chores that ‘lockdown’ obviates any excuses of ‘not having the time’.

Many years ago, Colin de Rouffignac entertained us with a short numismatic quiz; but a quiz with a difference. The clues listed below allude to a denomination of a coin or note. Simply add up the figures in pounds, shillings and pence, then see if your total matches the answer (at the bottom of the page). Full answers in the next issue. For starters, *Luciano Pavarotti* = tenor (‘tenner’). I know it’s corny, but could be harder than you think – no prizes.

1. *Luciano Pavarotti.*
2. *Sun, moon, star.*
3. *Joseph Hulme MP.*
4. *Robert Redford and Robert Peel*
5. *A place for stray dogs.*
6. *‘To take the King’s.....’*
7. *An ill sea creature.*
8. *Not quite a regal headpiece.*
9. *Lady Godiva.*
10. *Primate with a tail.*
11. *Little horse.*
12. *For your thoughts.*



### USELESS COIN FACT No.1

The square holes in the centre of old Chinese ‘cash’ coins were to facilitate them being threaded onto strings. Having a very low face value, they were often found in multiples of 500 or even 1000 coins strung together. Hardly pocket money!

## KNOWSLEY HALL PROJECT COMPLETED



After spending one day a month for nearly seven years, the coin project at Knowsley Hall has now finished. The accumulation of almost 600 mainly Roman coins has now been ticketed, catalogued, referenced and an inventory and report prepared. A printed copy of the final analysis was to be presented to Lord Derby,

but ‘lockdown’ intervened. It is hoped that, on the eventual presentation, Lord Derby will agree to recognize the amount of work and commitment by our members by, in turn, lending his name as patron to our Society. The Curator of the Knowsley Collections, Dr. Stephen Lloyd, is fairly confident he will agree.

*The next issue of this newsletter will (hopefully) be out in June 2020*