



ORMSKIRK & WEST LANCASHIRE NUMISMATIC SOCIETY

'LOCKDOWN' NEWSLETTER

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What have you all been up to? Any chat, photos, news, recent acquisitions etc. by members for future issues please!

ALL THAT GLITTERS...

Seeing in the New Year is still a time honoured tradition in many countries, although the form celebrations take is quite varied.

In ancient Thailand, for example, guns were fired to frighten away demons, whereas in China they used firecrackers. Denmark used to have the strange custom of throwing plates against each others' front door, again to banish evil spirits. In Scotland they celebrate Hogmanay with bonfires and fireworks, whereas the Dutch celebrate the dawn of the New Year in a more modest way by eating ring-shaped fritters called *olie bollen*, the shape symbolising 'coming full circle'. But what, you might well ask, has all this to do with coins?

The simple answer is very little. The Romans did celebrate the coming of the New Year with the giving or exchanging of freshly minted coins and gilded nuts. The identity and denomination of the coins in question has not been recorded, but the chances are they were either *sestertii* or *dupondii*. The reasoning behind this choice is their metal.



Hadrian orichalcum sestertius

The two denominations were sometimes struck in what we term *orichalcum*. The Roman transliteration was *aurichalcum* – literally meaning 'gold copper'. Cicero wrote that aurichalcum closely resembled gold in colour, but with a much lower value and weight. In Virgil's *Aeneid* reference to the golden metal is also made. In fact the word was hijacked from the Greek word *oreichalkos* meaning 'mountain copper' known as a valuable metal or alloy, valued for its brilliant lustre. To use the modern spelling 'orichalcum' appears to have been a golden-coloured bronze alloy, probably consisting of copper, zinc and other elements. Historians are divided over to which metal or alloy the term refers. Virgil describes the breastplate of Turnus as being 'stiff with gold and white orichalc'.

This would seemingly infer that the metal on the breastplate could have been a form of silver or even platinum. In 2015 some ingots, believed to be orichalcum, were recovered from a sunken Roman vessel off the coast of Sicily. They were subsequently analysed by X-ray fluorescence which showed the metal to be an alloy comprising 75-80% copper, 15-20% zinc and smaller percentages of nickel, lead and iron. The wealthier classes in Roman society probably exchanged true gold coins on the dawning of the New Year, but again this has not been recorded. The gilded nuts probably symbolized an abundant supply of food for the coming year, whereas the coins obviously hinted at financial security in a world already geared to a monetary economy. Coins struck in orichalcum do have a distinctive golden-brassy appearance when the bare metal is exposed, but toning and patina sometimes makes identifying the metal difficult.

It's quite surprising how traditions survive through millennia without most people stopping to question their origin. It is still customary to place a couple of freshly minted coins and some nuts and fruit in a child's Christmas stocking – the custom remains but like so many actions in everyday life its origins have been long forgotten.

OUR MEETINGS ARE STILL CANCELLED

Due to the ongoing Coronavirus situation it is still uncertain when regular meetings of O.& W.L.N.S will resume. Until such time it is deemed safe to congregate again this newsletter is set to continue.

CROMWELL'S DUNBAR MEDAL

Alan Dawson

Of all 17th century medals and medallions one of the most recognizable is the 1650 medal commemorating the Battle of Dunbar. It was commissioned by Parliament following Oliver Cromwell's decisive defeat of the Scottish army near the town of Dunbar, Scotland on September 3rd 1650. It was a grateful Parliament's intention to award it to all officers and men who had taken part in the battle. With over 11,000 surviving participants from the conflict this would have been quite a tall order. The engraver Thomas Simon was sent to Edinburgh soon after news of the victory reached London. His mission was to achieve a 'likeness from life' image of Cromwell for the obverse of the medal. Cromwell however had other ideas. He sent a letter to back in which he stated '*I may truly say it will be very thankfully acknowledged by me, if you will spare having my effigies in it*' – but this was seemingly ignored. The result was probably the most accurate image of the Lord Protector known. He is depicted in profile, with long flowing hair, wearing armour over which is draped a loose scarf. Around the portrait is the legend: WORD AT / DVNBAR / THE LORD OF HOSTS / SEPTE / Y3. 1650. It is signed beneath the left shoulder THO.SIMON.FE. The 'word' or battle-cry had been taken from a translation of the Hebrew *Sabaoth*, meaning armies; thus God of the armies of heaven. The reverse of the medal shows an elevated view of Parliament in full session.



Large 1650 Dunbar Medal in gold

1650 Dunbar Medal, smaller version, in silver

Marvin Lessen, an expert in Cromwellian coins and medals, believes that the medal was never issued as intended and certainly not in the numbers mentioned. The medal was to have been awarded to everyone, regardless of rank, but with officers receiving a gold version and troops a silver one – but identical in design. The medals were to be struck in two sizes, both oval in shape, the larger being 35mm x 25mm and the smaller measuring 25mm x 22mm. They were intended to be worn suspended round the neck from a cord, ribbon or chain.

Mr. Lessen's careful study of surviving examples of the Dunbar Medal has revealed some disquieting facts. It would now appear that far from being quite common and easily acquired, very few of the original striking have actually survived and that most specimens are re-strikes or forgeries produced between the late 18th and 19th centuries. If the intended 11,000 had really been issued the survival rate would certainly have been much higher. Confirmed original examples, such as the British Museum's specimens, show that the dies are virtually flawless, whereas later versions show a variety of die-flaws in the form of pitting and cracking. Some of the outright fabrications are from copied dies and are struck on cast flans. Many have suspension loops added, in a style not consistent with the original and the genuine larger silver versions had no provision for a loop.

In conclusion, most examples being offered for sale are not from the original striking. The reason for Parliament's apparent change of plan is unclear but it is possible that the decision to issue so many medals was taken, as Marvin Lessen puts it, 'in the euphoria of the moment' only to be embarrassingly re-considered when things had calmed down. Nevertheless the medal, original or not, is a superb example of Thomas Simon's engraving skill.



A WORTHY MASCOT FOR THE YEAR 2020

It has been announced that the North American raccoon has been chosen as an image to represent the memorable year 2020. This might seem a strange choice until you uncover the facts. The racoon always wears a mask on its face. When water is available it always washes both paws and food before eating. Finally, the very name 'racoon' is a simple anagram of Corona! So, it fits the bill perfectly – if only some humans were as careful.

A PLEA FOR MILLED COINAGE

Eric Hodge

Coinage is estimated to have come into common usage in about 700 BC. So up to the present day the collector and researcher has nearly 3,000 years to choose from. If a new collector has no particular pre conceived historical interest, but just becomes attracted to coins in general, then an easily accessible area to commence their journey would be in milled coinage of their own country.

Milled coinage refers to coins struck or manufactured by machine as opposed to by hand. The name is derived from the fact that the machines were driven from a mill which initially was operated by horse or water power and latterly by steam engines and then electricity. These milled coins were therefore more uniform in weight, size and design than the earlier hammered coinage.

COIN QUIZ No.9

QUESTION 1. Why do Henry I pennies have a small nick in the edge?

QUESTION 2. What does a large letter 'M' mean of Byzantine coins?

QUESTION 3. What is an Anglo-Saxon Styca?

QUESTION 4. What plant is featured on a George VI brass threepence?

QUESTION 5. Exactly what is an 'engrailed' edge on a coin?

QUESTION 6. What was an Anglo-Saxon 'scilling'?

QUESTION 7. When was the Venetian gold 'Zecchino' first issued?

QUESTION 8. Who was the Gresham of 'Gresham's Law' in monetary Economics: 'Bad money drives out good'?

ANSWERS (Quiz No.8)

Q1. Rebel Money was the term used to describe emergency coinage struck at Kilkenny, Ireland.

Q2. The 'Tribute penny' was a denarius struck by the Roman emperor Tiberius

Q3. York's Civil War coins were struck in the vicinity of St. William's College, behind the Minster.

Q4. The Reddite Crown was engraved by Thomas Simon.

Q5. A Pavilion d'Or is a handsome gold coin of Philip VI of Valois (1328-1350)

Q6. The term 'First Brass' used to refer to a Roman sestertius, an as being 'Second Brass'

Q7. V.O.C. on a coin, in monogram form, signifies a Dutch East India Co. issue.

Q8. The Northumberland shillings are dated 1763

Q9. The image is part of the reverse of a George IV 1826 proof crown.



QUESTION 9.

Can you name this famous English numismatist?



Fig.1. Charles II crown, Portrait facing right



Fig.2. George I 1723 halfcrown, with SSC in angles

In the UK hammered coins ceased production in 1662 and all future coinage was produced by the mill process. The machines enabled larger quantities of much larger coins to be stamped from dies of steadily increasing elaboration. Portraiture, instead of emphasizing the temporal part magnificently played by kings and queens, began to concentrate on their personalities. Character was felt to be of more importance than the ornate setting of robes and armour. The form of a man's own hair was preferred to the towering splendour of a peruke. In short, man himself was again the focus of interest.

It is this concentration on the true regal portraits on milled coins that gives the new student their first insight into the historical context of coinage. With the introduction of milled coins began the custom of turning the head of each succeeding monarch in the opposite direction to that of his predecessor. Charles II (Fig. 1) is said to have deliberately caused his head to be represented on his coins so that his back was turned in contempt on his predecessor, Cromwell.



Fig.3. 1790 Spanish 8-reales, Overstamped with the head of George III



Fig.4. George III Bank of England dollar obverse

USELESS COIN FACTS No.9

The so-called 'leather money' issued by some ancients was probably a form of barter currency, using dried skins or strips of leather to represent items or quantities comprising the barter. They might well have been stamped with some form of symbol to represent authority – but none has survived to reveal the image. So, we have to rely on writers of the time to describe as best they could what leather 'coins' actually were.

According to Aeschines, the Carthaginians wrapped a substance in leather or skin, the size of a tetradrachm. It was then sealed and issued for circulation as currency. Aeschines remarks "If any one among us has ever so much of these, he would be no richer than if he had a quantity of pebbles!" Obviously, this was an early form of token money without any intrinsic value and only a regional and limited circulation. In times of war certain leather tokens are known to have been issued as money of necessity. In more recent times primitive Russian 'coins' made from leather are probably the nearest to actual currency. They were probably just strips of leather, again used as barter currency and a way of checking transactions, although they are recorded as being of circular shape. Interestingly, the word *rouble* is derived from a word meaning 'to cut off'. Also, the Russian coin *pul* is derived from a word meaning leather. In England leather tokens were known to have circulated in the time of Elizabeth I. These would bring a whole new slant to the argument over whether a coin should or should not be polished!

Between 1662 and 1816 there were many examples of markings on the coinage to indicate the origin of the metal; elephants, castles, plumes, roses, Lima, E.I.C., W.C.C. and S.S.C. (Fig. 2), each worthy of further research.

The period of George III (1760-1820) saw many events of historical importance, affecting the coinage in various ways, where silver coinage virtually ceased and gold coinage struggled to take its place. Countermarked coins (Fig. 3) were put into circulation and Spanish 8 reales were over-stamped into coin of the realm (Fig. 4).

With the Napoleonic wars, the coming of steam-power and the experiments and persistence of Messrs Boulton and Watt, a further considerable change again came upon the coinage giving it the form, from 1816, which has survived till the present.

LOOKING BACK TO OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR 1980

Chris Leather

Lockdown Newsletter no.2, published in June 2020, celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of what is now the Ormskirk and West Lancashire Numismatic Society, so we can look back on 2020 as being our Jubilee Year. Anniversaries can be celebrated for other than fifty years however, and it might be interesting to look at what our Society was doing on a previous occasion. Delving into the darker end of the bookshelf, I have come across a bound volume of that much-lamented publication Seaby's Coin and Medal Bulletin for 1980. Within this most useful publication was a monthly list of the meetings and speakers for many of the nation's coin clubs and numismatic societies, ours included. So, what were we and our predecessors up to forty years ago?

The Bulletin is silent regarding January, but it does show that Chris Sabine, a name familiar to many of our members then and since, was talking to the Merseyside NS in Liverpool, with 'An Introduction to the Coinage of the Crusader States 1098-1291.' Chris did not have to go far for his next appointment, which was to talk to our society in February on a similar theme 'Emergency Coinage Struck During The Siege of Jerusalem 1187.'

At that time in 1980 the Ormskirk NS, as it was then, met at the Snig's Foot public house, in Ormskirk, an establishment which has since been less interestingly if more elegantly renamed on a couple of occasions. The March meeting was one of those occasions which feature, regularly, on the calendars of most Numismatic Societies: the Annual Auction. This is still a feature of our yearly offerings, but we now combine this with the Society's Annual General Meeting. Given the wide range of our interests, it is remarkable that each year virtually every lot offered is sold, though there are probably no two of us with identical collecting interests.

April saw a presentation by Brian Dawson on 'Halfcrowns from Charles II to Elizabeth II.' It is, of course, worth remembering that in 1980 halfcrowns had not long been out of circulation and were the stuff of relatively recent experience, not dim and distant recollection! The listing for May is a little short on detail, but seems to suggest that the Society had something of an 'awayday' as the presentation 'The Wreck of the Mary' (sic) by Mrs M. Warhurst was given at Liverpool Museum, rather than the Snig's Foot – incidentally, there is no generally accepted view as to what exactly a snig was, or is, but it might possibly have been a dray horse or it could even jokingly refer to an eel, as *snig* is the local West Lancashire name for an eel!

In June, the Rev R Plant came to see us, not, I hope, out of any need for missionary zeal but to deliver his presentation on the subject of 'Coins and Christianity' which, for European coins at least, offers an almost unlimited scope. A Coin Quiz is another of the regular, and popular, offerings on the calendar of many societies, ours included, and July 1980 was no exception to the rule, with a quiz by David Regan who is our current chairman. I refuse to be politically correct here; chairs are something to be sat on, not spoken to. Given our range of interests it is always possible to learn something new by listening to short presentations by our colleagues. This is what we did in August 1980, and is what we would have done in May 2020 had we not been overtaken by circumstances.

Quizzing is a popular activity now, and it certainly was then. The September meeting was taken up with an Inter-Society Quiz with our members pitted against visiting members from the Chester NS. There is no record of who won, but as we were on home ground....

Somehow one assumes that collectors of any historical artefacts would be quiet studious types, and this might well be so, but there is also a competitive side which would have been satisfied by a coin grading and identification competition organised by Colin de Rouffignac for the October Meeting. Colin is now our Life President. November was the AGM, over and around which a curtain is drawn, as is best and always the case.

The Society's year closed with a change to the published programme of meetings. Instead of the annual December Social Evening at the Snig's Foot Hotel, it was decided to celebrate the tenth anniversary with a little more style at the Boulevard Room in Southport, overlooking Lord Street. A good choice as the evening was enjoyed by all.

'When this lockdown and social distancing is finally over, let's not tell some people!'

Yesterday, my husband thought he saw a cockroach in the kitchen. He sprayed everything down and cleaned thoroughly. Today I'm putting the cockroach in the bathroom!

It's amazing how we used to gather round and eat cake after someone had blown on it

KING JOHN'S MINT AT SHREWSBURY

Alan Dawson

It had always been thought that the mint output at Shrewsbury ceased production towards the end of Richard I's reign (1189-1199) and coining did not start again until the voided-long cross coinage in 1248 during the reign of Henry III; a gap of some 54 years.

Since the burgeoning use of metal detectors what was once regarded as numismatic fact now needs to be seriously reconsidered. On the death of Richard I in 1199 his brother John was crowned King. The now familiar short-cross coinage, which had started in the reign of his father Henry II back in 1180, continued to bear the name 'Henricus', as continuity of style often implied stability and trust; although this would prove quite the opposite in King John's case.

By the time of John's accession to the throne it was assumed the mints at Lichfield, Shrewsbury and Worcester had stopped operations, whereas at the start of the upgrading of the quality of the coinage in 1205 new mints were opened up at Bury St. Edmunds, Chichester, Ipswich, King's Lynn, Oxford and Rochester, bringing the total number attributed to John's reign to 16 – or so we thought. Plantagenet short-cross coinage has been numismatically and quite accurately divided into eight classes plus numerous sub-classes spanning four reigns. These have been carefully studied, using evidence from such archives as the Pipe-rolls, various deeds and careful successive die sequencing noted by eminent scholars of the series. The result of all this study is that each class and sub-class can now be accurately dated, thereby reliably assigning it to one reign or the other.



King John penny of Shrewsbury, class 4C, by the moneyer Ive.

During Richard I's reign there were three moneyers working in Shrewsbury; Ive, Reinald and William. They weren't all working at the same time, although the coins signed by Ive are certainly the most frequently encountered. Issues from this mint are rare. Coins which have been listed as class 4A and 4B have been assigned to Richard's reign, with 4B running over into the very early years of John. However, it was always understood that production at Shrewsbury ceased shortly after the closure of the silver mine at Carreghofa in late 1194. The mint at Shrewsbury had been re-opened that year after the English took back control of Carreghofa Castle; the main purpose being to secure the nearby mine and its possible silver deposits. At this time King Richard was being held to ransom for a sum in excess of £100,000, so money was needed quickly to secure the King's release. Unfortunately, the mine failed to live up to expectations and in total produced just £20, 11 shillings and 11 pence worth of silver – hardly worth the effort! Although recorded activity at the mine ceased in 1195 the Shrewsbury mint must have continued with a small output of coins for at least another seven or eight years using silver obtained from a different source.

Baldwins of St. James's listed and illustrated a short-cross penny of Shrewsbury in their May 2015 auction sale. The coin was clearly a class 4C specimen, which can be dated to 1203/4. The moneyer was Ive, with the reverse side reading of IVE.ON.SALO(PE). It was described in the catalogue as possibly unique. Recently yet another specimen has turned up on eBay, clearly showing the reversed 'S' in hENRICVS, widely spaced pellets on the crown band and large annulet eyes, all determining characteristics of this very late and rare class 4 sub-class. Numismatic textbooks have yet to adjust to the fact that mint output in Shrewsbury seemingly continued into the early years John's reign, thereby adding another mint town to his tally, bringing the current count to 17. One mantra for serious numismatic study must surely be 'never say never' as history is constantly being corrected and re-written.

LEGAL TENDER

Peter Thompson

For centuries English coinage legislation addressed the problem of foreign coin circulating in England. At a time when all coins had an intrinsic value this was not an easy task but if foreign gold and silver was not re-coined it would affect the profits of the mints and therefore those of the king. For that reason, if for no other, it was a problem that had to be dealt with and the general aim was that foreign coin should be excluded from the currency of the realm.

On occasion, perhaps when mint output was affected by shortages of bullion, some foreign coins were tolerated and some, like Scottish coins in the early years, were commonly accepted but, in view of the general aim, it is a little surprising to find that on many occasions, for various reasons, foreign coins have been made a specific legal tender.

This note looks at three of these coins, the first being the double patard of the Dukes of Burgundy. In 1469 Edward IV was negotiating a trade deal with the current Duke (Charles the Bold) part of which was that the coins of England and Burgundy would circulate in both countries at agreed rates. A monetary agreement was duly published on 23rd August 1469. The key to the system was the equivalence of the English groat (known in the Low Countries as a 'stoter') and the Burgundian double patard (often termed a 'double plack' in England). Both would circulate at four pence in England and in the Low Countries at two Flemish groats. Although the agreement covered all denominations (gold and silver) only the double patard (figure 1) seems to have circulated freely in England. Documents, hoards and site finds show that it was in common use in England as a groat for over forty years.



Figure 1
Double patard of Charles, Duke of Burgundy (1467-1477).

Our second coin became legal tender in England after the marriage of Mary to Philip of Spain in 1554. Philip brought with him a large amount of foreign coin, particularly Spanish, and several denominations were proclaimed legal tender at given rates. This arrangement was rescinded by Elizabeth I in 1561 although Spanish silver appears to have been tolerated for many years after that. The most popular denomination was the one real which was proclaimed current at sixpence halfpenny and the example illustrated (figure 2) is a detector find from Somerset.



Figure 2
One real of Ferdinand II and Isabella (1479-1504).

Our final coin was also the result of a marriage, this time between Charles I and Henrietta Maria of France in 1625. Henrietta's dowry of 800,000 crowns was paid entirely with silver quarter écus which were to be re-coined into English coin at the Tower. An outbreak of plague in London at the time prevented this. Instead the coins were made legal tender by a proclamation of 4th September 1625 at the rate of nineteen pence halfpenny and put into circulation. Further Imports of these coins were strictly prohibited for fear that clipped and light coins would be drawn in from France. In practice that is exactly what happened and the coins had to be demonetised the next year (24th July 1626). In spite of its short period of legal status the quarter écu does appear in hoards and very occasionally as a site find. It was also well enough known to achieve the accolade of an anglicised nickname - the 'cardecue' (from quart d'écu).

The example shown here (figure 3) is clipped, light and probably typical of those that were subsequently imported.



Figure 3
Quart d'écu of Louis XIII (1610-1643) dated 1613

These are just three examples of foreign coins legally circulating in England all of which achieved some popularity. Over the years there were many others but these are three that must surely deserve a place in any collection of English coins.

'I stayed up on New Year's Eve. Not to welcome in the New Year but to make sure the old one well and truly left!'

CLYDESDALE BANKNOTES' DEMISE

If paying by banknote is giving way to contactless card and internet transactions then it is no real surprise that the Clydesdale Bank has stopped issuing banknotes. Even though the Clydesdale is a business it is on the way out, 182 years after its founding in Glasgow. The 'Clydesdale' brand is has been swallowed up by Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Group and the branches will be re-named as Virgin Money. Clydesdale Bank, although no longer a trading brand, will continue to appear on notes obtained from Virgin Money cash machines, until supplies are gradually all retrieved.

Apart from being something with which to irritate London cabbies and being an overt advert for its issuers, the old Clydesdale notes were regarded with a degree of affection, especially in Scotland. The imagery used on its notes was often extremely patriotic in flavour; depicting such Scottish heroes and notables as Robert the Bruce and Robert Burns.



Sir Richard Branson has never been shy about self-promotion, so it must be the sincere Christmas wish of all those who collect banknotes that he resists the temptation to emblazon an image of his own grinning face on any future banknotes his banking empire might issue.

LOOKING FORWARD TO A NEW YEAR

What a year 2020 has been! At least Brexit is now over, bar the shouting, but the plague of Coronavirus with an excess of fatalities, lockdowns, redundancies and a general economic downturn, the like of which has not been experienced since the 1930s is still with us. Salvation in the form of mass vaccinations is thankfully on the horizon. Over the last nine months both numismatic wholesaling and retailing has mostly been forced to use the internet as its only available platform. Despite all these woes coin collecting seems to be experiencing an unexpected surge. With global economic uncertainty it appears that coins and medals have yet again been seen as a safe haven for investors and collectors. Prices have been moving upwards throughout this year, with some reaching record levels. Some coin clubs and societies seem to have adapted to these unprecedented circumstances and have mostly held their membership. With 2020 now confined to history let's raise our glasses and toast the eventual return of meetings and a really happy and healthy New Year for one and all!